

An analysis of the writing of 'suicide cult' members

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Abstract

The infamous 'Heaven's Gate cult' committed a mass suicide in 1995 believing members of the group would achieve salvation through bodily transformation and departure aboard UFOs. The group left a large volume of writing available as a book and a website which outlined their belief structure. This writing, largely by the group's leaders Ti and Do is supplemented by 'exit statements' written by the group members. We analysed these writings and demonstrate how the texts evolve from accessible texts for recruiting individuals into the group through to more complex texts for cementing the belief structure and reinforcing the in-group. We also identify differences in the 'exit statements' that demonstrate the ideas and concepts that gained traction with the group members.

Introduction

In 1995 a group rented a seven-bedroom, 9,200 square foot home located in an exclusive community in San Diego County, California. Two years later in March 1997, police were called to the address to discover the bodies of thirty-nine men and women, each body was dressed in a black uniform, new black trainers, purple shrouds with money in their pockets and neatly packed duffle bags beside them (Zeller, 2014). Further investigation led to the conclusion that this was a mass suicide with the suicides appearing to occur in waves, with each wave tending to the previous until all members of the group, including their leader Marshall Applewhite, were dead. These ritual suicides were the culmination of the now infamous 'Heaven's Gate cult'.

The Heaven's Gate group began with the two founders Applewhite and Bonnie Lu Nettles who began a 'journey of self-discovery', a period during which

they later described as studying ‘... everything we could get our hands on that had to do with any sort of awareness – spiritual awareness, scientific awareness, religious awareness. Our thirst was absolutely unquenchable’ (Hewes and Steiger, 1976). During this period from 1973 to 1976 the group morphed to focus on the ‘Human Individual Metamorphosis’ (H.I.M), believing members of the group would achieve salvation through bodily transformation and depart the earth aboard UFOs. If during this transcendence the body was damaged it could be repaired, or indeed a new body could be created to hold the individual.

During this period the group had little structure and adherents were relied upon to manage their own spiritual development and build their own sense of right and wrong (Zeller, 2014). In April 1976, H.I.M. became a more structured group and gathered together in the Medicine Bow National Forest in Wyoming and the leaders Applewhite and Nettles (using the identities ‘Do’ and ‘Ti’) set out a rigid set of behaviours and guidelines, this instantiated themselves as the messengers and representatives of the Next Level. The Next Level (also called The Evolutionary Level Above Human (TELAH), is a place where the inhabitants live in ‘... bliss and nourish themselves with pure sunlight’ (Zeller, 2014), an approximate analogue would be a Christian ‘heaven’. These ‘guides’ at the centre of the group mandated that all teachings would only emerge from them paving the way to a well-defined group with strict rules and the group required clear obedience to these rules.

In 1985 Nettles died from liver cancer (Zeller, 2014) and Applewhite continued to lead the group with the belief that Nettles could communicate from the Next Level and help guide the group towards a final transcendence. This began a second phase of the group in which the central theme becomes the destruction of the human body (the group refer to this as a vessel) and a new ‘pure’ vessel being created to hold the

individual. It was the belief that human society was inherently corrupt and that escape from the vessel was the key to transcendence that ultimately led to the group's tragic end.

Just prior to the group suicides in late 1997 the followers wrote several statements that formed an appendix to the group's collections of notes, these were referred to as 'exit statements'. These statements form a view of the followers' thoughts and what they chose to share of their beliefs. It is these statements that form the main interest in this paper; understanding the relationship between what the followers chose to write about and the leader's writing (in this case mostly attributed to Do) can provide a window into the relationships between these individuals. Understanding the relationship between the cult leader and individual followers is key to understanding why an individual follower is part of a group (Salande and Perkins, 2012).

Why Study the Heaven's Gate cult

Cult membership is a controversial topic with two largely contrasting opinions as to why and how people join cults (Zablocki and Robbins, 2001). Typically these opinions fall into either 'brainwashing theories' (Hassan, 1988) and those that believe cults represent alternative cultures that individuals join freely (Richardson, 2001). Those that support the theory of 'brainwashing' typically highlight practices that attempt to increase the followers' dependency on the group and result in a loss of free will (Hassan, 1988; Singer, 2004; Lalich and Tobias, 2006). In general the term 'brainwashing' is really a metaphor for a very powerful kind of interpersonal influence that is more coercive than simple persuasion (Zablocki, 1998; Taylor, 2006).

The competing theory, often provided from a Sociology background, is a model of 'social drift' (Long and Hadden, 1983), where the followers become

committed to the group gradually through the influence of a number of social contacts. In this case cult membership is really a normal form of socialisation (Richardson, 2007). This commitment then is motivated by the direct rewards of membership such as friendship and meaning (Gooren, 2007).

It is most likely that cult membership is a combination of these approaches (Coates, 2012), both the direct rewards of membership and as a result of 'dependency inducing practices'. Whatever the process by which followers form around a leader, there is not a uniform relationship between all followers and a leader (Coates, 2012). This paper builds on this hypothesis by attempting to gain insight about the relationship between the followers and the leader, Do.

One of the interesting characteristics of the Heaven's Gate group is their use of the Internet as an avenue to publicise their belief system. There is also significant evidence that the group created an IT company, Higher Source, in order to provide income through designing Web sites and offering programming, systems analysis and security advice, the company turning over nearly \$110,000 over two years (Perkins and Jackson, 1997; Weise, 1997). The group's affinity for this new technology makes them arguably the first cybersect.

Whilst this cult's tragic end may be nearly twenty years ago, the culmination of the cult's belief and the strict religious nature have many parallels today (Perkins and Jackson, 1997). There are clear analogies with those who spend time joining and learning mainstream religions (Galonnier and de los Rios, 2016; Johnston, 2017). More importantly we can identify similarities in the education of those who go onto violent extremism (Jackson et al., 2005), particularly those groups where the ideology is complex (Wiktorowicz, 2005) or those joining a movement of which they

have little understanding (Busher, 2016). We can also identify similarities to other groups who have poor outcomes for those joining (Barker, 1984).

Pragmatically the learning resources circulated by this group provide a valuable insight into both the output of the group leader and the thoughts associated with the followers. The combination of these two datasets provides a good evidence base for study into how these relationships and influences are constructed.

Text used in this study

The text used was acquired from the website associated with the group (*Heavens Gate*, no date). This corpus formed the group's book, detailing their ideology and belief structure. The texts are shown in Table 1 and are grouped into chapters, representing stages in the group's evolution. Very short texts were removed from the analysis.

Table 1. The texts used in this analysis.

Chapter Name	Number of texts	Title
Introduction	5 texts	Do's Introduction: Our purpose
		Overview of present mission
		Pertinent background information
		Undercover Jesus
		1995 Statement by an ET presently incarnate
Early Material	3 texts	Pertinent background information
		First statement of Ti and Do
		1988 Update – The UFO two and their crew
Video Series	13 texts	All texts
Later Material	10 texts	UFO Cult resurfaces with Final Offer
		Extra-terrestrials Return with final warning
		Total overcomers classroom admission requirements
		The only way out of this corrupt world
		Last chance to advance beyond human
		Last chance to advance beyond human (statement)
		Organised religion has become the primary

		pulpit for misinformation and the great “cover-up”
		He’s back, we’re back, where will you stand?
		Some desire to advance even beyond all human behaviour
		The shredding of our human bodies may be required to take up new bodies in the next world
Exit Statements	22 texts	All student statements

Initial textual analysis

Initially the corpus was tokenised into bigrams, removing bigrams containing one or more stop words. Bigrams were chosen, rather than trigrams or larger n-grams, in order to reduce the sparsity of the dataset, since the dataset consists of 53 texts, a larger n-gram count would result in a very sparse document representation. The use of bigrams in this form of research is commonplace (Constant *et al.*, 2017; Alsharman and Pivkina, 2020), and whilst the atomic representation of the concepts would improve the sparse representation would mean that it would not be possible to generate any insight. Whilst this could be countered by statistical representations of rarely seen bigrams (Keller and Lapata, 2003), it is unlikely that these will generate any insight not offered by those bigrams which are commonly seen.

A simple count of bigrams across the corpus was performed, this is shown in Figure 1. From these terms there are clear themes that emerge: traditional religious terms such as ‘father’s kingdom’ and ‘heavenly father’, new-age religious terms such as ‘human kingdom’. There are also terms associated with some of the later belief system, e.g. ‘space aliens’, ‘evolutionary level’.

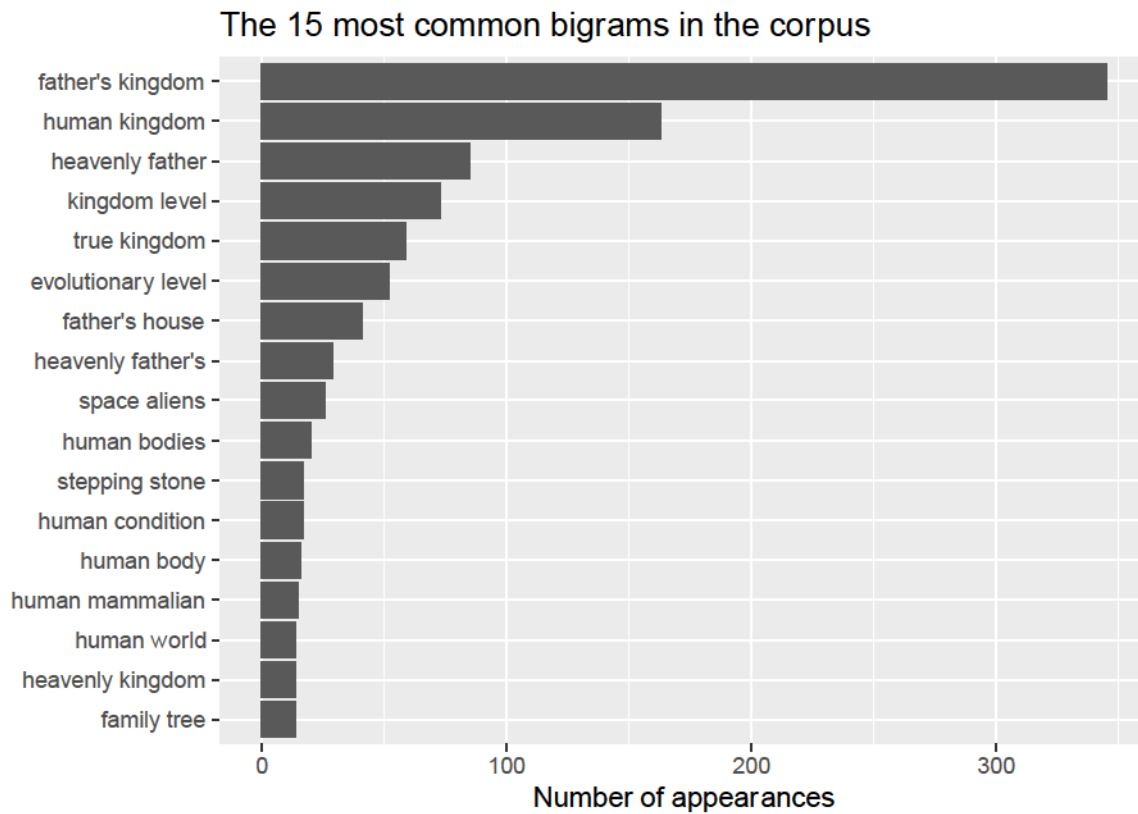
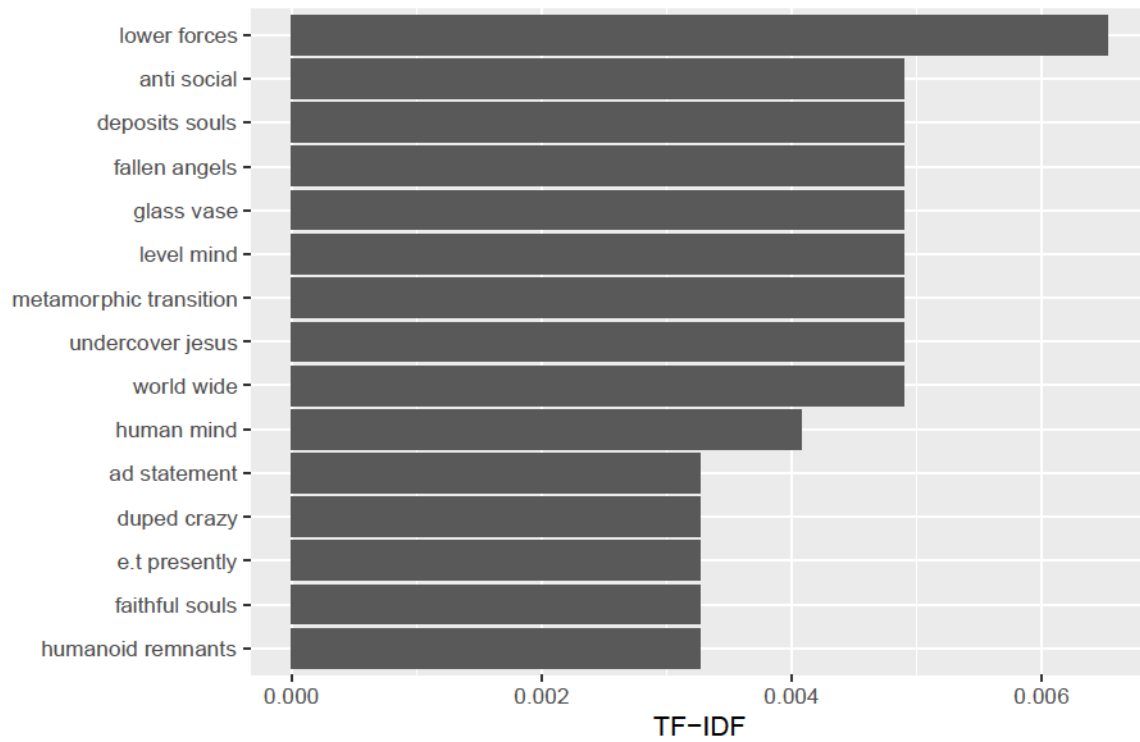


Figure 1. The top 15 most common bigrams in the corpus.

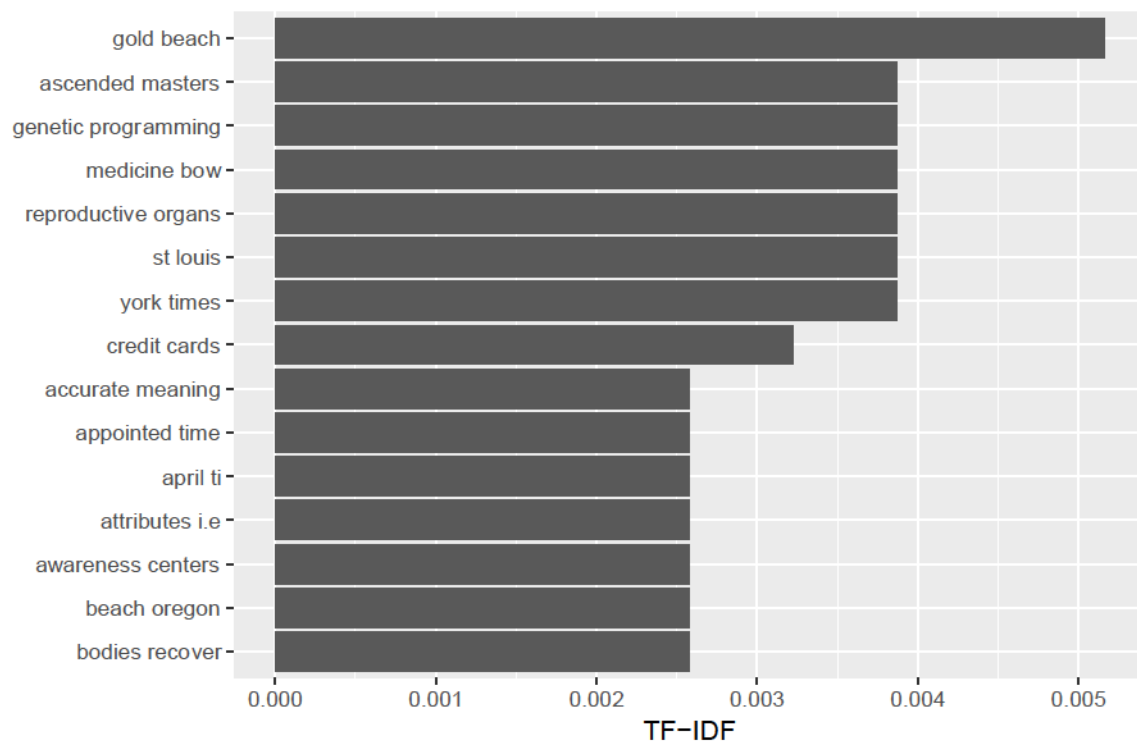
The distribution of these bigrams throughout the book is shown in Figure 2 (a) – (d), this is measured as a Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency (Salton and Buckley, 1988) identifying the bigrams that appear proportionally more than could be expected.

Top 15 bigrams for Introduction

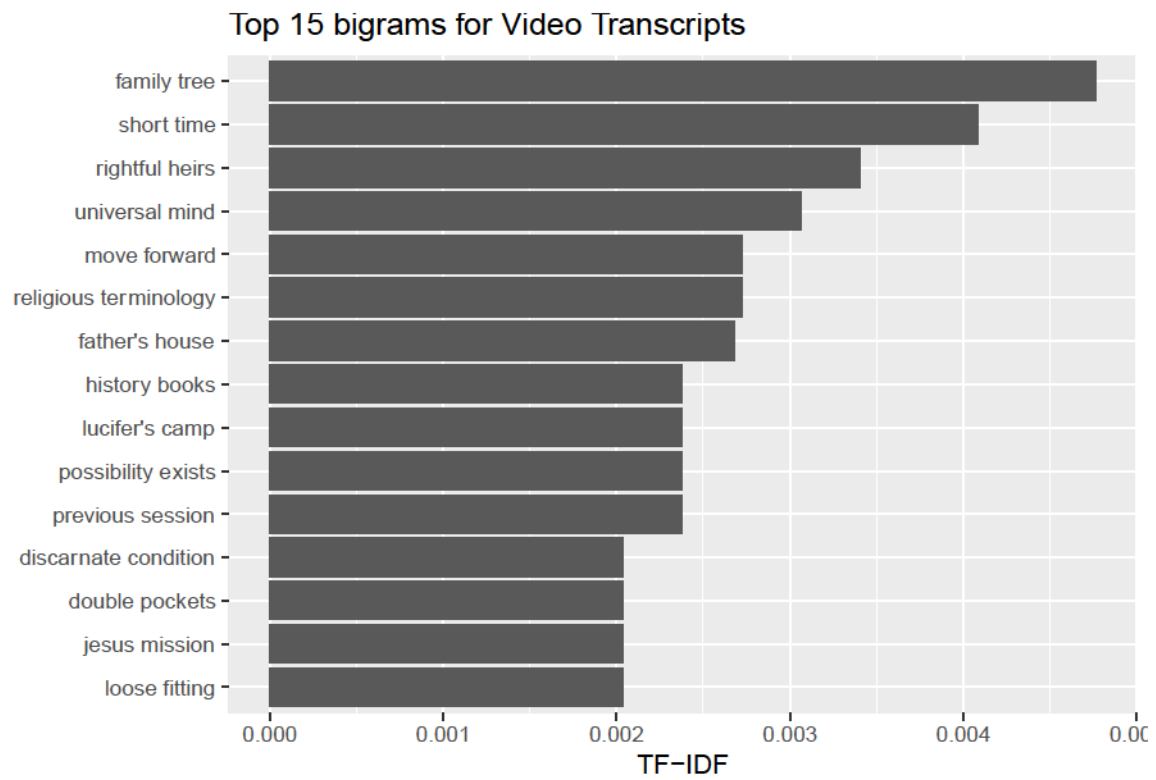


(a)

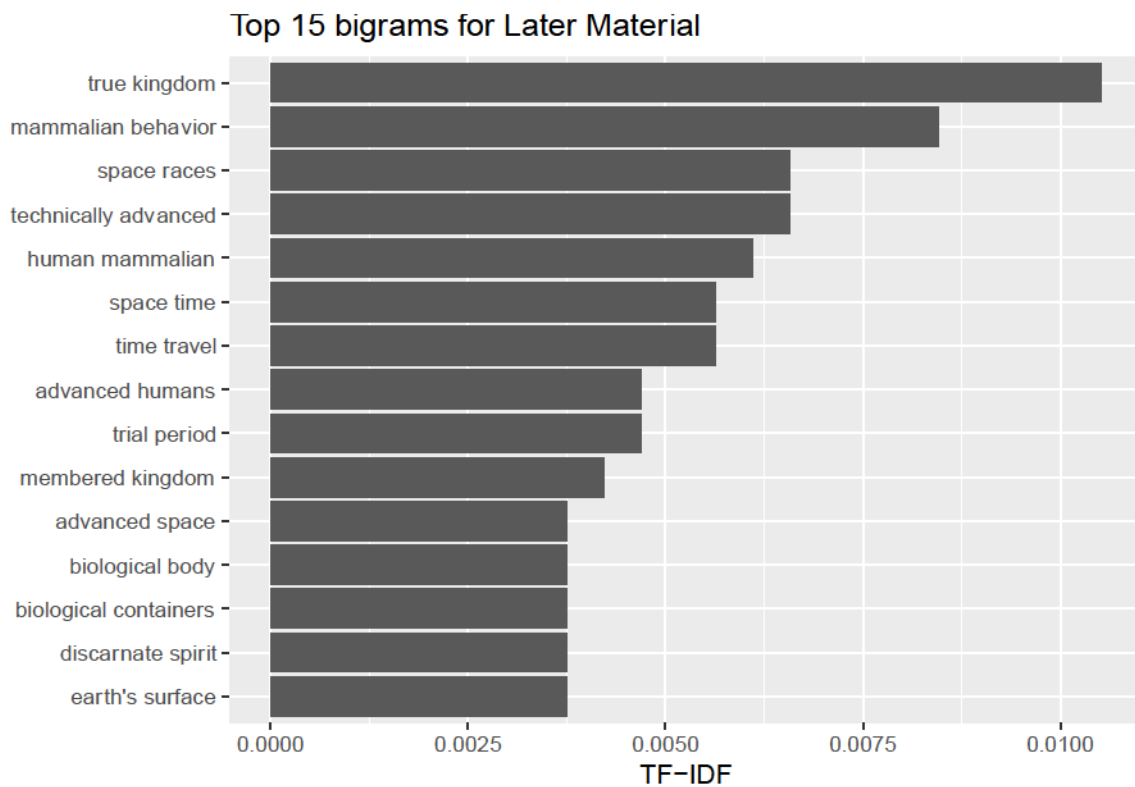
Top 15 bigrams for Early Material



(b)



(c)



(d)

Figure 2. The top 15 most discriminatory bigrams across the sections of the corpus.

From this analysis several interesting characteristics appear. The two earlier chapters, the introduction and the early material are both relatively short and it is difficult to identify consistent themes within the texts, although there is some evidence that the early material focusses on Ti and Do's journey with references to 'Gold Beach' in Oregon (where the cult largely formed) and 'St Louis' where Applewhite and Nettles spent some time. There are also disparaging references to 'ascended masters' a common belief in 'competing' new-age religions at the time. It appears this section is trying to provide the background to the group and distance itself from other new-age belief systems.

The bigrams associated with the transcripts of the video series seem to be more focussed around traditional new-age religion, with bigrams associated with 'family tree', 'rightful heirs' and some bigrams used to contrast against older religions 'history books', 'religious terminology'. In the later material there is a clear shift to the space, 'science-fiction' elements of the cult belief with bigrams such as 'mammalian behaviour', 'space races', 'technically advanced', etc. This section shows evidence of pushing the bounds of what would traditionally be called a new-age religion.

There appears to be a shift in the material, initially the focus is on very descriptive accounts of the belief system, then this system is contrasted against both new-age religions and older religions. Until finally, the content of the text shifts significantly to aliens, space and transformation to align with the final belief structure of the group.

An interesting evaluation of the texts is to explore the readability of the various sections, the Flesch Kincaid Reading Ease (Flesch, 1948) is shown in Figure 3.

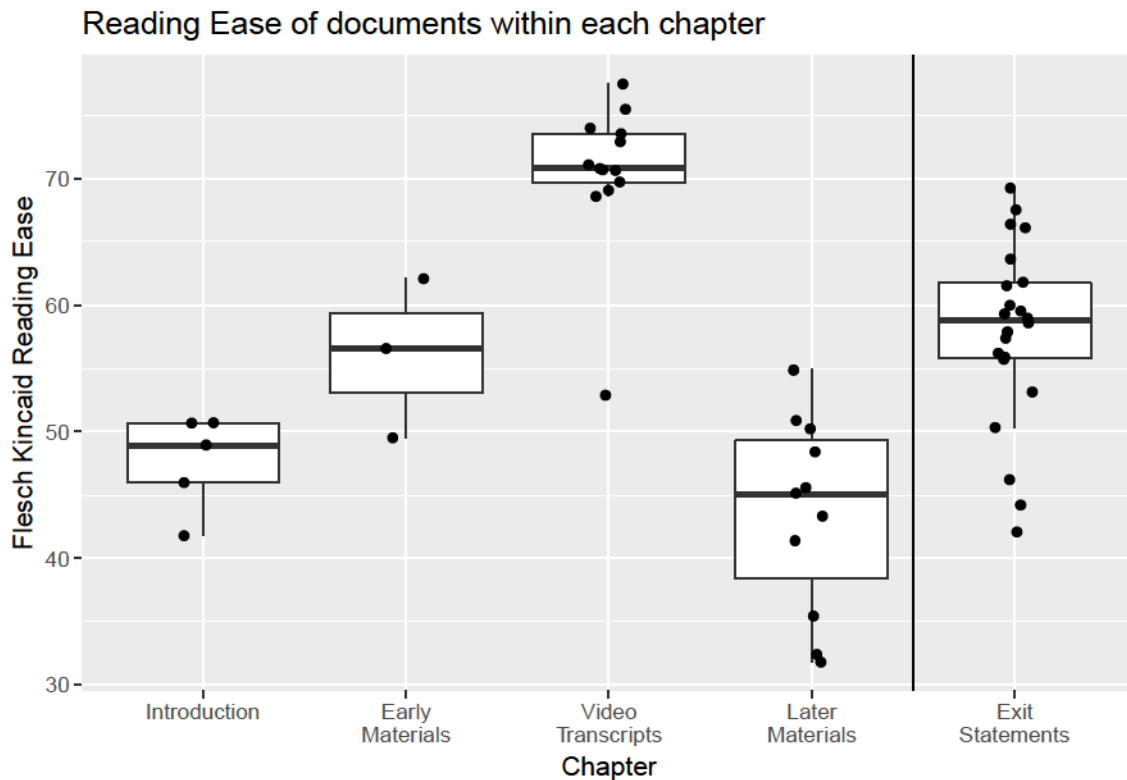


Figure 3. The Flesch Kincaid Reading Ease of the various texts within the corpus.

The transcripts of the video sections are notably easier to read, this is not surprising since they are transcripts of spoken word and hence exhibit a conversational tone, albeit still less than could be expected with conversational English tending to exhibit a score of around 80. In addition, the introduction to this section (which is not a transcript) is of a readability that is comparable to the earliest materials falling between 40 (typically considered to be ‘hard to read’) through to 60 (a score of 65 is generally described as ‘plain english’).

The other section with a notably lower readability is the later materials, this potentially represents a change in the goals of the cult from accessible mass recruitment to reinforcement of the existing belief and further refining the ingroup of those within the cult (Walther, 2007). These later sections not only become less readable (typically described as between ‘difficult’ and ‘very difficult’), but the

material becomes less traditional moving from typical new-age religion to an obsession with transformation, space and aliens.

Looking at the readability of the exit statements there is a wide range provided by the followers. The least readable are from the followers Snnody (Margaret June Bull) and Jwnnody (Judith Ann Wilber Rowland), these are two of the longest serving followers of the group. Jwnnody joined in 1975 and both Snnody and Jwnnody have been described as 'long term overseers' (Sawyer, 2017) indicating a close relationship to both the group and Do's teaching. In fact, the eight exit statements with the lowest readability are from the original 1975 group intake.

The highest readability exit statement is provided by Wknody (Nancy Dianne Nelson) which is the most readable of all texts contained within the book (excluding transcripts) and incidentally is one of the few texts which explicitly uses the word suicide and describes a vehicle (body) that 'means absolutely nothing to me' and an 'encumbrance' and continues to redefine suicide as remaining on earth in bodily form, but to lay aside the vehicle and free the 'next level mind' was not suicide but life (Lewis, 2011).

It is notable that the two most readable exit statements are from the relatively small 1994 group intake. From this initial analysis there is a clear movement from traditional new-age religions with some attempts to make the writings accessible; as the time progresses thematically the writing attempts to distance itself from new-age religion and also becomes harder to read, as the writings begin to reflect a more closed in-group. This trend is also shown in the exit statements, where those who produced the least readable statements had been with the group for nearly 20 years longer than those who produced the most readable.

Analytic and Narrative language

In order to understand more about the language associated with the material it is possible to calculate a variable related to analytical thinking (Pennebaker *et al.*, 2014). This is indicated through a high use of nouns, articles and prepositions which indicates that the writer is identifying concepts and organising them in a logical and ordered manner. It has been shown that those who rate highly in this variable tend to be more logical in their daily lives (Boyd and Pennebaker, 2015) and consistently perform better in academic settings (Robinson, Navea and Ickes, 2012; Pennebaker *et al.*, 2014).

In direct contrast to this is the lower use of nouns, articles and prepositions and a higher use of personal pronouns, auxiliary verbs and common adverbs tends to indicate that an individual is writing in a less analytic manner and more of a narrative manner. In this writing style there is greater emphasis on relaying the writer's own experiences and building a narrative to discuss or promote a concept or idea.

Using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) software solution (Tausczik and Pennebaker, 2010; Pennebaker *et al.*, 2015) the measures of analytic language were extracted for each document within the corpus, this is shown in Figure 4. From this figure the introduction and early material show a similar level of analytic language, whilst the later material demonstrates a significant increase in the use of analytic language.

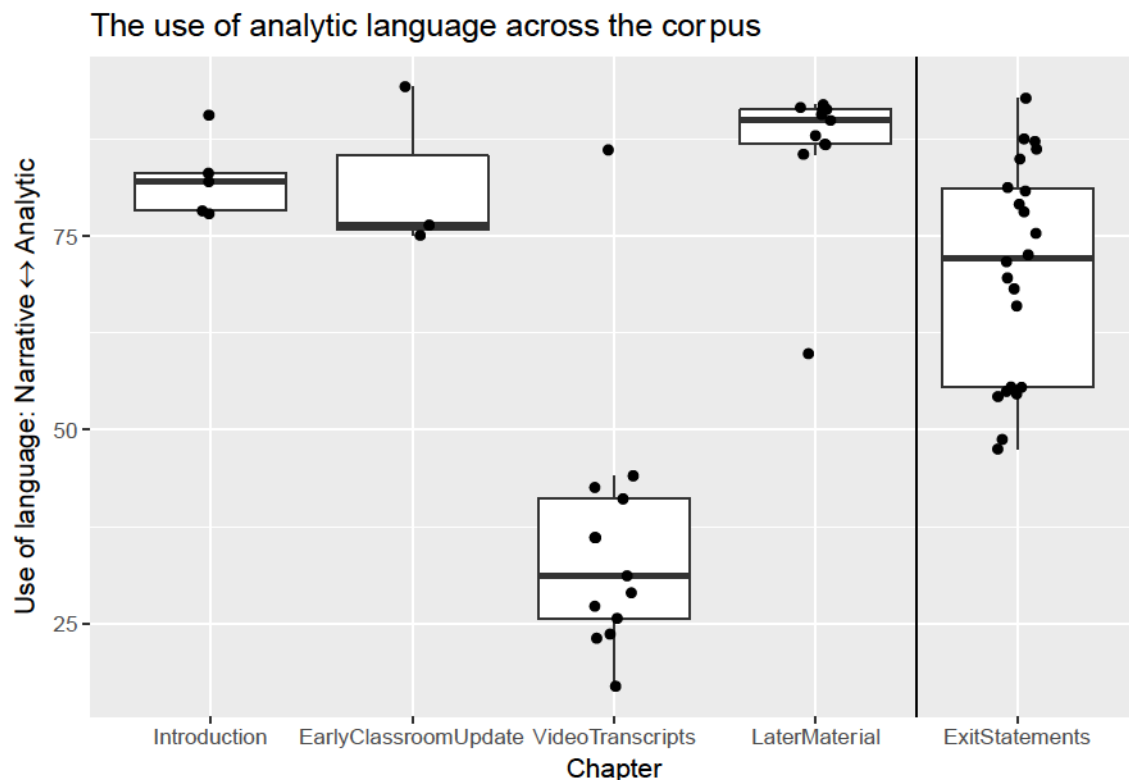


Figure 4. The use of analytic and narrative language within the corpus.

The increase in the use of analytic language is consistent with the refinement of the concepts and the writing becoming more focused on the complexities of the belief system. The later material associated with the group becomes less about engaging a wider audience and more about solidifying the ingroup. It is noteworthy that there is an outlier in the Later Material with a significantly lower assessment of the level of analytic language. This outlying document outlining the ‘admission requirements’ for the group’s outreach activity, a document fundamentally aimed at those not part of the group that has little or no conceptual complexity with respect to the group’s beliefs and values.

The video transcripts show a significantly lower use of analytic language than most of the writings, again this shouldn’t be surprising as this is both a transcript of the spoken word and aimed as outreach activity beyond the group. The use of a

more narrative style with a significant use of personal pronouns may be aimed at personalising the experience and resonating with a viewer, for example the following text appears in the second session: “I told you yesterday that when I met Ti, and even before I met Ti - I would say probably a year before I met Ti - that my life began to just fall apart”. Within this section there is also another outlier which demonstrates a significantly higher use of analytic language than the rest of the chapter, this text is a copy of the introduction associated with the video tapes. The introduction to the video tapes presents a high-level overview of the content included within the tapes, which results in a higher analytic content than much of this chapter.

The tendency for a more narrative and less analytic content further reinforces the conclusion that the video transcripts represent the last significant outreach activity before the later material is targeting the ingroup with the aim of solidifying this group.

The same analysis can be performed on the followers’ exit statements, this can then be combined with the reading ease in order to create Figure 5. This figure shows there is a tendency with those statements using more analytic language to also exhibit a lower readability.

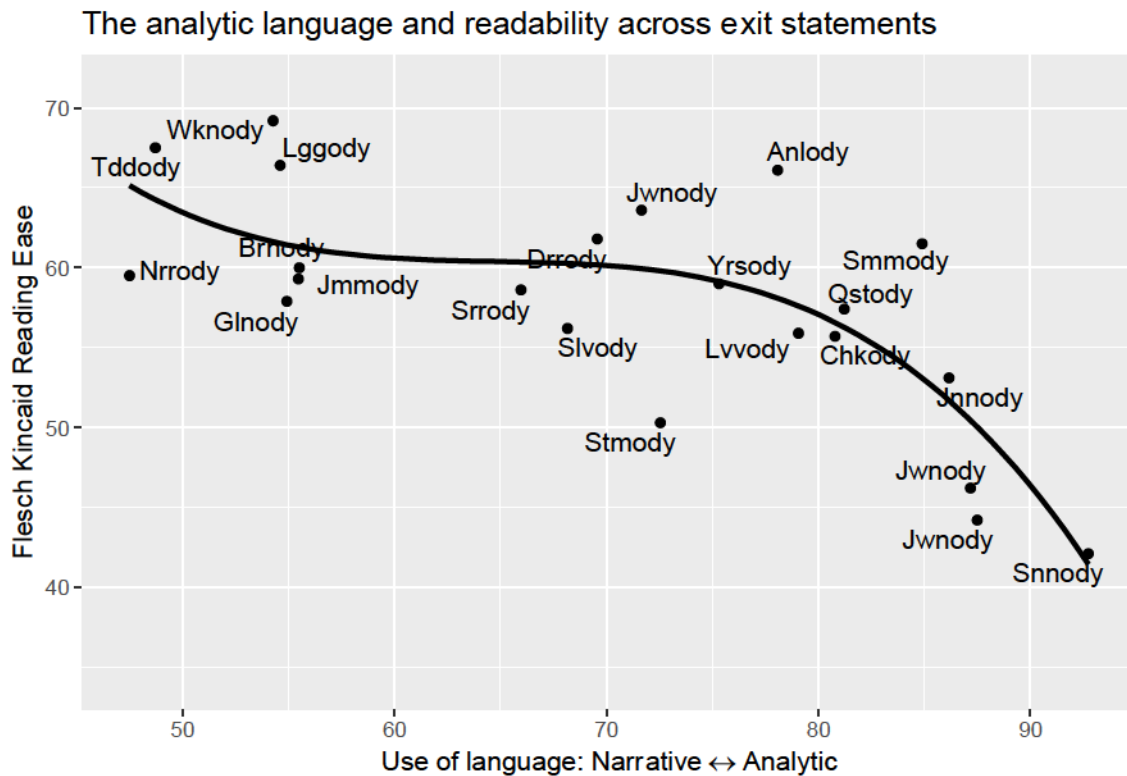


Figure 5. The readability and use of analytic language in the exit statements. The line represents a LOESS smoothing with a 95% confidence interval.

The ‘overseers’ of Jwnnodey and Snnodey demonstrate highly analytic language in their exit statements, building complex arguments in an analytical manner, unsurprisingly these statements also had the lowest readability of all the followers. Considering the other exit statements, it is clear that Wknodey and Tddodey again provide a narrative-driven and easy to read piece of writing, both of these members joined in the later stages of the group, clearly demonstrating a more narrative opportunity to write about their experience. Two original members Lggodey (John Michael Craig) and Nrrodey (Susan Paup) also provide very narrative exit statements which exhibit high readability levels, certainly in comparison to their colleagues Jwnnodey and Snnodey who joined the group at the same time. Upon examination of these two texts, Nrrodey provides a very personal journey rather than discussing

about the belief system. Interestingly Lggody provides a hypothetical discussion between himself and an 'evangelist' (a proxy for a religious leader, explicitly '... minister, priest, pope, and rabbi ...', he uses this vehicle to talk about the belief structure. This results in a readable discussion of the belief system but without building or developing arguments that would result in an 'analytical' language.

It is clear from this analysis that we can identify a number of different elements within the corpus of text: we can clearly see the group's material developing from narrative content which are easy for new members to engage with, through the later material which becomes less inclusive, building more complex arguments aimed at cementing the belief structure within the group and fostering the ingroup.

Topic Modelling

Topic Modelling using the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) algorithm was initially proposed for text mining in 2003 (Blei, Ng and Jordan, 2003), since it's introduction it has become a standard technique exploring large corpora across a wide range of domains (Kherwa and Bansal, 2018b, 2018a), from journalistic text (Jacobi, van Atteveldt and Welbers, 2016) through scientific journals (Blei and Lafferty, 2006) to crypto-currency forums (Linton *et al.*, 2017).

Initially a topic model was trained on the main book content, i.e. that provided by Ti and Do, in essence we create a computational representation of the content produced by the cult leaders (Ti and Do). This content contained four discrete sections: the introduction, early material, video transcripts and later materials, hence a model with 4 discrete topics was chosen. However, this created a topic model that failed to separate the later material and the introduction into different topics whilst separated the video transcripts into two separate topics. This led to the creation of a

topic model containing 5 topics, one label to cover each of the introduction, early and late materials, and two labels to cover the content in the video transcripts. The topic membership for each document within chapter is shown in Figure 6, each pane represents the likelihood of topic membership for documents that form a chapter within the main content, e.g. the documents which form the early content are universally members of topic 5.

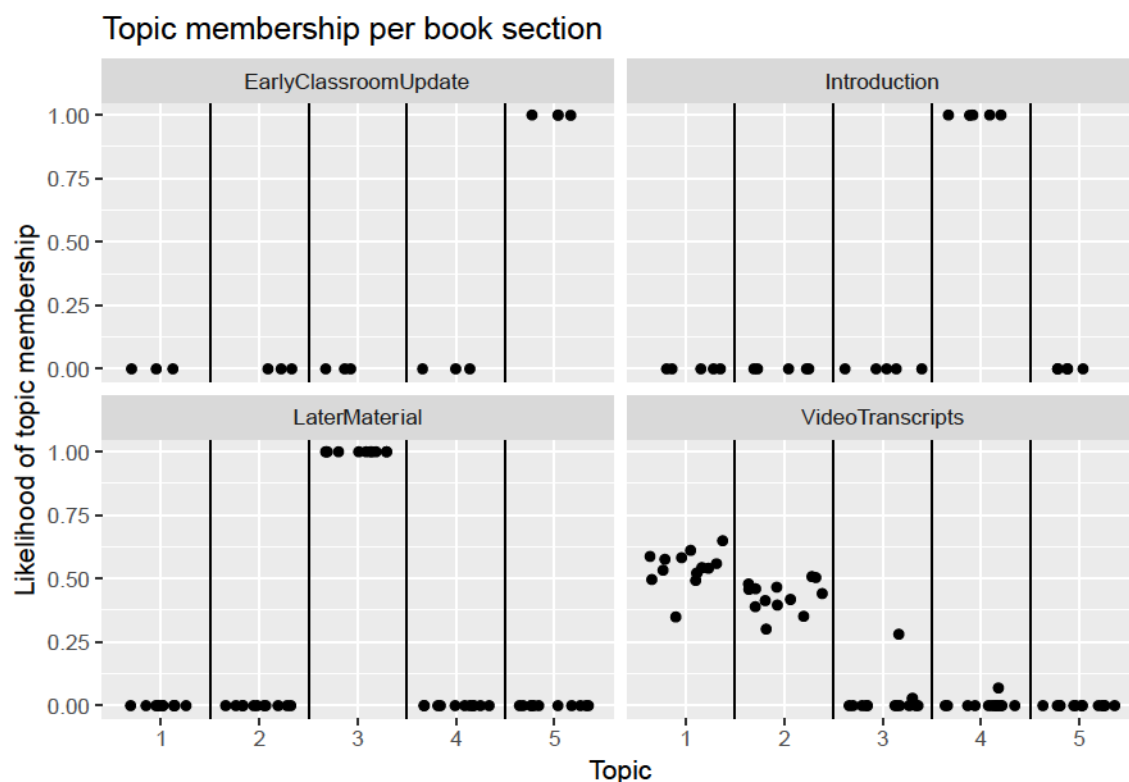


Figure 6. The likelihood of topic membership for each document within the four chapters of the main text.

From Figure 6 it is apparent that the topic model is able to separate the introduction content, the earlier content and the later content into separate topics. The video transcripts however seem to be a relatively uniform mix between topic 1 and topic 2 (with one particular document having a relatively large content from the topic commonly associated with the later material). This indicates that each

document in this section contains essentially two relatively separate topics. The ten most discriminative terms for the topics contained within the video transcripts are shown in Figure 7. As can be seen topic 2 is dominated with terms associated with learning and development, terms such as assisted, assignment, learning and guidance.

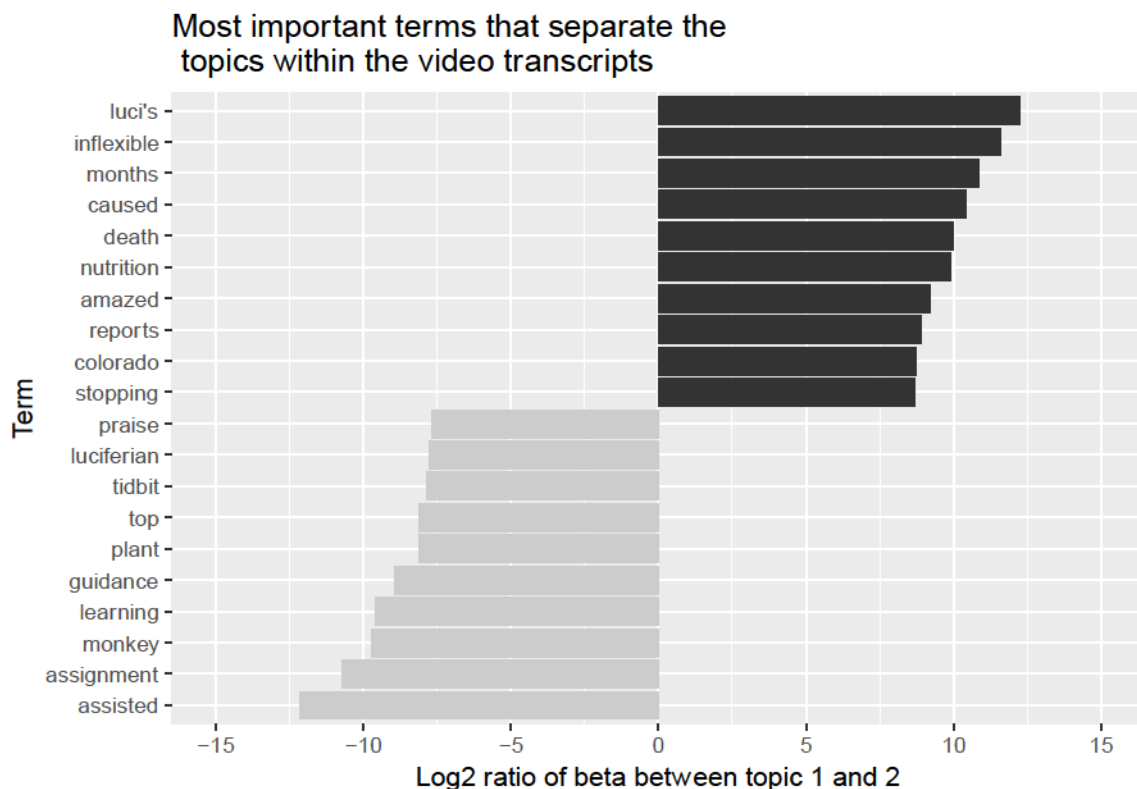


Figure 7. The most important terms for discriminating between the topics contained in the video series.

Application of topics to exit statements

The LDA topic model created from the text of Ti and Do is able to separate out the content from the various sections of the book indicating there are distinct topics contained within these sections. This model can then be applied to the exit statements provided by the followers to identify the texts that use similar terms to what the followers chose to write about. The topic membership is shown in Figure 8, each pane represents a given follower's exit statement

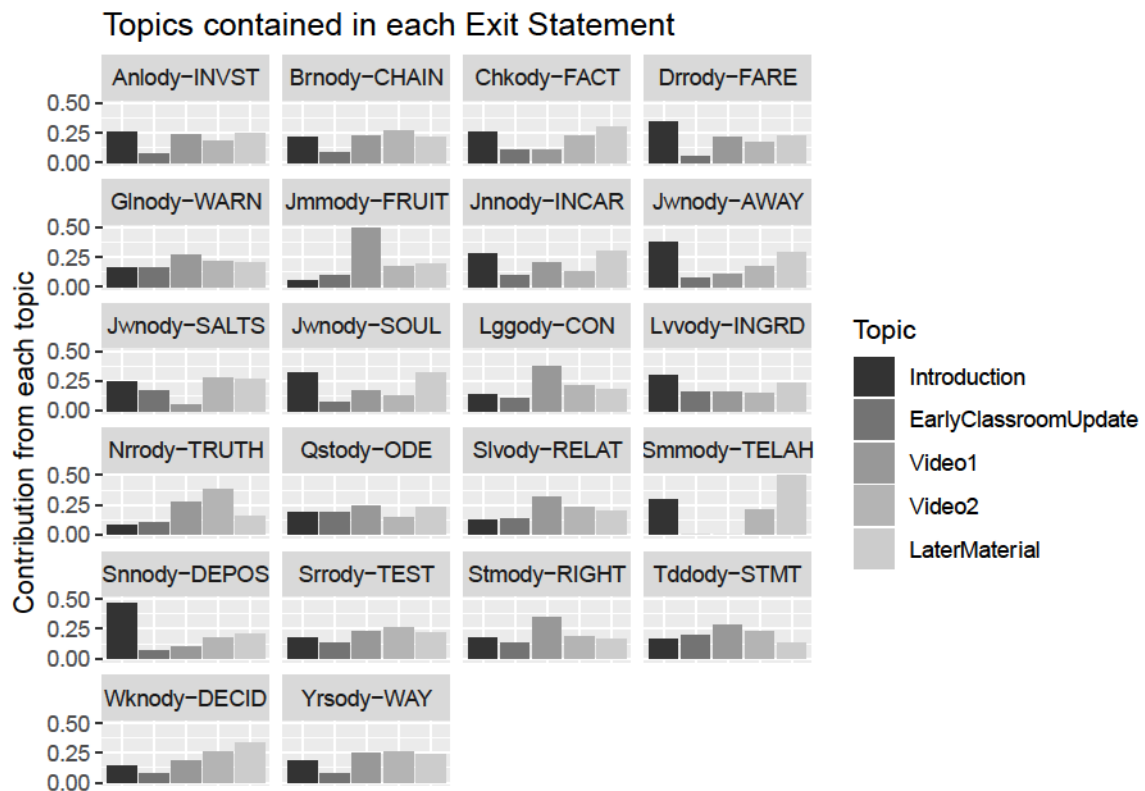


Figure 8. The topic membership of each of the exit statements.

Considering the exit statements, we can clearly see a range of distributions of topics. It is notable that the two exit statements most clearly resembling the Introduction section to the book are provided by Jwnody and Snnody. It is perhaps not surprising given their ‘overseer’ role, that they should provide a high-level overview of the belief system. Interestingly, none of the exit statements is dominated by the ‘Early’ group material – indicating that when given the choice few members wrote about this material.

The first topic from the video transcripts dominates two of the exit statements, that of Jmmody and Lggody. These largely focus on critiquing ‘traditional’ religious materials, again this is clearly reinforced by the high ranking of the word ‘Luci’ (a shortened form of Luciferian – referring to the devil or his agents) in Figure 7.

The second topic from the video transcripts, as discussed previously, is related to development and learning and although it appears in relatively high levels in nearly all the exit statements it is only dominant in one, that of Nroddy. Nroddy's exit statement entirely discusses his personal journey and development.

The final topic is that associated with the Later material, this represents the more complex, analytic discussion and from the TF-IDF scores shown in Figure 2(d) is also where the elements such as space, aliens and transformation begin to appear. These dominate some of the exit statements, most notably Smmodity's which, discusses none of the traditional religion shown in the first video topic, but is solely focussed on advancing the ideas of the transformation and exit from the human-form.

A correlation analysis across all the exit statements show that in general there is little correlation between the membership of the topics except there is a negative correlation between the Video1 topic (associated with 'traditional' religion) and the Introduction topic and the Later topic (focussed on aliens, space and transformation). A Spearman's rank correlation between the first video topic and the introduction has a correlation coefficient of -0.785 and -0.762 between the first video topic and the Later material. In essence, there was a general trend to either discuss the traditional religious elements or the belief elements around space and alien transformation.

This separation is clearly identified if the correlation between the topic membership of the exit statements is calculated, this is shown in Figure 9. With the hierarchical clustering approach, it is clear to see that there are two discrete sets of exit statements – with Tdoddy and Lvbody forming an opposite pair. These two discrete sets reinforce the identification of the negative correlation between the first video topic and the later material and introduction.

Correlation between topic membership for each exit statement

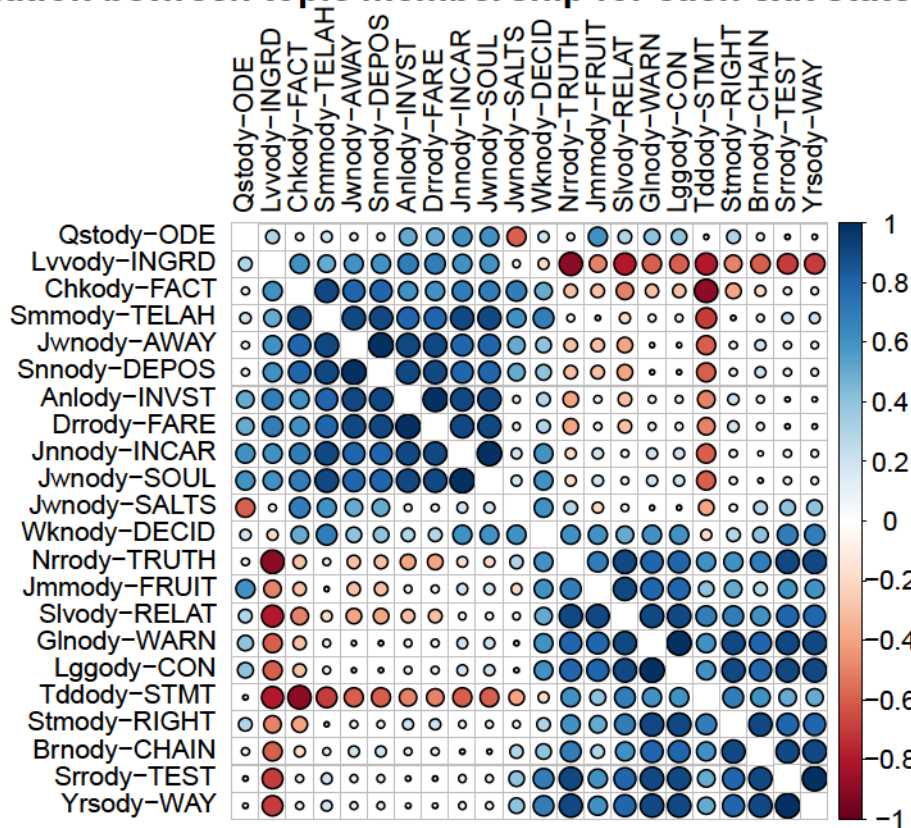


Figure 9. The correlation between the topic membership of the exit statements, the exit statements are ordered using a hierarchical clustering approach.

The two groups of exit statements identify one group focussed on traditional religion and personal growth, whilst the second group tends to focus more on introducing the group belief, but then focussing on the later material (typically associated with the 'science-fiction' elements of the belief).

It is noteworthy that there was no correlation between the joining date and the membership of these groups, i.e. these groups are not related to whether they have been a member since the early mid 1970s or the mid 1990s.

Discussion

From the analysis of the texts associated with The Heaven's Gate group it is possible to identify linguistic artefacts that show the transition away from a traditional

new-age religion. This initial content which is more accessible moves through to more complex and less accessible discussion of the complex elements of belief, particularly the science-fiction driven elements. These elements differentiate the Heavens Gate group from traditional new-age religions and ultimately become contorted to lead to the tragic culmination of the group. This transition is most clearly seen in the decrease of the Flesch Kincaid Reading Ease and an increase in the use of analytic language. The bigrams ranked by TF-IDF also demonstrate the most unique words in the later texts are all associated with the science-fiction elements of the belief.

Moving to the exit statements provided by the followers there are a number of interesting observations. The first is that the two 'overseers' Jwnoddy and Snnody are thematically similar to the introductory texts – this is perhaps not surprising that these senior members of the group should focus on providing high-level overviews of the group, rather than discussing their own personal journey. This conclusion is reinforced by the observation that both of these writers had some of the lowest readability levels and tended to use a lot of analytic language, indicating that they are building relatively complex arguments.

The exit statements are largely split into two themes, the first theme focussed on personal development perhaps typified by Nrrrody's exit statement which talks of their journey in the cult and how they came to join the group, for example '... Nothing particular was going through the brain, but for several days questions about the vehicle's purpose had dominated all thoughts. Suddenly, it was like watching a huge screen, showing the world - all humanity - the extent of ignorance, lack of development, the corruption, selfishness, and greed - the big picture, as from afar, in a moment of extreme clarity, and it was the most overwhelming emotion the vehicle

[the group use this term for the physical body] had ever experienced...'. The second theme that emerges in the exit statements are elements associated with aliens, transformation and space, this also has a positive Spearman's rank correlation of 0.562 with the introduction theme, and indeed there are a number of exit statements which talk both of a high-level about the cult structure and belief before really focussing on the more non-traditional elements of the belief, such as aliens and space. This is exemplified by Smmody's exit statement: '...Ti and Do and their students (crew) have come from a genderless, crew-minded, service-oriented world that finds greed, lust, and self- serving pursuits abhorrent. Each crew member has taken over an adult human body... These bodies are only containers for the Mind from the Next Level. The only reason we came into these mammalian "plants" was to gain strength and to learn control. Once we have disconnected from these bodies and gone back to the Next Level, we will receive new bodies to occupy in our new environment....'.

Conclusion

In this paper we have demonstrated the use of a variety of computational linguistic techniques to texts associated with the Heaven's Gate group. This exploratory analysis highlights the transition from early content which is easy to engage with and thematically is close to 'traditional' new-age religion. The later content becomes harder to read and introduces more complex elements and brings in new themes which are outside those traditionally associated with new-age religions. This transition is mapped well to the group's movement from recruitment to inward facing reinforcement of the group.

The paper also explores the statements written by the group members and identifies two clear groups of statements, one focussed on the personal development

and the other focussed on the ideas of space aliens, transformations etc. Since this group is often considered one of the first 'cults' to become seriously influenced through science fiction and embrace the emerging digital revolution; it is not surprising that we would see a split between followers. We might expect that a number of the followers would discuss their personal journey and talk about how the 'cult' has changed their life, but the second group of followers who focussed on the science-fiction elements and later content shows this is a particularly salient part of the experience for nearly half of the followers.

Reflecting on the wider capability that is demonstrated in this paper there are a number of interesting insights about the group that are revealed through an analysis of the texts they provided. These insights include both the relationship between followers and concepts within the group in addition to the focus of the texts. A further interesting reflection is to consider whether these texts represent a deliberate strategy to develop and reinforce an ingroup or whether the texts represent a 'symptom' of how the group developed from a new-age religious group to a harmful and ultimately destructive group.

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