

Impact on the Family when one or both Parents join a closed, high demand Group: A Family Systems Perspective

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Samevatting

Die gesin as 'n sisteem streef na outonomie, maar wanneer een of albei ouers lid van 'n geslote, hoë-eisegroep of 'n kultus word, kan dit ernstige implikasies vir hulle outonomie inhou. Boonop onderskat sommige professionele mense in hulpprofessies dikwels die mag van so 'n groep oor 'n individu. Die ouer wat lid is van die groep mag slegs beskou word as iemand wat baie toegewyd is aan sy of haar geloof.

Hierdie artikel word die dinamiek in die gesinsisteem wat deur die prosesse van kubernetika en konstruktivisme plaasvind, bespreek. Die verandering van hierdie prosesse in die lig van radikale gehoorsaamheid word deur 'n beskrywing van die elemente van *gedagte-hervorming* volgens Lifton (1989), asook met behulp van 'n gevallestudie geïllustreer.

Die uitwerking van spirituele indoktrinasie op die gesinsisteem is nog nie op 'n wetenskaplike wyse beskryf nie en professionele persone mag dit nodig vind om te verstaan hoe radikale gehoorsaamheid aan 'n korrupte spirituele leier die gesinsisteem se kommunikasie en die realiteitstigting kan beïnvloed.

1. Introduction

Literature about cults worldwide mentions the physical, emotional and spiritual disadvantages membership holds for the individual. When the member is also a parent, it may influence the family, as cults then become “fictive families” that demand commitments that parallel those made by

dysfunctional and often abusive families in society (Whitsett & Kent, 2003: 491-502).

Each family has a certain ego ideal which serves to regulate incoming information and the interpretation of reality that is for the good of the family. Family members measure their feelings, thoughts and behaviour against this ego ideal. A *cult* or *closed, high-demand group* seeks “to replace this ego ideal with their own grandiose purposes and seeks to control the family through the parent-member” (Sirkin, correct: 1990:116-123). Such a group is characterised by a high level of social cohesiveness; it may be driven by a religious or political ideology and usually has a profound influence on its members’ behaviour (Galanter, 1990:543-551). The group may have a large membership, but the same control can be exerted by only one person, who may act as a leader and may gather one or more followers around him or her.

One approach to understand the dynamics of a family is to view the family as a system. Any change in one part of the system influences other parts. This means that a family functions as an interacting unit with its own set of unique traits (Corey, 1996:367). In addition to the interaction within the family, the system also interacts with wider systems, such as the extended family, the school, the church and the social environment. Information from these systems is received, processed and interpreted according to the family’s own reality and rules of communication.

What happens when an outside agent takes control over the consensual reality and lays down new rules and content of communication for the family? The study on which this article is based focused on the implications for a family of four after the mother joined a small Bible study group. The mother committed herself to the teachings of a spiritual leader. Through the mother, the spiritual leader gradually took over control of the family.

Through my contact with this family as well as with other families, I have become aware that people in helping professions, such as attorneys, teachers, psychologists, counsellors, social workers and even church ministers, often do not understand the power of a closed, high-demand group over an individual. The parent member may be seen as a parent who is just over-committed to his or her church. Although the principle of freedom of religion is almost universally practised and embraced, harm could sometimes be done in the name of religion. This means that on the one hand, vulnerable people could suffer without protection from the law, and on the other hand, that deceptive churches or individuals could continue the harm they cause through their actions. In most cases the

spouses and children are the victims. There is often a lack of understanding of how this kind of involvement can lead to the destruction of a family and to what extent children may be emotionally or even physically harmed. More can be read about the psychiatric impact of certain high-demand groups on individuals and families in the work of Galanter (1990:543-551) and Bergman (1992).

A further complicating aspect is the fact that the controlled persons do not think or realise that they may be indoctrinated. Their new behaviour is justified by the spiritual leader as necessary steps towards spiritual growth, as an end-justifies-the-means approach. An uninformed or inexperienced professional person may overlook the deeper processes of indoctrination. The author believes that, although harm is mentioned throughout current literature, the effects on the family as a system have not been described in a scientific way.

This article deals with *the effects on communication (cybernetics) and the consensual reality (constructivism) in a family when a parent becomes a member of a closed, high-demand group*. By means of a case study the author will demonstrate how the consensual reality, the communication and other elements of the family system were affected by the spiritual leader and make recommendations to people in helping professions.

2. Discussion

2.1 The family dynamics according to the systems theory

According to the systems theory, human behaviour is not regarded in terms of smaller elements of behaviour, but in terms of larger wholes or systems. That means that an individual within a family is always in interaction with others, such as the family members and members of the community or environment in which the individual functions. The family members and other people around an individual make up the *context* of that individual. In each family, a special *pattern of interacting* exists. In the systems theory, this pattern of interacting is referred to as *cybernetics* (Corey, 1996:368). Cybernetics in the systems theory refers to the flow of information within the system and between the system and surrounding systems and to the principles that regulate the dissemination of information or messages, in other words the basic principles underlying communication.

In a functional family, all the members in the family, parents and children, usually contribute to the establishment and continuation of communication, in other words, what is talked about, when it is talked about and to what extent it should influence the family.

Meyer *et al.* (1997:564) explain that between two systems, for example the family and the church, or the family and the school, there are boundaries which are semi-permeable. That means that, depending on the rules of interaction of the family, information is allowed to flow across the boundaries and to enable the two systems to influence one another. The principles that regulate the dissemination of information are different for every family. In order to understand how these rules come into existence, the family's perception and construal of their reality must first be explained.

According to Carl Rogers's second proposition, every person develops his or her own reality by observing his/ her environment (Du Toit, Grobler & Schenk, 2003:50). That means that in a family there are different valid individual realities. Because they form a special group, such as a family, a *consensual reality* for the group can be formed. This means that differential opinions can exist within a consensual domain, in other words, a co-constructed reality. This co-constructed reality helps to create a group cohesiveness or synergism which means that the whole is always more than the sum of the parts (Galanter, 1990:543-551). A whole network of meanings comes into being, which represents the manner in which the individual looks at the world. It reflects each family member's own needs, wishes, goals, values and priorities; it also represents the needs, wishes and values of the family as a whole, as well as that of the larger systems in which the family system is nestled. *This leads to the experience and giving of social and emotional intimacy in the small family circle.*

For a system to survive within and in interaction with other systems the individuality of all members must be acknowledged but the cohesiveness and identity must be protected in order for the system to keep its identity. This means that constructivism is actually a building block for self-differentiation. Through the freedom to interact and to choose one's own reality, the identity develops. Differentiation of self means that a level of emotional maturity is reached within the family where the individual acquires a sense of self-identity. It encompasses both a sense of belonging to one's family and a sense of separateness and individuality (Corey, 1996:374). The person is able to say: *I am a part of this family, but I can be myself at the same time.*

The ability of family members to co-construct their own reality means that the system is autonomous. This means that the system has autonomy about the ideas they have about themselves, about each other, about the problem and about the world in general. This creates a homeostasis, or balance within the family, which keeps the boat afloat.

2.2 Mind control and its effect on individuals

McManus and Cooper (1984:27) hold the following definition of *mind control* or *thought reform*:

Thought reform is a process, not an event. Step by step, this process is designed to break a person's independence and individuality and to substitute it with the characteristics of a pawn. Some of the steps overlap, but they work together to actualise one end, the erasure of self and autonomy to facilitate internal cultic control.

No one would consciously allow another person to control them in such a way. Individuals are led to believe that they are in a group for a just cause. While following the cause, they willingly lay down their decision making and autonomy and willingly change their behaviour, thoughts and emotions to fit into the new identity that is created for them.

They have a righteous cause, which tends to alleviate their own consciousness of guilt and failure, and this becomes a drug that insures their continued obedience with a fanaticism that no logic seems able to dismantle. Like the heroin addict who needs his fix, the cause is their drug that must be retained at any price, even to the point of death (Watters, 1993:3).

While they are following what they deem a just cause, they open themselves up for a change in their thoughts, emotions and behaviour. If this change is brought about, the control is complete and just needs to be maintained. According to Whitsett and Kent (2003:491-502), this is done by the *ethic of radical obedience*. The changes that were brought about in a family through the involvement of a spiritual leader who used mind control techniques will now be discussed against the backdrop of the elements of mind control or *thought reform* as described by Lifton (1989).

Lifton (1989:420) created eight criteria against which every environment can be measured. West and Martin (1996:14-18) maintain that while one or two of these elements may exist without causing too much harm, the presence of all these criteria in one environment may pose the gravest of human threats.

Unlike brainwashing, which is a coercive process (Kaplan & Sadock, 1991:546; Galanter 1992:543-551), mind control is subtle and starts with a relationship of trust between a spiritual leader or group and one or more individuals.

Mystical manipulation

The controlling person or group creates a mystical aura in which they function, by claiming that they are the mouthpiece of God and are

therefore in possession of special knowledge. By using dreams, visions and prophecies, they claim that only they can interpret messages from God. Distrust between the family member and their world is created by giving suggestions that their loved ones do not appreciate them, that their church has faltered, that everybody is evil and not to be trusted. Only God can be trusted, and only through the spiritual leader. At this point the individual may start to trust the spiritual leader to interpret and evaluate information on his or her behalf.

Elevated knowledge

The controlling person is in possession of 'elevated knowledge', as it is claimed to have come directly from God. Any questioning attitude equals questioning God and is deemed disrespectful. This knowledge serves as the dogma according to which members must live. The elevated knowledge sometimes contains suggestions that the spiritual leader may have given to the individual, which the individual may believe. An example of this may be to give suggestions that the individuals were never completely happy until they found this new doctrine, that their family members have never cared about them or that they abused them.

Doctrine over person

Such individuals should not trust their self-evaluating ability any more; they should only trust the doctrine. The doctrine is more valid than any aspect of a person. They are taught to approach the spiritual leader with any questions, as they are not considered spiritually mature enough to interpret it for themselves.

Control of information

We need information from all possible sources in order to evaluate and make well-informed decisions. If need be, we want to distance ourselves from this information, reflect on it and decide either to accept it or not. Such information is kept for later use and in that way broadens our horizons. If only information which is approved by the controlling person is available, a distance is created between the individual and other information. The individual now starts to compile his or her reality only from the available information. The reality that is then created only represents the controlling person's opinions and ideas. Family members will start to hear that they should not watch television, read just any magazine or talk to people who are 'impure'.

The demand for purity

A sharp distinction is made between purity and impurity. The new followers are encouraged to seek the pure. Anything that is done to another person in the name of purity is morally justifiable. In order to do the 'right' thing, family members who refuse to adhere to the new doctrine may be punished or even rejected.

Loading the language

The language a high demand group seeks to describe themselves with is frequently filled with family images, especially ones in which leaders take on parental roles. This tends to destroy the dyadic bonds and family attachment between family members. Words are redefined to suit the new doctrine. Where love previously meant a feeling of closeness to God, it now means obedience to the leader. If you are disobedient, you do not love God. When you obey the leader, you love God. Your leader is your spiritual father, and the doctrine is your mother. Fellow believers are your brothers and sisters.

The cult of confession

Psychological energy builds up because everything in the new environment is difficult. Confession is used as emotional catharsis and as a way of becoming pure. Each confession serves to let the individual identify more and more with the controller. It also serves to keep a person in a psychological and physical stressful state.

Dispensing of existence

Believing and following the doctrine grants an individual the right to eternal life. Anyone outside of this reality is considered lost. If he repents and changes his behaviour and attitude, he may be allowed back into the 'circle' and be viewed as a person again. If not, he is regarded as a persona non grata, a so-called non-person.

The above criteria of mind control or thought reform were discussed in order to demonstrate how this control can impact on an individual, and through the individual, on the family system. The usual dynamics and rules of communication are changed by accepting that the usual information which was carried into the system through all known communication channels is evil, the semi-permeable communication boundaries of the family which were carried into and out of the family are closed and only one channel of information is allowed into the family. In

addition, words receive new meanings. Certain things are no longer said; the only allowed words or phrases are those that plead allegiance to the spiritual leader.

Through getting new members to believe that the spiritual leader is in possession of elevated knowledge, the members are brought to a place where they believe they function on a lower spiritual level than the leader, but that everybody around them is impure. They also believe that doctrine is more important than the wishes or needs of any person, including themselves. The previous consensual reality that everybody in the family's reality should contribute to the consensual reality is wiped out. A new reality is created where the spiritual leader's interpretations of visions and dreams spell out the reality for the family. Galanter's research (Galanter, 1990: 543-551) confirms the fact that the dreams, visions and signs can serve as the basis for the converts' attributing a new construction of reality to their life.

The harm which is brought to families by involvement in a high demand group is frequently discussed in literature (Singer & Lalich, 1995; Theron, 1993; Singer & Addis, 1992; Lalich, 1993.) These disadvantages of cult involvement to families range from marriage conflict and divorce, to emotional harm, serious bodily harm, and even death of a child or parent. In the Watchtower Organization (Venter, 2007:2-29), family members are required to spy on one another, as all disobedience to the Organization should be reported. This creates an atmosphere of total distrust between family members. According to this reality, the telling of lies is acceptable, as long as it is for the good of the Organization. "Did she lie? No, she did not. She was not a liar. Rather, she was using theocratic war strategies, hiding the truth by action and word for the sake of the ministry" (Watchtower, 1957:2). In *Insight in the Scriptures*, a publication of the Organization, the following guideline appears: "While malicious lying is definitely condemned in the Bible, this does not mean that the person is under obligation to divulge truthful information to people who are not entitled to it."

Singer and Lalich (1995:210) recount an incident where parents who were members of a cult had beaten their child to death because the cult leader had commanded them to punish him. She had to defend the parents in court, explaining the indoctrination to which they had been exposed. The Guyana suicides where Jim Jones died with more than 900 people by drinking poisoned Cool Aid, can be cited here. More than 300 of the group were children who were killed by their parents (Weightman, 1983:77). In 2005 a mother of a teenage daughter approached the author for help when her daughter joined a one-on-one cult. She has shown the author internet

messages in which the cult leader conspired with her daughter to kill her (Joan, 2006).

On a less than life-threatening level, thousands of families have been broken up by cult involvement of one or both parents. Initially commitment is required, as the new member declares him- or herself willing to change to become a better Christian. Efforts are then made to bring about changes in communication and in the way the family perceives their reality. Suggestions are given to the parent member that they cannot trust their spouse, which creates conflict and distrust within the marriage relationship. These influences are subtle and merely suggestions at first, but eventually seek to control every word, thought and behaviour of all family members. An example of this is the use of language. The analogy of Abram who had to sacrifice his son, Isaac, is used to convince members that they have to make a sacrifice. If a member is told to sacrifice their 'Isaac', it means that they must search their heart and sacrifice something or someone which is dear and close to them as a sign of allegiance to the group. The word 'family' in the context of spiritual abuse does not mean one's own family members, but those who are faithful to the group. 'Love' generally means total obedience to the group and 'evil' anything that is said or done in opposition to the group.

Although the harm which comes to families is widely described, there appears to be a lack of understanding that a caring, loving parent who gives her life over to God can at the same time act to the disadvantage of her children and marriage relationship. There is often a lack of empathy for such a parent, and she may be considered evil, rather than also a victim of the process of mind control.

3. Case study

With this case study the author would like to illustrate how a family's rules of communication and their perception of reality was taken over and changed by a spiritual leader who befriended the mother.

The information from which this case study was compiled was collected as follows:

The author –

conducted semi-structured and therapeutic interviews with Carl and Maggie, together and individually, at their home and in her office;

conducted interviews with Maggie's mother;

was given Maggie's diaries to read;

consulted the advocate and social worker who acted on behalf of the family;

had a telephonic conversation with a traumatologist whom Maggie had approached for help;
had a meeting with the psychologist who was appointed to do therapy with the children; and
studied all relevant reports written by these professionals.

After the interviews with Carl and Maggie, as well as with the other individuals involved, the matters which were discussed were written down. The author used the method of observation while the author visited their home to witness the family dynamics, for example, communication, handling of conflict, and general interaction between family members. The author attended meetings of the family advocate, social workers and psychologists and the author studied their reports. The author also had various telephonic conversations with all the above individuals.

In order to ensure that ethical professional standards were being met, the author received written consent from Carl to use this information for the purposes of my research.

Maggie's mother consulted me after she realised that their children, Maggie and Carl, were experiencing marriage problems.

Maggie and Carl had two children, lived in a city in Mpumalanga where both parents had professional occupations. After befriending Estelle, they started doing Bible study together. Briefly, the doctrine Estelle proclaimed stood for obeying all the Old Testament laws, keeping the Sabbath and interpreting the Scriptures literally. Maggie was baptised by Estelle and willingly started to change her behaviour in order to adhere to the new doctrine. The changes in behaviour concerned her marriage relationship, the education of her children and her relationships with her parents, family members, friends and congregation members.

Maggie believed she befriended Estelle for a just cause. She was disillusioned with Christianity and Christians in general and had a sincere need to live more closely to God. She believed that through Estelle, she could attain this goal. She therefore accepted Estelle's teachings and believed that her family should obey and observe the rules she believed Estelle received from God.

Estelle renamed one of Carl and Maggie's children, the reason being that God supposedly gave the child a new name. She forbade all homeopathic medicines, which, according to her, had occult influences on people. According to Estelle's teachings, and after the analogy of Exodus 20 which speaks of *graven images*, a Christian family was not allowed to have anything in their home that looks like a human being or an animal.

After Maggie had destroyed her art pieces which fit this description, she turned to the children's toys. All the three-dimensional toys with eyes, teddy bears, wooden horses and dolls were destroyed in a fire that she made in the garden. This was done in the children's presence. After she had found toys which one of the children had hidden in the bush near the house, she also burnt them. Gifts that the children received from friends on their birthday parties were screened by Maggie. If they did not answer to Estelle's rules, they were given back to the friend or parent. Christmas was considered an idol feast, Easter eggs were forbidden, which totally changed the consensus the parents had about rituals and the upbringing of their children.

The fact that the change and continuous conflict in the home was extremely difficult for her is evident from her diary:

Lord, help me not to deny you – help me!! I want to stand for you oh Lord.
You said that you will help me not to stumble!!

When the marriage relationship started to be under pressure, Estelle said the reason was that Carl was not a responsible Christian father, and ascribed the conflict to his disobedience. She also said that Carl was not the husband that God wanted for Maggie and that God would provide another husband. Estelle gave Maggie suggestions throughout that Carl had abused Maggie during their years of married life, which she believed.

When Maggie's parents objected to the relationship with Estelle and the impact it had on the family, Maggie distanced herself from her parents and called her mother *Jezebel*. She also severed her relationships with friends, family members and congregation members who opposed the teachings.

Estelle taught Maggie that everything that happened had some meaning. A colour, a vehicle driving past, a dream – they were all signs from God. Estelle would interpret the occurrence, and Maggie would change her behaviour according to the interpretation or so-called prophecy.

Her initial writings in her diary about Carl were romantic thoughts about him, praise to the Lord for a husband who works hard and provides, and for wonderful and loving parents. These thoughts are gradually replaced with paranoid thoughts that Carl's falseness is being exposed by God.

During the subsequent two years, more and more distance was created between Maggie and almost all the people in her life world. The marriage relationship was under great strain. Carl insisted that they speak to church ministers and psychologists about their problems, and Maggie agreed, but was set on holding onto the new path she had chosen. Carl's opposing this path was answered by Maggie losing more and more trust in him, and holding on to Estelle's teachings even more strongly.

At a point Maggie left her family and stayed with Estelle for a few weeks. She moved back to the family, and moved out again. At last divorce proceedings started and Carl received preliminary custody. Maggie attempted to get custody by claiming that she had no more ties with Estelle, but her attempts failed.

Even after Maggie realised that she was seriously harming her children and that her actions were leading to the breaking up of the marriage relationship, she insisted that she was abused by her husband. The traumatologist whom she consulted explained to me in detail the extent of the abuse she believed Maggie experienced from her husband. This is one of the complicating factors for people in helping professions, as a person who was indoctrinated may recount incidents of so-called abuse that may or may not be the truth.

4. Discussion of case study

In the literature study it was demonstrated how the reality and patterns of communication of the family as a system are established and how a family is able to maintain its character in the presence of continuous change when these criteria are adhered to. In order to create and maintain this consensual reality, all family members need to be taken into account. Only in a family where each family member is allowed to contribute to the communication by expressing themselves, and by having regard for the self-expression and uniqueness of a fellow family member, is it possible to live out their roles and establish their identity. In such an environment the development of self-differentiation is possible.

In the case study it was described how the consensual reality and rules of communication of this family were replaced with a new reality by a person outside of the family. The distance that was created between the spiritual leader and her follower, Maggie, served to place her on a so-called higher spiritual level than Maggie, and implied that the knowledge that she had was more elevated than that of other people. She convinced Maggie that any harm that Maggie did to her husband and children was for a higher purpose, which helped Maggie to justify her actions.

In her desire to 'hold on' and to become more pure, she became extremely critical and confrontational with people who rejected Estelle's teachings. In line with Lifton's criteria of *dispensing of existence*, such people were regarded as non-persons, lost and cut off from God's grace and eternal life.

Finally it was found that a complicating factor exists where it comes to the support team of helping professionals for such a family. Maggie believed

Estelle's suggestions that Carl had abused her in the past. After she left Carl, she approached a traumatologist for help and shared her so-called memories of abuse with the traumatologist. When the author was appointed by the court to investigate Maggie's later relationship with Estelle, a part of the investigation entailed that the author consulted with the traumatologist. The author immediately gathered that she knew nothing of the possible false memories which may have been given to Maggie by means of suggestion. She merely believed all the information that was given to her, although some of it may have been false memories.

As explained, the power of suggestion that an individual receives from an authority figure, such as the spiritual leader in the case study, is very strong and it may cause the individual to recount the truth as she sees it. The possibility exists that a person who was indoctrinated may have a false memory as some of her memories may have been induced by the spiritual leader.

5. Conclusions

In this article the following conclusions were drawn about the impact of cults or closed, high-demand groups on a family:

The family is an interactive system and the continuation of a consensual reality, fair patterns of communication and the character of the family are dependent on each family member taking part in its establishment and maintenance.

In order to reach self-differentiation, it is necessary for each family member to feel that they may live out their own roles, set and maintain their own boundaries and express themselves freely within the family, while being a part of the family system.

Cultic involvement or involvement in a closed, high-demand group has the implication that the family is cut off from outside information and that the semi-permeable boundaries of communication are closed.

The adherence to a new doctrine by a family member, especially a parent, leads to pressure on the family to change their consensual reality. The only incoming source of information and interpretation thereof, is from the spiritual leader. This may lead to a closed system, where family members are insulated from the environment and from each other, which removes the emotional and social intimacy that characterises a healthy family. In time, this may have a negative impact on self-differentiation, family relationships, and relationships with the outside world.

The possibility exists that all people in helping professions may not always be aware of induced memories, which may make it extremely

difficult to establish the truth. Moreover, there will not be agreement among family members as their consensual reality was erased.

6. Recommendations

The author attempted to raise awareness in ways that facilitate the ability of professionals to evaluate the impact of cults or closed high-demand groups on the family, and specifically on children who need to be protected by their parents.

(1) In a situation such as this, professionals should be aware of all the dynamics in the system and how it has changed since the new person became involved.

(2) Each family member's sense of belonging and ability to live out their own individuality in the family should be investigated.

(3) When there is a question about possible indoctrination and spiritual abuse, it may be helpful to measure the family or individual against Lifton's eight criteria to evaluate the environment in which they lived and to see how it changed the consensual reality and patterns of communication in the family.

(4) It should be kept in mind that although a relationship by one parent with an outside person, such as a spiritual leader, may look like a mere spiritual relationship, it may have undertones of mind control.

(5) People in helping professions should take note of the fact that in instances of possible indoctrination, such as in the above case, the professional should try to make sure of the truth by counterchecking facts.

(6) The existing relationship between the individual and the spiritual leader should be ascertained before making a decision on custody, as this could have grave consequences for the children. It is important for professionals to not merely consider the fact that a parent belongs to a certain church, but to consider the possible harmful effects to children and the family.

(7) When it comes to a decision about custody, the best interests of the children should always be kept in mind. Freedom of religion in the Constitution is never more important than the emotional and physical well-being of children.

(8) Always be careful not to name and blame the individual who did the damage, as this person is also in dire need of help.

7. Closing

Influencing or changing the communication and consensual reality of a family for the sake of control can have dire effects on a family and even lead to its destruction. Professionals should investigate the context of the

problem, keeping in mind that what they are told by their client may be a fabrication, even if the client considers it the truth. As in all family cases, the priority should be to protect the children. Care should be taken never to blame the individual who did the damage, since this person may be a victim of mind control and therefore may also be in need of help.

Even so, existing data now suffice to convince any reasonable person that the claims of harm done by cults are bona fide. There are a good many people already dead or dying, ill or malfunctioning, crippled or developing improperly as a result of their involvement in cults. They are exploited; they are used and misused; their health suffers; they are made to commit improprieties ranging from lying to murder. Their lives are being gobbled up by days, months, and years. Their families are often devastated (West, 1989:172).

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