



Jurisprudence Section – 2010

E14 Forensic and Justice Issues in American Polygamous Sects and Rejectionist Groups

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be familiar of a range of mental health and other forensic science issues unique to American polygamous sects and other native groups that disavow jurisdiction of criminal and civil laws.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by discussing the fact that the subcultures and their relationship to the justice system are often well concealed by design, with belief systems and ways of operating that engage numerous criminal and civil issues, touching on child, domestic, financial, and even death investigation. Better understanding is needed to properly examine such situations and to recognize wider forensic issues that may be at play.

An estimated 200,000 Americans live in polygamous cults. Those who comprise this population remain elusive in recognition of the illegality of this practice. Groups who reside in cloistered communities with unique laws alien from our own, or who otherwise live beyond detection may orient around religion or rejection of the U.S. Government. Polygamists and rejectionists share a common quality – lifestyles that seriously breach laws of the land and a sense of entitlement to a parallel society.

Numerous forensic issues lend themselves to polygamous sects and rejectionist organizations. Exploitation of members for sexual or financial gain, and competition for power in such fiefdoms, present common challenges. This presentation examines the significance of brainwashing, child exploitation, and domestic violence in the context of forensic investigation and victimology.

Psychopathology and group leaders are also reviewed and the importance of motivation in such groups is reviewed through a range of justice issues. Attendees will gain familiarity with considerations of abuse, questionable death, mind control, and fraud that distinguish themselves in such groups, drawing from real examples that span religions and ideologies. Participants will learn to identify key forensic and justice issues that might otherwise remain unexplored and unresolved, with significant consequences.

Domestic Violence, Brainwashing, Financial Fraud