

Title: A Façade of Promise: Cults

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Cults are a universal phenomenon that have influenced civilizations for centuries. They appear to be comforting communities that offer support that the real world never provided for their followers. In times of distress, cults seem to always have the answers. Jim Jones and Shoko Asahara are some of the 20th Century's most infamous cult leaders. Although they did preach that their philosophies led to salvation, their ritualistic practices resulted in the death of many. With simple yet detailed psychological tactics, both leaders were able to persuade masses into following unorthodox, rigid practices. Cult leaders wanted to learn every detail when it came to their followers: what irritated them, what made them happy, and what they valued most. By learning about these topics, cult leaders were able to hurt their followers emotionally and psychologically in ways that most other people couldn't. Ironically, targets were diverse individuals that sought out community, security, and peace. Through Jones and Asahara's conscious-deteriorating practices and tyrannical leadership, individuals were convinced into doing whatever their culprit asked of them. Not only did cult followers commit mass suicides, but they killed many outside individuals as well. Currently, cults have taken on a new identity in internet chat rooms. Because there is a strong absence of social interaction within today's generation, the levels of anxiety and loneliness have increased rapidly. It is important to inform our society about how easy it is and the potential dangers of joining a cult in a high-angst society.

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