Tech

The Google logo is pictured atop an office building in Irvine, California, U.S. August 7, 2017. REUTERS/Mike Blake -

Google Code Jam Finalists Are All Men For 14th Year In A Row

Ian Miles Cheong

For the 14th year in a row since 2003, men are the only ones who have ever made it to the finals of the Google Code Jam. In the wake of the company's PR disaster with the leaked "Ideological Echo Chamber" memo and the subsequent firing of the man who wrote it, Google may not be too keen on promoting the event–or its finalists.

Since 2003, Google hosted the international programming competition, sort of like the Olympics for programming geeks. Google uses the event to identify candidates for potential employment, recruiting tech wizards from all over the world—from the Philippines and Japan, all the way over to Russia, Sweden, and across the ocean to Latin America and the United States.

Every year, tens of thousands of would-be programming masters sign up for the competition—solving programming puzzles in record time. Only the best of the best make it to the final stage, where they're flown down to wherever the event takes place to compete in person. Competing in Dublin, Ireland in

2017, Belarusian programmer Grennady Korotkevich won the event for the fourth year in a row this weekend.

Based on merit alone, the Code Jam does not make any considerations to contestants' race, gender, political affiliation, or social status. It's a test of pure skill—and the impartiality of the results speaks loudly. Women, as with anyone else, have entered the competition, but none so far have ever made it to the final around. This isn't a fact that's gone unnoticed, as keen-eyed Reddit users speculated on reasons for why that is.

Despite efforts to increase gender diversity by companies like Google and all across Silicon Valley, the numbers aren't going up by much. Current statistics from Google's own employee demographics show that only 31% of the company is made up of women, with a near-gender parity (48% to 52%) in non-tech positions. The divide is much larger in technical positions (20% to 80%).

As with most companies in Silicon Valley, there is some evidence to suggest that women are discriminated against–Google itself is embroiled in legal trouble with the Department of Labor on the issue, and 60 women may take legal action for discrimination. However, unlike the company's wage issues, nothing has prevented women from competing in the Code Jam at its highest levels.

The results raise questions about the obvious gender disparity, but they are not easily answered (or even asked), given Google's decision to terminate James Damore's employment for attempting to address this very issue.

Ian Miles Cheong is a journalist and outspoken media critic. You can reach him through social media at @stillgray on Twitter and on Facebook

Google Pushes It's Tyranny And Oppression On The World And Tricks Naive Young Millennial Rainbow Hair Kids Into Helping The Google Cult Rig Politics

Google is a "Cult". Period!

The executives and investors at Google are as delusional as the stupid children that Google hires to SJW the entire planet and promote political extremism.

The term cult usually refers to a social group defined by its religious, spiritual, or philosophical beliefs, or its common interest in a particular personality, object or goal. The term itself is controversial and it has divergent definitions in both popular culture and academia and it also

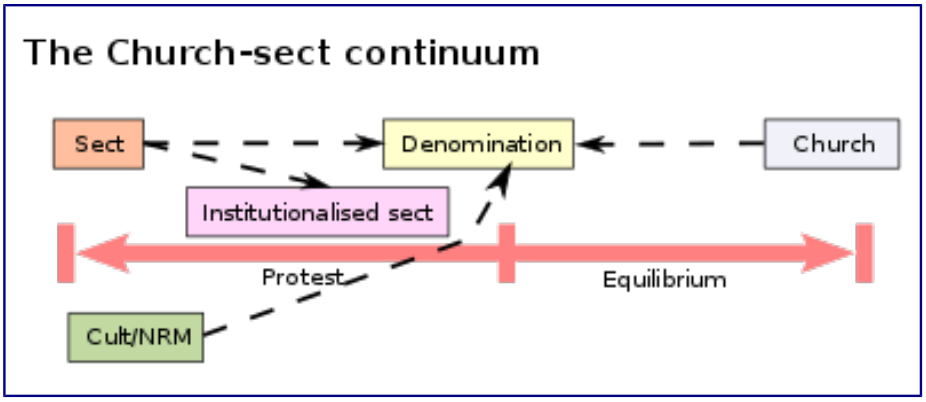
has been an ongoing source of contention among scholars across several fields of study.[1][2] In the sociological classifications of religious movements, a cult is a social group with socially deviant or novel beliefs and practices,[3] although this is often unclear.[4][5][6] Other researchers present a less-organized picture of cults on the basis that cults arise spontaneously around novel beliefs and practices.[7] The word "cult" has always been controversial because it is (in a pejorative sense) considered a subjective term, used as an *ad hominem* attack against groups with differing doctrines or practices.[8][9] Groups said to be cults range in size from local groups with a few members to international organizations with millions.[10]

Beginning in the 1930s, cults became the object of sociological study in the context of the study of religious behavior.[11] From the 1940s the Christian countercult movement has opposed some sects and new religious movements, and it labelled them as cults for their "un-Christian" unorthodox beliefs. The secular anti-cult movement began in the 1970s and it opposed certain groups, often charging them with mind control and partly motivated in reaction to acts of violence committed by some of their members. Some of the claims and actions of the anti-cult movements have been disputed by scholars and by the news media, leading to further public controversy.

The term "new religious movement" refers to religions which have appeared since the mid-1800s. Many, but not all of them, have been considered cults. Sub-categories of cults include: Doomsday cults, political cults, destructive cults, racist cults, polygamist cults, and terrorist cults. Governmental reactions to cult-related issues have also been a source of controversy.

Terminological history

Further information: Cult (religious practice), Sociological classifications of religious movements, Holiness movement, Faith healing, Anti-cult movement, and ritual abuse panic



Howard P. Becker's church-sect typology, based on Ernst Troeltsch's original theory and providing the basis for the modern concepts of cults, sects, and new religious movements

English-speakers originally used the word "cult" not to describe a group of religionists, but to refer to the act of worship or to a religious ceremony. The English term originated in the early 17th century, borrowed via the French *culte*, from Latin *cultus* (worship). The French word, in turn, derived from the Latin adjective *cultus* (inhabited, cultivated, worshiped), based on the verb *colere* (to care, to cultivate).

[12] The word "culture" also derives from the Latin words *cultura* and *cultus*; "culture" in general terms refers to the customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a religious or social group.[13]

While the literal original sense of the word in English remains in use, a derived sense of "excessive devotion" arose in the 19th century. The terms *cult* and *cultist* came into use in medical literature in the United States in the 1930s for what would now be termed "faith healing", especially as practised in the US Holiness movement. This usage experienced a surge of popularity at the time, and extended to other forms of alternative medicine as well.[14] In the English-speaking world the word "cult" often carries derogatory connotations.[15]

Most sociologists and scholars of religion began to reject the word "cult" altogether because of its negative connotations in mass culture.[16] Some began to advocate the use of new terms like "new religious movement", "alternative religion" or "novel religion" to describe most of the groups that had come to be referred to as "cults",[17] yet none of these terms have had much success in popular culture or in the media. Other scholars have pushed to redeem the word "cult" as one fit for neutral academic discourse.[18]

New religious movements

Main article: New religious movement

A new religious movement (NRM) is a religious community or spiritual group of modern origins (since the mid-1800s), which has a peripheral place within its society's dominant religious culture. NRMs can be novel in origin or part of a wider religion, in which case they are distinct from pre-existing denominations.[19][20] Scholars have estimated that NRMs, of which some but not all have been labelled as cults, number in the tens of thousands worldwide, most of which originated in Asia or Africa. The great majority have only a few members, some have thousands and only very few have more than a million.[10] In 2007, religious scholar Elijah Siegler commented that, although no NRM had become the dominant faith in any country, many of the concepts which they had first introduced (often referred to as "New Age" ideas) have become part of worldwide mainstream culture.[21]

Scholarly studies

Max Weber (1864–1920), one of the first scholars to study cults.

Sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) found that cults based on charismatic leadership often follow the routinization of charisma.[22]

The concept of a "cult" as a sociological classification was introduced in 1932 by American sociologist Howard P. Becker as an expansion of German theologian Ernst Troeltsch's church-sect typology. Troeltsch's aim was to distinguish between three main types of religious behavior: churchly, sectarian and mystical. Becker created four categories out of Troeltsch's first two by splitting *church* into "ecclesia" and "denomination", and *sect* into "sect" and "cult".[23] Like Troeltsch's "mystical religion", Becker's cults were small religious groups lacking in organization and emphasizing the private nature of personal beliefs.[24] Later sociological formulations built on these characteristics, placing an additional emphasis on cults as deviant religious groups "deriving their inspiration from outside of the predominant religious culture".[25] This is often thought to lead to a high degree of tension between the group and the more mainstream culture surrounding it, a characteristic shared with religious sects.[26] In this sociological terminology, *sects* are products of religious schism and therefore maintain a continuity with traditional beliefs and practices, while *cults* arise spontaneously around novel beliefs and practices.[27]

In the early 1960s, sociologist John Lofland lived with South Korean missionary Young Oon Kim and some of the first American Unification Church members in California, during which he studied their activities in trying to promote their beliefs and win new members.[28] Lofland noted that most of their efforts were ineffective and that most of the people who joined did so because of personal relationships with other members, often family relationships.[29] Lofland published his findings in 1964 as a doctoral thesis entitled: "The World Savers: A Field Study of Cult Processes", and in 1966 in book form by Prentice-Hall as *Doomsday Cult: A Study of Conversion, Proselytization and Maintenance of Faith*.

It is considered to be one of the most important and widely cited studies of the process of religious conversion.[30][31]

Sociologist Roy Wallis (1945–1990) argued that a cult is characterized by "epistemological individualism", meaning that "the cult has no clear locus of final authority beyond the individual member". Cults, according to Wallis, are generally described as "oriented towards the problems of individuals, loosely structured, tolerant [and] non-exclusive", making "few demands on members", without possessing a "clear distinction between members and non-members", having "a rapid turnover of membership" and as being transient collectives with vague boundaries and fluctuating belief systems. Wallis asserts that cults emerge from the "cultic milieu".[32]

In 1978 Bruce Campbell noted that cults are associated with beliefs in a divine element in the individual. It is either Soul, Self, or True Self. Cults are inherently ephemeral and loosely organized. There is a major theme in many of the recent works that show the relationship between cults and mysticism. Campbell brings two major types of cults to attention. One is mystical and the other is instrumental. This can divide the cults into being either occult or metaphysical assemblies. On the basis that Campbell proposes about cults, they are non-traditional religious groups based on belief in a divine element in the individual. There is also a third type. This is service-oriented. Campbell states that "the kinds of stable forms which evolve in the development of religious organization will bear a significant relationship to the content of the religious experience of the founder or founders." [33]

Dick Anthony, a forensic psychologist known for his criticism of brainwashing theory of conversion, [34][35][36] has defended some so-called cults, and in 1988 argued that involvement in such movements may often have beneficial, rather than harmful effects, saying "There's a large research literature published in mainstream journals on the mental health effects of new religions. For the most part the effects seem to be positive in any way that's measurable."[37]

In their 1996 book *Theory of Religion*, American sociologists Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge propose that the formation of cults can be explained through the rational choice theory.[38] In *The Future of Religion* they comment "...in the beginning, all religions are obscure, tiny, deviant cult movements".[39] According to Marc Galanter, Professor of Psychiatry at NYU,[40] typical reasons why people join cults include a search for community and a spiritual quest. Stark and Bainbridge, in discussing the process by which individuals join new religious groups, have even questioned the utility of the concept of *conversion*, suggesting that *affiliation* is a more useful concept.[41]

Popular culture

Main article: New religious movements and cults in popular culture

Beginning in the 1700s authors in the English-speaking world began introducing members of cults as antagonists. Satanists, sects of the Latter Day Saint movement, and Thuggees were popular choices. In the Twentieth century concern for the rights and feelings of religious minorities led authors to most often invent fictional cults for their villains to be members of.[42] Fictional cults continue to be popular

in film, television, and gaming in the same way; while some popular works treat real cults and new religious movements in a serious manner.

Anti-cult movements

Christian countercult movement

Main article: Christian countercult movement

Walter Martin (1928–1989), American author and leading figure in the Christian countercult movement.

In the 1940s, the long held opposition by some established Christian denominations to non-Christian religions and/or supposedly heretical, or counterfeit, Christian sects crystallized into a more organized Christian countercult movement in the United States. For those belonging to the movement, all religious groups claiming to be Christian, but deemed outside of Christian orthodoxy, were considered cults.[43] Christian cults are new religious movements which have a Christian background but are considered to be theologically deviant by members of other Christian churches.[44] In his influential book *The Kingdom of the Cults* (first published in the United States in 1965), Christian scholar Walter Martin defines Christian cults as groups that follow the personal interpretation of an individual, rather than the understanding of the Bible accepted by mainstream Christianity. He mentions The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unitarian Universalism, and Unity as examples.[45]

The Christian countercult movement asserts that Christian sects whose beliefs are partially or wholly not in accordance with the Bible are erroneous. It also states that a religious sect can be considered a cult if its beliefs involve a denial of what they view as any of the essential Christian teachings such as salvation, the Trinity, Jesus himself as a person, the ministry of Jesus, the miracles of Jesus, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection of Christ, the Second Coming of Christ, and the Rapture.[46][47][48]

Countercult literature usually expresses doctrinal or theological concerns and a missionary or apologetic purpose.[49] It presents a rebuttal by emphasizing the teachings of the Bible against the beliefs of non-fundamental Christian sects. Christian countercult activist writers also emphasize the need for Christians to evangelize to followers of cults.[50][51][52]

Secular anti-cult movement

Main article: Anti-cult movement

In the early 1970s, a secular opposition movement to groups considered cults had taken shape. The organizations that formed the secular "anti-cult movement" (ACM) often acted on behalf of relatives of "cult" converts who did not believe their loved ones could have altered their lives so drastically by their own free will. A few psychologists and sociologists working in this field suggested that brainwashing techniques were used to maintain the loyalty of cult members.[53] The belief that cults brainwashed their members became a unifying theme among cult critics and in the more extreme corners of the anti-cult movement techniques like the sometimes forceful "deprogramming" of cult members was practiced.[54]

Secular cult opponents belonging to the anti-cult movement usually define a "cult" as a group that tends to manipulate, exploit, and control its members. Specific factors in cult behavior are said to include manipulative and authoritarian mind control over members, communal and totalistic organization, aggressive proselytizing, systematic programs of indoctrination, and perpetuation in middle-class communities.[55][56][57][58][59][60] In the mass media, and among average citizens, "cult" gained an increasingly negative connotation, becoming associated with things like kidnapping, brainwashing, psychological abuse, sexual abuse and other criminal activity, and mass suicide. While most of these negative qualities usually have real documented precedents in the activities of a very small minority of new religious groups, mass culture often extends them to any religious group viewed as culturally deviant, however peaceful or law abiding it may be.[61][62][2][63]

While some psychologists were receptive to these theories, sociologists were for the most part sceptical of their ability to explain conversion to NRMs.[64] In the late 1980s, psychologists and sociologists started to abandon theories like brainwashing and mind-control. While scholars may believe that various less dramatic coercive psychological mechanisms could influence group members, they came to see conversion to new religious movements principally as an act of a rational choice.[65][66]

Reactions to the anti-cult movements

Because of the increasingly pejorative use of the words "cult" and "cult leader" since the cult debate of the 1970s, some academics, in addition to groups referred to as cults, argue that these are words to be avoided.[67][68] Catherine Wessinger (Loyola University New Orleans) has stated that the word "cult" represents just as much prejudice and antagonism as racial slurs or derogatory words for women and homosexuals.[69] She has argued that it is important for people to become aware of the bigotry conveyed by the word, drawing attention to the way it dehumanises the group's members and their children.[69] Labeling a group as subhuman, she says, becomes a justification for violence against it.[69] She also says that labeling a group a "cult" makes people feel safe, because the "violence associated with religion is split off from conventional religions, projected onto others, and imagined to involve only aberrant groups".[69] This fails to take into account that child abuse, sexual abuse, financial extortion and warfare have also been committed by believers of mainstream religions, but the pejorative "cult" stereotype makes it easier to avoid confronting this uncomfortable fact.[69]

Sociologist Amy Ryan has argued for the need to differentiate those groups that may be dangerous from groups that are more benign.[70] Ryan notes the sharp differences between definition from cult opponents, who tend to focus on negative characteristics, and those of sociologists, who aim to create definitions that are value-free. The movements themselves may have different definitions of religion as well. [71] George Chryssides also cites a need to develop better definitions to allow for common ground in the debate. In *Defining Religion in American Law*, Bruce J. Casino presents the issue as crucial to international human rights laws. Limiting the definition of religion may interfere with freedom of religion, while too broad a definition may give some dangerous or abusive groups "a limitless excuse for avoiding all unwanted legal obligations".[72]

American Psychological Association report

Main article: APA Task Force on Deceptive and Indirect Techniques of Persuasion and Control

In 1983, Margaret Singer, a leading anti-cultist who also had studied the political brainwashing of Korean prisoners of war,[73][74] was asked by the American Psychological Association (APA) to chair a taskforce called the APA Task Force on Deceptive and Indirect Techniques of Persuasion and Control (DIMPAC) to investigate whether brainwashing or "coercive persuasion" did indeed play a role in recruitment by cults. [75] It came to the following conclusion:[76]

> Cults and large group awareness trainings have generated considerable controversy because of their widespread use of deceptive and indirect techniques of persuasion and control. These techniques can compromise individual freedom, and their use has resulted in serious harm to thousands of individuals and families. This report reviews the literature on this subject, proposes a new way of conceptualizing influence techniques, explores the ethical ramifications of deceptive and indirect techniques of persuasion and control, and makes recommendations addressing the problems described in the report.

On 11 May 1987, the APA's Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility for Psychology (BSERP) rejected the DIMPAC report because the report "lacks the scientific rigor and evenhanded critical approach necessary for APA imprimatur", and concluded that "after much consideration, BSERP does not believe that we have sufficient information available to guide us in taking a position on this issue."[77]

Subcategories

Destructive cults

Jim Jones, the leader of the People's Temple

"Destructive cult" generally refers to groups whose members have, through deliberate action, physically injured or killed other members of their own group or other people. The Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance specifically limits the use of the term to religious groups that "have caused or are liable to cause loss of life among their membership or the general public".[78] Psychologist Michael Langone, executive director of the anti-cult group International Cultic Studies Association, defines a destructive cult as "a highly manipulative group which exploits and sometimes physically and/or psychologically damages members and recruits".[79]

John Gordon Clark cited totalitarian systems of governance and an emphasis on money making as characteristics of a destructive cult.[80] In *Cults and the Family* the authors cite Shapiro, who defines a "destructive cultism" as a sociopathic syndrome, whose distinctive qualities include: "behavioral and personality changes, loss of personal identity, cessation of scholastic activities, estrangement from family, disinterest in society and pronounced mental control and enslavement by cult leaders".[81]

In the opinion of Benjamin Zablocki, a Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University, destructive cults are at high risk of becoming abusive to members. He states that this is in part due to members' adulation of charismatic leaders contributing to the leaders becoming corrupted by power.[82] According to Barrett, the most common accusation made against destructive cults is sexual abuse. According to Kranenborg, some groups are risky when they advise their members not to use regular medical care.[83] This may extend to physical and psychological harm.[84]

Some researchers have criticized the usage of the term "destructive cult", writing that it is used to describe groups which are not necessarily harmful in nature to themselves or others. In his book *Understanding New Religious Movements*, John A. Saliba writes that the term is overgeneralized. Saliba sees the Peoples Temple as the "paradigm of a destructive cult", where those that use the term are implying that other groups will also commit mass suicide.[85]

Writing in the book *Misunderstanding Cults: Searching for Objectivity in a Controversial Field*, contributor Julius H. Rubin complains that the term has been used to discredit certain groups in the court of public opinion.[1] In his work *Cults in Context* author Lorne L. Dawson writes that although

the Unification Church "has not been shown to be violent or volatile", it has been described as a destructive cult by "anticult crusaders".[86] In 2002, the German government was held by Germany's Federal Constitutional Court to have defamed the Osho movement by referring to it, among other things, as a "destructive cult" with no factual basis.[87][88]

Doomsday cults

Main article: Doomsday cult

Anti-Aum Shinrikyo protest in Japan

"Doomsday cult" is an expression which is used to describe groups that believe in Apocalypticism and Millenarianism, and it can also be used to refer both to groups that predict disaster, and to groups that attempt to bring it about.[89] A 1997 psychological study by Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter found that people turned to a cataclysmic world view after they had repeatedly failed to find meaning in mainstream movements.[90] Leon Festinger and his colleagues had observed members of a small UFO religion called the Seekers for several months, and recorded their conversations both prior to and after a failed prophecy from their charismatic leader.[91][92][93] Their work was later published in the book *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World*.[94] In the late 1980s doomsday cults were a major topic of news reports, with some reporters and commentators considering them to be a serious threat to society.[95]

Political cults

LaRouche Movement members in Stockholm protesting against the Treaty of Lisbon.

A political cult is a cult with a primary interest in political action and ideology.[96][97] Groups which some writers have termed "political cults", mostly advocating far-left or far-right agendas, have received some attention from journalists and scholars. In their 2000 book *On the Edge: Political Cults Right and Left*, Dennis Tourish and Tim Wohlforth discuss about a dozen organizations in the United States and Great Britain that they characterize as cults.[98] In a separate article Tourish says that in his usage:

> The word cult is not a term of abuse, as this paper tries to explain. It is nothing more than a shorthand expression for a particular set of practices that have been observed in a variety of dysfunctional organisations.[99]

The LaRouche Movement[100] and Gino Parente's National Labor Federation (NATLFED)[101] are examples of political groups that have been described as "cults", based in the United States; another is Marlene Dixon's now-defunct Democratic Workers Party (a critical history of the DWP is given in *Bounded Choice* by Janja A. Lalich, a sociologist and former DWP member).[102]

The followers of Ayn Rand were characterized as a "cult" by economist Murray N. Rothbard during her lifetime, and later by Michael Shermer.[103][104] The core group around Rand was called the "Collective" and is now defunct (the chief group disseminating Rand's ideas today is the Ayn Rand Institute). Although the Collective advocated an individualist philosophy, Rothbard claimed they were organized in the manner of a "Leninist" organization.[103]

In Britain, the Workers Revolutionary Party, a Trotskyist group led by the late Gerry Healy and strongly supported by actress Vanessa Redgrave, has been described by others, who have been involved in the Trotskyist movement, as having been a cult or as displaying cult-like characteristics in the 1970s and 1980s.[105] It is also described as such by Tourish and Wohlforth in their writings.[106] In his review of Tourish and Wohlforth's book, Bob Pitt, a former member of the WRP concedes that it had a "cult-like character" but argues that rather than being typical of the far left, this feature actually made the WRP atypical and "led to its being treated as a pariah within the revolutionary left itself".[107] Workers' Struggle (LO, *Lutte ouvrière*) in France, publicly headed by Arlette Laguiller but revealed in the 1990s to be directed by Robert Barcia, has often been criticized as a cult, for example by Daniel Cohn-Bendit and his older brother Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, as well as *L'Humanité* and *Libération*.[108]

In his book *Les Sectes Politiques: 1965–1995* (translation: *Political cults: 1965–1995*), French writer Cyril Le Tallec considered some religious groups as cults involved in politics, including the League for Catholic Counter-Reformation, the Cultural Office of Cluny, New Acropolis, Sōka Gakkai, the Divine Light Mission, Tradition Family Property (TFP), Longo-Mai, the Supermen Club and the Association for Promotion of the Industrial Arts (Solazaref).[109]

In 1990 Lucy Patrick commented: "Although we live in a democracy, cult behavior manifests itself in our unwillingness to question the judgment of our leaders, our tendency to devalue outsiders and to avoid dissent. We can overcome cult behavior, he says, by recognizing that we have dependency needs that are inappropriate for mature people, by increasing anti-authoritarian education, and by encouraging personal autonomy and the free exchange of ideas."[110]

Polygamist cults

Cults that teach and practice polygamy, marriage between more than two people, most often polygyny, one man having multiple wives, have long been noted, although they are a minority. It has been estimated that there are around 50,000 members of polygamist cults in North America.[111] Often, polygamist cults are viewed negatively by both legal authorities and society, and this view sometimes includes negative perceptions of related mainstream denominations, because of their perceived links to possible domestic violence and child abuse.[112]

In 1890, the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Wilford Woodruff, issued a public declaration (the Manifesto) announcing that the LDS Church had ceased performing new plural marriages. Anti-Mormon sentiment waned, as did opposition to statehood for Utah. The Smoot Hearings in 1904, which documented that the LDS Church was still practicing polygamy spurred the church to issue a Second Manifesto again claiming that it had ceased performing new plural marriages. By 1910 the LDS Church excommunicated those who entered into or performed new plural marriages.[113] Enforcement of the 1890 Manifesto caused various splinter groups to leave the LDS Church in order to continue the practice of plural marriage.[114] The Church of Jesus Christ Restored is a small sect within the Latter Day Saint movement based in Chatsworth, Ontario, Canada. It has been labeled a polygamous cult by the news media and has been the subject of criminal investigation by local authorities.[115][116][117]

Racist cults

Cross burning by Ku Klux Klan members in 1915.

Sociologist and historian Orlando Patterson has described the Ku Klux Klan, which arose in the American South after the Civil War, as a heretical Christian cult, and he has described its persecution of African Americans and others as a form of human sacrifice.[118] Secret Aryan cults in Germany and Austria in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a strong influence on the rise of Nazism.[119] Modern Skinhead groups in the United States tend to use the same recruitment techniques as destructive cults.[120]

Terrorist cults

In the book *Jihad and Sacred Vengeance: Psychological Undercurrents of History*, psychiatrist Peter A. Olsson compares Osama bin Laden to certain cult leaders including Jim Jones, David Koresh, Shoko Asahara, Marshall Applewhite, Luc Jouret and Joseph Di Mambro, and he says that each of these individuals fit at least eight of the nine criteria for people with narcissistic personality disorders.[121] In the book *Seeking the Compassionate Life: The Moral Crisis for Psychotherapy and Society* authors Goldberg and Crespo also refer to Osama bin Laden as a "destructive cult leader".[122]

At a 2002 meeting of the American Psychological Association (APA), anti-cultist Steven Hassan said that Al-Qaida fulfills the characteristics of a destructive cult. He added: "We need to apply what we know about destructive mind-control cults, and this should be a priority with the war on terrorism. We need to understand the psychological aspects of how people are recruited and indoctrinated so we can slow down recruitment. We need to help counsel former cult members and possibly use some of them in the war against terrorism."[123]

In an article on Al-Qaida published in *The Times*, journalist Mary Ann Sieghart wrote that al-Qaida resembles a "classic cult", commenting: "Al-Qaida fits all the official definitions of a cult. It indoctrinates its members; it forms a closed, totalitarian society; it has a self-appointed, messianic and charismatic leader; and it believes that the ends justify the means."[124]

The Shining Path guerrilla movement active in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s has variously been described as a "cult"[125] and as an intense "cult of personality".[126] The Tamil Tigers have also been qualified as such by French magazine L'Express'[127]

Members of the People's Mujahedin of Iran in France, June 2003

The People's Mujahedin of Iran, a leftist guerrilla movement based in Iraq, has controversially been described as a political cult and as a movement that is abusive towards its own members.[128][129][130][131] Former Mujaheddin member and now author and academic Dr. Masoud Banisadr stated in a May 2005 speech in Spain: "If you ask me: are all cults a terrorist organisation? My answer is no, as there are many peaceful cults at present around the world and in the history of mankind. But if you ask me are all terrorist organisations some sort of cult, my answer is yes. Even if they start as [an] ordinary modern political party or organisation, to prepare and force their members to act without asking any moral questions and act selflessly for the cause of the group and ignore all the ethical, cultural, moral or religious codes of the society and humanity, those organisations have to change into a cult. Therefore to

understand an extremist or a terrorist organisation one has to learn about a cult."[132] In 2003, the group ordered some of its members to set themselves on fire, two of whom died.[133]

Regional developments

Falun Gong books symbolically destroyed by Chinese government

The application of the labels "cult" or "sect" to religious movements in government documents signifies the popular and negative use of the term "cult" in English and a functionally similar use of words translated as "sect" in several European languages.[134] Sociologists critical to this negative politicized use of the word "cult" argue that it may adversely impact the religious freedoms of group members.[135] At the height of the counter-cult movement and ritual abuse scare of the 1990s, some governments published lists of cults.[136] While these documents utilize similar terminology they do not necessarily include the same groups nor is their assessment of these groups based on agreed criteria.[134] Other governments and world bodies also report on new religious movements but do not use these terms to describe the groups.[134] Since the 2000s, some governments have again distanced themselves from such classifications of religious movements.[137] While the official response to new religious groups has been mixed across the globe, some governments aligned more with the critics of these groups to the extent of distinguishing between "legitimate" religion and "dangerous", "unwanted" cults in public policy.[53][138]

China

For centuries, governments in China have categorized certain religions as *xiejiao* (Chinese: 邪教; pinyin: *xiéjiào*) – sometimes translated as "evil cult" or as "heterodox teaching".[139] In imperial China, the classification of a religion as *xiejiao* did not necessarily mean that a religion's teachings were believed to be false or inauthentic, but rather, the label was applied to religious groups that were not authorized by the state, or that were seen as challenging the legitimacy of the state.[139] In modern China, the term *xiejiao* continues to be used to denote teachings that the government disapproves of, and these groups face suppression and punishment by authorities. Fourteen different groups in China have been listed by the ministry of public security as *xiejiao*.[140] In addition, in 1999, Chinese

authorities denounced the Falun Gong spiritual practice as a heretical teaching, and they launched a campaign to eliminate it. According to Amnesty International, the persecution of Falun Gong includes a multifaceted propaganda campaign,[141] a program of enforced ideological conversion and re-education, as well as a variety of extralegal coercive measures, such as arbitrary arrests, forced labour, and physical torture, sometimes resulting in death.[142]

Russia

In 2008 the Russian Interior Ministry prepared a list of "extremist groups." At the top of the list were Islamic groups outside of "traditional Islam," which is supervised by the Russian government. Next listed were "Pagan cults".[143] In 2009 the Russian Ministry of Justice created a council which it named "Council of Experts Conducting State Religious Studies Expert Analysis." The new council listed 80 large sects which it considered potentially dangerous to Russian society, and mentioned that there were thousands of smaller ones. Large sects listed included: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, and what were called "neo-Pentecostals."[144]

United States

In the 1970s, the scientific status of the "brainwashing theory" became a central topic in U.S. court cases where the theory was used to try to justify the use of the forceful deprogramming of cult members.[145][135] Meanwhile, sociologists critical of these theories assisted advocates of religious freedom in defending the legitimacy of new religious movements in court.[53][138] In the United States religious activities of cults are protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which prohibits governmental establishment of religion and protects freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly. However, no religious or cult members are granted any special immunity from criminal charges.[146]

Western Europe

France and Belgium have taken policy positions which accept "brainwashing" theories uncritically, while other European nations, like Sweden and Italy, are cautious about brainwashing and have adopted more neutral responses to new religions.[147] Scholars have suggested that outrage following the mass murder/suicides perpetuated by the Solar Temple[53][148] as well as the more latent xenophobic and anti-American attitudes have contributed significantly to European anti-cult positions.[149] In the 1980s clergymen and officials of the French government expressed concern that some orders and other groups within the Roman Catholic Church would be adversely affected by anti-cult laws then being considered.[150]

See also

- Anti-cult movement
- Greco-Roman mysteries
- List of new religious movements

- New religious movement
- Sect
- Sociological classifications of religious movements

Footnotes

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