

Persuasion

Experience, Belief



For any Idea, effective negotiation and selling is necessary in order to persuade your target audience. Through means of systematic persuasion the communicator will appeal to reason and logic to help change attitudes. or they may appeal to emotion and habit by means of heuristic persuasion to change beliefs. Every communicator aims to gain different and desired results. For example, sales people, politicians, and leaders in other areas all have different goals and audiences, but use persuasion to their benefit. Cult leaders and other extremists in history have used persuasion to immerse followings and gain social loyalty.

Over time they have evolved with different religious, political, and revolutionary motives. A cult by definition is a small religious group that is not part of a larger and more accepted religion and that has beliefs regarded by many people as extreme or dangerous. They are typically characterized by their distinct beliefs and rituals related to devotion to a god or person, are isolated from their surrounding "evil culture," and have a charismatic leader (Myers. 252). These charismatic leaders will use persuasion to influence the intentions, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and motivations of different individuals (Thoms and Walden, 2007).

Vulnerability in the larger community is the main reason individuals find consolation in cults (Richard, 2010). Feelings of inferiority, ignorance, social threat, and other such factors influence an individual's ability to be persuaded into a cult. After a person converts into the beliefs and practices of the cult, the cult's way of life becomes second nature. Isolation, and unacceptance of the cult's beliefs by the larger community makes leaving very difficult. There have been several great cults round the world, with effective

leaders, including Reverend Sun Myung Moon, Reverend Jim Jones, and Marshall Applewhite.

In 1954, Reverend Sun Myung Moon founded Unification Church in South Korea. Capitalizing on the problems of his time, Moon's teachings viewed divided Korea as the frontline of the war between democracy and communism; God and Satan. Moon claimed a vision he received at sixteen years old was what called him to complete the Christ mission. His church preached a conservative, family-oriented value system and his interpretation of the Bible. He argued that, Christ was crucified and died having not completed the mission of marrying and getting a perfect family (Dolan, 2000).

Moon, a self-proclaimed Messiah, was to become parent to all of humanity. Moon's teachings were to pledge obedience to him since he was the Messiah. He attracted a worldwide following through a mixture of Christianity, anticommunism, and glorification of himself as a messiah (Myers, 252). Moon's ability to persuade people was in the need for a good family, which is a problem to many all over the world (Thoms and Walden, 2007). A push for peace is another tactic that Moon applied to pursue the beliefs of the cult.

After being excommunicated by the Presbyterian Church, unification Church was characterized by numerous weddings presided by Moon. The ceremonies gained international attention for joining thousands of identically dressed brides and grooms, many of whom had never met. The grandeur of the wedding ceremonies was meant to draw mass attention to the Church, and highlight its emphasis on traditional

morality. They also brought Moon fame and notoriety. The church still exists and continues to teach its beliefs and practices all over the world.

In the 1970s Marshall Applewhite formed the cult Heaven's Gate. Applewhite and Bonnie Lu Nettles believed that they were "The Two" mentioned in the Book of Revelation and that they were on an important spiritual mission. During a six month stay in prison Applewhite refined his beliefs. He termed a physical and literal version of heaven in outer space, where he came from, the "Level Above Human." He and Nettles believed that they were sent to help others reach this next level. Applewhite taught his followers that the earth was to be 'recycled' to a new clean state, and they would ride the comet HaleBopp to heaven (Dolan, 2000).

In Heaven's Gate's teachings, the human body was just a vehicle and that to ascend from this world people had to separate from all that was human in them. This included their earthly needs and desires. Applewhite persuaded individuals through talks he gave around the country and through video and written testaments he provided. Much of the strength and influence Applewhite held was largely in part because he weeded out his followers. Although he gained a mass following, Applewhite frequently excommunicated members for even the most minor infractions.

He relied on intimate numbers, and uniformity of the group to strengthen and perpetuate his message. Members all wore baggy clothing, had short hair, and were kept busy performing tasks for the group or trying to curb their human nature (<http://www.biography.com>). In 1995, Applewhite believed the discovery of the Hale-Bopp comet was a sign that a spaceship

was coming to take them to the Next Level. Although many do not understand Heaven's Gate's drastic measures of leaving this earth, it is important to note that Applewhite did not subscribe to the typical understanding of suicide.

He and subsequently his followers believed that suicide was not taking the opportunity presented to them and instead waiting for the recycling of earth. In 1997, thirty-nine members, including Applewhite, poisoned themselves, wearing armbands and sneakers that said 'Heaven's Gate Away Team' (<http://www.biography.com>). Peoples Temple founded by Reverend Jim Jones was meant to help the sick, homeless, and jobless people of all races. In 1952 Jones joined the Methodist Church and went on to gain a reputation as a healer and evangelist.

However, the church's lack of interest in racial integration forced him to branch out on his own. After building a following by preaching on a local radio program, Jones moved, along with over one hundred church members, to California. Peoples Temple members lived secluded lives in California, but were even further isolated when Jones moved them to a compound he purchased in Guyana (Dolan, 2000). While Applewhite and Moon appealed to their followers' desire to belong and salvation, Jones relied heavily on threats and physical imprisonment. Comparable to a prison, followers were given little food and were not allowed to leave.

Armed guards secured the compound and members were regularly forced to prove their loyalty during suicide drills (<http://www.biography.com>). Jim Jones faced a lot of scrutiny for reported widespread abuse to the members.

A congressman and three Journalists were killed when they went to investigate the anuse clalms ana attempted to aloe detectors. Altnough Jones repeatedly threathenea mass suicide, it was not until the interference of American congressman Leo Ryan that he followed through. More than nine hundred people, including Jones and over wo hundred and fifty children, committed suicide by lethal beverage (Dolan, 2000).

There are varied reasons why people Join cults all over the world. However, it is mostly brought about by lack of one or more social, spiritual and physical satisfaction (Richard, 2010). Social and religious beliefs are evidenced in the above cases. Cult leaders have charisma, and use alienation, exploitation, and totalitarian views to control the behavior of their group (Thoms and Walden, 2007). Propaganda, mass media, and many other ideas are used to create heroic, idealized, and god-like images to influence and create converts.