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## AN EXPLORATORY STUDY IN METHODS OF DISTINGUISHING DESTRUCTIVE CULTS

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Drawing extensively on academic and anti cult literature and paying particular attention to theories of how cults become destructive, this small-scale exploratory study deconstructed 25 cults into a number of constituent behaviours, practices and beliefs. A preliminary multi-variate analysis revealed that 7 behaviours might form the basis of discriminating destructive from more benign cults. These 7 behaviours, which were most closely correlated with overt destructive acts (mass suicide and mass murder) did distinguish the five demonstrably destructive religious cults (*Aum Shinri Kyo*, *Order of the Solar Temple*, *Branch Davidians*, *Heaven's Gate*, *Jim Jones Jonestown*) associated with major loss of life from the remaining 20 cults examined. The exception to this was *The House of Yahweh*, which was not theoretically classified as destructive but was empirically classified as such in this analysis. The study demonstrated clear patterns of behaviour and beliefs that are at variance with those identified by other authors who have adopted a more conceptual approach.

Key words: cults; practices and beliefs; SSA; POSAC.

Recent history has shown that religious cults have a great capacity to be destructive, as evidenced by the mass suicides of Jim Jones' "*Jonestown*", *Order of the Solar Temple* and *Heaven's Gate*; the Tokyo subway nerve gas murders perpetrated by *Aum Shinri Kyo* and the controversial deaths of the *Branch Davidians* at Waco.<sup>1</sup> The primary aim of this exploratory study was to identify the behaviours, practices and beliefs that might distinguish these five demonstrably destructive cults.

The term "cult" can mean different things to different people. In fact defining "cult" can be quite problematic. Firstly, the sheer heterogeneity of cults frustrates attempts to derive a unitary definition. Secondly, many definitions are value laden as vividly expressed by Leo Pfeffer, "If you believe in it, it is a religion or perhaps the religion; and if you do not care one way or another about it, it is a sect; but if you fear it and hate it, it is a cult" (Pfeffer, 1979). The way in which "cult" has been conceived of in

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this study is consistent with Miller's (1995) definition of a cult as an "intense religious group whose ties to mainstream religion and culture tend to be less pronounced, one that often espouses a belief system not rooted in Christianity or Judaism and often under the personal direction of a single charismatic leader". All the cults included in this study fit this definition and, perhaps more importantly, are consensually recognised as cults in the mainstream literature on this subject.

Certain individuals within the anti cult movement contend that all cults, by definition, are destructive and that there can be no such thing as a harmless cult. The anti cult movement fuses two strands of opposition: the older, which opposes cults on theological grounds and the strand that emerged in the 1960's, where parents, concerned that their children had joined cults, established information and self-help networks and groups. The two strands coalesce around core beliefs about cults that are as negative as they are contentious. The first of these is that being a member of a cult is necessarily psychologically harmful, and *ipso facto* destructive. The second is a belief that cult members are victims of what is variously termed *mind control*, *thought reform* or psychological *coercion*. Thus, members can be compelled to act in ways that they might previously have regarded as morally unconscionable, even being induced to suicide or murder.

These views are extremely controversial and the claim that all cults are "destructive" in the widest sense (i.e., at least entailing psychological harm) is, arguably, overstated. Of concern to all are those cults associated with major loss of life such as Jim Jones' "Jonestown", *Order of the Solar Temple*, *Heaven's Gate*, *Aum Shinri Kyo* and the *Branch Davidians*. For the purposes of this study, *only* these self-evidently destructive cults (each associated with more than ten deaths) are defined as "destructive". This definition is a purely pragmatic one and is not meant to imply that all other cults (included in this study) are purely benign (as one or two included in this study group are clearly not, e.g., House of Yahweh).

That a cult is not created, *de novo*, destructive but *becomes* destructive is of profound significance. If destructively inclined cults can be identified soon enough then possible future destructive acts might be forestalled. It is reasonable to assume that, for any highly destructive cult, the final act of destruction might be preceded by lesser acts of destruction, violence and criminal acts and that these too may (although not necessarily) have ominous significance. Clearly, the reliable identification of *potentially* destructive cults is an important and challenging research endeavour and various individuals have generated lists of criteria that have tried to identify what might be described as a dangerous or destructive cult. Generally, these lists have not been derived from the impartial and systematic analysis of cult data, but conceptually, by the author generating a list based on what she or he *thinks* is significant based on his or her experience and knowledge. For

example, Eileen Barker, who draws on her many years experience in studying New Religious Movements, suggests that,

Among the *potentially* dangerous situations . . . are:

1. A movement cutting itself off (either geographically or socially) from the rest of society.
2. A convert becoming increasingly dependent on the movement for definitions and testing of reality.
3. A movement drawing sharp unnegotiable boundaries between “them” and “us”, “godly and satanic”, “good and bad” and so on.
4. Important decisions about convert’s lives being made for them by others.
5. Leaders claiming divine authority for their actions and their demands.
6. Leaders or movements pursuing a single goal in a single-minded manner. (Barker, 1989, p. 137)

Her list draws attention to some of the limitations of the conceptual approach. For instance, one would intuitively expect most, if not all, cults to (re-) define reality and have a strong “us and them” mentality. Other criteria are vague and arbitrary (e.g., point 6). More recently, Bonewits (1996) offers a more comprehensive list of warning signs than Barker. The higher the scores on each of the list’s scales and the higher the total score, then the more “dangerous” the group. Bonewits’ list, like Barker’s, presents several problems. For instance, many of the categories rely on subjective judgement while other categories, one suspects, would be evidenced by the majority of cults (e.g., “Wisdom claimed on the part of the leader” and “Dogma”).

In contrast to both Barker and Bonewits, the Ontario Consultants for Religious Tolerance (OCRT, 1998) danger list is expressly dedicated to identifying cults potentially associated with the major loss of life, defined in this study as “destructive cults”. The OCRT suggests that most destructive cults associated with the violent loss of life share common features such as: apocalyptic beliefs, charismatic leadership, social encapsulation in an isolated community, assembling arms and building defensive structures. Although the OCRT list is arguably less dependent on subjective judgement than both Barker’s and Bonewits’, it is by no means devoid of the weaknesses and limitations that characterise the conceptual approach. For example, one would expect two of the criteria they identify, charismatic leadership and a belief that the group is being persecuted, to be shared by most cults and that they would not therefore differentiate a destructive cult.

The following study was designed to rely on empirical analyses of behavioural indicators of destruction. Drawing extensively on academic and anti cult literature, and paying particular attention to the theories of how

cults become destructive (and the “danger lists” of Barker, Bonewits and the OCRT) we wanted to deconstruct cults into a number of constituent behaviours, practices and beliefs. This would then form the basis for an empirical investigation whose aim is to reveal those patterns of behaviours, practices and beliefs that would distinguish the “destructive” cults from the more benign. Specifically, we hypothesised that:

1. There are behaviours, practices and beliefs that will reliably distinguish the destructive cults (e.g., *Aum Shinri Kyo*, *Heaven’s Gate*, *Jim Jones’ “Jonestown”*, *Order of the Solar Temple* and the *Branch Davidians*) from the more benign cults in the group.
2. These behaviours, practices and beliefs are not necessarily those identified (conceptually) by other authors.
3. There will be an ordered relationship between the destructive behaviours such that less overtly destructive actions will culminate in the most destructive and extreme acts of mass suicide and murder.

## METHOD

In order to collect detailed information about the practices, behaviours and rituals of a diverse range of cults (including the destructive ones), two methods were necessary. Data was collected both by contacting ex-cult members and asking them to complete a questionnaire and, secondly, as it was not practicable to do this in respect of some cults (in particular the destructive ones), by content analysis of documentary material. Though these are patently distinct methods, each with its own biases and limitations, the humble aim of using both content analysis and the questionnaires was simply to elicit sufficient factual information to determine merely whether a particular behaviour was present in a cult or not. In that sense the data derived from each method was pragmatically treated as equivalent. Certainly it would have been preferable if data could have been derived from questionnaire alone but this is not to be recommended without some recognition of the profound practical problems that would be entailed in tracking down and engaging former members of destructive cults.

### *Study Groups*

Thirty-three responses were received within the deadline period for questionnaire distribution: 7 from the UK, 25 from the US and 1 from Germany. The average period of involvement reported was 5.7 years, though the range was from 4 months to 26 years. It should be acknowledged that the group is skewed by the inclusion of a few subjects who each spent a con-

siderable period of time as cult members. The median period of involvement was calculated at 23 months. This is arguably more representative and in keeping with the research findings that most cult members usually leave cults within a two-year time span. Twelve of the respondents were male and 21 female. The average age of the respondents was 36.2, although the range was from 20 years of age to 70. Fourteen responses were obtained from the *International Churches of Christ*, 3 from *Scientology*, 2 from *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 2 from *Bruderhof*, 2 from *Transcendental Meditation*, and one each from: *Garbage Eaters*, *Nityananda*, *Divine Light Mission*, *Aquarian Concepts Community*, *The Way International*, *Local Church*, *EST*, *Shree Rajneesh Bhagwan*, *Ananda Marga* and the *Moonies*. All these cults were included in this study.

Data was also collected, via content analysis on the five destructive cults (*Aum Shinri Kyo*, *Order of the Solar Temple*, *Branch Davidians*, *Jim Jones*, *Heaven's Gate*) and eleven others (House of Yahweh, Church Universal Triumphant, Jehovahs Witnesses, International Church of Christ, Moonies, Hare Krishna, Children of God, Shree Ranjesh Bhagwan, Transcendental Meditation, Mother of God and Scientology). These cults were all selected on the pragmatic basis that, firstly, they are consistent with the definition of "cult" provided in the introduction; secondly, they are consensually regarded as cults in much of the mainstream literature and thirdly, and most crucially, there were rich and reliable sources of documentary material available in respect of each cult. This not only yielded additional data about cults for which there was no questionnaire respondent, but in instances where there was also a respondent provided a means to compare their answers with those derived from content analysis.

## *Materials*

### *Questionnaire Design*

After an extensive review of the available cult literature, a large number of cult behaviours and practices were abstracted. Particular attention was paid to behavioural information and especially to the "danger lists" of Barker, Bonewits and the OCRT. This list was then converted into questionnaire form (see Appendix 1) with questions grouped into sections relating to various aspects of life in the group. Thus, a variety of questions were asked, for example, about the group's leader, the group's beliefs, sexual and marital relationships, control over information, extent of the group's isolation, control over how time was spent, punishment and violence, sins and confessions and so on. In devising these questions it was important they were worded in such a way as to not elicit any form of emotional negative reaction from the respondent (Oppenheim, 1992). In this instance,

the questionnaire was intended for ex-cult members who were almost certainly networked into the anti cult movement and, possibly, quite active in their opposition to cults. It might be assumed that they would share certain negative beliefs about cults (e.g., that they practice mind control). It was, therefore, deemed unwise to challenge or subvert by using language that denied the subjective reality of those beliefs. With this objective in mind we had an individual who is currently engaged in providing information about cults (who is himself an ex-cult member) critically examine the questionnaire's content and style. In addition, at a very early stage, a decision was taken to use "cult" as well as the term more routinely favoured by academics, "new religious movement". Sixty variables were derived from the questionnaire. These also formed the basis for collecting information from content analysis coding on the destructive cults.

### *Coding Dictionary*

Although the limitations of unobtrusive measurements in relation to archival material have been documented more thoroughly elsewhere (e.g., Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest, 1996), it is worth reiterating that the process of collecting information on destructive cult behaviour was, of course, practically limited to archival material. In the majority of instances it was possible to obtain information from multiple sources. This included Internet sites (e.g., OCRT, 1998), popular texts (England and McCormick, 1993; Kaplan and Marshall, 1996; Kilduff, Marshall and Javers, 1978), news articles (Miller, 1997; Sayle, 1995) and journal articles (Introvigne, 1995; Robbins and Anthony, 1980). Though these resources may vary in their objectivity we were careful to try and calibrate the accounts across a range of material. Any details where interpretation was required on the part of the coder or where sources contradicted one another were excluded from the coding checklist. Each item coded, therefore, had to have corroborative evidence from at least one other source (i.e. either another member or from archival material).

### *Procedure*

#### *Questionnaire Distribution*

A number of anti cult networks based in the US were contacted and their executive members distributed email versions of the questionnaires to their (ex-cult) members. Anonymity of contribution was assured. Some respondents emailed their responses directly to the authors, while other responses were routed back via the anti cult network. The latter route had two distinct advantages. Firstly, respondents could remain totally anonymous and secondly, it was an additional check that the respondents were genuine ex-cult members. It is impossible to know exactly how many people the

questionnaire was emailed to. As just one of the networks had an electronic mailing list with over a hundred names, however, it is safe to assume that the number of people it would eventually go to would have been more than this. It is important to note that respondents would not necessarily be representative of the ex-cult member population as a whole, but would probably be representative of the sub population that is networked within anti cult organisations.

Further hard copies of the questionnaire were distributed via two UK based anti cult organisations: the Cult Information Centre (CIC) and Family Action Information and Rescue (FAIR).

### *Content Analysis*

The range of documentary sources included for content analysis included the Internet (which provided a rich source of ex-members' personal testimonies), books and journal articles. Data was collected on the five destructive cults previously outlined and eleven others. This not only yielded additional data about cults for which there was no respondent, but in instances where there was also a respondent provided a means to compare their answers with those derived from content analysis.

Because some cults were over represented in the group (e.g., International Churches of Christ), this biased the group in favour of those cults that had the highest number of respondents. To preclude this bias, it was necessary to ensure that each cult was represented just once in the data. Therefore, the data set was revised on the following basis:

1. Where data on a particular cult was available from a respondent and from content analysis, the former was retained and the latter dispensed with. This left 10 cults in the group (including the destructive ones) for which data had been solely derived from content analysis.
2. Where data on a particular cult was available from two respondents, then only one was (randomly) selected. This occurred only in respect of the following cults: Bruderhof, Jehovah's Witnesses and Transcendental Meditation.
3. Where there was more than one duplicate (International Churches of Christ and Scientology), then a new, aggregate profile was created. For example with the Scientology responses (3 cases in total), a behaviour was recorded as present only if two or more respondents had also recorded it as present, and absent if two or more respondents had recorded it as absent. Aggregate profiles were constructed only in respect of the International Churches of Christ and Scientology.



4. For the purpose of the variables selected for distinguishing benign from destructive cults, only those variables with high inter-rater reliability checks were employed to ensure that the variables used could be checked and agreed by either group members or the researcher and group members.

There are, of course, problems associated with using two different types of collection method, each with its own biases and limitations. In an endeavour to minimise the potential differences between collection methods we asked questions about objectively verifiable behaviours, rather than opinions or beliefs. Thus the simple shared aim of both the questionnaires and the content analysis was to elicit sufficient factual information to determine merely whether a behaviour was present or not. However, each method is biased: information may be incomplete when derived from content analysis (though many cults are very well documented both in terms of personal testimony of ex-cult members and journalistic accounts and it was possible in the overwhelming majority of cases to extract all the relevant information). Equally, questionnaire data is susceptible to bias – e.g., by ex-cult members seeking to paint as dark a picture of the cult as possible. However, this was hopefully minimised by restricting questions as to whether a behaviour was objectively present or not (and allowing elaboration in the questionnaire to see how the respondent was interpreting the question).

## RESULTS

A data matrix of 25 cults and 60 variables was derived (see Appendix 2 for full description of variables). Information on 10 cults had been derived from content analysis, while information on the remainder (15) was provided by ex-cult member respondents.

### *Inter-Rater Reliability*

Where there was more than one respondent for a cult, Cohen's  $\kappa$  values were calculated to provide a measure of inter-rater reliability. The highest level of inter-rater agreement was observed between the two Bruderhof respondents (Cohen's  $\kappa = 0.81$ ). For the 14 International Church of Christ respondents, the average value for Cohen's  $\kappa$  was 0.61 ( $r = 0.21-0.83$ ), indicating a reasonable level of agreement. The two Jehovah's Witnesses showed a fair level of agreement (0.47) and the three scientologists a poor level (average = 0.37) while the two Transcendental Meditation respondents showed the poorest (0.17). There are good reasons why

strong inter-rater agreement might not be expected. Members of the same cult may experience the same cult very differently depending on:

1. When they were involved.
2. Where they were involved.
3. At what level they were involved.
4. Who in the cult they interacted with.
5. How they construed their experience.

This is illustrated by the two Transcendental Meditation respondents (Cohen's  $\kappa = 0.17$ ). One respondent was a member from 1972–1995, lived communally in the US, and had a high level of involvement and responsibility within the hierarchy. In contrast, the other was a member of the cult in the UK from 1976 to 1983, did not live communally, and experienced the cult at its lower levels of initiation and responsibility. Their differential responses reflected quite different, but equally valid, experiences.

### *Descriptive Frequencies*

Appendix 1 shows the frequencies recorded for each of the 60 variables for a total of 25 cults. The range of frequencies extends from 23 (donates labour to group) to 2 (e.g., claims celibacy). Significantly, there is no single behaviour either present in, nor absent from, all cults studied. Also of note is that the frequencies are evenly spread. More than half the behaviours are present in more than half the cults (thirty-two behaviours are present in 13 or more cults). And while five behaviours are present in 20 or more cults, a further nine behaviours are present in just 5 or less. The mean frequency is 12, mode frequencies are 16 and 19 and the median is 13.

Frequency data reveals little of the relationships between the various cult behaviours. For example, the behaviours: control sleep, collects weapons, leader claims incarnation, and leader claims special powers are behaviours that each occur in 13 cults. However, these do not necessarily co-occur in the same cults. In fact their relationship may be very weak.

### *Smallest Space Analysis (SSA)*

Smallest Space Analysis (SSA) is one useful technique for exploring the relationships between variables (in this instance cult behaviours). SSA is a nonmetric multivariate scaling procedure that geometrically represents a correlation matrix based on the order of the intercorrelations among variables (Tziner, 1987). Lingoes' (1972) is one multidimensional scaling statistics program designed to compute the relationships between all the variables and derive an association matrix that can be represented as dis-

tances. These distance associations are then rank ordered. The geometric representation (normally specified in two or three dimensions) is modified in a series of iterations until a best fit is found between the rank orders of the intercorrelations between the variables and the rank orders of the distance associations of the variables. A measure of goodness of fit is provided by the coefficient of alienation. Generally, the lower this value, the better the fit (any value less than 0.25 is generally regarded as acceptable, Lingoes, 1972).

SSA provides a means of picturing concepts (Shye, 1994) and revealing the sub-concepts and their relationships. Thus, any conceptual classification of cult behaviours into, for example, benign and destructive behaviours may be represented by a suitable partition of geometric space into conceptually meaningful regions. Smallest Space Analysis was conducted on the 25 cults and 60 dichotomously coded (1 = behaviour present, 0 = behaviour absent) cult behaviours. Jaccard's measure of association was used. Jaccard's only considers the co-occurrences of behaviours and ignores incidences of non co-occurrence. This is an appropriate measure to use in situations where it is conceivable that a behaviour was in fact present, but was not documented or recorded as such.

A three-dimensional SSA yielded 9 behaviours which related directly (and tautologically in the case of mass murder and suicide) or indirectly (and, therefore, not overtly) to a destructive behavioural region. The sole purpose of the SSA was, therefore, to identify the collection of features of cult behaviour that are empirically related elements of a destructive facet. For the purposes of this study this was the region that we wished to explore further for differentiating the destructive from the more benign cults.

#### *Isolation of the Destructive Region*

That behaviours conceptually related to destructive behaviour should appear in the same region is a significant finding. Statistically, there is no necessity that behaviours conceptually related to destructive behaviour are, necessarily, empirically related. The fact that they do implies that there is a strong facet-data correspondence, which confers validity on there being a polar faceted structure to (destructive) cult behaviour. What this means in practical terms is that if a cult is destructive and commits mass suicide for example, then this most destructive of behaviours is more likely to be attended by other behaviours that also appear near these overtly destructive acts (e.g., prepare for doomsday, collect weapons, endorse violence, etc.), rather than other variables that are not located near this region (e.g., believes in UFOs, believes in reincarnation, secret location).

The behaviours identified by the SSA in the destructive region (i.e. variables that clustered around mass suicide and mass murder) comprise the following:

1. mass suicide,
2. mass murder,
3. physically prevents members leaving the group,
4. endorses violence,
5. drills,
6. prepare for doomsday,
7. builds defensive structures,
8. collect weapons,
9. leader claims to be an incarnation of a religious or historically significant figure.

While it might be possible to similarly divine regional interpretations for other areas of the SSA plot, suggesting polar facets in addition to the destructive one already identified, this is extraneous to the central focus of this study. Additionally, we recognise the weaknesses of a high ratio of variables to subjects in such analyses. The SSA was simply a means by which a smaller subset of conceptually relevant variables could be examined for the central purpose of the study – i.e., to identify the relationships between these empirically related destructive behaviours. Because mass murder and mass suicide are tautologically destructive acts they were removed from the analysis. This left us with 7 variables that merited further examination.

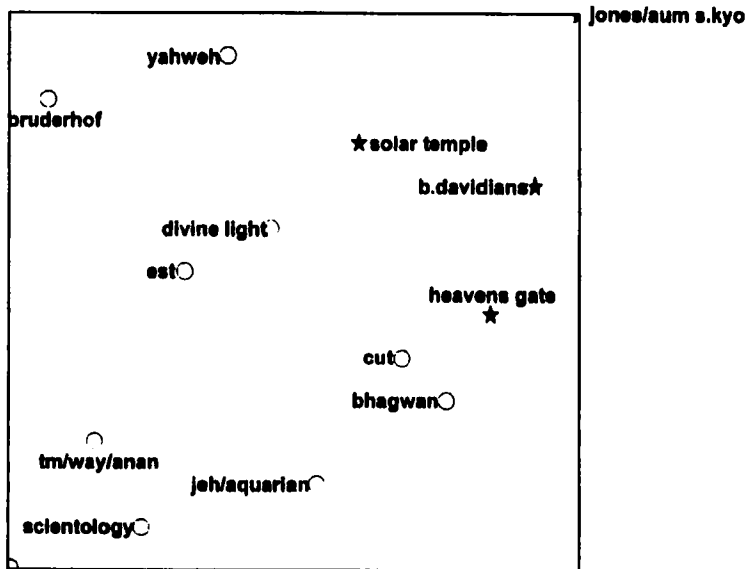
With SSA having revealed a number of behaviours associated with a destructive region, we wished to establish whether these behaviours reliably distinguished the 5 destructive cults previously outlined from the more benign ones. Similarly, we wished to establish whether there was a common order amongst the behaviours established as destructive.

Partial order scalogram (POSAC) analysis (Shye, 1994) is a statistical technique that represents the relationships between profiles in multidimensional space. The more similar the profiles are, the closer together they will be plotted in space. The unique feature of POSAC is that, in addition to item profiles being compared on qualitative dimensions, it also employs the artifice whereby the profiles are summed to derive a score. Profiles are comparable according to their differing scores. These differentials are portrayed graphically in POSAC space along a joint (J) axis, which runs from the bottom left to the top right hand corner of the plot, with the items achieving the highest scores appearing in the top right. Profiles that have the same sum of scores may differ in their qualitative composition. These qualitative distinctions are represented graphically along the lateral (L) axis that extends from top left to the bottom right of the plot. Therefore, 2 different profiles sharing the same joint score will be plotted at the same

position along the J axis due to their quantitative similarity, but will be drawn apart along the lateral axis because of their qualitative dissimilarity. In addition to the diagonal Joint and Lateral axes, POSAC also imposes horizontal (X) and vertical (Y) axes.

POSAC provides a main plot of all the items (cults) and a series of individual plots, one for each of the variables making up the profile on which the cults are being compared. The individual (item) plots maintain the same configuration of items as in the main plot, but in each instance show how the plot has been divided such that regions of space contain profiles of those cults which manifest a given destructive cult behaviour (variable) and those which do not. If several variables partition differentially along the same axis, then this represents a scale (of behaviour).

Figure 1 shows a two dimensional solution for the POSAC analysis comparing 25 cults on the basis of their profiles across 7 destructive behaviour variables. Figures 1.1–1.7. show the item plots of each of the variables. Discrepant data (e.g., where a cult that has a given behaviour nevertheless appears in the behaviour-absent region, or vice versa) can be seen in these figures as a circled point in the item plots. It is worth noting that in relation to these variables all revealed little or no contradictions in the original variable selection process. In other words, there was either perfect agreement



remaining 8

Figure 1 POSAC of 25 cults.

Key: Stars represent "destructive" cults; Empty circles represent more benign cults.

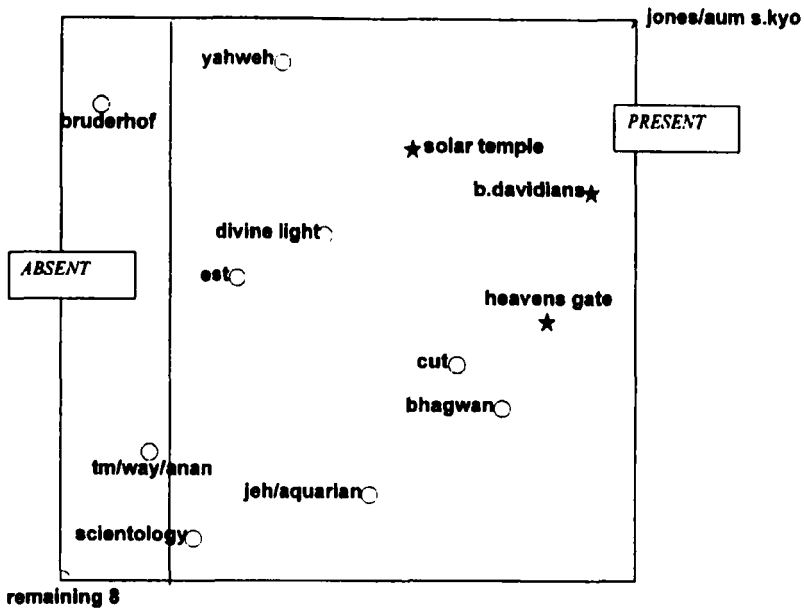


Figure 1.1 Leader claims incarnation.  
 Key: Stars represent "destructive" cults; Empty circles represent more benign cults.

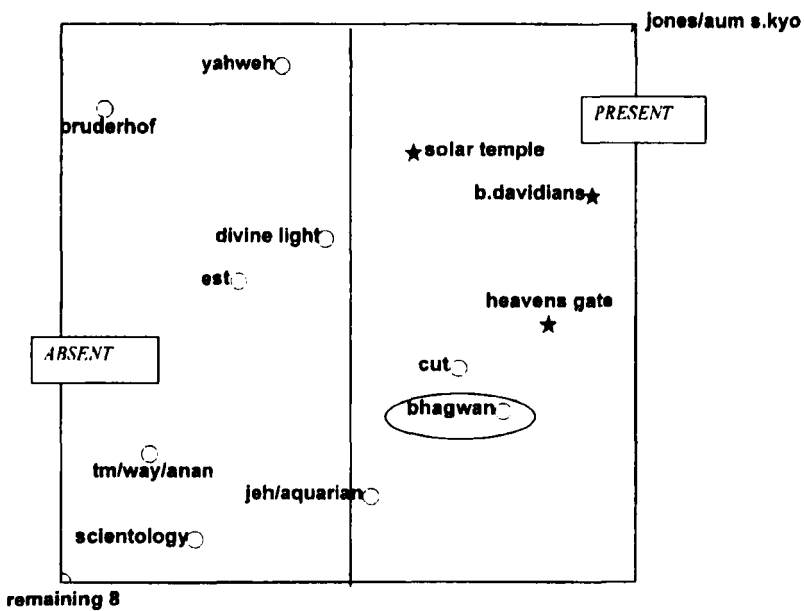
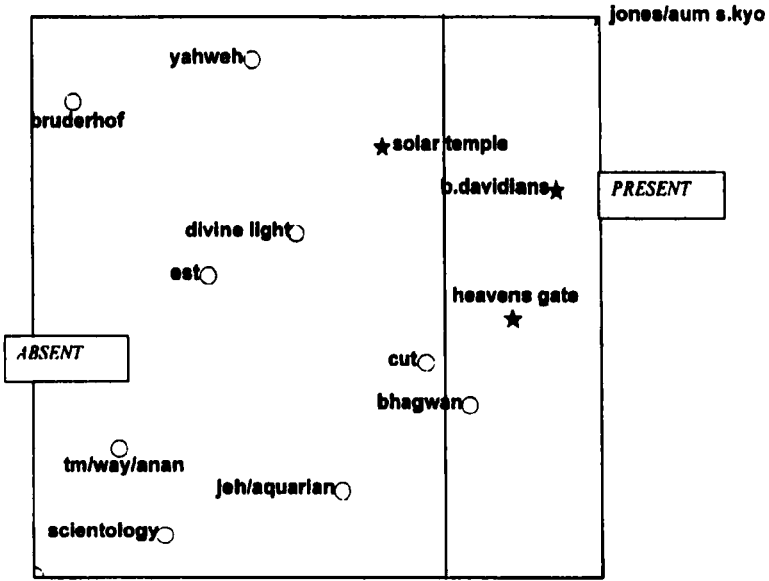


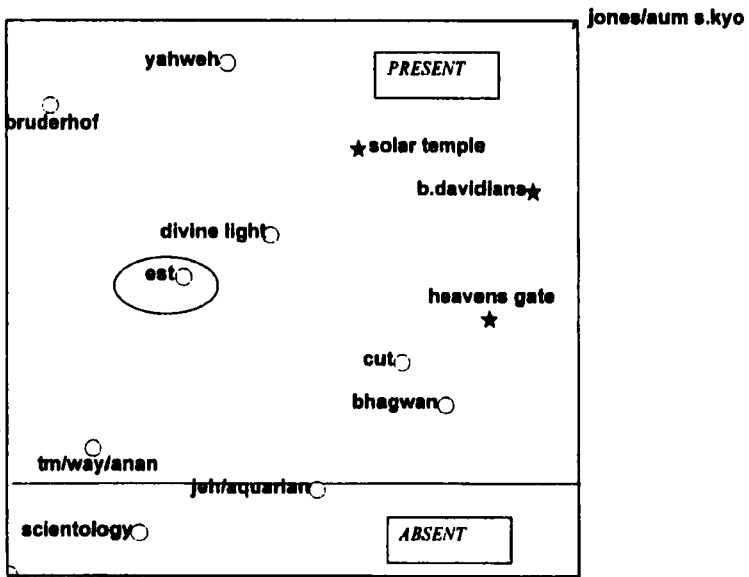
Figure 1.2 Prepares for Doomsday.  
 Key: Stars represent "destructive" cults; Empty circles represent more benign cults; Circled cult represents discrepant data profile.



remaining 8

Figure 1.3 Drills.

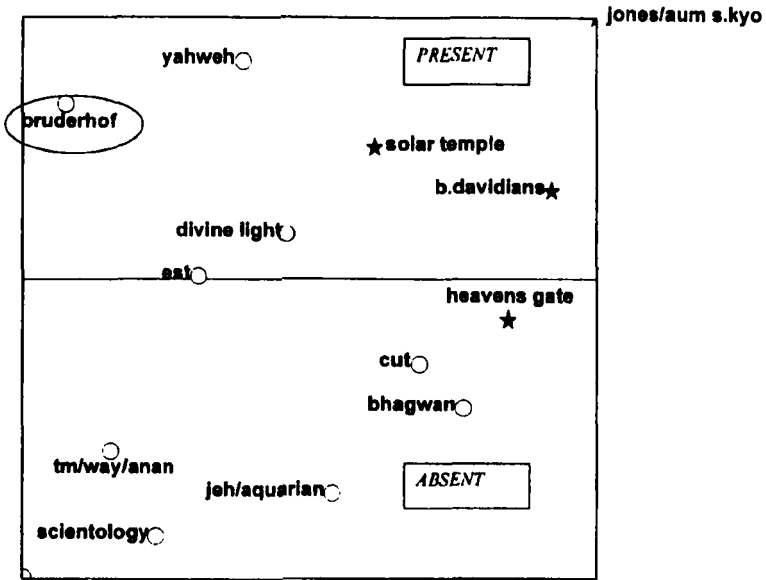
Key: Stars represent "destructive" cults; Empty circles represent more benign cults.



remaining 8

Figure 1.4 Collects weapons.

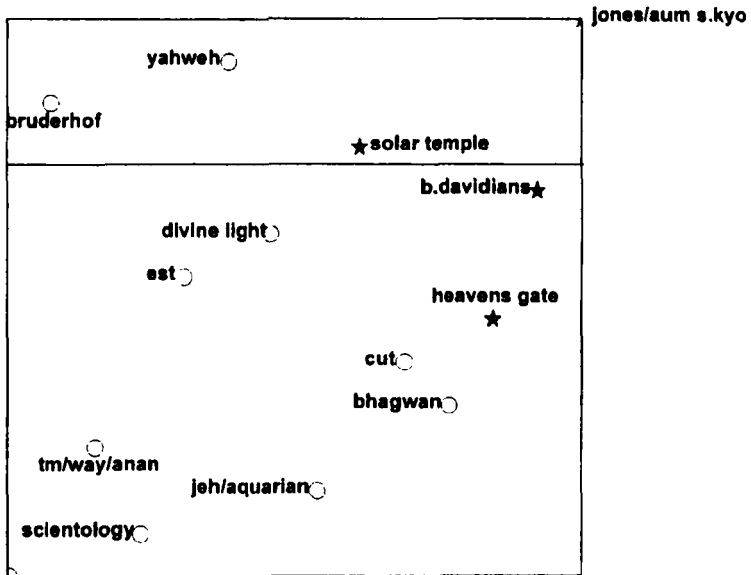
Key: Stars represent "destructive" cults; Empty circles represent more benign cults; Circled cult represents discrepant data profile.



remaining 8

Figure 1.5 Endorse violence.

Key: Stars represent "destructive" cults; Empty circles represent more benign cults; Circled cult represents discrepant data profile.

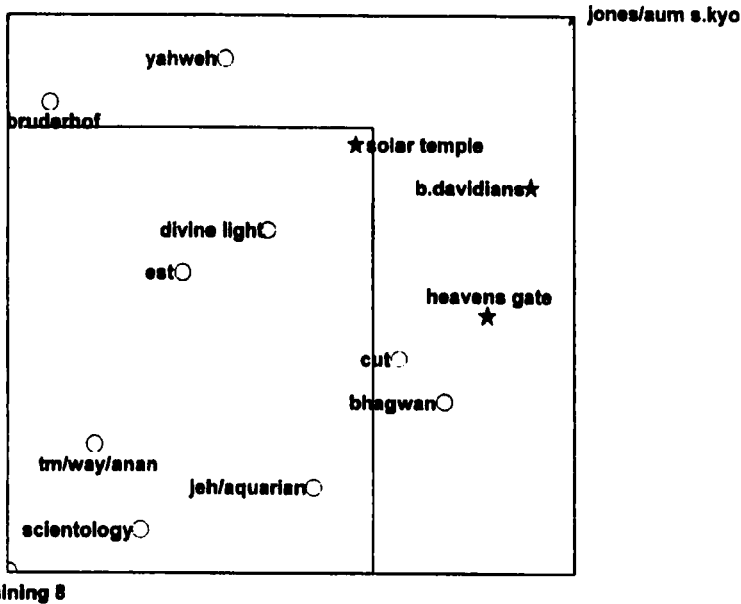


remaining 8

Figure 1.6 Physically prevents members from leaving.

Key: Stars represent "destructive" cults; Empty circles represent more benign cults.





**Figure 1.7** Builds defensive structures.

**Key:** Stars represent “destructive” cults; Empty circles represent more benign cults.

between the individuals in the cults or perfect calibration across the accounts examined. The 25 cults are represented by 14 profiles.

The Joint axis (running from bottom left to the top right of the plot) is the axis measuring destructiveness. Therefore, the least destructive cults appear at the bottom left hand corner of the plot while the most destructive appear at the top right. Appendix 2 illustrates the frequencies of destructive cult behaviours recorded by each cult. Eight cults (Hare Krishna, Children of God, Mother of God, International Churches of Christ, Garbage Eaters, Nityananda, Local Church and the Moonies) display none of the destructive behaviours and appear in the bottom left corner of the POSAC plot. Hence, all eight are represented by the same profile. Both Jim Jones and Aum Shinri Kyo manifests all 7 behaviours (appearing at the top right corner). Of the remaining destructive cults, Branch Davidians have 6 destructive behaviours and Solar Temple, Heaven’s Gate and Yahweh all have 5. Thus Yahweh, though not explicitly hypothesised as destructive, by this analysis does actually cluster with the other more destructive cults. Thus, other than Yahweh, all the explicitly destructive cults occupy the same area of the plot (top right).

POSAC reveals quantitative comparability between profiles, represented by their position on the J-axis. Thus, Yahweh, Solar Temple and Heaven’s Gate are quantitatively comparable (each possess 5 variables). The Branch

Davidians are classified here as “more destructive” – possessing 6 of the variables and Jim Jones and Aum as the most destructive. However, while quantitatively comparable in terms of “destructiveness”, Yahweh, Solar Temple and Heaven’s Gate are qualitatively incomparable (evidenced by the distribution of cults across the lateral axis). Analysis of the relationships between the destructive behaviours may help to suggest interpretations for these qualitative differences.

The variables “collects weapons”, “endorses violence” and “physically prevent members from leaving” partition along the Y-axis. The variables “leader claims incarnation”, “prepares for doomsday” and “drills” partition along the X-axis. The variable “builds defensive structures” partitions the plot in an inverted L-shape and has a modulating effect as an accentuator.

Thus X and Y partitions form qualitatively different scales. On the Y scale “collecting weapons” cumulates to “endorsing violence” that in turn cumulates to “physically preventing members from leaving”. The X partition variables form a qualitatively different scale. “Leader claims incarnation” cumulates to “prepares for doomsday” and finally in “performing drills” in anticipation of external threat.

## DISCUSSION

We have argued that a purely conceptual approach to distinguishing destructive cults is an unsatisfactory one. The primary aim of this research was to empirically examine the evidence for configurations of behavioural patterns that might discriminate destructive from benign cults. One of the likely consequences of adopting an empirical approach was that the behaviours and beliefs it identified may be at variance with those identified conceptually by previous authors.

An exploratory SSA revealed a destructive region containing 9 destructive behaviours. Perhaps the most striking observation to be made is that mass suicide and mass murder appear in the same region. One might have hypothesised that mass murder and mass suicide would involve different processes and behaviours, and that, consequently, two SSA regions might have been isolated (one relating to suicide and one to murder). This suggests that, *for the cults studied*, suicide and murder are predicated on broadly similar processes and behaviours and that it is appropriate to subsume both under the same destructive facet. An ordered sequence amongst 7 of these variables, not tautologically related to destructiveness, was confirmed by a POSAC analysis. It is worth noting too that all behaviours are modulated by their relative frequency. As one would anticipate, destructive behaviours tend to be of lower frequency. For example, a belief in doomsday is a fairly common behaviour in the cults studied (occurring in 15 of the 25 cults) and

does not appear in the destructive region. In contrast, a belief that the group will have a special role come doomsday is less frequent (occurring in 11 of the 25 cults) and prepare for doomsday is the least frequent (occurring in 8 of the 25 cults).

In an examination of the relationships between cults, the POSAC revealed that Aum Shinri Kyo and Jim Jones appeared in the same part of the plot. This is reflected in the fact that Jim Jones and Aum Shinri Kyo manifested all the destructive behaviours. In contrast Heaven's Gate did not endorse violence, did not physically prevent members from leaving and did not murder anyone. While its members committed mass suicide, they did so volitionally and peaceably. The Order of the Solar Temple, in contrast, was violent and murderous. It is intriguing then that this cult partitions along the same axis as Yahweh. The House of Yahweh has been identified by many in the anti-cult movement as a very dangerous cult with some members serving jail sentences for murder (though the number of deaths was insufficient to qualify the cult for inclusion in the "destructive" category as defined in this study). This is an encouraging finding since it suggests that this type of empirical research may have some heuristic value in identifying potentially destructive religious cults.

Some of the behaviours proposed by Barker and Bonewits as being associated with potentially dangerous and destructive cults (e.g., leader displaying an extravagant lifestyle, belief that the group was being persecuted and important decisions about convert's lives being made for them by others) were found, conversely, to be variables shared by most cults, although, as mentioned before, their definitions of destructive differ from that used in this study. Two of the behaviours identified by Bonewits (e.g., violence and dropout control) were, however, corroborated by this study (physically prevents leaving is obviously an extreme form of dropout control).

All danger lists assumed that social and geographic isolation would distinguish destructive cults, however, cutting ties to family and friends was a core variable shared by most cults and isolated or secret location featured in a minority of cults but not, generally, the destructive ones. This highlights some of the inadequacies of the conceptual approach. Jim Jones' *Jonestown*, an archetypal example of geographic and social isolation, may have overly influenced Barker, Bonewits and the OCRT. By not adopting an impartial and systematic approach to cult phenomena, it is possible to ignore destructive cults that do not conform to this archetype, and overlook the fact that many benign cults could be geographically and socially isolated.

Some of the danger signs proposed by OCRT e.g., collecting weapons and building defensive structures were confirmed as destructive behaviours that did differentiate destructive from benign cults. The OCRT (like Bonewits) also cited (extreme) persecution and paranoia as a possible warning sign but, as mentioned above, this was a behaviour shared by most

cults. *Attributing a belief in persecution to a cult masks significant complexities.* Firstly, most cults harbour some feelings of persecution (perhaps because they are non-conformist, and arouse suspicion), so discrimination needs to be made in terms of levels of paranoia and persecution. Secondly, this judgement is necessarily subjective and relative to the person making it. The authorities hounded some of the destructive cults (e.g., Jim Jones, Order of the Solar Temple and Aum Shinri Kyo) for very valid reasons. If persecution is to have any authority as a stable differentiating factor of destructive cults it would possibly depend on being able to make discriminating judgements about the level of the behaviour and whether the persecution is warranted (i.e., legally mandated) or not.

Finally, POSAC revealed two scales (partial orders) of behaviour. On the Y-axis, "collecting weapons" cumulates to "endorsing violence" that in turn cumulates to "physically preventing members from leaving". On the X-axis, "leader claims incarnation" cumulates to "prepares for doomsday" and culminates in "drills". The X scale, or pattern of behaviour, was evidenced by all destructive cults with the exception of the Order of the Solar Temple, which did not have "drills" (though this behaviour may not have been documented). The scale revealed that "drills" is an important behaviour in the sense that a cult which displays this behaviour will also display: "prepares for doomsday" and "leader claims incarnation".

Jim Jones, Aum Shinri Kyo, The Order of the Solar Temple, The Branch Davidians and Yahweh evidenced the Y scale pattern of behaviour. Behaviour is scaled in such a way that if a group physically prevents members from leaving, it also endorses violence and collect weapons. It might be seen by some as counter-intuitive that collecting weapons cumulates to endorsing violence (and not the other way around). By way of explanation, *it should be borne in mind that many of the cults studied are based in North America where owning guns is both widespread and unremarkable.* Thirteen of the 25 cults studied here had collected weapons at some point in their history.

The distribution of cults across POSAC's lateral axis and the incomparability relations confirmed that there were strong qualitative differences between the cults. Heaven's Gate, in particular, appeared to be markedly distinct from the other destructive cults. The rationale for these qualitative differences demands an explanation. One possible explanation is suggested by the X and Y scales that POSAC analysis revealed. These showed that the behaviours: "collecting weapons", "endorsing violence" and "physically preventing members from leaving" were qualitatively different from "leader claims incarnation", "prepares for doomsday", and "drills". As the Y scale relates to externally directed destruction (mass murder), it is tempting to speculate that the X relates to internally directed destruction (suicide). This might help to explain why Heaven's Gate, which has been

characterised in this study as a pure suicide cult, is qualitatively distinct from the other destructive cults. While "leader claims incarnation" and "prepares for doomsday" are compatible with this interpretation of the X scale, "drills" is not. Ultimately, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that an unequivocal rationale for the qualitative distinction between the X and Y axes cannot readily be discerned.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that there are 7 behaviours associated with a destructive region, patterns of which differentiate the destructive cults of Aum Shinri Kyo, Solar Temple, Heaven's Gate, Branch Davidians, Jim Jones (and Yahweh). It has also been found that there are (partially) ordered and meaningful relationships between these destructive behaviours. The question then arises as to what extent these destructive behaviours might prove useful and valid in identifying other religious cults which might have the *potential* to commit mass suicide or murder.

Considering utility first, one would want to identify those behaviours that provide advance warning of a cult turning destructive (possibly escalating to mass suicide and/or murder). Excluding those behaviours that are obviously related to destructive behaviour and which would probably come to light as instances of lawbreaking ("physically prevents members from leaving" and "collecting weapons") and other behaviours which findings have shown occur rather late in the spiralling process of destruction ("prepare for doomsday", "build defensive structures", "endorses violence" and "drills") leaves only, "leader claims to be an incarnation of a religious or historically significant figure". This is likely to be an early feature and less obviously related to destruction.

The utility of cult behaviours as early warning signs of possible highly destructive behaviour is inextricably linked to the issue of predictive validity. Excluding mass suicide and mass murder (which are tautologically defining of destructive cults), there is no logical nor empirical necessity that the 7 remaining destructive behaviours which have differentiated the destructive cults should be manifest in, and differentiating of, a cult that commits mass suicide or mass murder in the future. Hypothetically, a cult could commit mass murder or mass murder and display none of the behaviours identified in this study. Alternatively, a cult could manifest all, or most of the behaviours and never proceed to mass suicide or murder (this is currently the case, in this analysis, with Yahweh).

Logical considerations aside, common sense would dictate that we should be concerned about the intentions of any group whose leader believes in reincarnation (and claims to be an incarnation), prepares for doomsday, collects weapons, drills, and endorses violence. In addition, to distinguish the potentially destructive cult requires, ideally, the identification of destructive behaviours, practices and beliefs *and* a theoretical understanding of the psychological processes that underpin them. These

theories provide the real insight into the aetiology of destructive cult behaviour and help enrich the empirical and essentially behavioural approach used here.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study are encouraging and suggest that there exists a configuration of behaviours, practices and beliefs that might reliably distinguish the overtly destructive cults. There are some caveats that must be raised in relation to these findings however. The first is that all findings and conclusions are qualified by the limitations of the data set. The data set was small, sampling a low number of cults from a small number of respondents. As a consequence this study can obviously lay no claim to being definitive. As recent events have tragically shown there will continue to be new destructive cults (e.g., The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments) and the number of relatively benign cults that could be included in any study could number potentially in at least the hundreds. This study should therefore be rightly regarded as an exploratory one, generative of useful hypotheses. The data set was further prone to bias from two principal sources: the first being that respondents (disaffected ex-cult members) were possibly motivated to portray their group in the most negative light and may have sometimes answered yes (in a forced choice) to the presence of a negative behaviour by interpreting the questions in a sense that was not intended or anticipated. Secondly, the data set on the five destructive cults was derived entirely from content analysis of documentary material and not from questioning participants that had experienced those cults directly. This was not overly problematic because sources were reliable and included much personal testimony. Moreover, it has to be conceded that deriving data about cult practices, behaviours and beliefs using two patently distinct methods is a contributory weakness that we have sought to mitigate but, ultimately, cannot eradicate. As stated before, it would be preferable if all data had been elicited from interviewing former cult members, although this is, for obvious reasons, extremely problematic. The second caveat concerns the predictive validity of these behaviours in identifying other cults that have the potential to turn destructive in the future. We have argued that a behavioural approach alone is insufficient and that the identification of *potentially* destructive cults would be facilitated and complemented by a theoretical approach that helps us to understand what a cult's behaviours might mean in terms of psychological processes. The most fruitful approach would examine cult behaviour from the vantage point of a theoretical framework that takes account of processes like compliance, conformity, cognitive dissonance and social constructionism. Furthermore,

our research has shown that the differences between cults palpably outweigh the commonalities. The motives of those that join cults are complex and diverse, the processes by which a cult becomes destructive are equally so. It is unlikely therefore that there will be a unitary theory of destructive cult behaviour. Instead, existing theories need to be applied eclectically. Above all, in our view, it is important that attention is paid to a group's beliefs. Social constructions may play a pivotal role in the suicides and murders associated with the destructive cults. With Heaven's Gate, the portents of suicide were there for all to see on their "Higher Source" web site. And who knows whether the tragic outcome of Waco could have been averted if Koresh's requests for a meeting with a religious scholar to discuss the Seven Seals had not been contemptuously dismissed by the authorities as "bible babble".

### Note

1. This study acknowledges that controversy still reigns over whether the Branch Davidians died in a "terrible accident" (as a result of actions initiated by Federal officers), whether they set fires themselves (provocation to suicide) or whether some who wanted to leave the Waco compound were, in fact, murdered. While the truth will doubtless remain elusive, this study has erred on the side of caution and, while acknowledging that the Branch Davidians cult is associated with major loss of life, is forced to assume that, in the absence of definitive, positive evidence, it committed neither suicide nor mass murder.

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### Author Note

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## APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTED TO EX-CULT MEMBERS

- 1 What was the name(s) of the group that you were involved with?
- 2 When did you first become involved?  
*Month/Year (e.g., June, 94):*
- 3 When did you leave?  
*Month/Year (e.g., April, 96):*

---

### ABOUT THE GROUP'S MAIN LEADER

- 4 What was the name of the leader?
- 5 Did he/she claim:
  - to be infallible?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
  - a special position of authority given by god or exclusive revelations from god?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
  - to be an incarnation of god or a reincarnation of an historically significant figure?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
  - to be celibate while being sexually active?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW



or demonstrate special powers such as levitation, the ability to see into the future, read people's minds, see auras, move objects without touching them etc?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES to the last question, please specify:

6 Did he/she demand total obedience in all matters?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

7 Did he/she maintain a lavish and extravagant lifestyle in comparison to members?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

8 Did he/she have a criminal record or a legacy of official allegations against him/her?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

#### ABOUT THE BELIEFS OF THE GROUP

9 Which of the following did the group believe in?

(You may select more than one option)

UFO's       YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

The afterlife       YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

Reincarnation       YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

Apocalyptic/  
Doomsday/  
Armageddon

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

scenarios

Heaven and hell       YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

*If you answered YES to a belief in Apocalyptic/ Doomsday/ Armageddon scenarios please answer the following questions, otherwise move to question 10.*

Was a special role ordained for your group at the end time?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

Were there prophetic signs of the end time?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

Did your group make any preparations for the end time?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

**10** Did your group denounce the teachings of all other religious groups?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

**11** Were the beliefs of your group derived from existing, mainstream religious doctrines or texts?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

**12** Was there a belief that the group was being persecuted or being conspired against by powerful, external enemies?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

---

### SEXUAL AND MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

**13** Did the group control who could get married to whom?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

**14** Did the group control whether members could have a sexual relationship, or who they could have a sexual relationship with?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

**15** Did the group seek to separate married couples or partners in existing sexual relationships?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

### CONTROL OVER INFORMATION

**16** Was access to books, TV, radio or the newspapers controlled or restricted in any way?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

- 17 Were there any restrictions on which other members you could talk to in the group?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

- 18 Were there any special texts that new members were denied access to?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

### THE EXTENT OF ISOLATION OF THE GROUP

- 19 Would you describe the Group's main location as isolated/ geographically remote?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 20 Were you expected to keep secret the group's location.  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 21 Were you given a new name or identity on joining the group?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 22 Were you expected or encouraged to cut ties with family and friends who were not members of the group?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 23 Were you ever expected or encouraged to conceal your membership of the group from non members?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 24 Were you allowed to communicate freely (by mail, phone or in meetings) with friends, family and other non group members  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

### LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IN THE GROUP

- 25 Did the group control where you lived and/or who you lived with?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

- 26 Were you required to live communally?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

**CONTROL OVER HOW YOUR TIME WAS SPENT**
**27 Did the group control**

- or restrict the number of hours of sleep you could have?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

- how much free time you had?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- what work you did?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

- 28 Did you have to make a major time commitment to religious rituals such as prayer, chanting etc?**  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

---

**FINANCING THE GROUP**

- 29 Were members expected to assign personal assets to the group?**  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 30 Were members expected to assign a fixed portion of their earnings to the group?**  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 31 Were you expected to work for the group?**

*If YES,*

What was the nature of the work?

How many hours a week did you work?

How much pay did you receive?

---

**CONTROL OVER APPEARANCE**

- 32 Was any control exercised over what you could and couldn't wear.**  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

- 33 Was any control exercised over other aspects of personal appearance (e.g., hair length/ whether beards could be worn etc)?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

---

### YOUR DIET

- 34 Did the group restrict what you could and couldn't eat?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

*If YES,*

In your opinion, was your diet calorifically adequate?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

### PUNISHMENT AND VIOLENCE

- 35 Could members of the group be physically punished for doing something wrong?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

- 36 Was there an endorsement of violence by or for the group or its leaders?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

### CONTROL OVER PRIVATE LIFE/MENTAL LIFE

- 37 Were you encouraged to report your private thoughts, feelings and/or activities to others in the group?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

- 38 Were you expected or required to ask permission from others in the group to make major, personal decisions?

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

### REPORTING ON FELLOW MEMBERS

- 39 Were you required or expected to report fellow members for breaches of faith or any wrongdoing.

YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

- 40 Did the group hold public sessions in which members were publicly denounced, shamed or humiliated for doing something wrong?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

---

### SINS AND CONFESSIONS

- 41 Were members required to privately confess sins  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 42 Were members required to publicly confess sins  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

*If you answered YES to either question 40 or 41*

- Were you subsequently absolved of your sins or could the group or its leader use your sins against you?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

### MANAGING DISSENT

- 43 Were group members freely allowed to express doubt or dissent?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 44 Was the expression of doubt/ dissent punished in any way?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

---

### INEQUALITY OF GROUP MEMBERS

- 45 Did rich and/or powerful members get preferential treatment?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

### POLITICAL POWER

- 46 Did the group ever actively pursue political power?  
 YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

**MEDICAL TREATMENT**

- 47 Were members of the group forbidden in any way to seek medical treatment?
- YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

**COUNTERING PERCEIVED THREATS**

- 48 Did the group litigate against those whom it regarded as its enemies?
- YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 49 Did the group ever hire private detectives against those who might seek to do it harm?
- YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 50 Did the group prepare defensive physical structures?
- YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 51 Did the group collect any weapons?
- YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 52 Were group members ever required to perform physical drills or other forms of training in anticipating external threat?
- YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

---

**LEAVING THE GROUP**

- 53 Were members ever physically prevented from leaving the group?
- YES       NO       DON'T KNOW
- 54 Were there other factors that prevented members from leaving or made it difficult for them to leave?
- YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

---

**DECEPTION**

- 55 Was deception, of any form, used in recruiting new members?
- YES       NO       DON'T KNOW

If YES, please specify:

**56** Did the group have any "front" identities or organisations which it used to hide its true identity?

YES

NO

DON'T KNOW

---

### SOME DETAILS ABOUT YOU

Your Age:

Sex: (male/female)

If you want to provide your name and contact details, you can do so with the assurance that your name will not be used in connection with any publication that may come out of this research, and that your identity will not be disclosed under any circumstances.

Name:

Address:

Daytime Tel:

Evening Tel:

Email address

If you want to receive an abstract of the research findings, please put a cross in this box:

If you wish, please use the space below to comment in more detail on any of the questions or provide any additional information that has not been asked for but which you feel might be of relevance and significance.

**THE SWIFT COMPLETION AND RETURN OF THIS FORM WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED. THANKYOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP.**



## APPENDIX 2: FULL DESCRIPTIONS OF VARIABLE CODING LIST

Variable No.	Abbreviation	Full Description
1	Control marry	Group controlled who could get married to whom.
2	Control sex lives	Controlled whether could have sex life or who could have one with.
3	Separate partners	Separate people in marriages or existing sexual relationships.
4	Control access to media info	Restricted access to TV, radio or newspapers.
5	Controls sp. texts	Special texts that new members were denied access to.
6	Controls where members live	Controlled where members lived and/or who they lived with.
7	Communal living	Required to live communally.
8	Controls sleep	Controlled or restricted the hours of sleep members could have.
9	Controls free time	Controlled how much free time members could have.
10	Controls religious time	Members had to make a major time commitment to religious ritual.
11	Controls what members wear	Control exercised over what members could and couldn't wear.
12	Controls personal appearance	Control exercised over aspects of personal appearance (other than clothes).
13	Controls diet	Groups restricted what members could and couldn't eat.
14	Controls personal decisions	Required to ask permission for major personal decisions.
15	Physical punishment	Members of the group could be physically punished for doing something wrong.
16	Endorse violence	Endorsement of violence by or for the group or its leaders.
17	Report others	Required or expected to report members for breaches of faith or wrongdoing.
18	Publicly humiliate	Held public sessions in which members could be humiliated for wrongdoing.
19	Use sins	Group could use a member's confessed sins against them.
20	No dissent	Members not allowed to freely express dissent.
21	Punish dissent	Group would punish the expression of dissent.
22	Phys. prev. leaving	Members were physically prevented from leaving the group.
23	Difficult leave	Other factors made it difficult to leave the group.
24	Isolated	Group's main location is isolated/geographically remote.
25	Secret location	Members expected to keep secret the group's location.
26	New identity	Given a new name or identity on joining the group.
27	Cut ties	Expected to cut ties with family/friends who were not members of the group.

28	Hide membership	Expected or encouraged to conceal membership from non members.
29	No free communication	Not allowed to communicate freely (mail, phone, meetings) with non members.
30	Seeks political power	Group had actively sought political power.
31	Litigates	Group litigates against enemies.
32	Hires detectives	Hired detectives against those who might seek to do it harm.
33	Defensive structures	Group prepared defensive structures.
34	Collect weapons	Group collected weapons.
35	Drills	Performed physical drills in anticipation of external threat.
36	Leader claims revelats	Leader claims position of authority by god or exclusive revelations from god.
37	Leader incarnation	Leader claims to be an incarnation of god or historically significant figure.
38	Leader claims celibacy	Leader claims to be celibate while being sexually active.
39	Leader spec'l powers	Leader claims or demonstrates special powers (levitation etc).
40	Leader total obedience	Leader demands total obedience in all matters.
41	Leader extravagant	Leader maintains a lavish and extravagant lifestyle in comparison to members.
42	Leader criminal record	Leader has a criminal record or a legacy of official allegations against him.
43	Mass suicide	Members commit mass suicide.
44	Mass murder	Members commit mass murder.
45	Donate assets	Members expected to assign personal assets to the group.
46	Tithe earnings	Members expected to assign a fixed portion of their earnings to the group.
47	Donate labour	Members expected to work for the group.
48	Rich preferent'l treatment	Rich and/or powerful members get preferential treatment.
49	Deny medical treatment	Members forbidden to seek medical treatment.
50	Deceptive recruitment	Deception used in recruiting new members.
51	Front identities	Group has front identities or organisations used to hide its true identity.
52	Belief in UFOs	Group believed in UFOs.
53	Belief in afterlife	Group believes in the afterlife.
54	Belief in reincarnation	Group beleives in reincarnation.
55	Belief in doomsday	Group believes in apocalyptic/ doomsday/ armageddon scenarios.
56	Belief heaven and hell	Group believes in heaven and hell.
57	Belief doomsday sp. role	Belief that a special role is ordained for the group at the end time.
58	Prepare for doomsday	Group made preparations for the end time.
59	Deny other teachings	Group denounces the teachings of all other groups.
60	Belief in persecution	Belief that the group is being persecuted/ conspired against by strong enemies.