Collective Violence

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Cults, Militia, and Hate Groups

Cults, militia, survivalist, and hate groups are not easily explained by the structural perspective emphasized in previous chapters. To many scholars, the motivation for their formation seems more psychological than structural, and the violence that these groups sometimes commit is not easily understood by analyzing existing social conditions. Instead, one must look to the study of group dynamics and social psychology to understand how the need to solve an unsolvable problem or the dislike for a person one hardly knows can become the overarching behavioral motivation in one's life. The aim of this chapter is to explain the origins of these small, intense groups, the reasons for the decisions to join them, and the groups' dynamics and outcomes. As will be shown, all of these groups share certain similarities that help us understand why they exist and why they commit collective violence.

Cults

Most cults aren't violent, but when a cult does turn to violence, it often shocks us, if only because many cults begin with seemingly innocent and even altruistic motives. Let's first look at what cults are and why people join them.

What Is a Cult?

A cult is a small, tightly organized group that forms to alleviate some problem for which it thinks society has no set cure or answer. Most cults are usually viewed as a special type of religious organization with a set of beliefs and practices that differ sharply from more conventional religious tenets and behaviors (Collins 1991). As with many more conventional religious groups, cults involve people who are trying to find spiritual meaning in the world. A

cult is typically led by a charismatic leader, someone who is thought by cult members to have a special talent or an exceptional character (Galanter 1989; Singer 1995). Sometimes the cult members even think their leader has divine or supernatural powers. Many cults impose strict discipline on their members and are thought to control their behavior and even their thoughts quite severely, although scholars disagree on the extent to which such control exists.

Cults have a very negative image, so some scholars prefer to call them "new religious movements" because of the negative connotation of the term *cult*. This image notwithstanding, cults have played a very important role in the development of religious thought and organization throughout the world. As an example, some Christian sects began as cults 2,000 years ago. As some cults grow larger and acquire more legitimacy, they often turn into sects and, later, into established religions (Finke and Stark 1992).

Charismatic Leadership in Cults

Let's return for a moment to the charismatic leadership that guides many cults. Max Weber, a German sociologist, discussed such leadership extensively in his writings (Weber 1959). He said that the charismatic person, or prophet, exerts authority simply by virtue of his or her special gifts rather than through the process of legitimation bestowed through societal certification such as divinity school. The holders of charisma often demand obedience and a following by virtue of their mission. Their charismatic claim breaks down if their mission is not recognized by those to whom they feel that they have been sent, that is, their followers. It is the duty of their followers to recognize them as their charismatically determined leaders.

Charismatic leadership is a very important element of the social structure of the cult. In fact, the influence of charismatic leaders is so important that many scholars prefer to call cults "charismatic groups" (Galanter 1989). The charismatic leader may symbolize the movement in its entirety or in part. Typically, the leader represents the group's revolt against convention, the cult members' inner struggles in their own lives, or their personal independence and power of resolute action. As a cult evolves, its leader might become ineffectual. If this happens, the cult tends to either disintegrate or, instead, remove its leader and replace him or her with one that more closely reflects the cult's current ideological position.

One of the most valuable assets that charismatic leadership brings to the cult is the ability to focus members' attention so that the group can develop an intense social cohesiveness. The cult is held together via a system of shared beliefs that are usually taught by the leader and reinforced by other high-ranking group members, such as counselors (Galanter 1989). The leader often induces various states of altered consciousness through techniques such as physical and sensory deprivations, hallucinatory drugs, meditation, and time

distortion. The state of altered consciousness induced in these ways helps to destabilize old attitudes and to prepare the cult members to accept the group's beliefs. It acts to enlarge the group's cohesiveness, stabilize and even enhance a member's acceptance of group goals, and legitimate the use of violence, if it is needed. It can also serve as a medium to attract members to join the group. For example, the use of hallucinogens such as LSD or rock music have served as recruitment techniques as well as enhancers of group dynamics (Linedecker 1993).

How and Why People Join Cults

A basic question about cults is how and why people join them. *Recruitment* is typically a major function of the group's leader, who often makes both national and international excursions to find new followers. The recruitment technique of the Branch Davidians, a cult that lost many members in a fiery stand with federal agents in Waco, Texas, in 1993, is a good example. David Koresh, the cult's leader, made trips to California, Hawaii, England, Israel, Canada, and Australia to recruit new followers. Special audiences are often targeted during such trips. Again using the Branch Davidians as an example, they recruited mainly from the ranks of Seventh Day Adventists, maintained large mailing lists, and regularly sent out tapes and literature expounding Koresh's teachings (Tabor and Gallagher 1995).

Sometimes members with special qualities prove to be valuable in the cult's recruiting process. For example, two Branch Davidian members with theological training used their special talents in rock music and public speaking to draw people into the group. One of them was Marc Breault, whom Koresh recruited in California in early 1986. Breault played the keyboard in Koresh's band and became his right-hand man. He later recruited a friend and University of Hawaii religion professor, Steve Schneider, into the cult. Schneider was an effective speaker and once recruited 20 people when he traveled to England in 1988 (Tabor and Gallagher 1995).

While Branch Davidian members were recruited largely from one religious group, the Seventh Day Adventists, other cults draw a diverse following of recruits who join for many different reasons. Galanter (1989) found that members reported four different routes of induction into the Unification Church (Moonies) cult: (1) as a result of *subterfuge* on the part of church members; (2) after experiencing their own protracted searches as *seekers* of an acceptable creed; (3) because of an attraction to the group, which offered the opportunity to *identify* with an admired figure or ideal; and (4) because the group *compelled* them to accept church dogma, which they initially had opposed (Galanter 1989:134–140).

To expand on the use of subterfuge, cult recruitment sometimes operates as an inverse pyramid scheme whereby members are gradually brought into the group through a series of invitations to participate in workshops and

study sessions that increasingly involve the participants in the cult's belief system. Beginning with general topics such as helping the world's poor, the sessions become increasingly focused on the group's divine mission and its ideals of universal brotherhood. Groups often encourage the best recruits to become instructors or workshop leaders in order to bring them over the final threshold and into the group.

Other recruits, or *converts* as they are often called, have experienced long careers as seekers of spiritual quests as they search for a way to resolve their inner conflicts about life's meaning (Galanter 1989:53). Some authors such as Galanter (1989) and Collins (1991) feel that people growing up in countercultures such as the hippie subculture of the 1960s were in essence seeking a guiding philosophy and were easily drawn into various cults and sects: "Yet, for many seekers, the specifics of ideology in the sects they joined were apparently less relevant in their particular choice than coincidences surrounding their initial encounters with the group. That is, if the time, people, and place were right, any movement might have caught their attention" (Galanter 1989:53).

Much of the literature on cult membership has concentrated on how the conversion process works rather than the reason why a particular person chooses to join a cult or which characteristics predispose one to cult membership. For example, Lofland (1966) suggested that prospective members are indoctrinated via promotion vehicles and strategies that actively encourage their entry into the group. He says conversion is a seven-step selection process that focuses on specific candidates with the following traits: (1) are suffering with acute "tension," (2) are easily distracted by alternative solutions to their problems, (3) have a history of religious seekership, (4) are at a critical turning point in life, (5) are willing to develop cult-affective bonds, (6) are willing to disassociate "extra" cult bonds, and finally (7) enter total conversion through intensive interaction with cult members (pp. 31–57).

Once they join, cult members typically develop intense feelings of commitment to their new group and friendships within the group. This pattern is no different from that in other small, intense groups such as communes. Kanter (1972) emphasizes the development of commitment to such groups. In these groups, processes such as sacrifice, surrender to a larger reality, reeducation, a sense of the eternal, testimonials by group members, self-investment, mortification, and renunciation play an important role in the development of membership commitment.

Interaction with other cult members, typically involving casual contact, or "hooking," also plays an essential role (Collins 1991). In this step, the invitee arrives at a designated location to find that each person has been assigned "buddies," who gather information on the invitees to reveal what each individual is seeking so that these qualities can be used to hook the person into the group. Next, the cult members attempt to "surround" the invitee, filling all waking moments with systematic indoctrination into the cult. Members also

display "excessive affection" toward the invitee in the effort to win that person into the group and to intensify the person's commitment (Collins 1991). As this discussion suggests, recruitment into cults is in large part due to the efforts of cult members to add to the cult's membership (Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980).

So far, the focus has been on the *how* of joining cults. Now let's look at the *why*. To answer this question, a few studies have attempted to identify specific characteristics of people who join cults. For example, Melton (1982) claimed that the Eastern, or occult, religious groups that were popular during the 1970s attracted primarily single young adults (aged 18–25) with middle or upper socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds. Universities were popular recruiting grounds for members from mainly Protestant and Jewish backgrounds. Pattick's (1997) research on women attracted to the New Age mysticism found that many well-educated young women with the potential for successful careers and happy home lives chose to pursue spiritual quests in the new religious movements (NRMS) of the seventies and eighties. She concluded that the NRMs met the women's spiritual needs and values of safety, self-esteem, and empowerment, as well as the need for an environmental awareness within spirituality. In his review of cult research, Collins (1991) concluded that people who are more likely to join cults are looking for a sense of community; access to special, or divine, power; a desire for dependence; and a sense of unspoiled purity and simplicity in their lives. Thus, many of the studies of cults find that their members have apparently led normal, stable lives before joining their cult and join in order to find spiritual guidance and fulfillment.

Other studies suggest that cult members have experienced personal crises or difficulties in their lives before joining their cults. Downton's (1976) study of the Divine Light Mission group found that half of his sample had experienced family difficulties, such as divorce, while Galanter's (1989) study on the Moonies revealed that 86 percent of all members reported uncontrollable substance abuse problems before joining the cult. Findings such as these support the popular view that people who join cults are apt to be experiencing personal problems or crises that they think the cult will help resolve (Lofland 1966).

This view was reinforced after the Heaven's Gate cult gained notoriety a few years ago (see later in the chapter), and various reports chronicled the personal backgrounds of its members. Some had been with the group from its beginning in 1975, whereas others had only recently joined, in the 1990s. Most were highly educated, holding such jobs as computer trainers and consultants, masseur, car salesperson, local TV personality, medical assistant, ex-paratrooper, artist, musician, and paralegal. Many of the members were reported to be shy or loners with private lives, and many were attracted to the cult when they were going through difficult periods in their lives, such as experiencing the loss or death of a loved one, job insecurity, or a shattered marriage. A few of the

members joined in conjunction with a loved one such as a spouse. The description of one of the most recent members, Alphonzo Foster, 44, a bus driver, seems to typify the complex backgrounds of the cult's members:

> On the surface he was full of promise. Intelligent and handsome, he devoured books on philosophy and spirituality. But, says James Hannon, who roomed with Alphonzo Foster in Minneapolis in the '70s, he didn't do so well on the practical details of his life. A free spirit who was rarely able to hold a job, Foster sank into a deep depression after his mother died in 1980. Hannon wasn't surprised when Foster joined Heaven's Gate in 1994 after talking on the phone with [the Heaven's Gate leader] for 20 minutes. He didn't like much about life in this dimension, says Hannon. He wanted to go beyond. (*People Weekly,* 1997:43)

Two other popular views of cults are that their members suffer from mental illness or are often brainwashed into joining their cult. However, Eileen Barker (1984) found in her study of the Moonies that people who joined the cult exhibited no more symptoms of mental illness than did people who didn't join the Moonies. She also found no evidence that recruits to the Moonies had been in any way "brainwashed" into joining. Her findings suggest that popular beliefs in mental illness and brainwashing as reasons for cult joining could be myths that reflect the generally negative image of cults in modern society.

In sum, the research on the characteristics of cult members produces an ambiguous picture. Although many members have had personal problems and join cults to help them deal with those problems, many also have led fairly stable, normal lives. Although some come from economically poor backgrounds, many come from much wealthier backgrounds. Overall, people join cults for the same reason that other people join more established religions: They seek spiritual meaning in their lives, and they seek the fellowship of like-minded people. Even if some people joining cults have had personal difficulties in their lives, people in established religions have experienced similar problems. Given the many similarities between cult members and church members, research on cults does not yet help us understand adequately the reasons that people join cults instead of established religions.

Little has been said so far about the structural roots of cults. That's because little research tries to uncover their structural origins. However, some scholars do think that cults proliferate in periods of rapid social change and transition (Lofland 1966). Brandt (1994), for example, argues that cults appear when value systems fail to adequately transmit norms from one generation to the next. He predicts that *intentional communities* (another term for cults) will become more attractive in the future due to social and economic problems. He sees cults as a type of emergency response mechanism in social systems that are in need of repair.

Cults and Violence

The violence that some cults commit contributes to their negative image. A few examples of such violence should indicate why so many people fear cults. In 1987, the *Aum Shrinrikyo* ("Supreme Truth") movement was founded in Japan to "obtain self enlightenment through Tibetan Buddhism with a touch of Hinduism" (Strasser and Post 1995:41). Eight years later, thousands of innocent subway riders became acquainted with members of this cult when in March 1995 they released bombs of deadly Sarin nerve gas in several Tokyo subway lines, killing 10 and injuring more than 5,000. The cult's leader, Shoko Asahara, who used the title Venerated Master, had encouraged the cult to stockpile chemicals needed to make Sarin and its antidotes for use against some future enemy. Conflict between the cult and Japanese authorities prompted the group to brace for a confrontation. After the police raided its Osaka headquarters, the cult's leaders warned its members that "there would be more death coming" and that their only options were to "be a slave or die" (Strasser and Post 1995:40).

The Branch Davidian cult captured headlines in 1993 in Waco, Texas, when its armed compound was attacked by federal agents. A fire broke out and killed 80 members of the cult, including 19 children. Debate continues over the origins of the fire. Some believe that the federal agents started it, while others believe that it was ordered by Koresh, who reportedly opposed surrender to the government (McCarry 1999; Tabor and Gallagher 1995). Although it's unclear whether the Waco deaths resulted from mass suicide, other cults have definitely directed violence toward their own members.

Perhaps the most notorious act of mass suicide by a cult involved Jim Jones and his People's Temple of the Disciples of Christ, which he formed in the early 1950s. Jones's congregation became known for good work regarding homeless and other needy people. During the 1960s, Jones became obsessed with apocalyptic ideas, declaring that nuclear war would break out. He moved his church to one of the U.S. "safe" locations, Uhriah, California, and continued to encourage his followers to engage in heavy community involvement. Church membership continued to grow and outreach expanded into Africa. By the mid-1970s, the People's Temple had become politically active and Jones became more and more obsessed with the encroaching evils of racism and holocaust to the point that he began recommending mass suicide as the only path to salvation (Galanter 1989).

In the late 1970s, criticism by journalists and cult defectors prompted Jones to move his group to Guyana. A member of the House of Representatives, Leo Ryan, and a NBC News crew obtained Jones's permission to visit the cult. Once there, however, they were attacked and killed by cult members, who feared the demise of the People's Temple. Jones saw his leadership role as ended and ordered a mass suicide. Recording his ultimate power trip for posterity, Jones taped himself during the collective death rit-

ual. He said, "We win when we go down" (Stoen 1997). After taking poison, 914 people died. There was also evidence that some of the cult members murdered other members during the suicide ritual before killing themselves.

What Would You Do?

A few years ago, the Heaven's Gate cult also captured national attention. Assume that you are a parent who has a 19-year-old in this cult. You go to a cult expert who tells you the following story about the group.

The leader of the group, Marshall Herff Applewhite, formed it approximately 25 years earlier with the help of a former nurse, Bonnie Nettles, whom he might have met in the course of his medical treatment for a nervous breakdown (Hoffman and Burke 1997). They became known to the group as Do and Ti. Called formerly the Human Individual Metamorphosis (HIM) and, later, Total Overcomers Anonymous, the Heaven's Gate cult did a bit of metamorphosizing of its own by beginning as an offshoot of the UFO cult movement of the 1970s and then incorporating New Age mysticism, science fiction paranoia, purification through self-denial (including castration), and biblical apocalypticism. It also used sophisticated computer technology and the Internet to spread the message of the group, recruit new members, and finance its activities (Miller 1997).

The charismatic duo of Applewhite and Nettles lived out their own nightmarish fantasies that evolved through Nettles's obsession with astrology and science fiction and Applewhite's humiliation and self-hatred from being discharged from several academic positions because of his blatant homosexual affairs with students (Hoffman and Burke 1997; Thomas 1997). The cult went underground for more than a decade (due to a windfall inheritance from one of the members and the loss of many participants due to several failed predictions of a spaceship rendezvous), resurfacing in the 1990s to proclaim itself as a UFO group with a "final order." During the cult's period of hiding, Nettles had died of liver cancer and the cults' apocalyptic tone had increased and deepened. The group changed its name to Heaven's Gate and delved deeply into technology, using elaborately designed World Wide Web pages to spread their message about such topics as "the public's last chance to advance beyond human" and a computer programming company named Higher Source to produce greater wealth for itself than it had ever imagined. A client of the firm, Nick Matazorkis, summed up the group's efforts: "[I]ts workers were weird . . . dressing identically and calling themselves monks. But their work was superb" (Hoffman and Burke 1997:183).

But the charismatic Do was not happy. He had a castration operation that went badly, was rumored to be in poor health, and believed that he was dying. He said repeatedly that "He felt imprisoned in his body" (Miller 1997:42). The discovery of the Hale-Bopp comet was like a wish come true for the unhappy leader. He seized on the fact that a rare comet would visit Earth, calling it a heavenly signal for a mass suicide.

> Having now heard about the Heaven's Gate group, what would you do? Would you make every effort to get your 19-year-old child out of the group, or would you decide that your son or daughter was now too old for you to try to take such action? What would you do?
>
> *Postscript:* In March 1997, 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cult killed themselves in their posh California rental home. Do ordered the group to "exit their earthly containers" and, with much anticipation and preparation, 21 women and 17 men complied with his order and killed themselves.

Cult Beliefs and Cult Violence

Although these examples aren't typical of most cults, many cults do often put themselves in roles that very likely will lead to conflict with governmental authorities. The literature on cult violence attributes the violence to three related processes, all of them involving cult beliefs and ideologies (Wright 1995). First, cults adopt violent strategies due to the tension between their apocalyptic beliefs and the external political order. Second, the group dynamics of the cult involve powerful motivations such as fear and anger to maintain the social distance between it and the real world. This can easily lead to internal violence. Third, violence can become an integral part of the cult experience if the leadership attempts to take over the minds and bodies of cult members and use them to perpetuate its pursuit of power and wealth.

One type of cult, known as *millennial* or *doomsday*, seems to be particularly prone to violent ends (Lofland 1979; Miller 1985). These cults either begin, or later adopt, a goal to deal with the belief that Armageddon, a world war, or some other cataclysmic event will occur and only cult members will go on to heaven, paradise, or a similar place as they die defending against the encroaching evil forces. Goals related to violence, even only defensive ones, inspire the development of elaborate ideologies to justify the violence (Singer 1995). These ideologies in turn ensure that any attempt to impose law and order on the group will legitimate the leadership's claim that the cataclysmic event has occurred. Thus, a self-fulfilling prophecy is set in motion, and the cult members end up labeling governmental authorities as evil enemies. It's a short step from that to engaging in violence in an effort to maintain the cult members' special status as the "chosen" ones.

Many cults also prepare for a "Day of Reckoning," on which powerful forces will be overthrown by the faithful cult members (Robbins and Anthony 1995). Governmental forces are easily categorized as the enemy, since they are usually the ones responsible for keeping the group in line. Past persecution of religious groups by governmental agents adds to their reputa-

tion as evil-doers, so cults are likely to consider any governmental interference as a warning signal that persecution is about to occur.

Although much research on cult violence emphasizes the importance of cult beliefs for such violence, some scholars say that the presence of a charismatic leader is a more important factor in determining a cult's potential for violence than are the beliefs that cult members hold (Robbins and Anthony 1995). They argue that if the leader advocates violence, some cult members will heed such calls, but others might try to leave the cult. If they do leave, a violence-prone groupthink is even more likely to dominate the cult. Norris Johnson (1980) describes a similar process in his study of riots as a "risky" or group-induced shift to the extreme. If a riot appears about to begin, people who would likely counsel restraint leave the scene out of fear that violence might occur, thereby increasing the likelihood that the remaining people will decide to use violence.

It's also true that this process can work in reverse in cults. If a cult leader is more violent than most of the cult's members and can't convince them to believe otherwise, the leader might leave the cult, along with its violence-prone members. If this happens, the remaining cult is more uniformly opposed to violence than it was previously.

If it's true, then, that charismatic leadership is the glue that welds the group into a cult, it's also possible that charismatic leaders of cults can induce members into being violent. Determining the relative importance of cult beliefs versus cult leadership on a cult's potential for violence (or lack of it) remains an important issue for future research.

The History of Cults in the United States

Singer (1995) states that at least 11 types of cults have existed in the United States and can be grouped into the categories listed in Table 6.1. In the 1990s, examples of these types were found in U.S. society and throughout the world

TABLE 6.1 *Types of Cults in the United States, 1600–1995*

Religious	Mystical	Pseudo-Social Scientific
Neo-Christian	Spiritualist	Racial
Hindu/Eastern	Zen/Sino-Japanese	Psychological
Satanic/Occult	Philosophical-Mystical	Political
		Self-Help
		Flying Saucer/UFO

Sources: Galanter 1990; Singer 1995

as well. Other scholars use different classifications of cults. For example, Barrett (1996) distinguishes five types: Christian, Eastern, Esoteric, Neopagan, and Personal Development. Whatever classification scheme is used, no one is really sure how many cults exist in the United States. Scholarly estimates range from a low of 500 to 600 to a high of 3,000 to 5,000, and the number of people estimated to be involved in cults over the last two decades ranges from about 200,000 to 20 million (Hicks 1991; Singer 1995).

Cults have a long, rich history in the United States, as they do elsewhere in the world. Reports about the existence of cults have circulated since the days of the Greek city-states and the Roman Empire. In the United States, cults have existed since colonial times, when they were imported by the immigrants who crossed the seas. Some groups began as cults and then grew and mainstreamed. One example was the Society of Friends (Quakers), which came to what is now Pennsylvania early in the colonial period to establish a holy community based on Quaker beliefs of pacifism, simplicity, and especially the view that there is "that of God" inside every person. The Society of Friends, founded in England by George Fox, was persecuted in both England and Massachusetts Bay for their religious beliefs (Auerbach 1983).

Although the Quakers practiced nonviolence in all aspects of their lives and certainly were not a violent cult, other colonial cults were more violent. All of us have heard of the Salem witch trials, which took place when Satan and his followers were reported to be in business in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. There, a Barbados slave, Tituba, reportedly recruited village girls for Satan and his followers who resided in the community. More than twenty people eventually were executed on charges of witchcraft (Zellner 1995). The Salem witch trials opposed magic as a source of authority. However, they showed how arbitrary the labeling of extralegal control could be, since an outbreak of similar behavior in Boston at the same time was called a "religious awakening" rather than the work of an evil cult of Satanists (Auerbach 1983). More than three hundred years later, Satanic cults continue to exist worldwide. We discuss them further later.

From 1820 through 1860, a period known as the Second Great Awakening in cult history, numerous religious cults existed. Singer (1995) points out that people in many walks of life became involved in the revivalist movement. Some of the cults that began during this time later grew into sects such as the Millerites and the Seventh-Day Adventists, while others such as the Oneida Community evolved into unique enterprises (Kephart and Zellner 1995). Others moved west with the California gold rush.

In the 1960s, the formation of a sizable counterculture provided a fertile recruitment ground for cults such as the Hare Krishnas and the Moonies. Many Eastern-style cults emerged and were followed by awareness cults and neo-Christian cults. The Divine Light Mission is an example of the latter. Formed to bring greater spiritual awareness to its members, it claimed that people could know God directly and quickly "since as the source of all things

God is really primordial energy—the Divine Light" (Collins 1991:19). The leader of the group, Guru Maharaj Ji, aged 13, did not wish to form a new religion; rather he wanted to make the members of any religion more perfect believers in their God. His cult movement grew quickly, with some estimates putting its U.S. membership as high as 50,000 people, but it broke down when its most devoted followers became disillusioned with their leader. As Maharaj Ji matured, he adopted the ways of American teens and finally was deposed by his mother when he married his Caucasian secretary. By breaking his own rule of celibacy, Maharaj Ji lost more than 50 percent of his most devoted followers (Collins 1991).

Since the 1960s, new religious movements have proliferated, many combining elements of psychology, mysticism, and occultism (Singer 1995). Computer technology and UFOs have also been combined with cataclysmic beliefs. The growth of cults has led to an anticult movement that has, for better or worse, increased the chances of cult violence.

The Anticult Movement

The antiwar, drug subculture of the 1960s led to the defection of many middle-class hippies to cults and other nontraditional religious groups, as well as to self-help groups that formed in that time period. A countermovement among parents and relatives of the new cult members developed almost immediately to combat the influence of these groups on their children. Some deprogrammers forcibly abducted members of cults and other nontraditional groups, locked them up in motel rooms, and assaulted their beliefs until they gave up their religious faith (Lewis 1996).

The anticult movement (ACM) began in earnest during the late 1970s when several grassroots organizations formed a coalition and then a national confederation. The ACM came down hard on cult groups, claiming that they were profit-making organizations that manipulated and programmed members to the extent that they could not function on their own (Shupe and Bromley 1980). Religious scholars and the nontraditional religious groups countered with charges that deprogrammers were little more than vigilantes who attempted to manipulate the cult's media image for their own personal gain (Lewis 1995; Shupe and Bromley 1980). Cult watchdog groups also formed during the late seventies. One, originally termed the Citizens Freedom Foundation and then the Cult Awareness Network (CAN), developed a symbiotic relationship with the deprogrammers by acting as a referral service for people seeking work as a deprogrammer. Kickbacks from such recommendations have been alleged (Lewis 1995). CAN grew throughout the years, despite the slightly tarnished image that it developed, by using techniques similar to those used by the cults themselves. It claimed more than eighteen hundred deprogrammings in 1992 (Brandt 1994).

Just as the suicide poisoning of hundreds of people at Jonestown, Guyana refueled the ACM when it was declining in popularity at the end of the 1970s, the confrontation in Waco, Texas, between the Branch Davidian cult and federal agents refocused public attention on cults and deprogramming in the 1990s. During the last decade, cults and the ACM have fought many legal battles, and cults have won some significant legal victories. For example, CAN was driven out of business by law suits filed against them by the Scientologists (Hofman and Burke 1997).

At the same time, the struggle between cults and their opponents heightened the chances for violence. One reason for this, say some scholars, is that the ACM has painted an unjustifiably negative picture of cults and violated American standards of religious freedom: "Cultbusters send confusing messages about the dimensions of the cult problem, the power of the cult leader, and the nature of the audience for cults. . . . The anticult activists' claim to support the fundamental values of American democratic society is undermined by their willingness to suppress the exercise of religious freedom" (Tabor and Gallagher 1995:187). Even if anticult activists have returned some individuals to their families, these scholars say, they still have failed to define cult behavior in such a way as to differentiate it from other group behavior.

Satanic Cults in the United States

One type of cult that Americans seem especially to fear is the satanic cult. Although satanic cults have existed for more than two hundred years, their leaders have remained silent and their ideology and procedures have been cloaked in secrecy. In the last few decades, the rise in tele-evangelism and religious fundamentalism has fueled increased concern about Satan and satanic cults (Zellner 1985). At the same time, some journalists, con artists, and thrill-seeking rock stars such as the band, Black Sabbath, have played on people's fear of the devil. Luckily, most reports attributing baby breeding, snuff films, and human sacrifice to satanic cults are erroneous (Hicks 1991; Zellner 1995). People do join satanic cults and commit ugly acts in the name of Satan, but such acts are relatively uncommon.

There are two main organized streams: the Church of Satan, founded in 1966 by Anton LaVey, and the Temple of Set, founded by Michael Aquino and Lilith Sinclair (Hicks 1991). The estimated membership of both groups combined is two to three thousand, with the Church of Satan being about twice as large as the Temple of Set (Hicks 1991; Zellner 1995). Novices in the Church of Satan are attracted to the cult with promises of instruction in magic and the black arts. They also are encouraged to speak of their evil thoughts and deeds and are then praised by cult members for doing so (Hicks 1991).

Self-professed witches, pagans, and Wiccans are also included in the satanic category even though their group associations and lifestyles can dif-

fer radically from that of the satanists (Melton 1982). Witches organize in covens, which meet in the home of the leader on the new and full moons (*esbats*), while neopagans form groves, nests; and circles. Ritual magicians form lodges and temples. Modern magic is a mixture of many different activities and ideas, such as paganism, astrology, alternative therapies, Kabbalism, mysticism, and rites from a variety of cultures such as Celtic, Greek, and early Egyptian. There is some disagreement in the literature as to whether Wiccans are actually witches but, regardless, technically Wiccans are people who adhere to the Wiccan Redes, a pagan credo or philosophy. Witches may or may not adhere to all parts of the Principles of Wiccan Belief, even though it was adopted in 1974 by the Council of American Witches (Hicks 1991).

Because reports of animal mutilations, ritual murders, and teenage dabblers in sorcery have appeared throughout the United States, a contingent of law enforcement personnel, dubbed "cult cops" by Hicks (1991), has begun to offer costly in-service seminars that cover investigative techniques, portfolios of satanalia, and lurid tales of occult rituals and animal sacrifices. Cult survivors are often presented at the seminars as proof that such practices occur. For example, Lauren Stratford, author of *Satan's Underground*, has appeared at many seminars. However, cult survivor stories are often filled with many inconsistencies and unprovable assertions (Hicks 1991).

Another problem found in research and literature on satanic cult violence is that of guilt by association. For example, a mystical, pagan cult known as The Druidry is often suspected of evil doings by the authorities or local religious communities. While Neopaganism is usually associated with evil and destruction, many groups form who have little violent potential. The Druids are an excellent example of guilt by association with satanism. Although they are chiefly based in the United Kingdom, Orders of Druids are based also in the United States and throughout the rest of the world. Their ritual robes resemble those of witchcraft and their focus is on symbolism and magic, but Druids worship knowledge, nature, and renewal. Present-day Druid groups are based on ancient Druidism, which existed thousands of years ago, but are part of the Neopagan strand of cults that began in the late 1960s and expanded during the 1990s. Most of the Druid Orders are based on a love of nature, such as the mighty oak tree, and the land. Their goal is to unite their natural earthly selves with their spiritual selves as they work to protect the environment (Kendrick 1994).

Another problem is overreaction when dealing with satanism. For example, in 1985, a Bakersfield, California, jury sentenced a young woman who worked in a fast-food restaurant to 405 years in prison for molesting children. Some children in the community claimed that she was a member of a satanic cult that killed and mutilated babies (Hicks 1991). Despite a flawed investigation, the young woman and several others were given the longest sentences in California legal history.

Militia and Survivalist Groups

Survivalist groups are a popular contemporary alteration of the traditional cult structure. In general, they are formed to join together "superior" people who would survive an apocalypse brought on by modern problems of overpopulation, nuclear holocaust, drug use, and so on. The belief that separates survivalists from traditional apocalyptic cults is that they expect to *witness and survive the collapse* of modern civilization, rather than be rewarded with a special place of honor in the hereafter. The term *survivalist,* coined by author Kurt Saxon during the 1960s, denotes a person able to protect him- or herself from attackers (Zellner 1995). Saxon claims that the term is politically neutral and reflects a lack of ties to any organized group. The emphasis, according to Saxon, is on teaching intelligent people how to survive the collapse of modern civilization (Zellner 1995:54). Groups that strongly espouse survivalist beliefs would be less likely to commit suicide than more traditional cults. However, people who espouse these beliefs are likely to have *expertise in sophisticated weaponry,* so they might be prone to use it when highly provoked.

Militias may be formed by survivalists with either religious or political orientations and sometimes resemble terrorist organizations as much as cults. This is because they exhibit characteristics of both. They are like cults when they wish to retreat from mainstream society and like terrorists when they wish to deliver political messages that are aimed at overthrowing established governments, at either the national or local level. Militia groups with a religious orientation more closely resemble cults, since they form to solve extremely intractable problems, typically focus inward, and more frequently use violence internally rather than externally. Militias who form for religious purposes envision a transformation or the return of the savior on a day of judgment. At this point, such groups believe that the faithful, in this case, the group members, will be rewarded and the unfaithful punished. Such groups are closely allied with violent apocalyptic Christian cults, such as the Branch Davidian cult.

Another strand of the militia movement is populated with former hate group members, such as the skinheads (see later in the chapter), who are anti-Semitic and racist. In addition, some paramilitary groups who espouse survivalist goals have similarities in their belief systems to traditional hate groups. These include The Order and Christian Identity, as well as neo-Nazis such as the Aryan Nations.

Other militia are mainly paramilitary in nature. Wayne LaPierre, an official of the National Rifle Association, says that the network of armed militia that has formed throughout the United States is the ultimate deterrent to crime (LaPierre 1995). For LaPierre, a thoroughly armed people is relatively crime free. Militia groups concentrate on informing the public about armaments and run training exercises and camps that focus on weapons training. They believe that the federal agents who are charged with enforcing federal

gun control laws persecute and entrap citizens who have done nothing wrong and would never contemplate doing anything wrong.

Personified by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF), the U.S. government is portrayed by these militia as composed of mildly inept to outright traitorous people who plan to sell out their country to a new world order (Dees 1996). Most militia groups fit ideologically with the countermovement against gun control. *Newsweek* reported in 1995 that Internet traffic shows that the paramilitary right is fundamentally estranged from the national dialogue and in a world in which conspiracy theories thrive among a "bunch of dumb white guys who like to fantasize about guns and guerrilla war" (*Newsweek* 1995:39). However, the majority of militias confine themselves to running paramilitary exercises rather than move to cult or terrorist status. While smaller militias are found throughout the country, some have developed large state networks. The Militia of Montana, the Michigan Militia, the Viper Militia, and the West Virginia Mountaineer Militia are among the largest groups, several of whom have run into problems with the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice for conspiracy and weapons charges.

Hate Groups

In addition to cults, survivalists, and militia, hate groups are another example of small, intense groups that sometimes resort to violence to achieve their goals by committing what Chapter 5 referred to as *vigilante terrorism.* Hate groups are born when a group of people join together to oppose and even destroy another group because they believe that the group is responsible for some negative change in their environment. This change could be economic, political, or social, but in general, the hated group is assumed to be in a "do or die" position vis-à-vis the hated group. In hate groups, like-minded people come together to promote their ideology and legitimate their right to move from thought to action, action that is sometimes violent. The basis for a violent attack could be any physical or cultural characteristic which, in the minds of the hate group members, separates the victims from them in a negative way (Jenness and Broad 1997; Levin and McDevitt 1993). It's difficult to know whether most hate crime is committed either by organized hate groups whose members are dedicated to such goals as achieving racial purity or under ordinary circumstances by otherwise unremarkable types of people, with brutal attacks taking place spontaneously without the help of others.

What exactly is *hate crime*? Hamm (1994) feels that hate crime is best understood by looking at the various dimensions of the acts. He finds no consensus in the literature and so settles on hate crime as being illegal acts perpetuated because of what a victim represents (Hamm 1994). Hate crime might evolve from individual resentment, thrill seeking, frustration (for example,

from economic competition; see later in the chapter), substance abuse, or a mission to rid the world of the members of a "despised" group (Jenness and Broad 1997; Levin and McDevitt 1993). Staub (1989) believes that a continuum of destruction exists whereby hate groups involve their members in a progression that could lead to heinous actions: "Small, seemingly insignificant acts can involve a person with a destructive system." These initial behaviors, aimed at encouraging an individual to participate in the group, can result in psychological changes that make more serious acts possible.

Why Hate Groups Develop

Perhaps the dominant explanation of hate group violence based on race or ethnicity is the ethnic competition model (see Chapter 2). This model states that ethnic conflict occurs as part of the social modernization process when jobs, housing, and other valued resources become scarce. If the society is composed of multiple cultural entities, the competition between them becomes so intense that conflict, including violent conflict, occurs (Olzak 1992). Belanger and Pinard (1991) have reformulated this model through a critical historical review and survey research on interethnic competition between the French and English Canadians in Quebec, Canada. They conclude that the competition holds only under very limited circumstances, which include the presence of discriminatory acts, the failure to punish such acts, and the perception that the group is *relatively deprived* in comparison to its competitors (see Chapter 2).

Hate groups have at least some, if not all, members who experience relative deprivation vis-à-vis the despised group. The members feel that the despised ones have deprived them of a job, governmental benefits, or other substantial rewards, or even something so small as tax dollars. As they learn to hate, members of hate groups become oversensitized to danger from a particular group. They thus may commit violence if they feel that their physical survival and/or an intolerable reduction in their quality of life is likely to happen, even if the hated group is not directly connected with the threatening events (Perry and Pugh 1978).

The Social Structure of Hate Groups

Hate groups at times in their life cycles might resemble gangs and at other times paramilitary organizations or terrorist groups. Their social structures are usually flexible, transitional, and often decentralized, as in the "leaderless cells" or concentric circles model (see later in the section). Their volatile structures and these methods of leadership, in addition to their violent goals, help make them a dangerous group for agents of social control to handle. Often hate groups form on a hierarchical, paramilitary model only to find that it is self-defeating for their purposes. An example of this situation is the Provisional Wing of the Irish Republican Army (PIRA). PIRA was "initially

organized on quasi-military lines with battalions and a well-defined hierarchy of officers and volunteers in each country or town area" (Boyle and Hadden 1994:76). Its members eventually realized, however, that this structure made it too easy for the British and other security forces to find out the names of the leadership through the use of informers. They decided to revamp their organization, replacing it with a cellular structure according to which the number of members in each action unit was small and false names for their immediate superiors were used so that they could not be revealed by a member captured during a mission. These low-level leaders reported to a high-security command, thereby making it more difficult for the authorities to identify leaders and to identify members in charge of supplying weapons and other important items (Boyle and Hadden 1994).

Today, a few U.S. hate groups and militia have adapted the PIRA model to create a *leaderless resistance.* They recruit new members by publishing books and pamphlets, but their other activities are done secretly. Their membership is limited to five or six members per unit, each of which has relative autonomy in deciding what type of resistance efforts that they will mount (Kaplan 1997). During the 1990s, the leaderless resistance model began to emphasize that the cells should encourage their rank and file to emulate the lone wolf assassin, the solitary berserker, and the fictional heroes of the Phineas Priesthood, who were underground revolutionaries, men with no ties to society, family, or friends and who had the grim purpose of avenging their dying race (Kaplan 1997). Although Kaplan (1997) points out that few men fit this description, Timothy McVey and Terry Nichols, the accused Oklahoma City bombers, bear a chilling and eerie resemblance to it.

A Historical Perspective on Hate Groups

The hatred of people because of their race, ethnicity, and other characteristics is nothing new. Persecution based on such hatred has existed since ancient times when, for example, the Romans fed Christians to the lions. It perhaps reached its darkest hour during the Holocaust of the last century at the hands of the Nazis. Contemporary ethnic conflict likewise derives from ethnic hatred. For example, the violent conflict in the former nation of Yugoslavia between the Serbs, the Bosnian Muslims, and Croats dates back to the Ottoman (Turkish-Muslim) and the Austro-Hungarian Empires in the seventeenth century (Bjornson and Jonassohn 1994). Ethnic conflict comes and goes, but often old animosities and disputes are reborn as a result of current collective fears and uncertainties.

One bit of irony concerning hate groups involves their names. Unlike cult groups, which give themselves unusual religious names such as Heaven's Gate, the Branch Davidians, and Church of Satan, hate groups often have innocent-sounding names that belie their radical ideology of hatred. An example is the contemporary Citizen's Law Enforcement and Research Committee (also known as Posse Comitatus). Another example is the Church

of Jesus Christ Christian, which, despite its neutral name, believes that the Jew is the adversary of the white race and God and is a cancer or a satanic disease invading the Aryan race to destroy its culture and purity (Sargent 1995). From a longer historical viewpoint, other hate groups have had names that included such terms as brotherhood, klan, and Christian.

As noted in Chapter 5, hate violence has been common in U.S. history. Brown (1989) argues that the American Revolution served as a model for later violence by Americans in behalf of any cause considered to be upright, proper, or honorable. This model helped ensure, he says, that violence would have a permanent role in American life.

Perhaps the most notorious hate group in American history is the Ku Klux Klan, discussed in Chapter 5. To the casual onlooker, the Klan might seem more like a joke than a hate group. Its members wear ghost-like costumes, use a jargon that emphasizes the letter "k," and consider themselves part of what they call an Invisible Empire. But the Klan, which was conceived by six Confederate veterans as a lark, quickly metamorphosized into a hate group during the Reconstruction Era, when it served as a vehicle to terrify and torture former slaves. Masquerading as a protector of traditional American values, it renewed its terroristic activity after World War I and then again during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s (Toy 1989; Zellner 1995).

The Klan has suffered serious legal setbacks in the last two decades that have weakened its resources and influence. One of these was in 1981, when a jury deadlocked over the guilt of a black man in the murder of a white police officer. The jury's failure to convict the defendant provoked Klansman in Mobile, Alabama, to take the law into their own hands. One Mobile Klan leader reportedly said to his followers, "Get this down: If a black man can kill a white man, a white man should be able to get away with killing a black man" (Zellner 1996:29). Two days later, two members of the Klan allegedly kidnapped nineteen-year-old Michael Donald, an African American, at gunpoint. After beating and torturing him, one of the two allegedly cut Donald's throat three times. He was then hanged from a tree in the front yard of the home of one of his assailants. Despite this evidence, no one from the Klan was prosecuted for the murder.

Because of this legal inaction, the victim's mother sued the Klan and won a huge sum of money in court that seriously weakened the Klan. This legal and financial defeat led the Klan to refocus its attention on promoting institution discrimination through political means such as attacks on affirmative action and immigration laws.

Other hate groups were also active during the twentieth century, with several, like the Klan, still existing today. During the 1920s, the enduring myth of an international Jewish conspiracy was joined to strong anti-immigrant feeling (nativism) in the United States. A politician, Gerald L. K. Smith, attracted a following when he combined this philosophy with a

British quasi-theological theory that became known as Christian Identity, which still exists (Ridgeway 1990). Christian Identity believers hold that European whites were the Lost Tribe of Israel, which dwelt with inferior people. These inferiors were people of color and relatives of Satan who had been sent to Earth as a scourge on God. Christian Identity advocates believe that apocalypse is inevitable and that in this final battle, Earth will be rid of these inferior beings and reserved for the only true Israelite people, White Aryans, whose sign of racial purity is their ability to blush, or to have "blood in the face" (Ridgeway 1990:17).

After a stint as a minister, Smith took to politics and organized for the late Senator Huey Long of Louisiana. After Long was assassinated, Smith began a crusade that attracted many people who would emerge as leaders of the far right in the United States: Wesley Swift of the Christian Identity Church; Richard Butler, leader of Aryan Nations; William Gale, a founding father of the Posse Comitatus; Bob Miles of the New Klan; and Robert Matthews, leader of The Order, a splinter group of Aryan Nations. All of these were graduates of Smith's brand of racist radicalism (Ridgeway 1990; Stock 1997).

The cross-pollination of far-right leaders contributed to the political and social milieu of the 1990s. Robert Miles went on to be Grand Dragon of the Michigan Ku Klux Klan, a spokesman for the Dualist religion, an advisor to more than 15 different churches, and an ambassador of Aryan Nations. He joined with Louis Beam to edit a newsletter that outlined the ideology and goals of the Aryan Nations and other white supremacist groups of the 1980s. One editorial claimed:

> We do not advocate . . . segregation, . . . that was a temporary political measure and that time is past . . . [rather] the Greater White Racialist Movement intends to establish for our White Aryan Race what every other Race on Earth has, a racial homeland . . . Our Order intends to take part in the Physical and Spiritual Racial Purification of All those countries which have traditionally been considered White Lands in Modern Times. . . . We intend to purge this land-area of every Non-white person, idea and influence. . . . In Summary: This continent will be white or it will not be at all. (Ridgeway 1990:88)

As the Christian Identity flourished, many right-wing extremists began to believe that conventional agrarian ways of life and politics are doomed because Zionists already control the federal government and "are actively preparing to enslave all white Christian Americans" (Stock 1997:143). Most members espousing this philosophy also adopt survivalism and think that rural mountain tops are their most likely place for survival. Boundary Country, Idaho, home to many radical groups such as Aryan Nations, is one such area. It provided the backdrop for the Aryan Nations World Congress in the summer of 1986, a meeting that brought many radical right groups to Idaho. Later, Aryan Nations and the New Klan, led by Louis Beam, met at Estes Park, Colorado, where they announced plans to establish "leaderless resistance" to

the U.S. government through militia cells that would teach Americans how to prepare for the Zionist Occupational Government (ZOG) assault (Stock 1997).

Founded by Richard Butler in 1979, the Aryan Nations headquarters is in Hayden Lake, Idaho, a guarded compound surrounded by a socially conservative population. The Aryan Nations has spawned several deadly offspring, such as The Order and the Silent Brotherhood. The group's belief system includes portraying homosexuality, pop culture, and immigration as part of a larger ZOG plot to destroy and dilute America's white gene pool. The Holocaust is also thought to be a myth perpetuated by Jewish bankers and intellectuals to justify the killing of millions of white Christians (Stock 1997). Such behavior legitimates a coming race war.

Today, there are signs of "diffusion" among hate groups across national boundaries. As Ridgeway (1990:145) notes:

> By the late 1980s the far right in the United States had begun to forge ties with similar groups abroad. The progress toward an international movement was achieved at first by skinheads, who also struck up an alliance in the United States with the Ku Klux Klan. In addition to the birth of this street-fighting youth movement, the far right began . . . to move successfully into electoral politics. (Ridgeway 1990:145)

In 1989, the Dragon of the Invisible Empire, an offshoot of the Louisiana Klan, initiated an extensive recruitment plan in Western Europe that coincided with the international renaissance of the far right. As the Berlin Wall fell and the Eastern European Communist Union crumbled, anti-Semitism made a reappearance fed by the currents of nationalistic and religious conflict. Skinheads were reported in East Germany in 1988, and their numbers grew rapidly (Ridgeway 1990). They originally emerged from the British mod youth culture movement that began when English teenagers started to define themselves first in terms of their music, such as acid rock and reggae, and later according to their political orientation (Aronowitz 1994). As the movement seemed likely to be co-opted by the larger culture by becoming trendy, those young men with ties to the National Front broke off from the main movement and redefined their goals, emphasizing downward mobility, rejection of consumerism, and expressions of skinhead disaffection (Ridgeway 1990).

Transplanted to the United States via the invitation from the Klan, the more extreme skinhead practices such as slam-dancing and Paki-bashing merged with American tendencies toward violence, racial segregation, and rural bullying. Near the end of the 1980s, Tom Metzger, leader of the 2,000-member White Aryan Resistance (WAR), saw the skinheads as the way to revitalize the White Supremacist Movement with younger members. He helped his son, John, to build the Aryan Youth Movement, the WAR affiliate youth group. Many AYM members were skinheads who quickly allied themselves with other skinhead groups throughout the United States and Western

Europe (Ridgeway 1990). It didn't take long for the older racists to motivate their younger counterparts to violence. Hamm (1994) reports that U.S. skinhead groups were responsible for a sudden increase in right-wing terrorism. They were implicated in a majority of violent assaults against gays and lesbians, a 41 percent rise in anti-Semitic attacks throughout the country, including arson incidents, bombings, and cemetery desecrations, as well as one-half of the violent racial assaults, of which at least a dozen were murders.

Episodes of racial violence continued in the 1990s as the FBI arrested two Aryan Nations members who were plotting to bomb Seattle's largest gay nightclub, as skinhead attacks on Asians became common, and as the Klan began to abandon their robes in favor of camouflage and militarism. The farm crisis in America attracted many rural people to the radical right, which counseled farmers to fight back against bank and governmental foreclosures. Tax evasion also came to the forefront with hard economic times, with the far right continuing to argue its unconstitutionality (Stock 1997).

One of the newest and most popular hate groups is the World Church of the Creator (WCC), which captured national headlines in 1999 when one of its members, Benjamin Nathaniel Smith, went on a shooting rampage over the Fourth of July weekend in Illinois and Indiana. Before killing himself while being chased by the police, Smith shot and wounded 12 people and killed 2 others. All of his victims were Asian Americans, African Americans, or Jews.

After Smith's shootings, national attention focused on the WCC, which was called "perhaps the fastest-growing and one of the largest hate groups in the country" (Belluck 1999:A1). At the time of the shootings, the WCC was estimated to have 41 chapters in 17 states and a national membership ranging from the hundreds to several thousand. Besides Smith, other WCC members have engaged in hate crime. One was convicted of killing an African American sailor who had just come back from serving in the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Two other members pleaded guilty to beating a black man in Miami, and four others pleaded guilty to beating a video store owner whom they thought was Jewish.

Despite the violence, the WCC does its best to look respectable. As of 1999, it maintained a popular Internet site, which featured among other things a coloring book for children that included white supremacist messages and a crossword puzzle with racist clues. It was also active on college campuses, where it tried to recruit students with leaflets and talk of religious redemption. Several WCC members want to become lawyers so that they can try to use the legal system to advance the cause of white supremacy. In general, WCC leaders are young, educated, and articulate and—quite in contrast to groups such as the skinheads—try to present their white supremacist views in a calm, reasonable way that's intended to mask their underlying message of hate.

The head of the WCC, Matthew F. Hale, fits this image. A graduate of law school who passed the Illinois bar exam, he was denied a license to practice

law because of his racist views and activities. Hale said he didn't approve of Smith's shootings but nonetheless thought Smith was "a martyr for free speech for white people." He noted that his group advocates legal change but does not rule out violence: "Our position is similar to that of Thomas Jefferson. If our Constitution is destroyed, if our right to free speech is denied, then we have the right to use whatever means necessary to survive and to advance our position. If you're cornered in an alley you have the right to defend yourself" (Belluck 1999:A16).

Ethnic Conflict

When the hatred underlying hate crime gets played out on a much larger scale, ethnic conflict develops. Sometimes war between two governments exacerbates ethnic stereotypes and animosities. For example, Moore and Pachon (1985) credit the Mexican-American War of 1846 with instilling hatred of Mexicans into the American Psyche. Americans began to call the Mexicans "yellow-bellied greasers" and to develop the notion that Mexicans were cowards with no moral scruples or sense of fair play. The ensuing myth of racial inferiority conveniently justified the low status of Mexicans in the developing southwestern and far western parts of the United States that continues even today.

Natural disasters and other major problems, such as outbreaks of disease, have caused groups to be stereotyped and persecuted if they are blamed for the problems. For example, in Europe during the Middle Ages (mid-fourteenth century), the appearance of the Black Plague in a village or area could cause an entire ethnic group to be tortured and executed. The plague developed among the corpses of earthquake and flood victims in China and moved into Europe via rats living on the caravan trails; however, infected Russian Tartars blamed Christian merchants of Caffa, Italy, for spreading the disease (Gotteried 1983). The Tartars thus attacked Caffa and later transferred the plague to townspeople by catapulting corpses at them over the town's walls. In Germany, Jews and lepers were blamed for the plague. This led to tortured confessions from and executions of Jews all over Germany. Lepers, who, despite being tolerantly regarded before that period, were then stoned to death or refused entry into the walled cities.

One of the strangest scapegoating situations that occurred during the Black Plague concerned a religious group known as the Flagellants. This group was founded by Italians who became convinced that God was sending plagues and famines to Italy because of their behavior. Thinking that they had to show God their repentance, they began public displays in which half-naked people whipped and tortured themselves. The movement became very popular throughout Western Europe as the Black Plague took hold, but the Flagellants carried the plague from city to city as they proselytized. Public

opinion quickly turned against them, thereby causing them to be ostracized and stoned to death (Chalk and Jonassohn 1993).

Ethnic conflict also arises when two or more cultures that have been living side by side in the same society disagree over power distributions and the priority of one system over the other. The problem is that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to reach equality in either a bicultural or multi-cultural state. Kitano (1991) says that it has generally been the lot of groups with less power to adapt to changing social realities such as a new economic, employment, or political environment. When ethnic groups decide to promote competing claims rather than to compromise, conflict occurs.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed violence by cults, militia, survivalist, and hate groups. These groups differ in many ways, but they also share several similarities. They are small, intense groups that inspire deep commitment from their members, they are often led by charismatic leaders, and they sometimes commit violence to defend the existing order or to change it.

Social scientists have been able to study cults much more often than militia, survivalist, or hate groups, which are much less receptive to being studied than their cult counterparts. As a result, we know more about cult recruitment and dynamics than we do about the same processes in these other groups. The continuing controversy that all of these groups arouse ensures that they will continue to capture headlines around the nation and the world and that social scientists will continue to try to study them. Such attention is essential to understanding why they exist, why people join them, and what, if anything, can and should be done about them and the violence that they sometimes commit.