# Doctrine as Music: A Socio-Historical and Biopsychosocial Analysis of Music's Effects on the Membership of the Children of God

by

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# Abstract

This project endeavoured to partially close the gap in knowledge surrounding music's roles in high-demand new religious groups by adding to existing scholarship's understanding of music's potential role in the membership maintenance process. The author sets forth to do so by answering the question: can doctrine based music ritualized within the daily devotional processes of a high-demand group affect the listener or performer in ways that would aid in group membership maintenance? To accomplish answering this question, the author utilized a mixed-methods study with a biopsychosocial base. The more wholistic biopsychosocial base allowed for the creation of the *biopsychosocial model for religious music in high-demand new religious groups* (biopsychosocial music model) through a systematic literature review regarding the prominent effects of music and their related aural elements. The created biopsychosocial music model is an instrument of analysis can be used to examine individual high-demand case study groups and their use of music. To demonstrate its use, the author chose to examine the now defunct high-demand new religious group the Children of God during the years under the leadership of founder, David Berg. The author conducted a comprehensive historical review of the group's use of music, establishing both the daily use of it and its prominent level of group-specific doctrinal content. The application of the biopsychosocial music model to these results provided unambiguous evidence that the Children of God's use of music would have likely aided in the group's efforts to maintain its membership by potentially eliciting a number of biopsychosocial responses. Consequentially, these potential responses would have likely individually manifested as positive mental and physical states among the Children of God members resulting in a more optimistic outlook among them toward the group. These results suggest a clear benefit to the membership maintenance process for the Children of God's leadership whether intentional or not.

Dedicated to
Anna and my Family
You made this possible

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Thank you to Dr. Stephen A. Kent for your wisdom and guidance

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# Glossary

**Biopsychosocial** – A holistic model of analysis combining biological, psychological, and social factors to determine both the affects and effects on participants.

**Coding Instrument for Performed Songs** – A coding instrument I designed to record relevant sonic and social data regarding live performances of a group's music. I have chosen several categories based on biopsychosocial contributors (rhythm, tempo, etc.) identified through prior research.

**Doctrine based** – Consisting of either in-whole or majority of doctrinal teachings as established by a group's central communications and texts (holy books). A group's music or songs can be considered to be doctrine based music if they meet this criterion.

**High-Demand New Religious Groups** – Post World War Two religiously oriented groups whose doctrines, practices, and/or commitments of time, money, etc., may become harmful. Groups and their leadership require adherents to commit themselves fully to such an extent that often it is detrimental to the adherents' overall quality of life involving: time, money, social activities, sexual behavior, etc.

**Misattribution Theory** – As adapted for high-demand new religious group research, the theory argues that both individuals and groups can incorrectly attribute the causes of certain social, physical, and/or mental states to a divine source. This theory includes the misattribution of events and doctrine handed down by a group's leader(s) as divine or divinely inspired.

**Mo Letters** – A periodical series of individual publications primarily produced under the direction of the Children of God's founder, David Berg, especially during the group's peak years. They were the group's central method of disseminating doctrine to the global organization.

**Peak years** – For the Children of God (and its early manifestation, Teens for Christ), the years 1968 to 1981, when David Berg led the group and the group was at the height of its membership.

**Resocialization theory** – The process of radically altering an individual's personality through the erosion of his or her independence, followed by a systematic attempt to socialize him or her to a new organization's normative social structures.

**Song Coding Instrument** – A coding instrument produced through systematic sampling and analysis of the Children of God's communications, holy books, etc. The instrument is a listing of

keywords and doctrinal phrases that appear with the most regularity within the doctrinal works sampled. I used the instrument to code songs for their doctrinal content percentages.

# Statement of Thesis Problem

The purpose of this mixed method study is to explore the use of music in producing possible biopsychosocial responses that could aid in the membership maintenance process of high-demand new religious groups, specifically the now defunct Children of God. The Children of God used internally self-produced music extensively in recruitment and doctrinal instruction efforts, but little scholarship exists on how possible biopsychosocial responses to singing or performing doctrinal music could have aided in maintaining group membership. This lack of understanding about the possible effectiveness of singing within high-demand new religious groups raises questions about the comprehensiveness of current scholarship on membership maintenance, which is a central process for the continuation of high-demand new religious groups. Therefore, this project endeavours to close this gap in the scholarship in two ways: by offering an instrument of analysis for examining high-demand new religious groups, and by demonstrating that tool on a case-study group, The Children of God.

# Statement of the Research Question and Sub-questions

My research will generate answers to the following main question and sub-questions by establishing a biopsychosocial tool of analysis and through an exploration of the Children of God's music and relevant literature:

> Can doctrine based music ritualized within the daily devotional processes of a high-demand group affect the listener or performer in ways that would aid in group membership maintenance?

The following three sub-questions will provide the foundation to answer the above question:

- What are possible biopsychosocial effects on groups and individuals who perform doctrinal music socially?
- Are the possible effects predicted by the biopsychosocial music model made greater within the context of a high-demand new religious group?
- Was the music performed by the Children of God within the case study years primarily doctrine based?

# CHAPTER 1: PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

The socio-historical connection is deeply rooted between religious ritual and music and, to many individuals, music seems synonymous to ritual in general. Countless early recorders of various cultures' religious practices from around the world demonstrate this connection, and it is one that remains a part of many modern religious rituals today, regardless of denomination. This sociological study is grounded in the discipline's history of studying religious groups, specifically the focus of select sociologists of the last fifty years whose works concentrated upon the many new religious groups that formed in the late 1960s. Socio-historical projects focusing on these religious groups – some of which have been more colloquially called 'cults' – have shown that the high-demands (time, money, punishments, social, etc.) some groups have placed on adherents can negatively affect them. Therefore, due the occurrence of damaging experiences on participants, it remains imperative to fully understand why individuals remain members of these high-demand new religious groups. I have chosen a biopsychosocial approach to study the Children of God's use of music because it more holistically examines the possible psycho-physiological effects on individuals without negating the contributing effects of their social surroundings. Stephen Kent (1994) has successfully used this approach to examine the Children of God's divine justifications for the group's system of reward and punishment.

Membership maintenance is the process by which a new religious group either directly or latently retains a person as an adherent. Two competing ideas exist regarding this process, both dealing with the question of whether a group's actions are coercive or not. Labeling a group results in a prioritizing of values amongst each side's advocates and therefore dictates their

response (freewill – no response, resocialization – response). The *freewill-side* advocates the complete freewill of individuals to join and leave and base their arguments on the freedom of religion and a disbelief in thought-reform/resocialization. The other side, which we will call the *resocialization-side*, advocates that individuals' decision-making becomes impaired through a resocialization process that often occurs when someone joins a high-demand new religious group. The high-demand *with us or against us* mentality and commune-based nature of these groups, which causes adherents to lose their entire social worlds if they leave, often fuels this impairment. The resocialization-side places a higher value on other human rights, such as the right to freedom of thought.

The nature of a high-demand new religious group results in a decidedly regimented daily schedule wherein religious rituals often are the central aspect. The rituals surveyed during the case study of the Children of God contained a great deal of singing, which never has been the explicit focus of any known study of the membership maintenance process of this group. This lack of scholarship allows the construction of an area of new focus, requiring a group-specific literature review and a biopsychosocial model. Therefore, this project aims to explore and understand the effects doctrine based music has on high-demand new religious group members, specifically members of the Children of God during the group's peak years (1968-1981). This study seeks to close the gap in knowledge of the understudied intersection of music and religion, especially within the daily rituals of new religious groups. The focus of this project will aim to understand, from a biopsychosocial perspective, if Children of God adherents' internal social logic, high-demand nature, and use of doctrinal music would have effects that aided in the group's efforts to maintain their membership. The study will attempt to answer these questions to

establish a greater understanding of the group's music and the role that it could have played within the case study of the high-demand new religious group, the Children of God.

# Project Design

To ascertain answers to the research question and sub-questions, I have selected a mixed-methods design that allows for the combination of both qualitative and quantitative data. The choice to use a mixed-methods design also allows for a more interdisciplinary approach, thereby allowing for the biopsychosocial methods input. The social phenomenon I am attempting to understand in this project requires the use of different methodologies to better understand its intricacies. Below are the four major stages that make up the project's overall design.

## Stage 1

In this first stage, I undertake a comprehensive analysis of existing literature from different disciplines on whether music possesses any ability to affect a listener or performer in ways that would increase or decrease the group maintenance efforts of a religious group. That analysis will include an examination of whether those affects are more prominent or magnified within a ritualized high-demand context. It examines music and its possible role in memory making, neuro-chemical response, cerebral blood flow, pro-sociality, etc. with the aim of completing and presenting a biopsychosocial model for the analysis of high-demand religious music. I then use this model to inform the research of the case-study group. Firstly, the model identifies the aural and contextual qualities that aid in the type of positive group maintenance responses focused on in my study. Secondly, calculating the case study's percentage of doctrinal

content in the Children of God's internally produced music and rate of music ritualization will aid in drawing conclusions about the research questions.

### Stages 2 & 3

The case-study will progress systematically through the following questions, providing evidence for each:

- What is the relevant history of the case-study to this project?
- Did the group use music?
- How often did the group use music?
- Was the music performed by the group ritualized (rate of music ritualization)?
- Did the group's music contain doctrine?
- What percentage of a group's music is doctrinal content?

The case-study will begin with the presentation of the group's relevant history within the concerned time-period. This historical review will show through existing expert study, observational study, and first-hand accounts, that the Children of God not only used music, but also did so daily during pre and post recruitment phases.

I will conduct a content analysis of the Children of God's primary doctrinal communication method through a systematic review of *The Letter Index*, a Children of God publication that comprehensively indexes all subjects covered during the peak years' *Mo Letters*. This analysis will provide the data required to create group specific song coding instruments made of words and key phrases that form the group's primary doctrines. This instrument will make it possible for me to analyze a representative sample of written lyrics available within the case study's songbook. The population refers to songs contained in *The Family Songbook*

software package downloaded through an ex-member site (xfamily.org). I will use statistical software (the program R) to conduct my calculations of the music sampled from the population (ie. doctrinal content percentage, mean, median, and mode). The data generated will identify the degree that music produced by the Children of God had an association to the group's respective doctrines. By calculating the overall percentage of songs containing doctrine and the amount of key terms and phrases contained in each sample song, I can confirm the strength of these relationships.

### Stage 4

This section will bring together the previous three sections and answer the main thesis question. It will accomplish this goal by using the constructed biopsychosocial music model for the analysis of high-demand religious music and applying it to the relevant information provided within the case study. This process will provide an understanding of music's possible role in the membership maintenance process of the case study.

### Stage 5

Finally, I will provide an argument for more research in the area, exploring possible experimental and qualitative studies with an aim of understanding how future research may aid in possible recovery processes for ex-members.

## Feasibility

Ultimately, despite multiple research methods and a diverse topic area, the overall project remains feasible for the following reasons:

- I have free and unobstructed access to Stephen Kent's Alternative Religions Archive.
- Stephen Kent, who has written extensively on the Children of God, as well as misattribution and resocialization theories, supervises me.
- My own previous work in establishing a biopsychosocial perspective to analyze second-generation adolescents within the Children of God will aid in this project.
- My membership in the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) has allowed me to establish relationships with former members.
- The end of the Children of God's life cycle helps to decrease the chances of contestation by the group. It also removes the need to access current members for interviews, despite my focus on peak years. Traditionally, this process has proven difficult for social scientists studying similar groups and therefore will aid in the project's completion.
- The budget for the overall project falls within my current funding limits.

## Methodology

As discussed, the overall project is a mixed-method analysis with a biopsychosocial model base. I chose this method to provide the most compelling and complete answers to the research questions. Those answers are possible through a mixed-method analysis that allows for multi-disciplinary sources, as well as quantitative and qualitative analysis of case study materials. Although complex, this method is very systematic and logical for the nature of this project. A mixed-method design allows for a researcher "to select and use differing methods, mixing them as they see the need, applying their findings to a reality that is at once plural and unknown" (Maxcy, 2003, p.59). Thus, according to Niglas (1999), a mixed-method design

allows for the research problem to dictate the methodology of study, rather than a theoretical standpoint (Niglas, 1999, in Greene & Caracelli, 2003). More specifically, I employed mixed-model research which, according to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003), allows for the mixing of quantitative and qualitative data at more than one stage of the project. This method provided the level of data integration required to manage the diverse data inputs. To explain the various components of this overall approach I separated them into their constituent parts.

## Why a Biopsychosocial Model?

To elucidate my decision to make use of the biopsychosocial framework, I will outline what it is and thereby show its usefulness to my research. A biopsychosocial (BPS) model is based on a tripartite foundation, grounded in interdisciplinary methodology. The three constituent elements that form the foundation are psychological, sociological, and biological determents. George L. Engel (2012/1977) first posited the concept of the biopsychosocial model in 1977 as a more holistic medical model than what was dominant at the time. A biopsychosocial model has appeared in the study of new religions like the Children of God (Kent, 1994) and this model led me to ponder the role of music in new religious groups though a variant of the biopsychosocial model. The several disciplines that contribute to the literature of the biopsychosocial model's foundational elements adopted the model because of its holistic interdisciplinary framework. The equal treatment of the three determinant areas allows a cogent model within the framework. By reviewing and processing what many consider to be disparate disciplinary research and synthesizing it all within the greater holistic BPS framework, my constructed *biopsychosocial model for religious music in high-demand new religious groups (biopsychosocial music model)* can identify the speculated association between doctrine based music's potential biopsychosocial effects. Specifically, this model can identify the potential

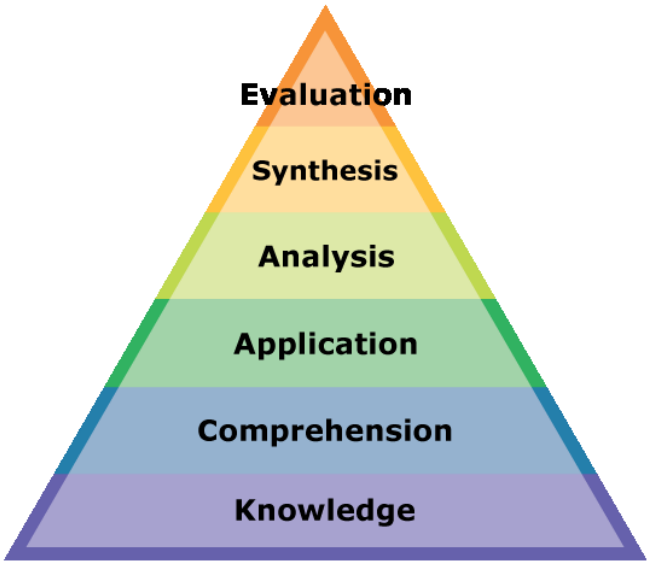
association between the effects on high-demand new religious group members and group membership maintenance.

To construct a cogent model, I have conducted an extensive literature review, the product of which is the biopsychosocial music model. The literature review was necessary to collect and synthesize research from several disciplines (biology, psychology, sociology, ethnomusicology, and neuroscience) that have contributed to the creation of the model. I conducted this literature review using the following framework as laid out in Figure 1. Using several online meta-databases, the most notable being *Worldcat*, *Web of Knowledge* and *JSTOR,* I collected a total of 117 articles using simple Boolean searching methods employing a set group of keywords used in conjunction with truncation and Boolean operators. An analysis of the 117 articles' abstracts led to their dismissal or their use as an input; this analysis resulted in 23 articles labeled as inputs. The decision to dismiss or include was based on an article's applicability to the study, contradictory to the project's aims or not. I read, analyzed, and ultimately synthesized the input literature using a modified framework of Bloom's Taxonomy (see Figure 2), and this taxonomical organization comprises the main method in the process of synthesizing the data. Bloom's comprehensive framework effectively dealt with the broad literature input and provided a comprehensive output. The output of the literature review and synthesizing process is the biopsychosocial model for religious music in high-demand new religious groups.

*Figure 1: Stages of Review*

**Literature (input) → Analysis & Synthesis → Biopsychosocial Music Model (output)**

*Figure 2: Bloom's Taxonomy (Coffey, 2008)*




Based on the knowledge gained while creating the biopsychosocial music model, I created two coding instruments to analyze, track, and quantify the internally produced songs of the case study group, the Children of God. Described in the below subsections are the specifics of each coding instrument and the method of its use.

## Aural Coding

The aural analysis of internally produced songs includes only 10 songs because live or recorded performances are difficult to find, especially from the peak years (resulting from a lack of affordable and transportable recording equipment and the survivability of cassette tapes for 40 plus years). I selected songs at random from the available 72 I had access to from the peak years. I coded each song for those qualities that I identified through the biopsychosocial music model as having an impact on the possible effects of music on listen and performer. Through careful systematic review, guided by Bloom's Taxonomy of relevant literature that resulted in the

construction of the biopsychosocial music model, I identified these qualities. The resulting coding instrument that I used for each of the ten songs is below in Figure 3.

*Figure 3: Coding Instrument for Performed Songs*

NAME: _____

LENGTH: _____

INSTRUMENTS: _____

SYNTHESIZER: _____

TEMPO: _____

TIMING: _____

NOTABLE OR REPETITIVE CHORUS: Y N

NUMBER OF TIMES CHORUS IS REPEATED: _____

LYRICS SUNG OR TALKED: _____

OTHER NOTES: _____

## Lyrical Coding

To determine the number of times certain key doctrinal words and phrases appeared in the lyrics of an internally produced song, I analyzed lyrical content of songs. The content analysis used the *Song Coding Instrument for Written Content Analysis* (Figure 4), which I generated through the systematic review of *The Letter Index*, described in the preceding section. The Children of God's internally produced music was available through a downloadable online archive maintained by ex-members, known as *The Family Songbook*. Contained within the software's archives are approximately 2600 songs (without the 2004 updated song database), all with text lyrics and some with their accompanying musical tablature for guitar. I selected songs from this archival database at random until I reached saturation. I accomplished random selection by using a random number list without duplicates generated by Microsoft Excel. I reached

saturation after 21 songs. The initial review to determine saturation coded songs based on the presence of key words or phrases throughout the whole song. I then reviewed each song's lyrics and then coded the number of times key words and phrases appeared (word-by-word count). I repeated this process on the sample again, but looking at the individual lines of the song to capture the larger theme of each song (line-by-line count). To identify the percentage of lyrics using doctrine, I compared each song's lyrics to the index. I did not use the connective and common words listed in Figure 5 in the total word count used to calculate the overall percentage of doctrine.

As previously noted, I used analytical software (the program R) to calculate my statistics of the music sampled from the population. The data generated identifies the degree that music produced by the Children of God had a relationship to the group's doctrine. I then used the program R to calculate the doctrinal content percentages, the overall mean, median, and mode for both the word-by-word and line-by-line counts. By calculating the overall percentage of songs containing doctrine and the amount of key terms and phrases contained in each sample song, I can confirm the strength of association.

*Figure 4: Song Coding Instrument for Written Content Analysis (Sample)*

**Song Coding Instrument for Written Content Analysis (Sample)**

| | SONG # _____ | SONG #_____ |
|---|---|---|
| Berg/Dad/Grandad/Grandpa/Moses/Mo | _____ | _____ |
| Maria/Karen Zerby/Mom | _____ | _____ |
| The Family/Children of God | _____ | _____ |
| Love | _____ | _____ |
| Faith | _____ | _____ |
| Family | _____ | _____ |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| God | _____ | _____ |
| Jesus | _____ | _____ |
| Scripture | _____ | _____ |
| Evil | _____ | _____ |
| Prophets | _____ | _____ |
| Martyr | _____ | _____ |
| Satan | _____ | _____ |
| System/Systemites | _____ | _____ |
| Bible/Biblical | _____ | _____ |
| Dismiss of Abuse | _____ | _____ |
| Salvation/Saved | _____ | _____ |
| Chosen | _____ | _____ |
| Heaven | _____ | _____ |
| Anti-Americanism | _____ | _____ |
| Anti-Evolution | _____ | _____ |
| Endtime/World End | _____ | _____ |
| Revolution/Rebels | _____ | _____ |
| *Mo Letters* | _____ | _____ |
| Flirty Fishing | _____ | _____ |
| Sexual (child = C adult = A) | _____ | _____ |
| Vilification of the Outside World | _____ | _____ |

*Figure 5: Words removed from Word Count*

**Words Removed from Word Count**

A, I, I'd, I'll, I'm, I've, ain't, all, also, an, and, as, back, be, because, been, but, by, 'cause, do, don't, ever, for, from, goes, going, got, have, he, here, in, its, it's, just, keep, know, let, like, make(s), may, more, my, nor, not, now, of, oh, one, our, put, said, same, say, see, seem(s), she, so, take, that, the, thee, then, they're, those, thou, to, too, up, very, want(s), was, way, went, were, when, when, which, will, with, would, yeah, yes, you, you're

Note: I removed non-sense words and repetitive words like (ie. la la la)

## Content Analysis: Children of God's the Letter Index

The primary internally produced communication method for the Children of God was the semi-illustrated newsletter known as *Mo Letters*. Written or informed by the group's leader, David Berg, these letters delineated the group's doctrine to adherents. To determine the key doctrinal words, phrases, and subjects used by the Children of God, I conducted the following systematic analysis. I identified the *Mo Letters* as the primary mechanism for the distribution of group doctrine, then confined the total population of *Mo Letters* to those produced during the peak years (1969-1981 – the years Berg was directly in charge) of the Children of God. Therefore, the total population of *Mo Letters* I focused on is 1446.

Note that that the title of *The Letter Index* indicates that it is an index of the letters numbered or letters 'A-1300'. This title does not reflect the true numbering system of the *Mo Letters*. Letters were first lettered A to U before the numbering system began; further to this system, multiple editions on a similar topic were not given their own separate number, but rather were numbered or lettered sequentially with a single root number (i.e. 121-1, 121-2 or 121-a, 121-b). Moreover, the numbering system used does not follow a strict chronological order, but

rather is a loose guide to the year of publication by the internal Children of God publisher World Services.

I then examined the population within the index and found 91 words and subject areas to be highly repetitive. Of the 94 words and subject areas, I labeled six as non-doctrinal because they related to either the direct location of statistics or illustrations or to a how-to manual. Therefore, the total number of words and subject areas in the Children of God's Song Coding Instrument for Written Content Analysis is 85.

*Figure 6: List of all Words and Subject Areas Included in Analysis America*

**List of all Words and Subject Areas Included in Coding Analysis**

America/Uncle Sam

Anger

Antichrist/Devil/Satan

Arabs

Backsliding

Bible

Chastisement

Children/Childcare/Childbirth

Children of God

Churches

Christianity

Colonies

Communications - Formats

Camping

Creation

Communism

David, Moses, Father

Discipleship

Dreams and Interpretations - Berg's Dreams

Death

Davidito/Davida/Deborah/Techi/Mother Eve/Hosea… royal family

Education, Children of God

Europe

Enemies

Children of God - Finances

Flirty Fishing

Faith

Fear

Food and Nutrition

Government, Children of God

Governments, World

God

History, Children of God

History, World

Health and Healing

Homes

Heaven/Other Side

Hell (Lake of Fire)

Israel

Jews/Judaism

Jesus/Lord/Crucifixion

Judgement

Jerusalem

Leadership, Children of God

Legal Affairs?

Love

Marriage

Missions, World

*Mo Letters*

Music/Sing/Song

Maria/Momma

Natural Disasters

Obedience

Parallels - Berg was often drawing parallels to demonstrate his teachings or prove a point

Parents

Pioneering

Prayer

Prophecies - Calvary

Publications - discussions of the publications

Persecution and Martyrdom

Public Relations > dealing with the outer world

Revolution

Reporting > Colonies to HQ

Russia

Security

Science

Salvation/Saves/Sin

The system/ Systemites (addressed in many other noted Categories > Churches, our relationship to economics, worldly; Education, Worldly; Flirty Fishing, who to; Public Relations, officials how to deal with.

Sex/Physical Touch

Holy Spirit

Stories and Illustrations

Sacrifice/Blood

Sprits (Angels, Saints, Soul, etc)

Training Leaders/Programs (babes, LTs)

Travel

Trials and Victories (examples and learning from mistakes) Also see Legal Affairs

Thankfulness

Understanding

Visions and interpretations

Videos (How to, MWM)

Witnessing/Preaching

War

World Services

Women

Youth

### Content: Analysis: Former Member Accounts

I accessed and reviewed all available written accounts penned by former Children of God members available through Stephen Kent's Archive for Alternative Religions. It is worth noting again that the group no longer has any central organization (Juliana Buhring, 2013) and therefore all accounts written about the group are former member accounts. During my analysis of these accounts, I eliminated several from this project for two reasons: one, they dealt with a timeframe outside the peak-years I focused on, and two, the subject of the writing was so specific to a single issue that its usefulness as a source on the general internal social dynamics of the group was low. Of the original 11 former member accounts, I kept seven as sources for the project.

### Content Analysis: Academic Accounts

Like the construction of the biopsychosocial music model, I first conducted a literature review following the same framework laid out in figure 1. I then accessed the meta-databases were where I identified a total of 28 articles and books about the group using the same Boolean searching methods. An initial analysis of the 28 articles and books led to either their inclusion or dismissal as an input. Of the 28 articles, I put forward eight academic and one well-researched journalism piece to serve as evidence of the internal social structure of the Children of God.

## Conclusion of Chapter

In this chapter, I have laid out how I managed the project to best ascertain answers to the research questions and sub-questions. To reach the research project's goals, I elected to break the workload into five chronological stages. This decision was, in part, made possible by selecting a mixed-method design and mixed-model research. My methodological choice allows me to use the necessary interdisciplinary qualitative and quantitative multi-stage procedures required to best answer the research questions. The largest portion of this approach is the construction and use of a biopsychosocial music model that I have shown to be the most useful tool of analysis for answering the main research questions. To answer the third – and final – sub-question, and support the potential conclusions of others, I have also showcased two tools of analysis I will use to examine the case-study. Finally, I include how I intend to manage the data from the case-study group. Despite a more complex research project, I have shown the project remains feasible by using a robust and flexible methodology and well-organized research design.

# CHAPTER 2: THE BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MUSIC MODEL

## A Biopsychosocial Music Model: An Instrument for the Analysis of Musical Use in High-Demand New Religious Groups

Many religious experiences include some form of musical accompaniment or performance. The roles, however, that music is playing for the listeners, and performers remains unclear and have not received much scholarly attention. For example, music may be aiding in transposing religious or group doctrine into memory. To gain a better understanding of the roles that music is playing in religious experiences, I conducted a literature review of several disciplines contributing to the understanding of music's biopsychosocial affects and effects.

I chose this area of research because it supports a better understanding of both the affects and effects that music has on members of high-demand new religious groups. I cannot overstate importance of this area of research, especially for those recovering from participation in these high-demand groups. By understanding what is occurring when groups like the Children of God, Rajneeshees, Hare Krishnas, practitioners of Transcendental Meditation, etc. ritualize the use of doctrine based music, we can better understand group attraction and membership maintenance. These two key areas are always of great interest to new religious group researchers and require analysis for all groups that a researcher encounters. A biopsychosocial mode of analysis examines the role that music played in recruitment, indoctrination, and member maintenance. I also made tentative explorations into whether music plays a role in defection. Moreover, by

better understanding how the group attracted people and why they remained will allow for more effective recovery treatment.

## Introduction to the Biopsychosocial Music Model

I constructed the biopsychosocial base of my model by drawing upon Steve Brown's foundational work regarding the subject of music and its ability to manipulate the listener. Brown (2006) argues that music is "an associative enhancer of communication at the group level," and it leads to four things:

1) Music is, psychobiologically speaking, an emotive reward and reinforcing agent, one that acts to modulate arousal, affect, and mood;
2) Music's principal role of operation at the cultural level is associative, and this role often manifests itself in specific linkages between musical structure and social meaning;
3) The object of this association ranges widely, and includes such divergent entities as verbal texts, group identities, social ideologies, and commercial products; and
4) Music is a tool of persuasion and manipulation.

Brown's conclusions suggest several key things about the nature of music and its effects/affects on the subject, and they remain crucial because they support a conclusion regarding music's ability to manipulate subjects by effectively producing deep-rooted memories. By correctly showing that music creates stronger societal bonds, reinforces group ideologies, manipulates, and persuades subjects, Brown's (2006) arguments conclude that "music functions to enhance and reinforce those things with which it is associated, to amplify, and give salience to the messages

being communicated," thus suggesting significant impact for high-demand new religious group adherents.

Brown's findings argue that music can regulate a group's social relations through the persuasion and manipulation of members on biological, psychological, and sociological levels. The culmination of these factors creates a system of conformity amongst members. Robert Boyd and Peter J. Richardson's research has established, according to Brown, that "music has the effect of *homogenizing* social behaviour within groups, especially in ritual contexts," a context familiarly found in new religious groups (Brown, 2006, p.4). Brown also offers a summation of Boyd and Richardson's (1985, 1990, 1992, 2002) research on group behaviour that uncovers how certain musical events in a group help to establish conformity through the reduction of variations in individual behaviour (ibid). Brown, Boyd and Richardson's theory establishes that this conformity results because:

> music-events themselves comprise a significant component of the activities of the groups in question, and participating in such events serves as an important criterion for membership in the group…. [R]itual behaviours occurring at the event require conformity to group norms …. Second, music serves as an adjunct to language to emotively reinforce group values, virtues, and normative behaviours.

Boyd and Richardson's findings are essential to the study of music in new religious groups because they suggest that ritualized group music performance – something I argue is a staple in many groups like the Children of God – will influence subjects into conforming to a group's ideologies and norms.

## Defining a High-Demand New Religious Group

I have offered in the glossary of this work the simplified definition of what I have termed a high-demand new religious group. That definition is a simplification and amalgamation of the following working definitions and descriptions offered by different academics working with new religious groups. For reference, I have included it here:

> **High-Demand New Religious Group** – Post World War Two religiously oriented groups whose doctrines, practices, and/or commitments of time, money, etc., may become harmful. Groups and their leadership require adherents to commit themselves fully to such an extent that often it is harmful or detrimental to the adherents' overall quality of life involving: time, money, social activities, sexual behavior, etc.

Stephen A. Kent has at times preferred to call the organizations we are dealing with "ideological organizations or groups" because "their members collectively refuse to question the primary assumptions about their groups' fundamental doctrines" (Kent 1990, p.394). Kent went on to further qualify this definition:

> Members may have private doubts, but all of these groups specifically prohibit the public expression of them. While organizations (and for that matter individuals) can be ideological in numerous ways (including religious, political, psychotherapeutic, medical, economical, familial, etc.), the important sociological point concerns the members' uncritical, collective stance toward their fundamental or core beliefs. When the groups are religiously ideological, then their fundamental or core beliefs concern their supernatural claim to legitimacy, along with the reputedly divine nature of compensatory rewards and punishments that these groups offer to members. (ibid)

Kent's article identifies the division of the pro and counter cult movements in academia along with the groups' own efforts to label themselves as key to how a working definition has been tough to achieve. He discusses this issue in terms of resource mobilization, examining what level of social influence, etc. new religious groups exert to control the labels used to define themselves. To achieve a more holistic and less controversial rubric for labelling such groups Kent submitted the following model:

*Figure 7: Normativeness and Religious Deviance Model (Kent, 1990, p. 397)*

| | **Legitimate** | | **Non-criminal** | **Criminal** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Tolerable** High to limited societal resource access | *2. guaranteed by law, and not threatening to society* | **1. Morally Normative*** | *3. not considered in legal codes, and not threatening to society* | *4. illegal but considered acceptable* |
| **Intolerable** Very limited to no societal resource access | *5. guaranteed by law, but threatening to society* | | *6. not considered in legal codes, but threatening or repugnant to society* | *7. illegal and considered unacceptable* |

**the community standard against which other groups or behaviours are judged [highest societal resource access]*

While groups with high-demands for their adherents are found within almost all categories, we are more specifically concerned with high-demand new religious groups that would fall outside *morally normative* and most likely be found be *intolerable* and often *criminal*.

Robert Lifton's (1961) work on ideological totalism provides us with eight very pivotal characteristics for our rubric on what constitutes a high-demand new religious group. While not all must be present in a single case the higher the number observed would more concretely suggest the group in question is a high-demand new religious group.

Lifton's eight characteristics for ideological totalism are as follow;

- **Milieu Control**: Control of individuals' communication within the group and outside of it, this process's goal is to influence their internal voices (p. 420-422).
- **Mystical Manipulation**: The connection of the group's mission to a higher or divine purpose manipulates individuals. All interactions and decisions are supposedly for this greater, often unseen, good and it therefore justifies the action the group's leadership wishes to exact on its membership (p.422-423).
- **Demand for Purity**: The foundation of this attribute is that the group has separated the world into good and evil or pure and impure, with the leadership or its doctrine as the ultimate arbiter and savior from the impure and evil. Groups present extreme dichotomies to adherents between the inner social world of the group and the outer world, thereby producing an *us versus them* mentality (p. 423-425).
- **The Cult of Confession**: Closely related to a demand for purity is an obsessive use of personal confession often carried well beyond its more ordinary uses in religion and therapy. One will often see adherents of such groups make false confessions or misattribute a malady to a lack of purity during confession (p. 425-427).
- **The "Sacred Science"**: This attribute is the element whereby high-demand new religious group maintains an aura of sacredness to its doctrine and leadership, all while maintaining itself as the supreme arbiter of morality and salvation (p. 427-429).
- **Loading the Language**: A common attribute of a high-demand new religious group is the use of specific, internally produced words and phrases that distinguish those who are part of it and those who are not. This language serves to further the dichotomy presented to adherents between the inner and outer worlds, the saved and the damned, the pure and the evil (p. 429-430).

- **Doctrine Over Person**: A consistent pressure on adherents to conform their character and identity to fit the mold suggested by the group's doctrine is doctrine over person. An individual's compliance with doctrine is the ultimate public measure of them within the group (p. 430-432).
- **The Dispensing of Existence:** This attribute happens when a group promotes or considers itself the ultimate arbiter of salvation and thereby able to choose who lives and dies, or who reaches the promised afterlife (p. 433-435).

To produce a more widely accepted definition of a cultic environment, Michael Langone, who is a long-time scholar of cultic studies, posited several definitions, all of which serve to further our understanding of what a high-demand new religious group is. Langone (1993) defined a cult as a group that exhibited the following to a significant degree:

> (a) exhibits great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea, or thing, (b) uses a thought-reform program to persuade, control, and socialize members (i.e., to integrate them into the group's unique pattern of relationships, beliefs, values, and practices), (c) systematically induces states of psychological dependency in members, (d) exploits members to advance the leadership's goals, and (e) causes psychological harm to members, their families, and the community (p.5).

In 1994, Langone worked with Chambers, Dole, and Grice to strengthen and refine this definition with an empirical survey of a diverse set of former members. Their work presented the Group Psychological Abuse Scale (GPAS) as a measurement tool consistent with Langone's previous definition (Aronoff, Lynn, and Malinoski 2000, p. 93). The research project resulted in following succinct definition: "[c]ults are groups that often exploit members psychologically

and/or financially, typically making members comply with leadership's demands through certain types of psychological manipulation, popularly called mind control, and through the inculcation of deep-seated anxious dependency on the group and its leaders" (Chambers et al. 1994, p.90).

The above definitions and attributes will collectively serve as a rubric for determining if a case study for the biopsychosocial music model is a high-demand new religious group. This distinction in labeling is important as determining a group's high-demand designation provides evidence for the possible amplification of the effects suggested by the biopsychosocial music model. I argue this amplification is due to the higher levels of social pressure and regimentation of rituals within a high-demand new religious group.

## Biological Evidence and Effects

William Tecumseh Fitch and Isabelle Peretz's work explains the evolutionary basis for the human predisposition and ability to make music. Their substantive summations of previous biological research based on human musical production and reception will serve as the basis for the biological component of the BPS model. According to Isabelle Peretz, "music has emerged spontaneously and in parallel in all known human societies" (Peretz, 2006, p.2) This finding suggests a biological (genetic) predisposition to music. Drawing on the work of Charles Darwin and his examination of bird songs, Fitch concludes that humans are the only primates to have developed the ability to make 'song' – as defined according to Darwin's evolutionary perspective. Moreover, according to Bruno Nettl, the use of "sound tools" to create music is almost exclusively a product of human culture (Nettl 1983 in Fitch 2006, p.183). Fitch calls on the work of Hauser and McDermott to differentiate human music from that of other animals, based on no observed singing for pleasure and a lack of equal representation between males and

females, both traditional observed traits in human music. (Hauser and McDermott in Fitch 2006, p.184). Calling on the analogous evolutionary studies of birdsong, Fitch (2006) makes clear that several studies have shown the following:

- The ability to make song is a learned function;
- Early song learning allows for the expression of genes (Haesler et al., 2004; Jarvis & Nottebohm, 1997; Teramitsu, Kudo, London, Geschwind, & White, 2004; Webb & Zhang, 2005); and
- An immature stage wherein the intricacies of song are not known leads to a self-stimulatory auditory/motor loop to be created, the goal being to learn the proper method through mimicry (Marler & Slabbekoorn, 2004).

Determining when humans developed the ability to make song is difficult because the physiological components required to make song do not fossilize. A recent discovery by MacLarnon and Hewitt (1999) found that humans have a larger thoracic vertebral canal than do other primates. MacLarnon and Hewitt's discovery is substantial (according to William Tecumseh Fitch) because the canal found in archeological records is the site of the motor neurons responsible for increased control of respiratory muscles. MacLarnon and Hewitt's (1999) study shows the emergence of this enlargement beginning no earlier than the late *Homo erectus* (1,000,000 to 500,000 years ago). Johan Sundberg's (1987) experimental research demonstrated how the human ability to make song is possible only through an increased control of repository muscles due to the complexity of movements required to modulate pitch and amplitude. The enlargement of the thoracic vertebral canal therefore marks the emergence of the unique human ability (among primates) to make song. The other unique musical adaptation regarding the use of "sound tools" occurred approximately 36,000 years ago according to the

archeological record (Cross et al., 2009; D'Errico et al., 2003 in Fitch, 2006; D'Errico et al. 2003 in Peretz).

Fitch puts forward several possible hypotheses about why this evolutionary adaptation took place, tracking the arguments for and against them. The most widely accepted hypothesis according to his review is the group cohesion hypothesis posited by Geoffery Miller. Miller's (2000) work convincingly argues humans developed the ability for song based on music's ability to encourage peaceful and cooperative interactions. Miller's theory circumvents Darwin's individualistic evolutionary theory by using the kinship/tribe model posited by William Hamilton (Hamilton, 1964 in Fitch, 2006, p.202). The synthesis of the above information validates that most humans are "'musically enculturated,' possessing a basic set of music perception skills that are nearly universal" based on biological predispositions as evidenced by the archeological record and evolutionary models (Koelsch, Gunter, Friederici, & Schroger, 2000; Schellenberg & Trehub, 2003; Trainor, McDonald, & Alain, 2002 in Fitch, 2006, p.206; Peretz, 2006). These skills would include the ability to vocally create song, an ability to learn an instrument, and the ability to refine both skills through training.

Isabelle Peretz (2006) identifies a common observable paradox regarding arguments for the universality of musical skill by directly addressing the fact that many humans appear unable to perform music. Peretz's observation, however, is based on the classical notion of what constitutes a musician and misconceptions about who can make music (p.2). Musicians are those who have developed increased skill through practice, while the average individuals' lack of skill does not mean they lack the ability to create music entirely. Therefore, according to several scholars, all humans have the intrinsic ability to "carry a tune" when asked to make or perform music (Dalla Bella, Giguere, & Peretz, 2007; Peretz, 2006, p.2). Peretz, summarizes that while

all humans are musical, "[m]usical abilities are widely distributed in the population, probably on a continuum of musicianship with poor abilities at one extreme and superior abilities on the other," she adds that this distribution places the average individual in between these extremes (p.4). The continuum of skill identified by Peretz further accounts for the prevailing misconceptions regarding musical ability.

A genetic study in 2001 of a family (KE) regularly affected by specific language impairments provided the discovery of the FOXP2 gene. The fact that this "gene seems to play a causal role in the development of brain circuitry that underlies language and speech," combined with the fact that the mutation observed in the KE family also impacted their vocal abilities (singing), provides an argument for the genetic basis of song creation (Lai, Fisher, Hurst, Vargha-Khadem, & Monoco, 2001 in Peretz, 2006; Marcus & Fisher, 2003 in Peretz, 2006; Peretz, 2006, p.15). The fact that a genetic mutation can affect one's ability to create song provides key evidence to support a biological basis for song.

## Neurological Evidence and Effects

Robert Chaffin and his colleagues discovered that several different forms of memory result from having performed music (Chaffin et al., 2009). Chaffin et al., argued that performance is an amalgamation of auditory, motor, visual, emotional, structural, and linguistic memories created when a subject practices and performs a musical piece. Chaffin et al.'s findings suggest that the multiple-memory nature of performance facilitates the memory of messages in religious music. Therefore, high-demand new religious group members who practice music are producing and strengthening numerous synaptic pathways, according to the Hebbian Learning theory. The Hebbian Learning Theory has shown that synaptic pathways become

stronger through repeat usage, thus producing direct paths of thinking in the subject (Raucsher, 2009, pgs. 243-252).

Increased cortisol levels are a proven biological response to group singing. Hallman and MacDonald's (2009) research on 'Community Music' discussed how both amateur and professional singers have shown increased cortisol levels before and after performing. According to Leech and Newsholme (1984), an increase in cortisol results in feelings of euphoria in those studied. Leech and Newsholme's conclusive findings suggest that regular practice and performance could lead to high-demand new religious group members misattributing their euphoria to the ritual's supposed 'power.' I argue that this euphoric feeling is what most new religious group members describe when they discuss post-ritual feelings.

Members who learn to play an instrument undergo cognitive and physiological brain changes. According to Gottfried Schlaug (2009), individuals who learn an instrument, especially at a younger age, develop increased fine motor skills and auditory discrimination skills, including rhythmic and melodic discrimination. Physiologically, those subjects had observably larger midsagittal corpus callosums[1] (Schlaug, 2009). Schlaug (2009) correctly identified the correlation between hours spent practicing and performing resulting in a higher volume of grey matter in the sensorimotor region of the brain. Isabelle Peretz summarized several studies that showed physiological differences in "auditory brain areas" between musicians and non-musicians (Peretz, 2006, p.22). The changes observed during MEG studies show a 100% increase in grey matter the anteromedial portion of Heschl's gyrus[2] contributing to a greater

[1] The midsagittal corpus callosum interconnects areas of the premotor and supplementary motor regions and motor cortex.

[2] The Heschl's gyrus is found in the primary auditory cortex. It is the first cortical structure to process incoming auditory information.

ability to process tones (Schneider, Scherg, Dosch, Specht, & Gutschalk 2002 in Peretz, 2006). This discovery is especially important if we again consider Hebbian Learning wherein repeated usage strengths synaptic pathways. The enshrinement of music within religious ceremonies, in combination with most new religious groups' propensity toward regimented schedules, leads me to conclude that the physiological responses of learning and practicing an instrument is having transformative results that are physically engraining group doctrine within high-demand new religious group subjects.

Isabelle Peretz's (2006) research tackles the debate regarding whether music-specific modules process music or if music is processed by a series of multi-functioning modules, language being the foremost[3]. She makes a clear and well laid out argument against a wholly generalized or language module based processing model by using studies on *musical savant syndrome* and *tone-deafness*. Peretz's studies have shown that individuals may have high or non-functioning domain specific modules (music) while still not having their speech related modules affected. Moreover, Peretz et al.'s (1994) work with adults who have suffered a brain injury further substantiates this model of processing by showing that music modules must be isolable because of certain individuals losing just their musical recognition (pitch, tone, melody, etc.). Her conclusion discusses that, while both proponents of domain specific (innateness) and general mechanisms theories each have a basis for their arguments, the result on the subject remains similar (Sperber & Hirschfeld, 2004). Peretz concludes that it is a combination of domain specific and general modules processes that contributes to the 'ubiquity and power of music' and its effects on the subject (Peretz, 2006, p.11).

[3] "Modules" is a term used to describe the entirety of those psychological elements involved in processing different types of stimuli.

Several studies show that the engagement of the limbic system triggers emotional responses to music. Anne Blood and Robert Zatorre reported changes in cerebral blood flows in different brain areas, including the orbitofrontal cortex, insula, dorsal midbrain, and ventral striatum[4] as shown in Figure 8 and Table 1 below (Blood & Zatorre, 2001 in Peretz, 2006, p.23). Several of these regions respond to important stimuli, like food and sex (Small, Zatorre, Dagher, & Jones-Gotman, 2001 in Peretz, 2006, p.23). The responses recorded in the Blood and Zatorre study suggests that music relates to the release of endorphins (Goldstein, 1980 in Peretz, 2006), p.23). Peretz successfully posits, therefore, that "under certain circumstances, music can access the neural substrates that are associated with primary reinforces, such as food and sex," thereby creating a positive feedback loop (Peretz, 2006. p.23). Moreover, music engages the amygdala, another subcortical region, which suggests that music is as effective as food, drugs, and sex in eliciting affective emotional responses (Gosselin et al., 2005 in Peretz, 2006; Peretz, 2006, p.23). Peretz concludes with the following important summation regarding music's ability to emotional affect a listener:

> Therefore, it seems that emotional responses to music can be aroused as readily in humans as *reflexes* [original emphasis]. Indeed, musical emotions occur with immediacy (Peretz, et al., 1998), through automatic appraisal, and with involuntary changes in physiological and behavioural responses. With limbic mediation, consistency, and precociousness, musical emotions resemble other important classes of biological stimuli (Peretz, 2006).

[4] These several anatomical sections of the brain play roles in emotion, consciousness, perception, self-awareness, motor control, etc.

The emotional affective ability that music possesses ultimately begins to explain both its utility and its ubiquity within high-demand new religious groups. Below fMRI (frequency magnetic residence imaging) data from Blood and Zatorre's 2001 study shows the brain's response to music from different coordinate angles. The colours represent increases and decreases in cerebral blood flow to either processing modules or emotional modules as previously discussed. The scales provide information on what colour corresponds to an increase or decrease and its magnitude combined with a regression analysis in its association to the subject experiencing "increasing chills intensity ratings" (Blood and Zatorre, 2001, p. 11821).

*Figure 8: Blood and Zatorre's Cerebral Blood Flow Study (Blood and Zatorre, 2001, p. 11821)*

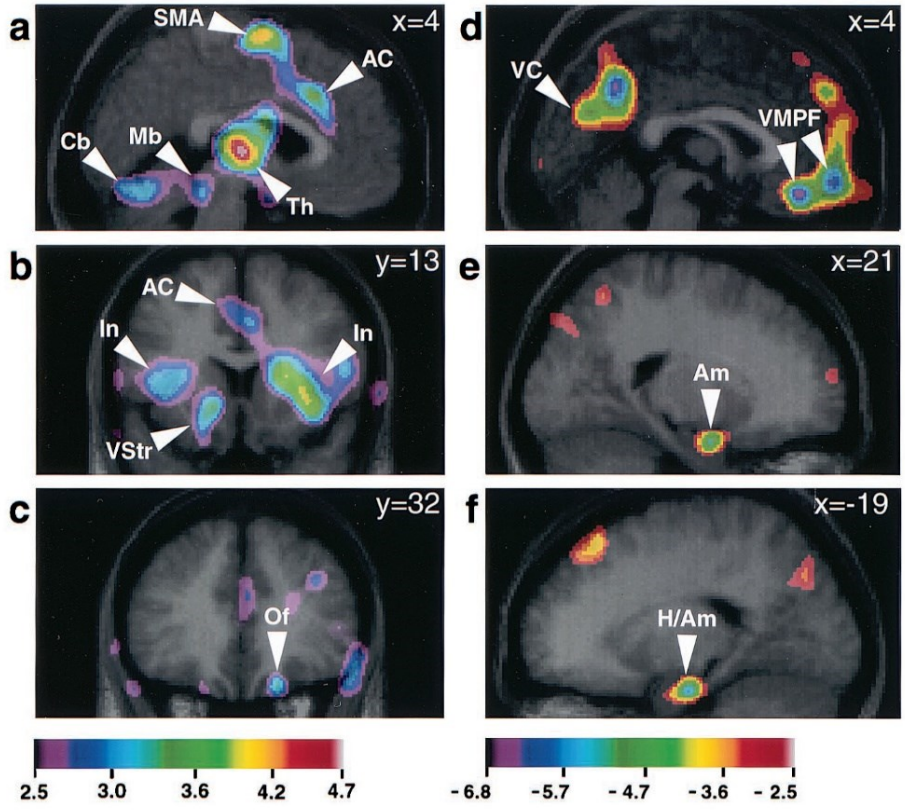


Figure 8 above and Table 1 below illustrate cerebral blood flow changes that Blood and Zatorre found in various cognitive regions in subjects' brains. These changes reflect the observed increases in regional cerebral blood flow (rCBF) to areas of the brain responsible for processing positive emotional response and desire for basic biological necessities like food, sex, drugs, etc. (Blood and Zatorre, 2001). According to Blood and Zatorre, these changes include increases in rCBF "in the left ventral striatum [Vstr] and dorsomedial midbrain [Mb]" as well as decreases in rCBF in the "right amygdala [Am] [and] left hippocampus/amygdala [H/Am], and VMPF [ventromedial prefrontal cortex]," thus providing evidence for their conclusion that "music recruits neural systems of reward and emotion" (p. 11823).

*Table 1: Blood and Zatorre's Subtraction Analysis: Subject-selected Music Minus Control Music (Blood and Zatorre, 2001, p. 11822)*

| | Coordinates | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Region | *x* | *y* | *z* | *t* value* |
| CBF increases | | | | |
| L. ventral striatum | −13 | 1 | −5 | 2.72 |
| R. dorsomedial midbrain | 4 | −40 | −17 | 2.92 |
| R. thalamus | 3 | −16 | −2 | 4.61 |
| M. anterior cingulate (BA 24/32) | −1 | 32 | 15 | 2.63 |
| R. orbitofrontal cortex (BA 14) | 20 | 34 | −23 | 2.78 |
| R. insula | 32 | 15 | 3 | 5.41 |
| L. insula | −39 | 12 | 11 | 3.75 |
| M. suppl motor area (BA 6) | 1 | −2 | 63 | 6.26 |
| L. cerebellum | −8 | −66 | −18 | 5.03 |
| R. cerebellum | 9 | −62 | −18 | 3.75 |

## Psychological Evidence and effects

The affective influence of music on emotion is a bi-product of its use within group settings, resulting in better cohesion among individuals (Wallin et al., 2000). The neurobiological result of listening to music elicits a positive emotional response as demonstrated above. The

bonding process via the process of *emotional contagion* magnifies positive emotional results within group settings (Peretz, 2006, p.24). Emotional contagion, according to Isabelle Peretz, is the "tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize vocalization and movements with those of another person and, consequently, to converge emotionally" while singing (ibid). This process of convergence would aid in and partially explain the psychological re-socialization process taking place during both group attraction and maintenance phases (Hatfield, Cacioppo, Rapson, 1994 in Peretz, 2006, p.24; Peretz, 2006). John Blacking's research suggests that music enhances cooperation, cohesion, and informs emotions, thus supporting the emotional convergence and group cohesion hypothesis (Blacking, 1987 in Peretz, 2006, p.26). Moreover, pitch intervals and frequency ratios are "highly effective in promoting simultaneous singing," thereby supporting the *emotional contagion* theory (Brown, 2000 in Peretz, 2006, p.26; Brown, 2000). Therefore, according to Peretz (2006), music can "override individuality for the benefit of the group" due to music's evolutionary significance in group cohesion and positive emotional neurological processing.

The structure of a song's lyrics or sound directly affects the emotional reaction and therefore its ability to generate a desired reaction in subjects. According to Steve Brown, music is a form of "directed stimulation" (Brown 2006, p.17). Moreover, performers use "musical devices to produce rather immediate effects on attention, arousal, emotion, and mood" (ibid). Two differences that have shown to create positive association and increased long-term memory are repetition in lyrics and an upbeat tempo. Alf Gabrielsson argues a song's tempo "is usually considered the most decisive" in affecting an individual's emotions (Gabrielson, 2009, p. 143) Gabreilsson's findings argue that both fast and slow tempos can engender in the subject a positive emotional response, especially fast tempos that result in feelings of

"happiness/joy/pleasantness," etc. (ibid). Many high-demand new religious groups use/d fast tempos and repetitive choruses in their internally ritualized and doctrine based music.

Lawrence Blum's (2013) *Music Memory, and Relatedness* provides us with evidence of the connection between rhythm and repetition and memory. His work also reviews the physiological responses to music, like chills and goosebumps; I argue that high-demand new religious groups misattribute these responses to the divine (Blum, 2013, p.124). Blum discusses how rhythm plays a vital role in the neural functioning of our brains, whether in the activity of our neurons or the diurnal rhythms (hormone secretion patterns) (p.125). To this list of physiological rhythms, he adds the rhythm of our heart and lungs. Blum argues that repetitive rhythms play a huge role in the effect of repetition (p.126). Bob Snyder's (2000) work on music and repetition shows that music with a high degree of repetition and hierarchical structure is easier to remember. Therefore, the combination of repetitive rhythm and lyrics would produce the effect of being very memorable. Blum notes that children's songs are an excellent example of the most effective structure. High-demand new religious groups often used and re-used basic rhythmic structure akin to that of children's songs; an example would be the very early Children of God essential *You've got to be a Baby to go to Heaven*.

Amy Belfi, Brett Karlan, and Daniel Tranel's (2016) article, *Music Evokes Vivid Autobiographical Memories,* is a succinct and excellent demonstration of music's ability to evoke vivid memories of the past based on popular music pieces in history. Their experimental study showed that not only are memories more vivid when cued by music comparted to just visual stimuli, but also that female participants were able to retrieve memories of a higher vividness. Lauren Istvandity's (2014) article, *The Lifetime Soundtrack: Music as an Archive for Autobiographical Memory,* supports Belfi, Karlan, and Tranel's 2016 work. Istvandity's piece is

a qualitative study of how individuals' memories become integrated with music, and how that music facilitates a more retrievable mental catalogue. Collectively, the two articles provide significant evidence of music's role in the recollection of personal memories.

Jakke Tamminen et al. (2017) article, *The Impact of Music on Learning and Consolidation of Novel Words,* presents three experiments conducted with adult participants with the aim of understanding whether music aids in the memorization of novel words. Their findings show no significant benefit to free recall, but that the words were more strongly integrated into the mental lexicons of participants. Defining free recall and mental lexicon will show the strength this article lends to my arguments. Free recall is a basic tool of study in the psychological study of memory that asks participants to recall items with no stimulus. The mental lexicon is the connective and associative mental dictionary individuals amass throughout their lives. The researcher's experiments demonstrated a better integration of novel words into the mental lexicon of participants, meaning they observed that the novel words were being more mentally connected and associated to the participant's existing lexicon. This finding is significant in that it demonstrates how the specialized language often used by high-demand new religious groups would benefit from musical accompaniment. I argue that music's ability to support the inter-connections within an individual's mental lexicon would serve as a basis for supporting the strengthening of autobiographical memories as demonstrated by Istvandity's (2014) and Belfi, Karlan, and Tranel's work.

## Sociological Evidence and Effects

Williamson et al.'s (2001) qualitative study about involuntary musical imagery ("earworms") generated significant data regarding how music familiar or often repeated by a

subject could become the subject of unconsciously generated episodes of repetitive involuntary musical imagery. The study by Williamson et al. (2001) demonstrates that a link exists between these episodes and long-term memory. Robert Bornstein's work on exposure and effect established how humans acquire their aesthetic taste. According to Bornstein's work, humans develop a preferential bias for those things they are regularly exposed to (Bornstein, 1989 in Peretz, 2006, p.23). To demonstrate that Bornstein's theory held when applied to music, Peretz et al. tested it in 1998, and the test confirmed that humans develop a bias for music in the same fashion (Peretz, Gaudreau, & Bonnel, 1998). The connections identified by Peretz et al. are substantial when one considers the fact that music containing doctrine would repeat, either daily or weekly, within the high-demand ritualized nature of some new religious groups. Moreover, those groups that only allowed members to play or listen to internally produced music would increase both the long-term memory and number of involuntary musical memory individual subjects had. Further to these conclusions, Williamson et al.'s work states that any person simply humming a tune could trigger a memory recall effect for individuals, thus showing how little stimulus we require to prompt a recall effect (Williamson et al., 2011, p.274).

Ray Jackendoff and Fred Lerdahl's (2006) study on the affective qualities of music demonstrated the importance of the psychical response of music in affecting emotion in individuals. Their study specifically discusses how positive gestures and posturing by others in a group will contribute to a positive emotional response in the individual, which the observing individual can attribute to the song itself (Jackendoff & Lerdahl, 2006, pgs. 42-43). Jackendoff and Lerdahl's research is significant within new religious groups for two reasons:

1) group settings for singing and performing allowed members to see one another positively gesturing,

2) the use of upbeat music and individual reactions allowed for its use as a group attraction mechanism.

This ability to create a positive association with the music by viewing others enjoying would have certainly contributed to group maintenance and attraction (ibid).

We cannot overlook the role of charisma in religious ritual. Harvey Whitehouse correctly argues that a religious organization's charismatic power centres around the way our memory works. He asserts that religious rituals consist of different memory enhancing devices that enable a group to survive (Ketola, 2008, p.40; Whitehouse 1995, pgs.194-200; 2000, pgs. 54-98; 2004, pgs.105-17). Kimmo Ketola correctly adds to Whitehouse's argument in stating that no tradition could survive or has survived without the routinization of rehearsing a group's doctrinal rituals (Ketola, 2008, p.40). Whitehouse's theory separates religions into either a doctrinal or an imagistic mode of religiosity, like Weber's routinized and charismatic form of religion, respectively (Ketola, 2008, p.40; Whitehouse 1995, pgs.194-200; 2000, pgs. 54-98; 2004, pgs.105-17). Whitehouse characterizes a doctrinal religion as more established then that of the imagistic, and thusly focused on different tools of membership maintenance. His theory posits that the rituals of either group are effective in creating memory, but that they are different kinds. Ketola summarized this distinction well in his work on the Hare Krishna:

> [Whitehouse's] theory postulates that there are two distinct systems of memory that the ritual system may recruit for the transmission of the tradition: the episodic and the semantic memory. Episodic memory refers to the mental representations of personally experienced events. If this mechanism is recruited, the tradition will gravitate towards the more emotionally intense and socially cohesive imagistic mode. Semantic memory, in

> turn, processes mental representations of a propositional nature. If the ritual recruits the mechanism of sematic memory, the tradition will tend to gravitate towards the more conceptually elaborate and socially expansive doctrine. (ibid)

Ketola markedly notes that Whitehouse further separates the two modes of religiosity and their respective rituals to better explain its effect memory.

> The imagistic mode is thus precipitated by the rarely performed, highly stimulating and dramatic rituals, which are encoded in participants' episodic memory. Imagistic rituals are typically highly arousing or "ecstatic" . . . . The doctrinal mode, by contrast, is precipitated by frequently performed rituals with generally low levels of arousal. Large-scale religious often incorporate highly routinized rituals for the purpose of transmitting verbally codified religious knowledge. Because the doctrines are acquired from religious experts, they characteristically show marked uniformity among participants. Such official religious knowledge is often conceptually complex and difficult to master. (ibid)

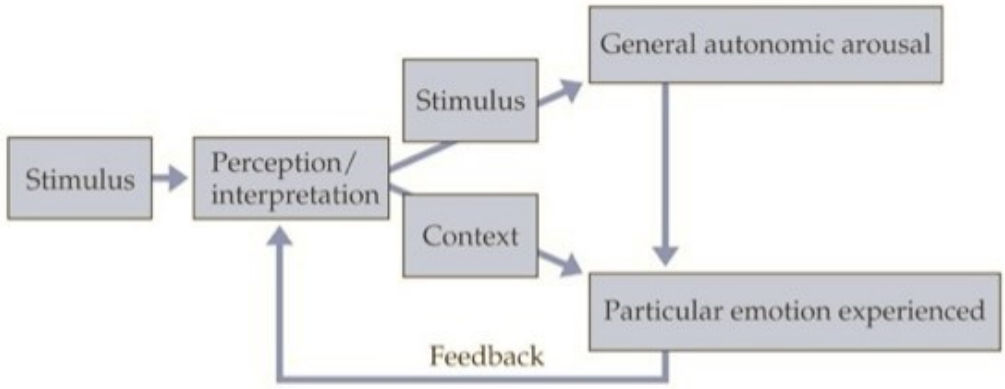
Whitehouse's separation of religions into two modes of religiosity is extremely well researched and established, but I argue that in the case of larger high-demand new religious groups, we have observed a hybrid of the two modes (ie. Children of God, Unification Church, etc.). I believe the potential for hybrid groups is especially high among those groups whose leader has died and they have survived, like Scientology.

Attribution theory, as posited by Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer (1962), and used by Stephen Kent, explains the social-psychological context that individuals assign or attribute to internal and external stimuli triggered by a religion's rituals, belief systems, or other in-group social interactions. The theory suggests that the emotional responses elicited in adherents by

listening to or performing ritualized music within a high-demand new religious group could lead to the magnification and/or misattribution of that response to the mystical or divine powers of the group or its leaders. Kent's study, along with the work of Galanter (1989), Galanter et al. (1979), and Proudfoot and Shaver's (1975), showed the applicability of attribution theory to study of high-demand new religious groups. Moreover, Kent (1994) correctly extended the attribution theory to the misattribution theory, thereby more accurately encompassing the oft observed phenomenon of high-demand new religious group adherents incorrectly identifying the source of different perceived psychological or physiological responses to ritual. The research showed in a case study involving the Children of God that the emotional misattribution was powerful enough to circumvent a person's basic need to protect him- or herself when faced with divine justifications for punishments.

Schachter and Singer's (1962) attribution theory, as demonstrated in Figure 9, posits that an individual – when faced with categorizing an emotional response – will label emotion in terms of available explanations and be very unlikely to label it with unfamiliar terms.

*Figure 9: Schachter and Singer's (1962) Attribution Model*



Schachter and Singer's model also corresponds with the Peretz (2006) findings that a positive neural feedback loop is occurring. Moreover, this process reinforces the positive primal loop through the misattribution of emotions felt to the divine, natural, or supernatural powers of the group and/or its leaders.

The sociological element of this tripartite model is one that requires the establishment of a case study to substantiate the affects and effects of the rest of the BPS model. To make a case for the applicability of a *biopsychosocial model for religious music in high-demand new religious groups*, a researcher will need to confirm the high-demand nature of the new religious group in question. Research must draw on and exam the following:

1) Research former and current members' accounts of the group;
2) Conduct a rigorous review of internal documentation and evidence;
3) Possibly conduct or draw upon qualitative interviews with current and former members;
4) Access to and examination of a substantial portion of the group's internally produced music; and
5) Ensure that through the pervious steps one can ascertain the degree of musical ritualization.

The above research is pivotal to demonstrate that there existed little to no opportunity for the biopsychosocial affects and effects suggested by the model to *not* be influencing adherents. Moreover, this research will help to confirm the possibility for misattribution amongst adherents, which, as previously mentioned, could augment both the affects and effects revealed by the model.

## Summation of Biopsychosocial Music Model

Through the systematic review of relevant literature, I have constructed the *biopsychosocial model for doctrinal music in high-demand new religious groups.* This model builds on the biological and evolutionary arguments that demonstrate the universality of musical ability and its role in group cohesion. Neurobiological research that effectively demonstrates the positive neurochemical responses to musical performance augments this universality and group cohesion argument. These positive neurochemical responses correspond to meeting necessities (food, sex, etc.), suggesting that music plays a role in eliciting positive emotional responses, and further supporting the group cohesion hypothesis. The social dynamics within a high-demand new religious group's ritualization of music magnify the above neurological and psychobiological responses. The formation of long-term memories would have profound and long lasting effects on adherents through primarily doctrine based songs. The above affects and effects have the possibility of amplification via the Schachter-Singer misattribution theory, using the recommended research methods in a case study of a high-demand new religious group. Ultimately, the social element of this model relies on an in-depth case study to support the social claims made by this model. In future research to test the model, I will be employing it in a study of the Children of God.

# CHAPTER 3: THE CASE STUDY

# The Children of God

## Introduction

The new religious group known as the Children of God was prolific in its use of music throughout its history, especially in its peak years. For that reason, I have elected to use the group as a case study and to analyze it using the constructed biopsychosocial music model. Moreover, previous work examining the group, as well as former member accounts, will prove its designation as a high-demand new religious group. To better understand the relationship between the Children of God's key doctrine, the group's music, and the possible membership maintenance effects on adherents, I will subject the group to the following analysis. An examination of key doctrinal communications index will yield words and phrases that appear to be central to the group's doctrinal structure. I will use the resulting list to examine the group's music for those words and phrases. The music and the group will then be subject to a biopsychical analysis using this project's model. I will review former member accounts of internal group schedules and activities to understand the social dynamic of the group and corroborate how much the Children of God used music.

## General Overview of the Children of God's History

David Berg (1919-1994) founded the Children of God in 1968 in Huntington Beach, California. Theologically, the Children of God group was a derivative of Christianity and an offshoot of the Jesus Freaks group. After facing persecution in the United States, the Children of God began establishing colonies or 'homes' globally (1,642 homes according to xfamily.org).

During its peak years, the group had a membership of between ten-thousand and fifteen-thousand adherents (xfamily.org). I have identified the peak years for the Children of God as the years between its founding in 1968 and 1981, the year that David Berg was replaced as the official leader by his mistress/wife, Karen Zerby. I made this decision on the basis that, up until 1981, all communications, and therefore, all decisions related to group doctrine flowed through David Berg; it also represented the peak of membership. It is worth noting that after 1978, efforts to reform the group's original doctrine began to shift due to different controversies that surrounded the group. These shifts are often noted by a change in the name of the group, from Teens for Christ (1968-69), to Children of God (1969-78), to the Family of Love (1978-81), to finally the Family or the Family International (1982- 2014), under the leadership of Zerby, also known as Mama Maria, Queen Maria, or Maria David. According to the group's own historical account on thefamilyinternational.org, these reformative years resulted in a loss of one eighth the Children of God's membership. Therefore, by confining the case study to the peak years we are more assured of the doctrinal origin and homogeneity and thereby improve the accuracy of our analysis of the group during its highest membership.

Berg, who was also known as Father David, Uncle Dave, Dad, David Moses, or Grandpa, communicated with adherents through his *Mo Letters*, which the group distributed globally to all members (over 3,000 titles published over 24 years). In one of them Berg stated, "if there is a choice between reading your Bible and the *Mo Letters*, I want to tell you that you better read what God is saying today" (*Old Bottles!* No.242). *Mo Letters* directed adherents to believe Berg was the end-time prophet of the Judeo-Christian god, thus reinforcing the millenarianism of the group's theology. This theology, communicated through these sacrosanct *Mo Letters,* taught adherents many of the basic allegorical stories of the Bible, but also Berg's

specific theology for his followers. The group's messaging included the belief that the external world or 'system' was a dangerous world of unsaved people or 'systemites;' it was the mission of the Children of God to save them, by having them join the group. The inbuilt and theologically mandated need for proselytizing, combined by the group with its open sexual practices, also founded upon Berg's *Mo Letters*, is the practice known as Flirty Fishing. This recruitment tool was the practice of sending mostly female adherents out to becoming 'prostitutes for Jesus,' whereby they would engage in sexual acts with members of the public with the aim of converting them. The *us versus them* mentality, driven by the constant reminder to adherents to view the world as what leader David Berg called 'the system,' constantly fueled the need and the justification for such tactics. It also provided the need to separate from the wider society into colonies and homes, an essential element for my labeling the group 'high-demand.'

The proselytizing process used by the Children of God included public musical performances intended to attract new members and to raise money for the group. Coffee shops were an early and notable home for these performances. Often Berg was in attendance during the group's early years. *Music with Meaning*, an internally produced show distributed to members around the globe, was the main medium for distributing internally produced music to adherents. Jeremy Spencer (former member of Fleetwood Mac) and other professional musicians helped produce the show, write, and perform doctrine-laden songs for adherents.

The group's open sexual environment, proselytization through sex, and musical recruitment became the Children of God's most well-known attributes. The group later banned most of these sexual practices, but not before several child sexual abuse allegations and legal challenges arose for the group (Barker 1989, Kent 1994, Van Zandt 1991, and Jones, Jones, &

Buhring 2007). As previously noted, at this juncture in the late 1970s we see a shift, at least publicly, of the doctrine the group was promoting and a decreased role for founder David Berg.

In July 2013, a knowledgeable former member reported to me that no central organization now exists for the group and, for all intents and purposes, the group was no longer in existence (Buhring, J., personal communication, July 8, 2013). While there are undoubtedly individuals or small groups still adhering to the teaching of the Children of God, the lack of a central authority means we can consider all members in the former member population. The combination of the group's demise and the extensive collection of doctrinal publications and songs that have survived make the group a perfect case-study for this project.

# Evidence of Musical Ritualization and High-Demand Nature

## Evidence Provided by Former Member Accounts

This segment details several former Children of God members' first-hand accounts of their time and experiences as adherents or as the children of adherents within the group. These accounts serve to demonstrate that the use of music was prevalent across globally dispersed communes. Moreover, it will show that the Children of God's doctrine directly influenced internally created music produced by adherents. These direct former member accounts will also show the highly regimented, high-demand lifestyle to which the groups subjected adherents. The rigidity of adherents' days set forth by group rules and norms, reinforced by group leaders, provided the necessary structure for the biopsychosocial effects to possibly occur more regularly. I divided the personal accounts below between the individual authors, all of whom had direct experience with the Children of God during the group's peak years. Individual authors may

touch upon the same topics or details provided in the historical overview, so I have included these instances for their relevance as evidence to either the internal social structure or biopsychosocial determinants.

### Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis

Deborah Davis (Linda Berg), who was founder David Berg's daughter, provides one of the clearest portraits of the internal social structure that existed during the peak years of the Children of God. Davis was an adult when her father founded the group and remained near the inner leadership circle for most of the peak years. This unique position afforded her more power within the group and thereby more access to the group's true motivations. Davis states outright that "[t]hrough music [the Children of God] lured thousands of youth into its clutches" (Davis 1984, p. x). She expands, stating that "music played a vital role in [their] ministry" even in very earliest days of the Children of God, back when they were still known as the *Teens for Christ*, (p.129-130). Davis recalls how singing together "had great appeal to the youth" they were looking to attract (p.36) and it was not long after these initial gatherings that hundreds of youth gathered. According to her, the "the secret to gathering wayward youth" was "free peanut butter sandwiches and live music" (ibid). Davis's recollection of the very earliest foundational days of the Children of God show how the group's leadership intentionally used music as a mechanism to attract and maintain membership from day one.

Davis recalls how, as the Children of God grew, the group began to have a more formal structure. She states that "[e]very person's time was highly controlled; no one 'did their own thing'" during their time at the early Texas commune. She lays out the normal daily schedule adherents followed as shown in Figure 10:

*Figure 10: Texas Soul Clinic Daily Schedule (Davis, 1984, p. 81)*

| | |
|---|---|
| 6:30 | Reveille |
| 7:00-7:30 | Light Breakfast |
| 7:30-10:30 | Morning work period |
| 10:30-11:00 | Clean up |
| 11:00-11:30 | Breakfast |
| 11:30-2:30 | Bible Classes |
| 2:30-4:30 | Snack and more Bible study classes or work period |
| 4:30-6:00 | Bible Classes |
| 6:00-7:00 | Dinner |
| 7:00-9:00 | Inspiration and fellowship, singing, dancing, testimonies |
| 9:00-10:30 | Tribe meetings |
| 10:30 | Lights out |

This schedule would be largely recreated time and time again in the various communes and houses of the Children of God across the globe. Moreover, the schedule shows that within the daily schedule was a nightly two-hour meeting wherein singing, dancing, testimonies, glossolalia (speaking in tongues) etc., took place.

Davis's account of the group also provides a unique insight in to how sexual abuse permeated and began with the upper leadership. Specifically, Davis recalls how her father made sexual advances toward her several times (p.9). Berg demoted Davis after she would not give-in to his incestuous sexual advances. Unfortunately, Berg replaced Davis with her younger sister Faithy, who, according to Davis, her father admitted to sexually abusing for years (p.12). At first, the group's upper leadership confined this level of sexual deviance to their circle. Berg, however, soon spread his new message to the whole group through his *Mo Letter* revelations (*The Devil Hates Sex,* Mo Letter No. 999). Davis explains how adherents who had already committed to the

group's supposedly divine doctrines and David Berg's leadership made these more extreme departures from the ultra-conservative foundations of the group. She aptly states:

> [a]fter this major initial decision, a person does not have to go through an intense moral battle every time he encounters a new cultic belief. His mind simply points him back to his most recent decision, which provides ample justification for accepting any new truth (p.69)

This process toward illegal sexual practices, combined with psychological and physical abuse, was gradual and constantly reinforced by David Berg's *Mo Letters*. According to Davis, her dad would "[mix] a kernel of biblical truth with one of his questionable doctrines." She notes how a "forthcoming publication would contain more error, using the previous one to justify it," thus following a purposely incremental and obfuscating principal in his *Mo Letters* (p.68). Berg and other leaders cultivated a level of blind obedience through the resocialization of adherents. This process was, unfortunately, very successful as we will see in the other first-hand and academic accounts.

### Miriam Williams - Heaven's Harlot

Miriam Williams's experience as an adherent in the Children of God provides important insight into the upper echelons of its musical leadership and production because she married the drummer of the Children of God's most famous musician and former member of Fleetwood Mac, Jeremy Spencer. Prior to this union, however, Williams recalls many musical influences like that of the many other adherents. Her first meeting with a Children of God adherent was with a young man about her age who carried a guitar, mirroring similar experiences of other former members in this section (Williams, 1998, p.29).

By joining the group in 1971, only a few years after it started, Williams provides some important insights. These insights strengthened her early opportunities "to meet many of the top leaders" when she was still just "a babe" or new convert (p.45-46). Williams remembers an early commune/colony life filled with nightly inspirations with hundreds of adherents, where singing and instruments would take place for hours, often into the early morning (p.40). Frenzied dancing accompanied what she describes as a "lively Gypsy tunes," all amounting to an "extremely exhilarating" experience (p.40 - 41). Like all adherents in the Children of God, she selected – or the leadership gave her – a new biblical name; in Williams's case that name was 'Jeshanah.' Colony leaders had duties based on traditional gender roles, and as a young woman in the group, those duties meant working in the nursery. The nursery existed because the Children of God communes at that time did not believe in individually raising children by one set of parents, but rather believed the group as a whole should raise all children born into it (pgs. 47 & 54).

Williams's vital insights into the creation and performance of music by the Children of God provides us with undeniable evidence of the purposeful and concerted effort of the group's leadership to use music as a medium to communicate to and control adherents. Williams recalls how "Mo's early disciples each played a musical instrument" and that "many were accomplished musicians and songwriters before they became disciples" of the group (p.40). Williams recalls how the group's leadership encouraged that songs were to be about the Children of God and inspired by God due to the leadership's goal of eliminating "worldly music" from the group (p.39). Williams's evidence again effectively demonstrates that the use of music was there from the very early days of the group's foundations.

Williams remembers that she and most adherents never questioned the ascendance of *Mo Letters* and David Berg to divine status. She writes, "the *Mo Letters* told us what to believe in, and how to live this belief" (p.36), and that *Mo Letters* "were soon on equal authority to the Bible" within the group (pg.48). Therefore, when they communicated that "Music is the language of this generation, and we must speak it" (London 58:33), and that "[o]ur music is the miracle that attracts so many to our message about the Man," adherents believed it to be a message from God (*Thanks and Comment, Mo Letter* No.157:6). Berg believed and told his followers that music was "the magic that heals their souls and wounded spirits and proves our messiahship, that we are their saviours." This direct message from Berg could not be clearer to his adherents about how they were to use music and, according to Williams, adherents received the message. She recalls that within this environment, Jeremy Spencer's band found success and produced "Hard-beating contemporary melodies [that] were accompanied by catchy, meaningful verses," which reflected the internal beliefs of the group (p.40).

Of note in Williams's account and found within the other accounts is the daily need for reading and memorization of scripture and *Mo Letters* (p.46 & 48). Not only does her story demonstrate the high-demand nature of the group, but it also provides a logical extension that members would have felt an internal pressure encouraging adherents to memorize the group's music. With a blanket ban on outside music and literature, the Bible, internal music, and *Mo Letters* were often the only acceptable way to spend any personal time.

### Ruth Gordon

Being a musician herself, Ruth Gordon (as a young convert) was attracted to the Children of God's use of music. She recalls, prior to joining the group, that she had a very positive

attachment to music because it brought reward and recognition to her, and these feelings are something she describes as looking for by becoming an adherent. One of her first positive memories while joining the group was an early meeting with a large group signing songs, dancing, and holding hands (Gordon, 1988, p.115). This moment was also the first time she heard the familiar and oft-repeated 'battle-cry' of the Children of God where a leader would shout "it's a revolution" and the group present would respond "for Jesus" (p.115). Gordon intimates that these gatherings would result in a very high energy among those present.

After joining the group officially, she soon found herself in different musical groups because of her ability to sing, play guitar, and write songs. She even performed in a Children of God band, performing group songs exclusively (pg.139-140). One of her groups would go on to have some mainstream success in Brazil. The Children of God's leadership used this success to attract new members (p.208). Music made up a huge part of her day-to-day routine while performing in the band. Gordon recalls that the recording "sessions were intense and draining, both physically and emotionally" for her (p.143). Gordon penned some of her own group songs that she says were about group doctrine, and she remembers that "[s]ongwriting became an emotional outlet, a way to praise God" as well a way to distance herself from the new and troubling world around her (p.150). Gordon wrote songs, she says, because Children of God "leaders wanted to provide a sense of unity by having all disciples use the same songs" across the global network of colonies (p.141). Doing so helped reinforce the group's message regarding the outside world being evil (the system), and therefore the leadership forbade outside music.

An example of the level of control some adherents felt about the group comes from Gordon's writing on her time doing Flirty Fishing, a highly-controversial tactic of proselytizing to men through sex. She writes, "[e]ven as negative thoughts about 'Flirty Fishing' came into my

head, I rebuked myself: We're not supposed to interpret. We're to be faithful servants and unquestionably obedient" to the doctrine (p.202). Throughout Gordon's account of her time in the Children of God, we find this pattern of psychological control. She recalls her own role in recruitment, stating that "[p]rospective converts were urged to come to [the house] to enjoy food, drink, music, and skits full of comedy and subtle messages about the COG" to win them over (p.210). Despite this level of psychological manipulation and countless forms of abuse, Gordon still views the music she had written during here time in COG favourably and divinely inspired, wishing she could have back the songs she wrote (p.295). Gordon's final sentiment shows her deep connection to music.

### Ted Patrick

Ted Patrick would later become the first and one of the more controversial figures in the anti-cult movement. His initial experience with a high-demand new religious group was with the Children of God. Patrick's son had a run-in with the group in California during the early 1970s that prompted Patrick, who was working for then Governor of California Ronald Reagan, to investigate. To do so, Patrick pretended to be a possible convert with the group to infiltrate it and discover members' motives.

Like others, his first experience with the group included music. He recalls a van full of young people singing songs while they waited and on the way to the group's commune (Patrick, 1976 p.38). He goes on to describe a tiring night without food, water, or sleep, where adherents berated them with scripture, *Mo Letters,* and songs. The commune's adherents allowed them outside the following morning to eat, and the large group of potential converts and adherents sang Children of God songs. Patrick said those present worked themselves "up into a frenzy"

during the singing and dancing (p.47). He also recalls how adherents made them sit outside all day in the heat, only breaking from the barrage of blaring Children of God doctrine for singing and dancing, thus creating a reward-centered view of the singing times. Patrick goes on to discuss the nightly playing of tapes contain readings of scripture, *Mo Letters*, and Children of God produced music while people were going to sleep or sleeping (pg.48). Shortly after his second night in the commune, Patrick left.

Patrick offers us a unique insight into his experience in the group because of his research and dealings with numerous other groups in his career. His discussion of the resocialization process the group used and the six common attributes some adherent experiences is especially relevant. Patrick's description of the resocialization process employed by the Children of God is that:

> They consciously and deliberately set about to destroy every normal pattern of living the victim has known; he is separated from his friends, he is turned against his family, he is led to renounce his education, his career, his responsibilities. He is literally robbed of whatever financial assets he may possess…. He is physically abused and often expected to work as much as twenty hours a day fund-raising for the group. He is frequently undernourished and psychologically manipulated to the degree that he cannot distinguish between reality and the grotesque fantasies and illusions the cult fosters. He is programmatically turned against his country, taught that patriotism is sinful, the system Satanic. He is urged to become revolutionary, to destroy the institutions of society in the name of David Berg. (pgs. 69-70)

The high-demand and structured nature of the resocialization process, outlined by Patrick and used by the Children of God, resulted in (according to a Charity Frauds Bureau report that Partick quoted, p. 76), the following six common experience of Children of God adherents:

1) A sudden (unexplained) decision by a new "convert" to drop out of school;
2) An initial refusal to leave the COG commune by a recent "convert" based on fear;
3) A complete personality change resulted in bitter hatred for parents;
4) An unexplainable and uncontrollable compulsion of a "convert" to return to COG commune despite vicious brutalization while there;
5) An uncharacteristic and self-destructive compulsion to transfer all personal assets and those of their parents to COG; and
6) The failure of "converts" to receive monies requested from and forwarded from their parents.

The culmination of the Children of God's resocialization process and the similar shared experiences fully demonstrate the high-demand nature of the Children of God internal social structure.

## Una McManus

Una McManus became an adherent of the Children of God at the age of fifteen and remained in the group for five years. Over this time, she had two children and was subject to the group's many psychological and physical abuses it condoned. The first Children of God adherent she met was a young musician in her native Ireland who sang to her, "*you've got to be a baby to go to heaven",* which was a popular first song and message delivered to potential converts (McManus 1980 p.16-17). She recalls "Listening to him, his agile body swaying in time to the

music, the answer to life seemed so simple," and as a result, she believed that through this group, she too "could be happy and fulfilled" and thus left home and joined (p.17).

McManus's writes that on her first visit to a Children of God commune, she remembers the lively singing and dancing that took place. She recalls how it resulted in "the atmosphere of the room bec[oming] emotionally charged" for those present (p.22). She goes even further recalling similar group singing experiences where members would speak in tongues and that "[a]s the session wore on, people grew more and more ecstatic, reaching a peak comparable to a drug induced high," something with which she had firsthand experience (p.22). McManus recalls how songs penned by Berg's son, Aaron, "roused us into such a spiritual frenzy," thereby showing that after having been in the group for a while, she too felt that same emotional charge when group singing would take place (p.42).

McManus also identifies in her writing that singing group doctrine was something done by all members – even those in leader David Berg's inner circle. She remembers a visit from Esther, a daughter in-law to Berg, and Joy, who was one of Berg's 'wives' (p.59). During this visit, Joy gathered the commune together and sang to them, revealing the new *Mo Letter* instruction of *One Wife,* the message of which was that all communes, leaders, and adherents had wandered too far from Berg's teaching and therefore chided and instructed to only do as told from now on (p.59-60). As one member (Jesse) who McManus quotes, put it, "Obedience to leadership is one of the basic foundations of this endtime movement," and although it was already a well-established rule of the group, this rebuke helped to reinforce the central leadership and strictness of following the rules (p.46).

## Celeste Jones

Celeste Jones, in *Not Without My Sister* (2007), recalls her childhood in the group and living with her adherent father whose group name was Simon Peter, and whom she credits with founding the influential *Music with Meaning Program*. She recalls his motivation being that he wanted to attract more followers quicker than was possible through the current *litnessing* (i.e., witnessing through literature) techniques used by the group. Although founded as a radio program (with cassettes distributed to the group's communes), the program eventually evolved into a videotaped program with VHS copies distributed. According to Celeste, Berg quickly endorsed this show after he found out about the program in its early days (pg.14). Celeste stated that "from the very beginning, the Children of God used music as a bait to attract interest and attention," but she points out the clear role that group singing or *inspirations* played in the day-to-day activity of the communes she lived in, of which there were many (Jones et al 2007, pg.13).

She describes her father and other musically talented members, like Jeremy Spencer, creating songs together. According to her, the songs crafted by adherents often were based on the doctrine contained in *Mo Letters* (ibid). Songs also were the product of living within a high-demand group where members "were conditioned to believe that carrying out Mo's directives was following God's will," a concept predicated on the belief that "Mo is God's prophet for today" and for the "end time" (p.28). The idea that "System Christians don't have the Spirit" (according to the internal social logic of the group), further supported the supposedly divine inspiration of their work (p.25). The above directives as discussed came from Berg directly in the form of *Mo Letters* or in the case for the group's children as *True Comix*, which was a differently illustrated version of the original *Mo Letters* (p.25). Jones notes, however, that often they still

contained the same graphic and sexual imagery found in the originals, thus ensuring a similarly explicit and forcefully instructive method for communicating Berg's will to even young members.

As part of Berg's support of the *Music with Meaning* program, (according to Jones), he had his youngest daughter, Faithy, contact Simon Peter about expanding the distribution of the program worldwide. To facilitate this growth, Faithy had scouted Greece as a location to gather together other musically talented Children of God members, all to "advance the cause to the outside world and gain them more followers" (pg.16). Making the *Music with Meaning* program more marketable created several other avenues through which both current and potential members could learn more about the Children of God doctrine. These other avenues included: listener write-ins, *Music with Meaning Clubs*, mailings, and magazines (pg.16-17). The program's commercial structure took shape in Greece, where hundreds of selected musicians and technicians moved, many of them taking up residence in a nearby campground (p.17). Camping communes were still a common practice based on the early models of Berg between his leaving Huntington Beach and arriving in Texas.

Celeste also provides us with several important insights into the internal social structures that helped to foster the creation of music, as well as the group's secrecy and abusive policies. Like with all former members examined, the first step in this process was creating an *us versus the outside world* (the system) mentality. This process reinforced that all things in the outer world, or the System, were evil and of the Devil. This logic, according to her, always discouraged adherents from doubting their choice to stay in the group (pg.25-26). The fear of prosecution from the outer world went so far that advanced members possessed gold coins as "flee-money" in case of trouble (p.53).

According to Celeste, adult members also would routinely chastise or physically abuse the children of the group for little or no reason, especially if they ever questioned the teachings of the group or an adult's authority. This practise created an environment where adult adherents would psychologically and physically punish children for their naturally inquisitive natures, thereby reinforcing the very doctrine in question (pg.50). This system of obedience reinforced the dichotomy between adherents and the world around them, which meant that "[a]ll our songs had to be inspirational, about witnessing, Jesus, the Bible" or risk punishment (pg.69). Celeste provides us with a greater understanding of how deep and detailed were the rules adherents had to follow at different points. The rules were especially difficult to follow because Berg was forever changing his mind. The shift from Berg's early puritanical views on sexuality to the later open sexual practices that the group promoted is an excellent example of the shifting rules over time.

The rules at different points included the following: eating with a spoon only, not using black pepper, forbidding women from wearing jeans, men having to wear boxers, using only three sheets of toilet paper, and even a rule on the soaking of fruits and vegetables (p.64). If members did not get on board with the new rules, then a new *Letter of Correction - Mo Letter* was quick to follow, addressing offending members (like in *The Girl Who Wouldn't,* a letter telling female members to get on board with sexual sharing [p.68 and *Mo Letter* No. 721]). The group reinforced the rules in a petty, hierarchical and informant rewarding system, so that if someone did not witness someone following them, then they still believed that God always was watching (p.64). According to Celeste, adherents viewed every mistake or illness as a weakness of faith. If people got sick or made a mistake, then other members chastised them. Celeste recalls how the leadership sent her step-mother back to Europe for medical treatment, which she says at

the time "was a mark of dishonour, hav[ing] to resort to doctors meant she was weak in faith" and worthy of public scorn (p.73). She also remembers how Berg chastised her father in a *Mo Letter* and how he internalized and took the blame, even going so far as to write a public apology (p.103). Perhaps most egregious, is how during several bouts of a sickness. A young Celeste recalls how group leaders blamed her for her own condition (ibid).

According to Celeste, the recollections of different individuals around the group's open sexual practices or 'sexual freedom' demonstrates the conditions of internally secrecy that prevailed within the Children of God. This sexual freedom led to open sharing between adults, pluralistic marriages, orgies, Flirty Fishing, and most infamously, the sexualization of children, the encouragement of child sexual abuse, and encouraged sexual relations between children. Celeste recalls that she was the victim of this abuse starting at the age of 6 (p.84).

The sexual abuse of children within the group directly followed both the directives of the group's prophet David Berg, but also his example (Faithy and Davidito). Due to these practices Berg concealed himself from his membership and was always moving to avoid capture by authorities (p.39). Again, the in-built us versus them mentality of adherents reinforced the secrecy surrounding these practices. Celeste recalls being "told that Systemites would not understand the truth and liberty [they] had" this rule she says taught her "lead a double life" when interacting with non-members (p.33).

For children and youth in the Children of God, all the rules, punishments, and abuse were made worse under the creation of teen camps, where one leader stated outright that "Yes, we're brainwashing you" to those gathered (p.83). The group established a Detention Teens program for youth who were "spreading doubts, showing a critical and analytical spirit, and questioning

the words of the prophet" to combat the growing discontent among its second-generation (p.107). Issues concerning second-generation members would come to dominate a great deal of focus for the group membership maintenance efforts because of the substantial number of children who had been born to members.

### Juliana Buhring

Juliana Buhring, the younger sister of Celeste Jones, grew up in the Children of God as well, but due to the family separating for large periods of time amongst the group's communes, her experience differs from that of Jones and provides us with even further insight into the group's high-demand social structure. Like her sister, Buhring was also heavily exposed to the music of the Children of God. She recalls nightly singing during her time in different communes (Buhring et al 2007, p.148-9) and that the only outings outside the Manila commune's compound were for singing (p.131). These nightly group singalongs and outings were performed by the "many talented musicians" in the group who "would lead the rousing inspirations. Over two hundred voices joined together in song made the atmosphere electrifying and sometimes [she] would get goosebumps. Often people would be crying and praising in tongues as they felt the Holy Spirt come over them," according to Buhring (p.138). She also remembers that this music dealt with the group's doctrine, primarily "the topic[s] of witnessing or the Endtime" as their theme (p.138). The young members of the Children of God, of course, continually performed this music. Buhring recalls how she and other "teenagers had been deprived of education, because they had been sent out busking and fundraising as children," thus reinforcing the narrow idea that doctrine was the only valuable information requiring any time and attention (p.139). The physical and psychological abuse, neglect, and deprivation suffered by second-generation

children eventually presented progressively larger issues for individuals and for the group as they aged.

As she grew older in the group, her experiences during the time she spent separated from her family contained many of the similar abuses her older sister faced. In addition to these abuses, she recalls the continual use of music to influence her age-group. There were *Kiddie Viddies*, which were music videos of Children of God music for young people (p.148). The "Family 'Battle Hymn' blasted loudly" each morning, to wake those in the commune and adult adherents played *Music with Meaning* tapes while kids were falling asleep and while asleep (p.140-146). This consistent use of music is a clear demonstration that the leadership understood that its highly routinized use provided possible positive and coercive attributes. Moreover, it continually reinforced the strict high-demand need for the memorization of doctrine.

# Evidence Provided by Academics

## Academic Evidence of the Children of God's Internal Social Structure

In order that the clearest picture of the internal social structure of the Children of God during the group's peak years emerge, I have done a thorough review of the academic research available. I vetted the research presented below as indicated by within the methodology section of this thesis. I have chosen to present the relevant findings of each individual academic separately where possible because each presents a specific viewpoint during a specific period of the peak years. Each academic's input will serve as further evidence in determining the high-demand status of the Children of God and how they used music.

## W. Douglas Pritchett

W. Douglas Pritchett's (1985) book *The Children of God Family of Love: An Annotated Bibliography* presents both the group's foundational history and a very complete breakdown of all internal communications the group produced during the peak years. Pritchett's review of the group showed that "[n]ew converts went through three months of intensive discipleship. Activities and relationships were so structured that there was little--if any--privacy, free time, or reading materials (except the Bible). Eating and sleep habits were similarly regulated," suggesting a decidedly controlled conversion to the group (Pritchett 1985, p.xiv). The Children of God recruited new converts, according to Pritchett, from the "disenchanted youths of the counter culture," as well as drug addicts, thus producing an early dependence on the group as their new path or savior (p. xi). Robert S. Ellwood Jr. states that this form of:

> intense training can be compared to a boot camp in the military, or to a novitiate in an austere monastic order. It is a strenuous experience designed to mold a new personality in a short period, using every trick of fatigue, strain, loud repetition, and authoritarianism to shatter one psychic structure and substitute for it the values and vocabulary of another (Ellwood 1973, p.104-05 in Pritchett 1985).

Both Ellwood's and Pritchett's conclusions clearly point to a demanding and intense initial period wherein new converts lived in a highly-controlled environment.

According to Pritchett, one of the most damning early investigations of the Children of God came in 1974 from Louis J. Lefkowitz, Attorney General of New York. Lefkowitz's (1974) report, titled *Report on the Activities of the Children of God,* concluded that "they were engaged in numerous illegal acts including: kidnapping, brainwashing, imprisonment, virtual

enslavement, violence, prostitution, polygamy, incest, sexual abuse and rape, draft dodging, tax evasion, and theft (McBeth, Leon 1977: 64-74; Dart, John 1976: II-3 in Pritchett 1985, p. xxi). One can see evidence of these many illegal and lascivious acts in the work of Pritchett, other academics, internal publications, and former member accounts included in this work.

According to Pritchett (1985) and former adherent Joseph M. Hopkins, one notable development in group doctrine that allowed these acts to occur was the shift of focus from Jesus to David Berg. According to Hopkins, he noticed it in how members proselytized (witnessed); "the strategy is still evangelism, but the messages are 100 percent different. It's not so much Jesus Christ any more; it is Moses David (David Berg)," which marked a major departure in the group's initial doctrine (Hopkins 1977, p.18 in Pritchett 1985, p. xx). Hopkins also noted that, combined with the shift in devotional focus, was the domination of the sex theme in Children of God literature (Hopkins 1977, p.41 in Pritchett 1985, p. xx). Pritchett correctly notes in his analysis of the Children of God's stages of evolution that "[a]t each stage in the group's evolution, Berg's charisma was transformed to a progressively stronger level as both a reaction to societal control and as an inducement to further deviance on the group's part" (Pritchett 1985, p. xxviii). This evolution ultimately culminated in Berg attaining the status of a demi-god among his adherents.

## Ruth Wangerin

Ruth Wangerin's dissertation, *A Make-Believe Revolution: A Study of The Children of God,* is a comprehensive look at the Children of God's founding, history, doctrine, and social structure, much of it attained through personal visits to the group's colonies. Wangerin clearly lays out how "[t]he Children of God used music right from the beginning" to expand the number

of adherents and colonies they had (Wangerin 1982, p.366). The group was quick to send its new converts or *babes* out singing and litnessing (proselytizing) on the street (p.380). The Children of God continually appeared to use music, not only to attract members, but also in the daily schedule, even "from the earliest days of Huntington Beach, through the coffeehouses in countless cities, to the first discotheques with electric music in London," leading many adherents to internalized a pressure to learn and perform. Many adherents began "practicing their instruments and writing new songs" to meet the pressure they felt (p.163). In her many visits, it appeared to Wangerin as if "everyone learned to play guitar," but the strategy to use music to the group's advantage was not just passively managed, since she notes that the Children of God "made special effort to attract trained musicians" and other people from the music industry (p.163-164).

According to Wangerin, The Children of God had a "large talent pool to draw from," because they attracted music students and musicians from the southern United States. These musicians injected the Nashville sound into the music, which made the "music all the more appealing to youth in much of the world" (p.163) Wangerin also addresses the role of famous musical convert, Jeremy Spencer. She correctly argues and shows how "[p]art of the secret of [the Children of God's] success in the musical field was that much of the personnel would move from one country to another," and among these key personnel were Spencer and Faithy Berg, who started bands and colonies (p.163). Wangerin tells how these bands were essential to "opening up" new countries (pg.366). The Children of God successfully launched a musical troupe in France under the name Les Enfants de Dieu (The Children of God), as well as other locally named groups in other countries. The Children of God leadership used these musical acts

to promote the group's music and thereby its doctrine to the mainstream. It also afforded a saleable product to aid in raising much-needed funds (p.162).

The saleable merchandise and good press these bands afforded the Children of God was invaluable and provided a major portion of the group's income stream, resulting in a natural expansion of music's use to include children's singing groups. Wangerin notes from her first-hand observations how "[a] big part of colony life was singing the [Children of God] songs, and the children were encouraged to sing along" with them (p.366). The inclusion of children in nightly singing sessions, however, went further, since "music was an important part of their school curriculum" in colony schools (p.366). Wangerin adds that she witnessed one member from a Children of God band provide regular music lessons for young children and toddlers, which "[s]he started by having them beat sticks to learn rhythm," providing further evidence of the systematic use of music (ibid). According to Wangerin, the Children of God even used children "in semi-professional show troupes," some of which were on radio and television programs (p.366-67). The group used many other children in the fundraising and proselytization efforts of the group, making them sing and perform publicly, often daily, thus ensuring they were unlikely to be receiving formal education of any kind (p.367). The money that the groups brought in kept the communes financially viable, thus creating an intrinsic motivator for adherents.

Wangerin's research also provides substantial evidence of the high-demand nature of the Children of God. Wangerin met tight security at every Children of God colony she visited while conducting observational research, according to her (p.136-7). The security of colonies was only one aspect of controlling interactions with the outer world, deemed the system by Berg and his adherents. Wangerin notes that what members could read was highly controlled and that usually

the Bible and internally produced communications were the only approved reading materials (p.374). The Children of God's leadership exerted this type of control on all aspects of life, according to Wangerin, including having to learn specialized vocabulary, or by forcing adherents to forsake money or goods (p.375 & p.417). The pressure exerted by colony leaders was, by her account, the result of a punishment and reward system established by Berg (p.141). Leaders who wanted to move up had to do so by impressing those above them and that was done by getting more "money, souls, disciples, and/or other "stats" on their records (ibid). The internal social structure these pressures created was intense and often damaging to mid-level leaders and below, resulting in an extremely judgmental and results-orientated system.

### John W. Drakeford

Psychologist John W. Drakeford's book, (1972) *Children of Doom: A Sobering Look at the Commune Movement,* is one of the earliest books and academic pieces written on the Children of God. Drakeford's work therefore provides a unique focus on the early history of the group, especially in the foundational Texas commune. After gaining several followers in Southern California and facing mounting pressures from officials, Berg uprooted his followers in the Spring of 1969 first to become a convoy of buses and RVs travelling around America and Canada before eventually settling on a ranch outside Thurber, Texas (Lattin, 2007, p.43-45). Fred Jordan, a former boss of Berg's and a noted televangelist, owned and loaned the ranch to Berg and his group (p.48). Drakeford's observations of the colony provides the model that we can now see served to inform all future Children of God colonies. This pattern was likely because the earliest adherents of the group were often in positions of leadership when the Children of God began expanding globally.

Drakeford's visit to study the Texas commune known as the *Texas Soul Clinic* provides an excellent review of the internal social structure of the Children of God's first static commune/colony. Drakeford's first observation was the security of the compound. Adherents had built fences, walls, and gates, and employed many of its members in daily guard duty. According to one former member with whom Drakeford spoke, these security measures included an early warning system of adherents posted in hidden guard stations along the approaching road (Drakeford 1972, p.15). Once inside the colony, Drakeford found the internal social structure rigid and well organized. The group's leadership had separated adherents into tribes, with each tribe assigned different duties (cooking, carpenters, mechanics, etc.) to aid in the running and maintenance of the colony (p.47). Drakeford found their living and sleeping conditions too crowded, rudimentary, and at times obviously punishing in the case of young women who had to sleep in a metal truck trailer in the Texas heat (p.48). A guide showing Drakeford the colony noted that the women staying in the trailer unit had to learn to suffer "for Jesus's sake" for them to gain salvation (p.48).

Recalling the daily regimented schedule at the colony, Drakeford notes that the group's leadership provided very little food to adherents for either breakfast or lunch. The group's leadership maintained this setup despite the heat and demanding work expected from adherents in a hot and dry climate (pg.52). The only real meal observed by Drakeford was dinner, followed by a raucous nightly singing and inspiration session.

Drakeford's observations show the leading role music played, even in this first commune. He recalls how "[t]he evening brings the climactic meeting. Here they sing, hear news from other colonies, have testimonies and Hebrew dancing, sway about with their hands held high, and participate in other practices that help build the experience of relatedness" (p.56). The experience

described by Drake appears to elicit an ecstatic state in participants. One guide told Drakeford that "members of the colony are encouraged to play guitar or learn to play," demonstrating how music played a role in the group's membership maintenance activities (p.57). Beyond the benefits of membership maintenance is the attraction of new converts. Drakeford recalls how the group's music and dancing would cause people to "flock to look at and listen to them" during his observations (p.141). Thus, music served an important dual purpose from the very earliest days of the Children of God.

Other areas of concern are evident in Drakeford's observations of the Texas colony and other early colonies that the Children of God established. These concerns include the group's millenarian beliefs, biblical literalism, and internal social pressure on adherents. He notes how the group required that the first three months of a new convert's time involve memorizing biblical verses and that they had to reach 300 memorized versus (p.32-33). This memorization would continue to play a role in the daily lives of converts as it was one of only a few sanctioned reading materials and they would often sing, chant, or recite scripture in unison as a group (p.28). The outright belief in biblical literalism fueled the group's millenarian belief structure, adding to a constant fear that the world would end or soon face judgement. Drakeford's writings show how adherents internalized the group's end of days' beliefs by viewing the 'soul clinic' name literally--they felt it was repairing and saving their souls (p.32). These beliefs also drove an in-group logic that made proselytizing the most important aspect of group life.

An excellent example of the in-group logic that the Children of God promoted comes from the group's failure to successfully farm peanuts and watermelons on the ranch. Drakeford recalls a guide telling him that "[t]he Lord showed us that we were spending our time with watermelons and peanuts when we should have been out harvesting souls" for the group (p.51).

The sentiment behind this logic becomes a central aspect of the Children of God moving forward and we see it time and again in the group's foregoing of producing any saleable products beyond its litnessing/witnessing materials. It also shows how adherents misattributed their fortunes to the divine very early in the group's history.

Drakeford's early observations also capture the foundations of the Children of God as a more centrally controlled and organized group with a growing number of communes. Of note is the establishment of the group's first press to print internally produced communications, and the use of public relations to combat the negative press they were receiving. By engaging in public relations, group members were attempting to control the message on who they were (p.55-57). Ultimately, the group's attempts would prove unsuccessful in the United States, where Berg organized a mass exodus of followers based on what he felt was the persecution of his group.

### David E. Van Zandt

David E. Van Zandt's (1991) book, *Living in the Children of God,* is perhaps the most in-depth look at the Children of God. Van Zandt initially conducted his research using covert participant observer methodology where he posed as a new convert and lived in an English colony in 1976. He conducted the second part of his research again as a participant observer, but he did it overtly for two months in a Dutch colony in 1977 with the permission of some group leaders. His covert and overt methods for gathering data provides a very complete analysis of colony life and some of the wider, often systematic issues the Children of God were dealing with.

One issue that had become prevalent by the time Van Zandt conducted his research was around David Berg and the *Mo Letters* connection to the divine. He discusses how the group

expected new members to have a "thirst for the word." By the time, however, that Van Zandt did his studies "the word" no longer meant the Bible, but *Mo Letters* (p.12). Many early publications declared that David Berg was God's last prophet or, as early *Mo Letters* stated, God's end-time prophet (pgs. 20-22). Berg's self-proclaimed connection to the divine transferred to the *Mo Letters*, which either stated or implied "divine inspiration" as well (ibid). Van Zandt notes how *Mo Letters* came to override the initial supremacy of the bible the group preached (ibid). This transition, which was founded on Berg's supposed divine prophet status and inspiration of the *Mo Letters,* is what Van Zandt credits with allowing Berg to introduce controversial doctrine and re-write any statements as he saw fit. Berg also classified *Mo Letters* according to who he had approved to read them, whether for leaders only, for reading aloud to members, all members, or the public (ibid). In doing so, he ensured a hierarchy of information and a system of secrecy within the group that still reinforced the dichotomy between the group and the outer world.

Van Zandt identifies several major themes he encountered in the *Mo Letters*; paramount among them was the theme of salvation. *Mo Letters* pushed that David Berg held the truth to salvation and that being a member of the Children of God and following its ideas for living was the only way to salvation. Moreover, the group constantly told adherents how the outer world was evil, and that God would imminently judge and destroy America and other countries that rejected their group (ibid). Other themes included God's love, sex, politics and (often anti-Semitic) economics, directives to leaders, reports of events, directives to members, etc. (ibid). Van Zandt again notes, like other authors, that the group made the distinction between the inner and outer worlds by labelling the outer world *the System* and members of it *systemites*. The group combined the above doctrinal topics to reinforce its previously noted millennialism. Van Zandt summarizes that the belief was that "[t]he System and its ungodly structure would soon be

replaced by a new social order during the imminent millennium" which the group initially expected to take place in the early 1980s (p.24). During this time leading up to the millennium, the group's doctrine predicted that war and economic ruin would overwhelm the earth, followed by the rise of the antichrist, before the return of Jesus to defeat the antichrist and "lift up" all believers, providing a divine existence to the Children of God's adherents (pgs. 24-25). This distinction created by the group between adherents and systemites fueled what I argue a dehumanization of non-members.

Another theme of the *Mo Letters* and membership that Van Zandt highlights is around discipleship, or what I call an adherent's total commitment to the Children of God. According to Van Zandt's observations and what he read in *Mo Letters*:

> [t]otal discipleship consists of full-time living within a COG colony; "forsaking all," the surrender of all possessions to the Family and the cutting of all ties with the world if necessary; obedience to COG leaders; and above all else, full-time proselytizing (pg.24).

Through this high level of commitment to 'God's work,' one ensured their salvation and a favourable judgement from God during the predicted rapture-like event.

Van Zandt's research provides evidence of how the Children of God organized its global network of colonies. His findings first show how the group's leadership divided colonies into functional areas, for example litnessing/witnessing, music, publication specialists, child rearing, school colonies, etc. Of specific note are the music colonies and those used for the rearing and education of children/youth. Van Zandt notes that music colonies housed the group's better musicians, and that right from the groups foundational days, "the Family had encouraged [adherents] to write and record as much music as possible" for use within the group and for

distribution (p.58). The group distributed internally produced music among the global colonies via cassettes; adherents would then listen to the music for "inspiration or to learn new songs for proselytizing" in public (ibid). Colonies for children and youth were necessary, according to Van Zandt, because of the substantial number of children the group was having and because leaders were often too busy or separated from their children by leaders higher up (p.59).

Van Zandt's work also provides the longest-term analysis of the day-to-day routines of the colonies and thereby may be the most accurate, at least at the time of his research. The daily schedule that Van Zandt describes is very similar to that of the one observed by Drakeford and the Texas soul ranch. Van Zandt, however, provides significantly more detail regarding routine. Of note is the following:

a) a guitar player singing a Children of God song woke members each day;
b) personal time was 'free-time' and informally required members to use it for reading or memorizing scripture and *Mo Letters*;
c) all non-leaders and child minders used the afternoon to proselytize;
d) dinner was still the only major meal of the day;
e) group conversations of the day's activities and current events were always viewed through the lens of group doctrine;
f) nightly devotions were still multi-sensory experiences involving a great deal of dancing and singing;
g) members all wished each other goodnight with a 'love hug' and affirmative or complementary statements about the other person; and
h) the colony leader/shepherd checked that members were in bed (pgs. 61-63).

The colonies followed this schedule on every day but Sunday, when the schedule was more relaxed, providing time for members to practice guitar, host visitors, memorize versus, clean, etc.

Van Zandt provides further key insights because of his access to the Children of God during his research periods. One of these observational insights deals with the 'faith trips' that two adherents would often be sent on by a colony leader/shepherd. These trips would involve the colony leader sending members to a new city with only enough money to get them to their destination. It was then up to the adherents to 'live by their faith' and live off the money they made from selling Children of God publications (p.66).

Van Zandt also discusses observing several other faith services that the group required of some adherents. He witnessed the very early days of Flirty Fishing or the group's use of female adherents as sexual bait for would-be converts, but states he had limited direct contact with it. Another attraction mechanism he more frequently observed was café singing, whereby Children of God musicians and other covertly placed adherents would produce a lively music session to elicit money from other patrons (pgs. 66-67). Both services to the group intended to either elicit money or other resources and/or new converts.

### Stephen A. Kent

Sociologist Stephen A. Kent has written extensively on the subject of high-demand new religious groups, including several important works on the Children of God. Most notable is his psychosexual history of David Berg and his application of misattribution theory to the Children of God. In his article (1994) "Misattribution and Social Control in the Children of God," Kent lays out a formative argument for why adherents would allow themselves to be subject to routine and often harsh punishment by group leaders. When combined with the first-hand account of

former members, Kent's research on the Children of God and David Berg uncovered a distinctive pattern of internal group logic. According to Kent, "[t]he social-psychological logic of participation in [the Children of God] provides a dramatic example of sustained patterns of commitment despite harsh punishment" and sexual exploitation (Kent 1994, p.30). For misattribution to be powerful as to sustain this pattern, Children of God adherents had to first engage in initially misattributing divine authority to the group's leadership and second, to engage in the childlike obedience of rules, doctrine, and leaders. Based on the writing of Berg and one of his daughters, Kent summarizes the obedience the group demanded of all adherents as "like that of children who obey their parents blindly and forcibly," thereby creating a very skewed hierarchy (p.40).

Kent's discovery of this pattern in logic leading to a cycle of misattribution provided a lens to view and understand the many troubling aspects in the internal social order of the group. As noted, the most significant of these aspects relates to the group's regime of punishment and sexual abuse. Kent specifically points out that Flirty Fishing and other "[s]exual relations (claimed by the group as a manifestation of God's love) were rampant among all members, even extending to sex between some adults and children and among some children" (p.30). Kent provides the story of one former adherent whom the group and her husband unduly pressured into Flirty Fishing, which again was the act of having sex with either potential converts or individuals providing some resources to the group. Kent correctly asserts that the Children of God's punishment system was dependent on the "reduction of members' will and self-esteem" in order that they misattributed all punishment and bad things as having been their own fault and all good things with having come from God and thus also from Berg (pg.35).

The misattribution of divine authority to David Berg and other Children of God leaders was an integral part of the group's doctrine and foundations since its early days in Huntington Beach. According to Kent, the group's early "[d]ependence on Jesus brought with it an immediate social requirement--dependence upon God's self-proclaimed prophet on earth, David Berg," thus providing a divine authority to every aspect of the group's organization and doctrine in the minds of adherents (p.33).

Kent provides two personal and salient examples from interviews with former members of how the logic of misattribution played a key role in their lives. First he presents the story of Karen Meyer, who--after being vocal of her husband's extra-material sexual activities and the death of her baby--was blamed and ostracized by her fellow members (p.36). Other adherents believed that "God was dealing with her" for her vocal objections to open sexual practices (ibid). David Berg even sent her a personalized message on the matter, telling her that she needed to pray because God had it in for her (ibid). Eventually Meyer would accept and internalize this logic, misattributing her situation as punishment for some failure on her part. Another account provided by Kent is that of Lucy Lowe (alias for anonymity), who lost a child shortly after its birth. In this instance, Lowe misattributed the loss of her child with her resistance to participate in Flirty Fishing (ibid). Both instances provide a clear picture of how the individual internalization of group logic and doctrine, combined with misattribution, could influence even the most personal and tragic of circumstances.

## Eileen Barker

Sociologist Eileen Barker is one of the most senior and most prolific academics in the area of new religious movement studies. Often her work has served to bridge the opposing camps

of supporters and detractors in the study of controversial religions. Throughout her work, Barker's aim has been to balance the rights of individuals while still employing a skeptical and evidence-first based approach. To strike that balance, she has been reluctant at times to accept former member accounts of their experiences, labeling them as *atrocity tales* (Barker, 1989, p.39). With this critical and somewhat oppositional approach to some of work used in this thesis, Barker still comes out very critically about the Children of God as a new religious group. For example, she addresses the group's controversial child sexual abuse and confirms its use of adherent only schools, while also addressing the open sexual practices of the group that involved Flirty Fishing (pgs. 70-72, 77-78).

Barker also examines other controversial elements of the Children of God. She cites the Children of God as one of most troubling examples of where the rules and the group's leadership only provided limited and often restricted communication methods between adherents and their families outside the group (p.172). Barker expands on this critique later in her analysis, stating that "[c]ontact with non-members tends to be confined to obtaining money and evangelising" (ibid). In her chapter on "Areas of Public Concern," she outlines several issues that fit with what we know about the Children of God. One such area of concern is on how some new religious groups lie and deceive the public, potential converts, and even their own members. Barker references instances where groups have lied to make financial or other gains in resources for the group. She notes that a common tactic is for groups to use multiple aliases (Barker 1989, p.50), observed in the many name changes that Berg's followers underwent throughout the years as they sought to shed bad publicity.

All of the controversial elements of the Children of God's doctrine happened within an internal social structure that demanded absolute commitment to the group. This absolute

commitment involved adopting a new biblical name, dispatched to a colony (often in a new country), and constant proselytizing (p.172). According to Barker, obedience to the doctrine and commitment to the group was predicated on a "hierarchal authority structure with ultimate power resting with Berg and his immediate family" (pg.172). Baker's examination also directs our attention to Berg's self-appointment as the 'end-time prophet' and the recurring theme that the apocalypse was coming, which caused adherents to view the group's doctrine as divinely inspired.

Barker quotes the following two *Mo Letters* as striking examples of how the Children of God promoted some of its formative and controversial doctrine.

> YE CANNOT BELONG TO BOTH THE SYSTEM AND THE REVOLUTION, the forces of reaction *and* the forces of change!... Its impossible; as Jesus said, you'll *either hate* the *one*, and *love* the *other*; or *hold to* the *one* and *despise* the *other*. You'll *either stay* in the *System* or *drop out.* There's no such thing as hanging somewhere in between, suspended between Heaven and Hell in some kind of compromiser's limbo! [original emphasis] (Our Message! *Mo Letter* No. 330 in Barker 1989, p.171)

> **Cut loose** from those old foolish fancies… still taught by some churches and parents! **Let yourself go in the bosom of God and let God do it to you in and orgasm of the Spirit till you're free! You're His wife!—Sock it to him! Hallelujah, I am free**—Jesus gives us **liberty!** Amen?—Now try it!—You'll **like** it— And thank God for it!—Amen? It's a Revolution!—For Jesus! Power to the **People!—Sex** power!**—God's** power!—Can be **your** power! Amen?**—Be a sex revolutionist for Jesus!—Wow!—**There we **go** again! **Hallelujah!—**Are you

> **comin?** [original emphasis] (*Revolutionary Sex! Mo Letter* No. 258 in Barker 1989, p.171).

In these *Mo Letter* excerpts, we again see the foundational logic that underpins the group's doctrine and supports the pattern of misattribution Kent observed. thus providing further evidence of the groups high-demand internal social structure.

## Other Sources of Evidence

Journalist Don Lattin's (2007) book, *Jesus Freaks: A True Story of Murder and Madness on the Evangelical Edge,* is an in-depth examination of the 2005 murder suicide committed by Ricky "Davidito" Rodriguez, the son of the Children of God's founder David Berg. Beyond the details of this crime, Lattin provides a well-researched review of David Berg and his family. Lattin's work on the early foundations of the group showed how "David Berg's children brought many early adherents into the fold especially Aaron, who wrote many of the songs that would inspire the first wave of converts" (p.38). Lattin makes it clear in his work that early on, David Berg was not the public face of the group in Huntington Beach, but rather his adult children were. Berg first revealed himself to those his children had attracted after the conclusion of a singing and clapping session led by his children (p.39). In these early meetings, according to Lattin, Berg first used the call and response battle cry synonymous with the Children of God, "it's a revolution" to which the crowd responded with "for Jesus" (ibid).

Lattin provides two accounts of early converts to the Children of God and how music played an effective role in recruiting them and maintaining them as members. In one account, an adherent named Shula described hearing Berg's son Aaron performing Children of God music

for the first time as a "supernatural feeling," which communicated that she should marry him only days after her introduction to the group (p.55). In another account, an adherent approached a man named Jim LaMattery and asked, "want to hear a song?" Being a guitar player himself, he agreed. Within moments of meeting, he agreed to go with the adherents in their van (p.59). LaMattery, in his conversation with Lattin, recalls how it was only a brief time after that and he was using his own musical abilities to attract members. In both cases, Lattin presents the possibly effective role music played in attracting the interviewees to the Children of God, and Lattin also shows how music served to maintain their membership. In the case of Shula, she chased her supernatural feeling within the group and toward Aaron, while in the case of Jim LaMattery, we see how the group exploited his own musical abilities to reinforce his membership.

# Analysis of Case Study Song Data

## Comparative Analysis of the Children of God's Song Lyrics and Doctrine

The following section will examine the level the Children of God's doctrine makes up the lyrics of internally produced music. I will conduct this systematic analysis by using the listing of words and key subject areas identified through a complete review of the internally produced *The Letter Index*, which provides an indexed breakdown of all peak year *Mo Letters* (the primary internal communication of group doctrine). *The Letter Index* provided a listing of 85 words and key subjects. This listing resulted in I what I call the *Children of God's Song Coding Instrument for Written Content Analysis*. Using this instrument of analysis, I will directly compare its contents to those found in randomly selected songs from a software package, containing the most complete record of internally produced music, known as *The Family Songbook*.

I will conduct this systematic analysis of the Children of God's *The Family Songbook* in the following manner:

1) I will enter all songs within the songbook as the population;
2) Using a random number list of songs, I then will pull songs from the population until I reach the point of saturation; and
3) Once I reach saturation, I will upload the corresponding data for each song's word-by-word count and line-by-line count to the statistical program R for calculating the doctrinal content percentages, mean, median, and mode.

I used the following definition of saturation for this project: achieving a highly consistent and maintained result from song to song as it detected by the *Children of God's Song Coding Instrument for Written Content Analysis.* Put differently, we achieve saturation when continuing to analyze songs beyond that point will not alter the results of the data analysis.

The *Ultimate Family Songbook 98* is an archive of 2,600 internally produced Children of God songs. Children of God adherents performed these songs throughout the history of the group. As with external music, different songs' popularity and frequency varied. What does not change, and is clear in the previous analysis of the daily life of adherents, was the regularity of singing in general. Therefore, the project will not weight songs based on their popularity, but rather simply allow all within peak years to remain potential songs for analysis. Evidence of an early popular song would be "You've got to be Baby to go to Heaven," as referenced by several former members and scholars (McManus 1980 p.16-17).

## Doctrinal Words and Subject Area Detection to the Point of Saturation

Table 2: *Song Subject Matter using Key Doctrinal Words and Phrases*, below, represents the initial review of songs selected at random from the Children of God's *The Family Songbook*. The information in the table details the key words and subjects that each song involved. As shown, not a single song presents itself without multiple key words and subjects. This fact played an important role in determining that the project had achieved saturation after 21 songs. Three other pieces of information also emerged from this analysis.

1) Over the course of the 21 songs analyzed, the *Children of God's Song Coding Instrument for Written Content Analysis* had 101 instances where songs addressed a key word or subject;
2) The 21 songs contained an overall average of 4.81 words and key phrases; and
3) Songs appeared to produce a pattern wherein several key terms and phrases were more likely to occur.

I have outlined these patterns below the table.

*Table 2: Song Subject Matter using Key Doctrinal Words and Phrases*

| | **Song Name** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Key Word or Phrase** | David's Mighty Men | Bim Bam | All Things Change | At Calvary | Queen Maria | Hands Up | Let Us Hear | Galo Gonzales | Jesus Christ Maketh They Whole | I believe in Love | Jesus is Here | Learn That Your Soul Can Be Free | Born Again | Forget the Past | Keep Your Eyes on Jesus | Just a Little Talk with Jesus | Oh, the Blood of Jesus | Hard Hat | Sex in Heaven | Moses David Wine | Really wanna to Love Him |
| America/Uncle Same | | x | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | | x | | | | |
| Anger | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Antichrist/Devil/Satan | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Arabs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Key Word or Phrase | Song Name | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | David's Mighty Men | Bim Bam | All Things Change | At Calvary | Queen Maria | Hands Up | Let Us Hear | Galo Gonzales | Jesus Christ Maketh They Whole | I believe in Love | Jesus is Here | Learn That Your Soul Can Be Free | Born Again | Forget the Past | Keep Your Eyes on Jesus | Just a Little Talk with Jesus | Oh, the Blood of Jesus | Hard Hat | Sex in Heaven | Moses David Wine | Really wanna to Love Him |
| Backsliding | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bible | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | x |
| Chastisement | | | | x | | x | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Children/Childcare/Childbirth | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Children of God | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Churches | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | |
| Christianity | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Colonies | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Communications - Formats | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Camping | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Creation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Communism | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| David, Dad, Moses, Father, Grandpa | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | x | |
| Discipleship | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dreams and Interpretations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Death | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Davidito/Davida/Deborah/Techi/Mother Eve/Hosea … royal family | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Education, Children of God | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Europe | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Enemies | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Children of God - Finances | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Flirty Fishing | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Faith | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | x |
| Fear | x | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Food and Nutrition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Government, Children of God | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Governments, World | | x | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | |
| God | | | x | | | x | x | x | | | | | x | x | x | | | x | | x | |
| History, Children of God | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| History, World | | | x | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Health and Healing | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Homes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Heaven/Other Side | | | | | x | | | x | | | x | | x | | | x | | | x | | |
| Hell (Lake of Fire) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Israel | x | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jews/Judaism | | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jesus/Lord/Crucifixion | x | | x | x | | | | x | x | x | x | | x | | x | x | x | x | | | x |
| Judgement | x | | x | x | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jerusalem | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Leadership, Children of God | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | Song Name | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Key Word or Phrase** | David's Mighty Men | Bim Bam | All Things Change | At Calvary | Queen Maria | Hands Up | Let Us Hear | Galo Gonzales | Jesus Christ Maketh They Whole | I believe in Love | Jesus is Here | Learn That Your Soul Can Be Free | Born Again | Forget the Past | Keep Your Eyes on Jesus | Just a Little Talk with Jesus | Oh, the Blood of Jesus | Hard Hat | Sex in Heaven | Moses David Wine | Really wanna to Love Him |
| Legal Affairs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Love | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | x |
| Marriage | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Missions, World | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mo Letters | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Music/Sing/Song | | | | | x | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | x | | |
| Maria/Momma | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Natural Disasters | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Obedience | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Parallels - Berg often drew parallels to demonstrate his teachings or prove a point | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Parents | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pioneering | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prayer | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| Prophecies and Predictions of the future, including end-of-days scenarios (Calvary) | x | x | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Publications - discussions of the publications | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Persecution and Martyrdom | | | | | | | | x | x | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Public Relations > dealing with the outer world | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Revolution | | x | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reporting > Colonies to HQ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Russia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Security | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Science | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Salvation/ Saves/Sin | x | | | x | | | | x | | | | | x | x | x | | x | | | | |
| The System/Systemites | | x | x | | | | | | | | | x | x | x | | | | x | | | |
| Sex and Physical Touch | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | x | | |
| Holy Spirit | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stories and Illustrations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sacrifice/Blood | | | | | | | | x | x | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| Sprits (Angels, Saints, Soul ,etc) | | | | | x | | | | | | | x | x | | | | | | x | | |
| Training Leaders/Programs (babes, LTs) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Travel | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Trials and Victories | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Thankfulness | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Understanding | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Visions and interpretations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Videos (How to, MWM) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Witnessing/Preaching | | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| War | x | | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | | x | | | |

| | Song Name | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Key Word or Phrase** | David's Mighty Men | Bim Bam | All Things Change | At Calvary | Queen Maria | Hands Up | Let Us Hear | Galo Gonzales | Jesus Christ Maketh They Whole | I believe in Love | Jesus is Here | Learn That Your Soul Can Be Free | Born Again | Forget the Past | Keep Your Eyes on Jesus | Just a Little Talk with Jesus | Oh, the Blood of Jesus | Hard Hat | Sex in Heaven | Moses David Wine | Really wanna to Love Him |
| World Services | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Women | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | |
| Youth | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

As discussed, this initial analysis of the Children of God's music has shown several high-value or reoccurring themes. I identified the following key words and phrases in that vein: chastisement, God, Jesus, judgement, heaven, *Mo Letters*, music, prophecy, sacrifice, salvation, spirits/angels, the System, war, and world governments (i. e. America & Israel). The most common narrative found within songs, as shown above, are persecution by the evil outer-world and how God and Jesus through the Children of God will lead to salvation in heaven.

## Percentage of Doctrinal Words and Subject Areas per Song

I forwarded the 21 songs generated by the initial review of the Children of God's music for a systematic analysis of their lyrical content to determine the doctrinal content percentages of each song. I arrived at the doctrinal content percentages of each song by using the *Children of God's Song Coding Instrument for Written Content Analysis* as demonstrated in the previous section. I utilized the measurement instrument to measure each song twice: first, I did a word-by-word review of each song and second, a line-by-line review. In both counts, I eliminated the previously noted connector and repetitive words from the overall word-count of

each song. The results of my systematic review and calculations are below in Table 3, presented along with relevant statistical measures for their corresponding counts.

*Table 3: Doctrinal Content Percentages of Sampled Songs*

| | **Song Title** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Doctrinal Content Percentage** | David's Mighty Men | Bim Bam | All Things Change | At Calvary | Queen Maria | Hands Up | Let Us Hear | Galo Gonzales | Jesus Christ Maketh They Whole | I believe in Love | Jesus is Here | Learn That You Soul Can Be Free | Born Again | Forget the Past | Keep Your Eyes on Jesus | Just a Little Talk with Jesus | Oh, the Blood of Jesus | Hard Hat | Sex in Heaven | Moses David Wine | Really want to Love Him |
| Percentage of Doctrinal Content by Word Count | 19 | 35 | 34 | 50 | 65 | 3 | 41 | 24 | 44 | 48 | 46 | 11 | 13 | 8 | 41 | 25 | 67 | 22 | 33 | 47 | 47 |
| Percentage of Doctrinal Content by Line Count | 78 | 75 | 77 | 85 | 82 | 5 | 43 | 28 | 100 | 95 | 100 | 40 | 18 | 29 | 89 | 83 | 75 | 17 | 55 | 74 | 81 |

*Table 4: Statistical Measures of the Doctrinal Content Percentages*

| **Statistical Measures of the Doctrinal Content Percentages by Word and Key Subject Area** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Statistical Measure** | **Percentage by Word Count** | **Percentage by Line Count** |
| Mean | 34.43% | 63.29% |
| Median | 35% | 75% |
| Mode | 41% | 75% |

The content analysis of the Children of God's music clearly shows that all music they produced contained doctrine, with all lyrics addressing multiple key words and phrases from the measurement tool. The level of doctrinal words and key phrases that appear in each song varies, but the mean (statistical average) of 34.43% over all songs measured demonstrates that the

group's music was certainly a medium for the transmission of group doctrine. Furthermore, the line-by-line analysis for the presence of key words and phrases displays a mean of 63.29% and median (statistical middle value) of 75%, which I believe is more representative of the true theme of each song. Therefore, I conclude that the majority of the Children of God's internally produced music lyrics were thematically based on the group's key words and phrases directly related to the group's doctrine. This conclusion establishes that the Children of God's music would certainly have been a factor in its membership maintenance efforts because it was an exclusive medium for transmitting large quantities of doctrine to adherents.

## Analysis of the Children of God's Music's Aural Attributes

### Application of Aural Analysis to the Children of God Internally Produced Music.

In the following sub-section, I will detail the results of the aural analysis of the Children of God's music. I will conduct this systematic analysis using the *Coding Instrument for Performed Songs*. I created this instrument of analysis to detect those aural attributes the biopsychosocial music model has deemed relevant to determining the possible effects individuals may experience under certain conditions.

I conducted the systematic sampling of songs by sourcing several digital recordings of audio cassette tapes produced during the peak years. I then assigned each song a number. Using a random number list generated in Excel, I selected songs at random until the project achieved saturation. Initially, I thought the small number of songs available for analysis would make saturation difficult, but the project reached saturation after 11 songs from the 72 that were available as inputs. The analysis of aural attributes of the Children of God's recorded music uncovered a distinct, repetitive pattern in how adherents structured the internally produced

music. In Table 3: *Coding Instrument for Performed Songs – Children of God Results*, below, one sees that there is little, if any, variation in the Children of God's internally produced music's aural attributes. I will discuss the patterns and recurrences below.

Table 5: Coding Instrument for Performed Songs – Children of God Results

| | **Aural Attribute** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Song Name** | **Song Length** | **Instruments** | **Synthesizer** | **Tempo** | **Timing** | **Repetitive Chorus** | **Repetitions** | **Lyrics Sang or Talked** |
| **Travelling** | 2:56 | Guitar & Percussion | Yes | Upbeat & Repetitive | 4/4 | Yes | 5 | Sang |
| **Prodigal Son** | 3:11 | Guitar | Yes | Slower & Repetitive | 4/4 | Yes | 4 | Sang |
| **Those Sweet Soft Songs** | 2:33 | Guitar & Percussion | No | Upbeat & Repetitive | 4/4 | Yes | 4 | Sang |
| **Your Love is the Reason I'm Here** | 2:40 | Guitar & Percussion | No | Upbeat & Repetitive | 4/4 | Yes | 5 | Sang |
| **My Love is Love** | 3:00 | Guitar, Percussion, & Piano | No | Very Upbeat & Repetitive | 4/4 | Yes | 8 | Sang |
| **You've Got to be a Baby to Go to Heaven** | 4:09 | Guitar | No | Upbeat & Repetitive | 4/4 | Yes | 8 | Sang |
| **Gypsy Pirates** | 2:07 | Accordion | No | Upbeat & Repetitive | 4/4 | Yes | 6 | Sang |
| **Lovelight** | 3:06 | Guitar, Percussion, & Piano | No | Very Upbeat & Repetitive | 4/4 | Yes | 6 | Sang |
| **Streams of Love** | 3:15 | Guitar & Percussion | No | Upbeat & Repetitive | 4/4 | Yes | 5 | Sang |
| **Mountain Children** | 3:10 | Guitar, Clarinet, Accordion, & Piano | Yes | Very Upbeat & Repetitive | 4/4 | Yes | 4 | Sang |
| **I Love Jesus** | 2:20 | Piano | No | Upbeat & Repetitive | 4/4 | Yes | 4 | Sang |

From Table 5 above, I identified the following important trends within the Children of God's music. I also observed a high amount of overlap in the instruments adherents used to perform. We mostly see a combination of guitar and percussion (drums) used, with the occasional use of other instruments, including piano and accordion. Although we see the use of

synthesizers in three songs, the overall trend shows they did not use synthesizers in its peak year music. All but a single song sampled had both an upbeat and repetitive tempo, with three of them considered to have a very upbeat tempo. The only exception was *Prodigal Son,* which had a slower ballad style when performed, but the overall tempo was repetitive. All songs sampled used a 4/4-time signature and a repetitive chorus, with an average of 5.36 repetitions over the eleven songs. The highest number of repetitions observed was eight and the lowest was four. In the recorded versions used for analysis, groups or individuals performed all songs by singing them. The strength of these patterns is significant, given the fact it will reinforce any conclusions about the possible effectiveness of the Children of God's music on the group's membership maintenance.

## Summary of Chapter's Findings

The aural and lyrical analysis of the Children of God's music provides definitive answers to the stage two and three questions of this project. Below are the answers to each of those questions.

### Did the group use music in its peak years?

The Children of God used music prolifically, as evidenced by the historical records of the group (The Family Songbook), internal communications discussing it (*Thanks and Comment - Mo* Letter No.157:6), former member accounts, and academic study of the group (both observational and secondary research). The Children of Gods usage of music was present from the very early foundations of the group and was integral in its proselytization efforts.

### How often did the group use music in its peak years?

The group performed its internally produced music daily. Drakeford and Van Zandt's observational studies provide the daily schedule the group communes and homes followed at different points in the peak years. Both schedules show that adherents sang as part of the evening devotional period daily. Former adherents and academics described these gatherings as high-energy. Former adherents also described how the group's leaders would play internally produced musical recordings while going to sleep and waking up. Furthermore, we see that the group's leadership often prohibited music from the outside, frequently labeling it as an evil product of the System.

### Did the group's music contain doctrine?

The initial review of the sampled internally produced music showed that every song sampled from *The Family Songbook* hit on multiple key doctrinal words and phrases, as found in the *Children of God's Song Coding Instrument for Written Content Analysis*. The data from this analysis shows all internally produced music pieces would likely deal directly with the group's core doctrine.

### To what degree did the internally produced music of the Children of God consist of the Group's doctrine?

The systematic analysis of the 21 songs sampled shows that the Children of God's music contained high-levels of the group's doctrine. Every song reviewed presented some level of the group's doctrine. The means for both counts are the two statistical measures that are most telling about what the average internally produced song's doctrinal content percentage is. The word-by-word count gave a mean of 34.43%; the line-by-line review a mean of 63.29%. The medians of

both sets were 35% and 75% respectively, thus providing even higher measures for the middle of our data set and more evidence that the music was based on a high degree of doctrine. I argue that the line-by-line review is a better summation of the song's overall theme and thereby the better measure for answering the question. Therefore, on average, we find a high degree, or 63.29% doctrinal content percentage, in the Children of God's internally produced peak year music.

### Were the aural attributes identified by the biopsychological music model present within the internally produced music of the Children of God?

Coding the aurally sampled songs identified a distinct and repetitive structure to the music produced by the Children of God's leaders and members. This structure, when viewed through the evidence provided by the biopsychosocial music model, would show a high conformity to the attributes identified by the model as being potentially effective in those who performed or listened to the music. I will explore and explain these findings further in the proceeding section.

# CHAPTER 4: APPLICATION OF THE BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MUSIC MODEL

## The Children of God

This chapter systematically progresses through the application of the biopsychosocial music model to the Children of God and data provided by the case study. Firstly, I have used the definitions of a high-demand new religious group to establish the group as high-demand, and thereby conclude if a possibility for magnifying any of the model's potential effects exists. I employed the biopsychosocial music model to make informed inferences on the most likely possible effects that Children of God adherents experienced. These inferences are based on the evidence provided by former members, academics, and the internally produced content driven analysis of the Children of God's music. I proceeded analytically through the major effectual areas that the biopsychosocial music model suggests are possible, while connecting them to the evidence provided in the case study.

### Determining if the Children of God were a High-Demand Group

I worked through the definitive properties of high-demand groups to determine that the Children of God was a high-demand group. This designation is important because it is a determining factor in the use of the misattribution theory, and could serve as a possible magnifying factor of the speculated effects of the biopsychical model. As discussed previously, I used the work of Robert Lifton on totalistic ideologies, and several other definitions of what constitutes a high-demand group, in order to establish that the Children of God was a high-demand group with a totalistic ideology. Note, again, that although Lifton's work has served as

the basis for scholars and advocates to assert claims of 'brainwashing' in new religious groups, I have chosen to use this work differently, thereby avoiding the more contentious debates between the two academic camps. I have used Lifton's model to determine only whether a group is in-fact high-demand, without passing judgment on the effectiveness of different components. I argue that little disagreement exists that any group meeting his criteria is high-demand, as I have defined it.

*Table 6: Lifton's Eight Characteristics as Found within the Children of God*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Milieu Control**<br>*Control of communications, even internally (p. 420-422)* | • Several former members and Eileen Barker (1989) addressed how the group's leaders were constantly controlling adherents' communications and interactions with the outside world.<br>• By constantly presenting the dichotomy of good and evil, the group's music and internal communications further strengthened this process.<br>• The requirement for adherents to live in a colony house exemplifies the control the group had over individuals' day-to-day lives.<br>• The group's leadership routinely discouraged and sometimes punished adherents for consuming outside (System) reading material or music.<br>• The group's leadership made adherents read and memorize the group's doctrine daily.<br>• The group's leadership led adherents in an evening session of singing nearly every day. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • The misattribution of punishment and ills that Stephen Kent (1994), and some former members addressed, indicates that the process of manipulating individuals' internal voices was successful in some instances. |
| **Mystical Manipulation**<br>*Connecting the group's mission to the divine (p. 422-423)* | • In both the historical review, as well as throughout the former member accounts and academic work, we see the group's leadership constantly referring to its divine connection and work.<br>• David Berg and internal communications constantly referred to David Berg as a divine prophet.<br>• We see the constant referral that the group's proselytizing was saving souls from the evil System that God/Jesus would come to destroy. |
| **Demand for Purity**<br>*World separated into good and evil, the group is good and so must you (p. 423-425)* | • We see this attribute consistently in the music, *Mo Letters*, former member accounts, and academic work in the Children of God's creation of the concept of the System.<br>• Again, the goal of proselytizing was saving people from this evil outer world.<br>• Former member and academic accounts show that the group consistently punished adherents for transgressions against the rules established to maintain their purity, and thereby their salvation. |

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| | • The sub-milieus of shame and guilt are present in the internalized misattribution we see in the work of Kent (1994) and in other stories from former members. |
| **The Cult of Confession**<br>*Use of personal confessions as an act to control and manipulate (p. 425-427)* | • Academic and former member accounts show how adherents often confessed their transgressions to leadership.<br>• Individual members would issue public apologies for their sins against the group.<br>• The group's usage of this attribute produced an internal social structure filled with informants. |
| **The "Sacred Science"**<br>*The group's doctrine is sacred and adherents cannot question it (p. 427-429)* | • David Berg's self-assigned prophet status.<br>• All *Mo Letters* and other internally produced doctrinal materials constantly reinforced that God/Jesus had inspired Berg's words – "if there is a choice between reading your Bible and the *Mo Letters*, I want to tell you that you better read what God is saying today" (*Old Bottles!* No.242).<br>• Former member and academic accounts show that if an adherent questioned the doctrine, the group's leadership would punish them accordingly (i.e. 'faith trips').<br>• The public confessions and apologies of adherents is an example of this attribute. Often Berg precipitated these confessions and apologies by personally addressing their transgression in a note or *Mo Letter*. |

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| **Loading the Language**<br>*The use of an internally produced lexicon (p. 429-430)* | • We can see this attribute in the Children of God's consistent usage of words with specific meaning within the internal social structure of the group. Examples include: The System, systemites, litnessing, witnessing, end-time, royal family (king, queen, etc.), backsliding, Moses/Father/Grandpa, heaven, and revolution.<br>• Kent noted that the former Children of God members he has spoken to over the years also speak in a low-volume and lilting speech pattern (Kent, personal conversation, 2013). |
| **Doctrine Over Person**<br>*Individuals must conform to doctrine's rubric for life (p. 430-432)* | • To join the group, individual adherents had to forsake all their connections to the outer world, thereby cutting them off from who they were and making leaving more difficult.<br>• Berg equated individuality with pride and the devil in his *Mo Letters* (*Bell, Book and Candle*, *Mo Letter:* No. 203).<br>• Personal time was extremely limited and the group instructed adherents to use it to memorize *Mo Letters*, biblical verses, or songs.<br>• Children of God leadership and adherents often would equate someone's illness with a lack of faith. The leadership often would go further by refusing to allow the person to seek medical help, recommending prayer and apologizing to God/Jesus instead. |

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| | • We see the power of this attribute in how early adherents stuck with the group through major shifts in doctrine (i.e., conservative sexual practices to free ones). |
| **The Dispensing of Existence**<br>*Group is the ultimate arbiter of salvation (p. 433-435)* | • The promotion of Berg's end-time prophet status ensured adherents understood that he was receiving important messages about how to survive impending divine revolution and achieve salvation.<br>• This message is important, given the extreme dichotomy the group consistently presented between the inner and outer world (the System). The Children of God's constant efforts to save souls from the outer world exemplifies the group's use of this attribute. |

Further to Robert Lifton's eight characteristics rubric for ideological totalism, I also introduced two other definitions and a categorization method from Stephen Kent. I used these to illustrate further how little doubt exists on the Children of God's status as a high-demand group. We can see in Kent's Normativeness and Religious Deviance Model that the Children of God's doctrine and actions would have fallen outside the morally normative range that existed around the group during its peak years. The group's actions and doctrines would have floated among the *Tolerable - Non-criminal* and *Criminal*, as well as the *Intolerable - Non-criminal* and *Criminal*. The group's promotion of open sexual practice would be an example where, depending on the age and undue influence exerted the sexual acts performed among adherents, could have existed in the four categories. This pattern of floating between the right side of this model shows the group clearly existed outside what was morally normative.

Michael Lagone (1994) predicates his definition of high-demand groups on the exhibition of five attributes. I argue that the former member and academic accounts of the Children of God plainly shows they meet these criteria. The group clearly exhibits a devotion to David Berg, while employing ideological totalism as shown above to socialize adherents into the group's internal social structure. The Children of God's promotion that the group was the way to salvation and the dichotomy, reinforced consistently the good internal world of the group and the evil System, which likely would have produced psychological dependency in members. Furthermore, the group's insistence that adherents forsake their worldly possessions and raise funds for the group would have furthered this dependency while advancing the leadership's goals. The group's usage of open sexual practices also would have benefited its leadership and is responsible for numerous instances of psychological harm. The potential for this form of harm is especially true among children born into the group. One can see that the demanding (and often demeaning) internal social conditions in the group also meets Aronoff, Lynn, and Malinoski's (2000) simplified definition of harm, based on their survey research.

Given that the Children of God, through academic and former member accounts, has sufficient evidence to meet all supplied definitions and attributes within the most extreme rubrics, I feel confident in assigning them with a high-demand label. This label serves to strengthen the potential of the speculated biopsychosocial effects being effective as a positive source for membership maintenance. I argue this magnifying effect results because of the total control of adherents' lives that we have observed.

This total control is best exemplified in the rigid daily schedule involving singing, the divine inspiration for doctrine, the required daily memorization, the enforcement that group membership and following its rules were the only path to salvation, and the clear presence of

misattribution among some adherents. These conditions contributed to an internal social structure that placed undue pressure on adherents to conform to a narrow definition of what was acceptable to the group's leadership. This conformity and misattribution are the largest bi-products of the group's internal social structure that have a high potential for magnifying possible biopsychosocial effects.

## Potential Responses by Overall Effect

### Potential Prosocial Responses

The biopsychosocial music model suggests several prosocial effects are possible within the Children of God given the group's use of music and high-demand designation. Firstly, the anthropological research within the model provides evidence that music is both a unique attribute of humans (among primates) and that its adaptation would most likely aid in group cohesion (Cross et al., 2009; D'Errico et al., 2003 in Fitch, 2006; D'Errico et al. 2003 in Peretz; MacLarnon and Hewitt 1999; Miller, 2000; Sundberg, 1987). This fact is important when we recognize that most humans possess a basic ability to comprehend and perform music, and the ability is genetically encoded (Dalla Bella, Giguere, & Peretz, 2007; Peretz, 2006, p.2; Koelsch, Gunter, Friederici, & Schroger, 2000; Lai, Fisher, Hurst, Vargha-Khadem, & Monoco, 2001 in Peretz, 2006; Marcus & Fisher, 2003 in Peretz, 2006; Peretz, 2006, p.15; Schellenberg & Trehub, 2003; Trainor, McDonald, & Alain, 2002 in Fitch, 2006, p.206; Peretz, 2006). Consequently, the great majority of adherents recruited by the group would have possessed the necessary cognitive abilities to process musical stimulus. Furthermore, it suggests that this adaptation predisposed adherents to the group cohesion forces that likely generated it in the first place.

The universality of musical processing and its roots in group cohesion likely would have produced a homogenizing effect among Children of God adherents. The cognitive processing of music by domain-specific and general modules instead of a singular processing centre, provides music with its ubiquity among humans and its cohesive power (Peretz, 2006, p.11). Robert Boyd and Peter J. Richardson's (1985, 1990, 1992, 2002) research provides evidence of the homogenizing effect of rituals that emotively reinforces the group's doctrines. The potential for reinforcing the Children of God's doctrine through the performance of musical rituals is certainly possible, given the overwhelming evidence of nearly nightly singing of highly doctrine based music and its common use in the group's proselytization efforts.

Examining music's ability to be an emotional contagion supports the possible simultaneous reinforcement of group doctrine and group cohesion. According to Peretz, this phenomenon occurs during group singing and reinforces the positive message of the group, resulting in a better group cohesion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, Rapson, 1994 in Peretz, 2006, p.24; Peretz, 2006, p.24). The concept of emotional contagion is based on the work of Blacking, who suggests that music has an intrinsic ability to aid in group cooperation and often informs emotion, thus providing further support for group cohesion among the Children of God (Blacking, 1987 in Peretz, 2006, p.26). The preferential bias for music and the group's daily routine involving singing doctrine-laden music has the potential to magnify the group's cooperation and cohesion (Bornstein, 1989 in Peretz, 2006, p.23; Peretz, Gaudreau, & Bonnel, 1998). Given this research, we can speculate that the Children of God would have experienced a heightened membership maintenance system because of its music's routinization and the contagion effect. The often-ecstatic reactions of adherents as observed in both former member and academic accounts in the case-study show this effect. Furthermore, the Children of God's

membership maintenance could have benefited from the repetition of music daily, thus producing a preferential bias for internally created music. Internally created music contained a high degree of doctrine and therefore could have aided in a preferential bias toward doctrine and possible the association of positive emotional states.

**Aiding in Memorization**

The biopsychosocial music model demonstrates that music under certain conditions is known to aid in the memorization of the song's contents. Given the presence of many of these conditions within the Children of God, we can speculate that adherents could have experienced these positive results in memorization. If adherents did experience this benefit, then it would most certainly have aided in the group membership maintenance process, through memorization of doctrine based songs, and therefore memorization of doctrine. The research outlined in the biopsychosocial music model underpins the potential for this effect to occur.

Music aids in the production of auditory, motor, visual, emotional, structural, and linguistic memories when performed, according to (Chaffin et al., 2009). This multiple channel production of music-based memory is important, because Hebbian learning theory shows how this process would strengthen the synaptic pathways through repeat usage (Raucsher, 2009, pgs. 243-252). Therefore, because of the demonstrated daily regimented usage of music by the Children of God, we can make the informed inference that adherents would have multiple channel memories and, as a result, would have strengthened synaptic pathways in multiple cognitive processing regions. Peretz (2006) further supports this speculation regarding adherents, by observing a 100% increase in grey matter in the Heschl's gyrus, the first cortical structure to process music (p.22). The increase in grey matter would result in a further ability to process tones (Schneider, Scherg, Dosch, Specht, & Gutschalk 2002 in Peretz, 2006). I would suggest

that, when combined with Hebbian Learning and the basic human ability to perform and process music, we would likely find that Children of God adherents would have increased grey matter, reinforced synaptic pathways, and abilities to process music. This speculative conclusion is based on the former member and academic accounts demonstrating that the Children of God's leadership placed a special emphasis on recruiting musicians, encouraging adherents to learn an instrument, and the routine use of music in the group's daily schedule.

The Children of God's encouragement of adherents to learn an instrument and its use of musical education for the group's children would have resulted in an increase in the fine motor skills of the learner. This is especially true among the group's children, because of the increased brain plasticity at younger ages (Schlaug, 2009). Again, we can speculate, given that children had musical instruction and exposure to the group's high doctrine music at very early ages, that they could have increased fine motor skills. I also suggest that, given Hebbian Learning and brain plasticity, at younger ages we could see an even higher increase in the size of the Heschl's gyrus and a greater development of synaptic pathways processing the multi-channel memorization of music. Thus, second-generation members could very well possess even stronger recall of the group's music and thereby its doctrine.

The consistently observed upbeat tempo and repetitive lyrics observed in the aural analysis of Children of God's music is another potential factor for increasing the memorability of the group's music and doctrine. Gabrielson's (2009) research showed how an upbeat tempo and repetition in lyrics aids in the memorization of the music being listen to or performed. The ability for memorization of lyrics is our primary concern, given the proven high doctrinal content of the group's internally produced music. Snyder (2000) and Blum's (2013) findings on how repetitiveness increases our ability to recall lyrics, combined with Gabirelson's work on tempo,

suggests that the Children of God's music would have been very memorable to those listening or performing it. Blum (2013) provides the usual structure of a children's song as an example of an effective song. We see in the early songs *You've got to be a Baby to go to Heaven* and *Gypsy Pirates*, that the group utilized the upbeat and repetitive structure found in children's music.

If the above held true--that the Children of God's music was highly memorable and, as a result, the doctrine within was memorable—then the biopsychosocial music model suggests that it would have aided in the storing of autobiographical memories. The storage or connection of personal memories with music is important when we consider the ecstatic states that some former members discussed. Because music can cue and help store autobiographical memories, adherents would likely possess better memories of many events due to the presence of music (Belfi, Karlan, and Tranel 2016; Istvandity 2014). Furthermore, those memories also would connect to the ecstatic emotion they felt as well. When combined with the potential involuntary recall through earworm effect, Children of God adherents likely would have experienced a consistent feedback loop aiding in group attraction (Williamson et al.'s (2001).

Defining the Children of God as a high-demand group also showed its usage of a specific internal dictionary of group-specific and repurposed words. The index review showed many of these words were central to the group's doctrine. Jakke Tamminen's et al. (2017) work showed that music could aid in the connection of these novel words to an adherent's existing mental lexicon. Thus, the group's specific doctrine (Loading the Language) could have been more easily memorized by adherents because it was easier for them to connect it to their existing mental lexicons. If this held true, then it certainly would have aided in the group's ability to get new members enculturated to the internal social structure faster.

Within the case study, we see that David Berg's self-proclamation as the end-time prophet, combined with his charismatic authority, played an influential role in how adherents viewed him and the doctrine he preached--doctrine that the group's internally produced music heavily incorporates. The biopsychosocial music model suggests that the charismatic authority built into the group's doctrine could have aided in the group's survival through the activation of certain memory devices (Ketola, 2008, p.40; Whitehouse 1995, pgs.194-200; 2000, pgs. 54-98; 2004, pgs.105-17). The potential activation of these memory devices would then have directly impacted the Children of God's membership maintenance efforts. This potential outcome is important because no group could survive without the routine practice of its doctrines and rituals (Ketola, 2008, p.40) – something we find routinely in the former member and academic accounts of the group's daily regime.

If the above held true, then the Children of God's music-based rituals potentially would create both episodic and semantic memories because of the Children of God's hybrid doctrinal and imagistic modes of routinizing and planning rituals. This effect could be possible because the group's rituals are both highly routinized and ecstatic. This hybrid nature of the group could have aided in the mastery and uniformity of doctrinal memory among adherents, thus benefiting the group's membership maintenance efforts (Ketola, 2008, p.40; Whitehouse 1995, pgs.194-200; 2000, pgs. 54-98; 2004, pgs.105-17).

**Collective Effervescence**

Durkheim's theorized concept of collective effervescence serves to illustrate an important potential effect, similar to the previously discussed emotional contagion effect. Again, the Children of God used music daily. Accounts of evening devotionals have described them as ecstatic events for those present. This ecstatic reaction of adherents could be due to both the

potential the emotional contagion effect, and increased cortisol levels because of group singing (Hallman and MacDonald's (2009), which results in a feeling of euphoria (Leech and Newsholme 1984). Potential increases in cortisol, combined with physiological effects of music that can include chills and goosebumps, would likely aid in adherents subverting their individuality for the sake of the group. Peretz (2006) demonstrated that music can override individuality in a group context. If true, then the collective effervescent effect would support the membership maintenance efforts of the group by positive interactions with the group's doctrines through nightly devotional sessions. If adherents did respond in this way, then the potential exists that they could have misattributed the positive responses to the divine connection of the group.

**Positive Personal Emotions**

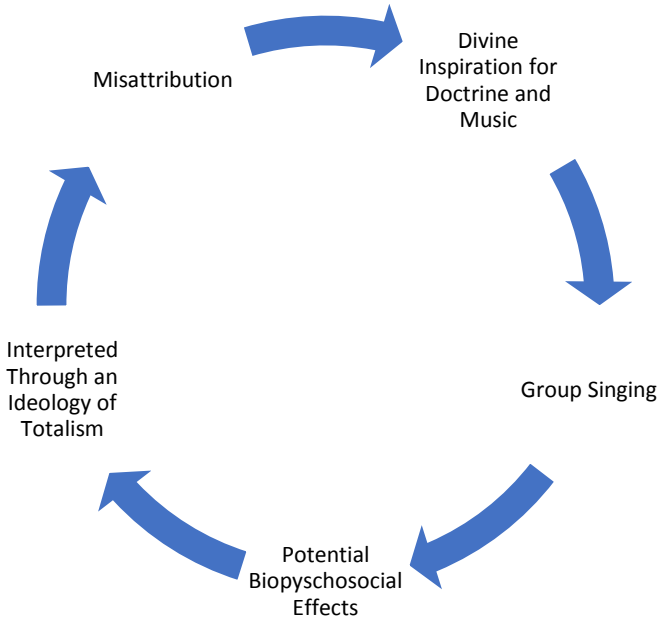
Connected to the potential for collective effervescence is the potential for positive emotional responses among Children of God adherents, based on the group's use of doctrine-laden music. The potential for these responses among adherents is because music engages the limbic reward system (Blood & Zatorre, 2001 in Peretz, 2006, p.23). The limbic system is important because it is the same system that processes stimuli like food and sex (Small, Zatorre, Dagher, & Jones-Gotman, 2001 in Peretz, 2006, p.23). Furthermore, in the biopsychosocial music model, music engages the amygdala, which means music is as effective as food, drugs, and sex at provoking a positive emotional state (Gosselin et al., 2005 in Peretz, 2006; Peretz, 2006, p.23), leading to the conclusion that music is releasing endorphins (Goldstein, 1980 in Peretz, 2006, p.23). If music can have these abilities, and the Children of God used music heavily within a high-demand regime, then the likelihood is high that adherents experienced these potential effects--effects that certainly would have created a positive feedback loop between the adherent, the group, and its doctrine, because positive emotional responses to music

are linked to the how others react (Jackendoff & Lerdahl, 2006, pgs. 42-43). Therefore, if even some adherents experienced these effects, then emotional contagion, collective effervescence, and misattribution had the potential to spread the effects among adherents.

### Misattribution of the Discussed Biopsychosocial Effects

I have suggested throughout that the high-demand nature of the Children of God and misattribution to the divine are two potential magnifying factors to the suggested effects of the biopsychosocial music model. The high-demand nature of the Children of God underpins the potential power of the misattribution within the group. According to Schachter and Singer's (1962) theory, adherents could have interpreted any positive biopsychosocial responses from singing in terms with which they were familiar. Kent's (1994) extension of misattribution to this group suggests that adherents mislabeled their responses to music to the supposedly divine doctrine of the group. Former members and academic accounts establish that adherents believed that the group's doctrines were based on the divine power of David Berg, and that the group was their path to salvation during the impending revolution/apocalypse. If the above held true, then adherents engaged in a positive feedback loop regarding the group (see Figure 11), its leadership, and doctrine, based on their positive music-based experiences (Peretz, 2006). We probably see, therefore, a highly-effective membership maintenance system, wherein members extensively memorized doctrines and associated them with positive emotions and the divine.

*Figure 11: Potential Misattribution Cycle*




## Conclusion of Chapter

In summation, I have shown that adherents of the Children of God during the peak years likely would have experienced some biopsychosocial effects. These effects would have aided in the group's membership maintenance, based on the group's high-demand nature and usage of primary doctrine-based music in regimented daily singing. This speculative conclusion, based on the universality of humans to make and understand music, suggests that group bonding, memory (autobiographical, doctrinal words, and of primarily doctrine based music), positive collective emotions, and positive personal emotions are potential effects that adherents likely experienced. If adherents experienced them, then any of the effects could be subject to magnification of the misattribution cycle. These associative connections unfortunately remain speculative and therefore, I recommend that future study be undertaken to concretely establish a more direct

connection between the biopsychosocial effects that I outlined and former Children of God adherents.

# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, I offer a series of valuable sections for comparing and contrasting the presented case study data, limitations of the project, future research considerations, and my closing remarks. The proceeding comparison of the Children of God's peak years and post-*Charter* years (which I explain below) provides pivotal insight into how a retooling of music's role in the group aided in the group's declining membership and eventual failure. Despite the supporting data provided by this comparison for my conclusions, the project still had several limitations. Chiefly, I could not effectually connect the potential effects outlined by the model to the Children of God's adherents, despite the presence of conditions on which the effects are predicated. Some aspects of this project, therefore, created intractable boundaries for me. By realistically recognizing, however, the limitations of this project, I nevertheless arrived at what I believe is a valuable contribution to the field. Moreover, I developed several research concepts for possibly overcoming these boundaries, thereby providing a path forward and through the limitations that they caused. Finally, I finish the project with summation and closing remarks.

## Comparing the Peak Years' Children of God to the Post-*Charter of Love* Years

David Berg's death in 1994 officially ushered in a new era of leadership, in which Maria (Karen Zerby) and Peter Amsterdam (Steven Kelly) were co-leaders of the group. In an effort to move on from the legal troubles the group was mired in surrounding child custody, neglect, and

abuse, the new leaders issued the *Charter of Rights and Responsibilities* (a.k.a The *Charter of Love*, hereinafter *The Charter*). The *Charter* was an attempt to reset the basic rules of the group and thereby restructure its internal social dynamics. After careful review of the 463-page document, I argue that this resetting of the group in no way removed the core foundations that I used to define them as a high-demand new religious group.

Evidence of the continuation of several key high-demand attributes is found throughout *The Charter* and would have ensured that membership maintenance efforts were very similar to those used prior to the group's rebranding. We see evidence of the following in *The Charter* (The Family, 1995):

- The group was still using *Mo Letters* as the foundation for the group's doctrine;
- Reading the Bible and *Mo Letters* was still a required daily activity;
- The leadership still prioritized the study of group doctrine over school – eight hours for scholastics and at least 10 ½ hours a week studying doctrine;
- The Charter maintains that adherents needed to maintain secrecy around the group's doctrines;
- The group still maintained a doctrine classification system for certain levels of consumption;
- *The Charter* instructs adherents that they should strive to only go outside their colony homes in pairs;
- *The Charter* still referred to outer world as the System and that it is dangerous;
- The leadership still discouraged the consumption of unapproved outside media (music and movies);

- *The Charter* required adherents to proselytize twice-weekly;
- *The Charter* still dictated many of the dietary restriction that *Mo Letters* laid out;
- *The Charter* dictates that local leaders only needed to provide one hour of personal time a month; and
- *The Charter* still outlines a vigorous education process for new adherents that prioritizes the memorization of biblical verses and reading of early *Mo Letters*.

The evidence effectively demonstrates that the group had not changed its fundamental nature governing its internal social structure--a social structure that would certainly have been high-demand in nature according the definitions and rubric I used to initially label the group during its peak years.

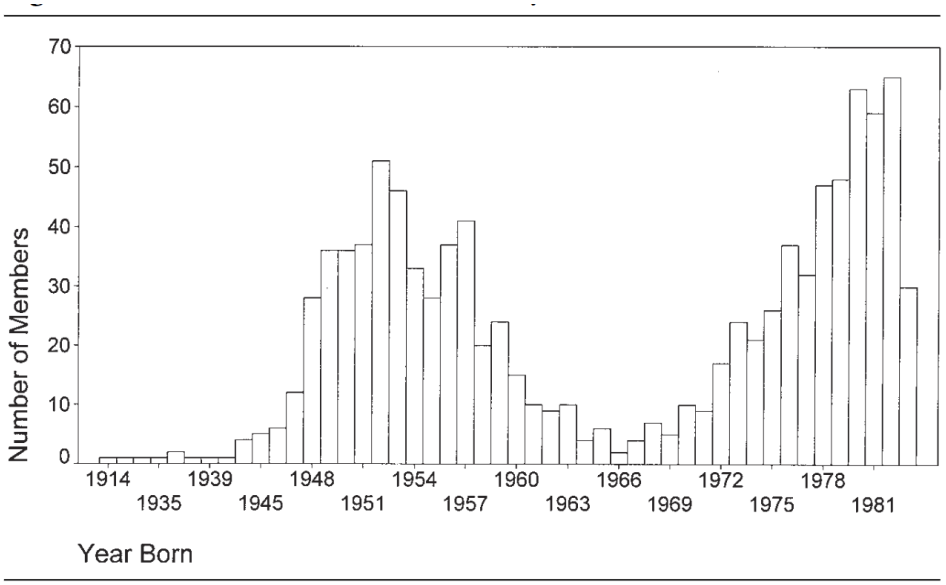
Noticeably absent from *The Charter* is any real mention or instruction around the group's internally produced music and its place in the daily or even weekly devotional schedules. This absence signifies a dramatic shift, given the previous routinized use of music within the daily devotional process and proselytization efforts that former member and academic accounts provide. It is worth examining the trends in membership after this noticeable shift in the key role music had played in the peak years for the group. Doing so will serve to better isolate whether music was a likely factor in the membership maintenance efforts of the group.

This examination aided in determining whether a linkage is likely between the group's established use of heavily doctrine-laden music and the potential effects outlined by the biopsychosocial music model. William Bainbridge's (2002) survey and interview research, with then current and former adherents of the Children of God, best examines the group after the release of *The Charter*. Most importantly, Bainbridge notes an important shift in the

demographics of the group. At its highest point during the peak years, the Children of God had 10,000 members and then stagnated. According to the group's own records 13,000 children were born into the group between 1971 and 2001 (pg. 169; Lattin, 2007, pg. 207). These numbers give us a potential membership of approximately 20,000 members around the time of *The Charter*. Bainbridge notes, however, that even by the group's own account, the Children of God's membership was probably close to 10,000 by 1999 (Bainbridge, 2002, pg. 167). The decrease in the group's membership by half up to that point, combined with the knowledge that we know the group now is not operating in any official capacity, suggests membership maintenance efforts were no longer as successful as they once were.

Perhaps one of the most interesting pieces of information from this decline in membership is regarding the group's suggestion that adherents bore some 13,000 children. We clearly see in Bainbridge's graph below that there were two distinct age groups in the Children of God: the first 10,000 adherents and their offspring who would eventually outnumber them.

*Figure 12: Bainbridge's Survey Data on Children of God Demographics (Bainbridge, 2002, p. 26)*




The second-generation adherents of the group eventually became the largest portion of the demographic. These children were born into the group and socialized completely within its structure, as we see in the examples of Celeste Jones and Julianna Buhring. The size of this second-generation cohort was significantly important to the group's survival, given that Bainbridge's research also showed the stagnation and decline of recruitment by 1995 (pg. 163).

When we combine this information with the facts recruitment declined, the group's early adherents bore 13,000 children, and yet still failed by the mid-2010s, then we can conclude that membership maintenance failed across the board. Most importantly, it failed among children – children it had the potential to completely socialize with the internal social structure of the group.

The biopsychosocial music model speculates that many of the potential effects aiding in the membership maintenance of the Children of God likely magnified among children, given brain plasticity and Hebbian learning theory. Therefore, we would expect that because of this potential magnification of effects and that the *group decided their* entire social reality, we would

not have seen them leave the group. As we have observed, however, the group suffered from a steady decline in membership, including second-generation adherents. As we have seen previously with adult adherents, this decline corresponds with a notable change in the group's focus on music.

A comparison of the peak year success of the Children of God to the group's post-*Charter* decline, especially when the major loss of second-generation members, provides evidence of the group's membership maintenance failure. Therefore, I think it likely that the group's exclusion of music from daily devotions and internal social practices likely were major factors, among others, in the group's failure.

## Limitations of Research

One of the major limitations of this research project is that its structure allowed for only speculative connections between the more well-established experimentally driven biopsychosocial data and the possible effects on case study adherents. While the Children of God members exhibit the necessary conditions that the biopsychosocial effects require for activation, I was unable to fully establish any causal or even correlative connections without conducting experiments or surveys with former member participants. I will note, however, by exposing the group's demanding membership requirements and the group's use of doctrine-imbued music, I strengthened the speculative association between the impact of the Children of God's music and the group's membership maintenance efforts.

Another limitation that requires addressing is the inability of the biopsychosocial music model to reconcile why members leave the group despite the potential influence of music. My

biopsychosocial music model only explains the importance of examining music as a possible crucial and coercive element of the group membership maintenance process, and only partially explains why people remain members of high-demand new religious groups. Therefore, it would be important to ensure that future models can account for these exits, despite the high-demand techniques employed by the Children of God and the probable effects of music.

I note that the biopsychosocial music model I constructed for this project limited research to speculative inferences regarding the effects on the relationship between adherents, music, and the group. The biopsychosocial music model only allows for generalizable assumptions regarding the potential mediating power of music, which limits its applicability to future research.

Individuals' susceptibility to a group's ongoing membership maintenance efforts varies throughout their time in a group, based on personal experiences before and during membership. This susceptibility also varies according to other external and internal factors that individuals unconsciously or consciously absorb, including the group's own doctrine. Some former members often describe an 'ah-ha' moment where the superstructure of the organization's beliefs comes crashing down after certain pivotal events expose a previously unknown truth. Other former members describe a very slow process of deconstructing a group's doctrines and internal social structure, leading to either a process of slowly removing oneself or simply a moment when a person gains the courage to leave.

I argue that a unified membership maintenance model for high-demand new religious groups may not be possible because of the roles played by individual perceptions and reasoning. Even though membership maintenance processes purposefully co-opt or replace individuality to

the advantage of the organization, a likely probability will remain that those techniques only will become effective to varying degrees on individuals over time. Moreover, the life-cycle of any high-demand group can create both internal and external conflict for individual members, leading to their leaving and, in some cases, a mass-exit of individuals during periods of upheaval. Additionally, individual members' interactions within their spheres of influence create too many unknown variables for a complete model to exist.

Due to the dearth of information on many of the different membership maintenance techniques used by high-demand new religious groups, limitations exist to understanding the generalized effects of those techniques on members. Overcoming these limitations, however, necessitates future research, specifically utilizing experimental modes of analysis.

## Future Research

This project quickly identified itself as a very cursory step toward understanding the understudied role of music in the group membership maintenance process of high-demand new religious groups. Beyond this project's initial scope, several other areas of study within this field of research would benefit from further analysis based on the biopsychosocial model and the findings of this project. I believe this section to be as important a contribution to the field of research as the biopsychosocial music model and the greater understanding of the Children of God's membership maintenance process. To illustrate both the limits of this current project and lay the foundations for future research building upon the findings of this initial analysis, I outline the research projects I feel are necessary and possible for a more complete biopsychosocial music model and more understanding around music's role in religion.

## Membership Attraction

To effectively narrow the scope of this thesis project, I made an early decision to limit the focus of the biopsychosocial music model to examine only the effects music had on the membership maintenance process and not the membership attraction process. This distinction can be a blurry one, because the story of joining a group remains a powerful memory for adherents and therefore required some attention during the case study. I argue that future research should seek to include the membership attraction process throughout the study, based on my review of different individuals' group attraction stories containing a high presence of music. A researcher could conduct a similar, but separate, biopsychosocial model for future research to isolate the role that initial group attraction played in group membership. This further examination would be wise to use the Children of God, the Hare Krishna, and other groups where obvious and substantial evidence exists of music's use during the first or early recruitment efforts of the case study. Moreover, the selection of other case study groups should follow the advice provided in the forthcoming sub-section.

## Application of Model to other High-Demand Groups

Another decision to focus the scope of the project was in limiting the number of high-demand new religious movement case study groups from two to one. Initially, the project was going to contain both an examination of the Children of God and the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), more colloquially known as the Hare Krishnas. Although a researcher could try to apply the biopsychosocial music model to any high-demand new religious movement, a checklist exists for ideal candidates that I recommend following.

*Table 7: Case Study Suitability Checklist*

| **Suggested Checklist Items** | **Reasoning** |
|---|---|
| Group is dead or a researcher can separate the group into a specific historical period (i.e. Pre-founder death). | There exists a substantial research benefit to being able to confine the group to its entire existence or to a specific historical period because it provides a defined scope to the project. Moreover, it can aid in removing or limiting the need for ethics approval for any projects conducted. |
| Group is recent enough for audio recordings to still exist. | The existence of either audio or audio-visual recordings of the group's music is necessary to fully complete the biopsychosocial case study analysis. Future researchers can partially overcome this challenge if they possess a sufficient musical background, such that they could read and possibly recreate the music. This background is necessary to establish the positive effects of tempo and beat on adherents as suggested by the biopsychosocial music model. |
| Substantial archive of music use:<br>• Former member<br>• Internal materials<br>• Audio<br>• Lyrics | A good case-study group would provide easy access to several areas of historical evidence of a group's use of music. Possessing one or two of these areas is likely insufficient evidence of the group's routinization of the music. Moreover, it also will fall short of providing enough evidence of the link between the group's doctrine and the lyrics of group music. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Evidence to substantiate the high-demand nature of the group. | An ideal case study should possess sufficient evidence that the new religious movement is high-demand in nature. The group should possess most of the following conditions: daily liturgy involving music, regimented daily schedules, live-in format, and a high number of rules governing the personal sphere of an adherent's life, etc. These conditions are necessary because they validate an important magnifying condition on the effects laid in the biopsychosocial music model. |

## Survey or Interview Projects

In order for a case-study to examine further the suggested effects of the biopsychosocial music model, a research would need to add a survey or interview-based portion. Conducting a survey or interviews would allow the researcher to gain further insight into the specific personal memories and psychological histories of a case study's adherents. The ability to conduct these interviews would be both complicated and made easier if the group is no longer in existence. A group that is no longer in existence requires that one only work with former members, which may be easier because gaining an unbiased access to an active group could be difficult. The downside of working on a dead group is that its membership is no longer centrally located and, therefore, the researcher would have to contend with finding former members, which suggests a high potential for response bias. In the case of an existing group, I recommend several semi-structured interviews with both current and former members, or a survey that attempts to access

both groups aiming for similar response rates from different demographic groups. For a defunct group, I recommend either method, depending on the researcher's methodological background and expectations about the number of possible participants and access to them.

## Potential Experimental Designs

Experiments using scientific methods have the greatest potential to prove the suggested effects of the biophysical model. Conducting the suggested experiments below would serve to support the model by quantifying and demonstrating the predicted effects. These research programs would create a more complete biopsychosocial music model. I hope that their results would enable future case-study conclusions to go beyond speculation. Therefore, it would be within this area that I would continue my own future research and would recommend others to follow.

## Brain and Body Metric Studies

Ronald Fischer et al. (2014) successfully demonstrated using body metrics (heart rate) and some cognitive measurements studies within the area of religious studies. Their usage of heart rate monitors to study both fire-walking and piercing rituals served to provide a better understanding of the physiological response to highly arousing religious rituals. This research is important because it shows how it is possible to take the experimental measurements directly at the site of religious significance, at the full height of festival fervor. By removing such experiments from labs and from recreations, we can access the true response to such extreme religious activities. Since pioneering studies only a few years ago, researchers have developed low-cost wireless portable electroencephalograms (EEG) units that can pair with smart devices (Stopczynski, et al., 2014). These devices should significantly improve the non-invasive

cognitive measurements that are possible in the field, thus opening a new area of potential research programs. The cost to a research program can be quite low, especially when combined with EEGLAB, a free MATLAB based software program for analyzing EEG data available from the Swartz Centre for Computational Neuroscience.

Electroencephalograms are a non-invasive way of measuring the electrical activity of the brain by placing a series of electrodes on the scalp. These electrodes measure fluctuations in voltage that occur in the brain because of changes in the ionic current within the neurons of the brain (Niedermeyer & DaSilva, 2005). An EEG can observe the spectral content or neural oscillations of a subject (ibid). Neural oscillations are more coequally known as 'brain waves.'

EEG has several prominent medical uses, most notably in the diagnosis of epilepsy, sleep disorders, coma, and brain death. Higher resolution magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computed tomography (CT) have largely replaced EEG as a diagnostic tool for tumors, strokes, and brain activity or deterioration disorders. Despite its limited resolution, EEG retains the advantage of millisecond-range accuracy over MRI and CT scans, which is beneficial in some cognitive research.

Using EEG for cognitive research has been highly successful, especially within the areas of event-related potentials (ERPs) and evoked potentials (EP). EP studies involve introducing a specific stimulus (auditory, visual, or somatosensory) and recording the neurological response. ERP involves the study of individuals during specific times while they process a series of complex stimuli or an event. The ERP research methodology would be the recommended methodology for the suggested future research studies below.

## Sacred space and music

In the interest of producing a greater understanding of the role sacred spaces play as a possible magnifying factor between music and the predicted biopsychosocial effects, an experiment utilizing portable EEG units would prove illuminating. Many individuals describe the weighty or emotional experience of visiting sacred spaces, especially if they connect the spaces to their own denominations or loom large in the historical mythos. I believe that these spaces can, and do, play a role in amplifying the emotional, pro-social, and effervescent responses that take place in them. To separate the role of the space and the performance of music in those spaces, I suggest a study whereby three groups of the same number: one from the religious denomination to which the sacred space belongs, the second from other religions, and a third made-up on non-religious individuals. I then suggest introducing participant groups to the space while wearing the EEG units under the following three circumstances; one, no music; two, music played in the space; third, participating in a choral session. A study set up in this way would provide sufficient evidence to allow for conclusions on the role that sacred spaces are playing in amplifying certain biopsychosocial effects of performing doctrinal music. Moreover, this experiment would show what neurological centres process or activate while listening to doctrinal music.

## Informing recovery therapies

Beyond the benefits of a deeper understanding of music's effects on adherents, the most valuable use of this research would be to better inform recovery methods from high-demand new religious movements and for other individuals triggered by musical stimuli. By understanding the probable differences in cognition, it will begin to inform existing rehabilitation methods or create new types for former members who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders and other

ailments associated with their time in a group. During an International Cultic Studies Conference a few years ago, an ex-nun from extremely high-demand convent (non-associated) approached me. She had largely forgone listening to music in the year or so since she had left the group. According to her, this avoidance of music was due to the convent's highly ritualized use of music, combined with the group's use of music in creating saleable music to fund the convent. Individuals like this former nun could benefit from more exact therapies to aid in recovery.

## Conclusion

I have been able to concretely demonstrate that the Children of God was a high-demand group, and that its highly-routinized usage of music likely would have aided in the group's membership maintenance efforts. The group's proven daily usage of primarily doctrine-based music within the group's peak years was certainly a contributing factor to the group's membership maintenance efforts. The membership maintenance system likely benefited from several potential effects the biopsychosocial music model outlines. As demonstrated, the most likely of these associated effects were prosocial, eliciting positive and transferable emotion, the release of positive neurochemicals, the strengthening of cognitive systems, and aiding in memorization of doctrine and autobiographical memory. The demonstrated presence of misattribution among adherents likely would have magnified the effectiveness of the above potential biopsychosocial effects, because adherents would have misattributed the effects to the supposedly divine nature of the Children of God's doctrine governing their lives. Finally, I have strengthened these (potential) conclusions by showing the association between the falling trends in membership levels before and after the group's leadership decoupled music's role from the group's internal social structure.

I expected at the onset of this project that I would observe what in fact I found, but I had hoped that I could achieve more concrete conclusions regarding the actual effectiveness of the Children of God's music on the group's membership maintenance systems. This shortfall was merely the result of a miscalculation on the strength of conclusions possible based on the biopsychosocial music model. I believe, however, that this shortfall has benefited the results of this project. Only being able to make speculative conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the biopsychosocial effects on adherents as they related to membership maintenance challenged me to create a robust future research section to overcome this shortfall. The potential effects that the biopsychosocial music model outlines probably would aid in the membership maintenance of any group, but would be enhanced within a high-demand one. Showing, therefore, that the Children of God primarily used doctrine-based music strongly suggests that music should be a significant area of research regarding group maintenance efforts.

Despite the speculative nature of some of my conclusions, I believe that the project has contributed a great deal to the field of new religious movement studies. Music, whether by direct omission or oversight, has not been a central focus for new religious movement scholars, especially regarding its potential effects on membership maintenance. I hope that my research has demonstrated that music is not something a researcher can overlook when studying these groups because it has several potential effects that would have consequences for adherents. In addition, this research established a baseline biopsychosocial music model to analyze new religious groups, and demonstrated its usage on the Children of God. It also produced a listing of the Children of God's key doctrinal words and phrases, and showed that the Children of God's music was primarily doctrine based.

A high likelihood exists that doctrine-based music ritualized within the daily devotional processes of a high-demand group has the potential to affect the listener or performer in ways that would aid in group membership maintenance. I have also demonstrated that this process is susceptible to possible amplification if a group is high-demand in nature. The likelihood of the effectiveness of the Children of God's music directly related to the group's usage of internally produced primarily doctrine-based music. I suggest, however, that future research retest this result through experimentation, and build a more robust biopsychosocial music model to fully develop the field's understanding of music and its potential as a membership maintenance process. Ultimately, this project shows researchers that music is a factor that they cannot overlook when studying new religious groups, and I have provided a road forward to understanding its impact.

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