

## News from Info-Cult

No. 35, June 2016

### Cultic Groups, Radicalization and Violence Info-Cult

#### In this Issue

Cultic Groups, Radicalization  
and Violence by Info-Cult

#### Education

Info-Cult staff and members  
International Conference 2016 in  
Dallas  
International Conference  
2017 in Bordeaux  
Website Updates  
Email Information Lists



Info-Cult turned 35 last year and is the only Canadian organization of its kind offering help and information about cults, new religious movements and marginal and radical groups. Indeed it is one of only two in North America. Over the past 35 years Info-Cult has responded to more than 80,000 requests covering over 4,000 groups and subjects!

Info-Cult and those that work in the field have noted for years the similarities between our agenda and the fight against terrorism and other forms of radicalism.

Attacks by terrorists here and abroad have led some politicians, media, academics and others to suggest that the process of radicalization is similar to cult recruitment. Some have stated that terrorist groups are cults.

There is indeed a striking similarity - the facts on the ground are that violence is perpetrated by some groups toward individuals and society.

Prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, the most well-known occurrences of religiously inspired violence involved new religious movements or "cults". They included but no means limited to:

- Mass suicide murders of men, women and children of the **Peoples Temple** in Guyana (1978)
- **Rajneesh** group's bioterror attack through the food poisoning of 751 individuals in Oregon (1984)
- Siege of the **Branch Davidians** which led to the death of 82 people (1993)

...continued on page 2

#### Education

##### Talks, media and conferences of Info-Cult staff and members

Info-cult staff and members are often invited to speak or are involved in organizing conferences. Here are the last and next one:

- June 30 – July 2, 2016 - *Identity and the Cultic Experience: About Changes, Transformations and Consolidation*, **Dianne Casoni (Psychologist, Psychoanalyst, Professor, University of Montreal and Info-Cult Board member)** International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) annual conference – Dallas, Texas – <http://www.icsahome.com/events/conferenceannual>
- April 16, 2016 – *Panel on Policy Implications*, **Mike Kropveld (Info-Cult Founder and Executive Director)** Moderator, the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) conference [Cults and Sex Trafficking](#). He assisted in the organizing of this conference, Los Angeles, CA,



Panel at ICSA - Cults and Sex Trafficking,  
event held April 16, 2016 at the University  
of Southern California \*p.3

## Cultic Groups, Radicalization and Violence:

(Continued from Page 1)

- Murder suicides of members of the **Order of the Solar Temple** (OST) in Quebec, Switzerland and France (1994, 1995, 1997)
- Sarin gaz attack by the **Aum Shinrikyo** in the Toyko subway (1995)
- Collective suicide by members of **Heaven's Gate** (1997)

All these groups can be understood as cults and violent extremist groups.

A helpful way to understand the spectrum of groups in our society is to see them as existing on a continuum —from groups that are open and tolerant, with a leadership that is non-authoritarian and respectful toward their members and non-members, to groups that are closed and intolerant, with an authoritarian leadership that is disrespectful of its members and the rest of society.

Not all groups that are labelled as cults or extremist groups are similar. But all groups fall somewhere in between the extremes. We have learned, however, that the high-control groups at the latter extreme are the ones that pose a higher potential risk of causing harm to their members and to society at large.

The reality is that some people and certain groups will resort to violence as a means to achieve what they believe to be justifiable ends. This is not a new phenomenon.



Witness such groups as the Symbionese Liberation Army (United States), the Baader-Meinhof Gang (Germany) and the Red Brigades (Italy). As Canada and other countries focus on radicalization as it pertains to Islamist groups and ideology, it is clear that followers of other extreme ideologies have resorted and will resort to violence. Timothy McVeigh and the bombing of a U.S. Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City in 1995 is one example that comes to mind.

In most of these cases, youth and young adults who are recruited or join groups are looking for meaning in their lives. Often bright and idealistic, many have lost confidence in society's traditional institutions, and want to contribute to making the world a better place. We need to understand that those who are more vulnerable to the appeal of extreme or marginal groups are often going through a transition period, or they need an authority figure to tell them what to do. Feeling alone and adrift, they may also be looking for a sense of belonging to a group, where they feel special and part of a chosen elite.

The need to believe and belong is a very powerful motivating force and can be easily manipulated by those groups seeking to gain new followers.

Rather than simply finding labels to categorize groups as cults or death cults, or their members as fanatics, crazy or deranged, we urgently need to be focusing on why people join or are recruited into extremist groups, how these groups operate and what strategies can be deployed to counter them.

Info-Cult has demonstrated its expertise on how and why people join extremist and marginal groups, how these groups function, how they change over time, and the role of the leaders in these groups. Indeed, recent concerns about radicalization, extremism and violence, therefore, are what we have been dealing with since we began operating in 1980.

## Cultic Groups...

The reality is that some people and certain groups will resort to violence as a means to achieve what they believe to be justifiable ends.

Over the years, Info-Cult has established contacts with an extensive international network of individuals, as well as private and public organizations, so we can be as up-to-date and well-informed as possible on marginal and extreme groups and trends that are arising.

9-11 reminded us that collaboration and communication between government agencies and relevant institutions is vital. What's more, individuals and groups across diverse cultures also have an instrumental role to play in countering extremism. Consultative forums can serve as an important means for sharing information and generating collective wisdom in order to determine responsible and effective responses to the phenomenon of extremism. By working together, we can play a significant role in countering the radicalization and extreme, violent acts that are becoming increasingly prevalent in our society.

## Education

### Talks, media and conferences of Info-Cult staff and members (continued [from photo](#) on page 1)

\*Panel composition at International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) - **Cults and Sex Trafficking**, event

Alan W. Schefflin, JD, LL.M., is Emeritus Professor of Law at Santa Clara University School of Law in California and a member of ICSA's Board of Directors.

Michael Kropveld, Founder and Executive Director of Info-Cult /Info-Secte, and a member of ICSA's Board of Directors.

Michael D. Langone, PhD, a counseling psychologist, received a doctorate in Counseling Psychology from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the Executive Director of ICSA.

Robin Boyle Laisure, JD, Assistant Dean for Academic Success and Professor of Legal Writing, St. John's University School of Law, and on the editorial board of ICSA's International Journal of Cultic Studies.

Halleh Seddighzadeh, PhD, The Founder of ARMAN (Asylee, Refugee Migrant Assistance Network)

For information on the Power Points used during this conference and to other resources pertinent to the conference's topic go here. <http://www.icsahome.com/elibrary/topics/cults-and-sex-trafficking>

### 2016 Annual International ICSA Conference, Dallas, United States, June 30-July 2 (Pre-Conference workshops June 29th).

The [International Cultic Studies Association](#) (ICSA) is conducting its 2016 Annual International Conference with [Info-Secte/Info-Cult](#) of Montreal.

This year's theme is **Recovery From Cults and High-Control Groups**. There will be a track on the conference theme as well as tracks addressing the needs of mental health professionals, former members, researchers, families, and others.

To **register for the conference, and other information** such as the program, hotel reservations, etc...:

<http://www.icsahome.com/events/conferenceannual>



*International ICSA  
Conference 2016  
Dallas, Texas*

## Education

### 2017 Annual International ICSA Conference, Bordeaux, France June 29-July 1 (Pre-Conference workshops June 28th).

The [International Cultic Studies Association](#) (ICSA) is conducting its 2017 Annual International Conference with [Info-Secte/Info-Cult](#) of Montreal and Société Française de Recherche et d'Analyse de l'Emprise Mentale (SFRAEM).

The 2017 theme will be: **Cultic Dynamics and Radicalization**

**Call for Papers:** <http://www.icsahome.com/events/callforpapers>

**Deadline:** October 31, 2016




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*International ICSA  
Conference 2017  
Bordeaux, France*

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### Info-Cult's Web Site

Different pages on our website are updated on an ongoing basis and a number of documents and programs are available in their entirety. For example:

#### Governmental Reports

This page <http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ic-gov.html> provides a range of government studies and reports, legal decisions and other documents from 19 countries and the Council of Europe.

#### Publications and Documents by Info-Cult and Colleagues

Recent additions are available in their entirety at:  
<http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ICPubs.html>

**Bookmark our site: [www.infocult.org](http://www.infocult.org) and keep up to date**

### Library Collection:

Info-Cult's library has acquired a vast quantity of materials on "cults", "new religious movements" and related groups and subjects. .

The documentation centre is the largest of its kind in North America and houses, thousands of files, more than 1,200 programs on audio/video cassettes, journals, newsletters, government and legal documents, academic reports, journals and thousands of books principally in English and French with a smaller collection of documents in Spanish, Italian, Japanese, and German. The collection spans critical and group generated information and other materials which are obtained from sources around the world.



## Info-Cult on Facebook



Find us on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/InfoCult.InfoSecte>



## Info-Cult E-mail Information Lists (English and French)

Info-Cult's **free email service** offers subscribers: articles on cults, new religious movements and related subjects, announcements of upcoming conferences, television programs and updates about Info-Cult. For more information about this service:

[http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/Options\\_EN.html](http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/Options_EN.html)



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Info-Cult's videos can be accessed on our YouTube page:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/infosecte>

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<https://www.canadahelps.org/services/wa/dnm/en/#/page/16231>

Or by:

**PayPal**

Go to [www.infocult.org](http://www.infocult.org) and click on **DONATE NOW**

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