

a business—all of which stood in stark contrast to the traditional gender roles embraced by the governing religious leaders. The breakdown of the prescribed gender roles in the colonies challenged the church's patriarchal structure, concomitantly threatening the church's societal control. The use of gender-specific fear tactics during the trials lends further credence to this argument. Many historians argue that the witchcraft trials were an exercise in the oppression of women into

traditional gender roles via fear-based social control.

Although many theorists and historians have posited various explanations over the years for the mass hysteria that killed 20 people and harmed hundreds of others in the 1690s, significant questions remain unanswered. Evidence from the trials has been interpreted and reinterpreted dozens of times in the intervening centuries. The witch-hunts in Salem are one of the earliest examples in American history of how mass hysteria and fears of conspiracy can affect a population. Since then the United States has seen numerous other examples of how hysteria can be weaponized—against difference or for social control—as demonstrated, for example, by the Red Scare of the 1950s and the satanic ritual abuse trials of the 1980s.

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See also: Cattle Mutilations; Four Pi Movement; Red Summer and Red Scare; Satanic Cults and the Satanic Panic; Temple of Set; WICCA Letters

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SATANIC CULTS AND THE SATANIC PANIC

The Satanic Panic was a series of stories and rumors involving ritual abuse that quickly circulated through the United States between the early 1980s and early 1990s. The stories told of the existence of a network of satanic covens kidnapping, murdering, sacrificing and torturing infants and young children as part of secret rituals. At its height, the Satanic Panic was often the topic of sensationalistic news

stories, including a segment on *20/20* (1978–) entitled “The Devil Worshipers” (aired May 16, 1985) and, most infamously, a Geraldo Rivera (1943–) special called *Devil Worship: Exposing Satan’s Underground* (October 22, 1988), which received the highest ratings for a network-produced documentary up to that point.

The consequences of the panic were dramatic. More than 100 daycare centers were investigated for suspected ritual abuse, McMartin Preschool in Manhattan Beach, California, being perhaps the most notable. Many communities became involved in lengthy and expensive criminal trials (often the most expensive in a particular community’s history) that strained local budgets. Innocent daycare workers had their lives destroyed through vicious media scrutiny, public shaming, and on occasion, lengthy prison sentences (most of which were quietly overturned within a few years). By the mid-1990s the Satanic Panic had largely subsided. In 1995 Geraldo Rivera, who had aggressively promoted the conspiracy theory, famously recanted and issued a public apology for his role in fomenting the attendant hysteria.

Rivera’s brief apology, however, hardly undid the damage caused by the Satanic Panic. Today the episode is cited as a textbook example of a moral panic; that is, a belief held by many people that an ambiguous evil threatens the fabric of a society. The social phenomenon of moral panic underlies many conspiracy theories and explains, in part, their appeal to a segment of the population.

Many scholars trace the origin of the Satanic Panic to the publication of *Michelle Remembers* in 1980, coauthored by psychiatrist Lawrence Pazder (1936–2004) and his patient Michelle Smith; however, sociologist Jeffrey Victor points out that rumors of satanic ritual abuse have antecedents in ancient legends (Victor 1993). *Michelle Remembers* tells of Smith’s childhood in which she was allegedly involved in satanic ritual abuse at the hands of her alcoholic parents. According to the book, Smith long repressed these memories but eventually was able to remember them while under hypnosis. *Michelle Remembers* became a bestseller and helped to originate and spread the Satanic Panic. However, the seeds for the eventual panic were planted the decade before. During the 1970s, tales of ex-satanists spread through fundamentalist Christian churches. Two significant figures involved in the dissemination of these stories were John Todd (1949–2007) and Mike Warnke (1946–).

Todd and Warnke toured the country, speaking at numerous churches regarding their harrowing experiences as members of satanic cults. Todd made outlandish claims of how satanists and the Illuminati (which were often synonymous in his talks) had infiltrated the entertainment industry. He insisted that demonic spells had been cast within rock-and-roll records, that shows like *Bewitched* (1964–1972) were literally inspired by the devil, and that the government was getting ready to make being a Christian a crime. His talks made preposterous claim after preposterous claim.

Warnke took a different path into the Satanic Panic. He published *The Satan Seller* in 1972, in which he chronicled his sordid childhood and his rise to power in satanic circles where he supposedly cast spells to summon demons, participated in debauched sex orgies, and oversaw ritual sacrifice. Warnke claims to have

found Christ while serving in the Vietnam War (1955–1975). His story was eagerly lapped up by fundamentalist crowds. While his stories were less extreme than Todd's, they were nonetheless fantastical. The testimonies of Todd, Warnke, and other "ex-satanists" were later debunked by *Cornerstone* magazine (1979–2003), a Christian publication that focused on the Christian right. However, ex-satanists in the mold of Todd and Warnke were routinely cited as experts on the matter. It was such tall tales that helped plant the notion of a multigenerational, interconnected, conspiratorial satanic cult in the minds of fundamentalist Christians, although it was only after *Michelle Remembers* that this idea entered the cultural mainstream.

As *Michelle Remembers* and other faux accounts of past satanic abuse gained notoriety, real-life accusations began to be made. The McMartin Preschool investigation and trial was arguably the most prominent. From pretrial proceedings to the prosecutors finally throwing in the towel, the McMartin trial lasted almost six years, from March 22, 1984—when seven individuals associated with McMartin Preschool were charged with 115 accounts of child abuse involving 48 children—to January 18, 1990, when all charges were dropped against Peggy McMartin Buckey (1926–2000) and Raymond Buckey. The McMartin trial was a media sensation in part because it involved wild accusations, such as the raping of children, the mutilation of corpses, the ritual drinking of blood, and the sacrifice of infants. These nightmares were the stuff of dreams for ratings-hungry networks. Many people became convinced of the authenticity of the case with hardly any evidence at all.

Simply put, the investigation was mismanaged from the start and wound up manufacturing the menace it was intended to combat. In August 1983, Judy Johnson filed a police report claiming that her son, a student of the preschool, had been molested by Raymond Buckey. The investigation uncovered no credible evidence for the claim, but Johnson pressed on and wrote a letter to the district attorney. The Manhattan Beach Police Department then sent letters to 200 parents of current or former students of the school. The letters contained alarmist language suggesting that the police strongly suspected Raymond Buckey of sexually molesting children. Parents panicked, and many contacted law enforcement to learn what to do next; at this point, even more mistakes were made.

Initially, the police referred the parents to Kathleen McFarlane (1947–), then the director of the Children's Institute International. It was at this point that the case exploded, as assertions of abuse mounted, garnered through unethical questioning and interviewing techniques directed toward the children. At first, the children under question denied being molested. However, as the investigation pushed on, the children were extensively interviewed, and they were told that their classmates had revealed witnessing or being the subject of abuse. Eventually, as the case progressed, 360 of 400 interviewed children succumbed to the pressure of the questioning techniques and falsely asserted that they had been abused. Many of the children claimed that they had been photographed naked, among various other disturbing accusations. The testimony of 18 children led to the March 22, 1984, indictment Raymond Buckey, Peggy McMartin Buckey, and five others. The case later focused on the charges against Raymond and Peggy.

The nearly six-year trial resulted in no convictions and cost taxpayers \$15 million, making it one of the most expensive and least effective in United States history. The prosecution's case grew increasingly convoluted; Lawrence Pazder was even brought in as an expert witness. The trial and the sensationalism surrounding it have drawn comparisons to the Salem witch trials of 1692 and 1693.

In the midst of the McMartin investigation, various tabloid talk shows and even respectable news programs exploited the scare to bolster their ratings. *20/20* was the first national program out of the gates with its segment "The Devil Worshipers." Hugh Downs provided a dramatic, sensationalist lead-in: "Perverse, hideous acts that defy belief. Suicides, murders, and ritualistic slaughter of children and animals." Significantly, Mike Warnke and Lawrence Pazder appeared on the segment to offer their expert testimony, which the segment's producers and the hosts of the show accepted uncritically. The piece brought in high ratings, ensuring that other television programs would follow suit. In his investigation of the spread of the panic, Jeffrey Victor reports that rumors of satanic cults and abuse spiked shortly after the segment aired (Victor 1993).

Just before Halloween 1988, Geraldo Rivera added more fuel to the fire with an ABC special. During the documentary, Rivera reported as fact many outright exaggerations, including that the United States contained over one million active satanists (estimates place the figure closer to 20,000), many of whom belonged to networks involved in secret rituals. The show trotted out the typical list of charges of satanic activity: the sacrificing of infants, ritual sexual abuse of children, sex orgies, blood drinking, and other debaucheries. Other talk show luminaries such as Oprah Winfrey (1954–), Phil Donahue (1935–), and Sally Jessy Raphael (1935–) produced their own uncritical episodes or segments on the Satanic Panic. The accumulation of such reporting likely helped to instigate additional ritual abuse claims.

The trial of Paul Ingram offers a case in point. In 1988, shortly after Rivera's documentary, Ingram's daughters accused their father of sexual abuse, including an aborted pregnancy. Ingram pleaded guilty despite a lack of evidence and a medical exam indicating that his daughter never had been pregnant. Later, as a maelstrom grew around the Ingram case, pulling many others into it, the prosecution's case faltered as it began to appear that the charges were unfounded and that Ingram himself was highly susceptible to the satanic hysteria.

The Satanic Panic was bolstered by a failure to examine critically the claims at hand. Few wondered where all the bodies of sacrificial victims were hidden, buried, or otherwise disposed of; few puzzled over the lack of evidence for the existence of a cabal of satanists or the absence of corroborating medical evidence. Skeptics were usually met with derision, as when Rivera's audience booed Jeffrey Victor in June 1995.

Scholars from different disciplines have offered a variety of explanations for why the Satanic Panic captivated the American public. Though using divergent methods and approaching the topic from different disciplinary fronts, several common emphases emerge, including concerns over shifting family dynamics, the rise of the religious right as a political force, and the emergence of psychological models for social problems.

Often panics and the spreading of rumors are responses to uneasiness over broad social changes. In this sense the Satanic Panic reflects concerns over changes that were occurring in American family life in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Cohabitation was on the rise, as was divorce. More married families became dual-income families. Most of these changes meant that children spent more time supervised by individuals other than their parents. The guardians of moral culture suggested that this would have dire consequences for the development of children. Anxiety over these changes was stoked as more parents entrusted the care of their children to daycare centers. Before long, fears were projected onto the workers who cared for children taken away from the supervision of their parents.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the religious right became prominent as a political and social force. The Satanic Panic reflected the moral and political agenda of this group as it attempted to reinsert the battle between good and evil into the public consciousness. During the 1980s the religious right built a powerful political infrastructure of churches, organizations, and elected politicians that brought many of their spiritual beliefs and cultural preferences to the mainstream. The fact the more parents left their children to the care of others clashed with their idea that children should be cared for by stay-at-home mothers. Working mothers, divorced families, and cohabitation were anathema to them and ran counter to what they regarded as moral family arrangements. This provided grounds for more fears to be projected upon daycare workers.

Also during this time, medical and psychological models were applied with increasing frequency to various troubles. Sometimes called the medicalization of social problems, the American public began accepting the psychological trauma experienced by marginalized groups (e.g., military veterans, the homeless, the poor, survivors of domestic violence). Fear over the psychological well-being of children outside their parents' care strongly dovetailed with these new concerns. Hence traumatized children were added to the list of vulnerable groups.

While fears of satanic ritual abuse still haunt the minds of those among the religious right, the issue is no longer mainstream. Several factors contributed to the downfall of the Panic. Nearly all the cases brought against alleged abusers fell apart in court, for example. As charges began to be dropped, many children recanted their testimony, and not-guilty verdicts began piling up. As this was happening, the tone of media coverage shifted from credulous to skeptical. David Shaw (1943–2005) of the *Los Angeles Times* won the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism in 1991 for his reporting on the McMartin Preschool trial. Also significant were cultural and procedural changes in daycare. As more women entered the workforce, the use of childcare services became more normalized in society. Many reforms to daycare were introduced, such as state licensing. Daycare providers also enacted self-protective measures, including installing video cameras and allowing parents to visit unannounced. Collectively, these factors nullified the unfounded fears that daycare centers were ground zero for satanic ritual abuse.

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See also: Backward Masking on LP Albums; Cattle Mutilations; False Memory Syndrome; Four Pi Movement; Salem Witch Hysteria; Temple of Set; WICCA Letters

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SATELLITES AND SURVEILLANCE

The Soviet Union placed the world's first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1, into orbit in 1957. Since then, more than 40 countries have launched roughly 6,500 satellites, over half of which remain in orbit. Of these, approximately 1,000 are operational, with the remainder constituting space debris. Types of artificial satellite include observation, navigation, communications, and weather, as well as space telescopes, space stations, and human spacecraft. Since their entry into public consciousness during the Cold War, artificial satellites have provoked many conspiracies around surveillance. These range from claims that the popular 2016 mobile phone game Pokémon Go was part of a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) spy program aimed at monitoring civilians via GPS to claims that the moon—Earth's only permanent natural satellite—is really an artificial satellite built by extraterrestrials for the purpose of surveilling, guiding, or manipulating humanity.

Artificial satellites comprise a central element within broader conspiracy theories tied to the rise of the modern surveillance-industrial complex. These include theories related to Social Security numbers, the Universal Product Code barcode symbology, and, more recently, radio-frequency identification (RFID) tagging, in addition to concerns around databases and communications technologies generally. As with other surveillance-based conspiracies, those involving satellites often blur distinctions between ostensibly irrational and illegitimate conspiracy theories and rational concerns over privacy. Lawyer Patrick Korody, in his influential 2004 article "Satellite Surveillance within U.S. Borders," highlighted the post-9/11 joint scramble of the military, intelligence agencies, and law enforcement for increased authority to conduct domestic surveillance, noting the legal gray zones that could lead to the mobilization of 24-hour satellite imagery to track individuals outside the home, themes expanded on and developed in academic journals such as *Surveillance and Society* (2002–).

Scholars like the sociologist Michael Barkun in his *A Culture of Conspiracy* argue for the separation of civil libertarian concerns from secular and religious