

## News from Info-Cult

No. 30, March 2015

### Radicalization : Cults, Radicals and Extremist Groups \*

by [Carolle Tremblay, President, Info-Cult](#)  
and [Mike Kropveld, Executive Director, Info-Cult](#)

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by Carolle Tremblay and Mike Kropveld

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Recent attacks by terrorists here and abroad have led some to suggest that the process of radicalization is similar to cult recruitment. Some have stated that terrorist groups are cults. Regardless of the label we tag onto a group there is one striking similarity, and that is the violence that is carried out by some groups on individuals and society.

For thirty-five years Info-Cult has been addressing concerns about high control groups commonly referred to as "cults" and to the issue of cultic phenomena in general. Info-Cult's focus has been on how and why people join or are recruited and converted to extreme and marginal groups, how these groups function, how they change over time and the role of leaders in these groups. The recent global concerns about radicalization, extremism and violence, therefore, are what we have been dealing with since we began operating in 1980.

Info-Cult avoids simplistic "yes" or "no" responses to complex questions such as "Is Group X a cult or not?" or "Is the group in question dangerous?" Not all groups that are labeled as cults or extreme groups are similar.

\* An edited version of this article with the title **Opinion: Terrorist groups and cults have some things in common**, was published in the Montreal Gazette, February 20, 2015.

It can be accessed here: <http://montrealgazette.com/news/world/opinion-terrorist-groups-and-cults-have-some-things-in-common>

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#### Education

##### 2015 Annual International ICSA Conference, Stockholm, Sweden, June 25-27 (Pre-Conference workshops June 24th).

The [International Cultic Studies Association](#) (ICSA) is conducting its 2015 Annual International Conference with [Info-Secte/Info-Cult](#) of Montreal and [Hjälpkällan](#) (Help Source - a support organization for people leaving closed religious movements).

This year's theme is **Children in 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.

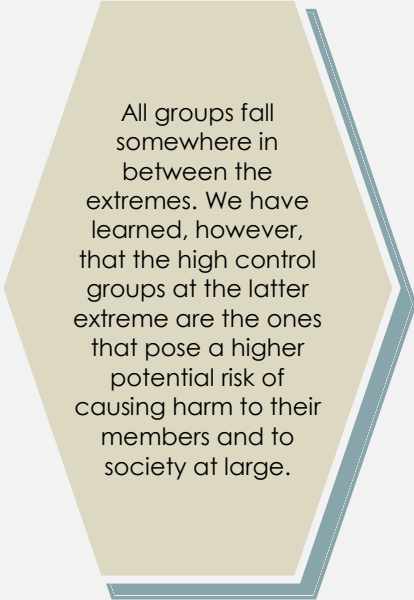
For more information: <http://www.icsahome.com/events/conferenceannual>



**International ICSA  
Conference 2015  
Stockholm, Sweden**

## Radicalization : Cults, Radicals and Extremist Groups

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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.

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, tolerant, with leadership that is non-authoritarian and respectful to their members and non-members to groups that are closed, intolerant, with an authoritarian leadership not respectful of members and the rest of society. 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.

These are precisely the groups about which we should be most concerned, and which require special attention. 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 (USA), the Baader-Meinhof Gang (Germany) and the Red Brigade (Italy). As Canada and other countries focus on radicalization as it pertains to Islamic 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 US Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City in 1995 is one example that comes to mind.

In some high control groups, members are the victims of violence, as evidenced in tragedies such as the group led by Roch "Moses" Theriault, the People's Temple of Jim Jones, the Order of the Solar Temple and Heaven's Gate. In other situations, violence has been directed outward to the general community. Here are two examples that exemplify this:

- in 1984, some members of the Rajneesh commune used salmonella in an attempt to poison the townspeople in Antelope, Oregon, resulting in hundreds of residents becoming ill
- in 1994, followers of Shoko Ashara of the Aum Shinriyko used sarin gas in the Tokyo subway, leading to 12 deaths and thousands of people being treated in hospitals.

In most of these cases, youth and young adults are recruited or join groups, looking for meaning in their lives. Bright and idealistic, many have lost confidence in the traditional structures that operate in society, and want to contribute to making the world a better place to live. 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.

## Radicalization : Cults, Radicals and Extremist Groups

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.

We at Info-Cult have gained substantial knowledge and experience over the years about who gets involved in high control and extremist groups.

Rather than simply finding labels to categorize groups as cults or death cults, and their members as fanatics, crazy or deranged, we should 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.

Extremist groups have been with us for centuries and will not disappear.

After a tragedy, how often have we heard that information had been known that could have prevented it, but the information had not been communicated to appropriate parties? We need to be reminded that collaboration and communication between government agencies 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 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.



### [Carolle Tremblay](#)

Carolle Tremblay is an attorney at Joli-Coeur Lacasse in Montreal and President of Info-Cult/Info-Secte. She has a bachelor's degree in social work (BSW) with a minor in economics from Laval University, Quebec City, Quebec (1983) and bachelor's degrees in law (B.C.L. and LL.B.) from McGill University, Montreal, Quebec (1984-1988). She is a private-practice lawyer specializing in family law with the Law Firm Joli-Coeur Lacasse. She has been involved in cult-related legal cases for the past twenty (20) years. Carolle is frequently interviewed by the media on cult-related matters.



### [Michael Kropveld](#)

is Founder and Executive Director of Info-Cult / Info-Secte, based in Montreal, Canada, and sits on the board of the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA). Since 1980 he has assisted thousands of former members and members of "cults," "new religious movements," and other groups, and their families. He has served as an expert witness on cult-related criminal and civil cases, and is consulted regularly by mental health professionals and law enforcement agencies. Since the mid 1990s he has collaborated on the organizing of the ICSA annual international conferences on cultic phenomena.

## Education (Continued)

### 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 18 countries and the Council of Europe.

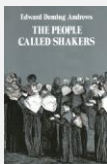
#### Publications and Documents by Info-Cult and Colleagues

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

### New Acquisitions:

The combined list which includes the library acquisitions since 1999 can be found here: <http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ic-selaca.html>. If you would like to know about the rest of our collection (journals, newsletters, file, videos, etc...) please contact us. Additional information on these acquisitions can be found on our web site at: [www.infosecte.org](http://www.infosecte.org) See: Info-Cult's Library Collection.



Andrews, Edward Deming  
[\*\*\*These People Called Shakers: A Search for the Perfect Society\*\*\*](#)  
Dover Publications Inc.  
C1963, New York



Aron, Raphael  
[\*\*\*Cults: Too Good to be True\*\*\*](#)  
HarperCollins Publishers  
C1999, Sydney



Barrett, David V.  
[\*\*\*Secret Religions: A Complete Guide to Hermetic Pagan and Esoteric Beliefs\*\*\*](#)  
Constable & Robinson  
C2011, London



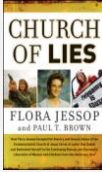
Caplan, Mariana, M.A.  
[\*\*\*When Sons and Daughters Choose Alternative Lifestyles: A guidebook to help families heal the pain of separation and resolve the misunderstanding brought on by differences in religious or personal choices\*\*\*](#)  
HOMH Press  
C1996,



Coquand, Jean-Pierre (sorti volontairement de l'Association « Les Témoins de Jéhovah »)

[\*\*Aliénation et prises de conscience\*\*](#)

C2009



Jessop, Flora and Paul T. Brown

[\*\*Church of Lies: How Flora Jessop Escaped the Slavery and Sexual Abuse of the Continued Rescue and Successful Liberation of Women and Children from this Notorious Sect\*\*](#)

Jossey Bass

C2009, San Francisco

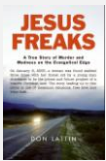


Krakauer, Jon

[\*\*Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith\*\*](#)

Doubleday

C2003,

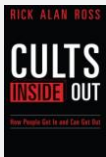


Lattin, Don

[\*\*Jesus Freaks: A True Story of Murder and Madness on the Evangelical Edge\*\*](#)

Harper One

C2007, New York



Ross, Rick Alan

[\*\*Cults Inside Out: How People Get In and Can Get Out\*\*](#)

Create Space Independent Publishing Platform

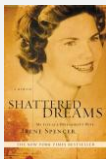
C2014, North Charleston

Silletta, Alfredo

[\*\*La ofensiva de las sectas: Los falsos mesías en la Argentina\*\*](#)

Editiones Temas de hoy

C1995, Buenos Aires

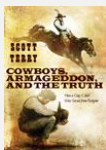


Spencer, Irene

[\*\*Shattered Dreams: My Life as a Polygamist's Wife\*\*](#)

Centre Street

C2007, New York



Terry, Scott

[\*\*Cowboys, Armageddon and the Truth: How a Gay Child Was Saved from Religion\*\*](#)

Lethe Press

C2012 Maple Shade, NJ



Wall, Elissa with Lisa Pulitzer

[\*\*Stolen Innocence: My Story of Growing Up in a Polygamous Sect, Becoming a Teenage Bride, and Breaking Free of Warren Jeffs\*\*](#)

William Morrow

C2008, New York

## 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)



Info-Cult on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/InfoCult.InfoSecte)



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

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

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Info-Cult is a registered charitable organization and is recognized for its role in responding to a real need in our society. Info-Cult is able to carry out its activities thanks in large part to the support of people like you who believe we provide a vital community service. Please consider donating to Info-Cult today.

Online at:



<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**

Or by mail to

Info-Cult at 5655 Park Ave., Suite 208, Montreal, QC, Canada H2V 4H2.

**Donations to Info-Cult are tax deductible and are greatly appreciated.**