SATANIC, OCCULT, RITUALISTIC CRIME: A LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSPECTIVE

NOTE: This article was completed after the killings in Matamoros, Mexico, became know in April, 1989. There is nothing known to the author about this case which changes the opinions and recommendations set forth in this article.

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Introduction

The belief that there is a connection between satanism and crime is certainly not new. In fact, one of the oldest theories of crime causation is demonology. Heightened concern about satanic or occult activity has appeared periodically throughout history. Concern in the late 1970s focused primarily on "unexplained" deaths and mutilations of animals, and in recent years has focused on child sexual abuse and the human sacrifice of missing children. In 1999 it will probably focus on the impending "end of the world."

Today, satanism and a wide variety of other terms are used interchangeably in reference to certain crimes. This discussion

will analyze the nature of "satanic, occult, ritualistic" crime and focus on appropriate LAW ENFORCEMENT responses to it.

Recently a flood of law enforcement seminars and conferences have dealt with the occult. These training conferences have various titles, such as "Occult in Crime," "Satanic Cults," "Ritualistic Crime Seminar," "Satanic Influences in Homicide," "Occult Crimes, Satanism and Teen Suicide," and "Ritualistic Abuse of Children."

The typical conference runs from one to three days and often includes many of the same presenters and instructors. A wide variety of topics are usually discussed during this training either as individual presentations by different instructors or grouped together by one or more instructors. Typical topics covered include the following:

1. Historical overview of satanism, witchcraft, and paganism from ancient to modern times.
2. Nature and influence of fantasy role-playing games, such as Dungeons and Dragons.
3. Lyrics, symbolism, and influence of rock and roll, Heavy Metal, and Black Metal music.
4. Teenage "stoner" gangs, their symbols, and their vandalism.
5. Teenage suicide by adolescents dabbling in the occult.
6. Crimes committed by self-styled satanic practitioners to include grave and church desecrations and robberies, animal mutilations, and even murders.
7. Ritualistic abuse of children as part of bizarre ceremonies and human sacrifices.

8. Organized, Traditional, or Multigenerational satanic groups involved in organized conspiracies, such as taking over day care centers, infiltrating police departments, and trafficking in human sacrifice victims.
9. The "Big Conspiracy" theory, which implies that satanists are responsible for such things as Adolph Hitler, World War II, abortion, pornography, Watergate, Irangate, and infiltration of the Department of Justice, the Pentagon and the White House.

During the conference, these nine areas are linked together through the liberal use of the word "satanism" and some common symbolism (pentagrams, 666, demons, etc.). The implication often is that all are part of one continuum of behavior, one big problem or some common conspiracy. The information presented is a mixture of fact, theory, opinion, fantasy, and paranoia, and because some of it can be proven or corroborated (desecration of cemeteries, vandalism, etc.), the implication is that it is all true and documented. The distinctions between the different areas are blurred even if occasionally a presenter tries to make them. This is complicated by the fact that almost any discussion of satanism and witchcraft plugs into the religious belief systems of those in the audience. Faith, not logic and reason, controls the religious beliefs of most people. As a result, some normally skeptical law enforcement officers accept the information disseminated at these conferences without critically evaluating it or questioning the sources. Little said at such conferences will change the religious beliefs of the attendees. Such conferences illustrate the ambiguity and wide variety of terms

involved in this issue.

Definitions

The words satanic, occult, and ritualistic are often used interchangeably. It is difficult to precisely define Satanism (with a capital S), and no attempt will be made to do so here. However, it is important to realize how the word satanism (with a small s) is used by many people. Simply put, for some people, satanism is any religious belief system other than their own. The Ayatolla Khomeini referred to the United States as the "Great Satan." In the British Parliament, a Protestant leader called the Pope the anti-Christ. In a book titled prepare For War, the author, Rebecca Brown, M.D., has a chapter entitled "Is Roman Catholicism Witchcraft?" Dr. Brown also lists among the "doorways" to satanic power and/or demon infestation the following: fortune tellers, horoscopes, fraternity oaths, vegetarianism, yoga, self-hypnosis, relaxation tapes, acupuncture, biofeedback, fantasy role-playing games, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, judo, karate, and rock music. Dr. Brown states that the rock music "was a carefully masterminded plan by none other than Satan himself." The ideas expressed in this book may seem extreme and even humorous. This book, however, has been listed as serious recommended reading in law enforcement training material on this topic.

In books, lectures, handout material, and conversations, the author has heard all of the following referred to as satanism:

Church of Satan Stoner Gangs New Age
Ordo Templi Orientis Heavy Metal Music Astrology
Temple of Set Rock Music Channeling
Demonology KKK Transcendental Meditation
Witchcraft Nazis Holistic Medicine
Paganism Scientology Buddhism
Santeria Unification Church Hinduism
Voodoo The Way Mormonism
Rosicrucians Hare Krishna Islam
Freemasonry Rajneesh Orthodox Church
Knights Templar Religious Cults Roman Catholicism

At law enforcement training conferences, witchcraft, santeria, and paganism are frequently referred to as forms of satanism. It may be a matter of definition, but these three things are *not* forms of traditional Satanism. The worship of lunar goddesses and nature and the practice of fertility rituals is not satanism. Santeria is a combination of 17th century Roman Catholicism and African paganism. The occult simply refers to the action or influence of supernatural powers or some secret knowledge of them, and it is not the same as Satanism nor is it necessarily evil.

Many individuals define satanism from a totally Christian perspective, using this word to describe the power of evil in the world. With this definition, any crimes, especially those which are particularly bizarre, repulsive, or cruel, can be viewed as satanic in nature. Yet, it is just as difficult to precisely define satanism as it is to precisely define Christianity or any

complex spiritual belief system.

What is Ritualistic Crime?

The biggest confusion, however, is over the word ritualistic. During law enforcement training conferences on this topic, ritualistic almost always comes to mean satanic or at least spiritual. Ritual can refer to a prescribed religious ceremony, but in its broader meaning refers to any customarily repeated act or series of acts. The need to repeat these acts can be cultural, sexual, or psychological as well as spiritual.

Cultural rituals could include such things as what a family eats on Thanksgiving Day or when and how presents are opened at Christmas. The initiation ceremonies of fraternities, sororities, gangs, and other social clubs are other examples of cultural rituals.

Since 1972, the author has lectured about sexual ritualism, which is nothing more than repeatedly engaging in an act or series of acts in a certain manner because of *sexual* need. In order to become aroused and/or gratified, a person must engage in the act in a certain way. This sexual ritualism can include such things as the physical characteristics, age, or gender of the victim, the sequence of acts, the bringing or taking of specific objects, and the use of certain words or phrases. This is more than the concept of M.O. (Method of Operation) known to most police officers. M.O. is something done by an offender because of a need.Deviant acts, such as urinating on, defecating on, or even eviscerating a victim, are far more likely to be the result of

sexual ritualism than religious or "satanic" ritualism.

From a criminal investigative perspective, two other forms of ritualism must be recognized. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R) defines Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) as "repetitive, purposeful, and intentional behaviors that are performed in response to an obsession, or according to certain rules or in a stereotyped fashion." Such compulsive behavior frequently involves rituals. Although such behavior usually involves noncriminal activity such as excessive hand washing or checking that doors are locked, in some cases this compulsive ritualism can be part of criminal activity. Ritual can also stem from psychotic hallucinations and delusions. A crime can be committed in a precise manner because a voice told the offender to do it that way or because a divine mission required it.

To make this more confusing, cultural, religious, sexual, and psychological ritualism can overlap. Some psychotic people engage in excessive religiosity and hear the voice of God or Satan telling them to do things of a religious nature. Psychopathic offenders who feel little, if any, guilt over their crimes may need little justification for their antisocial behavior. As human beings, however, they may have fears, concerns and anxiety over getting away with their criminal acts. It is difficult to pray to God for success in doing things that are against His Commandments. A negative spiritual belief system may fulfill their human need for assistance from and belief in a greater power. Compulsive ritualism (e.g. excessive cleanliness or fear of disease) can be introduced into sexual behavior. Even many "normal" people have a need for order and predictability and therefore may engage in

family or work rituals. Under stress or in times of change, this need for order and ritual may increase.

Ritualistic crime may fulfill the cultural, spiritual, sexual and psychological needs of an offender. The ritual behavior may also fulfill basic criminal needs to manipulate victims, get rid of rivals, send a message to enemies, and intimidate co-conspirators.

The important point for the criminal investigator is to realize that most criminal ritualistic behavior is not motivated simply by satanic or religious ceremonies. At some conferences, presenters have attempted to make a big issue of distinguishing between "ritual," "ritualized," and "ritualistic" abuse of children. These subtle distinctions, however, seem to be of no significant value to the criminal investigator.

What is Ritualistic Abuse of Children?

It is not an easy question to answer. Most people today use the term to refer to abuse of children that is part of some evil spiritual belief system, which almost by definition must be satanic.

Dr. Lawrence Pazder, author of 'Michelle Remembers, defines ritualized abuse of children as "repeated physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual assaults combined with a systematic use of symbols and secret ceremonies designed to turn a child against itself, family, society, and God." He also states that "the sexual assault has ritualistic meaning and is not for sexual gratification."

This definition may have value for academics, sociologists, and therapists, but it creates potential problems for law enforcement. Certain acts engaged in with children (kissing, touching, appearing naked, etc.) may be criminal if performed for sexual gratification. If the ritualistic acts were in fact performed for spiritual indoctrination, potential prosecution can be jeopardized. The mutilation of a baby's genitals for sadistic sexual pleasure is a crime. The circumcision of a baby's genitals for religious reasons is most likely NOT a crime. The intent of the acts is important for criminal prosecution.

The author has been unable to precisely define ritualistic abuse and prefers not to use the term. It is confusing, misleading, and counterproductive. Certain observations, however, are important for investigative understanding.

Not all spiritually motivated ritualistic activity is satanic. Santeria, witchcraft, voodoo, and most religious cults are not satanism. In fact, most spiritually or religiously-based abuse of children has nothing to do with satanism. Most child abuse that could be termed ritualistic by various definitions is probably physical and psychological rather than sexual in nature.

Not all such ritualistic activity with a child is a crime. Almost all parents with religious beliefs indoctrinate their children into that belief system. Is circumcision for religious reasons child abuse? Does having a child kneel on a hard floor reciting the rosary constitute child abuse? Does having a child chant a satanic prayer or attend a black mass constitute child abuse? Does a religious belief in corporal punishment constitute child abuse? Does group care of children in a commune or cult constitute child abuse? Does the fact that any acts in question

were performed with parental permission affect the nature of the crime? Many ritualistic acts, whether satanic or not, are simply not crimes.

When a victim describes and investigation corroborates what sounds like ritualistic activity, several possibilities must be considered. The ritualistic activity may be part of the excessive religiosity of a mentally ill, psychotic offender. It may be a misunderstood part of sexual ritualism. The ritualistic activity may be incidental to any real abuse. The offender may be involved in ritualistic activity with a child and also may be abusing a child, but one may have little or nothing to do with the other.

The offender may be deliberately engaging in ritualistic activity with a child as part of child abuse. The motivation, however, may be not to indoctrinate the child into a belief system, but to lower the inhibitions of, to control and manipulate, and/or to confuse the child. In all the turmoil over this issue, it would be a very effective strategy for any child molester to deliberately introduce ritualistic elements into his crime to confuse the child and therefore the criminal justice system.

The ritualistic activity and the child abuse may be integral parts of some spiritual belief system. In that case, the greatest risk is to the children of the practitioners. But this is true of all cults, not just satanic cults. A high potential of abuse exists for any children raised in a group isolated from the mainstream of society, especially if the group has a charismatic leader whose orders are unquestioned and blindly obeyed by the members. Sex, money, and power are most often the main motivations of the leaders of such cults.

What Makes a Crime Satanic, Occult, or Ritualistic?

Some would answer that it is the spiritual beliefs of, or the membership in, a cult or "church" by the perpetrator. If that is the criteria, why not label the crimes committed by Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in the same way? Are the atrocities of Jim Jones, in Guyana, Christian crimes?

Some would answer that it is the presence of certain symbols in the possession or home of the perpetrator. What does it mean then to find a crucifix, Bible, rosary, etc., in the home or possession of a bank robber, embezzler, child molester, or murderer? If different criminals possess the same symbols, are they necessarily part of one big conspiracy?

Others would answer that it is the presence of certain symbols such as pentagrams, inverted crosses, and 666 at the crime scene. What does it mean then to find a cross spray painted on a wall or carved into the body of a victim? What does it mean for a perpetrator to leave a Bible tied to his murder victim? What about the possibility that an offender deliberately left such symbols to make it look like a "satanic" crime?

Some would argue that it is the bizarreness or cruelness of the crime: body mutilation, amputation, drinking of blood, eating of flesh, use of urine or feces. Does this mean that all individuals involved in lust murder, sadism, anthropophagy, urophilia, and coprophilia are satanists or occult practitioners? What does this say about the bizarre crimes of psychotic killers such as Ed Gein or Richard Trenton Case, both of whom mutilated

their victims as part of their psychotic delusions?

A few might even answer that it is the fact that the crime was committed on a date with satanic or occult significance (Halloween, May Eve, etc.) or the fact that the perpetrator claims that Satan told him to commit the crime. What does this mean for crimes committed on Thanksgiving or Christmas? What does this say about crimes committed by perpetrators who claim that God or Jesus told them to do it? One note of interest is the fact that in handout and reference material collected by the author, the number of dates with satanic or occult significance ranges from 8 to 110. This is compounded by the fact that it is sometimes stated that satanists can celebrate these holidays on several days on either side of the official date or that the birthday of a practitioner can be a holiday. The exact names and exact dates of the holidays and the meaning of symbols listed may also vary depending on who prepared the material. The handout material is often distributed without identifying the author or documenting the original source of the information. It is then frequently photocopied by attendees and passed on to other police officers with no one really knowing who says it is valid or from where it came.

Most, however, would probably answer that what makes a crime satanic, occult, or ritualistic is the motivation for the crime. It is a crime that is spiritually motivated by a religious belief system. How then do we label the following true crimes?

a. Parents defy a court order and send their children to an unlicensed Christian school.
b. Parents refuse to send their children to any school

because they are waiting for the second coming of Christ.

c. Parents beat their child to death because he or she won't follow their Christian beliefs.

d. Parents violate child labor laws because they believe the Bible requires such work.

e. Individuals bomb an abortion clinic or kidnap the doctor because their religious belief system says abortion is murder.

f. A child molester reads the Bible to his victims in order to justify his sex acts with them.

g. Parents refuse life-saving medical treatment for a child because of their religious beliefs.

h. Parents starve and beat their child to death because their minister said the child was possessed by demonic spirits.

Some people would argue that the Christians who committed the above crimes misunderstood and distorted their religion while satanists who commit crimes are following theirs. But who decides who is misinterpreting a religious belief system? The individuals who committed the above-described crimes believed that they were following their religion as they understood it. Religion was and is used to justify such things as the Crusades, the Inquisition, Apartheid, segregation, violence in Northern Ireland, India, and Lebanon.

Who decides exactly what "satanists" believe? In this country, we can't agree on what Christians believe. At many law enforcement conferences 'The Satanic Bible' is used for this, and

it is often contrasted or compared with the Christian Bible. 'The Satanic Bible' is, in essence, a 150-page paperback book written by one man in 1969. To compare it to a book written by over 30 authors over a period of thousands of years is ridiculous, even ignoring the possibility of Divine revelation in the Christian Bible. What satanists believe certainly isn't limited to other peoples' interpretation of a few books. More importantly, it is subject to some degree of interpretation by individual believers just as Christianity is.

The fact is that far more crime and child abuse has been committed in the name of God, Jesus, and Mohammed than has ever been committed in the name of Satan. Most people don't like that statement, but few can argue with it.

Although defining a crime as satanic, occult, or ritualistic would probably involve a combination of the criteria set forth above, the author has been unable to clearly define such a crime. Each potential definition presents a different set of problems when measured against an objective, rational, and constitutional perspective. Each offender in a group may have a different motivation for the crime. The author has discovered that the *facts* of so called "satanic crimes" are often significantly different from what is described at law enforcement training conferences or in the media. The actual involvement of satanism or the occult in these cases usually turns out to be secondary, insignificant, or nonexistent.

The Law Enforcement Perspective

The perspective with which one looks at satanic, occult, or ritualistic crime is extremely important. Sociologists, therapists, religious leaders, parents, and just plain citizens each have their own valid concerns and views about this issue. This discussion, however, will deal ONLY with the law enforcement perspective.

The law enforcement perspective must focus on crime and clearly recognize that just because an activity is "satanic" does not necessarily mean it is a crime or that it is not a legitimate religious practice protected by the First Amendment. Within the personal religious belief system of a law enforcement officer, Christianity may be good and satanism evil. Under the Constitution, however, both are neutral.

This is an important, but difficult, concept for many law enforcement officers to accept. They are paid to uphold the Constitution and enforce the penal code, not the Ten Commandments. The apparent increasing numbers of teenagers and some adults dabbling in satanism and the occult may be cause for concern for parents, school officials, and society. What, however, law enforcement can or should do about it is another matter. Police interference with free exercise of constitutional rights potentially creates major problems and conflicts.

What is the justification for law enforcement officers giving presentations on satanism and the occult to citizen groups, PTA's or school assemblies? Is it public relations, a safety program, crime prevention? If it is crime prevention, how much crime can be linked to satanic or occult activity? The author is not suggesting that such presentations should never be done but only that law enforcement agencies should carefully consider the legal

implications and the justification. Is the fact that satanism or the occult is or can be a negative influence on some people enough justification for such law enforcement intervention?

When you combine an emotional issue such as the sexual abuse of children with an even more emotional issue such as people's religious beliefs, it is difficult to maintain objectivity and remember the law enforcement perspective. Some police officers may even feel that all crime is caused by evil, all evil is caused by Satan, and therefore, all crime is satanic crime. This may be a valid religious perspective, but it is of no value in the investigation of crime.

Many of the police officers who lecture on satanic or occult crime do not even investigate such cases. Their presentations are more a reflection of their personal religious beliefs than documented investigative information. In the United States, they are entitled to this personal perspective, but introducing themselves as police officers and then speaking as religious advocates causes confusion. As difficult as it might be, police officers must separate the religious and law enforcement perspectives when they are lecturing or investigating in their official capacities as law enforcement officers. Many law enforcement officers begin their presentations by stating that they are not addressing or judging anyone's religious beliefs, and then proceed to do exactly that.

Some police officers have resigned rather than curtail or limit their involvement in this issue as ordered by their departments. Maybe such officers deserve credit for recognizing that they could no longer keep the perspectives separate.

Law enforcement officers who believe that the investigation

of satanic/occult crime puts them in conflict with supernatural forces of evil should probably not be assigned to these cases. If, however, such officers must be or are assigned, they will need the power of their own spiritual belief system in order to deal with the superstition and religious implications of these cases. The religious beliefs of officers should provide spiritual strength and support for them, but not affect the objectivity and professionalism of the investigation.

The law enforcement perspective requires avoiding the paranoia that has crept into this issue and into some of the law enforcement training conferences. Paranoia is characterized by the gradual development of an intricate, complex, and elaborate system of thinking based on and often proceeding logically from misinterpretation of an actual event. It typically involves hypervigilance over the perceived threat, the belief that danger is around every corner, and the willingness to take up the challenge and do something about it. Another very important aspect of this paranoia is the belief that those who do not recognize the threat are evil and corrupt. In this extreme view, you are either with them or against them. You are either part of the solution or part of the problem.

Concern over satanic crime and ritualistic abuse of children is a very polarizing issue. After one presentation on this topic, a student wrote in a critique that the author was obviously an "agnostic cultist." The term "clean" is sometimes used to refer to law enforcement officers who have not been infiltrated by the satanists. Does the fact that some police officers or military personnel practice satanism or paganism mean that law enforcement and the military have been infiltrated? The word "infiltrated"

is only used when talking about an unpopular spiritual belief system. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews don't "infiltrate" the police and military.

Overzealousness and exaggeration motivated by the religious fervor of those involved in law enforcement training is more acceptable than that motivated by ego and profit. Some people are deliberately distorting and hyping this issue for personal notoriety and profit. Satanic and occult crime has become a growth industry. Speaking fees, books, video and audio tapes, prevention material, television and radio appearances all bring ego and financial rewards.

Law enforcement officers must be objective fact finders. It is not their job to *believe* the children. It is their job to *listen* to the children. THe law enforcement perspective can't ignore the lack of physical evidence (no bodies or even hairs, fibers, or fluids left by violent murders); the difficulty in successfully committing a large-scale conspiracy crime (the more people involved in any crime conspiracy, the harder it is to get away with it); and human nature (intragroup conflicts resulting in individual self-serving disclosures are bound to occur in any group involved in organized kidnapping, baby breeding and human sacrifice). When and if members of a destructive cult commit murders, they are bound to make mistakes, leave evidence, and eventually make admissions in order to brag about their crimes or to reduce their legal liability.

Bizarre crime and evil can occur without organized satanic activity. The law enforcement perspective requires that we distinguish between what we know and what we're not sure of.

The facts are:

a. Some individuals believe in and are involved in satanism and the occult.

b. Some of these individuals commit crime.

c. Some groups of individuals share this belief and involvement in satanism and the occult.

d. Some of these groups commit crime together.

- The unanswered questions are:

a. What is the connection between the belief system and the crimes committed?

b. Is there some organized conspiracy of satanic and occult believers responsible for inter-related serious crime (e.g., molestation, murder)?

After all the hype and hysteria is put aside, the realization sets in that most satanic/occult activity involves the commission of NO crimes, and that which does, usually involves the commission of relatively minor crimes such as trespassing, vandalism, cruelty to animals, or petty thievery. The law enforcement problems most often linked to satanic or occult activity are:

1. Vandalism
2. Desecration of churches and cemeteries
3. Thefts from churches and cemeteries
4. Teenage gangs
5. Animal mutilations
6. Teenage suicide
7. Child abuse
8. Kidnapping

9. Murder and human sacrifice

Valid evidence shows some "connection" between satanism and the occult and the first six problems set forth above. The "connection" to the last three problems is far more uncertain.

Even in those areas where there seems to be a "connection," the nature of the connection needs to be explored. The author's experience indicates that involvement in satanism and the occult is a justification for crime, not a motivation for crime. A teenager's excessive involvement in satanism and the occult is usually a symptom of a problem and not the cause of a problem. Blaming satanism for a teenager's vandalism, theft, suicide, or even act of murder is oversimplifying a complex problem.

The law enforcement investigator must objectively evaluate the legal significance of any criminal's spiritual belief system. In most cases, including those involving satanists, it will have little or no legal significance. If a crime is committed as part of a spiritual belief system, it should make no difference which belief system it is. The crime is the same whether a child is abused or murdered as part of a Christian, Hare Krishna, Moslem, or any other belief system. We generally don't label crimes with the name of the perpetrator's religion. Why then are the crimes of child molesters, rapists, sadists, and murderers who happen to be involved in satanism and the occult labeled as satanic or occult crimes? If criminals use a spiritual belief system to rationalize and justify or to facilitate and enhance their criminal activity, should the focus of law enforcement be on the belief system or on the criminal activity?

Several documented murders have been committed by individuals

involved in one way or another in satanism or in the occult. In some of these murders, the perpetrator has even introduced elements of the occult (e.g., satanic symbols at crime scene). Does that automatically make these satanic murders? It is the author's opinion that the answer is no. Ritualistic murders committed by serial killers or sexual sadists are not necessarily satanic or occult murders. Ritualistic murders committed by psychotic killers who hear the voice of satan are no more satanic murders than murders committed by psychotic killers who hear the voice of Jesus are Christian murders.

Rather, a satanic murder can be defined as one committed by two or more individuals who rationally plan the crime and whose PRIMARY motivation is to fulfill a prescribed satanic ritual calling for the murder. By this definition, the author has been unable to identify even one documented satanic murder in the United States. Although such murders may have and can occur, they appear to be few in number. In addition, the commission of such killings would probably be the beginning of the end for such a group. It is highly unlikely that they could continue to kill several people, every year, year after year, and not be discovered.

A brief typology of satanic and occult practitioners is helpful in evaluating criminal activity. The following typology is adapted from the investigative experience of Officer Sandi Gallant of the San Francisco Police Department, who began to study the criminal aspects of occult activity long before it became popular. No typology is perfect, but the author uses this typology because it is simple and offers investigative insights. The typology divides satanic practitioners into three categories. Practitioners in any of these three categories can participate in

satanic/occult activity alone or in groups.

1. Youth Subculture -- Most teenagers involved in fantasy role-playing games, heavy metal music, or satanism and the occult are going through a stage of adolescent development and commit no significant crimes. The teenagers who have more serious problems are usually those from dysfunctional families or those who have poor communication within their families. These troubled teenagers turn to satanism and the occult to overcome a sense of alienation, to obtain power and/or to justify their antisocial behavior. For these teenagers, it is the symbolism, not the spirituality, that is important. It is either the psychopathic or the oddball, loner teenager who is the most likely to get into serious trouble. Extreme involvement in the occult is a symptom of a problem, not the cause. This is not to say, however, that satanism and the occult isn't a strong negative catalyst for a troubled teenager. Probably the worst thing, however, that society could do about this problem is to hysterically warn teenagers to avoid this "mysterious, powerful and dangerous" thing called satanism. This approach will drive many teenagers right to it. Some rebellious teenagers will do whatever will most shock and outrage society in order to flaunt their rejection of society.

2. Dabblers (Self-styled) - For these practitioners,

there is little or no spiritual motivation. They mix satanism, witchcraft and paganism. Symbols mean whatever they want them to mean. Molesters, rapists, drug dealers and murders may dabble in the occult and may commit their crimes in a ceremonial or ritualistic way. This category has the potential to be the most dangerous, and most of the "satanic" killers fall into this category. Again, this extreme involvement in satanism and the occult is a symptom of a problem and a rationalization and justification of antisocial behavior. Satanic/occult practices (as well as those of other spiritual belief systems) can be used as a mechanism to facilitate criminal objectives.

3. Traditional (Orthodox, Multigenerational) - These are the true believers. They are usually very careful of outsiders. Because of constitutional issues, such groups are difficult for law enforcement to penetrate. Although there is much we don't know about these groups, as of now there is little or no hard evidence that they are involved in serious, organized criminal activity. In addition, instead of being self-perpetuating master crime conspirators, true believers probably have a similar problem with their teenagers rebelling against their belief system.

Many police officers ask what to look for during the search of the scene of suspected satanic activity. The answer is simple:

look for evidence of a crime. A pentagram is no more criminally significant than a crucifix unless it corroborates a crime or a criminal conspiracy. If a victim's description of the location or the instruments of the crime includes a pentagram, then the pentagram would be evidence. But the same would be true if the description included a crucifix. In spite of what is sometimes said or suggested at law enforcement training conferences, police have no authority to seize any satanic or occult paraphernalia they might see during a search. A legally valid reason must exist for doing so. It is not the job of law enforcement to prevent satanists from engaging in noncriminal beliefs or rituals.

Conclusions

There must be a middle ground in this issue. Concern about satanic or occult activity should not be a big joke limited to religious fanatics. On the other hand, law enforcement is not now locked in a life-and-death struggle against the supernatural forces of ancient evil. Law enforcement officers need to know something about satanism and the occult in order to properly evaluate their possible connections to the motivations for criminal activity. They must know when and how beliefs, symbols, and paraphernalia can be used to corroborate criminal activity. From a community relations perspective, they must also learn to respect spiritual beliefs that may be different or unpopular but that are not illegal. The focus must be on the objective investigation of violations of criminal statutes.

Until hard evidence is obtained and corroborated, the

American people should not be frightened into believing that babies are being bred and eaten, that 50,000 missing children are being murdered in human sacrifices, or that satanists are taking over America's day care centers. No one can prove with absolute certainty that such activity has NOT occurred. The burden of proof, however, as it would be in a criminal prosecution, is on those who claim that it has occurred. As law enforcement agencies evaluate and decide what they can or should do about satanic and occult activity in their communities, they might want to also consider how to deal with the hype and hysteria of the "anti-satanists." The overreaction to the problem can clearly be worse than the problem.

In general, the law enforcement perspective can best be maintained by investigators repeatedly asking themselves what they would do if the acts in question were part of Protestant, Catholic or Jewish activity. If a law enforcement agency wants to evaluate the group spiritual framework within which a crime is committed, it is more appropriate, accurate, and objective to refer to such crimes as cult crimes rather than as satanic, occult, or ritualistic crimes. The "Sects, Cults and Deviant Movements" seminar put on by The Institute of Police Technology and Management at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, Florida, is a good example of this more objective, broad-based approach. Satanic cults have no more law enforcement significance than many other potentially destructive cults that exist in this country.