

## Power: Interpersonal, Organizational, and Global Dimensions

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TOPIC: Force, continued.

**Total institution** – force is a form of power, the direct manipulation of human bodies; can be very successful but limited.

But there is also **psychic force** that contrasts bodily, physical force...

The example of Jim Jones and the People's Temple illustrates how psychic control is similar to other institutions but doesn't have the legitimacy like other institutions.

“Our Father Who Art in Hell” – NPR show about Jim Jones

**Jim Jones** – born 1931 in Indiana town, preached love and interracial brotherhood

1956 – founded the **People's Temple**

- sometimes with fake faith healing that was justified in terms of recruitment
- had a Christian mission – proclaimed himself divine, claimed he was the living god
- claimed to be socialist – share the bounty of the earth, anti-elitist, anti-capitalist
- preached that all persons were gods in god's eyes and that he would lead his followers to be gods too
- had passive followers
- thought of himself as a historic figure and so recorded everything

1965 – move temple to California, feared nuclear holocaust

- gained great deal of power and the support of political candidates
- amassed wealth from followers who handed over their social security checks (brought in more than \$40,000 per month)
- “collective socialist experiment”

Over 20,000 followers. **Guyana**, a socialist country, gave Jones land and 950 of his followers moved there. This would later culminate in the 875 of 900 **suicides** in Jonestown, Guyana. His followers were 2/3 black (many elderly on social security, some inner city youth too) and 1/3 middle class fundamental Christians and upper class white professionals who advocated social transformation.

Summer 1977 – Jones felt isolated and started to believe that he had active, plotting enemies because his mission was so threatening to established powers in the US. The first enemies were the **defectors**, the “traitors” who accused the People's Temple of manipulation, beatings, and sexual depravities. This spurred Jones to move his congregation to Guyana as pilgrims of enlightenment and toward safety.

**\*Power works by drawing on multiple schema, drawing on the familiar** by adding a new context/meaning. Jones employed familiar habits such as gospel music, faith healing, language, ideology of reactionaries and fascists.

There was a crisis with the **Stone Incident** during which parents sought custody of their child in Jonestown. Apparently, the mother claimed at first that the child was fathered by Jim Jones and then changed her statement, sought custody in CA court. Jones refused, claimed paternity, said it was an example of **revolutionary sex**. The parents won custody in CA, appealed to Guyana's government. Jones claimed he was the father of John Victor, son of the Stones. Mr. Stone had signed over paternity rights but later claimed he was made to do so under duress. Jones said he had slept with Mrs. Stone in order to keep her in the church.

September 1777 – first **White Night** where Jones would lead followers to verge of suicide

- would rather sacrifice for ethics than succumb to forces of American evil
- training sessions, fire drills, waiting for enemy attack
- they were all willing to die unless given freedom and asylum
- refused to give up John Victor Stone (Jones claimed child didn't want to go back)

The White Nights were long sessions in which Jones held all the members together, all 900, in one large meeting for many long hours through the night during which he was the only source of authority and justice. Jones was in **control of their bodies** (needed his permission to attend lavatory) and was the source of all information (he read newspapers to the group). Here he reversed the original message of Christ – The people, in the temple, were now no longer Gods, could not be, they were inadequate. He says they will all die, die for the cause, to show the world what true belief is, rather than succumb to the capitalist tyranny.

He works to destroy all social roles, civil selves (cf. Goffman Asylums) by asking members whether they are willing kill relatives who were against them – evidence of **conformity to support an authority**. They were all going to die for a cause and were thus trained by Jones. “Love is the only weapon with which to fight – bull shit! I will fight. I will fight. I will fight. MLK was wrong.....”

May 12, 1978 – one of the inner circle (Deborah Blakey – a white follower, previously very dedicated) defects and reports to the embassy, claiming that Jones had created a hostage situation in Jonestown, people being held against their wills. This spurred on another White Night during which followers professed their love for Jones and socialism and their willingness to die as well as to kill their children instead of allowing them to be handed over to the fascists, refusing to let any member be taken.

Concerned relatives of Jones' followers found allies, e.g. Congressman Jim Ryan (who had a niece in Scientology, then considered a cult, and therefore sympathized with the relatives). There were a large number of temple members from his district in CA. He asked the state department to investigate Jones' passport, wrote a letter of support for the Stones, and sought to visit the Temple.

Jones was trying to find another home now – he expected something cataclysmic. He asked the Soviet Union for asylum for his group. Soviet ambassadors were going to visit Jonestown, and Jones was instructing his followers how to respond to their questions, training them with daily broadcasts from Moscow. He instructed them about how to act and speak, and what to say, to appear knowledgeable about world history and revolution, e.g. “Change must come through the barrel of a gun.” (Mao)

Jones had allies of his own though – there were those that praised Jonestown.

November 18, 1978 – mass suicide (875 of 900) in Jonestown

“Pornography of Power” misses the point. The questions are, instead, *why do people join?* and *what are the processes that shape the group and its aim?*

- Jones followers were ordinary people – they weren't sick or weak
- Example: Recent research (Northwestern Political Scientist) has shown in a massive analysis that the majority of terrorists are those who think their land is colonized by another nation. Terrorists, suggests this research, as not crazy, but seekers of justice for their people.

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- The successful use of psyche force involves two processes:
  - detach from the old world/identity (Goffman's **mortification**)
  - attach to the new world/identity

Jonestown process of **detachment** comes from *sacrifice* – the followers gave up everything and it was a big investment

- geographic isolation, disrupted dyads and relationships with blood relatives – in effect, all social relationships were severed
- mortification: humiliation, lack of privacy, deviants are punished, uniformity of behavior, spiritual differentiation

Process of new identity and attachment derived from a sense of **communion** (and conformity) among followers, e.g. they were all Jones' wards, “Father loves.”

The population was diverse but also homogenous – they all claimed to want to live in communion. They had one **common enemy**. This can also be seen in identity politics where a bond is created with similar others.

Jones preached **transcendence** – higher principles, the promise of a better life.

Next class: charismatic leaders

- democratic or authoritarian --- (processes the same regardless of political affiliation)
- *content* may differ but *processes* remain consistent