

Sonya Jougla

Clinical Psychologist

Specialist in Cultic Influence

Specialist in Victimology

Co-founder of the University Diploma "Cultic Influence and Processes of Vulnerability" at the Faculty of Medicine, Paris Descartes

Co-president of the professional network DS&L "Cultic Disalienation and Freedom"

The development of my professional experience in the psychological care of victims of cults began a little over 47 years ago, when, as a clinical psychologist, I started receiving former members among my patients.

At that time, no training in this field existed.

As I was seeing more and more former members, and in order to broaden my qualifications as a Clinical Psychologist, I undertook two additional specialisations:

- a Specialisation Diploma in Victimology and Traumatology, in order to study and better understand victims;
- a Specialisation Diploma in Clinical Psycho-criminology, for the study and understanding of offenders.

At the same time, Jean-Pierre Jougla, as a lawyer, was receiving an increasing number of requests for help from former members of cults.

We decided to combine our research.

The complementarity of psychology and law gave us a much more comprehensive view of how to help victims of cults. This was a collaboration that had not yet been attempted at the time.

Our understanding and knowledge of the cultic process were developed thanks to the wealth of insights we were able to gather together over more than 47 years in the field:

1. First, through listening to the testimonies of the many victims we both received in our respective professions, which we could then debrief together.
2. Second, through the development and writing of our research work.
The large number and diversity of victims supported allowed us to identify:
 - the repetitive process of cultic coercive control;
 - to reach a coherent understanding of the cultic process;
 - and to recognise its invariants.
3. Third, through the structuring of our teaching, transmitted in various medical faculties in France and Belgium which invited us to contribute to their curricula.

While continuing to provide care for the victims we received in our two professions, we tried to find the best way to respond to each problem encountered by developing a series of actions.

I have grouped these actions into seven areas:

I. Response to the needs and requests of universities

We provided training days focused on cultic influence and alienation, first in France (Montpellier II, Lyon I Rockefeller, Paris VI Pierre and Marie Curie, Strasbourg, Rennes, Sciences Po Paris, Paris-Diderot/Paris Cité, Paris X Nanterre, EHESP – School of Advanced Studies in Public Health, University of Montpellier Paul Valéry), and later in Belgium and Switzerland.

II. Response to the needs and requests of professionals

We adapted training programmes to each profession:

- Lawyers
- Police investigation services
- National School for the Judiciary (ENM)
- Psychologists through INAVEM (France Victimes)
- Prison staff
- School for Educators in Roubaix
- Youth Judicial Protection services (Roubaix and Lyon)
- Court clerks in Lyon and Montpellier
- Teachers in the national education system
- Psychological emergency response leaders (CUMP)
- Humanitarian associations
- Victim support with the Conference of Bishops
- Journalism schools
- Support for documentary and investigative filmmakers

We also organised:

- Interdisciplinary professional meetings on complementary care for victims of cults
 - Conferences, colloquia, round tables, etc.
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III. Response to the needs and requests of the media

We took part in numerous television programmes, documentaries, interviews, and articles.

The media are an extremely important tool for “reaching” victims of cults.

Reports analysing different groups, and above all the testimonies of former members, often provoke a moment of realisation for victims still under influence, when they recognise similarities with their

own experience. Sometimes such reports can even trigger the first seeds of doubt that help them to leave a group.

IV. Response to the needs and requests of former members

Former members leaving cults face an insoluble first problem: the lack of trained professionals to provide them with care. Too few specialists were available to meet their needs.

We responded to this shortage by creating a University Diploma—a higher education qualification for trained professionals.

The title of the diploma: *“Cultic Influence and Processes of Vulnerability”*.

- In 2009 it was first established at the Faculty of Medicine in Lyon.
- In 2011 we created it at the Faculty of Paris V, Paris Descartes. This University Diploma (DU) was designed for professionals (doctors, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, experts, lawyers, magistrates, police officers, youth protection services, etc.).
- It continues today at the Faculty of Medicine in Montpellier.

It was the first time in France, and in Europe, that such a diploma existed, aimed at professionals concerned with cultic influence.

The objectives of this DU were:

1. To provide in-depth theoretical training on coercive control and cultic processes.
 2. To develop in each professional the ability:
 - to identify victims of cults in their daily practice,
 - to recognise the traumas they have suffered.
 3. To acquire within each professional discipline the specific expertise necessary for the care of these particular victims.
 4. To create a network of professionals trained in the specificity of coercive control.
 5. To create a network of researchers on cultic influence and victim support.
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V. Response to the needs and requests of emergency psychological units (CUMP)

As a member of the CUMP of Hérault since 1999, I witnessed how cults infiltrated disaster sites (e.g. during the floods in Aude), exploiting the distress of victims to recruit members.

At every natural or accidental disaster, several cults intervene massively, systematically, and in an organised way, claiming to provide material help but in fact drawing victims into indoctrination.

Faced with this recurring problem, we raised the alarm with Professor Louis Crocq, a specialist in psychological trauma. Together we put in place:

- information for psychiatrists heading the CUMPs, who received prevention sheets on cults,
- vigilance committees,

- information for prefects,
- media coverage through reports and articles,
- posters in affected municipalities.

So-called “humanitarian cults” act in the same way. Humanitarian work is an excellent tool for recruitment and coercive control. Today, with climate change multiplying floods, earthquakes, and other disasters, cultic movements increasingly exploit such crises to recruit.

VI. Response to the needs and requests of associations in France and Switzerland during collective cultic tragedies

Psychological and legal support for victims of collective cult tragedies had not yet been properly thought through, nor implemented in practice.

In 2002 we created a specialised emergency cell for cult-related disasters, named **CIMES** (*Cellule d'intervention mobile, emprise sectaire* – Mobile Intervention Cell, Cultic Influence).

CIMES intervenes in urgent situations such as:

- collective suicides,
- arrest or death of a guru,
- police raids on cult sites,
- judicial interventions,
- dismantling of a sect.

The aim: to prevent anxious or suicidal outbursts, panic attacks, and to contain post-traumatic stress.

CIMES provides immediate psychological support on site, ensures material assistance through social workers, and later sets up legal aid.

We have intervened at the request of judges, professionals, associations, families, and even terrified parents of members.

VII. Response to the need for a professional network

At the request of our colleagues, we created a professional group named **“Désaliénation sectaire et Liberté” (DS&L – Cultic Disalienation and Freedom)**.

In continuity with the University Diploma created in 2019, DS&L brings together trained professionals capable of identifying victims, recognising trauma, and providing care in their own disciplines.

This group aims to:

1. Study and analyse mechanisms of coercive control as violations of:
 - human rights,
 - human dignity,

- freedom of conscience,
 - free will.
- 2. Propose reflection on preventing the cult phenomenon.
- 3. Publish research findings.
- 4. Organise awareness-raising events.
- 5. Refer victims to specialised lawyers.
- 6. Refer victims to specialised clinical psychologists.