

**The Bill Blackwood
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Cult Behavior and the Effects on Society

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ABSTRACT

According to the Constitution of the United States, a person has the freedom to worship God as they see fit. However, law enforcement has had to intervene when this worship resulted in a violation of the law. Law enforcement's responses to these violations have been with limited knowledge especially when dealing with fanatic behavior or beliefs. There is a definite need for the law enforcement community to examine different data, views, and ideas from psychologist, sociologist, federal and local cult experts along with continued study and research. This paper will include cases that have been reviewed by several leading universities that study cult behavior and experts in the law enforcement community regarding cults and religious fanaticism. Moreover, the author discusses what is believed to be the barriers law officers' face when investigating cult's related crimes.

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INTRODUCTION

It is important that the law enforcers are diverse when investigating all type of crimes. When investigating criminal activity involving members of a cult, however, law enforcement has had to intervene when there were violations of the law. Therefore, it is necessary to examine different data, views and ideas from psychologist, sociologist, and federal and local cult experts. With fanatic behavior and beliefs on the rise, there is a great need for further research. This project will examine the techniques law enforcement officers use to investigate satanic cult who are involved in criminal activity and murder-suicides. It is understood that the law enforcement (i.e. police officer, FBI, etc.) institution is funded by the public and existing for the benefit of the entire community. The purpose of this project is to take a close look at these methods and training used by law enforcement professionals.

In preparing this research, it is believed that law enforcement agencies will develop an understanding on how critical it is to overcome the barriers of cult issues and be successful in their investigations. The methodology used will not be a standard form of survey, it will use a comparison and review of existing data.

Some cult experts agree that law enforcers do have the tools to adequately to do their jobs. This research is intended to create a greater understanding of the cult culture. Law enforcers have encountered cult behavior in Guyana, Japan, and throughout the United States, just to name a few areas. In addition, the research allocated will demonstrate other forms of criminal activities that occurred within the United States alone. The information will be shocking but true, but at the same time beneficial to any form or branch of the law enforcement community.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In reviewing investigative techniques used by law enforcement professionals, it is necessary to review the techniques and training used by cult experts. An example of such is the *Jargon Police Satanic Cult Seminar* which is a standard cult seminar class taught at several regional police academies and colleges. The seminar presents an illustration of different investigative methods and terms. Reviews and examination of murder suicide cases and the techniques used by police investigators are discussed.

Various documents, such as the *Cult Profile Model* and *Cult Terminology* can be used to identify cults or religious fanaticism. Listed below are cases of various cult situations that demonstrate the nature in which cults operate and the extremes law enforcement have to go to stop their leaders.

Example 1: A group called TNEVNOC Cult is a large and powerful international religious organization. The cult recruits young women and teenage girls openly at schools and colleges. Members must wear prayer beads and distance themselves from the worldly affairs. A member must pledge their absolute obedience to a dead cult leader. The name TNEVNOC, reversing the letters, is actually the word “convent.” The cult leaders described them as a “Christian Convent.” Cult crime experts describe this behavior as being evil, demonic, and pernicious (Bromley, 1979, p.362).

Example 2: A 14 year-old boy, Jefferson Township of New Jersey, kills his mother with a Boy Scout knife, sets the family home on fire, and commits suicide in a neighbor’s backyard by slashing his wrist and throat. Investigators find books on the occult and satanic worship in the juvenile suspect’s bedroom. The books made reference to murder suicides. Investigators also found out that the juvenile had a history of mental

illness. He was being treated for depression. The investigators concluded a combination of mental illness and an obsession with satanic worshipping lead him to commit these crimes (Barry, 1987, p.39).

Example 3: On February 28, 1993, agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms tried to raid the complex to search for illegal weapons and arrest David Koresh. The raid led to a gun battle in which four agents and six Branch Davidians died. It started a 51-day standoff that ended April 19, 1993. At the conclusion of the raid, the compound was burned down, killing Koresh and about 80 of his followers. Some died from fire and others from gunshot wounds. This incident cost the federal and local officials millions of dollars in resources and man-hours. The investigators concluded that these people died as a result of brainwashing and fear between the Branch Davidians leader and other members (Tabor, 1995, p.7).

Example 4: On November 18, 1978, over 914 persons died in Jonestown, Guyana, in an act of faith and trust. For twenty years, a small group of people has attempted to make the name Jonestown synonymous with Auschwitz. The tragedy of Jonestown is not diminished in slightest by declaring this to be an inappropriate analogy. Indeed, this is one of the most horrible events of the 20th century. The United States and Guyana government officials investigated the massive murder-suicide. The officials concluded that the cult members were *brainwashed* and feared their cult leader. Both governments spent millions of dollars in resources and man-hours investigating the incident and returning the suicide victims to their family members in the United States (Nordheimer, 1978, p.10).

Example 5: On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, there was an attack, which was part of a systematic terrorist attack of “The Taliban,” a religious fanaticism group. This group has ties to the Socialist Muslims in the Middle East. They committed a number of heinous acts. They hijacked an American Airline jet carrying 266 passengers. They crashed this plane into the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. Shortly after that, a second hijacked commercial jet crashed into the south tower of the World Trade Center between 8:45-8:53 a.m. They hijacked a third plane carrying 58 passengers. This plane was used to crash into the west side of the United States Pentagon, in Washington D.C. The jet crashed into area where approximately 20,000 people were working, including several national high-ranking military officials. Normally 50,000 people would have been working in both towers, but because the first attack occurred at 8:45 a.m., many workers were not yet in their offices. Officials estimated that 10,000- 20,000 people were in the buildings when the first plane hit, but many were able to flee, walking down dozens of flights of stairs, before the second plane hit and the tower collapsed. The federal and local officials linked the assassins to Usama Bin Laden, the leader and mastermind of the “The Taliban” terrorist organization. This terrorist murder- suicide act cost the United States and several other governments within the trade center network. The U. S. and other countries have lost billions of dollars in damages and thousands of people were seriously injured or killed as a result of this criminal act (Dominguez, 2001, pp.3-4).

Example 6: On December 13, 1990, in Teyirana, Mexico, 12 people died in a religious ritual, apparently after drinking a poisoned sacrament. It was never clearly established if this was a suicide. Authorities speculated the deaths might have been

accidental. However, government officials, later, determined that the group used an industrial alcohol to lace the fruit punch causing death. The punch was given to the members during a religious ceremony at their church (Richard, 1997, p.6).

Example 7: On March 22, 1997, in St. Casmir, Quebec, five members of the order of the Solar Temple died in a fiery massive suicide. The cult devotees believed in suicide transport to a new life on a planet called Sirius. Over the past three years, murder-suicides by temple followers have resulted in 74 deaths in Europe and Canada (Queen, 1997, p. 47).

Example 8: On October 5, 1994, the Swiss authorities found the bodies of 48 people linked to a cult in a farmhouse and three chalets, all consumed by fire. Five more bodies were found the same year in Morin Heights, north of Montreal (Chua-Eoan, 1997, p. 41).

Throughout history, thousands of people have joined cults and committed acts of mind-boggling atrocity in the belief they would obtain power or everlasting life. From the action of the systematic terrorists of “The Taliban” to the movement of Jonestown, the misled followers of cults and their charismatic and megalomaniac leaders have been responsible for history’s most shocking and bizarre assassination, slayings and mass suicides (Barry, 1987, p.41). These criminal acts committed by cult members have resulted in costing the taxpayers billions of dollars in damages over the years and thousands of lives have been lost or otherwise suffered serious bodily injury. In addition, countless man-hours and resources have been used to investigate these crimes.

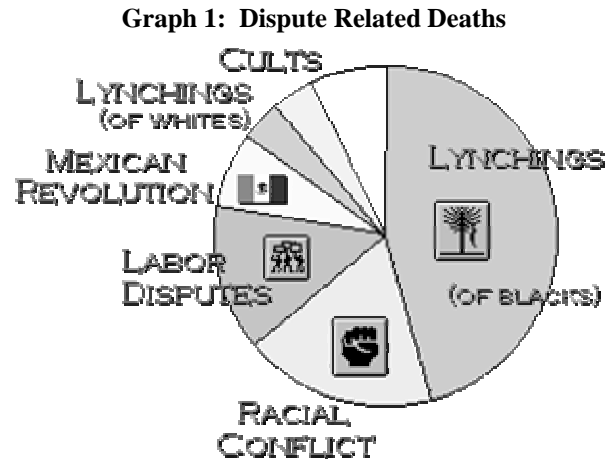
Researchers and investigators find it challenging to find works that dealt with religion as an addiction, however, the shelves of libraries abound with works on cults and

religious fanaticism. It is from these works where efforts will be directed in outlining and detailing how religion becomes an addiction for many (Greenwood, 1989, p.3). Since the followers are receiving support and in most cases love and attention from the cult leader, they have convinced themselves that the privations are reasonable and justified (Greenwood, 1987, p.3).

Distribution by Cause

In comparison of individual deaths related to crimes, approximately 4381 people killed in the United States during the 20th Century from various disputes of one sort or another including cult related disputes:

- 2729 were killed in racial conflicts that would break down to 1963 lynching and; 766 killed in racially motivated riots, bombings, beatings, etc. 622 were killed in labor disputes;
- 300 (more or less) were killed as the Mexican Revolution intermittently spilled over the border-estimates run from 196 to 554. (Let this be a lesson to the isolationists among us: we can't hide). 178 killed because of activity of a religious cult.
- Vigilantes lynched 171 white people, probably.
- 381 people were killed in all other types of civil strife, such as bombings, presidential assassinations, prisons riots, mysterious deaths in jail, antiwar or antiabortion protests, etc.



In the United States, the established religions get along fine, but for some reason, American society tends to spawn brand new cults that have a mean streak, a death wish or a short fuse. In fact, the worst cult death of the century is not counted here, but keep in mind that the 900 dead at the People's Temple in Jonestown, Guyana, were mostly Americans, so we're an exporter as well, (Hick, 1989, pp.5-7).

METHODOLOGY

In order to conduct this research, it was necessary to review news reports, journals and analyze training seminars regarding cults. These resources conveyed criminal activities various members committed. . By analyzing and comparing data from the articles, journals found, the author hopes to find common policies, procedures to aid an officer when he or she is conducting criminal investigations involving cult members.

Also, a phone survey of 13 Texas law enforcement agencies was utilized to determine if there is a need for further training in this subject.

FINDINGS

In the table below, the author illustrates the lives that have been sacrificed due to their cult leaders and beliefs:

Table 1 Cult Leaders and their Organizational Behavior

LEADER/RULER	ORGANIZATION	CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR
David Koresh	The Branch Davidians	80 followers died (murder-suicide)
Jim Jones	The People's Temple	914 followers died (murder-suicide)
Usama Bin Laden	The Taliban	Thousands of people lost their lives

Cult behavior holds a fascination for those desperate enough to look for the “ultimate truth” (Richard, 1997, p. 35). “Religion becomes an addiction when it is use to control and manipulate other people and/or at the expense of inappropriate behavior, such as taking care of oneself and one’s responsibilities, both emotionally and financially (Singer, 1995, p.26).” The basis for the development of fanaticism overall has been psychoanalytic thinking. For example, Jim Jones in Guyana, Aum in Japan, and David Koresh at Waco represent an aspect of human social response seldom understood by those who watch with horror as followers participate in ritual murder and suicide.

Since the followers are receiving support and in most cases love and attention from the cult leader, they have convince themselves that the privations are reasonable and

justified. These people are from all walks of life, at the rate of tens of thousands of new recruits every year (Tabor, 1995, p.8).

What are the similarities and what are their differences? They are male, take sexual advantage of that dependent on them, and are referred to as the ultimate decision-makers. These leaders are given legal or traditional authority, which bolsters their control over those dependent on them, and they tend to be possessive of what they consider their territory (Hicks, 1989, p. 7). Many will be horrified that we compare cult's leaders, whom they consider evil and perhaps even possessed of Satan, to the male head of a household, but the factors that lead followers to ritual murder-suicide are found in the ordinary household.

A cult leader is supported in so many ways. First, the follower must give all his or hers worldly goods to their cause. Worldly goods could include money, cars, and even their homes. Second, the follower would devote themselves to the leader's sexual needs. Children are given to their leaders for various types of gratification. In addition, the follower understands that to defy the orders of the leader will only bring punishment. For example, physical isolation or food deprivation or even some forms of torture as retribution are results for disobedience (Queen, 1997, p. 48).

What happens to cause followers to commit ritual murder-suicide? The cult leader has established himself as a father figure or head of household in the eyes of his followers. They will gradually change unlike what happens in an abusive household. In this case, abuse to children in the household is told by the cult leader that it is his or her fault (Dominguez, 2001, p.3). The leader also uses guilt, so that punishment of certain infractions becomes ritualized. Once the cult leader established this fact, the severity of

punishment may increase and death may occur. The follower, then, feels mentally and psychically oppressed. As a result, they think that suicide has become mentally acceptable and death has lost its horror (Bromley, 1987, p. 364).

What is going on inside the cult leader's mind as this occurs? This is best understood if one compares it to the family that every neighbor knows. The husband insists his wife stays home as a housewife, and become furious when she engages in social activities outside the home. His daughters cannot date, and in all likelihood have been sexually abused in some manner. He chums around with a group of friends who think nothing is amiss in this setting, and gives the frightened family member no hope of rescue. This is called "*Domestic Violence Syndrome*" (Bromley, 1987, p. 364). Research has shown that the cult member suffers from the same traumatic syndrome as the domestic violence victim does.

If the cult leader or abusive husband feels like they are losing control of their followers or family. They would rather destroy the follower or family member, by murder-suicide, instead of setting them free from their abusive torment. In addition to the data gathered comparing cult member's behavior to domestic violence syndrome (Singer, 1995, p. 26). The religious community found. It is a poor understanding as to why here are an increasing number of young adults that are participating in satanic worships.

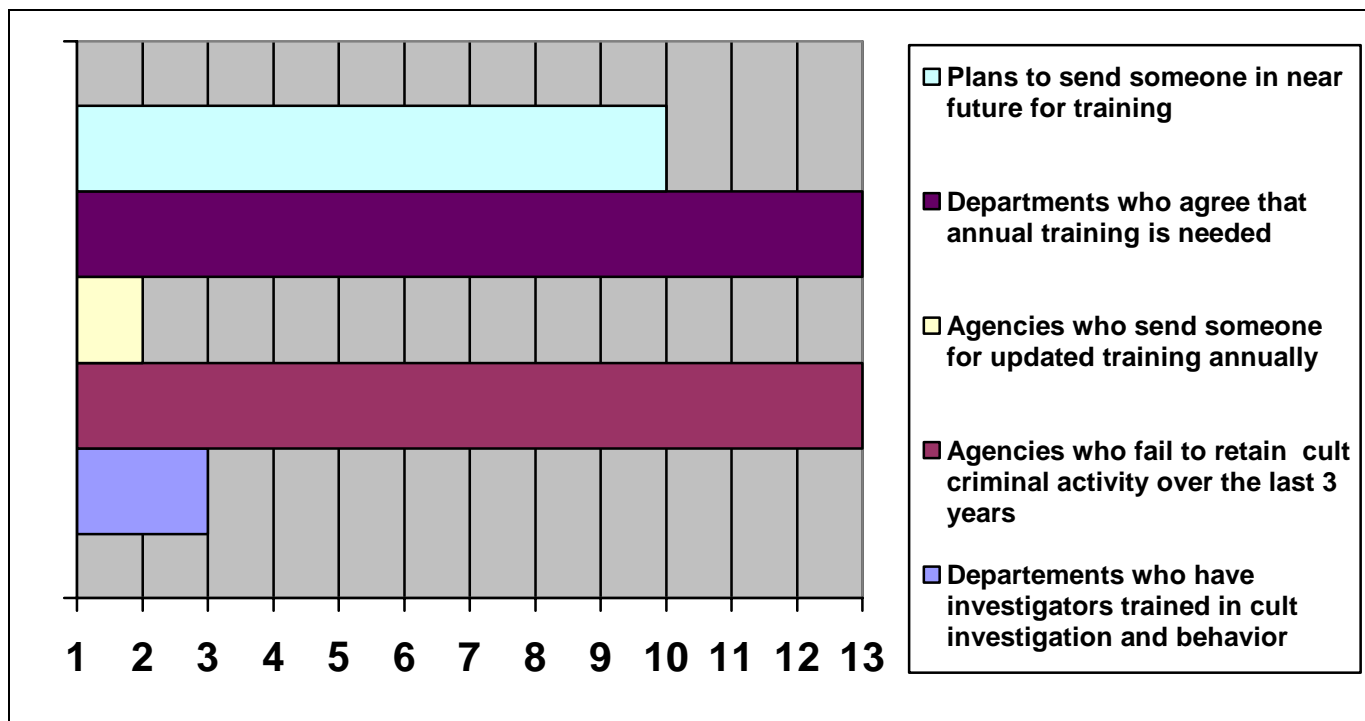
The seminar lecturer needs to inform the law enforcement community of cult's behavior and current social trends. Moreover, they should inform the law enforcement community of the psychologist and sociologist studies comparing cult members to domestic violence syndrome victims (Bromley, 1979, p. 365). Therefore, the investigator would have a better understanding as to why cult members commit mass murder-suicide.

The seminar claimed that Satanism has spawned gruesome crimes and aberrant behavior that might presage violent crime. The phenomenon has a firm and documented historical and sociological context. The news media have largely defined the law enforcement model of cult activity since the evidence offered at seminars for cults mayhem is nothing more than newspaper stories. On the contrary, the police have been quick to infer from them cause-effect relationships anyway. It was also noted that cult investigators do not define their terms: the words “cult, occults, satanic and ritual” find casual usage, the words imbued with demonic and evil associated. Evil is indeed, the operative word (Barry, 1987, p.40).

It appears that more hate crimes are being reported more than ever before. A total of 344 hate crimes throughout Texas were reported in 2002. Unfortunately, the 2003 report has not been published, yet. A list of the departments who participated in the survey is attached as an appendice.

None of the agencies had obtained any cult related data in the past 3 years. There were 3 agencies that participated in the survey that have a police investigator on staff that has training in cult investigation & behavior. The entire group of agencies surveyed felt that there was a need for updated training on cult behavior annually. See chart below.

Graph 2, response chart



DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

While researching this subject, the material that was located all contained similar information and viewpoints. To gain the loyalty and dedication of their leaders, followers were willing to give up all their worldly possessions and cut all ties with family and friends. Consequently, they pledged their lives to the cult leader.

Evidently, the facts of the crime must be treated with a high level of severity and proceed with the investigation until it is completed. The investigator should never focus on the fact that the suspect is a member of a cult organization. Keep in mind, the basic investigative method that was taught to cadets while in the police academy is not enough

to investigate the criminal acts. There is a constant need for training on the subject of cult behavior for law enforcement professionals.

However, when investigating a murder-suicide, he or she must be aware of the psychological trauma and abuse that the leader of the organization subjected the cult followers to in some cases (Bromley, 1979). This may assist the investigating officer with understanding a motive for the crime. Society has suffered a significant loss, (i.e. financially, economically, and emotionally) by the consequences dealt by the fanatic behavior.

Upon conducting a telephone survey with several state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the state of Texas, the author discovered cult related crimes are rare. As a matter of fact, the Texas Department of Public Safety Uniform Crime Report Unit does not keep records of cult related crimes due to the vast decrease in cult related crimes in the past 3 years.

In conclusion, there is a constant need for training on the subject of cult behavior for law enforcement professionals. Henceforth, there are several factors that guarantee the outcome of these cases is an update on cult investigation; behavior training, methods used and take in account the current social behaviors and trends. Giving that law enforcement professionals must perform their job efficiently and effectively, knowledge of such behavior is important.

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APPENDICE

List of departments who participated in the telephone survey

- Texas Department Of Public Safety
- Texas Southern University Department of Public Safety
- Harris County Sheriff's Department
- Harris County Constables Department Pct. 7
- Houston Police Department
- Stafford Police Department
- Missouri City Police Department
- Sugar Land Police Department
- Fort Bend County Sheriff's Department
- Fort Bend County Constable Department Pct. 1
- Prairie View A&M University Department of Public Safety
- Brook Shire Police Department
- Fort Bend I.S.D. Police Department