

Analyzing Cults and Saving Believers on Cults from the Perspectives of Psychology

XU Bibo, LI Tian and YAN Meifu

Psychology Department, Hubei University, Wuhan 430062, China

Abstract: There is cult leader who has not studied the psychology in a systematic way, but he is very good at using some psychology principles to capture a large number of believers and to make them follow him with their whole hearts. This article takes the need theory, the psychological frustration theory, the cognitive process theory and the theory of group psychological motivation as the principles, and obtaining the event in the actual struggle with the cult, the author reveals how the cult sets up the swindle with these theories and how the cult organization is developed fast and how to control cult believers and how they provide a service to themselves. The writers argue that when the cult leader crazily steals the psychological theory to deceive others and murder others and to loot money, we also should wave the psychological sword, and should use the psychological theory and methods against the cult to rescue the practitioners captured by cults, and the article also provides a strategy and method which can be a reference.

Key words: Need theory, illusion, frustration theory, group dynamics theory.

1. Introduction

As far as the world range is concerned, there are thousands kinds of cults, and so far, no one has ever discovered which the one systematically studies the cult psychology in a university, or he is a psychologist. But especially the cult leader Li Hongzhi in “Falungong”, he is very good at using the principles and laws in psychology to deceive believers and to capture a large numbers of believers and to make them follow him with their whole hearts, who are sticking to the cults. And the believers even waste all their property and their lives, and no matter how their parents plead to them, or their children are begging them to far away from the cult. Believers who are captured and cannot help themselves in the cult include common people and professors, PhDs, senior engineers. Cults who use the principles of psychological fraud have a bad influence on believers and it is hard to educate and help the deceived people. We cannot believe the deep influence on them. In order to wake the believers who have not yet

awakened themselves in the cult and to wake the believers to see the fake essence of the cult and to be far away from the cult, this article reveals how the cult steals the principles and laws of psychology to provide a service for itself and this article discusses how to use the theory of psychology to deal with and defeat the fallacies and the false reason by all kinds of cults to confuse the practitioners.

2. The Misfortune and the Meaning of Need Theory

2.1 The Cult Steals the Principle of “Need Theory” to Provide Services for Their Evil Targets

“Need theory” is one of the important psychology theories, and many famous psychologists such as Maslow (1908-1972) [1], McLean (DCMcCelland 1917-1998) [2], Alderfer has put forward their own needs theory [1]. The deepest influence belongs to Maslow’s “need hierarchy theory”, and the theory argues that needs are the sources of the behavior power of people. All the activities and efforts are to meet their own needs and needs of people are divided into 2 parts: a high level and a low level. Low-level

Corresponding author: YAN Meifu, professor, research field: psychology.

needs include the needs in the aspect of diet, men and women, health, and security, and whether those needs are satisfied or not is related to the survival of people, every member in the community, emperors and pawns must meet those low-level needs. The low-level need is a kind of deficient need while the high-level need includes the pursuit for respects in one's personality and ideals, beliefs and the realization of life values. There will be existing high-level needs usually after the low-level needs are basically satisfied, but the two needs are not contradictory to each other and they can coexist with each other. This theory is more in line with the actual needs of people, which has been widely accepted. Unfortunately, this theory is valued by the cult, and this theory is suffering a bad luck.

In more than ten years, the cult embezzles this theory and it uses this theory to capture a large number of believers and to keep believers to follow the service of the cult with their whole heart. One of the cults firstly throws out the practice that the practicing trick can cure all diseases, and the cult advocates that if you are sick, you can eliminate the disease without injecting medicines, taking medicines and you do not need to go to a clinic and a hospital only by practicing the trick. Here, the cult is aimed at people's health and life safety which belongs to the low-level needs. In the initial stage in our economic development, because there is enough social security and medical security and the community has a problem, such as the expensive curing and the difficult curing, he can meet people's health with social difficulties and life safety needs to seduce people only by practicing the "trick", and the attractiveness is obvious. In more than 300 personnel who are studied by the author, more than 110 people among more than 300 people accept the temptation and fall into the abyss of the cult for curing illnesses and having healthy bodies, which clearly illustrates this point. The cult meets people's needs of curing illness and having a strong body to induce people into the cult by using the cult belief, and at the same time, the cult does not

forget to use people's high-level needs such as ideals, pursuits, beliefs, self-realization to pursue its own evil service. The fabricator in the false sense in the cult knows that the low-level needs are very close to the actual life of crowds, and the needs are easy to be satisfied. If you give several bowls of rice to a hungry man, the man will not be in a hungry state, so it can be easily used to trap believers. Because of it, the low-level needs do not have a long power function to drive people to take actions. The high-level needs are opposite to low-level needs, and the high-level needs are difficult to be met immediately. A person can achieve his own ideal for decades with struggle, which can inspire people to pursue the long-term pursuits and to have a fight. Based on this understanding of high-level needs, Cori with "David sect" tells his followers that he can lead them directly to heaven; the leader of the "Heaven's Gate" Apple Whitepreaches to his followers that he is the following generation of Jesus, and at the same time, he gives a promise to save them to heaven by using a spacecraft (UFO) [3]. It is clear that once the needs theory is misappropriated by a cult, the cult will grasp believers into the cage by meeting low-level needs of people, and then the cult will push believers into the obsession abyss by using the high-level needs such as ideals, beliefs and self-realization in cults. Needs are the source of the power of human activities and embody the essence of human nature. After many cult practitioners accept the temptation of meeting low-level and high-level needs in cults, helpers use reasons and feelings to move the cult practitioners, and the strength has reached a strong level, but it is difficult to make cult practitioners recognize the deceptive feature in cults and willing to be far away from cults.

2.2 The Original Source should Be Good, and the Psychology Theory can Reveal the Fake Evil Needs in Cults

Cults induce believers to be obsessed with the cult from meeting people's needs in low level and high

level, and we should also use the corresponding principles of psychology to fight against the cult, and to expose the abuse and misinterpretation of the principles of psychological in cults. The original source should be good, and people should get rid of evil spirit control.

(1) That practice can cure illness function mainly is the result of psychological suggestion. The cult practitioners explain to the beneficial bodies that need low-level needs to meet the temptation that the modern medical comfort therapy is based on the psychological implied principle, and supplement a large number of psychological implied pathogenesis and treatment cases to prove the effect. The result of psychological hints mainly makes the believers understand and believe the low-level needs that the cults can cure the illness and can absolve disasters.

(2) All kinds of qigong have a certain effect in fitness. The cult should give an explanation to the addicts, regardless of what kind of qigong you practice, that qigong is a kind of sports activity and fitness activity, and it has functions which can stretch your blood vessels and can cure your illness. Some cult organizations with the banner of Qigong steal “Chanmigong” and “jiugongbaguagong” and other exercises to prepare some “Gongfa”, so the cult has double functions such as the sports function and the relaxation function; therefore, after some frail people practice themselves in accordance with the cult practice, their body situation will indeed be improved, but this is by no means the performance of the cult.

(3) Criticize the absolute pain view obsessing with cults. Physical and psychological pain in long-term patients is not entirely negative, and it also has positive significance and value. The history of people is a journey from pain to happiness, and people cannot clearly see the world without pain, and they cannot profoundly understand the meaning of happiness, and they will not produce the firm, tolerant, perseverant and great personality strength which is amazing. The story of Guan Yunchang scraping his bone to cure

himself in the *Three Kingdoms* is so touching, because of the strong perseverance and a high degree of optimism when he faces with this kind of pain when, the pain makes his righteous personality more glorious. But by using the cult can meet their low-level needs, the beneficial body being obsessing with the cut says that the practitioner cannot extricate themselves from the misery, and cannot see the long-term struggle with human disease. The practitioner is dreaming that human beings can cure all diseases in a morning, and the practitioner can eliminate death. They should enjoy happiness and eternal life without sickness. Based on the desire for needs that medicine cannot provide, when some cult organizations can cure all the disasters, it just meets needs of these people, so those cult organizations are accepted.

(4) A deep analysis on strong fear in the practitioners who get physical benefits. Those believers who are obsessed with the low-level needs that cults can provide have a strong fear to death. Originally people as a kind of creatures have an instinct to save life, which means that people are afraid of death. A German philosopher Feuerbach says: “If people are alive forever and the world has no the thing of death, then, there will be no religion” [4]. An atheist Xiong Bolong in Qing Dynasty in Hubei China also has a similar statement, he said: “The reason why people are afraid of god is that people are afraid of death ... The fear to death is stronger than the fear to gods” [5]. But cult believers are more afraid than the common people, but this fear to death often existed in their subconscious mind, and sometimes they even do not know it. The reflection of this subconscious fear to death in the sense level is that people are afraid of illness, and they are afraid of the pain by the illness. Although they often say that they have been tired of pain and they want to die, they are very afraid of death in their heart. Because of this reason, when their illness cannot be cured for a long time, or they are limited by the economic power, or their diseases cannot be effectively cured, they will be obsessed with

“Falungong” and Li Hongzhi’s boast and promise. The boast and promise in the psychology of practitioners producing “the self-fulfilling prophecy” [3] make them quickly fall into the trap.

(5) The modern medical knowledge is used to expand the cognitive side of the obsessed people. This kind of obsessive persons should be given access to forefront of medical science, such as the progress in the stem cell culture organ and organ transplantation, the genetic disease and the gene therapy and other aspects. Because the obsessive scientific knowledge (including psychological science knowledge) grows one score, their cult beliefs will be reduced by one score.

3. The Theory in Psychology Cognition Is Misinterpreted and Trampled

3.1 Cults Set up a Scam in the Process of Psychology Cognition

The research on the recognizing process of people—feeling, perception, memory, appearance, thinking, including illusion and illusion, has always been one of the important elements in psychology. From Wundt (Wilhelm Wundt 1832-1920), this aspect has made a lot of efforts, but psychology has not become a compulsory curriculum in basic education, and much knowledge in this aspect is not universal, which makes the cult have an opportunity and uses the psychological phenomenon in some fields to set up a scam to provide a service for its leader worship and spiritual control in the purpose of cult, and particularly recognize phenomenon of illusion.

Many cult addicts have all kinds of illusion in a long-term practice, and some of them see the starring Falun, and some people see their leader sitting on a lotus, and others see heaven and hell. This kind of effect gives the leader a good opportunity to prove the evil practice, and he said, people are reaching at the level “Tian mu”, and it is result of practicing “Falungong” with listen to the teacher’s word, which is a high-level expression.

Case 1: Mr. Yang, male, 30 years old. He is graduated from a computer department in a university, and he is working in a branch company in China Telecom. Mr. Yang is a relatively simple and honest man and has a tame character. He said he opened his own “Tianmu”, and he saw heaven and hell for several times to see hell, and he can vividly describe the phenomenon he saw in earth, and he said his grandfather becoming a pig was taken away in hell. Mr. Yang believes that the reason why he believes in cults is in “Kaitianmu”, but people who help others give a scientific explanation for several times in “Kaitianmu”. They prove that it is an illusion and they clarify the causes of hallucinations, but Mr. Yang still does not believe it. Psychology only can give a reasonable explanation to the reason of the illusion from the closed environment, interdicted information, tired situation, hints accepting, drug effects, emotional tension and other aspects until now. The certain illusion cannot be shown to Mr. Yang by using experimental means, including how the illusion of heaven and hell is formed, and he cannot has a illusion to hell directly. Mr. Yang saw that his grandfather becoming a pig was taken away in the illusion, which makes him not realize the scam in cults, thus being far away from cults ultimately.

3.2 Understanding of Psychology to “Illusion”

Illusion is a perceptual obstacle that is one of the common psychotic symptoms and it is caused by the nervous system in sensory organs or functional lesions, and it can also be caused by intense emotions, hints and sensory deprivation. Excluding hallucinations caused by mental illness, people having illusion mainly are affected by two factors. Firstly, it is related with the blocked and closed information. Studies have shown that when sensory channels connecting with world in five people are blocked, so that they cannot exchange information with the world, and the reported has a rational disorder phenomenon. They showing severe repression and fear have changing moods, and

at least 80% of them have illusions. When subjects even have not blocked the information, they still have a variety of psychological disorders in a certain time [6]. Secondly, it is related with the individual's emotional and subjective wishes. A large number of psychological experiments have also confirmed that human awareness activities do not reflect the objective world as a mirror, but it is a dynamic process that has not only selective feature in the reflection. "One person can only see what he wants to see, and can only hear what he is willing to hear" [7]. It also is influenced by the individual subjective desires and behavioral motives, and people have a strong desire to see the person who is just gone and the person who comes home can produce a phantom and auditory hallucinations that can see his family and hear his words. A patient who thinks that the surgeon's surgical device or gauze is forgotten in his body will produce a tingling illusion with a knife, scissors, or gauze in the body. The cultists realized that two aspects of the psychological regulation in the illusion will be used to create illusions in believers, and "Falungong" cult will be a part of believers' illusion called "Tianmu", and people who have "Tianmu" can see "Falun" that is awaited in a long time, struggled by him; people can see the gloomy hell, the magnificent "Falun world" and everything that they want to see.

For the illusion shackles and cult practitioners who cannot be waken, you can take the following three methods to help him.

(1) You should repeatedly tell him the psychological illusion principles, and you can debate with him that he considers illusion as a real and wrong phenomenon and amend his misunderstanding.

(2) You should make him look at the illusion of the patient's video about the psychiatric symptom, and know what are the definition, species and manifestations of hallucinations.

(3) In the case of their agreement, the drug-induced or deprived of deprivation experiment can be carried out, and let him experience what is the illusion and

how to produce it.

4. The Phenomenon of Psychological Frustration Has Become the Spreading Soil

4.1 Cults Use "Frustration" to Quickly Develop Organizations of Psychological Responses

The fast developing cult in the country is a shock, and just in several years, there are millions of believers. There is a huge network of cults in the country just like a lightning, and from the perspective of psychology to analyze it, the secret is that it masters people's unique psychological reaction regulations after setbacks, and it is used rightly.

Psychology argues that in the life road, there are inevitably insurmountable obstacles and setbacks, which means that "life has 9th ten adversities". After being frustrated, some people will have attacking behaviors; others also will appear "degradation" behavior. "Degeneration" is a retrogressive and regressive behavior that makes the frustrated person show a childish behavior that is not commensurate with his knowledge level, age and identity, which makes him easy to accept hints, and diminishes independence, and declines autonomy and sensitivity. He cannot distinguish reasonable and unreasonable demands, and dependency will be enhanced. He will blindly believe others and perform a person's instruction, and he will be blindly faithful to an individual or an organization. Especially in their country, although cult leaders do not have a high literacy level, they verse the role and value of psychological regulations in expanding and enlarging cult organizations, and this role and value in developing cult organizations should be played vividly. He is keenly aware of that in the current period of social transformation, many enterprises are in the restructuring and the downsizing efficient innovation, many people including some original leaders and managing staffs will be laid off, and they will lose their original unit or department. Social security system of the unemployed people is not perfect, and

the medical expenses are high, and social medical security is still difficult to benefit the masses in the community. It is aware of that when the society transforms to the competitive and widening gap one from a poor one that everyone is fair and the society is stable, many people will suffer setbacks, then the “attack” and “degradation” and other psychological reactions, which make those frustrated people seek for protection, comfort, security and spiritual touch, and at the same time, it is a good time to capture believers and develop cults. It can be said that in 1990s and 1980s there are psychological frustration occurring in the rapid transformation of Chinese society, the psychological frustration in the rapid transformation and the psychological needs after setbacks open a door for developing the cult organization. The cult puts forward its theory in a proper place, a suitable time and for some suitable people, so it can gather thousands of believers into the cult fast.

Case 2: Ms. Zheng, female, 52 years old, she was a government cadre, and then she has a certain effect in the sea business. In 2002, her younger brother who was running a business outside, because he would get some goods which have great profits and he lacked funds, he asked her to help to loan money and promised to give her 30 percent profits after the successful business. In this way, she used her own shop as the security condition for her brother to guarantee the huge loans more than RMB 100,000. Unexpectedly, serious loss in business occurred, and a large number of goods were almost gone, so his brother was far away from home and she also served a sentence for three years. This setback gave a shock to her and fundamentally changed her view to life. She thought of a suicide for several times, and later she contacted with a cult in the sadness and pessimism. She immediately found there is another way to go and there no longer has fraud and trouble in cult. So she had a new pursuit and desire.

4.2 The Psychological Assistance for Cult Addicts

with Psychological Frustration

The psychological assistance can be implemented from the following aspects of “psychological frustration” to addicts.

(1) The subconscious helplessness. Cult believers who embark on the frustration road in life are obsessed with cults after they have setbacks, and they do not know the real reason why they are obsessed with cults. People who help them to carry out a deep analysis make him understand two points: firstly, they choosing to convert to the cult are out of helplessness and they make an unconscious choice in the past regretting, guilty, lonely and “helpless” circumstances without a bright future. We can make the reasoning according to it that if a love-loser who will be converted to “Falungong” is told that one person who he is very interested to is willing to be his wife in all his life; a person who is willing to be in “Falungong” with economic interest loss is noticed that his loss will be repaid in a double times, and they may abandon the conversion to the cult. Secondly, the reason why they are obsessed with the cult is that the cult is using with opportunity to pull people into the water. Or the reason is that they suffering huge setbacks are vulnerable to be hinted by others, and their ability to determine the autonomy of judgment is declining, and they will blindly believe others. At this moment, they should calm down, and rethink it and they should make a decision again.

(2) Do not admit that you are a loser. Through the “semantic analysis” [8], these addicts should know that he may be defeated in several things, and only one thing is unsuccessful, and it does not mean that you are a loser. You should never admit that you are a loser.

(3) There is no “terrible” thing in the world. From the point of view of psychological cognitive therapy, many things that are frustrated from the perspective of those frustrated people are so frustrated, because everything is developing and changing.

5. The Cult Leader Is a Master of Psychological Regulations of “Group Dynamics”

5.1 *Cults Use Psychological Regulations of “Group Dynamics” to Control and Control Believers*

Psychological dynamics of group theory is a valuable theory exposing regulations of group psychology activities, which is put forward by a German psychologist Levin (K. Lewis 1890-1947) [9] in the United States in the last century. The theory thinks that once an individual enters into his group he is belonging to, his personal thoughts and behaviors will be affected by the group, and there will be many changes. An individual who is exposed to the group are no longer is an isolated person, and he will form a certain group of norms, group pressure, group cohesion, group opinion, and so on under the action of imitation, hints, empathy, infection and other psychological activities to influence the individual's thoughts and behaviors, so that individuals produce groups of sexual behaviors and psychological phenomena such as obedience, herd, obedience, competition, cooperation, responsibility dispersion, adventure transfer, sense of belonging, collective sense of honor and so on.

Now, the regulations of group dynamics have become a powerful tool for cult organizations to capture believers, and enhance their internal cohesion, and oppose the government and organize various cult activities. Some people who believe in cults are seriously ill in their body, but they feel good about themselves, and the reason is that after he enters into the cult organization, he sees people deal with the illness successfully, and a strong herd mentality makes his illness feel eliminating from his psychology; the reason why some people who believe in cults are moving on the instructions of leaders and they do not listen to the government banning and they go to Beijing to bring trouble to them is that they in the cult in their subconscious mind want to compete with each other to see that who understands the leader's meaning

better and who has a smart head, and who reaches to a more higher intrinsic impulse and drive. Foreign people's temple in which there are many believers, in the commander of Jones, committed suicide once more than 900 people. Subsequent investigations show that the majority of them are killed by themselves, except for that a few people are killed with other's help, many of whom are old people and children. These people “consider death as a final result”, and the group norms [10], group infections and personalization removing [11] play an important role in group psychological motivation. All cult organizations are very concerned about the formation of cult groups, they are focusing on collective practice, and collective learning, and its purpose is to use the group power to gather believers, and to their will unite their determinations, so that they are more obsessed with the cults and they comply with cults under the function of group dynamics. They can do some things that others cannot finish and they can experience some psychological phenomenon in an individual state, including they can see gods appearing in front of them and “Falungong” and they can hear the nature sounds and so on. It is clear that the group's psychological power has been used by cults as a powerful tool for developing cult believers and it is used to control believers' spirit, so that believers staying in cults are powerful tools.

5.2 *Rescuing the Accused Believers with “Informal Groups” [12]*

The famous “Hawthorne test” [13] in psychology found that there are “informal groups” in crowds. Because informal group members have similar social backgrounds, personal experiences and mutual needs and emotional ties, informal group members have strong cohesion. There are “leaders” in informal groups, and they are not appointed or elected, but they are naturally formed by their own attraction and the support from group members. Therefore, they have more authority and influence than formal group

leaders. Many views, opinions and actions in members are influenced by them, and their words are intended to have more functions than formal leaders. The existence of informal groups is mainly maintained by mutual needs and emotions, and obvious emotional colors make its internal information exchange having a smooth channel and delivering fast. Therefore, you can choose several original cult believers who have transformed and have more profound understandings as a helper in cults, and you can help the practitioners who are resistant to education helps be the informal group, and you can assist the helpers with one kind of the most profound practices in cults improving their authority and influence gradually to make them in the leader position in the informal group, and then you can help cult practitioners who are resistant to education helps to be far away from cults by the influence of him and the whole informal group.

References

- [1] Chen, G. H. 2006. *Organizational Behavior*. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 119.
- [2] Kong, X. Y. 2001. *The Management of Psychology*. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 136.
- [3] Myers, D. 2006. *Social Psychology*. People's Posts and Telecommunications Press, 199.
- [4] Feuerbach, L. 1984. *Feuerbach Philosophy Works Anthology*. Next volume, Commercial Press, 534.
- [5] Xiong, B. L. 1979. *No Collection*. Zhonghua Book Company, 139.
- [6] Lu, J. M. 1998. *Psychology*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing Press, 48.
- [7] Gris, R., and Zimbardo, P. 2003. *Psychology and Life*. People's Posts and Telecommunications Press, 488.
- [8] Guo, Y. F., and Yu, J. S. 2005. *Psychological Counselor*. National Press, 89.
- [9] Yang, X. H. 2000. *General History of Psychology*. Vol. 5. Shandong Education Press, 73.
- [10] Hong, B. 1999. *Management Psychology*. Hubei People's Publishing House, 145.
- [11] Shi, R. H. 1998. *Social Psychology*. Zhejiang Education Publishing, 515.
- [12] Rusens, F. 2003. *Organizational Behavior*. People's Posts and Telecommunications Press, 335.
- [13] Robbins, S. P. 2008 *Organizational Behavior*. Renmin University of China Press, 260.