What the Puck?
The Gentle Wind Project, a Quasi-Religious New Age Alternative Healing Organization

by

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Abstract

The quasi-religious space is important for examining groups and organizations that exhibit qualities of both the sacred and the secular, particularly when groups have a vested interest in being perceived as either secular or sacred. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the Gentle Wind Project, a quasi-religious, New Age alternative healing movement, and to demonstrate how the group fit the category of quasi-religious. First I examined the category of quasi-religion, using Scientology and Transcendental Meditation as two examples of it, followed by examining the religious and secular aspects of Gentle Wind. As part of the examination of Gentle Wind as a quasi-religion, this thesis also briefly explores the role of the internet for Gentle Wind and critics, as well as examines one of the main lawsuits in which the group was involved. Gentle Wind ultimately sued former members and critics over statements made about the group online, and the results of this lawsuit have implications for a long-standing debate within the sociology of religion. This debate revolves around the reliability of former member testimony regarding groups with which they were previously affiliated.

In order to conduct my analysis, I followed two research methods. First, I relied heavily on primary source material regarding the Gentle Wind Project, which required me to use an archival methodology. Second, I examined secondary sources on a range of relevant issues in Gentle Wind, including, but not limited to, quasi-religion, New Age, the power and use of scientific language, alternative health practices, and magic. Furthermore, by examining the small and relatively unknown group, this thesis not only demonstrates the value of the quasi-religious label for examining New Religious Movements (or other ambiguous movements) but also draws attention to the group itself.

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Introduction

Like so many binaries, the terms “religious” and “secular" divide the world into ‘either/or’ terms: an individual is either religious or not; an organization is either secular or not. Although some might view these concepts as opposites, in many instances groups (particularly new religious movements [NRMs]) demonstrate qualities and characteristics of both ends of the spectrum. These two seemingly oppositional forces interact with, and interpenetrate each other, with particular efficiency in quasi-religions. The concept of quasi-religion influences my study of the small alternative New Age healing organization started in Maine, the Gentle Wind Project. The group remained adamant about rejecting the religious label, despite characteristics, beliefs, and ideology, with clearly religious overtones. Yet, while the organization had religious aspects, it also exhibited qualities of the secular. In this thesis I will demonstrate that the Gentle Wind Project (GWP) was an ideal example of the quasi-religious category. A secondary endeavour with this thesis is to provide an overview of the Gentle Wind Project.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter I explore the category of a quasi-religion. I use the examples of Scientology and Transcendental Meditation to further demonstrate the way that some NRMs occupy the space between religion and the secular (often science). This space and how a group attempts to shape its categorization (as well as how others perceive it) is an important and complicated aspect of a group’s identity. The ability to label itself, or be labeled by others, as either secular or religious provides a group with clear advantages. For instance, the secular label allows an organization to operate in environments traditionally separate from religion (e.g., public schools), while the religious label may provide access to additional protections or access to potential recruits that a secular label may not. I will address some of these advantages by focusing this thesis on The Gentle Wind Project (GWP).

Chapters two and three further elaborate on GWP as a quasi-religion. Chapter two explores GWP's religious aspects. It focuses on GWP as a New Age movement, and examines much of the group's ideology. The goal of this chapter is to establish Gentle Wind's religious qualities and foundations. Chapter three focuses on the secular aspects of GWP, including the healing instruments and the group's position on education (among other issues). The purpose of these two chapters is to present both the secular and religious qualities of GWP and demonstrate why, like Scientology and Transcendental Meditation, it was a clear example of a quasi-religion.

In the fourth and final chapter I examine the opposition to GWP, including the legal proceedings that ultimately led to the downfall of Gentle Wind. This chapter also examines the role of the internet for both the defendants and the plaintiffs. The aim of the thesis as a whole is to explore and analyze the small alternative healing movement in order to outline the ideological system of Gentle Wind, the critics of the group, and the legal fallout of the project. In the conclusion, I endeavour to provide potential additional research queries for future research projects. Additionally, I briefly examine the use and validity of former member testimony. The ability to contribute to this social scientific debate was an unexpected, and unintended, result of my research, but my findings make a clear contribution to the debate.

In my analysis of the Gentle Wind Project I used an archival methodology to analyze primary sources. I processed the collection of Gentle Wind material donated to the Stephen A. Kent Collection on Alternative Religions in the University of Alberta's library system by former GWP members Judy Garvey and Jim Bergin. The preliminary work on this project required me to organize and catalogue eight banker boxes of source material into various thematic categories. I created categories such as court documents, financial documents, emails, websites, letters, instrument manuals, etc. Whenever possible I sorted chronologically within those broad

categories. The chronological sorting was more difficult since many documents lacked dates. I also create a running list of the boxes' contents in a personal word processing document to provide a way to more easily find specific sources.

The archival material was vital for understanding Gentle Wind since the organization is no longer around, but also enabled me to access to a range of primary sources. Overall, the internal documents and commentaries from supporters, critics, and apostates provided a rich basis from which to approach the study of Gentle Wind. Other source material (such as audio cassettes of radio interviews), and legal documents, also contributed to my understanding of the group.

One issue that I encountered while sorting the significant amount of materials was the lack of dates and authors on many of the sources, particularly in material produced by the group. By comparing and analyzing theses sources, and in some cases seeking clarification from ex-members Jim Bergin and Judy Garvey, I was able to generate a relatively complete chronological picture of Gentle Wind. Although challenges existed with the archival method, it enabled me to analyze and access a multitude of primary sources that may have been unavailable otherwise.

Furthermore, since Religious Studies is interdisciplinary, I drew upon a range of sources and information in my synthesis of GWP material and analysis of that material. These sources include, but are not limited to, sociological scholars and theories (including Rodney Stark, William Sims Bainbridge, and Norichika Horie), studies of the comprehension and pervasiveness of scientific language in the vernacular, and comparative analysis between GWP and NRMs and religions, including TM and Scientology, but also The Theosophical Society and the Canadian Kabalarians. I approached my study of Gentle Wind as I would the study of any religion. I intended my analysis of the group's beliefs to be neutral, fair, and respectful, while still seeking

to be academically critical. When, however, I explored both the group's claims of being scientific, and of requiring sizable donations, I became more critical, since these claims moved out of the theoretical metaphysical realm into tangible real world consequences.

While some groups exhibit clear religious doctrine, beliefs, and practices, others profess strongly secular doctrines, practices, and beliefs. A few groups display both secular and religious characteristics. Despite attempting to assert itself as a secular and scientific organization, GWP had significant religious aspects, thereby demonstrating its quasi-religious status. The analysis of this group is important not only for understanding quasi-religious groups (particularly those with New Age and pseudo-scientific aspects) but also may provide a case study for future exploration of quasi-alternative healing organizations. Finally, since no prior comprehensive exploration of Gentle Wind exists, this analysis also is important for establishing the foundations for future academic study and analysis of the Gentle Wind Project.

Chapter 1: The Quasi-Religious Category

Some New Religious Movements (NRMs) seek to establish themselves on the border between the sacred and the secular. At times these movements may chose to assert scientific claims in opposition to religion, in order to distance themselves from a religious label. The success of this choice is debatable, especially when one analyzes a group's literature, doctrine, or worldview, not to mention the legal rulings made about a group. This boundary is neither rigid nor impermeable and, as such, the relationship between the secular and science, and religion and the spiritual, in these movements is complex. This complexity makes labelling a movement as either religious or secular difficult. NRMs may attempt to move (intentionally or not) away from their religious core by making an appeal to science (or in many cases pseudoscience), or acting outside of traditional religious roles. Despite this move, many of these groups never fully escape their religious ties (i.e., they are quasi-religious).

In this chapter I will outline the category of quasi-religion using examples of Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Scientology. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate the value of the quasi-religious category. I will begin with a discussion of the theory of quasi-religions, before moving to the selected examples of quasi-religions, and finally concluding with a brief introduction of the focus of this thesis —the Gentle Wind Project (GWP).

Quasi-Religion

The distinction between secular and sacred is not always clear. While some insist on marking these two categories as distinct, completely separate, and binary, the border between these two categories is often far less rigid than it appears. Often the categories overlap and intersect. A NRM may choose to distinguish itself as more of a science in order to accomplish certain goals. This distinction, however, is not always clear nor — when one explores the

doctrine of certain NRMs — successful. As defined by Arthur L. Greil and Thomas Robbins, quasi-religions are religions that "either do not see themselves, or are not seen by others, as unambiguously religious" (1994: 8). This definition does not deny that quasi-religions have religious aspects, but rather demonstrates how an organization may attempt to distance itself from the religious label intentionally (or unintentionally), or may incorporate more than religious elements into their goals, structures, and ideologies.

Despite this attempt, many of these organizations end up, in fact, exhibiting religious aspects. The difficulty in the labeling of certain religious phenomenon is not necessarily a problem. That is, no reason requires secularity and religiosity to be mutually exclusive. The interaction of these categories presents the opportunity to study groups that exist *at the intersection*. In their exploration, Greil and Robbins offered three types of definitions of religion that offer insight into the realm of quasi-religions. These definitions are: sociological, folk, and political (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 8). The three definitions provide a starting point for understanding the discourse surrounding the term quasi-religion, and the ways in which certain organizations blur the lines between the religious and secular.

Greil and Robbins divided the sociological definition of religion into functional and substantive definitions. The functional definition seeks to establish "an 'encompassing system of meaning' or the ability to 'relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence'" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 3). The functional definition enables the discourse on religion "to transcend the commonsense definitions of religion and to look at beliefs and practices not commonly referred to as religious but which may nonetheless resemble religious phenomena" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 3). One disadvantage of this broad definition of religion is that 'religion' becomes meaningless (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 3). In contrast, the substantive definition aims to

"[distinguish] religion from other types of human activity" (Greil and Robbins 1994: 3) by connecting religious activity to "the sacred, the supernatural or the 'superempirical'" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 3). While many consider the substantive definition to be a "commonsense" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 3) definition, it also excludes groups that do not have any supernatural aspects (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 4).

In an attempt to navigate these difficult definitions, Greil offers an alternative term: para-religious. Greil defines para-religious as: "phenomena which seem to share features with religious phenomena but which do not make explicit reference to a supernatural or superempirical realm" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 4). Greil and Robbins present this definition as a compromise between the substantive and functional definitions (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 4). Despite none of these definitions being perfect, they all offer a starting point for the navigation of the quasi-religious. That is, by breaking down the boundary between the functional and substantive, and between the sacred and profane, one can start to explore those groups that are difficult to categorize.

The folk definitions of religion are those definitions that the public creates to "categorize phenomena as either religious or not religious in order to make sense out of their everyday lives" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 4). This categorization suggests a complex series of highly subjective definitions, some of which may be helpful in the discussion of quasi-religions, and some of which may make the discussion more complicated. The difficulty with folk definitions is that they are time and culture specific, and, at times, very individualistic in nature (i.e., subject to a person's knowledge base and bias). The definition that one group might propose as a means of confining religion may not fit in with another group's definition.

As Greil and Robbins discuss, a modern American definition of religion may not be applicable to religions in other societies (1994; 7). By offering the American folk definition of religion (which the authors suggest is: "beliefs and practices focusing on a transcendent deity, standing above nature, controlling but not controlled by natural law," [Greil and Robbins, 1994: 7]), Greil and Robbins are able to demonstrate how some folk definitions work (as well as the cultural and temporal specific nature of such definitions). The way a group, or individual, defines 'religion' impacts the determination of a group's quasi-religion status. If one uses folk definitions, then the quasi-religious label will also be culturally and temporally restricted.

Greil and Robbins provide one way in which the folk religion definition is able to help navigate the quasi-religious in the discussion of healing movements. These movements exhibit characteristics of religion such as "providing cosmologies, rituals, a language for the interpretation of believers' worlds, a social context for belief and practice, and a group of fellow believers" (McGuire 1993 qtd in Greil and Robbins, 1994: 8) in the absence of any "overtly theistic or . . . professedly religious" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 8) elements. Although the target of these characteristic was healing groups, they provide an example of the characteristics of quasi-religions as well. That is, it demonstrates how religious elements can exist in a group (such as ritual, tradition, performance, worldview shaping, etc.) without a necessarily theological core accompany it. Arguably, at some point many of the healing movements do appeal to some sort of spiritual force for either legitimization or as the source of healing.

The advantage of the quasi-religious perspective is not that it narrows the categories, but rather that it presents a continuum with which to analyze certain groups. Greil and Robbins caution against viewing quasi-religions as monolithic entities requiring labeling as either religious or not (1994: 10). This problem, I would argue, is easily bypassed when one realizes

that even those entities that are easily classified as a religion (many of the world religions, for instance), have elements that are secular (or at least appear non-religious). While there is something special about religion (characteristics explored earlier regarding rituals, appeals to the supernatural, etc.), it does not preclude the inclusion of non-religious aspects. The permeability of these boundaries between religion and secular, religion and culture, religion and politics, or religion and science provides the opportunities to explore the ways in which these factors influence each other (often in very practical ways).

Finally, Greil and Robbins offer the political definition of religion. This definition is determined by "competing interest groups" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 11) and affords certain benefits to those who are able to gain the political label of religion. Moreover, the choice of the label enables a group to orientate itself—and for people to receive these groups—in a very specific way. For instance, "in a society . . . where science and rationalistic arguments have a great deal of prestige" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 13), groups will benefit by aligning themselves with the scientific instead of the religious.

A particular problem associated with the political definition of religion is authenticity. In their discussion of this problem, Greil and Robbins demonstrate how labeling certain groups as religious, or not, depends upon those with the capacity to attach labels. Players in society determine, specifically or generally, if a religion is authentic or not (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 15). These influential parties may make general or specific judgments regarding the authenticity of religion. A general claim occurs when "groups within society pass judgment on a particular group, movement, or tradition's claim to be 'religions'" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 15). For example, courts, media, and special interest groups make these types of judgments. In contrast, specific claims are those that are "made by organizations and individuals within particular

religious traditions" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 15) towards other groups within the same religious tradition (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 15).

The label of quasi-religion provides a category with which to explore groups that exhibit both religious and non-religious tendencies. While this category is by no means rigid, nor impermeable, it is helpful for locating groups that may chose to identify themselves as non-religious, or those who wish to appeal to dominant non-religious values in a particular society. The category acknowledges the interplay of secular and sacred, and, therefore, is a valuable tool in the exploration of NRMs. The definition of quasi-religion depends upon, for obvious reasons, who is defining religion, and how. As explored in this section, this question is challenging as it depends on which definition one is using for the category of religion itself (sociological, folk, or political, for instance). In the following sections, some of these factors will present themselves in the discussion of certain specific examples of quasi-religious NRMs. Moreover, to further narrow down the discussion I will focus primarily on the boundary between religion and science.

Transcendental Mediation

In the exploration of quasi-religious groups (specifically the intersection of religion and science) some groups attempt to argue that they are not religious in their content or goals. One particular group to make this argument was Transcendental Meditation (TM) founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (nee Mahesh Prasad Varna [b. 1918 – 2008]) in the 1950s. TM claimed that it was not only non-religious, but also that its teachings were scientifically verifiable (Baird, 1982: 391). The foundation of TM is the Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI),[1] which TM explained as "systematized knowledge of existence or the actuality of life" (Baird, 1982: 393). Even in the foundational theory of TM, one can begin to see the ways that TM blended science and religion. In addition, TM was aware that science was what appealed to its target market. That

[1] SCI was also known as the Science of Being.

is, TM acknowledged that it could present its ideology as either a religion or a science, depending on the dominant worldview orientation of the society receiving TM's teachings (Baird, 1982: 392-393). In this way, TM was flexible with its label, and embraced its quasi-religious status for its own advantage.

TM presented a theology that insisted "human beings are essentially one with the Being . . . [a] state which lies beyond all seeing and hearing and touching, smelling and tasting" (Baird, 1982: 394). Additionally, the practice of meditation was meant to "refine the nervous system so that the expanded perceptions experienced during TM . . . [carried] over into the mediator's conscious thought" (Baird, 1982: 396-397). In this way, it is clear that TM was connecting its ideology with science. These tenets clearly connected science with religion, by implying that through the religious act of meditation a person would receive a physical benefit (specifically on the nervous system). In this teaching, TM also appealed to something beyond the profane. In appealing to the sacred, while at the same time claiming to be a rational scientific teaching, TM blurred the lines between religion and science. While the blurring of boundaries may not always be intentional, the way TM chose to identify itself as a science certainly was. Appealing to science allowed TM into the public school system where it was offered in "the 1975-76 academic year . . . [as] an elective course . . . in five New Jersey public high schools" (Baird, 1982: 395). Thus, TM benefited from existing at the intersection between science and religion.

In the case of TM, a political definition of religion ultimately successfully labeled TM as religion in the United States. In court, TM attempted to align itself with science, in opposition to religion, in order to maintain itself in the school system. For instance, TM compared creative intelligence (a term connected to Being [Baird, 1982: 396]) with the law of gravity, suggesting it was both "[guided] and [sustained]" (Jarvis qtd in Baird, 1982: 398). In contrast to the law of

gravity, however, creative intelligence also claimed to be "the source of life-energy, the home of all knowledge and wisdom, and the origin of all power in the universe" (Baird, 1982: 398). Although TM used scientific terminology and concepts, it maintained religious elements. These elements allowed the court to decide TM's designation as a religion.

In its attempt to appeal to a scientific, rational worldview, it is clear that TM was simply picking scientific sounding words (with a general idea of how the concept worked, or related to, TM ideology). Terms such as 'gravity,' 'matter,' and 'energy,' carry specific understandings in a worldview dominated by science. The court declared, however, that TM used none of those terms in the correct scientific manner (Baird, 1982: 399). In other instances, TM borrowed obviously religious terminology and attempted to downplay the religious significance. This borrowed religious vocabulary is particularly evident in TM's practice of *puja*. *Puja* is a ritualistic prayer, worship, and offerings, made in Hinduism towards one or more deities. In TM, however, these ritualistic attentions[2] were directed towards "'the Lord,' other named entities or individuals, the 'tradition of our Master,' and Guru Dev, who [was] portrayed as a personification of a divine being or essence" (Baird, 1982: 401).

While participants seemed unaware of the religious connotations of the *puja* (as evident by the inability to even explain what *puja* meant [Baird, 1982: 403]), the court did not accept TM's arguments that the *puja* was a non-religious ceremony (Baird, 1982: 401). The *puja* demonstrated the quasi-religious nature of TM in the way the group shaped its own boundaries. It also serves as an example of how different stakeholders define religion in different ways (e.g.,

[2] Baird noted the ritualistic nature of TMs *puja* when he mentioned that students were required to bring certain special items (a "clean white handkerchief, a few flowers and some fruit" [Baird, 1982: 400]) presumably for an offering ceremony. Moreover, the room was marked off as a special (sacred) place, as indicated by the removal of shoes before entering, and the presence of "candle and incense, camphor, and three dishes for water, rice, and sandal-paste" (Baird, 1982: 400-401). Furthermore, Guru Dev's image featured prominently in the same way an image of a deity might be (Baird, 1982: 401).

participants versus outsiders). If the participants had knowledge of other religious traditions, however, they may have concluded the *puja*'s religious nature themselves.

In its decision, the court explored aspects of TM that remained religious despite the defense's attempt to claim otherwise. In determining the religious status of TM, the court pointed to the original name of TM when it arrived in the United States: the 'Spiritual Regeneration Movement Foundation' (Baird, 1982: 405). The court decided that, since TM's terminology and practices were religious in nature, TM deserved neither to be taught at a public high school, nor receive public funding (Baird, 1982: 406). Both the court (by labeling the organization as religious), and TM and its adherents (through claiming it was not religious) demonstrate the complex nature of quasi-religions and, at times, the competing interest and viewpoints within this label. Interestingly, the court case also involved other religiously affiliated experts (a minister, a priest, and a rabbi)[3] who testified (on behalf of TM) that they did not consider TM to be a religion (Baird, 1982: 399).

Although these three experts seemed unprepared (some had not read the textbook before their day in court, or had not read carefully [Baird, 1982: 399-400]), the use of other religious experts to frame TM as non-religious further demonstrates its quasi-religious status. That is, TM not only attempted to shape itself in scientific terms (in opposition to religion), but also used other religious experts as a means of establishing contrast to traditionally defined Western religion. Despite these attempts, the courts ultimately determined that TM was a religious movement. The conflicting definitions indicate a tension between the categories of 'religious' and 'secular.' While these categories do not have to be mutually exclusive, certain organizations

[3] It is important to note that none of these experts were from any branch of Hinduism, the religion which TM pulled many of its religious terminology and practices.

(such as TM) benefit from certain labels than from other labels. A nonreligious label would have permitted TM to remain in the school system and continue to receive public funds.

Scientology

In contrast to TM, Scientology embraced its religious label. Even though it was eager to be a religion, Scientology still attempted to appeal to the scientific. Thus, Scientology fits the idea of a quasi-religion in-so-far-as it plays with the boundary between science and religion. In fact, unlike TM, Scientology seems to have embraced its quasi-religious status (intentionally or not). Scientology's claim to the label of religion was upheld in a 1969 court decision that "found . . . Scientology was 'religious' even though it 'postulated the existence of no supreme essence or being and disavowed mysticism and supernaturalism'" (Baird, 1982: 405). While Scientology used the religious label to "insulate itself from regulation," (Manca, 2010: 1) in the medical realm of science, it still appeals to the nonreligious, especially the scientific.

Scientology's appeal to science began with its founder, L. Ron Hubbard (1911- 1986). He claimed to be a scientist with the aim of "[making] health risks visible to the public" (Manca, 2012: 82). During the atomic testing and nuclear fears of the 1950s, Hubbard took advantage of the gaps in knowledge in orthodox science to present his own pseudoscientific answers to concerns surrounding radiation (Manca, 2012: 83). Hubbard further claimed to not only have a scientific education background, but also to have conducted scientific experiments in relation to radiation (Manca, 2012: 84).

These claims not only established Hubbard as an expert in science through claimed degrees "including nuclear physics and medicine" (Manca, 2012: 84)—he also claimed a fictional Doctorate of Scientology (Kent and Manca, 2012: 5)—but also the claims orientated his discussion in scientifically appealing terminology. Hubbard reinforced his expert status by

claiming to have followed rules of science (e.g., conducting radiation experiments). This type of orientation implies a certain conduct. The suggestion of a scientific experiment implies those conducting the experiments not only are experts, but also following certain standardized procedures.

While these claims were likely false (since many radiation trials, particularly those involving human subjects, did not gain serious attention and momentum until the 1960s [Manca, 2012: 85]), the appeal to science remains effective. By placing himself as a source of scientific knowledge, Hubbard was able to make recommendations, primarily to his own followers, regarding mental and physical health. For instance, Hubbard claimed that taking the vitamins he developed prevented the risk of cancer from radiation exposure by eliminating the worry about radiation (Manca, 2012: 88). In addition, when Hubbard first developed Dianetics, he did so with the assumption that it would be a valuable addition to the psychiatric community, aligned with contemporary (1950s) thought regarding mental health, and would eventually replace psychiatry completely (Kent and Manca, 2012: 4).

In order to effectively appeal to science, Hubbard often disregarded, or attempted to discredit, scientific evidence presented by other authoritative scientific sources. By discrediting the other (in this case, the other is science-based mental health services), Scientology, I argue, blurred the lines between science and religion. Scientology, and particularly Hubbard, created an alternative source of scientific knowledge, without needing (or wanting) to distance itself from the label of religion. Playing with the boundary between religion and secular and/or science, as in the case of Scientology, can be deliberate. Hubbard reacted to the contemporary concerns, and scientific norms and values of the 1950s with his claims of contributing to the science of radiation (Manca, 2012: 84, 85). Although Hubbard framed some of his ideology scientifically,

the scientific community did not usually accept it. With a few exceptions, the mental health community largely rejected *Dianetics* upon publication in 1950-1951 (Kent and Manca, 2012: 6).

Often the tension between Scientology and science has led to conflict between the organization and legal authorities. For instance, in 1969 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) seized documents, books, and electrometers on the basis that these items "contained 'false scientific and nonreligious claims'" (Manca, 2012: 88). The FDA's claim suggests the interplay between the sacred and profane in Scientology not only effectively fit the quasi-religious label, but also that the non-static nature of this boundary in Scientology presented a problem for government regulation. In order to effectively regulate a sector, or provide services, clear labels for organizations are required. For example, in order for a governing body to enforce medical standards on a group or procedure, it must be able to label said group (or procedure) as medical or medically relevant. In the seizure of Scientology material, the FDA claimed that Scientology was neither a science nor a religion. I argue that, instead of being neither, Scientology had attempted to be (and likely continues to attempt to be), *both* (hence, quasi-religious). Interestingly, the courts eventually seemed content to return Scientology's material as long as the group clearly articulated that electrometers were "spiritual devices that did not cure disease" (Manca, 2012: 88). In doing so, the legal system enforced a religious label on Scientology.

While the courts in the United States labelled Scientology as a primarily religious organization, Australia and Canada seemed more inclined to align with Scientology's secular claims (in-so-far as the secular claims can be effectively regulated by governments). Australia (more specifically, the parliament of Victoria) not only banned Scientology, but also the use of the electrometers by anyone other than psychologists (Manca, 2010: 6). In doing so, the

government seemingly gave credit to Scientology claims of electrometers being a scientific instrument by suggesting only approved experts should use the devices.

The provincial government Committee on the Healing Arts (1970) in Ontario "concluded that Scientology should adhere to proscriptions of the practices of medicine under the country's Medical Act" (Manca, 2010: 6). The committee's decisions potentially acknowledged the pseudoscientific claims in order to establish regulation of Scientology. Alternatively, the decision acknowledged that in order to adequately protect citizens and public health, a need exists to (in certain circumstances) recognize non-religious claims by quasi-religious organizations. I argue the different reaction by different countries towards Scientology not only demonstrated its quasi-religious status, but also showed that the labels attached to the group impact the way that outsiders view and interact with it.

While the boundaries between medicine and religion have not always been as strong as they are today (Kent and Manca, 2012: 9), this firmer boundary remains permeable. Some New Religious Movements, such as Scientology, present clear examples of where this boundary can break down. Scientology continues its fight with psychiatry and psychology (for instance, Scientology has lobbyists campaigning for "the destruction of psychiatric practices" [Kent and Manca, 2012: 18] in the United States), and thus continues to navigate in the realm of a quasi-religion and pseudoscience. While the origin of this tension came out of the psychiatric community's rejection of Dianetics (Kent and Manca, 2012: 7), and Hubbard's own psychiatric condition[4] influenced his strong reaction to this rejection by the psychiatric community, I argue that does not detract from the continued attempts by Scientology to blur the lines between religion and secular science.

[4] See Lane and Kent (2008) for further discussion of Hubbard's narcissism.

In addition to Dianetics and theories on radiation, Scientology exhibits traits of blurring the boundary between religion and science in other instances. Scientology's practice management companies, for instance, are able to attract scientific professionals (dentists, doctors, and veterinarians) through the effective use of familiar terminology. Through presenting its ideology in the form of business management courses that used "statistical graphs" (Hall, 1998: 401), encouraging "a scientific approach to problem-solving" (Hall, 1998: 401), and referring to the management system as a "technology" (qtd in Hall, 1998: 401), Scientology appealed to professionals who had a scientific background (Hall, 1998: 401) through framing the program in a discourse they understood. It also blurred the lines between secular and religious since, once professionals signed up for the courses, Scientology began the process of religious conversion (Hall, 1998: 407).

Other scholars have recognized Scientology's status as a quasi-religion, though without using that label. For instance Passas and Castillo refer to Scientology as "a deviant business that borrows from science, renews its imaginative jargon, updates its spiritual techniques, and remains a religion" (1992: 115). In fact, based on the diversity of the boundaries that Scientology crossed (and continues to cross), Scientology presents an excellent example of a quasi-religion. Although Scientology does not deny its religious status, it may at times downplay this aspect in favour of appealing to more secular qualities when and where it sees fit. As Scientology demonstrates, the status of a quasi-religion impacts the way outsiders view these groups.

The Gentle Wind Project

In order to demonstrate how GWP fit the label of quasi-religion, I have divided the next two chapters into the ends of the religious-non-religious spectrum. First I will explore the theological side of GWP. The intention of this exploration is to offer a summary of some of the

supernatural ideas that GWP appealed to in order to demonstrate the religious aspect of its quasi-religious status. Next, I will explore the secular aspect of GWP, including claims made regarding the type of alleged healing that the organization offered. Through examining some aspects of Gentle Wind's healing claims, and the way these claims blended with its religious aspects, one can see the ways in which GWP exhibited quasi-religious characteristics. Before I analyse GWP as a quasi-religion, however, I must introduce the project.

The Gentle Wind Project[5] (GWP) was a group from Maine, in the United States, that started in the 1970s. It continued to grow through the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s before disbanding following court battles with former members and the state of Maine. After losing the lawsuit, Gentle Wind changed its name to the Family Systems Research Group (FSRG). The group operated under FSRG for awhile before the site closed down and was replaced with the I Ching Systems (and accompanying website) selling similar instruments as Gentle Wind, and offering similar seminars, for comparable prices, under this new name.

In 1984 GWP "formally incorporated as a federally approved non-profit" (GWP, n.d[e]: 1). GWP claimed to be a world-healing organization with the goal of healing the world through healing individuals (WCNJ, 1997). The type of healing GWP offered did not involve orthodox medicine; rather, it involved a nonphysical spiritual healing of the alleged etheric structure around the body. Although GWP did not label itself as religious, it certainly contained religious aspects (particularly New Age ideas). While GWP claimed to be neither secular nor science-based[6], it used science-like language regarding to its healing claims. In addition, GWP set itself

[5] The Gentle Wind Project has also been known by other names, including (but not limited to): Gentle Wind/Turning Point, the Gentle Wind School, Gentle Wind Retreat, Gentle Wind Hawaii, Gentle Wind Iran, Gentle Wind World Wide, Global Information Network, Family Systems Research Group (FSRG), and Eye of the Sky (WoC, 2004).
[6] That is, Gentle Wind never explicitly identified itself as a 'science' or a 'secular' organization in those words.

in opposition to modern education and advocated homeschooling. These factors, I argue, contribute to GWP's status as a quasi-religion.

GWP identified itself as a "world healing organization" with the purpose of "restor[ing] the human consciousness to a state of balance and peace" (Carreiro, 1987: vii) using "healing technology" (Carreiro, 1987: vii). Early in GWP's development some core members "pool[ed] resources" (GWP, n.d.[l]: 2) and bought a home in Blue Hill, Maine, in order to "compress [their] lives in a way that has cut . . . individual living expenses so more money could be given to [the] project" (GWP, n.d.[l] 2). Blue Hill became the center for GWP, with "seven adults including one married couple" (GWP, n.d.[l]: 3) and several animals living together "in the main house" (GWP, n.d.[l]: 3). Fifteen members (including those in the main house) lived in the Blue Hill area (GWP, n.d.[l]: 3).

Mary "Moe" Miller[7] was one of the founding members of the group along with John 'Tubby' Miller. Mary and John met in the early 1970s when both attended the University of Connecticut for their Master of Social Work degree. Although GWP literature and members often expressed John Miller as the central figure in the organization, Mary Miller was, arguably, the more prolific member of the Gentle Wind Project.[8] She organized and spoke at many of the seminars, gave multiple interviews with the media, wrote the newsletters, articles and books, and according to former members controlled "the flow of information" (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). The other founding member, John Miller, rarely made public appearances and a majority of communication with him was done through a female third party (Garvey and Bergin, 2003).

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[7] Mary Carreiro had several aliases: Mary Miller (this particular name came from John Miller another one of the founding members of GWP. Several women adopted his last name though not married to him), Mary Elizabeth, Claudia Panuthos, and Moe.

[8] Former members Bergin and Garvey noted that Mary Miller was the public face of the group, and the spokesperson in charge of operations, finances, and recruitment, but John Miller was the spiritual authority and the driver of many purchasing choices, such as the Florida property (Garvey, 2015). Thus, one could view John as the sacred half, and Mary was the secular half, of GWP's leadership.

Many of the women involved in GWP changed their last names to Miller in order to "show their devotion to John Miller" (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). Towards the end of The Gentle Wind Project a minimum of five core members had legally changed their name to Miller (Bergin, 2003). John Miller also was credited with giving many members nicknames or new first names (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). John 'Tubby' Miller assigned these names to allegedly reflect personality (Bergin, 2003). The change in name, particularly since it was assigned by the central figure of GWP, not only served to reinforce the significance and power of John Miller (and his connection with a spirit realm), but also reflected a new identity and acceptance into the upper echelon of GWP.

Despite reacting against religion, New Age, and science, GWP continued to display qualities of, or make appeals to, these three categories. When one also considers the Brotherhood, and the idea of spiritual evolution, it becomes much more difficult to not classify GWP as at least somewhat religious, likely under the category of New Age, despite its rejection of both those labels. This rejection, however, orients Gentle Wind toward in the quasi-religious label. As Arthur L. Greil and Thomas Robbins suggested, quasi-religions are religions that "either do not see themselves or are not seen by others as unambiguously religious" (Greil and Robbins, 1994: 8).

Based on this definition, GWP more than adequately fits the category of quasi-religion. GWP was able to cross the barrier between religion and medicine through alleged alternative healing techniques, and healing instruments both meant to heal a person's etheric field and thereby create the connections in which they are able to listen to their soul and continue the path of spiritual evolution. The healings of GWP were not physical, but rather had a supposed impact

on a person's emotional and psychological state. In addition, GWP's stance on education also blurred the lines between religion and secular.

GWP's quasi-religious status aided the group in gathering supporters. Former members Bergin and Garvey became involved in GWP when they sought home schooling support. Other supporters (or members[9]) were drawn to GWP for the healing technology. The healing technology appealed both to secular ideas and religious concepts. The Gentle Wind Project's quasi-religious nature enabled it to appeal both on a religious and a secular level. Furthermore, by stressing its secular aspects it enabled the group to draw in supporters both through spiritual claims and through pseudo-scientific claims.

Conclusion

The quasi-religious category provides the ideal opportunity to explore New Religious Movements. It allows for the exploration of movements that exist at the intersection between religious and secular. The quasi-religious label largely depends on who is defining, and how they are defining, religion. Although a group may chose to present itself a certain way (overall, or in reaction to particular circumstances), the way others (academics, individuals or groups, and political institutions) perceive these groups determines the acceptability of the religious or the non-religious label. In contrast, the quasi-religious category allows a group to be simultaneously both religious and non-religious. The mixing of seeming opposites, however, creates not only issues of regulation, but also tension with society's established norms and norm creators.

In the discussion of Transcendental Medication, Scientology, and the Gentle Wind Project, I demonstrated how permeable the boundary is between religious and secular. While TM

[9] I am drawing the distinction between supporters and members in this case. Members would be part of the inner circle, have significant contact with the Millers, and/or own multiple instruments. Supporters, in contrast may attend seminars, or use (or own) a few instruments. One should note that GWP claimed to not have "members" because there was nothing to "join"; however, the term adequately describes individuals who are part of a group, society, etc.

attempted to self identify as non-religious (by making appeals to science), its beliefs and practices led the court system to label TM as religious. In contrast, Scientology had more success in easily passing across the boundary of secular and religious. Not only did it not deny its religious status but in making connections to science in both its language, and group doctrine, some jurisdictions promoted a secular label for the movement. Although the basis of this chapter focused on the quasi-religious theory by Greil and Robbins (1994) — and the examples of Scientology and Transcendental Meditation — I also used this chapter to introduce the Gentle Wind Project, laying the foundation for the next two chapters where I explore its quasi-religious status in more detail. Having established what "quasi-religion" means, and what it might look like in a New Religious Movement, I will now explore the Gentle Wind Project explicitly.

Chapter 2: The Sacred and Gentle Wind

Quasi-religions balance on the border between the sacred and the secular. In this grey area, many New Religious Movements attempt to navigate between religious and non-religious labels, often for their own motives and purposes. In the previous chapter I explored the examples of Scientology and Transcendental Meditation, and the way these two movements attempted to navigate the space between religion and secular ideology based on pseudoscientific claims. In the remaining chapters of this thesis I will analyse the Gentle Wind Project (GWP) as a quasi-religion. I have divided the exploration of Gentle Wind into its religious elements and its scientific aspects, concluding with the consequences of GWP's ideology and its attempt at navigating the space between science and religion.

This chapter will examine GWP as a religion, or rather, its religious aspects. GWP presents the challenge of labelling, since it rejected a religious label. I aim to demonstrate, however, that GWP included religious ideology. Specifically, GWP's ideology fit under the umbrella of the New Age. Although GWP rejected the New Age (and religious) label, GWP balanced between religious and secular, thus making it a quasi-religion. While some might argue that applying a religious label to a group that did not self-identify as religious is problematic, it is important to remember that New Religious Movements, and other alternative groups, have motivations for distancing themselves from these labels.

Religion

GWP not only denied the religious label but also was antagonistic toward religions. It viewed religions as "clubs" (Carreiro, 1988[a]:21) a person joins in order to "be associated with the 'right' people" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 21) or to be one of the "'chosen people'" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 21). Furthermore, religions taught people "about personal salvation rather than

individual evolution," (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 13) stunting growth along the spiritual evolution path. GWP directed its anti-religious rhetoric specifically at the major Western religions (Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism [listed separately from Christianity by GWP]) as well as Communism and New Age. Eastern religions — particularly Daoism,[10] Confucianism, and Buddhism — were declared philosophies, not religions, and were not "involved with evil" (GWP, 1996: 33) in the same manner as religions.[11] While these latter three are, in fact, religions and not philosophies, one can see why GWP made this distinction.

GWP drew upon Daoism (particularly the *I-Ching*), but — in order to maintain a consistent non-religious stance despite citing a sacred text — maintained that Daoism was not a religion. This assertion may also reflect a bias on the part of GWP regarding what constituted a religion in comparison to the dominant monotheistic religions of the West. GWP asserted that religions "offered very disturbed, distorted human ways. They offer human pain, pathology and misunderstandings that have caused humanity many serious emotional and spiritual problems" (Carreiro, 1988[a]:5). In this framework, it should not be surprising that GWP would set itself apart from religious institutions, beliefs, and practices. Important to note, however, is that when GWP leaders discussed religion they only included Western religions and asserted that a defining characteristic of religion was that it claimed to save people (GWP, 1996: 34). This narrow definition allowed it to treat Eastern religions as non-religious.

One striking exception, however, to the acceptance of Eastern religions was GWP's bleak assessment of Indian religions. While Gentle Wind viewed three of the large religious groups of the East (Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism)[12] as better than religions of the West (although

[10] GWP used Taoism, but I prefer using Daoism.
[11] GWP did not include Hinduism in either its lists of religions or philosophies. See my discussion of India to follow for possible reasons why GWP made this exclusion.
[12] GWP did not include Hinduism in its Eastern philosophy list likely due to its perception of India.

still not as good as the path of GWP), India was portrayed as a "spiritual burial ground" (Carreiro, 1987: 35). Not only did GWP argue India was a "land of poverty, starvation . . . decay . . . disease and hunger" (Carreiro, 1987: 35), but India was also a "country of darkness, hardship, pollution and despair . . . . spiritually bankrupt. . . [and] a land where old religions and ideas die slowly" (Carreiro, 1987: 36). This assessment of India, and the religions and spiritualities of the country and its people, was not only disparaging but also clearly ignorant. One can only assume the superficial assertion that Indian people "worship cows and watch their children die of starvation" (Carreiro, 1987: 35) to be the result of a severe lack of research and a significant superiority complex.

I assert that this severe criticism of India and of Indian religions has a twofold reason. On one hand, it is the result of prejudice, and on the other hand it demonstrates the assumption, by GWP, that India was not a source of spiritual knowledge. The latter assertion requires exploration within an historical context. At the time when Gentle Wind was formed (the 1970s), and was growing (through the 1980s and 1990s), an influx occurred of New Religious Movements tied to Indian thought, religious practices, and teachers. For instance, Rajneesh (1931-1990), an Indian guru, and the movement that formed around him (Rajneeshees), was at its peak during the 1970s and early 1980s. The Rajneeshees offered a "sixty different therapies . . . as well as Eastern meditations like yoga, *vipassana*,[13] Sufi dancing, and tai chi" (Palmer and Bird, 1992: S71). Although Gentle Wind did not offer or promote Eastern meditations, the services offered by Rajneeshees were a potential source of competition — both spiritually and economically. It would have been advantageous, therefore, for a group such as GWP to define its

[13] *Vipassana* is insight meditation in Buddhism which focuses on suffering, impermanence, and *anatman* (no-self) with the goal of obtaining insight into reality and ultimately escaping the cycle of *samsara*.

boundaries clearly, and demonstrate its superiority in an environment of competition with other movements, groups, and practices.

GWP further distinguished itself from Rajneesh, and other popular gurus at the time, by claiming only it had access to the correct spiritual authority. For Gentle Wind, individuals such as Rajneesh who attempted to convey spiritual knowledge without the protection from a reputed collection of entities known as the Brotherhood, only ended up "pulling difficulties" (Miller, n.d) towards them due to the inaccuracies in the information they shared (Miller, n.d). Moreover, those who have reached the stage of third degree initiate[14] had the opportunity to teach but risked getting caught up in power — as Rajneesh had (Miller, n.d).

GWP was no kinder in its assessment of the New Age. Both New Age and religion were responsible for "leading people further into passivity and inertia no matter what they claim to be doing or where they operate in the world" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 22). It is interesting that, within its New Age label, GWP decided to include the Unitarian Society, Evangelical Christians, Rajneeshees, Church Universal and Triumphant, and Scientology (Carreiro, 1987: 32; GWP, 1996: 14). The New Age, according to GWP, offered no "roads to 'enlightenment'" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 15). GWP further accused the New Age of being "spiritual trash" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 15). In GWP's framework, it offered "the only one Great Way" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 15), the only true path distinct from either religion or New Age. The Great Way was "the only possible road to evolution" (Carreiro, 1987: 115) and required that each soul follow a spiritual teacher from the non-physical Inner World (Carreiro, 1987: 118).

New Age

[14] I will further discuss the Brotherhood and levels of initiates, and the significance to GWP beliefs, later in this chapter and the next.

GWP asserted that New Age movements lead "away from genuine spiritual growth" (Carreiro, 1987: 53). GWP also cautioned that the Brotherhood did not work through psychics, who only provide inaccurate information (Carreiro, 1987: 54). Despite the rejection of the New Age label (a GWP spokesperson stated: "we're not New Age wackos [sic]" [qtd in Shepard 2004]), the Gentle Wind Project demonstrated several characteristics of a New Age movement. In order to explore this aspect of GWP we must first establish what exactly 'New Age' means. One of the difficulties in defining New Age arises in part because of the eclectic nature of New Age beliefs, and in the lack of strong overarching organizational structures. Although GWP fought the New Age label, and attempted to deny its New Age connection, many of the seminars it offered, and bookstores that sold its books, targeted the New Age market.

According to Steven J. Sutcliffe and Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, the New Age from the 1980s:

> had become marked by an ethically 'white', lower-middle-class and/or middle-class profile, middle-aged (30-50 year olds) and superiorly educated, made up of professionals, IT, arts, and healthcare occupations, and strongly represented by women (2003: 5).

This description adequately describes the Gentle Wind Project. The project itself began in the 1970s, but its significant publications and operations started in the 1980s. Furthermore, many of the core members were professionals (and held advanced degrees), and a majority were female.

At the center of GWP was John "Tubby" Miller, the "representative of the spiritual engineers . . . whose task [was] to provide humanity with the technology necessary to insure humanity's recovery" (GWP n.d[a]: 8). The Gentle Wind Project asserted that Tubby had completed his evolution "in another place and in another way, much more rigorous and disciplined" (GWP, n.d[a]: 8) and the group regarded him as "older than time and . . .young as a spring chicken" (GWP, n.d[a]: 8). Despite the seemingly central nature of Tubby, Mary "Moe"

Miller (no relation) created a majority of the literature (books, newsletters, correspondence, etc.) and handled a significant portion of public relations (including radio interviews).

The majority of the inner circle, and other vocal members of GWP, were primarily female. A photograph on an early GWP newsletter (GWP, n.d[b]: 1) further supports Sutcliffe's and Gilhus's characterization of New Age comprised of mostly women, and mostly Caucasian. As for their economic and professional standing, members of GWP, particularly at the core of the organization, also complied with Sutcliffe's and Gilhus's assertion of mostly educated middle-class participants. Both Mary and John were originally social workers, while other members included nurses and book publishers. Additionally, as GWP progressed and began to solicit donations for their healing instruments (some for hundreds or thousands of dollars), one has to assume that the majority of those partaking in GWP had some form of disposable income.

Though some argue that New Age is characterized by loose organizational structures, or as "de-institutionalized religion" (Sutcliffe and Ingvild, 2013: 9), GWP itself had a relatively organized structure. It kept a list of Instrument Keepers (IKs), those who had in their possession instruments for people to use, and connected individuals interested in healings to local IKs whenever possible. If no IKs were near a hopeful inquirer, then GWP offered telepathic healings for interested parties from its headquarters in Maine (also where the production of instruments took place).

An important aspect of New Age to consider is that many of the ideas and beliefs in this religious system tend to be syncretic, drawing in particular from Eastern Religions. The general cultural milieu, however, is important when defining and studying the New Age. Norichika Horie argues, rightfully, that the acceptance of Shinto cannot be considered New Age (or new at all) within Japan in the same way that some Japanese may give a "romantic glance at exotic

pagan figures" (2013: 101). Presumably, however, the presence of Shinto ideas within a non-Japanese community outside of Japan should be evidence of New Age syncretism.

Horie presents an effective schema for understanding just where New Age fits in the broader categorization of religion. He outlined a quadrant based system with local (at the top) and global at the bottom of the y axis and religious (to the left) versus non-religious (to the right) on the x axis (2013: 113). The quadrants (beginning in the top left and moving clockwise) represent: 1) established religions,[15] 2) folk spirituality[16] and pop culture, 3) systematic spirituality and secular knowledge,[17] and 4) foreign religion and spirituality of the foreign[18] (Horie 2013: 113). Surrounding the origin point is New Spirituality, with New Age designated as a smaller category within New Spirituality (Horie 2013: 113).

Horie offered a definition of spirituality that "includes New Age and new spirituality and still related to religion" (2013: 111). For Horie, new spirituality, of which New Age was a part, was:

> Both belief in what cannot usually be perceived but can be felt internally, and practices to feel it with the whole mind and body, accompanied more or less by attitudes of individualism or privatism, anti-authoritarianism, and selective assimilation of religious cultural resources (2013: 111).

In order to understand New Age as a religion, and for the purposes of understanding GWP, I suggest the inclusion of the supernatural and a conceptualization of an afterlife. Horie's definition, along with my amendments, provides significant aid in categorizing New Age

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[15] Established religions are those that "are regarded as traditional religions in their home land" (Horie, 2013: 113). I would place the so-called World Religions here.

[16] Folk religions "come from the local folk religion and [are] characterized by features such as animism, *mana*, or shamanism" (Horie, 2013: 112).

[17] Systematic spiritual is defined as having an "intellectual foundation in inter-disciplinary scholarship. . . . It is also supported by the expert systems of these disciplines. . . . It is rooted in individualism, psychologism, vitalism and romantic evolutionism." (Horie, 2013: 114)

[18] Foreign Religion/spirituality of the foreign is not merely a religion outside of its homeland, but is a religion, or part of a religion, that gains popularity "without organizational support, or the popularity of a non-native religious practice that can be exercised without learning its doctrine or . . . being a permanent member" (Horie, 2013: 113).

religions. In combination with the quadrant-based categorization of religious and spiritual, one can see how by these dual features, New Age is a combination of the old and the new, and the local and the foreign. Keeping this definition in mind, I will now outline GWP's ideology.

Ideology

So far this chapter has explored the Gentle Wind Project's position on Religion and New Age, as well as introduced a schema for interpreting and classifying New Age within a broader religious context. The next section will explore GWP's ideology. The goal is to demonstrate that, despite its own objections, GWP held significant religious ideology and beliefs that fall under the broader religious category of New Age. To begin, I will explore one of the key beliefs of many Western New Age groups, the inclusion of astrological beliefs. Astrology fits within Horie's category of folk spirituality.

New Age, by name alone, connotes a new beginning, and is often associated with the coming 'Age of Aquarius.' The idea of the 'Age of Aquarius' draws upon Western astrology and the idea that the earth was moving out of the "astrological 'house' of Pisces . . . into 'Aquarius'" (Sutcliffe and Gilhus, 2013: 3). In this framework, each age is governed by characteristics of its respective astrological house. The idea that the Age of Aquarius (and New Age by extension) meant a new beginning, had roots in the hippy culture of the 1960s (Sutcliffe and Gilhus, 2013: 3-4).

GWP included a discussion of the Age of Aquarius in one of its early publications. Carreiro asserted that, "astrologically, we are entering the Age of Aquarius" (1987: 132). Carreiro further elaborated that "the transition period from one astrological age to another always brings about some confusion, chaos and opportunity for change." (1987: 132) The inclusion of

the Age of Aquarius placed GWP within a broader cultural context of popular contemporary notions of an impending change.

Beyond the astrological idea of the Age of Aquarius, early GWP did astrology readings and offered classes on astrology, both for a small fee. GWP offered natal charts for ten dollars, relationship charts for twenty dollars, and an astrological chart for thirty dollars (GWP, 1985). Early in the movement GWP also offered a class in Boston on "Astrological Transits: Understanding the Planetary Movement," which aimed to teach people "to use the planetary energies, rather than endure them" (GWP, 1985). Although later seminars offered by GWP moved away from the astrological aspects towards a focus on the healing instruments, the initial focus on astrology served as one means of fundraising (as indicated by the fees).

GWP claimed that astrology was a potential source of accurate information regarding personality although it held no value in understanding the soul (Carreiro, 1987: 54). Individuals could request Soul Readings and Astrological Readings that were delivered via cassette (with one reading on one side of the cassette, and the other on the flip side). The readings would give individuals an idea of their purpose in life, how far along the path of spiritual evolution they were, and challenges they might face, and might occasionally address specific current problems in their lives. Though the inclusion of astrology aligns with the astrological element of New Age, the Soul Readings provided a unique addition to the overall GWP worldview.

GWP distinguished Soul Readings from psychic readings, asserting "the Brotherhood does not ever offer psychic information" (Carreiro, 1987: 18). According to GWP, psychic readings were offered by only the "uninitiated and ignorant, who abide on the astral planes and know nothing about evolution" (Carreiro, 1987: 18). Soul Readings gave information from the Brotherhood and were therefore, in the GWP worldview, far superior to any and all other sources

of spiritual information. Although Soul Readings were available for anyone to purchase for the first few years after GWP's formation, in later years the Soul Readings were mostly reserved for Instrument Keepers and GWP members (Bergin 2003).

Former member Jim Bergin noted that the first Soul Reading that GWP gave to his family "seemed to fit our child's behavior and persona, and offered us some answers about his behavior" (Bergin, 2003). The couple believed in the spiritual origin of the Soul Readings and gladly sent in for readings not only for their other child but for themselves as well (Bergin, 2003). It should not be surprising that the Soul Readings were effective for drawing people in. Not only did the Soul Readings claim spiritual authority but also, since Bergin and Garvey had spoken to Miller prior to the Soul Readings, it was probable that GWP tailored the Soul Readings to fit their specific needs. Furthermore, the tailoring of the readings made listeners feel as if a spiritual source "that knew the real [them] and seemed to care" (Bergin, 2003) was talking directly to him or her.

One Soul Reading assured Judy Garvey that she had no karmic obligation to raise a foster child, but if she chose to, then she was the right mother for him even if raising him may cause the member suffering (Miller, 1984[b]). The Soul Reading of Jim Bergin, the partner of the woman from the previous reading, included what level of initiate (rebirth) he was at in this life and the assertion that, as a young soul, his evolutionary path is easier than older souls (Miller, 1986). That is, he was not as damaged as souls that had been around longer. Earlier readings for the same former member offered personality information including that he was a protector and that the child that he was fostering was not the result of karmic debt (Miller, 1984[a]). These two pieces of information demonstrate at least a rudimentary extrapolation of the purpose of this life

and an afterlife. GWP asserted that humanity was bestowed with souls in order to complete a process of spiritual evolution (Carreiro, 1987: 1).

Unfortunately, since "most people believe that they are their bodies and their minds" (Carreiro, 1987: 1-2), and are ignorant to the fact that "they *have* souls, nevermind [sic] the actual fact that they *are* souls" (Carreiro, 1987: 1-2), many people have spent, and will continue to spend, "thousands of years incarnating without any spiritual growth at all" (Carreiro, 1987: 2). This line of thought creates a worldview in which the goal of human life is spiritual evolution, and the 'afterlife' is reincarnation (a new life) in order to further this goal. The process of reincarnation enables the soul to progress along a path of spiritual evolution[19] through seven levels of initiation. GWP's ideology even included, or suggested, what occurs in the intermediary period between death and rebirth.

The intermediate stage is the spirit world. The spirit world is a realm of non-physical entities responsible for the human condition (WERU, 1996). It is a place where souls go after they die, before they are reborn again, and GWP claims it is "as old as time" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 129). The spirit world differs from the human world since it is characterized by "satisfaction, . . . peace, . . . [and] real beauty. . . [and is] based upon honesty and reality" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 128). GWP described the spirit world as the only place where purification is possible (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 119).

At one GWP seminar, Mary Miller suggested that the spirit world could be a trap for certain religious individuals (particularly Catholics) who are seeking a spiritual epicenter or a Godhead figure (GWP, 1999). The spirit world is identical to this world but separate, but a

[19] I will explore this spiritual evolution in more detail in the next chapter, but it is important to note at this point to better understand some aspects of GWP ideology.

"temporal shift" [20] (John Miller dep, 2005: 131) connects the two worlds (John Miller dep, 2005: 131). GWP suggested that those in the spirit world could interact with, or influence, those in the current plane of existence (before or after reincarnation).[21] While one way this interaction with the spirit world can occur is through channeling, GWP portrayed another type of interaction between those in the spirit world and this world GWP as more sinister.

Miller suggested that those suffering from schizophrenia had interacted with Catholics or other religious devotees in the spirit realm, who had convinced themselves they were divine beings (Miller, 1999: 2-A). Moreover, those who hear voices, according to Miller, are allegedly interacting with deceased suffers of schizophrenia or other delusional disorders (1999: 2-A). The cycle of misinformation and delusion was allegedly caused by the fact that no one "asks for ID" (Miller, 1999: 2-A) from those still in the spirit world, and thus cannot be guaranteed to know exactly who they are interacting with. While this assertion implies that the spirit world is a source of distraction and danger, it can also be a source of knowledge and aid.

The Brotherhood was the primary supernatural force within the Gentle Wind Project framework.[22] For GWP, the Brotherhood was "a group of male and female souls dedicated to the evolution of humanity" (Carreiro, 1987: xi) and the source of knowledge both of GWP's Healing Instruments and general spiritual and worldview matters.[23] The Brotherhood also was connected to, or part of, the 'Planetary Logos,' a concept that is similar to God (Carreiro, 1987: x, 22; John Miller dep, 2005: 147). The Planetary Logos is the soul that "embodies the planet earth" (Carreiro, 1987: 22) and "guides and directs The Plan of Evolution" (Carreiro, 1987: 22).

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[20] John asserted that the spirit world did not want him explaining what this meant (John Miller dep, 2005: 131)
[21] According to Tubby, contact with the Spirit world can be draining and, in fact, shorted his life span (John Miller dep, 2005: 135).
[22] In later years GWP referred to the Brotherhood as the Company.
[23] John Miller asserted that members of this spiritual authority were not aliens, but were tall human that wore unusual, or unrecognizable, clothing (John Miller dep, 2005: 119). Additionally, Miller claimed to confirm sightings of these beings with another member (John Miller dep, 2005: 119).

Although 'He' allegedly did not punish or heed the prayers of humans, Gentle Wind described the Logos entity as "compassionate and understanding" (Carreiro, 1987: 22). While the connection between the Brotherhood and the Planetary Logos was not explicitly stated, the inclusion of the Logos implies a conceptualization of a deity-like figure. The focus of GWP was on the Brotherhood, and it rarely mentioned the Planetary Logos.

The Brotherhood as a source of knowledge is particularly evident by the fact that some members, particularly in the inner circle, allegedly channelled members of the Brotherhood. In fact, the three initial books written and published by GWP (*The Psychology of Spiritual Growth* [1987]*, Modern Religion & The Destruction of Spiritual Capacity* [1988], and *Modern Education: Once Size Fits All* [1988]) were accompanied by notes on the covers, which stated the information within the books was "Channeled from the Brotherhood." This claim implied that the information within the book was influenced by, and derived from, a higher plane of existence, and from a source superior to human knowledge.

GWP claimed to "maintain continuous telepathic communication with the Brotherhood" (Carreiro, 1987: vii). Through this communication, GWP staff supposedly received "telepathic impressions in the form of engineering blueprints" (WERU, 1999) for the healing instruments, and information regarding soul readings for members. GWP claimed these soul readings were messages from the Brotherhood regarding a member's current life path and problems. The Brotherhood exhibits qualities of the sacred, but GWP neither worshiped nor prayed to these entities.

Furthermore, other members of GWP's inner circle also were capable of channeling the Brotherhood. In one issue of the *Gentle Wind Newsletter*, for instance, two other members channelled messages from the Brotherhood (GWP, n.d[b]: 2). Pamela channeled Marion, "a

fourth degree initiate from the ashram Koot-humi" (GWP, n.d[b]: 2). This particular being was also allegedly "part of an Aquarian Age exchange program among the Brotherhood that allow[ed] the blending of many energies from many teachers" (GWP, n.d[b]: 2). Another member channelled Master Hilarion, a member of the Brotherhood who " [was] not in incarnation at this time" (GWP, n.d[b]: 2). Mary Miller, under one of her pseudonyms (Mary Elizabeth), allegedly channelled one of Master Hilarion's disciples, a fifth degree initiate (GWP, n.d[b]: 2). Mary gave this member of the Brotherhood the name Estelle, since the Being's name did not translate into any human language (GWP, n.d[b]: 2). The description of Estelle suggests an entity beyond human comprehension (the difficulty with her name) and a Being more spiritually advanced than most (based on her initiation level).

Although the members of the Brotherhood were different from the gods, GWP considered them supernatural entities in possession of a significant source of knowledge and which were organized in some sort of hierarchical structure (Masters and students). Despite claims by GWP that it is not a religion (that is, nothing to join, no gurus to follow, and no ceremonies[WERU, 1996]) I argue that the existence, and integration, of the Brotherhood within GWP doctrine and practice is one of the strongest pieces of evidence contrary to this claim. GWP touted the impressive knowledge of the Brotherhood and claimed:

> the work of the Brotherhood distributed through Gentle Wind [was] the most effective, most efficient path to evolution now on the planet….from Our [sic] point of view there are many possible paths. However, none are as effective as the path now given to humanity through Gentle Wind (GWP, n.d[b]: 2).

GWP used the power associated with the Brotherhood not only to legitimize GWP through appealing to a higher power, but also to claim that GWP offered the ultimate path of spiritual evolution.

Energy serves an important role in New Age groups and alternative healing movements. Spiritual energy becomes a way to explain how and why techniques work the way they do. Lisbeth Mikaelsson explored how the popular conceptualization of energy employs the idea that energies can be "absorbed, balanced, strengthened, transferred, exchanged, stolen and leaked through the procedures of ordinary life" (2013: 170). The concept of spiritual energy "has become all-embracing. It is used to explain all sorts of phenomena, and is . . . a unifying cognitive category in alternative spirituality" (Mikaelsson, 2013: 170).

According to Gentle Wind, spiritual energies not only drove spiritual growth but could also be turned towards achieving personal human life happiness (Carreiro, 1987: 103). Using one's energy to pursue the latter was always in opposition of spiritual growth (that is, pursuing the needs of the ego did not contribute to spiritual growth [Carreiro, 1987: 103]). Everyone had access to this energy and, in GWP's framework, "the human electrical system called the meridian system" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 96) served as a conduit for this energy. Furthermore, according to GWP, "mental-emotional upset[s] or physical breakdown[s]" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 96) were evidence of problems in the body's energy system (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 96).

Spiritual energy also existed in the healing instruments that GWP offered. For instance, the instrument manual for the Shambhala Instrument indicated that the energy it accessed was equivalent to high power voltage and therefore it needed to be "stepped down to a safe and usable healing energy" (GWP, n.d[f]: 1). Furthermore, energy — according to Carreiro— flowed within the human body through the "electrical system" (1998[a]: 96) also known as "meridian system" (1998[a]: 96). If this energy became blocked for any reason, then it would cause problems in the meridian system which, in turn, would manifest itself in the individual's mental,

emotional, and physical wellbeing (Carreiro, 1998[a]: 96). The energy, therefore, was not only a substance within the body, but also a source of the healing technology's power.

Mikaelsson explains how the existence of spiritual energy is used to explain "why healing, therapies and many other spiritual practices function" (2013: 170).The energy explanation is particularly poignant in GWP, since energy was infused into the instruments, allegedly, during 'energy work' sessions. These sessions reportedly involved sexual rituals with the leader John Miller and several female followers. While I will explore these allegations in more detail in a later chapter, the manipulation, creation, and containment of energy for the purposes of healing was a vital aspect of GWP's ideology (and influenced the group's assertions regarding its healing technology). Without the concept of energy both within the body and surrounding the body, GWP would have had no explanation for the claims of success nor would the healing instruments have had purpose at all.

Borrowing and Blending of Religion

Eastern Religions

Another key component of New Age, highlighted under Horie's classification system, is the combination of different religious and spiritual systems, the "selective assimilation of religious cultural resources" (2013: 111). This syncretism was evident in GWP through blending Eastern religious concepts with Western theosophy. The Gentle Wind Project drew heavily on Eastern religious traditions. For instance, GWP asserted that the world was in an "era of darkness known as Kali Yuga" (Carreiro, 1998: 1). Interestingly, particularly given previous discussion of GWPs perception of Indian religions, the leaders borrowed this term from Hinduism. This contradiction may have been the result of a change in doctrine or policy, a disregard for

contradictions, exposure to (and integration of) new ideas and concepts, carelessness, or even a decrease in perceived competition with NRMs based in Hindu thought, such as Rajneeshism.

GWP's main source of borrowed knowledge was Daoism. Mary Miller asserted that Gentle Wind was "essentially Daoist" (WCNJ, 1997). This assertion, I argue, was most likely an attempt to rationalize and locate some of GWP's ideology within an already existing and recognizable framework. In her summary of what it meant to be Daoist, Miller asserted that Daoism essentially was a philosophy in which "things just are what they are. . . . [B]ad things happen to good people, bad things happen to bad people" (WCNJ, 1997Miller).

GWP's association with Daoism begins in the name of the organization itself. The Gentle Wind Project claimed to derive its name (that is, 'Gentle Wind') from hexagram 57 of the *I-Ching* (WERU, 1999). The *I-Ching* is a central text (and source of divination) in Daoism and details the hexagrams' meanings. Like all of the hexagrams, Hexagram 57 is divided into two trigrams. Furthermore, 57 is one of eight double trigrams. That is, the trigram *Sun* is both the top and bottom trigram comprising Hexagram 57. *Sun*, also known as The Gentle, has the quality of penetration and it is symbolized by wind and wood (Wilhelm, 1967:li). Hexagram 57, therefore, is The Gentle, The Penetrating, wind, wood (Wilhelm, 1967: 220).

The *I-Ching* explains that *Sun* is "the wind that disperses the gathered clouds, leaving the sky clear and serene" (Wilhelm, 1967: 220), and when applied to humans "it is the penetrating clarity of judgment that thwarts all dark hidden motives" (Wilhelm, 1967: 220). In a radio interview Mary Miller echoed this idea when she explained that the penetrating wind, the hexagram from which GWP drew its name, symbolized the inner voice that helped to guide a person, and was the wind that changed a landscape without causing it damage (WERU, 1999).

Hexagram 57 is the most popular in GWP literature, but it is not the only one. Some of the other hexagrams that appeared were 61 (*Chung Fu* – Inner Truth [Wilhelm, 1967; 235]), which has *Sun* as the upper trigram; hexagram 43 (*Kuai* – Breakthrough / Resoluteness [Wilhelm, 1967; 166]); and hexagram 59 (*Huan* – Dispersion/Dissolution [Wilhelm, 1967: 227]). The hexagrams generally lacked any explanation or clarification when used in GWP literature. Often a hexagram appeared at the start of a book or at the end of a chapter, an isolated symbol with no context or connection within the text. Although GWP may have inserted the hexagrams under the assumption that the audience understands the meaning and symbolism behind the hexagrams and trigrams, it is equally likely that the use of the hexagrams is an example of selective syncretism.

Importantly, Gentle Wind leaders did not consider Daoism a religion (GWP, 1996: 39). Instead, they asserted that Daoism was a philosophy that focused on reality and that advocated accepting reality and events, since events happened without requiring an underlying meaning (GWP, 1996: 40). Furthermore, GWP literature advocated the *Dao De Jing* as the best sacred text that one could follow, since reading the *Dao De Jing* counteracted the ego allowing for spiritual growth (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 129). GWP's assessment of Daoism was significantly simplified and largely incomplete. Although the selective nature of GWP's grasp of Daoism was a form of cultural appropriation, it also highlights the syncretism nature of the New Age. Furthermore, this approach falls under Horie's classification of a spirituality of the foreign, one element that also contributes to the categorization of New Age and new spiritualities. Although the Gentle Wind drew its name from the I-Ching, and used some of the hexagrams in its publications as illustrations, it did not engage in divination with the hexagrams. GWP adapted

some elements and ideas from Daoism without, arguably, fully and completely resting under the Daoist label.

The adoption of Eastern religious terminology is also evident, at least in name, in some of the healing instruments that GWP developed: for instance, the Sacred Instrument of the Tao, and the Shambhala[24] Instrument. GWP also borrowed other terminology from Eastern religions including karma. In a Soul Reading, for instance, the Brotherhood (through Mary Miller) assured a member that the foster child he was raising was not the result of negative karma (Miller, 1986). It did not, however, necessarily acknowledge, accept, or use broader Buddhist thought and beliefs. GWP did use, however, a passage that it attributed to "Gautama Siddhartha [sic]" (GWP, 1996) in "The Sacred Book of Healing."

Western Religions, Theosophy, and New Age

Interesting, despite its clear anti-Western Religions stance, GWP drew on western religious thought as well. In the *Sacred Book of Healing* GWP included diagrams of four new healing symbols, three of which included major symbols of Western Religions (a cross, the Star of David, and a crescent moon) for the purpose of "mak[ing] the healing available to people of all religions without offending anyone" (GWP, 1996: 4). As well, GWP shared many characteristics, terms, and concepts with Theosophy.

As already explored, GWP shared many aspects of New Age groups (despite attempts to distance itself from this label), and many New Age groups in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries do draw on ideas formed in the spiritualism movement, and by extension, Theosophy. Before I explore the similarities (and differences) between Theosophy and GWP, one should note that the Gentle Wind Project never directly referenced or cited Theosophy. GWP (particularly in early published material) did not offer any citations or references in general.

[24] Shambhala is a mythical utopian kingdom referenced in Buddhism and Hinduism.

Therefore, the lack of citations regarding Theosophy and the Theosophical Society was not unusual for Gentle Wind. One should not see the lack of explicitly sourced claims and ideological ideas as proof of complete originality void of influence from other movements or religions, but rather an attempt to claim authority and assert the superiority of Gentle Wind.

Although GWP never directly cited Theosophy, many aspects of GWP's ideology echoed Theosophical thought. For example, the Theosophical Society was very direct about its blending of science and religion; however, according to C.W. Leadbeater (a prominent member of the Theosophical Society) it did not seek converts (Leadbeater, 1912: 11). While the Theosophical Society was open about its location on the border of science and religion, GWP preferred to promote its secular scientific aspects while downplaying its religious aspects. While both Theosophy and GWP share this quasi-religious space, they shared more similarities within the religious aspects of their ideology than their secular aspects.

For instance, both groups held a belief in a spiritual Brotherhood. The Theosophical Society referred to this authority as the Great Brotherhood of Adepts (sometimes called The Great White Brotherhood). The Great Brotherhood of Adepts was a group of souls who have ascended beyond this world, but who remain "within touch of our earth as members of this Hierarchy which . . . [was] in charge of the administration of the affairs of our world and of the spiritual evolution of humanity" (Leadbeater, 1912: 20). This concept echoed Gentle Wind's portrayal of the Brotherhood as an organization that, although separate from this world, still allegedly influenced humanity.

Another shared concept between GWP and Theosophy is the existence of Monads. According to GWP, "the Monad is the source or original cause of the soul. The Monad might best be thought of as one's own personal God" (Carreiro 1988[a]: 119). GWP expands this

understanding and asserts that the Monad is the "spiritual aspect" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 134) of a person with the "goals and directives" (Carreiro 1988[a]: 134) that shape a person's evolution and allows him/her to "see the futility of living for the human world only" (Carreiro, 1988[a]:134). This description of Monads echoes the Theosophical Society's assertion that Monads are the "Spark[s] of the divine Fire" (Leadbeater, 1912: 52). These Monads appear in lower world levels in order to aid humans along the evolutionary path, and are comprised of three aspects—the spirit, the intuition, and the intelligence, in man—which are manifested as the ego[25] soul of a man in the human stage of evolution (Leadbeater 1912:52).

GWP, Theosophy, and many New Age groups, share the idea of an etheric structure or aura. Theosophy explained that "the shape of all the higher bodies as seen by the clairvoyant is ovoid, but the matter composing them is not equally distributed throughout the egg" (Leadbeater, 1912: 74). While Theosophy posited the existence of higher bodies in seven planes of existence, Gentle Wind only focused, and elaborated, on the etheric plane. GWP asserted that every person had an aura (referred to as the etheric web/structure/field), that was a netting structure eight to ten feet high, and four to six feet wide, and was thirty-two layers deep (Miller, 1997: WOMR). The etheric structure was also present around all cells within the body (GWP, n.d(c): 3).

The etheric structure was often used interchangeably with the idea of an aura. GWP suggested that some people can see part of this field, but no humans can see more than two layers (GWP, 1996: 19). The existence of this etheric structure is also an example of a moment in GWP ideology where, I argue, a leap of faith is required. That is, despite the claim that the etheric structure could be captured through Kirlian photography,[26] the existence of this structure

[25] The ego, according to Theosophy, is the man (or soul) "during the human stage of evolution" (Leadbeater, 2009: 53).

[26] Miller claimed that this structure existed because Kirlian photography could capture it (WERU, 1997). Kirlian photography, in fact, captures "natural phenomena such as pressure, electrical grounding, humidity and temperature.

was also something that members accepted as real even without proof. During a radio interview, one member stated that the etheric structure was also something that she could not see but that GWP members had told her existed (WERU, 1997[c]).

This etheric structure was "the energetic force that [was an individual], [GWP thought] it [was] the permanent [individual]" (WERU, 1997[b]) and was what moved through reincarnation. Past harms (either from this life or from past lives) damaged the etheric structure, and no physical medicine or psychotherapy was capable of healing the etheric web. Harms to the etheric structure come primarily from emotional upsets. In one interview, Mary Miller described the etheric web as magnetic, so the more it was damaged the more harm it attracted (WOMR, 1997).

The concept of damage to this etheric structure is of utmost importance for understanding GWP's primary mission and its assertions regarding the healing instruments. The purpose of GWP healing instruments was to "heal and repair mental and emotional damage at its source within each person's energetic structure" (Miller, 1999: 26). The aim of the healing technology was to repair "enough of each person's system . . . to make it possible for him (or her) to break out of this incarnation system and return to his (or her) spiritual home" (GWP, 1996: 20). GWP notes, however, that the leaders had "no proof of this" (GWP, 1996: 20) effect, suggesting another instance where a leap of faith was required. That is, while they could not prove that a person's soul would return to this ultimate spiritual home, they were asserting this belief as one of the ultimate benefits of their healing technology implying that, at least to some degree, they believed this assertion to be truthful. Alternatively, to apply a theosophist approach to belief, members of GWP "suspended their judgment" (Leadbeater, 1912: 10) and accepted GWP claims as true.

Changes in moisture (which may reflect changes in emotions), barometric pressure, and voltage, among other things, will produce different 'auras.'" (Skepdic, 2014).

The acceptance and reiteration of spiritual growth, etheric structures, and the Brotherhood (all explored earlier) suggest a framework that, for the most part, had to simply be believed as true. GWP itself likely would disagree with my claim of faith since it asserted that faith was something which religions used in order to "establish a belief in something that is not real" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 95). As with many of its antagonistic opinions, GWP exhibited some of the very aspects of what it criticized. GWP's position on faith is reminiscent of the one that Theosophy advocates. Leadbeater explained that Theosophy differed from the common Western understanding of religion in that:

> It neither demand[ed] belief from its followers, nor [did] it even speak of belief in the sense of which that word is usually employed. The student of occult science either *kn[ew]* a thing or suspends his judgement about it, there [was] no place . . . for blind faith. Naturally beginners cannot yet *know* for themselves, so they [were] asked to read the results of the various observations and to deal with them as probable hypotheses — provisionally accept and act upon them, until such time as they [could] prove for themselves." (1912: 10)

Although Theosophy's position was different than GWP's assertions regarding faith, I argue that Theosophy provided a valuable comparison. Despite demonstrating no proof of many of their claims, GWP relied on observation and personal anecdotes, and assured participants that these observations proved its claims.[27]

GWP also drew on other New Age groups including the Agni Yoga Society. The Agni Yoga Society was a group from New York that formed in the 1920s and combined Eastern and Western thought, as well as religious and scientific ideas (Agni Yoga Society, Inc.). GWP included an excerpt from Agni Yoga's the "Leaves of Morya's Garden" in one issue of its News Letters (sic) (n.d.[b]). GWP also included Agni Yogi books in the booklist of *Modern Religion*.

[27] I will explore and elaborate on these observations and claims in the next chapter where I examine the healing and science claims made by the Gentle Wind Project in more detail.

Additionally, in GWP's Glossary of Terms[28] it cited the Agni Yoga Society, along with The Triune Foundation and the *I-Ching*, as some of the sources for borrowed ideas and concepts (GWP, n.d. [d]).

Anti-Authoritarianism

A final aspect of Horie's classification to discuss in relation to GWP is the assertion that new spiritualities and New Age movements were characterized by "individualism or privatism, [and] anti-authoritarianism" (2013: 111). In many ways, GWP healing was individualistic and private. Furthermore, the continued assertion by GWP that it had no members or leaders suggests it wished to promote the image of a group of loosely connected individuals. The anti-authoritarianism aspect in the Gentle Wind Project was exemplified in the organization's position regarding formal education.

GWP literature claimed that the modern education system as the biggest source of damage in the current age (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 139). It argued this damage occurred because children were separated too soon from their parents, and forced into school systems that used public humiliation as a form of reinforcement, and made children memorize information for which they had no practical use (WCNJ, 1997). Since formal education, according to GWP, was the root of a majority of damage in one's etheric structure, it should not be surprising that GWP advocated homeschooling as a means of preventing harm. Not only had formal education "destroy[ed] children's ability to perceive reality as it exists and to think independently" (GWP, n.d. [m]: 60), but also it was the "enemy" (GWP, n.d. [m]: 3) of those who chose to educate their

[28] Although the Glossary has no date, I am confident in my hypothesis that the glossary was compiled later in the GWP timeline (in the late 1990s or early 2000s). I found the Glossary in a bundle of other documents submitted by GWP that the defendants in the civil suit perused and commented on. The defendants noted that, despite being part of the inner circle, much of this information (particularly the alleged studies) was new to them, or appeared to be hastily compiled and, in some cases, back-dated (Garvey, 2015). I have no way to verify this claim; however, this glossary did not appear in earlier publications (books or newsletters). I am not arguing that they drew on these sources late to form their ideology, rather that the Glossary itself is a later addition.

children at home. In fact, Gentle Wind offered "battle tips" (GWP, n.d. [m]: 3) for dealing with this enemy. In one issue, this battle tip simply asserted that homeschoolers should "Never Consort With The Enemy" (GWP, n.d[m]: 3) which was the "Educational Establishment" (GWP, n.d. [m]: 3).

The public school system was not the only aspect of education that GWP attacked. Gentle Wind was equally harsh towards post-secondary institutions and degrees. University-level education, according to GWP, was not rooted in "the real world" (Carreiro, 1987:71) and only "offer[ed] students . . . useless mental junk" (Carreiro, 1987:71). Furthermore, despite many members of GWP's inner circle (including Mary Miller) having university or college degrees, GWP insisted that higher education had "no spiritual value . . . and [was] actually of little human value" (Carreiro, 1987:71). GWP's position on advanced education not only exhibits the same anti-authoritarian position as its stance on primary and secondary education, but part of its stance demonstrated the individualism of Horie's definition of spiritualism and the New Age.

That is, GWP asserted that souls "seek to learn . . . seek individual destiny, self-expression and creativity" (Carreiro, 1987: 72) something that cannot be achieved in environments that promote memorization and perfection where the student is one among many in large lecture theatres (Carreiro, 1987: 72). In this sense, GWP asserted the importance of the individual souls, and their growth, as something separate and distinct from society, and modern Western ideals. Carreiro asserted that most Western political leaders "achieved their positions because they were hungry for power, not because they wanted to serve their people" (1988[b]: 110). According to GWP, most political leaders did not want to help souls; however, when Gentle Wind began to offer telepathic healing, the first group to receive healing was politicians, both domestically and internationally (Carreiro, 1998[a]: 134).

The final aspect of anti-authoritarianism to note is GWP's assessment of science and scientists. GWP's position regarding science and scientists was important for two reasons. The first reason is the prevalence of science as a source of authority and knowledge in the modern West. The second reason this stance is relevant lies in GWP's attempt to assert itself as a scientifically valid source of healing. According to GWP, science had "severely impeded the process of spiritual evolution" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 110). GWP accused scientists of creating the threat of nuclear war, purposefully using language to obscure meaning and make knowledge only for the elite and initiated, being out of touch with reality, lacking practical skills, and of becoming the focus of worship, without question, in the modern world (Carreiro, 1998[a]: 111-112). Therefore, Gentle Wind had asserted that most traditional sources of authority in the modern West were ineffective, if not outright harmful. In this vacuum that the absence of a legitimate source of authority created, GWP implied that the Brotherhood (and by extension itself and its leaders) were a better source of information and authority.

Conclusion

The inclusion of reincarnation and the spirit world and the Brotherhood demonstrated a world view that exhibited characteristics of religion. While GWP adamantly denied its religious status, the group exhibited characteristics of the New Age (as exemplified by Horie's definition). For instance, Gentle Wind beliefs drew upon a wide range of cultural and religious elements that illustrated the discerning adaptation and adoption of "religious cultural resources" (Horie, 2013: 111). Gentle Wind drew largely on Daoism and the Theosophical Society in the creation of the group's ideology. The group's position on education highlighted Horie's New Age criteria of anti-authoritarianism. Although the group asserted to have no religious qualities, its doctrine and literature contradicted this claim. As I explored in this chapter, Gentle Wind had detailed New

Age beliefs, a comprehensive understanding of a spiritual authority (the Brotherhood), and a belief in reincarnation. Demonstrating significant religious aspects, I assert, requires one to understand GWP as at least partially religious.

Now that I have examined the religious half of the quasi-religious label as it applied to GWP, I will shift focus to examining the secular and pseudo-science aspect of the group. The secular aspects of Gentle Wind were the qualities around which the group attempted to focus its label. Although the next chapter will focus on the secular and scientific claims by GWP, these claims still rely heavily on the religious foundations established in this chapter.

Chapter 3: The Secular and Gentle Wind

Although the focus of this chapter will be on the secular and pseudo-scientific claims of the Gentle Wind Project, the secular claims and concepts remained influenced by its religious qualities. Thus, some of the seemingly scientific, pseudoscientific, and secular claims and ideas influenced and interpenetrated through the group's religious aspects. The label that the group's leaders chose, however, does not necessarily encompass the complexity of the interchange between secular and sacred. Like other quasi-religions and NRMs, Gentle Wind attempted to control its label. In the case of Gentle Wind, its leaders sought to portray it as a secular healing organization in contrast to its clearly religious aspects. The reason a group might choose to label itself as either religious or non-religious reveals its underlying goals and motivations. While Gentle Wind's leaders attempted to deny its religious qualities for various reasons (including perceived competition as explored in the previous chapter), they embraced the secular label.

Magic, Science, and Healing

Perhaps the most important facet of GWP was its supposed healing technology. The healing instruments were the unique, and defining, characteristic of the organization. GWP's leaders used healing claims to argue that it was non-religious; however, the purpose of the healing instruments makes this claim questionable. This section will explore three main points. First, I will present GWP's healing technology and claims. Second, I will examine some of GWP's reasons for positioning its healing in the secular realm. Finally, I will articulate the relationship between the healing claims of GWP and Stark and Bainbridge's theory regarding magic.

Through the Gentle Wind Project, the Brotherhood supposedly "provided humanity with a healing technology that [would] alleviate the energetic sources of pain" (Carreiro, 1987: 122).

The healing instruments allegedly worked by diminishing "the noise and pain" (Carreiro, 1987: 7) that has been gathered over lifetimes of humanity living in "darkness" (Carreiro, 1987: 7). This effect allowed a person to hear "the voice of the soul . . . [and following the] directives of that soul and thus grow spiritually" (Carreiro, 1987: 7). Although this technology was available to all humans in principle, GWP stressed that not everyone would access the healing technology since some people could not "imagine living without their familiar toothaches" (Carreiro, 1987: 122).

The instruments reputedly healed "past life and present life damages in the human consciousness, and reconnect[ed] the human aspect of the person to his or her own spiritual aspect or Monad" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 133). The group, therefore, did not intend to have direct physical effects. Through GWP, the Brotherhood offered healing technology to repair damages to the etheric structure thus, enabling an individual's "personality to reconnect with the soul and set in motion the changes required for spiritual growth" (Carreiro, 1987: 7). The Brotherhood supposedly provided guides for these instruments in the forms of telepathic impressions of engineering blueprints (WCNJ, 1997).

The adaptation of scientific concepts and terms to fit within, or alongside, spiritual and religious aspects, is neither contradictory nor novel. Instead, the combination of secular and religious is arguably a product of the culture in which GWP formed. Before exploring GWP's use of scientific language and pseudoscience, one should note that GWP expressed similar opinions of orthodox science and medicine that it did with religion. According to Gentle Wind, science neglected to teach people about the history of Earth: which it claimed should emphasise that the physical world was a place for souls to grow, and that the energies of other planets affect the Earth (Carreiro, 1987: 66-67). Science, and scientists, further failed to teach people why they

were alive, why they were on Earth, and to explain the cyclical pattern of reincarnation (Carreiro, 1987: 7). These assertions demonstrate a lack of understanding of the role, purpose, and limits of science and the importance of empirical evidence in many scientific inquires.

GWP also attacked the scientific method as a faulty method since it "fail[ed] to account for anything that [could not] be established through . . . the five senses" (Carreiro, 1987: 67). GWP's claims that science should have accepted reincarnation, astrology, and etheric fields (Carreiro, 1987: 68),[29] was perhaps an attempt to recast the religious elements of GWP as something other than sacred. That is, GWP did not want to be labelled as religious, but contemporary science, as it existed, was inadequate to fully explain Gentle Wind's worldview.

In an extension GWP also attacked orthodox medicine, claiming it had become a profession of "large salaries . . . made from the pain of sick people" (Carreiro, 1987: 88). It saw medicine as "a system of darkness" (Carreiro, 1987: 89) that "[knew] nothing about the energetic structure and function of the human consciousness" (Carreiro, 1987: 89) nor that "most physical problems actually begin in the aura" (Carreiro, 1987: 89). In brief, GWP attacked medicine for not being concerned with the spiritual wellbeing of humanity, a realm traditionally left to religion.

Vernacular language in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is saturated with scientific concepts, terms, and ideas. GWP members used a variety of scientific language in order to both appeal to the cultural milieu (and general acceptance of science) while also lending credibility to their claims. Due to the position that science holds in modern Western society, the inclusion of scientific terminology and concepts presents an important signifier for the validity of the information presented. That is, "if a claim 'looks and smells' scientific . . . communications may be made more convincing without any alteration in content, *simply by virtue of being presented*

[29] These elements, I assert (and explored earlier), are religious in nature.

with elements associated with science" (Tal and Wansink, 2014: 2). Scientific language does not necessarily have to be used correctly, nor does it necessarily have to add anything of value to the argument, for some members of the public to perceive a statement, or product, as more credible. For instance, Weisberg et al.'s 2008 study found non-experts were more likely to judge a statement about neuroscience more positively because of the inclusion of signifying terminology. The inclusion of neuroscience information made statements "look more satisfying than they actually [were], or at least more satisfying than they otherwise would be judged" (475).

GWP used a variety of scientific and technical language including referring to the healing instruments as *technology* that members *engineered* through *blueprints* provided by the Brotherhood. While these terms are not inherently scientific, they do imply a level of competency and specialized knowledge. GWP specifically used the terms 'blind' and 'double-blind' studies to describe research conducted with their healing instruments (Miller, 2001; GWP, 2004[a]).[30] Although GWP never released reports or evidence of such studies, members and Instrument Keepers reiterated that these studies were blind and double blind (thus, implying their scientific validity).

At times, GWP claimed to have conducted studies "in a clinical setting" (GWP, 2001), which suggested not only a certain level of scientific professionalism, but also the use of instruments by medical professionals who were members of GWP. The validity of this apparent study is also questionable for the small sample size (only twenty people participated [GWP, 2001]). A GWP study described by Mary "Moe" Miller aimed to determine if the healing instruments had a placebo effect, but had few (if any) controlled factors (WERU). In fact, GWP did not account for variables or control factors.

[30] In her deposition, however, Miller asserted that GWP conducted no blind studies on the healing instruments itself, but rather third parties allegedly conducted these studies (Mary Miller dep, 2005: 104).

For instance, in one of the earliest studies it reportedly conducted (1990), GWP distributed healing instruments to twenty people. It asked them to share the healing instruments with others, and to follow up with GWP in three, six, or twelve months (WERU, 1997[b]). According to Moe, the only way to gather "valid research" (qtd in WERU, 1997[b]) was to "let the instruments go out" (WERU, 1997[b]) and wait for feedback (WERU, 1997[b]). After a year, results of the study allegedly demonstrated that most subjects noticed an improvement in their lives (or the improvement in the subjects' lives); fewer than five percent reported no change (WERU, 1997). GWP later claimed that only fifteen percent[31] of successful healings were the result of a spontaneous remission (WOMR, 1997).

Miller elaborated on the research that GWP conducted, stating they "literally gave [the instruments] to thousands of people and had those people report back to us on the results" (WERU, 1997[a]). Other research models included studying members' as they participated in a range of activities including: building, repairing, and sailing boats; building and flying model aeroplanes and helicopters; carpentry and woodworking; and small radio use, repair, and ham licenses. GWP used funds from its operations to acquire the necessary equipment (boats, carpentry machinery and tools, radios, etc), for its pseudoscientific research. The use of donations in this manner certainly raised ethical concerns regarding Gentle Wind's use of its not-for-profit status and its motivations for creating the healing instruments.

The model GWP used was pseudoscientific, falling short of what most academics hold to be valid scientific inquiry. At the most basic level, the tests did not account for a number of variables that might have influenced these positive results. For example, the significant amount of time that elapsed could alone be responsible for some of the perceived positive changes

[31] None of these percentages had sources in the GWP material (i.e., GWP cited no studies, thus making these figures questionable [at best]).

reported. By exploring beyond the erroneous research methods, one might find other reasons why those who used the instruments responded positively. Furthermore, the main source of evidence for the success of GWP's healing instruments were the numerous testimonials that supporters offered.

The testimonials of the healing effects of GWP products were varied and abundant. For instance, one instrument user claimed that the instrument had helped a sick relative's white blood cell count rise, gave him back his energy and appetite, and made tumours disappear (unknown n.d). At the start of one radio interview, the host indicated that he had started to use the healing instruments and found them beneficial (WOMR, 1997). On a separate radio program, the host attributed his new-found lack of anger and the absence of arguments in the week prior to the interview to the effects of the instrument (WCNJ, 1997).

Some testimonials indicated that Instrument Keepers used the instruments in an orthodox medical environments, including on patients before operations and in an emergency room (GWP, 2003[a]). Testimonials that claimed people used instruments in these environments in particular imply the introduction of the instruments by a medical practitioner and, therefore, it is particularly questionable and problematic as an accurate form of evidence. That is, a tool used by an apparent expert (an orthodox medical practitioner, nurse, or doctor), in an orthodox medical environment (such as a hospital), endows the product or procedure (in this case a GWP healing instrument), with a certain level of authenticity. Quite simply, in an orthodox medical environment, those who offer the care and are keepers of medical information, wield power over — and hold a degree of trust with — their patients.

This type of testimonial was not the only one that GWP used that had problematic elements. For instance, Instrument Keepers (IKs), those who had spent significant amounts of

money to own various instruments, were often the most vocal in reporting on their experiences and offering testimonials. Those who had invested in the project may not have been the most neutral responders, and clearly demonstrated a conflict of interest. In another instance of a conflict of interest, Paul Carreiro, Mary Miller's brother, wrote one set of testimonials regarding the benefit of the healing instruments for cancer patients, and it was published in *To Your Health!*. GWP had also lent money to Mr. Carreiro, further making his objectivity questionable.[32]

Mr. Carreiro presented himself as initially a skeptic of the effectiveness of these instruments, indicating that before falling ill he "would not have paid attention to anything like [these instruments]" (Carreiro, 1997: 14). He admitted, however, to being "desperate enough" (Carreiro, 1997: 14) to try the instruments. Personal desperation is a feature that often draws individuals to alternative healing movements, quite understandably. Someone facing chronic or fatal illnesses, for which orthodox medicine holds no answers, may turn toward whatever (or whomever) offers them hope.

In Mr. Carreiro's account he affirmed that the instruments had provided "mental and emotional help" (1997: 14) to both him and his family. He credited the instruments for allowing him to remain "calm in the face of terrible news" (2000: 9) and asserted the instruments' effect on his emotional state enabled him to "fight [his] cancer physically" (2000: 9). Furthermore, Paul Carreiro attributed the following developments to the healing instruments: an improved relationship with his wife and family, his father's ability to be more open about his emotions, and the family's ability to be sad without being "paralyzed by . . . sorrow" (Carreiro, 1997:14; Carreiro, 2000:9). Carreiro's account has a fundamental conflict of interest, given his sister's

[32] In her legal deposition, a high ranking member (Shelbourne Miller) indicated that Carreiro was paying back the loan with a combination of cheques and in lieu of salary (Shelbourne Miller dep, 2005: 69-70). The implication that, at some point, Carreiro was receiving salary from GWP further diminishes the credibility of his testimonial.

presence as a central member of GWP. In fact, one has to wonder if his connection to GWP was disclosed to the doctors who, Mr. Carreiro claimed, "call[ed] on [him] to bring the healing instruments to new patients and their family" (Carreiro, 2000: 9).[33]

In other instances, GWP claimed to have witnessed the results in its own 'studies.' For instance, Mary Miller claimed that the healing instruments helped both a heroin addict going through rehab, as well as enabled a woman to leave an abusive relationship (WCNJ, 1997: side 3). Another member of GWP claimed to have found a balance in the conflicting relationship with his or her child (WCNJ, 1997: side 3). In another testimonial an IK claimed she noticed a difference in her children (more cooperative and better behaved) after they held the instrument (WCNJ, 1997: side 3). GWP published these testimonials on its website, in newsletters, articles and publications, and repeated them in interviews.

Despite some aspects of the testimonials being questionable, the positive feedback indicates that some individuals found relief (emotionally, mentally, or physically) from using the healing instruments. Recall that most of the healing claims made by GWP were not of the physical nature. Instead, many of the instruments allegedly gave people more energy; made problem solving easier; repaired relationships (romantic or familial); enhanced a person's creative abilities; repaired a person's etheric structure; dealt better with conflicts and difficulties; and to dealt better with emotional upsets (WCNJ, 1997; WOMR, 1997). The instruments could also help people cope more easily with emotional upsets often associated with serious illness. For instance, Mary Miller's brother Paul Carreiro, who had cancer, reported feeling more

[33] Of course, whether his doctors truly called for Carreiro to share the healing technology is up for debate. I found no evidence, other than Paul Carreiro's word, that his doctors asked for Mr. Carreiro to share the healing instruments. Furthermore, without the doctors' own words, it is unclear the nature of this request. Did Carreiro offer the instruments unsolicited? Perhaps, seeing no harm, the doctors simply consented to allow Carreiro to share the instrument with new patients. This is, of course, my own speculation.

emotionally capable of dealing with the diagnosis (than he would have otherwise)—a feeling he attributed to holding the healing instruments (WOMR: 1997).

Miller claimed the instruments provided "mental, emotional, [and] spiritual healing" (WERU, 1997[b]) and she elaborated that "some people [had] got[ten] physical results [such as the] reduction of headaches, or backaches, that [were] stress related for instance" (WERU, 1997[b]). GWP emphasized, however, that it neither guaranteed nor claimed that these instruments helped people recover from physical illness (WERU: 1997[b]). It encouraged people to seek out orthodox medical treatment in accordance with "good common sense" (GWP, n.d.[g]) and suggested instruments only after medical intervention, particularly in the case of emergencies (GWP, n.d.[g]).

Since the healing focused primarily upon the non-physical, testing the effectiveness of instruments is arguably much harder. How does one prove if someone's etheric structure had been repaired? Or if an instrument had positively affected a person's emotional wellbeing? These claims are unfalsifiable. The former question can be answered only within a particular worldview. The latter question would *have* to rely on self-reporting by those who had personally held these instruments or had undergone another GWP healing procedure (such as the telepathic healings).[34] The problems in relying heavily on self-reporting were further compounded by, as I have previously discussed, a lack of proper scientific study on GWP's part. Furthermore, since the healings targeted problems that were often not tangible, it is more difficult to prove and thus easier for potential clients to believe.

[34] GWP asserted that these telepathic healings would result in changes both for the individual and for society. For instance, GWP claimed that telepathic healings resulted in the fall of the Berlin Wall, exposure of corrupt politicians, reconnecting religious leaders with spiritual authorities, and curbing aggressive tendencies of athletes (Bergin, 2003; Carreiro, 1988[a]: 134-135).

As seen with the radio host examples in particular, it is possible that those who sent GWP positive feedback, in fact, did find substantial relief from the healing instruments. Multiple reasons exist, however, for why users might have found the instruments beneficial beyond any spiritual healing properties they may (or may not) have possessed. Firstly, some people might attribute a positive change in their lives to the instrument despite no legitimate connection between the two, and thereby making the error of mistaking correlation for causation. This confusion, according to the late Dr. Barry Beyerstein (a psychologist and alternative health practice critic) "[was] the basis of most superstitious beliefs, including many in the area of alternative medicine" (1997).

Beyerstein noted that use of testimonials is common in unorthodox and alternative health practices. In fact, "many dubious health products remain on the market primarily because satisfied customers offer testimonials to their worth" (Beyerstein, 1997). Beyerstein cautions, rightfully, in using testimonials as proof of the legitimacy of medical treatments, since personal accounts do not account for the multitude of variables that might cloud one's ability to accurately attribute the cause of an outcome (1997). Personal testimonials do not adhere to proper scientific procedure, thus making them "weak currency" (Beyerstein 1997) for the endorsement of a healing product.

The confusion between correlation and causation is further exacerbated when one questions the time that experimental subjects spent between holding the instrument and reporting results. In one interview, Mary Miller suggested people could hold the instrument and then in six to seven months look back and see if anything was different in their lives (WERU, 1996). Half a year is a significant length of time, and if one expected a positive change to occur in their

emotional and spiritual wellbeing (or in their lives in general), then they might be more aware of these moments and more likely to attribute them to the instrument.

Another clear case where the effect of a GWP instrument may have been a correlation was the Children's Rod. This instrument was designed to aid with "the two most common problems in childhood [:] mental and emotional upsets and excessive willfulness" (GWP, n.d.[g]). GWP asserted that the instrument was particularly beneficial for public temper tantrums instructing users to have the child hold the rod in his or her left hand for two to three minutes, or longer if the tantrum was more severe (GWP, n.d.[g]). Ultimately, the Children's Rod, GWP argued, would calm the child down. Although I do not doubt that in some cases this instrument may have appeared effective, the effects probably had to do with changing the focus of the child's attention and waiting for the tantrum to subside, rather than having anything to do with the Rod's alleged properties.

GWP alleged that another instrument, the Physical Equilibrium Symbol, "restore[d] physical equilibrium in times of physical distress" (GWP, n.d[h]). Instructions encouraged people to hold the symbol for seven minutes against the part of their body that was causing problems, and then sleep, or at least rest, for half an hour (GWP, n.d[h]). Coupled with rest, it is difficult to determine whether the instrument or the rest eased someone's physical pain. Furthermore, users may have taken medications, used other techniques, or the pain was only temporary. The Physical Equilibrium Symbol in particular adequately fits what Beyerstein referred to as *derivative* benefits, one of the "Ten Errors and Biases" (1997) of alternative therapies.

Some alternative therapies may have positive effects on individuals, particularly on their mood or optimism about a prognosis. Beyerstein referred to this particular error as *derivative*

benefits. He specified that some alternative treatments may increase the effectiveness of orthodox treatments by helping to reduce stress, or encouraging a person to "eat and sleep better and to exercise and socialize more" (1997). It is difficult to determine exact reasons why the healing instruments of GWP had a positive effect, given the nature of the healing that GWP claimed occurred. I suspect, however, that the positive effect may have been partially due to the manner in which the healings took place. The instruments required people to hold them for a number of minutes and wait for a result that could happen immediately, but may occur a significant time later. Furthermore, Instrument Keepers, who administered the healing through sharing instruments in person, may have encouraged a positive response through their own touting of the products. As a result, users may have contributed to the attribution of a positive change in their lives (such as a better relationships with children or parents, for example) or mental states (being calmer and less confrontational, for instance) to the instruments rather than simply the passing of time and other factors — factors that GWP did not account for.

The actual healing instruments were composed of acrylics, metals, wood, herbs, stones, and salts (Carreiro, 1987: 6; WOMR, 1997). These instruments were "usually small enough to be held in one hand" (Carreiro, 1987: 6), and the healing was "'faster [if held] with the left hand,'" (Miller, 1997: qtd on WERU[b]) but it could be used in the right hand as well (WERU, 1997[b]). In addition, GWP claimed that instruments manufactured after September 1, 1995, included the ability for the Instrument Keeper (IK) to perform a telepathic healing on anyone in the world as long as the IK had that person's permission (GWP n.d[e]:n.p). Originally people were supposed to use the instruments during difficult times in life, or instances of emotional upset. GWP later asserted, however, that humanity was so damaged that people were forgetting to hold the instruments at appropriate times. Thus it developed instruments that could be held only once

(although if a person held them multiple times there was no risk of harm [WCNJ, 1997]). Overall, the healing occurred simply by holding the instruments, but many instruments included special instructions.

The instrument manuals[35] that accompanied the healing instruments included instructions on how to operate them. According to these manuals, the wait-time for effect of the healing varied. GWP (or testimonials) claimed that the effect was almost immediate and other claims included a change within twenty-four hours. In some cases the effect might take months before a subject noticed a change. Many instruments affected only the individual holding it (such as the Healing Puck V), but with some healing instruments users reputedly could heal groups or pets (Universal Healing Alignment Symbol). Larger healing symbols were available for attempts at healing an area such as a home or office (such as the Habitat Alignment Diagram, or the Unified Field Alignment symbol with a six hundred foot radius[36] [GWP, n.d. (p)]).

In addition to appealing to aspects of science (language and statistics for instance), GWP also attempted to discredit orthodox scientific practices. For instance, GWP asserted that ninety-eight percent of psychotherapy was ineffective (Carreiro, 1987: 44), due to psychotherapists themselves being unhealthy in their etheric structure (Carreiro, 1987: 45). GWP contended that psychotherapy only helped people hide their pain, preventing evolution, and maintaining humanity's state in darkness (Carreiro, 1987: 44). GWP and the Brotherhood did accept mental health professionals in a limited role. Therapists could be useful in relieving worry (something which "consume[d] much time and resources . . . [and] cause[d] people to live unbalanced and distressing lives" [Carreiro, 1987: 47]). In essence, this position suggests that mental health

[35] Instruments, and the symbols, had manuals that included instructions on use, cautions (such as some needing to be kept out of direct sunlight, or away from children), and some had money-back guarantees. See any of the manuals for more information (Rod of Light, Healing Puck, Universal Healing Alignment Symbol, System X Healing Instrument, System 9, etc).

[36] The manual stated this figure as both the radius and the diameter.

professionals are not the solution to an individual's (or humanity's) problems, but could aide in the creation of the proper environment for spiritual evolution.

Some of GWP's assertions about its healing instruments suggest that the instruments are *magical* objects rather than scientific. Liselotte Frisk differentiated magic, science, and religion, within Stark and Bainbridge's (1996) classifications. In this system, *religion*, deals with general compensators and can "be supported only be supernatural explanations" (Frisk, 2013: 51). The supernatural aspects exist "beyond or outside nature which can suspend, alter, or ignore physical forces" (Frisk, 2013: 51). In contrast, *magic* "deals with specific compensators, [and] it may become subject to empirical verification. Therefore only magic, not religion, is vulnerable to scientific testing" (Frisk, 2013: 52).

Furthermore, while religions "create stable organizations" (Frisk, 2013: 52), magic "serve[s] individual clients" (Frisk, 2013: 52) and "consists of beliefs that are assumed true in the presence of disconfirming evidence." (Frisk, 2013:52). In the previous chapter I demonstrated not only that GWP should be considered New Age, but also that this categorization (New Age) is justified by the religious half of the 'quasi-religious' label. The magical qualities of GWP healing instruments are not as contradictory to the religious label, but instead are an explanation for the alleged effects of the various GWP healing instruments within the broader New Age framework. In order to show that religion and magic are not inherently contradictory, I will examine more deeply their definitions according to Stark and Bainbridge.

Stark and Bainbridge distinguish magic from religion in several ways. Magic, unlike religion, focuses on the "manipulation of the universe for specific ends" (1987: 41). Since magic aims to produce "specific and immediate rewards, magic becomes subject to empirical evaluation" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987: 41), it may contribute to scientific development. Yet,

magic "flourishes when humans lack effective and economical means for . . . testing" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987: 41) the claims being made. For Stark and Bainbridge, although magic is "based on supernatural assumptions" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987: 41) it does not deal with "supernaturally-based compensators" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987: 41).[37]

Since magic focuses on creating tangible results in the real physical world and deals with "small, specific assumptions" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987: 41), magic is uniquely positioned to blend "concepts of the supernatural" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987: 41) with "ordinary views of the natural world" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987: 41). The term magic is applicable more broadly to "present-day magical pseudoscience" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987: 41). Contemporary magical therapies "supply compensators for relatively limited goals such as peace of mind or increased personal influence" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987: 41). Furthermore, Stark and Bainbridge stressed many "modern forms of magic often postulate the existence of forces and entities . . . which sound scientific rather than supernatural" (1987: 41) and they offered auras as one of several examples of this phenomenon.

Applying Stark and Bainbridge's theory of magic to The Gentle Wind Project's healing technology, the technology fulfilled many of the qualities of this proposed understanding of magic. GWP claimed its healing technology produced *tangible results* by repairing the *aura* and creating *noticeable changes* in one's mental and emotional state and responses. Therefore, based on Stark and Bainbridge's criteria, the healing instruments of GWP offered magic-based healing. Furthermore, the healing instruments fulfill the scientific testing aspect of the magic criteria. This scientific testing can be explored in two ways: first through the assertion by GWP that it had conducted research on the instruments, and second through the independent study done on

[37] Compensators, in Stark and Bainbridge's religious theory refer to future unverifiable rewards that religions promise to deliver.

some of the instruments. Additionally, the claim of scientific inquiry implies that any studies allegedly conducted should be replicable.

Although Gentle Wind did not conduct any scientific studies on these instruments, a former member had the contents of one of the healing instruments analyzed. This former member of GWP sent a Healing Puck to MVA Scientific Consultants, an independent laboratory, where the contents of the central plug were subject to investigation by "light microscopy, infrared spectroscopy and scanning electron microscopy" (Miller, 2005: 2). The study concluded that the contents of the Puck were inconsistent with sand, but were consistent with the chemical makeup of twelve compounds and 'cell salts' that GWP claimed to be in the healing instrument (Miller, 2005: 2-3). While the study concluded chemical composition of the central plug of the Healing Puck was consistent with GWP claims, from the position of physical science the fact that this content was locked inside layers of acrylic would have made it impossible for the contents to have any effect directly on an individual (i.e., the substances were not applied topically, nor taken orally).

Evolution

Evolution, particularly spiritual evolution, is a concept that is common to New Age. Spiritual evolution postulates the advancement of the soul through several stages towards an ultimate goal. Spiritual evolution was one of Gentle Wind's central myths and it outlined specific stages of progression along the spiritual evolutionary path.[38] According to GWP, the soul progresses through stages of spiritual evolution, which it referred to as 'initiations,' each step forward on the evolutionary path requiring more of the "human personality . . . ideas, emotions, and desires, [to] be surrendered over to the soul" (Carreiro, 1988[a]:15). For GWP, evolution

[38] GWP held that the ideas of evolution and initiation were "borrowed from a number of other writings prior to our work" (Mary Miller dep, 2005: 96) and it allegedly dropped the concept around 1995 (Mary Miller dep, 2005: 97).

was also a "process of purification that eventually leads to perfection" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 117). While everyone was on the path of spiritual evolution, according to GWP, ninety-eight percent of the planet was neither aware of the stages of spiritual evolution nor were they initiated at all[39] (Carreiro, 1987: 14). The Gentle Wind Project offered assurances, however, that regardless of how long it took, all souls would progress through the seven initiations (Carreiro, 1987: 14).[40] Specifically, according to GWP, the Brotherhood sought to "bring as many souls as possible through the first initiation by the year 2000" (Carreiro, 1987: 14).

Each initiation stage of evolution has certain characteristics and goals. For instance, the first through fourth stages of initiation focus on mastering control of the human ego (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 119). First degree initiates had let go "of the aggressive urges, of violence and of the emotional pain associated with uncontrolled impulses and desires" (Carreiro, 1987: 14). They should seek to recognize the "hurtful [and] aggressive aspects of . . . human nature" (Carreiro, 1987: 14). The Brotherhood offered "the technology and information" (Carreiro, 1987: 15) to help people relinquish personality aspects to their souls. Souls also could complete the first step by making "enough electrical connections to gain the first level of control over the human ego" (Carreiro, 1987: 15), or an accidental product of "thousands of years" (Carreiro, 1987: 15) of learning.

According to GWP, during the second initiation a soul acquired information about the physical world, obtained through activities including "woodworking, welding, auto mechanics, plumbing [, and] . . . electrical wiring" (Carreiro, 1987: 15), and learning subjects such as "relationships, computers or photography" (Carreiro, 1987: 15) in order to "make the

[39] That is, some people had not entered the first of the seven initiation ranks.
[40] This assertion echoes Theosophy's reassurance that everyone would move through evolution stages eventually. Evolution was "a school in which no pupil fails; every one must go on to the end. He has no choice as to that; but the length of time which he will take . . . [was] left entirely to his own discretion" (Leadbeater, 1912: 119).

connections required to sustain a higher vibration" (Carreiro, 1987: 15). The third initiation involved "opening the heart" (Carreiro, 1987: 16) and learning to see the "heartache and human suffering that exists" (Carreiro, 1987: 16) in the world. GWP characterized those who reached the third initiation as "fiercely independent" (Carreiro, 1987: 16). Those who grew attached to this independence allegedly made it difficult for their soul to progress further along the evolutionary path (Carreiro, 1987: 16).

Those souls who made it to the fourth level of initiation, according to the Gentle Wind Project, had ascended to a point of mastery over the physical world (Carreiro, 1987: 16). GWP asserted that not many people had reached this level. Those who had only did so after "nearly impossible sacrifices and lifetimes of difficulty" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 16) and often "work[ed] at some trade or craft . . . to further perfect their mastery" (Carreiro, 1987: 17). The fifth initiation is the start of the "real purification process" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 119) and the first point when spiritual salvation is possible (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 119). When one reaches the fifth level of initiation "the soul body drops away and the Monad, or spirit, remains" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 119). Although the fifth degree initiates remains in the physical world they no longer have "illusions about what the human world can bring or offer . . . them" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 120). The higher levels of initiation were seeking "higher states of perfection" (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 120) and very few who reach this level remain in the physical world (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 120). Those who reached levels five through seven had evolutionary requirements beyond the comprehension of most (Carreiro, 1987: 17).

Progression through the seven initiations demands "specific spiritual requirements" (Carreiro, 1987: 14), which can only be accomplished by the human soul, not the mind (Carreiro, 1987: 14). Furthermore, the group encouraged members to view critics and outsiders as "'less

evolved' people" (Garvey and Bergin, 2003), establishing the members of GWP as allegedly spiritually higher than those outside of the movement. Thus, it was easy to dismiss those who were critical of the movement simply by proclaiming they were not spiritually evolved enough to understand GWP's goals or products.

The process of evolution, according to GWP, is the reason for the existence of humanity (Carreiro, 1987: 1). Although Gentle Wind insisted its beliefs and practices were not religious, it proclaimed that science (in contrast to GWP) wrongly focused on evolution in the physical world. Moreover, GWP asserted that scientists did not actually have a lot of knowledge, particularly related to the human soul (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 13). Rather, GWP asserted that the physical world was a means of establishing a location for evolution to occur (Carreiro, 1988[a]: 14). GWP did not necessarily embrace science; yet, in using terminology associated with science (such as evolution) it made an appeal to the established *framework* of science. The idea of spiritual evolution is not unique to GWP, but is a common theme in many New Age movements.

Irving Hexham (1994) explored the way in which the science of evolution transformed into the concept of spiritual evolution. The clearest distinction between scientific and spiritual evolution is that one asks *how* evolution happened (scientific) while the other asks the *why* evolution occurs (Hexham, 1994: 12). The transformation of the theory of evolution into a myth involved contributions from religious movements, science fiction of the 1960s, the education system, and the decline of the old central mythology of the West, specifically Christianity (Hexham, 1994). While these factors may not have contributed specifically to GWP's idea of evolution, they certainly contributed to the environment that influenced GWP (like many other NRMs) to draw on and develop the idea as part of the group's ideology.

Some NRMs have adapted the scientific theory of evolution, creating what Hexham called the mythology of evolution (Hexham, 1994; 310). Evolution as a mythology is effective since it appeals to the modern belief, and faith, in science (Hexham, 1994; 310). The widespread acceptance of scientific language in the vernacular makes it the perfect option for NRMs to appeal to (such terms carry with them established meanings and understandings from the main meaning-maker [science] in the modern West). Although GWP used evolution in a similar manner to many other New Ages groups, it maintained that it was not, in fact, a New Age group. In a radio interview, Miller claimed that GWP was nothing like any New Age movement because they had "spent the last sixteen years and over two million dollars researching these healing instruments" (WOMR, 1997) implying that GWP, unlike (other) New Age movements, was more scientific in nature (an implication made by the term 'researching').

Education

One aspect of importance for the Gentle Wind Project was its perception and understanding of education. The anti-education aspect of GWP is the clearest example of how GWP falls under the anti-authoritarian aspect of Horie's definition of new spirituality and New Age. GWP's critique of education was found in much of their earlier publications, particularly in newsletters (*Rebound*), sections and chapters in books, and was the subject of an entire book (*Modern Education: One Size Fits All,* 1988). According to GWP, "modern education cause[d] serious depression" (Carreiro, 1988[b]: 111) and "destroy[ed] human instincts" (Carreiro, 1988[b]: 111).

The homeschooling initiative also demonstrated the quasi-religious status of GWP, since Gentle Wind advocated homeschooling on the basis of its theological idea of harms to the etheric structure, and the impact of these harms on one's spiritual evolution. GWP published a

newsletter regarding homeschooling as well as a book (supposedly channelled from the Brotherhood) on the harms and failures of the modern education system. GWP made it clear that "home-based education is not the answer to the problem" (GWP, n.d.[l]: 2), implying GWP had more radical understandings of education than simply homeschooling. Although GWP offered publications for homeschooling, I argue that the group advocated a system of learning more aligned with unschooling rather than homeschooling. Unschooling advocates allowing children to direct their own education and encourages exploration of their own interests.

This pull away from homeschooling towards unschooling is evident in GWP publications regarding education. The theme of unschooling carries on throughout the book, *Modern Education: One Size Fits All*. The first two chapters in particular outline this position firmly in two major ways. In chapter one, Carreiro presented a series of photographs depicting various activities (choosing a life partner, raising children, farming, plumbing, airplane maintenance and flight, etc) and posed the question to the reader of how classroom-based learning prepared a child for any of these seemingly practical life experiences (1988[b]: 4-23). In the second chapter, Carreiro presented two hypothetical case studies of children raised in two different learning environments: one set in the traditional classroom setting, and the other free to learn what they were interested in, from a variety of subjects that the author perceived as practical. The conclusion of the chapter, or rather the conclusion Carreiro (and seemingly the Brotherhood from whom the author supposedly channelled this information) wants the reader to make is that the latter type of education is better for children, the soul, and society.

I must note that the second hypothetical example is less concrete than the first. That is, the author presented the second example as something that took place "once upon a time on a planet far away" (Carreiro, 1988[b]: 27) a statement reminiscent of the opening of *Star Wars*.

Furthermore, the example digresses further into science fiction by the end of the chapter, when the fictional free-learning Ted and Sally must travel the galaxy for three years in order to help others before they could attend college (Carreiro, 1988[b]: 37).

The choice to digress into science fiction is perplexing to me, particularly since (at the time) other unschooling voices existed already, including John Holt (who some recognize as the father of the unschooling movement [Greer, 2013]). John Holt coined the term 'unschooling' to describe education that is not only tailored towards a child's own interests, but also done outside of the traditional classroom environment (Farenga, 2014). While unschooling is part of the spectrum of homeschooling, often it is more decisive and contentious than general homeschooling. The Gentle Wind Project echoed many of the ideas of unschooling in its earlier literature.

For instance, GWP asserted that children required at least "nine years of experiencing the physical world" (GWP, 1989[b]: 14) before they began to learn traditional school subjects. The connection to the physical world, GWP affirmed, was also reflected in the priorities of types of learning and knowledge that was valuable to humanity. Until children "discover[ed] for themselves how reading and writing [was] relevant" (GWP, 1989[b]: 14) to their lives, GWP advocated not forcing the child to learn mathematics, reading or writing, or other subjects considered fundamental to the education system. Instead, GWP asserted that children should be learning about choosing the right spouse, fixing cars, raising a family, farming, electrical and plumbing installation and repair, aviation and airplane repair, and how to cope with death, among other skills (Carreiro, 1988[b]: 4-21).

GWP contended that "many of the mental and emotional problems" (GWP, n.d[l]: 1) people experience was a "direct result of the mistreatment and abuse . . . inherent in the . . .

educational system" (GWP, n.d[l]: 1). GWP claimed to have conducted research[41] and concluded that any education outside of the formal educational system was better, although still not ideal. GWP offered resources to parents who opted to educate their children outside of the classroom (GWP, n.d.[l]: 2). Although for GWP the education system was responsible for much of the apparent damage to souls, and initially offered some resources for alternative education (such as the newsletters), the group's primary focus remained the healing instruments. The complaints regarding education could have been, I assert, an attempt at preventative healings. That is, if the modern education system was responsible for the damages to the soul and part of the reason for hindering spiritual growth, then preventing further damage would be just as important as repairing the damage already done.

Gentle Wind remained unwilling to discuss "material presented in . . . [the educational] newsletters" (GWP, 1989[a]: 8). The group considered itself "researchers" (GWP, 1989[a]: 8) uninterested in "epistemology . . . research models" (GWP, 1989[a]: 8), exploring methodologies, or the reasoning behind how other people perceive and interpret reality (GWP, 1989[a]: 8). In a clear reflection of GWP's own perception of the scientific method, and echoing similar arguments that GWP made regarding the proof of the effectiveness of the healing instruments, the group professed that its position on education should be accepted without question or discussion, since the "conclusions can be easily validated in everyday reality" (GWP, 1989[a]: 8). With the observations on the harmfulness of education, GWP did suggest in a later newsletter that "natural reality and empirical research" (GWP, 1989[b]: 14) both contributed to its conclusions regarding formal education, but failed to cite any studies conducted either by GWP, or independently, to support this claim.

[41] As with other times GWP used this word, it neither clarified what exactly this research entailed, nor was any evidence provided outside of simple word choice.

The Business Side

Another aspect of GWP that was closer to the secular end of the spectrum was its business side. The Gentle Wind Project had certain entrepreneurial aspects. These aspects provided GWP with an income (a source of criticism by some), and helped to situate the group in the quasi-religious category. The price of the healing instruments steadily increased over the course of GWP's history. According to GWP, the group began to ask for donations in exchange for instruments starting on October 6, 1995 in order to be able to pay bills (GWP, 1999; GWP, 1995). Prior to the introduction of a mandatory donation, GWP had encouraged donations but had not enforced this request (GWP, 1995). GWP also claimed that if people were financially invested in the instrument and project, then they were more likely to share it because of the tangible investment (WOMR, 1997). Furthermore the charging of fees served as a deterrent for those who GWP saw as undesirable, specifically it "[kept] New Age dabblers away from this serious technology" (GWP n.d.[i]).

When GWP began requesting money in exchange for the healing instruments, a letter to its Instrument Keepers (IKs) referred to this change of policy as a "kind of . . . enforced donation" (GWP, 1995). The letter further assured the IKs that "the actual value of the Healing Instruments cannot be determined in human terms" (GWP, 1995), in a way suggesting that the set donation price of $100 per instrument was a bargain in comparison to what the buyer was getting. GWP offered the healing instruments for a monetary donation, but if one could not afford the donation amount then one could contact GWP to receive healing instruments at no charge (WCNJ, 1997). In many ways, GWP modeled a typical retail business when it came to the exchange of donation for instruments. GWP offered a ninety day money-back guarantee, and the instruments even occasionally went on sale (GWP, 1995; GWP 2003[a]). GWP often

required IKs to sign an agreement to share the instrument with a quota (Garvey and Bergin, 2003) and a later iteration of the agreement required signatories to acknowledge they were giving a non-refundable donation (GWP, 2002).

In order to encourage people to buy new instruments, GWP provided a variety of instruments and symbols, slightly tweaking its promise regarding the reputed effects of each new instrument. Furthermore, GWP was innovative with ways to keep clients returning and acquiring more instruments by implying, occasionally, that old instruments would be "shut . . . down" (GWP, 1995). In a letter to IKs in 1995, GWP asserted that it would phase out old instruments' energetic connections after a year as new and improved instruments were produced (GWP, 1995). GWP assured IKs that they could call and find out if their instruments remained active (GWP, 1995). The method of deactivation was unclear. Intentional or not, however, this suggestion had significant implications and practical benefits, by implying that an instrument could, and would, be turned off and made ineffective, but providing a new substitute (for a price) GWP encouraged individuals to continually buy more instruments.

GWP employed this tactic more than once over the course of its history. In 1992, for instance, GWP sent out a notice to IKs that it had encountered a problem in the manufacturing process and needed to "shut down the energetic bands for a day" (GWP, 1992) in order to rectify the problem and finish replacing outdated instruments (GWP, 1992). For twelve hours on March 10, 1992 all GWP healing instruments allegedly would not work (GWP, 1992). GWP leaders requested that those who did not receive the notice in time, or forgot about the shutdown, send the name of those who had access to the healing instruments during that period of time and GWP would "do a telepathic healing on them" (GWP, 1992).

This model is effective for business since it perpetuates a continued need to buy more instruments. While this business model is effective for profit, it is also potentially problematic. For instance, if someone did not call to see if the instrument was still active, would the individual then still claim to notice benefits? Second, if one was to presume the effectiveness of the instruments, then the possibility that GWP could at any moment turn them off could make the instruments unreliable (that is, GWP apparently had the ability to turn them off remotely). Furthermore, GWP could have used this remote shut-down mechanism an excuse to explain why some people may not have felt the effects of the instruments (that is, the instrument was old and no longer active). Although GWP did not utilize this latter explanation, or at least its use was not recorded, the potential for this argument existed.

Interestingly, GWP requested that old instruments and manuals be returned to the organization (GWP, 1992). This request may be a simple matter of wanting to help IKs dispose of old instruments safely. Because these instruments allegedly affected a person's energy field (that is, if one prescribes to Gentle Wind's worldview), improper disposal could be detrimental to one's energetic field. Certain instruments were not meant for children, and GWP requested people did not tamper with, or try to repair, the instruments themselves. In fact, some instruments came with a contract. An example of such a contract accompanied the Bio-meridian Stabilizer instrument. The purchase contract included agreeing to only use the instrument as directed;[42] sharing the instrument, information about the instrument, and GWP contact information, with twenty-five (or more) people; keeping the instrument in a safe place to prevent others from inadvertently using it incorrectly; and not to tamper with, repairing, or reproducing the healing instruments (GWP, n.d[o]:1).

[42] The instructions for use accompanying this instrument included reduction in physical exercise, sexual activity, and avoiding "reading or intense mental activity" (GWP, n.d.[n]) for two to four days after using the instrument (GWP, n.d. [n]).

The true motivation behind these requests may remain occluded, and although these requests may have been altruistic (e.g., preventing one from inadvertently damaging one's aura by tampering with the alleged energy manipulation aspects of the instruments), it would be an oversight not to point out other motivations for these warnings. These others motivations might have included protecting proprietary information (sacred or not), to prevent people from perhaps discovering the true contents of the instruments, and perhaps even to prevent competition from duplicating the healing instruments.

The prices for the instruments at times reached over ten thousand dollars. A pack of System 10, for instance, cost $10,800 (US dollars only) (GWP, n.d[k]). In another GWP instrument catalogue the higher priced instruments were as much as $2450, $4000, and $6050 (GWP, n.d.[j]).[43] The healing puck, in contrast, was a lower priced instrument at only $275 (GWP n.d[k]). These donation prices were quite high. The price, coupled with the continued production of new instruments and the claim that old instruments could stop working, would compound for supporters (the more committed a person was to the healing, the more expensive supporting Gentle Wind would be).

Occasionally Instrument Keepers, those who bought and possessed multiple instruments meant to be shared with others, could get special discounts on some of the products. For instance, the Gentle Wind Project introduced the Trauma Card and Pain Instrument, and offered IKs the instrument for $450 instead of the regular price of $1250 (Smart Business Choices, 2004). The choice in these numbers seem to be completely arbitrary, particularly when considering that, in the example given, the IK price was $800 off, or a sixty-four percent discount. In order to offer such a discount, the cost of production would have had to be under the

[43] Although no date appears on this catalogue, the prices indicated that it had to be after the 1995 imposition of a standard fee for the instruments. Additionally, prices appeared to increase as time went on. Since the prices were in the thousands of dollars, I suspect that this catalogue dates from the late 1990s or early 2000s.

discount price (in order to ensure a profit), thus suggesting that the full price of $1250 offered a significant profit margin.

GWP not only charged a donation fee for the instruments but also for the seminars. The seminar prices remained relatively low, (for example, ten dollars in 1999 [WERU, 1999]). IKs also could host seminars, and GWP prepared packages of relevant information and questions for seminar hosts. At the seminars, Mary Miller, or another member of GWP, would lecture on topics related to GWP including "the intricacies of the soul, evolution, spirituality, and the 'healing instrument'" (Bergin, 2003). During seminars GWP members would "stand up to mysteriously 'direct energy' around the room with their arms and hands" (Bergin, 2003). At certain points in the seminar, members might assert they had "'receive[d] information'" (Bergin, 2003) presumably from the spirit world, or from Mary Miller, that "certain people in the audience needed a 'special adjustment' or 'healing'" (Bergin, 2003). At this point members would surround the singled-out person and use their hands or the healing instrument to conduct the healing. A former member indicated that the experience was "alluring . . . for the recipient . . . and a spectacle for the other seminar attendees" (Bergin, 2003).

Gentle Wind was not unique in the New Age business market. Scholars have connected the New Age market with capitalism and consumer culture (Aldred, 2002; Mikaelsson, 2013). Lisa Aldred "characterize[d] the New Age as a primarily . . . consumerist movement, that despite 'exotic' practices and search for alternative spiritualities, reinforces consumer capitalist values" (2002: 61). Although this assertion is partially incomplete (that is, it does not fully address all the nuances in ideology and practice in New Age), it certainly describes some aspects of the New Age. The connection between New Age and capitalist ideals is particularly important for exploring the business aspects of the Gentle Wind Project. The capitalist aspect of GWP is

particularly evident in the 'enforced donations' in exchange for instruments, and the significant physical assets that the organization (and high ranking members) owned. The group purchased some of their assets, but others were donations.

Gentle Wind owned several properties in the United States in Durham, New Hampshire; Kittery, Maine (and other places in Maine); Melbourne Beach, Florida;[44] and in Massachusetts. GWP had successfully amassed several sources of income and assets. The Gentle Wind Project also owned a 33-foot Hans Christian sailboat, along with other sailboats, motorboats, and a canoe. In addition, two co-directors (John Miller, Mary Miller, and another member of GWP) co-owned a BMW for less than a year, and Mary Miller, in 2002, owned a Chevrolet Corvette (Mary Miller dep, 2005: 92 -94). The purpose of the car was to explore "self-limiting ideas" (Mary Miller dep, 2005: 95) though research focusing on observing members driving the car. Miller claimed that the group "wanted to give people [the] experience of driving that car" (Mary Miller dep, 2005: 95) since most people could not visualize themselves owning, or ever driving, the sports car. GWP allegedly sought to learn more about the 'human condition' through observing people using these assets and learning skills such as radio or carpentry.

Despite the non-profit status, and central members claiming to not personally make significant financial gains, GWP amassed several material goods. Former members reported that the main Gentle Wind house had "the very latest in computer technology . . . top-of-the-line industrial and finish-carpentry machinery, the highest quality sound and photography equipment[45] . . . [a] swimming pool, sauna, hot tub, tanning beds," (Bergin, 2003) and a large TV (Bergin, 2003). GWP denied having theses luxuries, but financial records do indicate that GWP (and many of the core members) had amassed several expensive purchases, including musical

[44] GWP added a swimming pool to this property, using GWP funds, after the group acquired the property — allegedly to increase its value (Shelbourne Miller dep, 2005: 54).
[45] The photography equipment included maintaining a dark room (Shelbourne Miller dep, 2005: 62).

instruments, properties, boats, cars, shop equipment, computers,[46] golf equipment and greens fees, radio controlled airplanes, and stock shares.

The Gentle Wind Project requested money from inner circle followers in addition to the donations. Invested members of Gentle Wind contributed significant funds and resources to the organization. Former member, Judy Garvey, lent the leaders of GWP hundreds of thousands of dollars. The largest loans included $130,000 to help GWP with a property down payment, and an additional $75, 000. These loans did not include any written repayment terms, nor were the donations discussed with her husband (Bergin, 2003). The funds for these loans were obtained from the sale of the couple's house and their publishing business (Bergin, 2003). According to Garvey and Bergin, the financial commitment of maintaining connection to the GWP, buying instruments, and supporting the leaders, caused "depression . . ., stress and anxiety" (2003) in addition to the financial repercussions. According to former followers of John and Mary Miller, the mental and emotional repercussions were caused by energetic difficulty, or experimentation by the spirit world (Garvey and Bergin, 2003).

When Garvey and Bergin refused a request for money from GWP, the group responded by spiritually reading the couple. In this Soul Reading, GWP attacked the couple's attempts to rebuild their relationship by asserting it was "foolish and impossible" (Bergin, 2003), since the most energetically sound relationship involved two women and one man insuring that energy flowed properly (Bergin, 2003). Furthermore, the couple was told that their "'destructive' relationship and parenting practices'" (Bergin, 2003) would result in their children being reborn as animals (Bergin, 2003). Although these claims have nothing to do with the financial request GWP made, it clearly demonstrates a significant degree of attempted control and extortion. Thus,

[46] GWP furnished the property in Florida with $455,000 worth of computers and equipment (Shelbourne Miller dep, 2005: 64).

even in business, Gentle Wind employed spiritual consequences in order to ensure the flow of capital into the organization.

Conclusion

Through the exploration of secular, pseudo-scientific, and business aspects, The Gentle Wind Project was able to balance between secular and religion. Through offering many secular services, Gentle Wind appealed to an audience who may have not been swayed by its spiritual claims. It also added an apparent validity to the group using pseudo-scientific claims, appealing to scientific language, and offering alternatives to orthodox medicine and formal education. Additionally, GWP's business side, although legally not for profit, was successful in marketing products and creating capital.

In exploring both the religious aspects of GWP, as well as the secular aspects, one can see how GWP fit a quasi-religious status. Furthermore, GWP's assertion of not-religious status further aided the organization's attempt to appear, and appeal, to secular ideals. The attempt to control its label is reminiscent of the two quasi-religions explored in chapter one (Scientology and Transcendental Meditation). This control over how others perceived Gentle Wind also led the group to pursue litigation against detractors and critics. In the next, and final, chapter I will examine one of the lawsuits that ultimately contributed to the downfall of The Gentle Wind Project.

Chapter 4: Gentle Wind and the Legal System

The initial exploration of quasi-religions at the start of this thesis explored both Scientology and Transcendental Meditation, and noted these organizations' entanglements with the legal system. The central issue of many of these court cases was the religious or secular nature of the respective groups (and, by extension, the ability to label its own identity). I have endeavoured to demonstrate that the Gentle Wind Project also balanced on the border between religious and secular in the category of quasi-religion. GWP also had experience with court proceedings, but the nature of the legal battle involving the group differed greatly from the other two quasi-religions explored. Central to GWP's case was the ability for the group to control and manage negative criticism. GWP argued that negative content online, made by both critics and ex-members, greatly inhibited its income and was both defamatory and an overt effort to hinder its healing efforts. Although the differences in legal proceeding are important, the central conflict, I argue, was impacted by the GWP's quasi-religious standing.

Two important legal cases surrounded the decline of GWP in Maine. The first, and the focus of this chapter, involved Gentle Wind and high-ranking members versus former members and a small number of critics.[47] This case divides into two parts. The first part resolved in January 2006 when the court dismissed many of the claims and defendants. The second part of this case involved GWP refiling the libel claim against Judy Garvey and Jim Bergin. Although scheduled to make it to court in December 2006, the plaintiffs ultimately agreed to a settlement. I have connected these two legal actions together since they are, arguably, a continuation of each other. The second legal case, which is not the focus of this chapter, was between the State of Maine and GWP. The latter case ultimately resulted in Gentle Wind's forced closure in Maine.

[47] I refer to this case as "the case" since it is the primary focus of this chapter. If I am referring to the action that Maine took against GWP I will explicitly indicate the distinction.

The legal cases surrounding GWP were particularly significant to the group as a whole since they occurred late in the group's maturity, and were contributing factors to the ultimate dissolution of the Gentle Wind Project. In this final chapter, I aim to explore some aspects of the GWP litigation against a group of defendants, focusing specifically on the two sides of the case itself. I aim to present the participants and arguments asserted by both sides in an attempt to parse through the complicated legal proceedings. I will begin by providing a general overview of the case itself. After examining this summary, I will explore some of the main aspects of the case, including the importance and centrality of the internet and websites to this case. In particular, I will focus on two prominent ex-members of GWP. I will conclude by examining the response of Gentle Wind.

The Gentle Wind Project, et al. v. Jim Bergin, Judy Garvey, et al.

In May 2004, The Gentle Wind Project[48] filed a lawsuit against a series of defendants, accusing these individuals and organizations not only for defamation, but also of breaching the federal Racketeer Influence and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO). The court dismissed the initial lawsuit, in January 2006, citing insufficient proof for the RICO claim and dismissing the defamation claim (Berkman, 2008; DMLP Staff, 2007). GWP ultimately re-filed the defamation claim in the District Court of Maine and the case was scheduled for a trial in December 2006. This second case never went to trial since, in November 2006, GWP settled with Garvey and Bergin (DMLP Staff, 2007). In this settlement Garvey and Bergin received compensation, were permitted to maintain their website without changing or removing anything, and GWP could not attempt to re-sue the couple for anything written on the couple's Wind of Changes website (DMLP Staff, 2007).

[48] The list of plaintiffs included GWP as an organization, but also individuals Mary Miller, Shelly Miller, Carol Miller, Joan Carreiro, Pam Ranheim, and John Miller.

The list of the defendants in the lawsuit included two ex-members as well as members of the anti-cult movement, and two separate alternative health practitioners. Judy Garvey and James (Jim) F. Bergin were members of GWP for seventeen years. After leaving the organization in 2000, the couple started the Wind of Changes website to share their experience, provide resources regarding GWP, and collect the experiences of others with the Gentle Wind Project. The J.F. Bergin Company also was listed in the lawsuit. Gentle Wind requested several documents from Bergin and Garvey, including copious amounts of emails.

Ivan Fraser (a skeptic interested in New Age and alternative health claims) and the *Truth Campaign*[49] joined Steve Gamble (an individual who claimed an academic interest in alternative health and religious practices but who also acted as an alternative health practitioner) and Equilibra[50], in criticizing GWP products and practices. These men were drawn into the lawsuit through their online critique of GWP and GWP products. Steve Allan Hassan (and the Freedom of Mind Resource Center Inc), Rick A. Ross (and the Rick A. Ross Institute for the Study of Destructive Cults, Controversial Groups, and Movements) and Ian Mander (owner and operator of New Zealand website cults.co.nz) were all vocal members of the anti-cult movement. These members of the anti-cult movement were included in the suit because information regarding GWP had been posted in their respective websites. The inclusion of such a range of defendants demonstrated the wide net that Gentle Wind cast in their attempt to silence critics.

The lawsuit drew the attention of online free speech advocates and those who operated similarly critical websites on other groups. Some feared that if the case, particularly the RICO complaint, had been successful, then it would have had lasting implications for free speech on the internet. The case drew the attention and assistance of the Berkman Center for Internet &

[49] *Truth Campaign* was Fraser's website and magazine.
[50] Equilibra is Gamble's website and online business.

Society's Clinical Program in Cyberlaw. The Center provides amicus briefs and legal aid in cases dealing with free speech on the internet (*Berkman Center*, 2008). According to the Berkman Center, if the RICO accusation had been successful, then it "could have seriously chilled critical online speech" (Berkman, 2008).

While I will focus mainly on internet content created by the defendants in the lawsuit, the battle between GWP and detractors was neither simple nor straightforward. The debate surrounding GWP took place across many websites including, but not limited to, those operated by the defendants. In addition to the sites explored below, the battle between GWP and its critics also occurred on a handful of forums including Yahoo![51] Message Boards (Gentle Wind Discussion and Gentle Wind Victims) and the Rip Off Report. Although these discussion boards and comment sections provide an interesting exploration of GWP members' and Instrument Keepers' reactions to criticism, the reaction of former members, and the reaction of the general public, they present several issues that make them unreliable sources.

Firstly, without knowing to whom the accounts are registered, the reliability of the comments is questionable. Secondly, in reading these posts, particularly since many (although not all) are relatively anonymous,[52] it can be difficult to determine if a comment is made by a 'troll.'[53] Although relevant to the controversy surrounding GWP, these sources have questionable credibility. The comments on the counter-GWP sites tended to express a general distrust of, dislike for, or skepticism regarding Gentle Wind. In contrast, the pro-GWP discussion board (run by GWP members) expressed frustration and, at times, hostility towards the

[51] The Yahoo! brand name includes the exclamation point.
[52] Many sites would have data on users that may indicate their real identity, but this information may not be available to other users or third parties.
[53] A troll is a commenter on an internet forum who posts intentionally inflammatory or antagonistic comments with the desire to provoke a response (often an emotional response) from others. Since the entire purpose of the comment is to illicit a response from others for the troll's own amusement, the contents of these types of comments often are unreliable and unfounded.

opposition. Thus, the online debate surrounding GWP included more individuals than strictly the plaintiffs and defendants. While this is important to note, and may be of interest in future research endeavours, this chapter will specifically focus on the interaction between GWP and the defendants (online and in court).

Garvey, Bergin, and the Wind of Changes

Central to the case was a website created by former GWP members Judy Garvey and Jim Bergin. On their website "Wind of Changes," Bergin and Garvey posted their experiences with GWP from their almost twenty years with the organization. Publishing "Insiders' Stories" and "A Husband's Account," which detailed the experiences of Garvey and Bergin, the ex-members sought to share their story as a warning to others. Eventually, Wind of Changes appeared at the top of the Google search results, allowing it to be seen before Gentle Wind's own site. Thus, their accounts had potential to reach anyone who sought information online regarding GWP. In their account, Bergin and Garvey described several features of GWP that indicated the organization held significant control over members. For instance, the couple asserted that members of GWP began to partake in activities and habits enjoyed or preferred by John and Mary Miller. For instance "everyone became Celtics basketball fans, bought super gasoline rather than regular, cut their hair short . . . earned a ham radio license," (Garvey and Bergin, 2003)[54] and were directed to wear certain clothing colours and styles[55] (Garvey and Bergin, 2003).

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[54] This information also appeared in GWP literature itself. In the "About Us" section in "The Sacred Instrument of the Tao" instrument manual, GWP asserted that the group members were NBA fans, but the Celtics were "[their] favourite team" (GWP, n.d[a]: 6), shared the ownership of multiple animals, loved for comedy movies (including *Beetlejuice*, *Wayne's World*, and *Ghostbusters*), and wearing certain clothing colours (GWP, n.d[a]: 6). Despite claiming this level of unity in preferences in GWP literature (the instrument manual said 'we,' implying the group shared these interests), Mary Miller denied these shared interests in her deposition (Mary Miller dep, 2005: 70-73).

[55] GWP insisted that neutral colours were the best since they promoted "greater mental-emotional stability and less unnecessary stress" (GWP, n.d[l]:3). Other colours and patterns, according to GWP's claimed research, caused people to "feel jagged and jumpy" (GWP, n.d.[l]: 3).

Despite GWP claiming thousands of supporters (specifically IKs), Garvey and Bergin reported that, in their time with GWP, there were approximately twenty core members who were "completely committed" (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). GWP subjected members of the group to relationship and parental advice — often suggesting a break up, a reunion with an ex, separation from friends and family, a change of career, or that a child did not need a particular parent (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). Such suggestions, especially when coupled with claims of supernatural power and knowledge, are particularly powerful. By controlling a member's relationships, the group was able to shift the focus from external loyalties to the group alone. Bergin alleged that members were encouraged to limit, or eliminate, contact with non-GWP, and many in the inner circle never travelled without another GWP member, even when visiting family (Bergin, 2003). These measures of control signify how Gentle Wind had become the central focus in many members' lives. It further suggests that GWP wanted to control interactions between certain members and the outside.

Over a period of "two and a-half-years" (Bergin, 2003) the couple dedicated more time and effort to the group. After the initial Soul Readings done for the Bergin and Garvey family, GWP invited Judy to visit the central house for weekend visits (Bergin, 2003). As Judy Garvey spent more time with the group, her husband noticed she would return from the weekend visits "withdrawn and distant, and without appropriate affect" (Bergin, 2003). Her behavioural changes, increased time spent away from family and the business, and increased devotion to the GWP world view (including channeling and becoming an IK), slowly led to "a growing distance" (Bergin, 2003) between the couple, despite Bergin also "being ensnared by the mystical ideas of GW" (Bergin, 2003).

Both professionally and domestically, Bergin covered, and compensated, for his wife's increased absence and changes in behaviour to friends and family (Bergin, 2003). Furthermore, Bergin noted that he made excuses for his wife's absence and behavioural changes because he was also invested in the Gentle Wind. Although detrimental to external interpersonal relationships, the increased time spent with Gentle Wind served to further ingratiate Garvey into the group. By increasingly isolating core members from personal relationships, including encouraging married couples "to sleep in . . . different room[s]" (Bergin, 2003), GWP reaffirmed the superiority of the group over external connections. Members accepted changes in their personal lives because these changes were the prerogative of a spiritual authority.

GWP allegedly further controlled members through emotional manipulation. Members avoided deep, meaningful conversations with other members, and members responded to non-superficial topics of conversation with muted interest (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). Leaders, and other members, shunned, ignored, or expelled members who did not follow the conventions of the group, or who questioned the group leader (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). GWP's influence led members to give GWP significant amounts of money, alter the relationship between couples and parents and children, and in some cases drastically change their livelihood.[56]

Bergin and Garvey first encountered GWP through their book publishing company, Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc, which published books for Mary Miller, who wrote under the name Claudia Panuthos. Seeking help with difficulties the couple was having with their children, they turned to Miller, "a respected, thoughtful person, and licensed social worker," (Bergin, 2003) for assistance. The personal connection to Mary Miller, coupled with her credentials as a

[56] According to Bergin, GWP claimed that his publishing company would decline since he "was only doing the work for 'glamour'" (qtd in Bergin, 2003). GWP further asserted that publishing was not 'right' for Garvey (Bergin, 2003). According to GWP, Jim's health would also decline if he "[did not] begin working in carpentry and building" (Bergin, 2003).

social worker, likely contributed to her trustworthiness. Bergin and Garvey were drawn into GWP through the group's secular appeal (i.e., they sought help in parenting, not in healing their auras).

Although Bergin described Miller as "sympathetic and helpful" (Bergin, 2003), the couple expressed "surpris[e] . . . when she offered 'healing instruments' and a 'soul reading' rather than therapy or counseling" (Bergin, 2003). Bergin and Garvey listened repeatedly to the audio recording of the Soul Readings they received, finding these readings at the time "a form of relaxation and direction . . . and an escape from the real world responsibilities of working and parenting" (Bergin, 2003). In hindsight Bergin asserted that the couple "came to realize that this focused listening had a profound effect on our subconscious minds — a hypnotic influence . . . that, over time, shifted our entire lives" (2003).

The Gentle Wind Leaders, Mary Miller and John Miller, exhibited the same spiritual authority that infused the Soul Reading. That is, "most devoted followers assume[d] that every spoken word by the GW leaders [was] coming from the 'spirit world'" (Bergin, 2003). By asserting that staff members "maintain[ed] continuous telepathic communication with the Brotherhood" (Carreiro, 1987: ix), one could infer that the Brotherhood condoned all spoken words and actions. Members were inclined to believe that staff, and specifically John and Mary, spoke with spiritual authority (Bergin, 2003). This suggestion by the former member is plausible. By insisting that the leaders were in constant communication with the spiritual authority of the Brotherhood, one would have difficulty determining when the human was speaking and when a member of the Brotherhood was speaking. Believing in the teachings and lacking any means to distinguish when the speech was of the sacred or the profane, a member would have to assume that the spirit world, at least on some level, influenced anything that the leaders said. Once

established (and followers had ingrained the beliefs), followers may perceive and assume any of the leaders' actions or words (positive or negative) to be approved, or endorsed, by the spiritually advanced, and authoritative, Brotherhood. This assertion is particularly pertinent to GWP, since GWP practiced channeling.

Bergin and Garvey claimed that during their time in GWP they began to "unconsciously, and later consciously, separate people into those who 'got it' and those who just 'weren't ready'" (Bergin, 2003). Those who did not 'get it' were those who refused a healing, questioned the information provided in Soul Readings, or scrutinized the effectiveness of the instruments (Bergin, 2003). Arguably, this categorizing of outsiders created a situation of us versus them. That is, members within GWP — those who agreed to a healing or expressed interest in the project — would have perceived one another as more spiritually advanced than the critics. At the same time, they easily would have dismissed critics as being severely damaged.[57]

Bergin asserted that it did not take long for him to realize that, despite the initial egalitarian assertions that GWP made (and which he found enticing), "all information and directions arbitrarily came down to use from the group's well-defined hierarchy" (Bergin, 2003). This top-down approach was particularly evident for Bergin concerning some of the literature produced by GWP. Bergin and Garvey, who were former publishers, were "hesitant to be honest" (Bergin, 2003) with the GWP leaders regarding the grammatical and spelling errors in many of the GWP publications (Bergin, 2003). When his wife offered to edit the Gentle Wind material being disseminated, "the offer was refused with a smiling face or a blank look" (Bergin, 2003). Often the "risk of receiving an insulting 'soul reading'" (Bergin, 2003) accompanied the

[57] I make this claim based on previously explored GWP literature. For instance, GWP's antagonist attention to religion and education certainly could be extended to all critics. I will examine GWP's response to critics in more detail later in this chapter.

refusal. Known among the members as "blaster" (Bergin 2003) reading, such insulting soul readings focused on the person's "'intellectual pretensions'" (Bergin, 2003).

Eventually, the couple came to "rationalize [they] were 'giving up our egos' by letting mistakes go through without commenting" (Bergin, 2003). Furthermore, GWP gave such grammatical and spelling errors spiritual authority. That is, GWP asserted:

> there [was] a reason for the mistakes and misspellings. . . . [T]he 'spirit world' want[ed] it and they [were] the only ones who kn[ew] how to communicate with human beings. We are wrong and they are right (Bergin, 2003).

This assertion not only served to justify the writing mistakes in GWP literature but also established the infallibility of the spirit world, the Brotherhood, and by extension the leaders themselves. Furthermore, it suggests that the leaders did not tolerate dissent or questioning within the group.

Bergin affirmed this suggestion when he asserted that no one "question[ed], or otherwise interrogate[d] the information flowing from 'Moe' or 'Tubby'" (2003), and GWP leaders responded to any hint of discord with removal of the dissenter from GWP's inner group (Bergin, 2003). The level of control that GWP exerted on members also shifted the focus of positive life events away from the individual and directed it towards the organization. Bergin asserted that he, along with other members, "stopped taking credit or responsibility from our own successes and accomplishments" (Bergin, 2003). In contrast, members attributed negative aspects of their lives to their "own limitations or 'will'" (Bergin, 2003) while attributing success to the use of the instruments. In attributing success to Gentle Wind, and failure to themselves, members gave GWP incredible power in their own lives.

The emphasis of positive results attributed to GWP, and negative results attributed to the individual, carried forward to the healing instruments as well. If a healing failed or a problem

reoccurred, then GWP members were likely to have suggested that the individuals themselves were to blame, or that they had to wait for a new instrument to be developed or an intervention from the spirit world, or they might be one of the rare people that the Healing Instruments could not help (Bergin, 2003).[58] One can find similar misattribution trends in other NRMs. For instances, Stephen Kent examined the misattribution of negative life events as divine retribution in Children of God (COG) members (Kent, 1994: 29). One member of COG had "misattributed the death of her . . . infant to her resistance about participating in 'flirty-fishing'" (Kent, 1994: 36).[59] Although the misattribution in Gentle Wind was different than in COG, the premise is similar. That is, members in COG attributed negative events to disagreeing or disobeying COG rules and regulations, Gentle Wind members attributed negative events to the their failings as individuals, and they attributed positive events to the group and its healing instruments.

The account of former members also explores the energy work conducted by members and leader John Miller. Energy from alleged sexual activity infused the healing instruments with energy, and at times the energy work session involved a group of multiple women doing energy work sessions with John Miller (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). John was the only male who could participate in the energy work, since he "was the only man enlightened enough" (Bergin, 2003). In fact, Bergin reported that members (who had been told about Tubby's elevated spiritual state) often found the male leader of GWP with:

> two or more women from his inner circle touching various points on his body in order to direct energy to 'bring him into balance,' since it was so difficult for him to maintain health and 'grounding' in such a 'low vibration' as planet earth (Bergin, 2003).

[58] The assertion that the instruments could not help certain people reminded me of claims made by faith healers who asserted that those whose healing attempts failed simply did not have enough faith.

[59] Flirty fishing was a recruitment technique in which young women flirted, or used sexual relationships, to bring new members into the Children of God.

Although Bergin never participated in the energy work himself, his observations indicate that some degree of contact had taken place between female members and John Miller.

In their statement, Bergin and Garvey indicated that Mary Miller also participated in the energy work (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). Furthermore, GWP allegedly exercised further control over women's sexuality by encouraging participants in energy work not to tell anyone about the experience (since "'the world wouldn't understand'" [qtd in Garvey and Bergin, 2003] the practice), and to avoid sexual relationships with external individuals (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). Although GWP materials did not indicate the presence of sexual rituals, one should not view the absence of records from within the group as indication of false reports.

The lack of Gentle Wind material indicating the sexual nature of energy work is not a unique phenomenon. The sexual misconduct that occurred in the Canadian Kabalarians also occurred without doctrinal indications. The Kabalarians sought to blend Eastern and Western traditions in order to "provide the world with a perfect religion," (Brodie, 2010: 14). In the examination of the Kabalarians, Renee Brodie commented on the disconnect between belief and behaviour, noting that "when one examines . . . basic Kabalarian beliefs, one cannot see the undercurrent of sexual violence that permeated two decades of the movement's history" (2010: 16). Despite this lack of ideological foundation, the Kabalarian leader was indicted in 1997 on several counts of assault, sexual assault, and gross indecency and convicted on twelve of twenty charges (Brodie, 2010: 14). The leader of the Kabalarians, Ivon Shearing,[60] shaped the group's perception of himself as the only "link between the sacred and the mundane world" (Brodie, 2010: 18). Brodie concluded that that this disconnect between doctrine and practice was a demonstration of Shearing's power and charisma, as well as members' acceptance of his authority (2010: 21).

[60] Alfred Parker (1897 – 1964) founded the Kabalarians, and Ivon Shearing is his successor.

The case of the Kabalarians presents a good comparison point, and a potential source of validity, to the claims of sexual misconduct made by former members. For instance, the male leaders were the sole link between the sacred and profane, and neither group presented evidence of sexual rituals in their doctrines. The presence of sexual misconduct in Kabalarian practice (in contrast to its doctrine) provides a precedent for a group's leader exploiting female members despite contrary doctrine, beliefs, or public practices.

Although I am inclined to believe the former member's account of the sexual rituals, the lack of evidence from Gentle Wind sources, along with its denial that such practices ever took place, does make verification of these claims difficult. In her deposition, Mary Miller asserted that energy work was a non-sexual practice to return a person's energy into balance (Mary Miller dep, 2005: 99). The method of energy manipulation, however, did require physical contact between participants. John Miller acknowledged that some of these points were located in the genital area, around the coccyx, and the breast area (John Miller dep, 2005: 106-108). The leader asserted, however, that contact with the genitals never occurred in GWP energy work (John Miller dep, 2005: 108).

Since GWP referred to this practice as energy work, not sexual rituals, the group had a technical reason for deniability. Garvey noted this distinction might be the source of the group's denial (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). While GWP may have used this technical loophole to deny any sexual activity and abuse surrounding the energy work, this technicality may also be a matter of perspective. That is, beyond simply a choice of words as Garvey suggested, GWP leaders may have legitimately believed in the effectiveness of sexual energy in the creation of the healing instruments. While such a claim is difficult to prove (particularly since GWP denied that sexual

practices took place at all), the use of sexual energy in religious practice has precedence (both within NRMs and within esoteric traditions of some 'mainstream' religions).

Although the possibility of spiritual motives for conducting the energy work is reasonable, the response from Garvey suggested a lack of sacredness regarding the energy work. Bergin and Garvey reported that the "the exploitation perpetrated by the leaders" (2003) caused significant psychological harm to them individually, and damaged their relationship with each other. Furthermore, former members asserted that the leaders of GWP compelled them, and other female participants, to "perform sexual acts that they normally wouldn't do" (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). GWP used energy work as a means of control and punishment. Suddenly a participant might be expelled from an energy work session or invited to return a session without clarification regarding the change in participation level either way (Garvey and Bergin, 2003). In another instance, a former member alleged that GWP told her that she was "just too weird" (Garvey and Bergin, 2003) to participate in the energy work. Through controlling participation in the energy work, GWP managed group members and maintained a high level of control.

The case between Gentle Wind et al, and Garvey and Bergin concluded with a Settlement Agreement on October 24, 2006. The Settlement Agreement included agreement to drop all claims and counterclaims made by both the plaintiffs and the defendants. Furthermore, the Settlement agreement forced the plaintiffs to:

> Acknowledge that Defendants may, at their discretion, continue to operate the internet website known as 'windofchanges.org,' and Plaintiffs agree that nothing in this Settlement Agreement is intended to, or shall be constructed to, limit, restrict or otherwise affect Defendants' operations of or the content of that website (Gentle Wind et al v. Bergin and Garvey 2006: 3)

Effectively, the Settlement Agreement required Gentle Wind to allow Bergin and Garvey to maintain their website without alteration of content. While the case never reached the stage of

judgment by the court itself, the Settlement Agreement effectively enabled Bergin and Garvey to continue to tell their story without interference or intimidation by Gentle Wind.

Gamble and Fraser

The initial conflict between GWP and Gamble and Fraser[61] arose when the men published reviews of some Healing Instruments in Ivan Fraser's magazine *The Truth Campaign.* The critique of GWP products by these two individuals derives not from an academic position but rather from their position within a New Age belief system. One of the men, Steve Gamble, sold (and continues to sell) his own alternative health products through his own website (Equilibra). The Truth Campaign explored New Age topics including health products and some conspiracy theories. In this way Gamble and Fraser represented not only critics but also potential competition.

Fraser tested, and reported on, the A4 laminated card. Holding it in his hand he claimed to observe changes to his etheric structure. His aura allegedly shifted from "spiralling and curving wavy [sic]. . . [and] free-flowing" (Fraser and Gamble, 2002) to "outwardly-projecting spikes, emanating away from the body" (Fraser and Gamble, 2002). Gamble reported these same changes to his aura (allegedly independently from Fraser's own experiences with the healing instrument). In his report, Gamble purported that his aura after holding the instrument "resembl[ed] the quills of a porcupine, or the spines of a hedgehog" (Fraser and Gamble, 2003). Both men asserted that these changes to their aura were of no benefit, and both expressed a degree of concern regarding the change.

Although the existence of an aura or etheric structure is not up for debate in this thesis, it is interesting to note that those who claimed to see — or be connected to — these energies reported changes after holding the instruments. The initial complaints by Fraser and Gamble are

[61] Both Gamble and Fraser were residents of the United Kingdom.

indicative of a difference in ideological beliefs. That is, while one cannot prove, or disprove, the existence of auras, any more than the existence of any supernatural entity,[62] the concerns raised by Fraser and Gamble are best categorized as an ideological disagreement and a spiritual objection, rather than a secular or scientific objection. These ideological objections are important to note, particularly since Gamble sold his own line of health products, and the possibility of a motivation to reduce competition is always important to consider (an objection raised by GWP itself).

Fraser backed up his objection to GWP with the testimonials from a former GWP instrument user. This source of proof echoed GWP's own use of testimonials as evidence for success. Unlike GWP's positive testimonials, however, the testimonials in *The Truth Campaign* asserted an unsatisfactory experience with the Gentle Wind Products. For instance, an individual initially found relief with The Rod of Light; however, in hindsight he noted that he had developed "a real pallor of self-importance" (Macduff, qtd in Fraser and Gamble, 2002). The testimonial concluded with a positive endorsement of one of Equilibra's[63] products.

At the start of their first joint article, Fraser and Gamble invited readers to offer feedback of their own experiences with GWP healing technologies. In *The Truth Campaign*'s Winter/Spring 2003 issue Fraser and Gamble detailed some of the responses received since the first publication of their GWP criticism. The follow-up articles included one piece authored by a couple, and then two responses by Fraser and Gamble respectively (both to the letter and to GWP in general). In the letter, two GWP members pointed out that Fraser failed to properly follow the instructions on how to use the instrument (including not holding it for long enough, nor allowing for repeat sessions, nor allowing two days between treatments [Fraser and Gamble,

[62] Nor do I believe that such proofs are my place to make.
[63] Equilibra is Steve Gamble's company.

2003]). This particular complaint regarding Fraser's assessment is perhaps the most believable. That is, if one does not properly follow the suggested guidelines for how to use a product one should not be surprised if the product, does not work as advertised. Although I am inclined to agree in general with this assertion, the remainder of the letter followed the similar positive tone of other GWP testimonials. For instance, the members asserted that the instrument repaired the relationship with each other and made their rescue cat more agreeable (Fraser and Gamble, 2003).

Fraser and Gamble, however, were less forgiving of this testimonial and the other numerous responses from instrument users received between issues. Gamble reported that he received numerous phone calls from "person or persons unknown who said absolutely nothing and then just hung up," (Fraser and Gamble, 2003). Although Gamble was uncertain of the source of these calls, his belief was that they were from GWP supporters, members, or IKs, and he found the calls disruptive enough to block the numbers (Fraser and Gamble, 2003). In response, he began to receive calls from cell phones and, in one of these calls, was reportedly told that his "opinion of the effects . . . [of] the Gentle Wind products . . . upon the energy fields of the body" (Fraser and Gamble, 2003) was incorrect. The caller also accused Gamble of taking a negative stance against GWP since the "products . . . represented a threat to [him] and the production of the Harmonizers" (Fraser and Gamble, 2003).[64]

Beyond these publications, Fraser and Gamble were active in the online debate. Garvey and Bergin exchanged numerous emails with Gamble and Fraser leading up to and during the initial stages of the lawsuit. In a mass email from Fraser, he claimed that the Brotherhood whom GWP channeled was "not an altruistic spirit world organization . . . [was] an aspect of the rogue

[64] The Harmonizers were one product that Gamble sold. Furthermore, Gamble never directly refuted this claim but instead implied that there was something conspiratorial in the caller referring to his product by name.

consciousness of the astral plane . . . [and] wolves in sheep's clothing" (Fraser, 2004). These arguments imply the existence of a complementary belief system (insofar as Fraser claimed that GWP was using the astral plane correctly). In many ways, the objections that Fraser and Gamble made to GWP were objections raised by another 'denomination' rather than a completely objective rejection of GWP ideologies and practices. The Maine district court dismissed suits against both Fraser and Gamble, and their respective businesses, without prejudice on October 26 2004 (Gentle Wind v. Garvey, 2006:1).

The Anti-Cult Websites

In addition to the challenge posed by former members and competition from other New Age individuals and groups, Gentle Wind faced criticism from cult awareness and the anti-cult movement. While many individuals and organizations are involved in both sides of the cult/anti-cult debate, three individuals and organizations were of particular importance for Gentle Wind. These three people and their accompanying organizations and websites drew the attention of Gentle Wind and were subject to litigation alongside Bergin, Garvey, Fraser, and Gamble. The New Zealand website "cults.co.nz" posted information regarding the Gentle Wind project, labelling the group as dangerous. Ian Mander created cults.co.nz in 2003, an extension of The New Zealand Cult List founded in 1999, in an effort to educate New Zealanders about dangerous organizations and groups (Mander, 2015). [65] Mander included GWP on the New Zealand Cult List for the first time in November 2003, a few months before GWP officially launched in New Zealand.

[65] Important to note is that Mander acknowledged the information on his site was from a Christian perspective. Although it is not necessarily an indication of a bias, it is clear in the case of cults.co.nz that this perspective did produce a bias. For instance, the rank of "danger" was assigned to karma, reincarnation, pantheism, atheism, the Freemasons, and Oprah Winfrey, in addition to Scientology, the Gentle Wind Project, and other high control groups. Atheism, Baha'i, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and evolution, were assigned the label of "false religions" (Mander, 2015). Moreover, Harry Potter, Halloween, role playing games, tithing, and vegetarianism, among other beliefs and practices, received a "caution" designation (Mander, 2015).

In the site's classification system GWP received the rank of "danger"[66] and was considered a "hot topic" (Mander, 2006; 2015). [67] In the assessment of GWP, Mander further defined the group as "basically a New Age cult/business cult/scam" (Mander, 2006). The description asserts that the healing instruments worked by "expectation, dependency, and the placebo effect" (Mander, 2006; 2015). Until the lawsuit, GWP never named Mander or cults.co.nz. Rather Gentle Wind merely referred to an opponent, and potential target for legal action, in New Zealand (Mander, 2015). The court ultimately dismissed the case against Mander without prejudice (Gentle Wind v. Garvey, 2006: 2).

Another significant player in the anti-cult movement, and one that drew the attention of GWP was Rick A. Ross and the Rick A. Ross Institute for the Study of Destructive Cults, Controversial Groups and Movements.[68] Ross's website collects information in relation to cults and other movements. For the Gentle Wind Project, Ross collected and posted numerous critical newspaper articles and, eventually, court files. Ross requested to be dismissed, along with his organization, from the case and was granted the dismissal on February 16, 2005 (Gentle Wind v. Garvey, 2006: 2). The final defendant in the lawsuit was Steven Hassan and Freedom of the Mind. Freedom of the Mind offer consulting and coaching services for those who are members of, are ex-members of, or have family in, high control groups or in "difficult relationships" (Freedom of the Mind, 2014). The website also provides information regarding specific organizations. Freedom of the Mind offered three articles on GWP, only one of which was written before GWP was brought to trial. GWP and Hassan ultimately settled with both parties

[66] Other ratings include: caution, ok, neutral, and not yet rated.
[67] The "hot topic" label is used on cults.co.nz to indicate that a topic or group "has recently featured in the secular news media, has generated notable correspondence, is a popular conversation topic, etc" (Mander, 2015)
[68] The Rick A. Ross Institute is now known as the Cult Education Institute.

agreeing to remove statements and links (respectively) from their own websites (DMLP Staff, 2007).

Gentle Wind Responds

Gentle Wind responded to its critics, first online, and then through the legal system. GWP was both defensive and antagonistic to its vocal detractors and critics. Although GWP attempted to turn the critical responses into a positive —through asserting that the reason for the attacks were the improvements to, and success of, the Healing Instruments (GWP, 2004[b]) — its response contained various degrees of defensiveness. Although the group encouraged individuals to seek the truth themselves, it was active in its defense. GWP asserted the need to address these attacks directly since "unanswered hoaxes have a way of taking on the aura of truth" (GWP, 2004[b]) and that it must, therefore, "defend [itself]" (GWP, 2004[b]). The group went beyond defense, however, and was hostile towards its opponents. This hostility was expressed both online and through the lawsuit itself.

Prior to the defendants' critical response to GWP, GWP claimed the group had only received one complaint in twenty years. It made it clear, however, that this complaint was not valid since the man had "claimed (with no proof) to have received a FREE [sic] healing and felt he was not helped" (GWP, 2003[b]). GWP undermined the validity of this complaint by questioning the honesty of the one who lodged the complaint. It is interesting that Gentle Wind only mentioned this complaint after other criticism drew its attention. Furthermore, the tactic of attacking the person — as opposed to addressing the complaint — demonstrated a desire to discredit and demonize critics. Gentle Wind, I assert, attempted to counter criticism through making the source appear unreliable.

On the main website, GWP[69] accused Fraser, Gamble, and Hassan of being part of an "internet scam (possibly an attempt to extort money)" (GWP, 2004[b]). The ex-member testimonials provided by Garvey and Bergin were "a complete hoax" (GWP, 2004[b]) and "aimed to destroy the reputation of The Gentle Wind Project" (GWP, 2004[b]). GWP accused the Cult Information Network and deprogrammers of being part of an "underground ring" (GWP, 2004[b]) and their opponents to be part of the "cult" of deprogrammers and those on the side of the anti-cult movement (GWP, 2004[b]). Collectively, GWP characterized the conduct of its opponents as "illegal, unethical and immoral" (GWP, 2004[b]). GWP directed specific attacks at certain defendants with its main focus being Garvey and Bergin.

GWP directly attacked Garvey by implying that she "ha[d] a possible history of serious mental illness" (GWP, 2004[b]) in an attempt to further discredit not only Garvey herself, but by extension her husband (Bergin) and their personal testimonial regarding their time in GWP. Garvey was not the only target of an attempt to discredit the opponents by questioning their mental health. More directly, John Miller suggested that Judy suffered from schizophrenia, based on a conversation with Mary Miller and his personal observations over the years (John Miller dep, 2005: 172-174). His motivation and qualifications for this assertion are questionable. In fact, when pressed, Miller claimed that he felt "angry and hurt" (John Miller dep, 2005: 173-174) when asked if he was qualified to make such diagnoses. Furthermore, GWP leaders removed the statement from the group's website because "it made us feel bad. . . . [I]t's not what we were about" (John Miller dep, 2005: 174). Carol Miller, John's wife, asserted that John wrote most of

[69] GWP owned several websites including , the main website "Gentle Wind Project" and a secondary website "Eye in the Sky" that focused more on monitoring, and responding to, critics. In her deposition, Miller asserted that the responses posted on the GWP website(s) were written both by her and by John Miller—depending on the paragraph or the statement (Mary Miller dep, 2005).

the material on the second GWP website "because he was really angry" (Carol Miller dep, 2005: 52).

Rick Ross was also a target of GWP's attempt to discredit its critics by alleging that the deprogrammer had "a long list of serious psychiatric problems" (GWP, 2004[b]). GWP also asserted that Ross had a history of interaction with the legal system (including felonies and lawsuits).[70] GWP asserted that Hassan claimed to have been willing to "kill for his cult" (GWP, 2004[b])[71] in an attempt to portray his concerns regarding GWP as unreliable. GWP questioned the credibility of the defendants associated with the deprogramming movement, by accusing deprogramming of being scientifically unreliable. That is, GWP claimed no "clinical trials, no tactical efficacy studies, no evidence of success or failure, no outside documented studies and NO [sic] client fate studies" (GWP, 2004[b]) had been conducted on deprogramming.[72]

According to GWP, these deprogramming individuals and organizations, allegedly charged "exorbitant fees — sometimes tens of thousands of dollars, with no guarantee for any kind of success" (GWP, 2004[c]). GWP set itself apart from the deprogrammers (and others in the anti-cult movement) by asserting that only it could provide the real help for individuals and humanity. Ironically, GWP asserted that one could observe "the clearest sign of real deception and 'extortion tactics'" (GWP, 2004[b]) when "individuals attempt[ed] to promote themselves by

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[70] These arguments are partially truthful. Ross was accused of unlawful imprisonment, along with the Cult Awareness Network, in the deprogramming case of Jason Scott (Haines, 1995). While he was acquitted of kidnapping and coercion by the state of Washington, Jason Scott ultimately sued Ross and was awarded damages (Haines, 1995; Seattle Times Staff, 1994). Rick also plead guilty to felony diamond theft in the 1970s.

[71] Hassan, a former member of the Unification Church, claimed that he had violent thoughts during his deprogramming. For instance, when his father moved him between two locations, Hassan reported that his "first impulse was to escape by reaching over and snapping my father's neck" (1988: 27). It is feasible that this account in his book is where GWP drew the idea that Hassan was willing to resort to violence for his previous religious affiliation.

[72] GWP contrasted itself with these groups by, once again, asserting that it had a plethora of "evidence and studies from professionals and end users in a variety of authentic clinical settings" (GWP, 2004[b]) to prove the effectiveness of its healing technology. As explored in previous chapters, however, the credibility of these 'studies' conducted by GWP is questionable.

tearing down legitimate people and organizations" (GWP, 2004). Although in this argument GWP implied that its opponents were acting dishonestly, it is ironic that, in many cases, GWP employed the tactics it derided (e.g., attempting to discredit its opponents, and boast about its own 'better' agenda and products).

GWP further denied how much involvement Bergin and Garvey had in the organization. GWP publicly posted a medical procedure Garvey had undergone.[73] GWP posted a Health Alert, after publicizing Garvey's medical procedure, which urged women over forty with any of the listed symptoms (most of which are indicative of menopause) to seek proper medical treatment (specifically hormone replacement therapy) before, but particularly after, having a similar procedure (GWP, 2003[b]). This advice had a twofold implication. First, it questioned Judy's mental state for favouring a certain medical produce over another (and it implied she was unfit to decide what was best for herself). Second, despite no mention of the healing technology, it asserted GWP as a medical authority. Although John Miller agreed that this information was traditionally seen as private, he seemed to have rationalized the publishing of this information, I argue, through the assertion that it was a justified response to the " [made] up stories . . . about us" (John Miller dep, 2005: 176) which were "beyond private" (John Miller dep, 2005: 176).

John Miller asserted that the negative comments regarding the defendants posted on Gentle Wind sites were an attempt to protect the group (John Miller dep, 2005: 178). Miller did not see posts made on GWP sites against the defendants as libelous or defamatory. He expressed the view that anything posted on the internet was separate from libelous or defamatory acts offline. According to John Miller, "on the internet anything goes" (John Miller dep, 2005: 182). This stance, however, only applied to statements made by GWP. Despite repeatedly admitting

[73] GWP never named Garvey, but as the only female defendant (and given the procedure was only conducted on females) the statement was obviously pointing to Garvey.

that many of the comments against Judy Garvey (in particular) were reactions out of anger to comments made by Garvey and Bergin (specifically), Miller did not view his comments as illegal nor, arguably, immoral.[74]

When GWP filed suit against the defendants, it asserted that the defendants had defamed the group by claiming GWP was "a mind-control cult whose products are 'snake oil' at best, dangerous at worst.'" (Gentle Wind v. Garvey, 2004: 2). GWP asserted that the allegations that: the individual plaintiffs were members or leaders of a cult, participated in or encouraged others to participate in group sexual rituals, extorted or coerced donations, caused child neglect, lied about the efficiency of Gentle Wind Project, and took money from the Project for personal use, were all false, slanderous, libelous, and harmful to the individuals and GWP as a whole (Gentle Wind v. Garvey, 2004: 2).

GWP asserted that the work of the defendants had cost the group a significant amount of income. The sites operated by the defendants had caused people to question the work of the project and, in at least one case, was responsible, or would be responsible, for the inability of the member to gain external employment.[75] As an organization, GWP also claimed a noticeable decrease in revenue that they blamed on the defendants' actions. In 1999 GWP claimed $1.1 million "in contributions, gifts, grants, and other income" (Shelbourne Miller dep, 2005: 55). In 2002, GWP claimed $1,810,804 in expenses, with a net asset and fund balance of $2,077,324 (IRS, 2002: 1).[76] In 2003, GWP claimed its expenses increased to $2,107,482 while its net assets and fund balance for the year decreased to $1,336,465 (IRS, 2003:1). While GWP did experience

[74] He maintained, however, that he had no idea any of the information he wrote was false (John Miller dep, 2005: 194).
[75] John Miller asserted that he would not find employment "because people think I'm like some weird cult leader" (dep 2005: 189). He further implied that Mary Miller, and his wife, could no longer find jobs in their fields (social work and teacher respectively) without acknowledging that, at least in Mary's case, she had not worked as a social worker for many years anyway (John Miller dep, 2005: 190).
[76] The Gentle Wind Project filed its tax return as a tax exempt organization under the name of The Gentle Wind Retreat.

a sharp decline in its income, and it might well have been due to the online content of Garvey et al, GWP's case still rested on the claim that the defendants had knowingly shared false information to purposefully harm Gentle Wind (a claim it did not prove, instead choosing to settle).

Conclusion

At the start of the chapter, I noted that the re-filed and amended lawsuit made by Gentle Wind never reached trial. Instead the organization settled out of court before the trial date. The aspect of the case that did occur in court proceedings (such as the depositions), however, provided an opportunity to explore those critical of the organization. Furthermore, the case did include an assessment by Dr. Cathleen Mann.[77] In her assessment of GWP, Mann affirmed that GWP met "the psychological and sociological definition of a cult or high demand group" (Mann dep, 2005: 51). In the discussion of GWP as a quasi-religion, and in this chapter, I highlighted many aspects of the group that support Mann's assertion.

The depositions and response to critics, however, best exemplified Mann's statement. GWP, arguably, attempted to silence critics and control online content about itself, through suing those most critical of the group. Despite some defendants demonstrating bias in their assessment of Gentle Wind (specifically Mander, Fraser, and Gamble), GWP's reaction to the defendants demonstrated a significant degree of hostility. Many of the posts made by GWP on its own website(s) were overtly hostile and a clear indication of a vindictive intent towards those who expressed contrary opinions, or shared their negative experiences with Gentle Wind.

[77] She is a psychologist who provided expert testimony in cases involving New Religious Movements prior to Gentle Wind.

Conclusion

GWP demonstrates the importance of the label of quasi-religion, particularly for groups claiming non-religious status. The quasi-religious label enables one to study a group that exhibits both religious and non-religious qualities, claims to be non-religious, or attempts to adjust its doctrine and practices in order to shift its label between the two ends of the religious-secular spectrum. The category of quasi-religion is particularly important when examining individuals and organizations that claim to offer healing (physical or otherwise). Gentle Wind's insistence that it was scientific was necessary for acceptance in a world that views science as a significant source of meaning and knowledge. One has to wonder if Gentle Wind would have faced similar challenges if it had embraced the religious label.

The Gentle Wind Project exhibited the ideological qualities of religion. It exemplified Horie's definition of New Age, despite its rejection of the label. Although the group's ideology shifted and changed over the years, the group's foundations were clearly planted in the New Age. The Brotherhood allegedly provided a spiritual source for the Healing Instruments, and the instruments relied on the belief of an etheric structure and rebirth. GWP, however, also exhibited characteristics of a secular organization, including making claims of scientific studies, advocating appropriate forms of education, and practices indicative of a for profit business, among others. By blending science and religious ideologies and practices, I assert, that Gentle Wind exemplified the quality of a quasi-religion. Gentle Wind's continued resistance to being labeled as a religion by outsiders (or by itself for that matter) further exemplifies this category.

Although this thesis has endeavoured to explore GWP as a quasi-religion and offer an overview of its religious and scientific beliefs and practices, there are more opportunities to study GWP including, but not limited to, the use of media (including newspapers, radio, and the

internet) by both GWP, and its critics. Additionally, one might endeavour to explore GWP leaders and the organization's hierarchy in more detail (analyzing audio records such as interviews, as well as textual sources). Although one can apply the quasi-religious label to other groups, no one has completed a comprehensive study of the number of quasi-religious organizations operating. This endeavour was beyond the scope of my research, but may be of interest to future researchers.

While it was not my intention at the start of this project to delve into the complicated and often contentious issue regarding the use of ex-member testimony, I would be remiss to not note the importance of the Gentle Wind court case in aiding the legitimacy of the former member accounts. The issue of using ex-member's accounts is a particularly contentious issue in the study of New Religious Movements where the debate around the use of ex-member testimony is of particular focus for those scholars who take sides in the pro-cult/anti-cult debate. While I approached my study of GWP from the neutral position of a religious studies scholar, the conclusion of the legal battles involving Gentle Wind establishes a potential case study for the validity of former member testimony in contrast to current member testimony.

Both sides of the pro-cult/anti-cult debate regarding the use of ex-member testimony provide their own series of arguments as to the validity of apostate testimony. In one of the earliest anti-apostate arguments, James Lewis asserted "that most current ex-members who compose atrocity tales have been through some form of deprogramming — some form of intensive counter-indoctrination at the hands of anti-cultists" (Lewis, 1989: 388). Unfortunately, Lewis's extremely small sample size of 154 ex-members did not provide enough evidence to back up this statement. Over half of his respondents (58%) voluntarily left their respective

groups, and of the remaining sample, 23% were "coercively deprogrammed" (Lewis, 1989: 389) and 19% sought out counselling of their own volition (Lewis, 1989: 389).

If one was to believe Lewis's initial hypothesis regarding the majority of ex-member accounts being "atrocity tales" (Lewis, 1989: 388) brought on by "counter-indoctrination" (Lewis, 1989: 388), then Lewis should have had very little difficulty finding a significantly larger sample size of deprogrammed individuals (not to mention a larger sample size for the study overall). Lewis asserted that former members, as well as members of anti-cult groups, help to "shap[e] public opinion by recounting stereotypical atrocity tales" (Lewis, 1989: 395) and represent "samples for pseudo-empirical studies designed to substantiate . . . claims" (Lewis, 1898: 395) of brainwashing,[78] "induce[d] mental illness" (Lewis, 1989: 395), and child abuse in NRMs.

In contrast to Lewis's position, Janja Lalich asserted that researchers who:

> appear determined to discredit . . . the testimony of any and all former cult members . . . tend to rely on the accounts of leaders and current members . . . [and accept] at face value the group's literature (Lalich, 2001:139-140)

In favour of relying solely on the accounts of current members while dismissing all presentations by former members is as equally problematic as dismissing any accounts of ex-members who report negative experiences after exiting a group. Discounting *all* negative apostate stories simply because *some* may have been forcibly deprogrammed, and hence possibly pressured to critique their former groups, is highly unprofessional and petty. Although some ex-members have allegedly made careers out of their ex-member status, Lewis F. Carter counters by

[78] Lewis asserts that the theory of mind-control was a response to the question of "how could one make the case for a state of bondage in a situation where the alleged captive was apparently free to walk out at any time?" (Lewis, 1989: 387). While brainwashing and mind control is one explanation in response to this question (and an aspect that Lewis obviously disagrees with), people have raised similar questions regarding domestic abuse. One does not discount survivors of domestic abuse simply because they stayed.

suggesting that excluding apostate testimony, specifically of career apostates, limits "the especially valuable potential of . . . [other] apostates" (Carter, 1998: 229).

While Carter spoke specifically regarding career apostates, I assert that one could apply this argument to ex-member testimony in general. While some ex-members may embellish stories with horrors, to deny all negative testimonies outright simply due to their contents, only serves to cause more harm. That is, by denying the legitimacy of negative claims, simply because the sources interacted with the anti-cult movement, or had since made a career out of their apostasy, serves to overlook potentially legitimate criticism. Stated differently, exclusion of negative apostate testimony risks overlooking the real danger posed by, and harm done by, some NRMs.

While researchers must be cautious when using individual personal accounts, to simply dismiss them as merely the result of encounters with the anti-cult movement (or as simply the result of bitterness with the apostate's former group) would also require scholars to avoid current member opinions based on the fact that they may be influenced by their group's motivations and doctrines. To remain truly neutral, one would have to take into account both sides of an issue (former and current members) and, when applicable, additional sources. A researcher should "[construct] a coherent overview of a movement or tradition which makes sense of the disparate narratives by relating and evaluating their content" (Carter, 1998: 234). Verification of claims using multiple sources or types of data is called triangulation, and researchers should apply it to all data whenever possible.

The importance of triangulation and the debate regarding the use of former members' testimonies remained ever-present as I researched Gentle Wind. The copious amount of archival material available to me included material produced by GWP, former member accounts, and

some testimony from current (when GWP was active) members of the group (including those in leadership roles). Despite the use of a variety of sources, I still relied heavily on the testimony of ex-members and critics of Gentle Wind (particularly when dealing with the scientific claims, healing practices, and legal action). Despite this reliance, the resolution of the legal action in fact enhanced the legitimacy of the former members' testimonies in this case, and one could potentially find it useful to use the case of GWP to strengthen arguments for the use of apostate testimony in the study of NRMs.

In August 2006, the defendants[79] of the civil action suit, in which the State of Maine and the Maine Attorney General were the plaintiffs, signed the Consent Decree and Order in which the defendants agreed to falsifying claims and breaching fiduciary duties as directors of a non-profit. The findings of this case included that Mary and John made claims regarding Gentle Wind's healing instruments, "which were not substantiated by objective and reliable scientific evidence at the time the representation were made" (State of Maine and Attorney General v. Gentle Wind et al, 2006:2).

Members of the board signed the decree that acknowledged directors had breached their duty as directors "by authorizing the transfer of charitable funds in the form of personal loans to the brother of an officer," (State of Maine and Attorney General v. Gentle Wind et al, 2006: 2), by "failing to establish and follow written criteria and protocol for GWP's 'medical grant program'"(State of Maine and Attorney General v. Gentle Wind et al, 2006: 2-3) and failing "to keep accurate and complete records of the [medical grant] program" (State of Maine and Attorney General v. Gentle Wind et al, 2006: 3). Furthermore, the court found that GWP had failed "to keep correct and complete books and records, or minutes of the proceedings of GWP's

[79] The defendants were the Gentle Wind Project, Mary Miller, Carol Miller, John Miller, Joan Carreiro, Pamela Ranheim, and Shelbourn Miller.

board meetings" (State of Maine and Attorney General v. Gentle Wind et al, 2006: 3) and breached fiduciary duties "by approving the expenditures of charitable funds for the acquisition and upkeep of real and personal property . . . titled in the names of certain individual Defendants"(State of Maine and Attorney General v. Gentle Wind et al, 2006: 3).

Thus, the court concluded that Gentle Wind had not only lied about the effects of the healing instruments, but also had conducted improper non-profit business activities and improper financial actions. Placing these conclusions regarding Gentle Wind within the context of the sociology of religion debate around the validity of apostate accounts, the court's conclusions that current members had fabricated stories and employed questionable tactics, not the former members whom the pro-cult movement attempts to vilify, is particularly important. The court prohibited Gentle Wind and the individual defendants from "representing in the State of Maine in any manner, directly or indirectly . . . the manufacturing, promotion, packaging, labelling, sale, or distribution of healing instruments" (State of Maine and Attorney General .v. Gentle Wind et al, 2006: 3).

Furthermore, GWP (and the individual defendants) could no longer make claims that the healing instruments repaired the etheric structure, that damage to the etheric structure caused mental and emotional pain, or that the healing instruments "solve[d] most of the problems found in humanity, lower blood pressure, reduce the need for anti-anxiety medication, reduce combativeness in Alzheimer's patients . . . [were] proven to be effective in hospital settings . . . [and] have tested the healing instruments using blind and double-blind studies," (State of Maine and Attorney General .v. Gentle Wind et al, 2006: 5). Additionally, GWP could no longer claim it "adhered to the highest research standards" (State of Maine and Attorney General v. Gentle Wind et al, 2006: 4), that the research had "been duplicated by independent health care

professionals" (State of Maine and Attorney General v. Gentle Wind et al, 2006: 5) or that there was "no placebo effect in the performance of the healing instruments" (State of Maine and Attorney General v. Gentle Wind et al, 2006: 5).

Essentially, the defendants agreed with the court's charges that all of the healing claims were false. The court fined Gentle Wind, along with certain individual defendants, and offered restitution to anyone who had purchased a Gentle Wind healing instrument since 2003. The decision of the court and the compliance of GWP, lends credibility to former members' claims regarding the organization itself, as well as, its leadership. It is interesting that, despite the signed court admission that GWP falsified claims regarding the product, the organization and individual defendants continued forward, briefly, with their lawsuit against Bergin and Garvey.

The settlement agreement for Gentle Wind Project et al v. Bergin, Garvey et al, greatly favoured the rights, and affirmed the position, of the defendants. The settlement agreement prevented the Millers from suing the couple for anything written, and allowed the website to remain online. While the consent decree was a more direct condemnation of Gentle Wind's practices, the settlement agreement strengthened the account of Bergin and Garvey. Although the settlement ended the case before an official judgment by the court, the settlement allowed Bergin and Garvey to retain their website without making changes to their wording or account. The retention of the Wind of Changes website as it was, suggests a level of truth to the former members' accounts that were missing from the Gentle Wind's arguments. Furthermore, the Consent Decree requiring Gentle Wind to cease operations in Maine, and the individual members signing the decree admitting to fabricating or falsifying information, indicates that current members of groups can be unreliable in providing accurate information.

In 2010, Mary E. Miller published *Caught in the Act of Helping: How a government officially destroyed 23 years of effort aimed at producing a new stress-relief technology*, a book that chronicled the court case from GWP's perspective. Miller's critical position of those who opposed GWP is echoed on the reinvented group's website. According to the I-Ching Systems (GWP's new form and name):

> In 2003, Gentle Wind became the target of a cyber smear campaign and an unethical government official who joined forces with the cyber smear group to destroy the efforts of this non-profit. After years of litigation, Gentle Wind finally closed its doors in 2006 at the hands of an unethical government official, leaving behind records showing that thousands of people had benefited from this company's efforts (2015).

In this way, Miller painted GWP as the victim of a conspiracy, unfairly persecuted by the government and cyber bullies, and forced to stop its work. Just as GWP had a vested interest in portraying itself as a secular alternative healing instrument, so too did it have a vested interest in shaping its end, and rebirth.

Despite being forced to close in the State of Maine, the group moved its headquarters and changed its name (multiple times) but, ultimately continued to operate. Mary Miller continues to sell healing technology and offer seminars in the U.S. and abroad (in 2015, I-Ching Systems will offer seminars in Switzerland, France, Canada, Mexico, and the Czech Republic). Although John Miller was central to the formation of Gentle Wind, his involvement in I-Ching is unclear. In fact, the group's website states that Mary and John have not worked together since 2006 (I-Ching Systems, 2015). A study of Mary's evolving ideology and the growth of the healing technology in the absence of John Miller should be explored further. For now, however, it is important to be aware that although the Gentle Wind Project has disbanded, the group continues today in a new form.

Despite its insistence on being non-religious, the Gentle Wind Project clearly demonstrated an ability to synthesize religious and secular ideas and concepts into a single entity. Its healing technology proved to employ pseudoscientific claims while relying on supernatural ideas and explanations. This blending of secular practices and concepts with religious beliefs enabled the group to draw in followers and business. The quasi-religion ultimately demonstrated significant negative aspects including controlling members, false claims, and deceptive and unethical claims, as well as attempting to silence critics through litigation. Despite its relatively unknown status, Gentle Wind had a significant impact. The impact of its new form is yet unknown.

The quasi-religious category provides a way to analyze groups on the border of sacred and secular. It is particularly useful for studying groups like the Gentle Wind Project, which have a vested interest in controlling their labels and their perceptions by outsiders. The quasi-religious label will continue to be relevant as new groups develop and straddle the line between religious and non-religious. Thus, as with Gentle Wind, Transcendental Meditation, and Scientology, it will be important to examine thoroughly groups and movements that claim one label (either a secular or a religious label) while demonstrating qualities from both ends of the secular –sacred continuum.

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