Name

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Course

Date

Cults

In the 21 century, the term 'colonialism' has a negative connotation in contrast to previous eras when imperialism was encouraged. The 21 century can thus be referred to as a post-colonial period; nonetheless, the intricate nature of colonialism implies that it encompasses not just economics and politics, but consciousness. This aspect of colonialism brings about the paradigm of colonized minds; a phenomenon that occurs when a group or person manipulates an individual's beliefs and decisions for their own benefit. An example of colonized minds is manifested in cults; these groups involve isolation of members and punitive consequences for leaving, fanatic loyalty to those leading the cult, special doctrines not mentioned in scripture, and opposition of any aspect of critical thinking. The isolation, fanatiscm and opposition to critical thinking result in colonization of the mind, where the individual becomes a puppet or slave to the doctrines of the cult even when they have negative effects on him or her. Cult leaders target vulnerable groups such as women and the youth, as these persons may not be in a position to make rational decisions when asked to join the groups. This paper will discuss examples of negative effects of cults on the American youth, persons who are susceptible to them, and the manner in which victims have been persuaded to join them.

Psychologists indicate that adolescents, and the youth in general, experience a need to rebel against authority and those older than them. Young people presume this rebellion to be their way of charting their own path in life; however, it can result in negative impacts. The susceptibility of the youth in joining cults is derived from this attribute: a common reason for joining these groups is to get back at parents/ guardians. In addition, this developmental stage is associated with conflicting emotions, and young people who feel misunderstood by those around them may opt to join a cult that offers a sense of belonging. The manipulative nature of cult leaders allows them to target these weaknesses in young people, and to exploit them based on each individual's life story. Young people alienate themselves, and thus it may be difficult to detect behavior that is indicative of recruitment in a cult during its early stages. Furtherance, peer pressure among this group increases its susceptibility to joining cults, as cult leaders target influential youth to gain following among their friends. The increased popularity of social media has accentuated cyber bullying, and the victims become easy targets for cults as they seek approval.

In October 2011, four young people burnt a teenager alive in Johannesburg in what was part of a satanic ritual. Psychologists argue that because of the negative connotation associated with the term 'cult', these groups are misrepresented as other forums; for example, some college clubs have been reported to exhibit cultic behavior and following. One indicator that a social group is a cult is its entry procedure; those groups that require an individual to shed blood or engage in an immoral or unnatural activity before joining have a high probability of being cults (Whitsett 12). In learning institutions, which comprise of the youth demographic, students attempt to identify with others with common beliefs or those that offer them a sense of belonging. Authorities in these institutions should be proactive in mitigating the formation and advancement of cults within their establishments. Additionally, awareness should be promoted among students to ensure they are aware of the detriments of joining a cult. In the 1980s, ritual killings had increased in the US, and this period can be used as a reference point on what a cult can require from a young person.

Developmental psychologists have established that serious family problems are a precursor for joining cults. Clinical studies targeting persons that have left cults established that period prior to joining these groups was characterized by poor relationships and high exposure to interpersonal crises (Damon and Lerner 988). Paternal absenteeism has also been identified as a precursor for joining cults among young people; this was explained as an intrinsic pursuit for authoritarian values that the absent father could have provided (Atkins 146). Additionally, the high risk of cult recruitment among the youth is associated with the fact that they focus on lower developmental issues; for example, the classification of society on the basics of good and bad. These issues are easy to be understood by young people, and can be used to alienate them and distance them from reality. In addition, human beings have an innate need for spiritual gratification from an entity bigger than them, and cults offer to fulfill this need for their members; therefore, young people who are experiencing family crises consider these groups as an escape platform from their problems.

Cults take advantage of emotional distress among young people; they alienate them and interfere with their social and academic growth. One strategy of mitigating the risk of joining cults is through providing a stable family environment for the youth. In addition, activities that alienate young people in families, at work, or in school should be avoided; parents and other guardians should be proactive in promoting inclusivity among this demographic.

Works Cited

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