

Prague College of Psychosocial Studies

**Exiting a New Religious Movement from the Perspectives of
Former Peoples Temple Members**

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**Odchod z nového náboženského hnutí z pohledu bývalých
členů Svatyně Lidu**

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Abstract

New religious movements have been a focus of research and controversy ever since the tragic event in Jonestown on November 18th. While the dynamics of new religious movements are well researched, the process of exiting such a group is less documented. This Master's Thesis preoccupies itself with the topic of new religious movement involvement, and more importantly on the experience of new religious movement exit. Four former Peoples Temple members were recruited for this study and were asked to answer a structured in-depth questionnaire via email. Using multiple case study design, cross case analysis resulted in eight themes: childhood, rebellious behavior, justice and activism, changes in faith and relationship to God, perceived freedom of will, feelings of abandonment vs social support, positive impacts and life satisfaction today. Hopefully, this Thesis will bring some insight on the process of exiting and on the impacts such exit has.

Anotace

Nová náboženská hnutí byla předmětem kontroverze a značného bádání zvláště po tragické události v Jonestownu 18. listopadu, 1978. Ačkoliv je dynamika nových náboženských hnutí značně probádána, proces odchodu z takovéto skupiny je již méně zdokumentován. Tato diplomová práce se zabývá problematikou členství nového náboženského hnutí a konkrétněji odchodem z takovéto skupiny. Pro tuto studii byli vybráni čtyři bývalí členové Svatyně lidu, kteří přes e-mail odpovídali na rozsáhlé otázky zabývající se jejich životem před členstvím ve skupině, životem ve skupině a životem po odchodu ze skupiny. Použitím designu vícečetné případové studie, analýza napříč případovými studii přinesla tato témata: dětství, vzpurné chování, spravedlnost a aktivismus, změny ve víře a ve vztahu k Bohu, vnímaná svoboda ve skupině, pocit izolace vs. sociální podpora, pozitivní dopady a životní spokojenost.

Statutory Declaration

I hereby declare under oath that this master's thesis is the product of my own independent work. All content and ideas drawn directly or indirectly from external sources are indicated as such. The thesis has not been submitted to any other examining body and has not been published.

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Introduction

New religious movements, or “cults”, have been the subject of much research. Particularly, after the tragic events that took place in Jonestown on November 18th, the public and media were taken by curiosity and fear. The events in Jonestown were highly sensationalized, further feeding the fear and negative perceptions of new religious movements. Unfortunately, religiously motivated mass suicides repeated in movements such as the Order of the Solar Temple, Heaven’s Gate or Branch Davidians. Even though new religious movements like these gained the most attention, individuals are involved in groups all throughout the world. Research indicates that between 3-5% of the population were at some point involved in a new religious movement (Bird and Reimer 1982; Bloomgarden & Langone, 1984). However, due to the difficulty of obtaining such data, these numbers should merely be considered an estimate. Current members may not report being in a new a religious movement because of fear or shame and some may not even consider their group to be “cultic”, hence the number could be higher.

Because new religious movements are relatively successful in recruiting new members, it is important to investigate this topic further in order to assess the harmfulness of different groups, explore signs of destructive groups, the impacts of such involvement and reasons for recruitment.

The present Thesis tries to explore the topic of new religious movements by focusing on a particularly destructive group Peoples Temple through the experiences of its former members. Four former Peoples Temple members participated in this study to help investigate the process of joining a NRM and leaving a NRM as well as shed light on different impacts their involvement had on their lives. Also, because this year marks the 37th anniversary of the Jonestown tragedy, respondents are able to provide insight on how their lives evolved since then and what their current perceptions of their former group are.

The Thesis opens with an overview of terminology used when discussing new religious movements. It then continues by exploring who exactly joins new religious movements and what vulnerabilities influence their recruitment. The following chapter discusses reasons for leaving as well as different strategies by professionals that help guide former members through the process of exiting. Next, impacts of NRM involvement are discussed, both negative and positive. Finally, Peoples Temple is explored as well as Jim Jones.

The second part of this Thesis is composed of four case studies of said participants. A within case analysis along with a cross-case analysis is conducted. The following themes are then discussed: childhood, rebellious behavior, justice and activism, changes in faith and relationship to God, perceived freedom of will, feelings of abandonment vs social support, positive impacts and life satisfaction today.

1 Part I. Literature Review

1.1 On Terminology and Definitions

The term “cult” has its origins in the Latin word *cultus* (worship), derived from the verb *colere* (care, cultivate). The term “cult” was brought into sociology by Howard P. Becker, who defined cults as being a relatively small religious group, lacking organizational structure and having a private and personal character. In sociology, the term cult refers to innovative religious movements, standing on their own, while sects tend to be movements that broke off from mainstream religions (Chambers, Langone & Malinoski, 1996)

According to Zablocki (as cited in Langone, n.d.), a cult is “an ideological organization held together by charismatic relationships and demanding a high level of commitment” (4th para.). The American Heritage Dictionary (2011) offers the following definitions (among others): 1) a system or community of religious worship and ritual; 2) a devoted attachment to, or extravagant admiration for, a person, principle, etc., especially when regarded as a fad; 3) the object of such attachment; 4) a group of followers.

A more negatively charged definition was offered by The Cult Awareness Network¹, defining cult as a “closed system whose followers have been unethically and deceptively recruited through the use of manipulative techniques of thought reform or mind control” (as cited in Davis, 1996, p.2.). This definition however does not include possible impacts on its members. Further, during that time, cult was synonymous with thought reform or mind control. Langone however stresses, that cults do not necessarily have to be characterized by mind control (Langone, n.d.), making this definition insufficient based on new findings.

Literature indeed often discusses mind control as a tactic used by leaders to gain and keep followers. For example, Hassan (as cited in Swartling, G., & Swartling, P., 1992) offers a more psychological definition based mainly on this tactic. According to Hassan, members must follow strict rules for living, which include control over things like clothing, books, music, etc. Also, the groups often demand that their members limit or

¹ The Cult Awareness Network (CAN; not to be confused with New Cult Awareness Network, an organization run by the Church of Scientology) was an organization started by deprogrammer Ted Patrick in 1978 and provided information about cults as well as support and contacts for various deprogrammers. The Network was shut down in 1996 and eventually bought by The Church of Scientology.

entirely break off contact with friends and family². Another way mind control occurs is when due to repetitive rituals and long services, individuals become too busy to engage in private reflections. If these activities are used mechanically in order decrease the ability of critical thinking, then thought control comes into action. Third, leaders often carry out emotional control, by inducing fear of Satan and hell, fear of going against God and guilt for such thoughts. Finally, leaders increase their powers by carefully controlling the amount of information their members are exposed to. This includes magazines, newspapers, books and radio or television programs. The level of control also depends on how much the group is physically removed from the rest of the world; whether they live together or maintain their separate homes outside the group.

Robbins and Anthony (as cited in Davis, 1996) offer a definition similarly based around manipulation and thought reform techniques. They list six characteristics shared by possible cults:

- 1) authoritarian;
- 2) communal and totalistic;
- 3) aggressive in their proselytizing;
- 4) systematic in their programs of indoctrination;
- 5) relatively new in the United States;
- 6) middle-class in their clientele. (p.2)

However, it must be noted that some groups do not fit one or more of the criteria. In particular, Peoples Temple prided themselves on recruiting members from all classes, with most members coming from middle to lower middle classes. On the other hand, the Order of the Solar Temple was particularly interested in wealthy recruits.

In 1985, The International Cultic Studies Association/University of California at Los Angeles, (ICSA/UCLA) Wingspread Conference on Cultism, developed the following - more neutral - definition (by West & Langone):

² This refers to family and friends outside the group. However, sometimes leaders also try to weaken relationship inside the groups. In the past, Jim Jones eventually banned sex even between married couples. Recently, Warren Jeffs (former leader of FLDS who is now imprisoned for child sexual abuse) practiced reassigning of already married women to other men.

Cult (totalist type): A group or movement exhibiting a great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea, or thing and employing unethically manipulative techniques of persuasion and control (e.g. isolation from former friends and family, debilitation, use of special methods to heighten suggestibility and subservience, powerful group pressures, information management, suspension of individuality or critical judgment, promotion of total dependency on the group and fear of leaving it, etc.), designed to advance the goals of the group's leaders, to the actual or possible detriment of members, their families, or the community (West & Langone, 1986, p.119-120).

In 1993, Langone expanded on his definition, this time focusing more specifically on the behavior of the group and its possible effects on members:

- (a) exhibits great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea, or thing;
- (b) uses a thought-reform program to persuade, control, and socialize members (i.e., to integrate them into the group's unique pattern of relationships, beliefs, values, and practices);
- (c) systematically induces states of psychological dependency in members,
- (d) exploits members to advance the leadership's goals; and
- (e) causes psychological harm to members, their families, and the community (Langone, 1993; p.5)³

Over the years, the term cult has become charged with negative connotation and has received distaste from the general public and media (Olson, 2006). This negative perception increased particularly after the notorious collective suicides of Peoples Temple, Branch Davidians, Heaven's Gate and others. In order to control the public fear and hatred of such groups, it was necessary to find a way to assess the amount of harm caused by cults and thus differentiate between harmful and benign groups. In 1994, Chambers, Langone and Malinoski developed the Group Psychological Abuse Scale (GPAS), in an attempt to develop an objective, empirically derived measure and definition of cults. The 112-scale was administered to 308 former cult members, focusing on four varieties of psychological

³ As can be observed, such definitions do not include the groups' belief systems, because cults can be formed around any idea or any belief. They are often categorized into nine groups: religious, Eastern-based, New Age, business, political, psychotherapy/human potential, occult, one-on-one, and miscellaneous (such as lifestyle or personality cults; Lalich 1997).

abuse: compliance, exploitation, mind control and anxious dependency (Chambers, et al., 1992). Such a scale may help differentiate between dangerous cults (“destructive cults”) and merely controversial religious groups and thus decrease the negative perceptions of more benign groups. Based on the results of this study, the authors developed and introduced a more objective definition of a cult which includes the impacts on its members: “Cults are groups that often exploit members psychologically and/or financially, typically by making members comply with leadership's demands through certain types of psychological manipulation, popularly called mind control, and through the inculcation of deep-seated anxious dependency on the group and its leaders” (Chambers et al., p. 105).

As can be seen, there is no simple definition of the term cult. The definitions may be influenced on what field of study researchers are approaching the term from (psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc.) and on what pre-judgement they hold towards cults⁴. The public therefore may not decide on a single operational definition of a cult, nor should it necessarily. Instead, it is more useful to perceive cults as being on a continuum, ranging from harmless groups to extremely destructive to their members.

For that and other reasons, the term “new religious movement” was coined (by George Merton; hereafter referred to as NRM), in order to avoid the a priori implication that members must be harmed. As with any attempt to change terminology, it has received supporters and critics. The term has been criticized for granting too much respect to groups that have not earned it⁵; as well as for its vagueness (Aronoff, Lynn & Malinoski, 2000). Also, some “cults” are not religious at all (in fact even Peoples Temple eventually somewhat strayed away from religion) and some are not new (such as satanic cults). Therefore, it seems as though the term “cult” and the term “new religious movement” cover much of the same areas, but each extend to different groups as well. If we assume that the term “cult” should and does only refer to harmful groups, then the term “new religious movement” offers more coverage as it includes benign groups. On the other hand, the term “cult”- unlike “new religious movement”- can include groups that are neither new nor religious. However, because term “cult” is associated with harmfulness, this paper will use the term “new religious movement” (further only NRM), a seemingly neutral term

⁴ There are three main perspectives on cults. (1) Anti-cult movement takes a more sociological approach and criticizes cults mainly for their behavior towards their members. (2) A Christian, counter-cult movement criticizes cults mainly for theological reasons. And (3), value free perspective, that ranges from neutral perspectives to so called “cult apologists” (Hudson & Hein-Hudson, 1996).

⁵ Especially groups that ended in tragic events such as Peoples Temple, Branch Davidians, Heavens Gate, etc.

which is often associated with cult apologists. This study does not intend to pride itself in belonging to either of the polarizing groups (sympathizers or critics) but uses this term solely for its neutral connotation. Vojtisek (2005) offers an interesting and neutrally charged definition of a new religious movement which is based on the ideals and motivations of such groups, instead of the impacts on its members. He describes the key characteristic of a NRM as being a protest against mainstream society and its religion. NRMs offer an innovative path of salvation and are very critical of the current mainstream paths. Vojtisek states that this innovative religious salvation and belief system is what creates the gap between NRMs and conservative religious tendencies of mainstream society who perceive these new groups as threats. Vojtisek however stresses that an innovation of religion is healthy and normal throughout history (2005).

Indeed, as will be explained further in this paper, the terminology is often associated with the professional's personal views of the effects of a NRM membership. But before the possible benefits and drawbacks of a NRM membership are discussed, it is useful to first look at who the potential receivers of these NRM effects are. When attributing a level of harm and destructiveness, one should always work with an image of mentally healthy member. However, some authors believe in predisposing personality traits or psychopathology which foreshadow potential attraction to NRMs. It is absolutely essential to explore the findings of these authors in order to further investigate NRM dynamics.

1.2 Who Joins New Religious Movements?

The public misconception is that NRM members are crazy or non-intelligent (Langone, n.d.). Although some studies do in fact report that members did show signs of psychopathology before joining (e.g. Aronoff et. al., 2000), some of the research does not support this claim: with some even claiming that groups do not want to accept individuals with severe psychopathology as it could be harmful to the image of the group as well to its functioning (Lalich, 1997). As Lalich states, "Cult leaders and cult recruiters tend to capture the hearts, minds, and souls of the best and brightest in our society. Cults look for active, productive, intelligent, energetic individuals who will perform for the cult by fund-raising, recruiting more followers, and operating cult-owned businesses or leading cult-related seminars" (Lalich, 1997; p.5).

A wide range of individuals can be found in a NRM, including the educated, uneducated, wealthy, poor, young or old. It is therefore difficult or impossible to describe a typical profile of a NRM member and it is equally difficult to study individuals prior to joining. The potential risk factors must be studied retrospectively, which in itself a limited method is now further influenced by the effects of a NRM involvement. Nevertheless, some studies have shown that a large number of newly recruited members have recently experienced significant stress (Langone, 1988), or had pre-existing psychological difficulties and maladjustment (Namini & Murken 2009). According to Singer, members are usually recruited within twelve months of such a stressful event (1979). Langone (1988) mentions other possible factors that may play a part in NRM involvement, including:

- Dependency;
- Unassertiveness (inability to say no);
- Gullibility (inability to think critically);
- Low tolerance for ambiguity (need for absolute answers);
- Cultural disillusionment (alienation, dissatisfaction with status quo);
- Naive idealism;
- Desire for spiritual meaning;
- Susceptibility to trance-like states;
- Ignorance of the ways in which groups can manipulate individuals. (Third para.)

Other researchers also include feelings of loneliness (Levine & Salter; as cited in Aronoff et al. 2000), or family dysfunction (such as unrealistic expectations, insufficient parent-child relationship or muted emotions; Namini & Murken, 2009; Sirkin & Grellong 1988). About one third of those who entered a NRM have had a history of seeking psychotherapy or counseling (Langone, 1995; Martin, 1989; Singer & Lalich, 1995), which however is only slightly more than the national average of 20%. Singer and Lalich (1995) add that of the one third, only five to six percent had serious psychological issues. The rest were usually in therapy for personal loss or sexual or career dilemmas.

For example, Namini and Murken report life events or times of psychological crisis which preceded group involvement most often (2009). This list includes: emotional problems, dissatisfaction with life, and lack of meaningful relationships or detachment from a parent (Namini & Murken, 2009). Even so, the authors argue that “it would be wrong to reduce the motives for membership in NRMs solely to vulnerabilities or crisis, which by no means are necessary pre-requisites for the decision to join” (Namini & Murken, 2009, p.4) In correspondence to the mentioned researchers, in a 2007 Belgium study, Buxant, Saroglou, Casalfiore & Christians investigated current members of different NRM. The study found predispositions including insecure attachments to the father, problematic relationships with family, a somewhat negative view of ones well-being in the past (with depressive tendency) and a high need to closure. A year later, Buxant and Saroglou (2008) expanded their list to include: (1) insecure attachment to their parents in childhood, (2) few social relationships, (3) negative life events, and (4) higher need for order. In comparison between current members and former members, the most interesting finding was, that ex-members reported higher insecure attachment to parents in childhood. This may be due to an overall difficulty of attaching to anything by those with insufficient parental attachment, including attaching to a NRM (Buxant & Saroglou, 2008). Another way familial relationships may play a part in a NRM involvement was introduced Singer and Lalich (1997), who suggested that some families put too much pressure on their children to grow up fast and make decisions without providing them with enough guidance, which in return causes the individual to try to find security and guidance elsewhere. Further, according to Singer and Lalich (1997), the most common risk factor besides familiar relationships are depression and being between important affiliations.

Similarly to drug use, experts differ in opinion on how much control one has over conversion. Langone (1993) states that “conversion to cults is not truly a matter of choice. (...) The group manipulates these vulnerabilities and deceives prospects in order to persuade them to join and, ultimately, renounce their old lives (...) The process is a seduction, not a mutually beneficial agreement of the choice of an informed consumer” (p.2). There are of course more authors (often NRM critics) that share this stance and try to veer the public away from blaming the victim (e.g. Lalich, 1997).

A NRM involvement starts with a first contact with a potential member, which may be more prevalent than appears. Zimbardo and Hartley (as cited in Langone, n.d.) reported that based on their study, 54% of their respondents (out of 1000 high school

students from San Francisco) have experienced at least one contact with a NRM recruiter. Out of that number, 51% claim to be open to the idea of joining and 3% were already members of a NRM. In 1984, Bloomgarden and Langone reported that 1.5% to 3% of high school students in a suburban area admitted to being in cults. The situation was found to not differ in Europe, where a similar study was conducted in Spain (it should be noted that the sample was much smaller, consisting of 49 university students), with nearly 60% of respondents reported having at least one contact with a NRM recruiter. In another Spanish study by Canteras, 2% of the respondents reported either belonging to a NRM at the moment, or did so in the past (as cited in Langone, n.d.).

Regarding the typical age of a newly recruited member, there are also no definite answers. A 2009 Spanish study of 101 former NRM members showed, that the mean age of involvement was 26.75 years (Almendros, Carrobles & Rodrigue-Carbalellera; 2007). However, due to different natures of different groups, the desired age of new members may differ. Some groups that pride themselves in a high social and financial standing may therefore prefer members who are financially secure and thus usually older in age.

The researchers of the previously mentioned Spanish study reported an interesting and somewhat unusual finding: that neither previous psychological difficulties nor personal and social maladjustment played a role in the participant's attraction to NRMs (Almendros et al., 2007). However those who did seek mental health services prior to joining, did experience more psychological distress after exit. The participants also reported that it was the deceitful and persuasive behavior of the group that was the determining factor in their involvement, along with the belief in the NRMs ideology. "The desire for self-development" and "search for experience" were also mentioned. The authors concluded, in agreement to Martin, Pile, Burks and Martin (1988), that "most people who join cults think they are joining a good group, a moral group, a healthy group" (Almendros, 2007; last para.).

It is true, that no one joins a cult; one only joins a group that he believes holds the key to his happiness, his self-realization and may hold the answers to his or her questions in pursuit of seeking the truth. An individual may seek answers, social support or sense of belonging, but not a cult. These fundamental needs combined with the groups' manipulative tactics, may temporally limit one's ability to think critically or to notice any red flags. Or perhaps the group does not yet shows signs of a dangerous NRM and once it does, the individual is too far involved to notice immediately. The dangerous behavior that

can start demonstrating later, may be hiding behind the groups ideology so well, it may be hard to notice from the inside. However, this does not mean that “search for meaning” is a sufficient explanation on its own as it has clearly been supported that vulnerabilities such as psychological distress, insufficient familial relationships, or weak self-confidence play a major role in NRM involvement.

1.3 Exit from a New Religious Movement

Research indicates, that although NRMs have a high conversion rate, they also have high rate of defection (Robinson, Frye & Bradley, 1997). A NRM exit may be voluntary (a personal choice), involuntary (exclusion) or counseled. The amount of control individuals have over exiting impacts their future perceptions of the NRMs (Robinson et al., 1997). Wright reported that those who chose to leave due to their disagreement with the leaders’ teaching or due to insufficient practicing of the groups’ goals, perceive their involvement as a positive experience (as cited in Robbins & Zablocki, 2001). On the other hand, those who were deprogrammed (while deprogramming was still the most commonly used strategy) often became angry towards their former group, since they began to identify with their deprogrammers views (Robinson et al., 1997). To examine different reasons for leaving, Almendros et al., 2007 conducted a study using 101 participants from 27 different abusive groups. Results showed that most of the participants left their groups, for reasons such as not appreciating the group any more, perceiving lack of progress between ideals and practices; or realizing deceit. Other important reasons related to the restrictions their group tried to impose on their members (2007). In an earlier study by Wright, centered on the former members of Children of God, Hare Krishna, and Unification Church, reported 4 factors which preceded NRM exit: contact with the outside world, forming unauthorized relationship, perception that the group was not able to cause social change, and perceived inconsistencies between the groups’ ideology and actual practice (as cited in Snow, 2003). Involuntary exit may include deprogramming, a coercive method which is rarely used today but was the main technique used in the 1970s.

1.3.1 From Deprogramming to Exit Counseling

Due to counter-cult movement’s activities and the rising concerns of family members, deprogramming entered the scene in the early 1970s. Parents who visited their children who were in a NRM used these meetings in order to persuade them to leave the

group. NRMs noticed and reacted by monitoring and training the members, which resulted in the conversations appearing more rehearsed and under control of the leaders. Thus, the term “brainwashed” (or programmed) started being used more often when describing observed behavior of the members (Langone, 2005). Parents thus decided that the only way to “rescue” their children, is to try to remove them from the group by force and “deprogramming” them. Even though deprogramming was generally a success – reaching to a 60% exit rate (Langone, 2005) – due to legal and ethical problems, this practice is now rarely used.

Probably the most well-known deprogrammer in 1970s and 1980s was Ted Patrick; whose method was also most widely used. Ted Patrick became interested in deprogramming after his son and nephew were targeted by members of Children of God. After investigating this and other organizations, he came to the conclusion that the only way to return these members to “normalcy” is to break the programmed thinking that these groups instilled in the members (Shupe and Bromley, 1980).

During deprogramming, group members were - for example - abducted from the street, or were prevented from leaving the house when they visited their loved ones. Deprogrammers promised to restore the ability to make independent decisions, as well as critical thinking, which they believed has been lost due to the cultic manipulation. Deprogrammers often used force as a defensible and often necessary mean. They believed that in order to restore critical thinking and “normalcy”, it may be necessary to use similar tactics as the NRM did before them (Kent & Szimhart, 2000). The process was based on the idea that members needed to be “snapped” – or brought back from their cultic way of thinking through shock or fear (Giambalvo, 1998).

Critics claim that deprogramming stood on the basic fact that the pressure that was put on the target caused emotional and physical fatigue, which resulted in the target being more accepting and less resisting to the deprogrammer (e.g. Shupe & Bromley, 1982). However, Kent and Szimhart argue that the fatigue could have been pre-existing, caused by the pressures of the actual NRM and that during deprogramming, the targets actually gained strength (2002). The critical articles about deprogramming were often distributed to the members by groups’ leaders themselves, in order to prepare their members for such a possible event.

The act of abducting the targets has remained very controversial and questionable. According to Shupe and Bromley, the fact deprogrammers used abduction meant that they

could never establish themselves as a legitimate occupation (1980). Regarding the law, there were also two paths of beliefs. The anti-deprogrammers claimed that deprogramming goes against the First Amendment of the freedom to believe and the freedom to act. On the other side, supporters of deprogramming defend the freedom of thought as the prerequisite to freedom of religion (Kent & Szimhart, 2002). Therefore, for deprogrammers means justified the outcome. In other words, while knowing that forcible abduction is illegal, it was necessary in order to fight a greater wrongdoing. Deprogrammers also assumed that members of NRM are being brainwashed – programmed - and therefore need to be reprogrammed.

Critics went further and argued that deprogramming techniques are as bad as or worse than the tactics used by NRM and that deprogrammers use tactics such as “brainwashing” or “mind control” themselves. In a 1994 study, Langone found that on average, one third of forced deprogrammings resulted in a member returning to the cult. Many of the failed attempts also resulted in a stronger belief in the NRM of the members upon their return. Coulter addressed this problem in 1984, stating that the tactics of the deprogrammers only strengthen the members’ perception that they are being persecuted for their beliefs (as cited in Kent & Szimhart, 2002).

Kent and Szimhart stress the hopelessness deprogrammers experienced, when they accepted they were lied to and that the promises of “peace, love, world unity and happiness” often promised by NRM were unattainable (2000). However, realizing the negative influence or harmful tactics of the group does not mean one’s ideals must be shattered or believed to be false. One can surely recognize ill leadership from universal truths and goals. Furthermore, after deprogramming, members often found themselves in a state of identity confusion known as “floating” (which may be a form of dissociation), during which the ex-members “float” between NRM and non—NRMs life and often daydream about their previous NRM life and the ideals and structure that went along with it.

Between 1975 and 1977 American judges granted temporary conservatorships to parents who were able to prove their children’s mental and physical well-being was at risk due to a NRM membership. Parents were now able to remove their children legally from the group (Kent & Szimhart, 2002). However the decisions to grant guardianships were becoming rarer and more difficult to obtain over the years. Also, the NRMs tried to change

the legislation so that conservatorships would be harder to obtain (Singer and Lalich, 1995).

Deprogrammers soon started realizing that using force and violence wasn't necessary for a successful deprogramming, since non-coercive methods were just as successful and less disruptive. Furthermore, due to ethical and legal problems surrounding coercive deprogramming along with the need for a longer dialogue (as quick interventions weren't as successful), counter-cult counselors came up with non-coercive ways of intervention with members of NRM (Kent & Szhimart, 2002). Thus, exit counseling (also called non-coercive deprogramming, thought-reform consulting, voluntary cult intervention or re-evaluation), as a more respectful, educational and methodological method was born.

By 1983, counselors and deprogrammers were meeting in conferences (CAN) with the goal of establishing ethical standards and a universal method, which turned out to be unsuccessful (Kent & Szhimart, 2002). The leader of The Way International, Victor Paul Wierwille spoke cautiously about exit counseling, as he felt that although the method is less violent, other negative tactics used before, like lying or tricking the members of NRM were still being used (Kent & Szhimart, 2002). Nevertheless, by mid-1990s, exit counseling became the primary method of deprogramming in North America. The goal of exit counseling is to help members of NRM become informed and help them reconsider their membership through dialogue and education (similarly to drug and alcohol interventions; Singer & Lalich, 1995). Following the interventions, members are often recommended for further meetings with a post-exit counselor, or for a stay at a rehabilitation facility.

Exit counseling has several steps. First, a person who knows the member contacts a counselor. The exit counselor then meets with the person's family and educates them about the NRM their loved one is a member of. This involves learning about the groups' recruitment process, their ideology, rules, everyday life, etc. Also, if the counselor observes communication issues within the family, he may offer them counseling before the intervention starts. The counselor then must discuss with the individuals' family and friends, how to get him to talk to the counselor. In the US, the cost of intervention varies between 500 and 750 dollars per counselor per day (Kent & Szhimart, 2002)

The meeting has three different forms. Either a straightforward meeting takes place, if the target has agreed to talk to the exit counselor. Second, a role play may take place (for

example, the exit counselor would “run in” to the target at a social function). And lastly, a surprise meeting may take place, where counselors arrive shortly after the family announces the meeting to the target. Once the target has agreed to enter the intervention process, he or she can terminate it at their will (thus giving the target a feeling of empowerment).

Kant and Szhimhart (2002) describe four different frameworks within which the interventions operate:

- 1) Some counselors use an educational model, putting very little emphasis on people’s beliefs, in the hopes of helping the target reach an informed decision about his or her allegiance to the group. This framework assumes that clients are unaware, “uneducated” about their group and about what will be asked of them as members in the long run. This approach emphasizes the growth of the whole family and support network, and hopes to identify the targets vulnerabilities and help the counselor establish a rapport with the client.
- 2) The second framework on the other hand focuses on the religious aspect of the group. Counselors working within this framework try to bring the client back to their previous faith.
- 3) The third framework puts emphasis on critical, rational thinking and “depends heavily upon the scientific method for testing reality” (Kent and Szhimhat, 2002; p.10)
- 4) The fourth framework is often called liberal-spiritual or transpersonal persuasion.

Following a NRM exit, Stoner and Parke (as cited in Robinson et al., 1997) describe three stages that individuals go through: reevaluation of life in the cult; readjustment to life outside the cult and reacceptance of life outside the cult. Goldberg (as cited in Robinson & Frye, 1997) further identified stages following involuntary NRM disaffiliation:

- (a) Initial post deprogramming - where individuals may still demonstrate many symptoms of their NRM behavior and identity, like floating, blandness, dissociative symptoms, etc. This stage begins after deprogramming and usually lasts six to eight weeks.

- (b) Reemergence of the pre-NRM personality, during which individual's behavior and personality starts resembling their pre-NRM state. Individuals begin regaining their self-confidence, they also express anger at their previous group or try out things that were denied before. This stage lasts about six months to two years.
- (c) Integrating NRM experiences into one's lives. During this time, psychotherapy should be taken place, where possible vulnerabilities should be discussed as well as future goals.

In conclusion, NRM exit may be voluntary or involuntary. Depending on the amount of control one has over his existing affects her or his future attitudes of the group as well as the psychological impact they will have to endure. Fortunately, coercive methods today are no longer used and exit counseling is done with a more respectful approach. However, even though deprogramming was controversial at best, it did help save many individuals from the hands of destructive groups. In the following chapter, different impacts – negative and positive - of NRM involvement will be discussed.

1.4 The Psychological Effects of a NRM Involvement

Mass media and popular literature paint a picture that involvement in a NRM emotionally damages its members (Barker, 2007). This view is supported by various studies focusing on the psychopathology of former members (Coates, 2002; Langone et. al, 1998). The beneficial impacts on current and former members are also studied but tend to be regarded as unreliable, since it is argued that it is too difficult to obtain honest opinions from members that are influenced by their leaders (Aronoff et al. 2000; Langone et al., 1998). Those studies that focus on the psychopathology of former members tend to be of quantitative nature (e.g. Coates, 1995; Langone et al., 1998; Swartling & Swartling, 1992), while those who try to find beneficial impacts are often of qualitative nature (e.g. Coates, 2012; West & Martin, 1994). The negative impacts mentioned range from relationship difficulties to mental health problems like anxiety disorders, atypical dissociative disorder, pseudo-identity or altered persona or information disease (Coates, 2012). These symptoms are believed to be mainly associated with leaving the group and readjusting to life outside. Some studies show that former members report mixed to favorable attitudes toward towards their former groups (Coates, 2010). Further, studies have shown that some former

members reported positive impacts, such as improved critical thinking, coping skills, insight or empathy (Coates, 2009, 2012; Namini & Murken, 2009). Coates argues that while the experience of exit can be traumatic and destabilizing, former members feel they have grown and become wiser as the result of their involvement (2002).

NRM researchers are often divided into two groups based on their views of NRMs. The first group consists of what are called “anti-cultists” (e.g., Martin, 1993), who hold a more critical view of NRMs and are often associated with the term “cult”. The other group, “cult-apologists” (e.g. Anthony & Robbins, 1992), are a more liberal group of researchers, who do not hold an entirely negative stand towards NRMs and believe that a NRM is merely an “alternative culture” (Aronoff et al., 2000). These sympathizers believe that NRMs are protected by the First Amendment and should be able to operate freely. They also believe that cult membership can have certain benefits. As polarizing as these groups have been since they first emerged in the 1970s, today the dialogue between them has increased and the gap decreased.

A year after the Jonestown massacre, Margaret Singer, a well-known proponent of brainwashing theories, characterized “post-cult trauma syndrome” by having the following symptoms:

- spontaneous crying;
- sense of loss;
- depression and suicidal thoughts;
- fear that not obeying the cult’s wishes will result in God’s wrath or loss of salvation;
- alienation from family, friends;
- sense of isolation, loneliness due to being surrounded by people who have no basis for understanding cult life;
- fear of evil spirits taking over one’s life outside the cult;
- scrupulosity, excessive rigidity about rules of minor importance;
- panic disproportionate to one’s circumstances;
- fear of going insane;
- confusion about right and wrong;

- sexual conflicts;
- unwarranted guilt. (1979, first para)

Singer also describes different stages of post-NRM adjustment: disbelief/denial; anger/hostility; self-pity/depression; fear/bargaining; reassessment; accommodation/acceptance; re-involvement (1979). One usually doesn't go through the stages smoothly, but instead goes back and forth. Those who do not achieve the stage of acceptance may experience several difficulties including low self-esteem, disassociation, Stockholm syndrome, difficulty concentrating or difficulty managing time (Singer, 1979).

Different symptoms experienced after leaving a NRM include: (a) depression; (b) loneliness and a sense of alienation; (c) difficulty explaining how they could have joined such a group; (d) phobic-like constriction of social contacts; (e) fear of joining groups or making a commitment; (f) apprehension about their own idealism and altruism (which the cult had manipulated); (g) distrust of professional services and distrust of self in making good choices; (h) problems in reactivating a value system by which to live; (i) guilt, shame, and self-blaming attitudes (Langone, 1995; Singer, 1979; Singer & Lalich, 1995).

In 1994, West and Martin wrote about a phenomena among NRM members (usually observed by their loved ones) called pseudo-identity or altered persona – a dissociative coping response to extraordinary circumstances. This means a person, that is undergoing prolonged stress, creates an altered identity which due to the NRM environment becomes dominant, surprising the original personality. West and Martin describe several symptoms of pseudo-identity syndrome, such as dissociative, trance-like states, depersonalization, de-realization, emotional numbness and floating (switching back to NRM identity). The pseudo-identity can appear normal while the members are still in a group, but the psychological pain surfaces whenever the pseudo-identity starts being torn (fractured) due to outside influences (Gasde & Block, 1998). Langone (1995) stated, that members whose pseudo-identities are fractured, usually don't return to the NRM because while suffering in the outside world, it feels more authentic than their “happy” lives inside.

On the other hand, some literature suggests that NRM impacts might not be as drastic. Rochford et al, argue that psychological impairment of some members that were reported in several studies, have been present before joining (1989). Further, according to Langone (1996), NRM members` personalities fall within a normal range.

In 2012, Coates designed a qualitative study, interviewing 23 former members of 11 different groups. The participants reported that their membership in a NRM was not an entirely harmful experience and for many, the positive effects outweighed the negative. Even more, some have reported that their membership helped some psychological issues they had prior to entering the group. Furthermore, Coates argues that many participants (12), could be described as very dependent on others and easily influenced (2012). For those, membership in a NRM was influenced by their high need of connectives to others. For the rest, who described themselves as highly independent and unable to form good social connections, a membership in a NRM could have been influenced by their need for developing better social skills. Therefore, membership in a NRM may have helped the participants in dealing with social demands for autonomy as well as connectedness (reflexivity): “it is suggested that as the result of membership and exit the majority of participants have (...) developed selves that are more strongly anchored to both individuality as well as connectedness and in this sense, have become more reflexive” (Coates 2012, p.16). Coates argues that most of the negative effects followed right after exit and were not as significant as the positive effects. Those who experienced long term negative effects are those who left the group without their families and loved ones. It has been observed, that certain groups try to ban communication between current members and former “shunned” members (Aldridge; as cited in Coates, 2012). Even though it was also reported that most marriages leave groups unbroken (Wright, 1991), not that many studies have focused on the loss experienced by those who left their loved ones in the group. This, which while not being a negative experience due to thought reform, is a traumatic negative consequence in itself. For these future studies, it would be beneficial to focus on groups that have existed for a while. In such groups, more family members tend to be involved, as marriages and births happen inside the groups.

Coates (2012) concluded that many former members of his study perceived their NRM involvement as a beneficial experience. Therefore, Coates calls for a change in the treatment model applied on former NRM members that focuses mainly on the negative impacts of membership. Coates believes that a more gentle and general counseling approach, focusing on the management of stress and loss and which would keep in mind that membership can offer an opportunity for growth would be more beneficial (Coates, 2012).

A more recent study by Buxant et al., (2007) shows ex-members perceptions of their former group is generally negative but with some positive elements such as acquisition of aptitudes and knowledge. In this study, the participants all left their group as a personal choice. The reasons included personal conflicts with the groups' doctrine, life events that were in contradiction with the group or increased pressure and obligations from the group. After exit, the participants still regarded God and overall spirituality as an important part of their life and while their faith dropped soon after exit, it eventually increased again. Similarly, life satisfaction dropped just after exit, but still was consistently higher compared to before joining the group. Those who were in the group longer, seemed to identify themselves more with the group; and defined their life through it. Participants also reported an absence of depressive tendencies as a result of their membership, as well as a positive outlook on the world and optimism for the future. The authors emphasize the need to look beyond the simplistic "psychopathology vs normality debate", as there are more subtle differences between NRM and non-NRM population (Buxant et al., 2007).

In conclusion, a number of negative effects have been reported. Among that most frequently reported are feelings of loss and grief, feelings of anger, dissociation, or pseudo-identity syndrome or depression. Although beneficial impacts have also been reported (e.g. higher self-esteem, better social skills, sense of belongingness, etc.), many researchers shy from doing so based on what their a priori perception of NRMs are. Furthermore, when conducting a study with current and former NRM members, it is always important to remember several limitations or biases that can occur. First, current members might give a more positive picture of their current state. This could be either because they fear their leader or as a result of mind control. Also, if a current member is present in a study, this could mean that their group gives their members more freedom, hence they might have a more positive experience. In contrast, former members might paint a more tragic picture to satisfy the public's expectations. Despite these limitations, studies have provided useful information regarding the aftereffects of NRM involvement. This is very beneficial for health care professionals, for the loved one of a current or former NRM and also for ex-member themselves who are experiencing readjustment difficulties.

The following chapter will attempt to discuss Peoples Temple as well as Jim Jones, in order to gain a full understanding of the respondents past experience.

1.5 Peoples Temple

Peoples Temple (hereafter referred to as PT) was started in Indianapolis in the 1950s by a Pentecostal preacher Jim Jones. Jones eventually moved (after prophesying a nuclear attack) to Northern California, where two churches were established – in San Francisco and in Los Angeles. PT was very active in their community, serving the poor, the outcast and practicing racial inclusion. According to Chidester, by early of 1970s, the group had three to five thousand members, and nearly a hundred thousand people (also thanks to radio) listened Jones’s sermons (as cited in Vojtisek, 2009). Maaga described three different groups of PT members. The first group consisted of white and black devoted long-term members from the area of Indianapolis, who helped build PT. The second group composed of white intellectuals who helped run the Temple. The last and largest group consisted of poor blacks (as cited in Vojtisek, 2009). Some members eventually brought to light the Temples problematic tactics, and due to the negative publicity and the Internal Revenue Service investigation, a large number of members relocated to Guyana, South America, to Jonestown, a “socialist paradise“. For a while, Jonestown seemed to be exactly what it was trying to be; a peaceful community, living the simple but beautiful life (Moore, 2011). However, Jones was increasingly becoming more paranoid in Jonestown and his tactics grew even more oppressive. Survivors recall being forced to listen to his prerecorded sermons throughout the campgrounds all day long, being severely punished for any misbehavior or not being able to leave. Jones had his followers rehearse suicide during “White nights“. Eventually, suspicions grew in the United States, and California Congressman Leo J. Ryan visited Jonestown along with some of the members’ relatives and reporters, in order to investigate the rumors. Ryan’s initial satisfaction with the community was challenged when on for fortnight of the tragedy, one of the PT members slipped him a note saying he wants to leave. Eventually, several more people spoke up with their wish to leave Jonestown and Ryan escorted fifteen of them to a local airport six miles away. Little did they know, several members of PT followed them to the airstrip, where they shot and killed three of the reporters along with Leo J. Ryan and one PT member. Shortly after, Jones called in all the remaining Jonestown residents and informed them of the killings at the airstrip. He insisted that they had no other choice then to “leave in peace” and “die with dignity”. This last speech was recorded (along with most of his other speeches) and eerie calmness in Jones voice can be heard. Below is a segment from his last speech:

Please. For God's sake, let's get on with it. We've lived — we've lived as no other people have lived and loved. We've had as much of this world as you're gonna get. Let's just be done with it. Let's be done with the agony of it.

It's far, far harder to have to walk through every day, die slowly — and from the time you're a child 'til the time you get gray, you're dying. (Pause) (Tape edit) Dishonest, and I'm sure that they'll — they'll pay for it. They — They'll pay for it. This is a revolutionary suicide. This is not a self-destructive suicide. So they'll pay for this. They brought this upon us. And they'll pay for that. I — I leave that destiny to them. (Jim Jones, 1978)

Barrels of Fla-Vor-Aid (a British version of Kool-Aid) which contained painkillers and potassium cyanide were brought in, and children were killed first, in order to ensure that adults would want to follow.⁶ Meanwhile in PT headquarters in Guyana, a message was received that those outside of Jonestown were also to commit “revolutionary suicide“. Only one member did so, along with her three children (she slit the throats of her children, and then her and her eldest daughter slit each other's throats). All in all, 918 people died on November 18th, five at the airstrip, four in Georgetown and 909 in Jonestown. Jones and one other member were the only ones that died due to gunshot wounds. However, the Guyana soldiers underestimated the number of deceased at first, as the children's bodies were positioned under the adults and thus were hard to see. The US government initially wanted to bury the bodies in a mass grave in Guyana, against which the Guyana government protested (Moore, 2011). The bodies were then shipped to Delaware, much to surprise of the relatives (since most of the relatives lived in California), for processing (Moore, 2012). According to Smith, the ever present photos of the deceased in the media, contributed to the “pornography of Jonestown“ and created a distance between the deceased and the living (as cited in Moore, 2011). Moore discusses how this “dehumanizing” of the deceased led to an improper investigation and medico-legal examination of the bodies. Moore sees this as a reason for disenfranchised grief of the relatives that wanted to mourn the deaths of Jonestown. According to Doka, certain types of deaths that have a stigma attached may be associated with shame, guilt or embarrassment (as cited in Moore, 2011).

⁶ A medical examiner who was at the sight reported that only 200 people committed suicide. However, for unknown reasons, only five full autopsies were performed.

The deaths in Jonestown were especially stigmatized, due to the fact that parents killed their children before killing themselves (Moore, 2011). Survivors had trouble finding jobs, or confiding in others. Often, once employers found out about their former Jonestown membership, they would be fired. The survivors lacked social support and thus experienced disenfranchised grief. The same went for the relatives of the deceased, who, tormented by shame, were not allowed to mourn in public (Moore, 2011).

1.5.1 Jim Jones

Jones was born on May 13, 1931 in Lynn, Indiana. Jones's father James (known as Big Jim), overwhelmed by sense of worthlessness due to his disability from world war I. (Vojtisek, 2009) misplaced many of his feeling towards Jones. Reiterman and Jacobs (1982) describe Big Jim as being bitter and cynical towards Jones and paid little attention to him, spending a lot of time gambling. Jones' mother Lynetta, was forced to support the family through her job at the factory, leaving Jones alone from an early age. The frustration with this situation is obvious in the following quote by Jones:

I was ready to kill by the third grade. I mean, I was so fucking aggressive and hostile, I was ready to kill. Nobody gave me any love, any understanding. In those days a parent was supposed to go with a child to school functions.... There was some kind of school performance, and everybody's fucking parent was there but mine. I'm standing there. Alone. Always was alone. (as cited in Reiterman and Jacobs, 1982, p.16)

Jones' felt abandoned not only by his family but also by society in general. Jones always felt removed from his peers due to several reasons. For one, his parents did not attend church like the rest of the community. Also, Jones felt he was standing out physically, with his black hair, round face and slanted eyes, amongst most of his light-haired and light skinned peers. This and the fact that Big Jim was reportedly a member of Ku Klux Klan with a very racist mentality may have played a role in Jones' passion for racial inclusion and justice (Lys, 2005).

Jones's first interest in church started when his neighbor introduced him to the Nazarene church when he was a little boy. He then decided to search for a church that would be suitable for him, which he found in the Gospel Tabernacle church. Jones soon started "mock" church services in his garage and used farm animals to attract children from his neighborhood to come listen to him. Jones thus felt the need to use external means to

draw attention to himself from an early age (Lys, 2005). While still in Lynn, Jones already started preaching in several churches. After his parents divorced, Jones moved with his mother to Richmond, Indiana to attend high school. After graduation, he took a part time job as an orderly at a Richmond hospital, where he met his future wife Marceline. Jones soon started feeling distaste for churches who preached tolerance and equality under God, but still practiced segregated congregation (Lys, 2005). According to Reiterman and Jacobs, it was soon after this realization, that he informed his wife that he no longer believes in God (1982). However, when he finally found a church (a Methodist church) that supported his views and goals (eliminating poverty, providing security for the elderly, increasing employment, promising free speech, etc.) he entered the Methodist ministry. Jones eventually felt he needed more space for his views; a platform that would be only his own and under his control. He then founded a Pentecostal sect named the Community Unity Church, which was later renamed to Peoples Temple (Lys, 2005).

Jones soon took on the role of a racial equality activist, believing that racial inclusion should be the primary goal of any religion. Other PT goals included combating social problems by opening soup kitchens, providing the poor with free clothing, helping build houses, etc. PT quickly grew in size and in 1959 Jones proposed that all members should sell their positions and give the proceeds to the church. Jones' views on Christianity and the Bible became more critical, and he eventually denounced Christianity all together. According to Jones' wife, he became active members of the communist party during 1950s (Vojtisek, 2009). The plan to relocate was set in motion after Jones preached his vision about Indianapolis being under a nuclear attack. The first relocation was to California and then to Jonestown, Guyanna (Lys, 2005).

According to Lys (2005), Jones' perception of revolutionary suicide is not unlike Durkheim's theory of altruistic suicide. Altruistic suicide comes into place, when an individual identifies with a group to the extent that he takes on the group's identity. An individual suicide would be selfish, but a group – revolutionary – suicide becomes a respectable and reasonable. Jones used misattribution to justify and even rationalize a group suicide.

Jones was known to suffer from paranoid delusions that seemed to worsen with age as well as with the growth of his group (Lys, 2005). Even though Jones was known to be a drug abuser, it is believed that he experienced delusions before his drug abuse. Another factor that may have contributed to his paranoia, as argued by Feningstein, was Jones'

inability to properly read the motives of others, which may have caused a suspicious and paranoid misreading of people's behaviors (as cited in Lys, 2005). According to Lys, Jones suffered from persecution and megalomaniacal delusions of grandeur (2005). Indeed, delusions of persecution, which are the most frequent subtype of delusional disorder, are apparent in Jones' behavior and his rising fear that ultimately led to the tragedy of November 18th. Ironically – as many with a delusional disorder do - he eventually managed to turn his delusional fears to realistic fears after the killing of Congressman Leo Ryan and others who were present at the airstrip. Jones instilled this fear in others by certain tactics, like having several members of Jonestown fire guns in the jungle surrounding the compound. This was meant to enforce the idea that a war started. According to Reiterman and Jacobs (1982), Jones feared he was dying from a terminal illness, that there was an assassination planned, that other ministries are spreading rumors about him, or that he was the target of the Central Intelligence Agency. Some of his fears were true however, especially after numerous ex-members decided to speak publicly about their experience in PT; which drew the attention from the media and government agencies. Even before that, due to the groups' progressive racial equality outlook, the group was often a target of a racially conservative community. The actual public reactions were, however, not in par with Jones' perception of it. For someone who already had a paranoid personality, such circumstances could have result in a catastrophic outcome, which in this case, proved to be true.

Jones' grandiose delusions could also be well observed during his sermons, for example:

You say you don't believe, uh, in God, but you really do. You substituted your Skygod in me. (Pause) Now, if Father was a Skygod, he would eliminate all poverty. I'm amazed that I have as much power as I do, with people not paying any attention to me. I'm amazed that every person that's ever had a stroke in all of my churches have been healed, because people don't listen to me, and people, very few of them, know me. But don't you ever insult me by calling me your creator Skygod. I am a savior, because I save everybody that comes to me (Jones, 1974).

Jones often performed "miracle healings" to demonstrate his messianic beliefs, which were by several ex-members reported to be fake and staged. But it was these healings that helped his perception as a prophet. Mike Cartmell, who was in close contact with Jim and was appointed as his designated successor, believes that Jones' alleged

psychic abilities were “the glue that held us together as a group” (Cartmell, 2006). He continues:

And why were we so certain that ours was the true path? Well, if we’re honest, it’s because Jim asserted that it was so. And why did we believe Jim? Because he was God!! Even for those of us who didn’t believe he was God, we believed he was a being of universal significance. Again, why did we so believe? If we’re honest, we have to admit, it’s because of his apparent psychic ministry and healing ability. It’s all too easy for non-Temple members to raise an eyebrow in smug disavowal of such beliefs. To them I say, you weren’t there and you simply cannot appreciate the emotional power of those services. The overwhelming belief of a couple of thousand enthusiastic Temple members (and nobody does enthusiastic as well as we did!) combined with prophecies and revelations, which seemed perfectly legitimate, literally made my hair stand on end.(...) So, what’s it all mean? We were bamboozled. That doesn’t make us bad or stupid. I think everyone knew most of the healings were fake. We just hoped, against all reason, that some were in fact “genuine.” And aren’t we all (this means you non-Temple folk, too) tempted by the notion that “a little evil in support of a great good” (to wit: our single-minded belief) is perfectly acceptable. Nevertheless, we do ourselves, our community, and our world a disservice in attempting to defend the indefensible. (Mike Cartmell, 2006)

Eventually, Jones denounced Christianity and God all together (who he then referred to as “Skygod“), whom he did not consider to be a true God and is not the way towards salvation. Instead, Jones considered Principal, Love or Socialism to be the real God (Vojtisek, 2009). In some of his sermons, it seems as though Jones put himself in the position of God himself:

I came in the power of religion.... All the power you said God had, I have. I’ve come to make one final dissolution, one final elimination of all religious feeling. Until I have eradicated it from the face of earth, I will do all of the miracles you said your God would do and never did.... I come as God socialist! (Jones, as cited in Reiterman and Jacobs, 1982, p. 147-148).

The more his followers believed in his supernatural abilities, the more devoted they were and the more power Jones had. According to Galanter (1999), the combination of the grandiosity and persecution paranoia can result in a religious violence. The need to protect the group grows with the fear of the outside world.

Despite being an active critic against drug use and forbidding drugs to his members, it has been widely documented that Jones was a drug abuser himself. It is unclear when exactly his addiction started, but it is believed that it was in the 1960`s. Jones abused drugs such as amphetamines, barbiturates, Quaaludes, Valium, codeine or morphine (Lys, 2005). His autopsy showed levels of the tranquilizer phenobarbital that would be deadly to a first time user (Lys, 2005). His drug abuse is often noticeable on different PT recordings, with Jones` slurring his speech, losing thoughts or jumping erratically from one topic to the next (it should be noted however, that Jones` speech had always had – but on a smaller scale – these characteristics). Whether or not this was due solely to substance abuse cannot be said for certain, but it surely played a part.

Jones also used his power for sexual gain. As it was often with Jones, he contradicted himself in first promoting sexual liberation, which he then replaced with preaching of complete abstinence (even amongst married couples). Jones would make his members stand in front of an audience of fellow PT members and admit the number of past sexual partners, sexual desires and even homosexual feelings. Jones considered himself to be “the only true heterosexual” and had sex with men as well, to “prove their homosexuality”. He would maintain that sexual relations with men and women were not pleasant for him, and he was merely doing them as a favor to the members.

In conclusion, Peoples Temple started out with ideals and practices that were very progressive at the time. People were intrigued by Jones and PT and people that were dedicated to helping others were drawn in. Unfortunately, Jones`s paranoia, delusion and drug abuse turned the good willed group to a place of terror and fear.

Because each group is different, one should be careful in generalizing the findings. NRMs range from benign groups to destructive groups that may even result in death. The NRM that is the point of focus in this research would probably fall on the far destructive end of the continuum. In fact, before 9/11, this group (or leader) was responsible for the largest single loss of American civilian life in history. Understandably, this event sparked panic and fear of NRM, which in return received negative perception that expanded even to benign groups. Unfortunately, Jonestown wasn`t the last of such events (Branch Davidians, Heaven`s Gate or Order of the Solar Temple are among other NRM that ended in a group suicide), but remained the largest. Today it serves as a precaution tale and the characteristics of Peoples Temple are often looked for in other groups. The truth is however, that Peoples Temple did not meet all the criteria of a “typical NRM”. For

example, PT was not a religious organization per se. Even though it started as a Christian church, Jones eventually proclaimed his atheism. Also, members were of all different denominations including atheists. They also composed of members of different races, different ages and different educational and socio-economical background. It is therefore difficult to present a typical PT member. Regardless, because PT is such a notorious NRM, research is always beneficial if we want to prevent such a tragic event in the future.

Based on the literature review, the following questions will be explored:

- What vulnerabilities of the participants preceded PT involvement?
- What were the participant's reasons for joining and exiting?
- What were the impacts of involvement soon after exiting and now?
- How have their lives evolved since their involvement in terms of their spirituality and well-being?

2 Part II. Present Study

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 Participants

For this study, four former PT members were recruited, including two females and two males. Two of the participants joined PT as children and two as adults. Three participants that joined as adults were in PT until November 18th, and one left the group prior.

There were three main criteria for sample selection. First, participants had to be in PT a considerable amount of time (at least 5 years). Second, participants had to have exited close to November 18th (maximum time of exit was a year before November 18th⁷). Finally, participants had to have a considerable amount of writing on online. This demonstrated their openness and willingness to talk about their experience.

Thanks to the website “Alternative Considerations of Jonestown”, many former members of PT may share their thoughts and feelings in articles, essays or poems. Most of the contributors also share their email addresses, which are attached to their writings. That became the primary source of contact. The information exchange was conducted via email. Since the study was conducted from Europe (and all the participants live in the United States), phone communication was eliminated.

The dropout rate was considerably large. Out of about 25 emails sent to various ex-members only half responded. Ten members then agreed to be a part of this study, but half stopped communicating. The questionnaire was relatively time-consuming and combined with the fact that the respondents never even met the researcher face to face; their participation is greatly appreciated

2.1.2 Method

Supporting the belief that the impacts of NRM membership can be best understood in light of pre-involvement vulnerabilities as well as reasons for joining (Coates, 2012), the respondents received a set of structured questions that were divided into three sections: (1) Life before PT, (2) Life in PT and (3) Life after PT. It was considered absolutely essential to understand the ex-members lives prior to joining, if we want to truly understand the

⁷ This was to ensure that participants experienced some of Jones’s worsened behavior.

effect it had on their life after. All three sections included many of the same questions (“How would you describe your significant relationships during this time?”; “How would you describe your mental health during this time?”; “What would you consider being the highest and lowest point at this time?”; “How would you describe your spirituality during this time? etc.). New questions were introduced in sections (2) and (3). The “Life in PT” section included questions about the circumstances of joining, what everyday life in PT was, what their role was or how their relationship with Jones was. The third section, the longest and most important section, deals with the reasons for exit; the aftermath of exit shortly after and now; 37 years later; what helped them most with coping and how their spirituality evolved.

With the goal of avoiding leading questions as much as possible, most questions started with “How would you describe...?” (Instead of “Did/do you...?”, “Were you able to...?”, “Did you experience...?” etc.). Because of that though, certain topics weren’t introduced intentionally by the researchers, and were only considered important if they were addressed by the respondent. After these sets of questions were answered, the members received additional questions based on their responses.

The members’ personal reflections, poems and articles were also used. These were collected via the Alternative Considerations of Jonestown website, and some via interviews with the media (newspaper interviews, television appearances and documentaries).

Because this study investigates a lengthy time in the participant’s lives and uses a variety of resources for data collection, a case study design was utilized. Multiple case study, unlike a single case study allows for comparisons between cases and bringing upfront similarities and differences. According to Hendl (2005), a case study is the most appropriate method, when trying to answer “why” and “how”, while not having any control over the course of events. Specifically, this study will be an exploratory multiple case study. An exploratory study is designed to examine an unknown situation or event along with influential relationships and perhaps define hypothesis and theories (Hendl, 2005).

After receiving and closely examining all the answers as well as other material (which was done as soon as possible), coding was done for all data deemed important. After coding and identifying patterns within and across cases, different themes emerged. Within these themes, differences and similarities were analyzed.

3 Results

3.1 Case Study: Glenda

3.1.1 Brief Biography

Glenda had an uneasy start in life, as her mother died when she was only 6 years old and her biological father abandoned her shortly after. He was married to someone else when he fathered three children with her mother, who was married to her stepfather at the time. The three children, including Glenda, were sent to live with relatives. Glenda has a total of twenty siblings, with some of whom (those from her mother) she reunited later in life. She was physically and sexually abused by her mother's husband and raped at the age of eleven. Glenda describes strong feelings of anger during this time which led her to running away from home often and eventually to her diagnosis of anxiety at the age of thirteen, and an attempted suicide a year later.

For Glenda, the most significant relationships during this time were with her two younger sisters (with whom she shared both parents) and her adoptive mother. "These were the ones I could be transparent with," Glenda says. She also considered her best friend Toni, who died in Jonestown, to be like a sister to her. During this difficult time, Glenda was seeking God, trying to get to know Him better. However, she did not attend church regularly because she did not have good clothes. "People made fun of us, so I always thought of the church as a place to be ostracized," she recalls.

Glenda's first contact with the church was orchestrated by her stepfather's girlfriend, who was a member at the time. She noticed Glenda's problematic behavior and thought this could help her "settle down". Glenda thus became a member at the age of twelve. She describes an average day at the church as "always something serious". Her task in the church was being an "attendance taker that worked at the doors and an usher that worked with collecting offerings. I sang in the choir and directed sometimes." She also helped out in the nursery, in the kitchen and did street witnessing. She sums up her role in the church as being "a pawn".

Glenda did have a close circle of friends inside PT that "could see through the BS". She describes this group as being very "tight and loyal to each other". This group had one thing in common – they were all in PT because of their caretaker and resented being there. Glenda's spirituality took a turn during this time as she describes, "It went from

amazement to rude awakening”. She remembers losing her faith when she saw that Jim Jones` behavior was accepted by the other members. She often felt stress, fear and anxiety while in PT, as well as abandonment. “No one care about us”, Glenda says. Unfortunately, she could not find relief outside the church life either. She recalls feeling “traumatized by living in an all-white racist community (...) this was a complete culture shock. I was called a nigger every day at school; and people outside of the church were openly hostile to blacks. To live in that environment and then life also in the church’s paranoia was unspeakable.” For Glenda, the highest point during this time was when she got pregnant, since it was her get-away ticket. And away she got, right before she was about to leave for Guyana. She recalls the group being very angry about her departure, but her loved ones were happy about her escape.

On November 18th, Glenda was in Los Angeles with her sisters. She recalls feeling guilty and shocked by the mass suicide. “I was guilty because I felt I helped contribute to the tragedy by escaping and aligning with others that left the group. I always sensed something horrible would happen and wished I had done more to prevent it,” Glenda recalls. She also states that she is still working on her grief and anger to this day.

After leaving the group, Glenda had to deal with a large amount of questions from the public, which she calls “understandable”, but leaving her feeling “stupid and used”. She never sought counseling following her departure from the group, even though she suffered insomnia for years after. Instead, she credits reading the Bible and support from her loved ones as her main help. Her community and loved ones support her healing to this day by helping and allowing her to find her “my place and space”. She did, however, join the Jehovah’s Witnesses but was later excommunicated when she “saw through their lies.” Even though she does not miss anything from her PT membership (besides loved ones), she believes some of her PT experiences helped her in her post-NRM adjustment, “It has taught me to respect my beliefs regardless of who doesn’t agree.” When asked what are the biggest benefits and drawbacks of being in a NRM, Glenda answered: “Traveling to new places, lots of friends, the drawback was I couldn’t choose when and where to travel and who my friends were.”

Glenda describes being very happy now. “I believe God created me to be the person I am, and life’s experiences have drawn me closer to Him. (...) I really love my life. I still hurt from past memories, but I’m no longer under a heavy yoke of guilt. I have family,

health, friends, and enjoyable work, so I guess that makes me wealthy in spite of it all.” She describes not having a relationship with God until 1994, however this relationship is now “healthy, whole, sure, relevant, unconditional, and lasting.”

3.1.2 Within Case Analysis

Glenda’s childhood is marked by several traumatic events. She suffered loss from her mother’s death, when she was only six years old. She also experience abandonment from her father soon after. Studies suggest that former members often suffer from insufficient parental relationship (Buxant and Saroglou, 2008; Markowitz, 1983) and in particular from an insecure attachment to father (Buxant and Saroglou, 2007). Glenda also suffered physical and sexual abuse that ultimately led to her suicide at an early age. Glenda describes her emotional state as being “angry” and was also diagnosed with anxiety disorder. Even though her entering the group wasn’t voluntary, it supports the idea that NRM involvement often follows psychological distress or a traumatic event (Buxant and Saraglou, 2008; Langone 1995; Singer and Lalich, 1995).

Glenda experienced anxiety, fear, abandonment (“I felt like no one really care about us”) and stress during her stay in PT. Feelings which she was far too familiar with even before joining and which she now had to re-experience. In support of research (Spila, Makara, Kozak & Urbanska, 2008) indicating higher prevalence of suicide thoughts and attempts among child abuse survivors and amongst NRM members (Singer, 1979), Glenda attempted suicide at the age of fourteen. NRM involvement alone can cause significant psychological stress and combined with sexual and physical abuse, unsurprisingly, can have destructive traumatic effects. The situation outside wasn’t much better and enforced her feelings of shame and inadequacy as a black woman.

Glenda’s most significant relationships are those with women, including both relatives and friends. Because of Glenda’s early experiences with men, it could be hypothesized, based on previous research (Isley P.J., Isley P., Freiburger, & McMackin, 2008), that it could have affected her relationship with men later in life.

Regarding her spiritual life, Glenda describes feelings of shame and inadequacy, when describing not having proper clothing to enter the church. Church was not a symbol of justice and equality under God; instead, for Glenda, it was associated with bullying and humiliation. This, combined with her experience in Jonestown, could have seriously damaged her view of organized religion and perhaps even her relationship with God.

Despite of this, Glenda expressed desire to get to know God. While in PT, she lost her faith all together, believing that if there was a God, he would never let this happen. Supporting Buxant and Saraglou (2007), Glenda eventually regained her faith later in life and describes her relationship to God today as “Healthy, whole, sure, relevant, unconditional, and lasting.”

Glenda’s childhood and adolescence were influenced by her mother’s death, her father’s abandonment, sexual and physical abuse, rape, and a NRM membership. Due to the amount of traumatic events, it is unclear what exactly the effects of NRM were. However, research indicates that new members often find comfort in a NRM soon after experiencing a stressful event. This wasn’t the case for Glenda, for whom PT was associated with fear, anger and stress. It was only after leaving PT, that Glenda could finally seek happiness. However, before doing so, she had to deal with post-NRM symptoms, including guilt and shock (in support of Singer, 1979; Gasde & Block 1998) which she describes as emotions she has to deal with to this day. Fortunately, she describes not being “under a heavy yoke of guilt” anymore, and expresses happiness with her life. Careful study of the Bible, she claims, helped her most with readjustment, as well as social support. While she perceives her PT involvement as a mainly negative experience, she credits her former group for teaching her to respect her beliefs no matter what others think. Glenda’s high sense of loyalty, which she considered to be one of her most important values while growing up, is evident throughout her life. She describes her group of friends in PT as very tight and loyal towards each other. They all shared negative views and suspicions towards PT. Her sense of loyalty is evident today in her relationship to God as well as in her dedication to helping others who are under the influence of a NRM. Glenda received a doctoral degree in religious studies.

3.2 Case Study: Laura

3.2.1 Brief Biography

Laura was born in Washington, D.C. to a lower middle class family. Her parents divorced when she was two, due to her father’s infidelity. After the divorce, Laura only had contact with her father twice a year. Laura’s family moved several times until she, her two sisters and her mother settled in Maryland. Laura describes her childhood and adolescence as being ‘very stable’. She lived with her family until she graduated high

school and moved away to attend college. During this time, the most significant relationship in Laura's life was with her mother who was a reporter and a newsletter writer. She describes her as "bright and competent (...), and a progressive and energetic role model" in Laura's life. "She was very active in the Democratic Party," Laura continues, "throughout our childhoods, she would host visitors who came to demonstrate in Washington from all over the South – from Selma, and other places. She of course marched with Martin Luther King when he gave his famous speech 'I Have a Dream Today...' It seems ridiculous now, but I took a babysitting job on that day – I regret that a lot. I am the most politically active of my siblings to this day".

After high school, Laura attended the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut. During college, she became more of a rebel than she was in her high school years, during which she was "the perfect daughter". As the most politically active of her siblings, her activism continued during her college years: "I stayed an activist, worked for human rights, protested the war in Vietnam and worked on my BA in Philosophy." Laura got married during her third year of college and dropped out of college in order to support her husband and his education. Unfortunately, the marriage ended nearly a year later after her husband left Laura for her best friend. Laura became politically active with the Black Panthers, but looking back she was "too naive to be a part of them at the time". She also went to Woodstock, but that wasn't a good "fit" for her either. Laura describes her religious views as atheistic. She recalls that as a child she was in a scary airplane incident and remembers having no one to pray to.

In 1970, Laura decided to move to San Francisco to live with her sister. The first weekend she was there, she visited PT and met Jones in a church that was two hours away. She describes Jones as "an expert at identifying people who were at crossroads – people who were weighing which path to take," and Laura fit that description at the time. As much as she was politically active and had a great heart in "caring about the human state", she seemed to continue to make bad decisions regarding the people she let into her life. Laura describes seeing Jones at this time as a "kind and inclusive leader." She appreciated his willingness and ability to draw in people of all races and all religious backgrounds; even atheists like Laura. It took her three months of visiting PT before deciding to join and move closer to the church.

After joining, Laura started living in communes that she also helped organize. More and more young and single people joined the church at this time. "Almost everyone shared

a space in their homes with a non-family member. I loved that,” she recalls. Laura was active in many PT activities, including being the head of security around Jim’s house, driving a bus, or counseling. “My life was exciting, never predictable, and exhausting,” she says. When Jim lived nearby, Laura would see him on a nearly daily basis. “He knew me by name and we had the kind of relationship a leader would have with the 200 people who lived with him or nearby, in that small community,” Laura explains. Jones eventually moved to San Francisco, where his church grew much larger. While in PT, Laura especially enjoyed her fellow members with whom she spent all her waking hours. “It was an awesome group of people. Somehow, Jim was able to draw in people who believed in human and civil rights, and who were willing to work through exhaustion to make the world better.” Although Laura, in retrospect, can now see some “red flags”, she was willing to overlook them for the greater good. Seeing all the hard work, all the lives enriched, all the great relationships formed, Laura could never think of leaving:

I was always on a high while in PT – until the very end. My life was challenging and I was becoming more confident and competent. I was driving a huge bus; I was doing all sorts of things that felt important and essential. I saw the needs of people being met every day – soup kitchens, housing, legal support, and educational support – in so many ways, the lives of the members were enriched. I never thought of leaving. (...) Jim’s behavior let us know that “the ends justified the means.” (...) I saw the wonderful things, and there were many. I glossed over the not-wonderful things. We were revolutionaries. No one said it would be easy. I was judgmental of others who complained or whined. I didn’t understand or have patience. There was so much good being done. (Laura)

Laura decided to join those moving to Guyana. For a year, she lived in Georgetown, helping newcomers with their relocation to Guyana. After a year, she was sent to Jonestown, after having an affair with a Guyanese man and enjoyed her life in Jonestown. Despite it being what she calls “primitive living”, it was rapidly growing and improving. Laura was one of the first of the few who actually knew about what was going on in San Francisco and about the concern growing in America. Near the end of October 1978, Laura was sent to Georgetown, where she stayed for the following 3 weeks. On November 18th, Laura received a coded message from Jones that those in Georgetown were to commit “revolutionary suicide”. Except for four people, Stephan Jones managed to stop everyone else in the house as well as those in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Laura describes being devastated: “I had lost all my friends – who had become my adopted

family. And I had lost my dream. Everything was ripped away. And I was abandoned by it all.”

Following September 18th, Laura soon moved back to San Francisco to live in on of the PT buildings for the next three months until the building was sold by the conservator. Laura and other survivors then lived in communes in San Francisco. “I went to work every day, but had not really decided to survive. I thought those who died had it easier than those of us who had to live through it,” she describes her post-exit difficulties. Laura soon discovered that she owed the government 500 dollars for her transport from Guyana. This was actually a blessing in disguise as it forced Laura to get a job and continue her education in computer operations. The money had not only helped pay off her debt, but also allowed her to help other survivors. Laura’s biggest struggle was time management, since she was used to being so busy in PT. It was suddenly hard to fill in the day as well as her life: “Nothing was as nourishing as working for a racism-free world. I was searching for a way to give meaning to my life,” she describes.

Although San Francisco offered counseling, which some survivors found helpful, Laura opted instead to move to a community where she felt “comfortable and loved” and where she had a “forum to talk about my grief.” For a year, she lived in this community with other survivors, but unfortunately they were “unable to help each other very much.” She eventually got involved with another community that focused on drug treatment. This proved to be a better fit and Laura met even her husband here, with whom she had a son in 1989. After her son was born, Laura started teaching English and eventually earned a BA in Philosophy and Psychology. Although Laura initially spent time with other survivors and tried to help them, it proved to interfere too much with her own coping. “I could only focus on one thing at a time when I came back. That is why I could not be with other survivors. I could only work on MY survival. That is all I had the energy for,” Laura says. This changed, when Laura decided to attend the 20th anniversary gathering in Oakland, where she met all her fellow survivors. “I was just delighted. It made my life complete”. Since then, Laura stayed in touch with about sixty survivors and family members. This was a starting point in Laura’s decision to finally open up about the secret she kept inside for so many years. After the anniversary, she was included in the Leigh Fondakowski play (“THE PEOPLES TEMPLE”), as well as in a PBS documentary. “All of these interviews and discussions were cathartic for us. We had a safe setting to expose our deepest traumas and thoughts.”

Looking back, being a part of PT has given Laura self-confidence and taught her a “profound” work ethic. “I know I can move mountains if I am focused. And, I have learned to focus on what I want. I am very strong, very opinionated, and have no hesitation in challenging authority now. I learned my lesson.” Laura also feels that even though her family loved her deeply, they were not able to help her to cope. Since being in PT, Laura has been searching for a way to feel she is making a difference – the way she did while in PT. This need was satisfied when she decided to write an autobiography. “My book was a huge step in my recovery. I didn’t have to open up the depth of my feelings to everyone I met. If people wanted more information than I gave them, they could read the book. I could give myself a break.” Laura once again got also involved in activism, with the Occupy movements and with immigration issues and civil rights.

Laura remained an atheist to this day, but is currently an active Quaker. Today, she describes herself as an educator and a world traveler. She expresses satisfaction with her life: “With all that’s going on, I finally feel that my energies are bringing fulfillment to my life. I am busy, and happy. I am totally satisfied with my life now.”

3.2.2 Within-Case Analysis

Laura described herself as having a stable childhood. However, she did report an insufficient relationship with her father, which is in correspondence with previous studies (e.g. Buxant and Saroglou, 2008). The most important relationship during this time was with her mother, who served as a role model to Laura, thanks to her political and social activism. Laura took on this theme, being active herself in adolescence and adulthood. Her rebellious behavior started in college, where she remained an active defender for human rights and justice. However, she eventually dropped out of college and soon experienced a betrayal by another important man in her life – her husband. Laura was seeking the right platform for her activism, including the Black Panthers and Woodstock, but none of them proved to be a good fit for her. As Coates (2011) reports, individuals often seek to “belong” prior to NRM involvement. It is only until her first contact with Peoples Temple, that she finally found a group that shared her views and where Laura was able put her ideals into action. Also, driven by disappointment with the people in her life, the group also acted as a substitute for her unfulfilling relationships. Laura describes being at “crossroads” after her divorce. Divorce as a major negative event preceding NRM

involvement is often reported by former members (Langone, 1995). She now recognizes that it was her vulnerabilities at the time that attracted her to PT as well as Jones's ability to recognize these vulnerabilities in others and persuade them to join.

Laura acknowledges her positive view of Jones upon her beginnings in PT as he seemed to practice what she believed in. Because she entered so early in PT's existence, she was able to see Jones on a daily basis and could observe him well. Laura soon threw herself into the PT activities, driven by passion for helping others. This work ethic and drive resulted in her ignoring some of the warning signs that might have arisen. In the theme of "the ends justify the means", she continued with her hard work and attributed all the "not so wonderful stuff" to the difficulty of implementing their thoughts. This theme of overlooking red flags for the greater good is present in the stories of many PT former members; particularly in those that today have mixed feelings about PT as opposed to those that have a negative perception.

Despite her dedication to the group and its message, Laura still at that time demonstrated rebellious behavior. After having an affair with a Guyanese man, she was relocated from Georgetown to Jonestown. This – surprisingly - did not turn her away from the group, instead she recalls enjoying life in Jonestown, despite it being simple living. After November 18th, she experienced feelings of loss and abandonment. Besides losing her loved ones, she describes losing a dream and meaning of life. Though Laura never mentioned suicidal thoughts concretely, she hints at them when stating: "I went to work every day, but not really decided to survive. I thought those who died had it easier than those of us who had to live through it." Another loss she experienced is fulfillment of everyday life. Being used to the rushed and fulfilling everyday life in PT, Laura found it hard to fill in her days. This is also influenced by the loss of meaning and search for a new purpose: "Nothing was as nourishing as working for a racism-free world. I was searching for a way to give meaning to my life". This statement demonstrates that the tragic exit from PT did not result in the loss of her fundamental beliefs. Laura was still in pursuit of "making the world better", after exiting and presently, thirty-five years later.

Laura credits social support as being instrumental in her recovery. This support from other former members did not prove to be beneficial, so Laura opted to enter a support group that at first glance composed of people with different experiences. However, it has been discussed (Perlado, 2004) that drug use and NRM involvement share many

similarities (The Family Survival Trust mentions among others: financial problems, physical and psychological problems, relationship problems, feeling of loss, etc.).

Laura opened the door to other former members, during the 20th anniversary of the Jonestown massacre, where deceased member's names were read out loud for the first time. Laura believes this event helped her and others significantly in their grieving. Laura finally felt that she could speak out about her experiences, and did so through different types of media, including documentaries and a theater play. Laura now continued searching for new ways to make a difference and found purpose in writing her biography. Studies have shown that writing can be therapeutic for some (Langone, n.d.). Laura expresses "total satisfaction" with her present life, in that she is finally able to use all of her "energies" in a productive way. She is fulfilled and satisfied.

3.3 Case Study: Thom

3.3.1 Brief Biography

Thom grew up in a "poor" family as an only son and the youngest among four children. When he was three years old, his family moved to Red Wood Valley, California, where his parents bought a house in order to start a care home for the elderly. Thom developed a unique relationship with one of the residents, who paid him to empty his ashtray and told him "fascinating" stories about his youth. Thom believes this is where he gained his interest in people's stories. "My poor Grandfather from my Father's side of the family must have been driven crazy of my constant questions of his life during the Great Depression and before," Thom says. After his grandfather passed away, his father became the storyteller, focusing mainly on the hardships of those times and on his army experiences. Overall, he describes being happy during this time, recalling playing with cars or exploring the nature side with his Great Dane Nicholis. These adventures often lasted all day: "I would leave in the morning and often not return until evening, boy was it fun!"

When Thom was five, his parents joined the PT after being encouraged to do so by Thom's grandparents. He recalls having to sit through long sermons in Jones' garage⁸, which he hated: "I soon became a 'problem child,'" he remembers. Even though Thom was very young when he joined, he describes it as a personal decision: "I recall the feeling of being left out, as my family left to go to church and in hearing my

⁸ The earliest of PT meetings were held in Jones's garage; authors' note.

sister talk of the church activities they enjoyed. So I started attending,” he says. However, Thom describes not really having a relationship with God at this point as God was just a “vague concept to me (...) I had never learned anything about God”.

Thom felt like his two older sisters took it upon themselves to “toughen” their little brother up. “Personally, I think they liked picking on me,” Thom explains, “not that I wasn’t a mischievous little brother; I just liked getting under their skin.” The youngest of his three sisters took on a more parental role (which he describes as a “mamma complex”) towards Thom and often protected and defended him during his fights with peers. Since Thom was an only son in the family, his parents arranged for another boy, Michael, to stay with him during one summer. Michael enforced Thom’s rebellious behavior to the point that law enforcement had to get involved several times. However, they managed to form a strong bond and as both went to PT, they stayed in touch for a while

During the beginnings, Thom’s father tried to spend some time with his children outside of PT, however this was soon becoming harder to accomplish. Because of this, Thom’s father wanted to leave the group, but instead was sent to Jonestown as one of the earliest residents. This left him feeling abandoned as his mother was too involved in PTs activities.”Wow that hurt!” he recalls. “Believing I was now alone my mental health diminished, internalized my anger, desperation and eventually this mental condition would come out, being both the source of my trouble and in saving my family and I. “

By the age of 12, Thom’s rebellious behavior worsened and soon PT decided to temporarily place him into the care of different family, in hopes of controlling his behavior. Thom had a history of running away at this point. Once, he ran away for four days until he was found; and his attempts to escape continued after being placed into the care of an African American woman who volunteered to take him in. The situation at Thom’s new household was troublesome at best. He describes his “foster mother” as having racial issues and placing her anger at him:

She would look for any reason to beat me: School grades; our school grades on a scale of A,B,C,D and F, "A" being Above average and "F" being Failing. Her requirements of me where straight A's anything less would mean another beating; I was a "C" student with an occasional "B", so every report card meant another beating! I hated her mother until the day she died! Eventually I ran away again. (Thom)

The situation got so intense that Thom ran away again during one of the church's road trips. After being found, he was moved to the San Francisco church. Regarding his everyday life, he explains that there was no "typical day" in PT. The group was formed during a time of "social turmoil" and society began changing, as well as PT, which in Thom's words was becoming more of a "people's movement". Despite how PT presented itself on the outside, he experienced a much different situation. He describes not being allowed to participate in after school activities or interacting with anyone outside the group. "To do so meant trouble for me," Thom explains. "I hated having everything I did being watched, scrutinized and being trapped within this group." He attributes his suffering to Jones, stating that:

As far as I was concerned he was the enemy and the cause of all my suffering. Even in my youth I knew if I could just kill him everything would become ok. I was just too young to figure out how, or to develop the courage to do so. (Thom)

Thom was envious of his peers outside of PT because of their freedom. He became resentful and believes that this was the core of his rebelliousness. Perhaps because of his hatred towards PT, spirituality eventually become none existing, as he describes that his PT experience made him hate anything connected to religion. "This would come to haunt me later in life," he adds.

Thom eventually moved to Jonestown, which was in his words, the "highest and lowest point" of his PT experience. Thom felt like a „jungle boy“, exploring the jungle and „discovering all sorts of new adventures – lots of fun!“ he recalls. Things changed after Jones moved to Jonestwon. Upon his arrival, Jones demanded hard physical labor from Thom. Insufficient work done resulted in hard punishment including being denied food. He describes the following punishment he had received for growing his own watermelons:

I was called before every one, severely chastised, forced to eat hot peppers' and assigned to digging a new out-house (out-door bath room) 9 feet by 9 feet by 9 feet deep; again if I didn't dig a foot a day I didn't eat. (...) In addition to the digging I had to run everywhere I went, not allowed to talk to anyone and had my head shaved. The worst times had arrived and I for the most part lived in trouble, I was nick named Tommy trouble. (Thom)

Thom's departure from Jonestown was carefully planned by his father, who informed him about his plan while in Jonestown. Thom describes feeling relieved that his parents also wanted out. However, before the plan was finalized, the Congressman's

infamous visit took place. Upon seeing that other members have decided to leave that day, with the help of Leo Ryan, Thom and his family decided to take their chance. Unfortunately, one of his sisters decided to stay and died that day; as well as Thom's best friend Brian. The rest of the family left with Congressman Leo Ryan to the local airstrip where shooting took place. Thom's family managed to escape into the jungle, where Thom stayed for three days until being rescued.

Soon after November 18th, Thom recalls feeling great relief, along with a fear of the unknown. Jones often preached to his members that if anything is to happen to PT, they are assigned people that to kill all the defectors. After November 18th, several unexplained deaths and murders of former PT members took place, and thus former members had to live in fear once again even after Jones' death.

After PT, Thom battled with survivor's guilt. He would preoccupy himself with thinking of ways he could have prevented it. He also battled with drug addiction. Thom did not seek any therapy due to unavailability of such services. Overall, Thom believes time was the biggest factor in coping with his PT experience. Social support from his wife and father were also crucial to his recovery. Thom also states, that his experience caused him to be more pessimistic and weary of people, which he perceives often as a threat. However, he also states that it equipped for anything life may bring him.

There is nothing this world can throw at me I can't survive; short of death it's self. I enjoy money but not afraid of failure, challenge me and I challenge you, anything a person throws at me eventually I will find a way to return the same and what should have mentally destroyed me only made me stronger and more resilient; this has become the outcome of JT for me and I can't help it. (Thom)

3.3.2 Within Case Analysis

Although Thom grew up in a poor family, he recalls being "happy" during his early childhood. He describes spending time with his grandfather and his father, although he also spent considerable amount of time alone, exploring the nature. Thom describes always being curious - ever since being young - which continued into his adulthood. He also describes his relationships with his sisters, which were of a more rivalry nature, especially with the two older ones. However, Thom admits his part in these siblings' fights, calling

himself a “mischievous” kid. His rebellious behavior continued during his membership in PT as well as in Jonestown.

Since Thom entered PT at such an early age, vulnerabilities prior to joining are difficult to observe. Interestingly, Thom does not describe being forced to go to PT sermons and instead recalls going voluntarily. Because of his early age of involvement, sitting through the long sermons was difficult for him, as is for any child. He did not form a relationship to God at this point either. Even though Peoples Temple was a Christian group during these early years, it had failed to teach Thom about God, whom remained for Thom a “vague concept”. His rebellious behavior increased when another PT member, Thomas stayed with him during the summer. His behavior was noticed in PT, where he soon became known as the “problem child”. Jones noticed Thom’s resistance to conformity and perceived him as a threat, thus punishing him more.

Thom describes his father leaving as a traumatic event. After his group took away his freedom, it now also took away his father and eventually his mother, when he was placed into a foster family. Thom felt abandoned and lonely, internalized his anger. However he never “gave in” to his situation and after punishment from his foster mother, from PT itself and from Jones, he never stopped fighting to get out. He believes his rebellion stems from his resentment of having to be in PT.

Jonestown was a terrible experience for Thom, but he does recall some brighter moments there. These included running around in the jungle and exploring the nature. However, once Jones arrived, Thom was put into extremely hard labor (granted, he was only fifteen at the time), which still didn’t break Thom’s spirit. He decided to run away once more, this time with his best friend Brian.

After finally escaping, Thom dealt with further fear and an extensive amount of survivor’s guilt, which he tried to overcome by addiction. Finally, he was able to overcome his readjustment difficulty with the help of a strong support system. Instead of his wife pushing him to speak, she would “plant seeds” in him, by hinting at her observations of his adjustment. He describes this as being a better strategy for him, since he “self-corrected” thanks to it. Thom seems well adjusted at the moment. However, as mentioned before, he still has to deal with trust issues and preoccupation with the negative.

As I become older I have come to realize this experience has created several issues for me, some positive and most negative. I have had to accept the fact I don't think or rationalize every day existence the same as others. I analyze everything to the fullest

extent, I tend to see the negative more prominently than the positive, anything which encroaches on my space or direction in life I am pursuing is contrived as a threat and to be battled (although I have toned this down alot) (Thom)

3.4 Case Study: Guy

3.4.1 Brief Biography

Guy describes his childhood as “great” up to the age of 12. Guy grew up in California, where his father was a coach at the local high school and his mother was in charge of a playground and a handicraft shop. Even though he suffered from stuttering, he had a wide social life, having many “big brothers” thanks to his father’s job. When Guy was six, his family moved to another city and eventually his stuttering became more noticeable. Guy experienced a lot of negative attention because of it, which resulted in his being withdrawn and spending a lot of time alone creating games and various activities to “deal with and overcome the negative occurrences,” he explains. When his father became the principal at the grammar school Guy attended, he had to deal with yet another source of bullying. Guy soon came up with a solution to this problem – he was able to obtain a key to the supply room and provide schoolmates with stationary and other things. In spite of this, Guy was able to develop long term relationships that last to this day.

Guy attended a protestant church as a boy with his family, where his parents eventually became elders in the church. He “religiously” attended Sunday School until he was about seventeen or eighteen years old even though he was experiencing doubts about himself. “From an early age I felt like I was unworthy to be a ‘Christian’ as I got into (at time) anti-social behavior patterns and at one period got into ‘shop lifting’ until my mother found out and took me to the store manager to confess (...) And during this time period, I had negative feelings about myself and others. God to me at that time was a figure out in space that had neither connection nor concern for me – I was an unforgiving sinner!”

After Guy graduated from college, he married his first wife and during this time had no real contact with any particular church. “I became anti-church at this time because, as far as I was concerned, the so called Christian churches were not practicing what they were preaching,” Guy explains. “They were not taking care of the ‘widows and orphans, feeding and clothing the needy and providing shelter’, etc. as written in the Bible. So I became a probation officer determined to do good to all people whether they were

Christian, non-Christian, whatever!” Guy describes his mental health as ‘good’ during this time. He eventually remarried and had a daughter. “Most important values to me prior to joining PT were to become a good father and husband and a Probation officer, who took care and treated his clients with respect regardless of what offence they were guilty of.”

Guys’ dedication to helping people without judgment is evident and the mission of PT was sure to fall within these values and mindset. Once he saw this kind of dedication from Jones, he knew this might be the right fit for him. It was through his job as a probation officer, that he came into contact with Peoples Temple; actually Jim Jones himself, to be specific. Rev. Jim Jones called him one day, because a family the church was working with was ordered by the court to report to the Probation Department, due to their older son’s behavioral problems. Jones left his contact with Guy, in case there was anything Jones could do to help the family in need. Guy describes being “flabbergasted”, since this was the first time a minister contacted him while working as a probation officer. Later, he attended a couple of PT services and was attracted by the fact that it was a multi-racial church that really cared for its members and even nonmembers in need of assistance. “This church was doing what Jesus said eons ago”, said Guy. “Take care of the widows and orphans, clothe the naked and feed the hungry.” He was so taken back by the church that he eventually quit his job and enrolled in seminary training. He eventually left his plans and returned to working as a probation officer. He later attended more PT services and met new members, which convinced him to join. Shortly after, he was ordained as a minister of PT.

When Guy married his wife Christina in 1975, they lived in San Francisco with Christine’s two youngest children and their adopted daughter, Mona. Christine’s three older children left for Guyana shortly after; with Christine following in 1976 and Mona in 1978. All of them, except for Christine’s son John (who was in Georgetown at the time), passed away on November 18th. After Jim Jones left for Guyana permanently, Guy’s responsibilities in the San Francisco temple grew further. Guy and other staff members would try to encourage the Temple members to contemplate relocating to Jonestown. They would do so by showing them pictures of the progress their friends in Jonestown made, or have actual Jonestown residents come into town to talk about their life in Guyana. Guy had contact with Jonestown daily via shortwave radio, which confirmed to him that “Jonestown was becoming a true example of Socialistic Democracy in progress. We were part of a larger family.”

On November 18th, Guy was at the San Francisco temple, giving a sermon about “the success and dedication of our family and friends in Jonestown and their accomplishments over the years,” he remembers. It was during this sermon, that he was informed about what had happened in Jonestown. Guy didn’t believe it at first, thinking it was only a “cruel joke”. However, once his surviving step-son came on the radio and explained the reality of the situation, He was forced to accept the truth. His step-son also informed him that when he and others arrived to the site, they did not see any children’s bodies. The hope that the children were alive was crushed when the Guyanese officials and FBI confirmed that children indeed were deceased as well and were not visible because they were positioned under the adult bodies. After Guy got off the radio he experienced shock and disbelief. “I felt like that world as I knew was over and I was left alone to suffer in the agony of it all,” he recalls. Guy did not believe that this was a mass suicide, but instead a mass murder initiated by Jones and his supporters. In the following weeks, Guy filled his days with helping other members deal with the tragedy, fearing some may take their lives. Initially, Guy felt that he was unable to “carry on the principal” they practiced and lived by, but soon realized that others needed him to be strong during this time in order to offer assistance during this difficult time. This dedication to helping others deal with the aftermath of November 19th proved to have a healing effect on Guy himself. He did not receive any professional help due to lack of time and money. On Thanksgiving of the same year – a few weeks after the massacre – Guy visited his parents. After his father informed he that he was responsible for the tragedy and that he could have prevented it, Guy ended his relationship with his father and did not see him again till the early 1990s.

Guy moved away a few months after the event and worked as a probation officer again; which also helped him not give into the grief. “If it wasn’t for my job as a Probation Officer, I most likely would have gone over the edge. As long as I had my job, I could hold onto some reality that there was life-after-death, so to speak,” he describes. Guy was “hounded” by the FBI and journalists until he moved again to live with a childhood friend. Eventually, he was reunited with several former Peoples Temple members who encouraged Guy to work with them in a furniture company.

Looking back, he appreciates some aspects of the group. He considers PT as a “living example of how all races and religions can work together in service to all humanity – to all peoples!” he continues, “I miss the part of the temple working with people of different backgrounds, races, etc. Yes, we had our internal problems with each

other at times, but we spent the time and energy to find a common ground on all issues that arose.” He considers this to be the biggest benefit of being in a NRM. “We were looked at in awe of our endeavor and abilities to work together for a common cause – to be in service to all people – to serve humanity.” This also led to jealousy from other churches who, according to Guy, hated them for it. These churches were jealous of “our accomplishments, our involvement in local politics, and our ability and dedication to publicly demonstrate our beliefs and service to the community at large”.

After Nov. 18th, Guy describes having no relationship with God, and in fact being “anti-God” for a while. He was unable to fit the tragedy to his standing framework of ever-loving God. “How a loving God could let such a disaster occur, was my question – and still is of sorts. After recovering from all the guilt and despair, I asked and continued to ask God: ‘why did this happen’? And if there was U.S. governmental involvement in the massacre, when will those and others be brought to justice?” He believes that over the past thirty years, his spirituality evolved greatly. He is able to now fully accept all religions as long as they work for their members “in serving humanity, is all anyone can ask of another”. Guy’s relationship with God today is “joyful, loving, giving, sharing, etc. It takes me back to the early understanding (sort of) that God gave humans the choice of free will,” he explains. Perhaps the concept of free will is helping Guy with the painful question he so often asked himself.

Guy’s faith is of an internalized character, as he never plans on rejoining any organized religion again. However, he recently became interested in spiritual and metaphysical teachings. “Since I believed in reincarnation since childhood, I found this center for spiritual living less into religiosity and more tuned into helping and aiding others to a new age of Christianity.”

Guy seems to be very satisfied with his present life and the changes he has made since that infamous day. Guy is thankful to those who are “honest in their researching the history of Peoples Temple from its beginning to its end, will make it known that we were a community of people from all walks of life, and religions dedicated to serving others in need”.

3.4.2 Within case analysis

Guy did not experience a troubling childhood in terms of a troubled family life or insufficient family relationships. He did however experience feelings of inadequacy or shame due to his stuttering. Later, this was enhanced by that fact that Guy became the son of a principal, adding fuel to the bullying he received. This resulted in Guy's isolation, in which he found ways to entertain himself. He eventually found a clever way to deal with this by using an external means to gain respect from others. His feelings of unworthiness remained though, and grew stronger when he started attending church. There he had to deal with the high moral demands of the church that were in - Guy's view - incompatible with his behavior. Regardless, Guy doesn't mention any particularly negative life events prior to joining. Corresponding with the findings of Buxant and Sarogolous (2007), Guy cites his reason for involvement as being the attraction to the groups' teachings and activities, describing being "taken back" by Jones's caring of people.

After hearing what had happened in Jonestown on November 18th, Guy reports feelings of shock and disbelief. These feelings were followed by feelings of loss and abandonment ("I was left alone to suffer in the agony of it all"). Regarding his post-PT struggles, Guy credits helping other former members as therapeutic (in support of Langone, n.d.). Soon after, Guy moved and started working again, which he reports were additional coping strategies for him which proved to be helpful ("If it wasn't for my job...I most likely would have gone over the edge"). In conclusion, the most helpful strategy for Guy was working with other former PT members, which created sufficient social support.

Looking back, Guy appreciates some aspects of his former group. Particularly those that attracted him about the church initially: people from all walks of life coming together, working "in service to all humanity".

Guys' faith went through many changes throughout his life. Guy was introduced to church by his parents, which led to Guy attending church "religiously". As mentioned above, his rebellious behavior resulted in feelings of inadequacy and shame. He felt that God surely condemned him due to his behavior. Eventually, Guy veered away from church entirely, since they did not fit in with his belief of how a church should operate. Upon meeting Jones, Guy finally saw a group that was actually doing what he believed all churches should – helping the needy. He not only entered PT, but was ordained as a minister. After November 18th, Guy lost his faith, describing being "anti-God", in support

Buxant and Sarogolou`s (2007) findings of decreased faith after exiting, and eventually rising later. This is also reported by Guy, stating that since November 18th, his spirituality “evolved greatly”. Today he describes his relationship to God as joyful, loving, giving, sharing, etc. Guy’s faith however took on a more internalized character, as Guy never plans to enter any church again. He believes faith should revolve around helping others, a believe Guy had prior to joining.

3.5 Cross-Case Analysis

After analyzing each case individually, the cases were also analyzed comparatively in order identify similarities and differences as well as overlapping themes. Cross case analysis found the following themes: childhood, rebellious behavior, justice and activism, changes in spirituality and relationship with God, perceived freedom of will, feelings of abandonment vs social support, positive impacts and current satisfaction.

3.5.1 Childhood

Three out of the four respondents described having a happy childhood. Laura describes her family life as “very stable“, Guy remembers a “great childhood“ and Thom describes being “very happy”; at least during his early childhood. On the other hand, Glenda experienced traumatic events as a child, including rape and physical and sexual abuse by her father, followed by a diagnoses of anxiety and suicide attempt at the age of fourteen. Two respondents (Glenda and Laura) experienced insufficient parental relationship – Laura with her father and Glenda with both parents.

3.5.2 Rebellious Behavior

Three of the four respondents described engaging in rebellious behavior either as children or as young adults. “In high school, I had been the perfect daughter, still a virgin, no smoking, no drugs, and an activist” Laura explains. “When I got to college – that all changed” (Laura). Guy himself describes his anti-social behavior patterns as contributing to his feelings of unworthiness of God: “God had neither connection nor concern for me – I was an unforgiving sinner!” (Guy).

Thom describes himself as being a “mischievous kid”. He goes on to describe what he believes is his reason for rebellion:

As a young man (late adolescent) I was often envious of other kids not associated with the PT in regards to their freedom and in recognizing their normal life, at the same time being resentful of the life I was trapped in. This I believed to be the core of my rebelliousness or in the least contributed to it. (Thom)

Since Thom entered PT in an early age, his rebelliousness was associated more with life in the PT, rather than before. It is likely, that this rebelliousness and lack of conformity is what saved Thom’s life.

Rebellious behavior can be associated with impulsivity and lack of control and could be categorized as a predisposing vulnerability. For people with these personality traits, a highly organized and structured group with a charismatic leader could be attractive, as it could substitute for their lack of control and organization

3.5.3 Justice and Activism

Both of the respondents that entered PT as adults (Laura and Guy) describe a strong passion for social justice, racial inclusion and helping others prior to joining. Laura describes herself during her college years as „being an activist, worked for human rights and protested that was in Vietnam (...) I cared about the human state” (Laura). It was the passion for social justice that attracted her to Peoples Temple. This passion never left her, and Laura is very active today as well: „I have gotten very involved in activism, with the Occupy Movement and currently with the Immigration issues and civil rights” (Laura). Guy describes his disappointment in Christian churches, as they were “not practicing what they were preaching” (Guy). He continues: “They were not taking care of the ‘widows and orphans, feeding and clothing the needy and providing shelter’, etc. as written in the Bible” (Guy). When he started attending PT services, he was “taken by back by the fact that this was a multi-racial church, that took care of its members and their children (...) This church was doing what Jesus said eons ago” (Guy). In support of previous research (Coates, 2011; Almendros, 2007) both members entered what they perceived as a moral and well-motivated group.

For Glenda and Thom, issues of activism for human rights and a strong need for helping others arose during and after their PT involvement. It is uncertain whether it was this experience that influenced them in doing so.

3.5.4 Changes in Faith and Relationship to God

In correspondence to previous findings by Buxant and Saglou (2007), those who reported having faith (or in Glenda's case at least reported the desire to get to know God), did experience a decline of faith soon after exiting. As Guy states: "After November 18th I had no feeling of God's presence and was quite Anti-God for some time – how could a loving God let such a disaster occur, was my question – and still is of sorts" (Guy). However, today Guy describes his relationship to God as "joyful, loving, sharing, giving, etc." (Guy). Glenda reported having a non-existing relationship with God until 1994; however, today she describes a strong relationship to God. Laura, who entered NRM as an atheist, reports still being one. "I am more of an atheist today, if possible, than before 1978" (Laura).

Interestingly, the PT experience of the first two members did not veer them from faith all together. Although they suffered disappointment, anger, loss and even a period of non-faith, both members eventually welcomed faith back into their lives.

3.5.5 Perceived freedom of will

There is an overall difference not just in the perception of life in PT itself, but also in the amount of free will. One respondent who entered as a child at twelve describes her stay in PT as forced and accompanied by feelings of resentment:

We were all in the church (her and her group of friends, authors note) because we were in the custody of an adult member and resented it." (...) My lowest point was attempting suicide because I didn't want to be there and I didn't want to return to the environment I thought I'd escaped. (Glenda)

Another respondent (Thom) who entered as a child (although refers to his involvement as a personal decision) describes his numerous attempts to escape. Besides him being forced to be a member of PT, as he failed to escape numerous times, he also describes being forced to work among other things: "I didn't dig enough feet a day, I didn't get to eat" (Thom).

The two that entered as adults describe doing so voluntarily. Also, while recalling their presence inside PT, they do not refer to any problematic restrictions, loss of freedom

or inability to leave. One respondent even reports: “I never thought of leaving” (Laura); or later: “I was judgmental of others who complained or whined” (Laura).

Surprisingly, even though the respondents differ in their perception on the amount of freedom they had throughout the PT experience, they all agree that November 18th was a murder, not suicide. Laura refers to “victims” of November 18th, adding: “It is my opinion that Jim hated us, and I felt his hatred before he went to Guyana. He knew exactly what he was doing, and so did the others in control” (Laura). Guy similarly states: “It was not a suicidal mission. It was pure murder directed by Jim Jones and who ever supported him at that moment” (Guy).

3.5.6 Feelings of abandonment vs. social support

Several participants reported feelings of abandonment soon after November 18th. After the initial shock, Laura describes feeling “abandoned by it all” (Laura). Similarly, after hearing what happened on November 18th, Guy describes: “(...) I was left alone in the agony of it all” (Guy). Both members that entered as children did not mention feelings of abandonment. On the other end, isolation as a theme is often present before joining, inside the group, and after leaving. As mentioned above, the unwanted attention from the public appears to be one of the reasons former members isolate themselves or feel isolated for a period of time after exiting a NRM. It is only understandable, since most former members spent a considerable amount of time in the group (some even decades), and left friends or family members behind. In this case, their loved ones not only stayed in the group but also died, magnifying the sense of isolation. On the other hand, psychological trauma itself is often accompanied with avoidance of anything that might remind the survivor of the event. This combined with the feeling that no one can really understand what they are going through, leaves one feeling alone. Many ex-members cope with this feeling by staying close to former survivors or escapees, often forming such a tight bond that isolates them even the rest of the world. This was Guy’s experience as he states:

Through the time spent with many of them (former members; authors note), I realized it was helping me as well to adjust and carry on (...); it was helping other former members cope with the disaster that kept me from possibly doing any harm to myself. (Guy)

This however isn't proven to work for everyone. Laura, for example, describes living with other former members as not being very helpful to her initially. Instead, she opted to live in a community for substance abusers, which proved to be a better fit. However, twenty years later, she let former PT members back into her life, stating that they remain her closest friends till this day.

All participants experienced a severe sense of loss following their exit. Due to the circumstances of PT's demise, it is only expected to experience intense grief. Other than the loss of loved ones, two respondents described loss of meaning (Laura and Guy), two describe loss of faith shortly after exiting (Guy and Glenda) a one respondent describes a loss of everyday activities (Laura).

3.5.7 Positive Impacts

All participants discussed how their PT experiences helped them in post-NRM adjustment.

Even though Jonestown ended as it did, I had gained a lot of self-confidence and certainly a profound work ethic being in Peoples Temple. I know I can move mountains if I am focused. And, I have learned to focus on what I want. I am very strong, very opinionated, and have no hesitation I challenging authority now. I learned my lesson. (Laura)

Thom initially mentions not being able to see the good in his experience. However, as years passed, he now describes the outcome of his experience as following:

There is nothing this world can throw at me I can't survive; short of death itself. I enjoy money but not afraid of failure, challenge me and I challenge you, anything a person throws at me eventually I will find a way to return the same and what should have mentally destroyed me only made me stronger and more resilient; this has become the outcome of JT for me and I can't help it. (Thom)

Glenda also feels stronger as a result of PT: "It taught me to respect my beliefs, regardless of who doesn't agree. I advocate for children and woman and teach as a ministry" (Glenda). Guy however, responded to this question with: "Not really. The last thing I'll ever do is join a church ever again" (Guy).

Studies have shown that one of the positive impacts of NRM membership reported is higher self-esteem (Klosinki, 1985, as cited in Rochford et al., 1989). Laura's response

supports this claim, when she credits PT activities, as well as dealing with the tragic exit, to have contributed to her higher self-esteem. As she mentions earlier in regards to life in PT: “My life was challenging and I was becoming more confident and more competent” (Laura). However, Thom and Glenda (both of whom entered the group as children), instead describe how the negative experience made them stronger and more independent. Because of that, we shouldn’t treat these answers in support of positive impacts of NRM involvement, but instead in support of the paradoxical positive effects of psychological trauma. According to Updegraff and Taylor, personal resources determine whether a person achieves growth from a stressful event, or whether that even enhances his vulnerabilities. Optimistic people with a strong sense of self, who consider themselves to have more control over events, can achieve growth. Pessimistic people on the other hand rely on avoidant coping strategies and perceive themselves as having lower control (2000). Interestingly, a former minister of PT does not describe gaining coping strategies while inside the group. He however mentions less personal and more universal benefits of PT in the following statement:

To me the biggest benefit in a new religious movement was that we were looked at in awe of our endeavor and abilities to work together for a common cause – to be in service to all peoples – to serve humanity. (Guy)

3.5.8 Life Satisfaction Today

This is one of the few themes that all respondents agreed on. All respondents reported being happy and satisfied today. Laura states that she is “busy and happy. I am totally satisfied with my life now” (Laura). Guy also expresses happiness, stating that “I am very satisfied with my life at present and how it evolved since November 18th, 1978” (Guy). Similarly, Glenda describes: “I really love my life. I still hurt from past memories, but I’m no longer under a heavy yoke of guilt. I have family, health, friends and enjoyable work, so I guess that makes me wealthy in spite of all.” (Glenda)

Except for one respondent reporting still working with guilt and anger, the other respondents did not mention currently suffering from any after effects. This could be either due to the fact that they have successfully resolved all the stages of post-trauma adjustments (Singer 1979) and used positive coping strategies, or due to the amount of time that has passed.

3.6 Discussion

Two participants (both women) experienced a weak relationship with their fathers in support of the “missing father syndrome” (Ash, 1985). Authors have suggested that NRM involvement could be based on the search for a father figure (Ash, 1985). While this may be true for Laura, it was definitely not true for Glenda, who reported having a very negative relationship with Jones. Overall three respondents reported a “happy” or “stable” childhood. All three of these, however, did engage in rebellious behavior as children or as adolescents/young adults. This could be associated with a lack of direction, loss of control or impulsivity. Lack of adequate self-control could be a predisposing vulnerability, as individuals search for sources that could compensate for this lack of control by surrendering of ego control to the cult (Ash, 1985).

Prior to joining, only one respondent reported psychopathology (anxiety disorder), unreporting previous research (Langone, 1995; Singer and Lalich 1995). Nevertheless, three respondents did report experiencing a negative life event prior to joining – sexual and physical abuse and divorce – in support of previous studies (Buxant & Saroglou 2007; Langone, n.d.). However, for example divorce is a fairly common experience, unlike abuse, and so the question remains, whether a negative or distressful event wouldn't be found in most people. Also, the respondent that experienced abuse entered PT as a child, which was accompanied by resentment. Of the two that entered as adults, one reports being at “crossroads” before joining as well as experiencing social vulnerabilities. However, she and the other respondents who entered as adults, maintain that it was primarily the church's teachings and activities that attracted them to PT (in support of Martin et.al, 1988; Almendros et al., 2007). Perhaps because of this, they perceive the amount of voluntarism and freedom in the group differently than those who were taken to PT by their parents. The two that entered as children report a more negative perception on their life inside PT. One respondent's involvement was accompanied by anxiety, fear and stress. This respondent was also the only one to leave PT before November 18th. This respondent's attitude toward PT does not support Wright's (1991) view that those who leave voluntarily have a more positive attitude towards their former group. The other respondent that entered as a child would have left as well if he wasn't caught each time. Overall, as was expected, the amount of control one had over joining, affected experience. Regarding the perceived level

of voluntarism of those who died, respondents agree that it was more of a murder than a suicide. All participants refer to November 18th as “murder-suicide” or simply just “murder”. However, since many experts and examiners also believe this to be true, it would be hazardous to draw any conclusions from that (such as defense of former group, dissonance with beliefs, etc).

Several studies respondents reported feelings of loss as a common side-effect after NRM exit (e.g. Coates, 2010). Because of November 18th, former PT members had to deal with feelings of loss not only in the sense of losing a “home”, losing faith or losing security, but also with the literal loss of loved ones. One respondent describes missing fulfillment of everyday life and not knowing how to fill in her days, which is a common side effect mentioned by Singer (1979). Two respondents describe loss of meaning and a loss of relationship to God. In correspondence to previous research (Singer, 1978; Buxant & Saroglou 2007), post-cult adjustment struggles mentioned include (followed by the number of respondents in parentheses): feelings of loss (4), guilt and anger (4), time management problems (1), concentration problems (1), feeling of abandonment (2), drug abuse (2), and insomnia (1). Wright (1991) noted that post-NRM difficulties are usually resolved within 2 years after exit. However, at least one respondent discussed still working with feelings of loss and anger to this day, thirty five years after exiting. This may be due to the unusually tragic way the NRM ended. Additionally, unwanted attention and legal troubles were mentioned. Because their loved ones were taken, by what all respondents call murder, the feelings of loss are accompanied with anger and survivor’s guilt.

Even though research suggests that a large percent of former members who have experience psychological abuse or spiritual trauma appear to need counseling (Langone, 1995), none of the respondents sought professional help after exiting. Mentioned reasons for this were: insufficient time and finances, not believing it would help or unavailability of such services. Instead, all members reported social support as being crucial to their healing. While some sought the support of family members, others found it beneficial to stay in contact with other ex-members. In fact, Langone (n.d.) mentions that 90% of former NRM members find contact with other former members as well reading materials to be beneficial. One respondent reported finding it helpful twenty years after November 18th, in accordance to Moore’s theory of disenfranchised grief (2011). Before that, she express the need to only concentrate on herself.

Respondents also discussed how their experience helped with their growth. However, only one respondent cited the group itself - with its teaching and activities - to have a positive impact on her life, in support of Klosinski (as cited in Rochford, et al 1989). The rest describe personal growth, more similar to one experienced after a traumatic or stressful event (Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). It is possible that this could be due to the unclear phrasing of the question. In general, this study isn't particularly in favor of NRM, given the fact that all respondents reported many struggles post-exit, and only one reported benefits provided by the group itself. Two of those instances describe growth from the trauma PT caused, instead of PT teaching them valuable lessons or skills.

As for their faith, two of the respondents that were involved in the church the most interestingly mostly stayed true to whatever beliefs they had before joining the church, even though they were not in accordance to the belief system presented by Jones. One respondent, who was an atheist before joining, remained an atheist to this day. In support of Buxant et al. (2007), two respondents experienced loss of belief while in PT but regained it after leaving; and now describe a healthy relationship with God. The respondents' faith though appears to have a more individualized character as at least one member responded that he never plans to enter an organized religion again.

Today, all respondents describe being happy, although at least two respondents reported still working with emotional after-effect (feelings of threat, pessimism, anger and grief) till this day. Overall they appear to have successfully readjusted and live productive lives. All respondents report having good jobs and good social and familial relationships. Several factors could have contributed: the amount of time passed, personality traits, outlooks on life or coping strategies. Inside the negative environment, under a dictatorship, the group may have created a "bubble" of positive exchange, and a suitable environment for obtaining positive coping strategies. Perhaps in light of Updegraff and Taylor (who describe positive growth after a traumatic experience; 2000), we can better understand the reasons for their positive readjustment. Perhaps, respondents all had strong sense of selves, held a more positive outlook on life and/or perceived to have more control over their lives. Based on the amount of fight and sense for justice these respondents had (some prior to joining - fighting for social rights, and some inside PT - fighting for the rights of other members), the optimism for human condition combined with rebelliousness might be contributing factors for their positive readjustment.

3.7 Conclusion

This study provides two different perspectives of the same NRM. Two of the respondents who joined as adults express more mixed emotions, acknowledge benefits and negatives, and show appreciation for what the group stood for and its members. The two participants who entered as children show a more negative attitude towards their group. Their recollection of their experience also uses more negatively charged words and their written answers also included more exclamation marks as well as curse words, especially when describing Jones. It was also these two participants that either successfully escaped PT, or attempted to. The two participants who entered as adults also hold a negative view towards Jones now, but describe some of what they perceived as good traits in him, when in PT. This is in correspondence with Coates, that the best way to understand ones difficulties after exiting is to have an understanding of their reason for joining (2010). However, several other former PT members (not included in this study) who entered as children also report mixed emotions as do the ones who entered as an adult. Further research would therefore be beneficial.

The study also shows that the breakdown of belief system, which is used in deprogramming and often in exit counseling, is not necessary in order to leave the group as one can still keep the ideology after departing from the group. Even if the departure was bitter and negative, it doesn't have to effect one's persuasion of the rightness of the groups teaching. The ex-members' relationship with God, although tested, can remain eventually intact. This could prove to be true regarding non-religious movements as well.

A longitudinal study would be beneficial in order to compare life soon after exit and life long after exit. Since this study uses retrospection and demands looking back thirty seven years, respondent bias must be considered. Three different sources of respondent bias could be present: (1) the time passed could have construed the memories; (2) because of the disastrous events November 18Th, ex-members might be afraid to openly discuss more positive memories or have subconsciously altered them to fit the public's perception of NRM; and (3) the amount of voluntarism in group joining could contribute on the later perception of the experience. Another limitation of this study is based on the fact that face-to-face interviews were not possible. Therefore, follow up questions as well as observations were limited. Another limitation is based on the variety of respondents, as two entered as adults and two as children; nevertheless this limitation introduced some ideas for further research.

Even among the many limitations, this study brings interesting insight to the experiences of being in a NRM in general and especially being in a NRM with such destructive results. Concretely, insight was gained on how the destructiveness of this group effected the respondents' further lives, their faith and well-being. According to Coates (2012), it is possible that those who join NRM do so, because they are searching for a belief system, which may be able to compensate their need for closure. "It is possible," he continues, "that our fast-paced and fragmented societies fail to meet our natural need to belonging" (Coates, 2012, last page). It is plausible, that joining a benign NRM may in fact be beneficial, as it would fill the needs for belonging, social relationships or meaning of life. However, as long as there are ill-motivated and power-hungry leaders, the dangers of harmful cultic new religious movements need to be explored further in order to hopefully being able to recognize warning signs in time, to guide members in exiting and readjusting to life outside their group.

I am thankful for those who are diligently and honest in their researching the history of Peoples Temple from its beginnings to its end, will make it known what we were a community of people from all walks of life, races and religions dedicated to serving others in need. (Guy)

There are so many stories to be told about the horrors of PT. (...) hopefully, someone will report something that will prevent the loss of innocent lives in the future. Cults still exist, more overtly than most recognize. Perhaps (studies) will shine a light on the atrocities of man, and allow God's real Truth to shine. Love is not that complicated, it's when we refuse to love that things become complicated. I lost family and friends in Jonestown, and many that survived were lost to drugs and mental illness. I pray for the day when they find courage to accept the peace of God to live the lives they were supposed to live, a life free from fear and pain. God bless. (Glenda)

I go around universities, libraries, conferences, etc. to speak, but not to speak about Jim Jones. I feel that he has received all the attention that he likely wanted, as the leader and murderer of my loved ones in Jonestown. I want to speak about the 917 who lost their lives, of how wonderful they were, how they are missed, how much of a difference they could make in this world that is so corrupt and prejudiced. That is my goal. (Laura)

There is nothing this world can throw at me I can't survive; short of death itself. I enjoy money but not afraid of failure, challenge me and I challenge you, anything a person throws at me eventually I will find a way to return the same and what should have mentally destroyed me only made me stronger and more resilient; this has become the outcome of JT for me and I can't help it. (Thom)

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Appendix A. - Glenda's answers as sent

LIFE BEFORE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE

1) *How would you describe your childhood and adolescence and what were the most significant events (best and worst) in your childhood and adolescence (before joining the church)?* I have 20 siblings, my mother died when I was 6 years old, I was abandoned by my biological father after her death. My biological father was married and fathered three children by my mother, who was married to my stepfather. My 2 sisters and I that have the same biological parents were sent to live with relatives, but were later reunited with our older siblings from my mother. I was abused physically and sexually by my stepfather, raped at 11, and became very angry. I began to run away from home. I was diagnosed with anxiety at age 13 and attempted suicide at 14.

2) *Please describe your most significant relationships in your childhood and adolescence.* My 2 little sisters, my adopted mom. These were the ones I could be transparent with. My best friend Toni, who died in Jonestown was like a sister to me.

3) *What was your relationship to God during childhood and adolescence? Please describe your spirituality during this time* I always wanted to know God, but did not go to Church regularly because we never had proper clothes to go. People made fun of us, so I always thought of the Church as a place to be ostracized.

4) *If you joined the church as an adult, how would you describe yourself and your mental health before joining?* N/A

5) *What would you consider to be the most important values to you before joining the church?* Loyalty and trustworthiness.

LIFE IN PT

1) *What were the circumstances under which you joined the church?* My stepfather began dating our next door neighbor, a member of the church, who saw how troubled I was and started taking me to the meetings.

2) *How would you describe your typical day at the church?* It was always something serious. I was an attendance taker that worked at the doors and an usher that worked with collecting offering, I sang in the choir and directed sometimes. I was a bus hostess, helped in the nursery, helped in the kitchen, and did street witnessing.

3) *What do you think your role in the church was?* A pawn.

4) *How would you describe your relationship with Jim Jones?* Forced and fake. I went to school with his kids.

5) *How would you describe your most significant relationships inside the church?* I had a close circle of friends that could see through the BS, were kept our circle tight and were very loyal to each other. We were all in the church because we were in the custody of an adult member and resented it.

6) *How would you describe your spirituality and belief system while in church – did it go through any changes while being in the church?* It went from amazement to rude awakening, I began to believe in nothing because I couldn't understand how a Jim Jones could get away with what he was doing. I felt like no one cared about us.

7) *What would you consider to be your lowest and highest points during your stay at the church?* My lowest point was attempting suicide because I didn't want to be there and I didn't want to return to the environment I thought I'd escaped. The highest point was when I became pregnant, it made a way of escape.

8) *How would you describe your mental health and well-being while in the church?* High anxiety, stressed, fearful.

9) *Is there anything else you would like to say about your stay in the church?* I was traumatized by living in an all-white racist community in Redwood Valley, CA. I was born and raised in Watts, so this was complete culture shock. I was called nigger every day at school, and people outside of the church were openly hostile to Blacks. To live in that environment and then live also in the church's paranoia was unspeakable.

LIFE AFTER PT

1) *What were the circumstances of your departure from PT?* I snuck away from the entourage the night before I was to leave for Guyana.

2) *How would you describe the reactions from the group and from your loved ones about your departure?* The group was angry and wanted to punish me, my loved ones were glad I got away. My best friend was depressed because she knew she would die in Jonestown.

3) *Where were you on November 18th?* In Los Angeles with my sisters.

4) *How would you describe your feelings after learning about November 18th?* Guilt and shock. I was guilty because I felt I helped contribute to the tragedy by escaping and aligning with others that left the group. I always sensed something horrible would happen and wished I had done more to prevent it.

5) *How would you describe your feelings about November 18th now?* Still working through my anger and grief.

6) *What would you consider to be your major struggles while adjusting to life after PT?* Trying to answer everyone's questions, and their curiosity. Feeling stupid and used.

7) *Considering your mental health did you seek any help after your departure?* I was an insomniac for years after. I never went for counseling or took meds for anxiety. I became a Jehovah's Witness, and was later disfellowshipped when I saw through their lies.

8) *What would you say helped you the most with coping with your departure from the church?* An honest study of the Bible, support from family and friends.

9) *Have any of your PT experiences helped you with post church adjustment?* Yes, it has taught me to respect my beliefs regardless of who doesn't agree. I advocate for children and women, and teach as a ministry.

10) *How was your family, your friends and your community helped your transition?* By allowing me to find my place and space. My community supports my healing.

11) *Looking back, what are your thoughts about Jim Jones's and his (and other member's) tactics now, and how has your view of them changed from when you were in the church?* I believe he always had an agenda that led to 11/18/79. He was never the nice person people portray him to once have been. He was power hungry and sadistic, and was surrounded by a bunch of idiots just like himself.

- 12) *Besides your family and friends, what do you miss most about being in PT?* Nothing
- 13) *What would you say were the biggest benefits and biggest drawbacks of being in a new religious movement?* Traveling to new places, lots of friends, drawback was I couldn't choose when and where to travel and who my friends were.
- 14) *How would you describe your relationship to God after November 18th?* It was non-existent until 1994.
- 15) *How would you describe your relationship to God now?* Healthy, whole, sure, relevant, unconditional, and lasting.
- 16) *If you could ask God anything concerning November 18th, what would it be? Are any of my friends in heaven?*
- 17) *How would you describe the evolution of your spirituality since your departure until now?* I don't see it as an evolution, but as a creation. I believe God created me to be the person I am, and life's experiences has drawn me closer to Him.
- 18) *How satisfied are you with your life right now?* I really love my life. I still hurt from past memories, but I'm no longer under a heavy yoke of guilt. I have family, health, friends, and enjoyable work, so I guess that makes me wealthy in spite of it all.
- 19) *Is there anything else you would like to add?* There are so many stories to be told about the horrors of PT. I'm glad you are doing this study, because hopefully someone will report something that will prevent the loss of innocent lives in the future. Cults still exist, more overtly than most recognize. Perhaps this study will shine a light on the atrocities of man, and allow God's real Truth to shine. Love is not that complicated, it's when we refuse to love that things become complicated. I lost family and friends in Jonestown, and many that survived were lost to drugs and mental illness. I pray for the day they find find courage to accept the peace of God to live the lives they were purposed to live, a life free from fear and pain. God Bless☺

Appendix B. - Laura's answers as sent

LAURA

JONESTOWN SURVIVOR

LIFE BEFORE PEOPLES TEMPLE

I grew up in a lower middle class family – my parents were divorced when I was two over my father's infidelity. My mother was very bright and competent, but struggled with the divorce. I was born in Washington, DC, and lived there briefly until the family moved to Texas. After two years, my mother and my two sisters moved briefly to live with my maternal grandmother, and then settled in the suburbs of Washington, DC. My mother worked as a reporter, a speech writer, and newsletter writer. My father had limited contact – twice a year for the most part. My family lived for the next twelve years in the same neighborhood in Rockville, Maryland – until I graduated from high school and moved away to college. (very stable)

My most significant relationship was with my mother. She was a progressive and energetic role model in my life. She was President of the Parent Teacher Association at almost all of the schools my sisters and I attended, worked full-time and commuted an hour a day into Washington, and was very active with the Democratic Party. Throughout our childhoods, she would host visitors who came to demonstrate in Washington from all over the South – from Selma, and other places. She of course marched with Martin Luther King when he gave his famous speech “I Have a Dream Today...” It seems ridiculous now, but I took a babysitting job on that day – I regret that a lot. I am the most politically active of my siblings to this day.

I was never religious, had no religious training. When I was in an airplane in about the 9th grade, the plane hit an air pocket and rapidly dropped 10 or 20 feet. Then, I realized I had no thing to pray to – and have been an atheist all my life. I was never drawn to a church.

After high school, I went to the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut. In high school, I had been the perfect daughter, still a virgin, no smoking, no drugs, an activist. When I got to college – that all changed. I stayed an activist, worked for human rights and protested the war in Viet Nam, and worked on my BA in Philosophy. I got married in my third year of college to a fellow activist, and flunked out of college. I went to work and supported my husband finishing his education. After nine months, he decided he would prefer to be with my best friend and college roommate, so we separated and then divorced. I was politically active with the Black Panthers in Connecticut. I was too naïve to be a part of them at that time. I also went to Woodstock to see if that was the “right” way for me to get involved. It was not a good fit either.

My sister in San Francisco invited me to come live with her in March, 1970. She said I had made enough mistakes over the past year and that I should move in with her. I moved to San Francisco. The first weekend, I first visited Peoples Temple and met Jim Jones, in Redwood Valley, California. It was about 2 hours north of SF. Jim was an expert at identifying people who were at a crossroads – people who were weighing which path to take. I had a good sense of activism and cared about the human state, but continued to make bad decisions with the people I chose as friends/boyfriends. So, I was following my heart, not my head at that time.

The members of PT obviously adored Jim, and he was a kind and inclusive leader. Both kids and adults loved him and his message. He had drawn people of all races and all backgrounds – people who were determined to make the world better. He would bring in Catholic, Pentacostal, and all other religions, and followers of Edgar Cayce, and atheists like me. Anyone and everyone was welcome – especially if you were a hard worker.

LIVE IN PT

I visited Peoples Temple over the months, but didn't decide to join for about three months. About three months after that, I moved to Redwood Valley. I threw myself into Peoples Temple activities. I lived with the Assistant Pastor's family for a while and then started living and organizing communes. More and more single young people were joining and we lived in many different communes. Almost everyone shared a space in their homes with a non-family member. I loved that.

I worked full time in the local welfare department, with at least seven other PT members. We tried to be discreet about our membership and our friendships – that didn't work. I had other jobs in PT like being on the Planning Commission, head of security around Jim's house, driving a bus, working on files – our mailing lists, sending out newsletters, going on trips around the country, counseling, many jobs. My life was exciting, never predictable, and exhausting. While Jim was living in Redwood Valley, up until 1972 or so, I would see him 4-5 times a week. He would come to some of the projects I'd work on, and we would have frequent family meetings etc. He knew me by name and we had the kind of relationship a leader would have with the 200 people who lived with him or nearby, in that small community. Once he moved to San Francisco, I continued to live and work in Redwood Valley. He had a huge church after that and became a power broker in San Francisco.

My relationships in PT were with the people I worked with, ate with, traveled with, and spent all my waking hours with. It was an awesome group of people. Somehow, Jim was able to draw in people who believed in human and civil rights, and who were willing to work through exhaustion to make the world better. Even today, 36 years later, the survivors are my best and most intimate friends.

I remained an atheist – to this day. Religion never answered any of my expectations. I am more an atheist today, if possible, than before November 18, 1978.

I was always on a high while in PT – until the very end. My life was challenging and I was becoming more confident and competent. I was driving a huge bus, I was doing all sorts of things that felt important and essential. I saw the needs of people being met every day – soup kitchens, housing, legal support, and educational support – in so many ways, the lives of the members were enriched. I never thought of leaving.

Jim's behavior let us know that "the ends justified the means." I overlooked any flags that we can now see in retrospect, knowing that things for many people were improving, and even life-giving. I saw the wonderful things, and there were many. I glossed over the not-wonderful things. We were revolutionaries. No one said it would be easy. I was judgmental of others who complained or whined. I didn't understand or have patience. There was so much good being done.

While I was in Guyana, I lived a year in Georgetown, buying supplies, meeting people who flew in, and getting them ready to go into Jonestown – legal papers, medical care, etc. After a year, I had a one-night affair with a Guyanese man. I was immediately sent into Jonestown. I stayed in Jonestown for 8 months. I loved it there. It was primitive living, but I saw vast improvements every

day and every week. I was delighted with the progress. Very few of us in Jonestown knew of the events unfolding in SF with Congressman Ryan's visit, with the Concerned Relatives, or the news reporter who had uncovered some of Jim's escapades. Even though it was early in the development of our community – really just about 2 years old – I stayed delighted with the progress.

At the end of October 1978, Jim asked me to go back into Georgetown to relieve some of the people working there. I stayed there for the next 3 weeks. When Congressman Ryan came to Guyana and went into Jonestown on November 17, 1978, I was living in Georgetown. Jim sent a coded message on the radio (which was our only way to communicate between all the PT locations) that we were to commit “revolutionary suicide.” In Georgetown, only Jim's secretary Sharon Amos killed herself and her 3 children. Stephan Jones stopped everyone else in the house, and stopped by calling SF and LA and telling them no one was to listen to that instruction. I was devastated – I had lost all my friends – who had become my adopted family. And, I had lost my dream. Everything was ripped away. And I was abandoned by it all.

LIFE AFTER PT

After about 10 days, I came home from Guyana – and went to live in the SF PT building. I lived there for three months until the Conservator emptied the building in preparation of selling off the assets of PT. Then, we survivors lived in a few communes in SF. I went to work every day, but had not really decided to survive. I thought those who died had it easier than those of us who had to live through it.

A major event that helped me was that the US government told me that they had a lien on my passport. I owed the government \$500 for my transport back from Guyana. I was so furious! I told them I hadn't even wanted to come back. They didn't care. So, I got off my crying couch and got a job and got my passport. I went back to school, too, in computer operations. Then, I had money to help some of the others who survived. It was one of those unpredictable circumstances – that pushed me forward.

In reflection, my thoughts about November are just as vivid now. It was a terrible loss of all of these wonderful people. Jim was sick – mentally and physically – and addicted to drugs. Those closest to him caught his insanity and became nearly as bad as he was. Horrific. And, such a waste of wonderful and much-needed activists.

My biggest struggle was using my time. I had been so busy, doing fulfilling and important work every waking minute of the day, that I couldn't fill my time enough. I wasn't and am not a tv addict, or shopper. Nothing was as nourishing as working for a racism-free world. I was searching for a way to give meaning to my life.

San Francisco made some counseling available and some people found the counselor to be a big help. I knew a visit of an hour or two a week was not going to fix me. Even against the advice of my fellow survivors and my family, I moved into a community where I felt comfortable and loved, and where I had a forum to talk out my grief – the “Synanon Game.”

For a year, I lived with other survivors. We were not able to help each other very much. I got involved with another community, the Synanon Residential Drug Treatment Community. They had a leader, Chuck Dederich, who was a former alcoholic. He had fallen off the wagon again and was a raging drunk. That allowed me to move in – since no one held him on a pedestal and I didn't want to be in a group with a strong leader. It was a wonderful community of people dedicated to getting drug addicts off of drugs. About half of the members were dope fiends, half were “squares” or folks who didn't abuse drugs or alcohol. They

took wonderful care of me. I met my husband there and got married in 1982, and my son was born in 1989. Synanon closed in 1990.

In 1990, with Synanon closed down, I knew I had to get to work. I was married with a small wonderful son. I worked teaching English and went back to school. I earned my BA with dual majors – Philosophy and Psychology. Then, I got my bilingual teaching credential. I began teaching full time in 1994. I just retired from full-time teaching last June.

I could only focus on one thing at a time when I came back. That is why I could not be with other survivors. I could only work on MY survival. That is all I had the energy for. I really distanced myself from the other survivors during my 10 years in Synanon. Though, I did visit Larry Layton in prison in San Francisco while he was there, over about 6-8 months. Otherwise, I was not in touch with more than one other person.

In 1998, I heard from one survivor that he and a friend were hosting a 20th anniversary gathering at Evergreen Cemetery in Oakland, where most of the remains were buried. By then, I had a stable family, a profession and job, and I decided I'd go. I went to a counselor first to talk it through. It was an open wound I carried with me, but NEVER talked about with any of my new friends. It was a secret I carried.

When I went to the gathering, I met all of my fellow survivors. I was just delighted. It made my life complete. From that moment, we have stayed in touch. I am in regular contact with about 60 survivors and family members. I started thinking of writing a book around then. From the 20th anniversary, I have been involved with the other survivors and close friends.

We were all helped when Leigh Fondakowski contacted us to write a play. She did an awesome job of including our thoughts and dreams and our music in her play THE PEOPLES TEMPLE. Soon after that, Stanley Nelson decided to do a documentary on Peoples Temple for the American Experience Program of PBS. He also did a great job. All of these interviews and discussions were cathartic for us. We had a safe setting to expose our deepest traumas and thoughts. I have felt bad for the survivors who refused to talk to these professional and caring documentarians. I feel that they missed out having a forum to open up. There have been horrific movies, books, and documentaries – because trash talk sells. But, there have been a number of wonderful ones.

Even though Jonestown ended as it did, I had gained a lot of self-confidence and certainly a profound work ethic being in Peoples Temple. I know I can move mountains if I am focused. And, I have learned to focus on what I want. I am very strong, very opinionated, and have no hesitation in challenging authority now. I learned my lesson.

During all of my experience with Peoples Temple, there was nothing that my beloved and wonderful family could have done to sway me. I was so determined to make my own decisions and path. Before, during, and even after Peoples Temple, I had to find my own unique path. My family loved me utterly, but couldn't help me to get over it. My two sisters are still alive. They help fill my life now, but couldn't break through my shell for a long time. I am so happy that my mom did have a chance to meet my family and meet my son. My father too, got to meet him. I am very happy about that.

I have searched all these years to get the solid feeling that I am making a difference – that same feeling that I had while in PT. I finally got it back beginning when I published my book. My book was a huge step in my recovery. I didn't have to open up the depth of my feelings to everyone I met. If people wanted more information than I gave them, they could read the book. I could give myself a break. And since then, my son graduated from college, became a teacher and is my pride and joy. I have gotten very involved in activism, with the Occupy Movement and currently with the Immigration issues and civil rights.

I am an active Quaker, and an educator. I am also a world traveler, and have been to China, India, Barcelona, Montreal, Mexico City, and elsewhere just within the recent past. With all of that going on, I finally feel that my energies are bringing fulfillment to my life. I am busy, and happy. I am totally satisfied with my life now.

I want to add – I go around to universities, libraries, conferences, etc. to speak, but not to speak about Jim Jones. I feel that he has received all of the attention that he likely wanted, as the leader and murderer of my loved ones in Jonestown. I want to speak about the 917 who lost their lives, of how wonderful they were, how they are missed, how much of a difference they could make in this world that is so corrupt and prejudiced. That is my goal

Appendix C. - Guy's answers as sent

Life Before People's Temple

I had a great childhood up to the ages of 12 or 13. At 5yrs.old my dad was a coach at the local High School. So I had "big brothers to play and spend time with. My mom was in charge of the playground and handicraft shop owned by C&H Sugar refinery in Crocket,Calif. Our house was owned by C&H as well. On the week ends me dad was in charge of the playground and officiated and supervised in some of the sporting events. This too provided me allot of attention from older boys and girls in sports and social events. I also got to know many of the kid's parents and relatives which furthered my social surroundings. I had good times in grammer school and loved my teachers.

We moved to another city in Calif. (Alameda) just after Pearl Harbor was bombed by the Japanese in 1941 – I was 6yrs. Old. It was during this period (1941-1946) that my stuttering became noticeable by my peers, teachers, parents, etc. I went through allot of kidding and ribbing from my peers who bothered me allot and at times I would remove myself from my friends and others and spend lots of time alone creating games and various activities to deal with and overcome the negative occurrences that I had experienced.

We moved again to a smaller town in Calif. Owned by the Cowell – Portland Cement Co., in Calif. where I lived from 1946 until I completed my undergraduate studies in 1962. From 1946 to 1949 my dad was the principal of the grammer school I attended from the 6th to the 8th grade. Since I was the principal's son, I was tormented by my peers and upper classmen. I was chased constantly during recess periods and pushed and shoved by upper classmen. By the 7th grade it got better when my classmates discovered that I could get the key to the supply room and provide them with stationary, etc. When the upper classmen learned of my supplying my roommates with stuff, they backed off. My mother was a school bus driver that I rode on to and from school – this was a plus for me for me as well, in that I got better treatment from my peers and upper classmen. In this "Company" town, over the years, I made long lasting friendships with other kids in town. And to this day, we are still friends and keep in touch with each other.

#3

I went to protestant churches with my mother and sister off and on for years in the three cities we lived in. My dad returned to church at our last home, and he and my mother became Elders in the church (Concord, Calif. Presbyterian Church). I "religiously" attended Sunday School in all the churches until I was probably 17 or 18yrs. Old. From an early age I felt like I was unworthy to be a "Christian" as I got into (at times) anti – social behavior patterns and at one period got into "shop lifting" until my mother found out and took me to the store manager to confess. And that was the end of that! And during this time period, I had negative feelings about myself and others. God to me at that time was a figure far out in space that had neither connection nor concern for me – I was an unforgiving sinner!

#4

I attended a couple of P.T. meetings while I was living in Ukiah, Calif. and employed as a Probation Officer with the Mendocino Co. Probation Dept. The Temple had moved to Redwood Valley from the mid west in the early 60's. I resided in Ukiah from 1964 till the fall of 1969.

I graduated from a church related college (Whitworth Clge. in Spokane, Wash.) in 1962, was married (to my 1st. wife) and had very little contact with any particular church. I became anti-church at this time because, as far as I was concerned, the so called Christian churches were not practicing what they were preaching. They were not taking care of the "widows and orphans, feeding and clothing the needy and providing shelter", etc. as written in the Bible. So I became a Probation Ofcr. Determined to do good to all people whether they were Christian, non-Christian, what ever! My mental health was good. I was married (2nd. wife) and was experiencing what it was like being to a father to my daughter who was born in 1968.

#5

Most important values to me prior to joining P.T. were to become a good father and husband and a Probation Ofcr. who took care and treated his clients with respect regardless of what offence they were guilty of.

Life in PT

A.1. While living in a household of "guys" in Oakland, Calif. during '63 and '64, and jobless, wondering what I was going to do next. I met Tim Stoen who was befriended by an old friend on mine. Tim was a dep. district attorney in Mendocino Co.(Ukiah) at the time, and after spending social events with him, informed me on one of his visits to the bay area, that there was an opening for the position of Probation Ofcr. in Ukiah. I got the job and shared a house with Tim, and some time later, with my new wife. At one point Tim told me that he was volunteering as an attorney for this preacher, Jim Jones, and his church - Peo's. Temple Christian Chu. At this time I never had a contact with a minister or church near Ukiah. One day I received a call at my ofce. from a preacher who identified himself as Rev. Jim Jones, and that a family the church was working with, was being ordered by the court to report to the Prob. Dept. for a report and disposition, The older son that had truancy problems with the local grammar school was also having behavior problems in public. Rev. Jones said if there was anything he could do to help, o please contact him. I was "flabbergasted" to say the least - this was the first time I had ever been contacted by a minister since I was a Prob. Ofcer in Ukiah. Some time later I attended a couple of services and was taken by the fact that that this was a multi-racial church. that took care of it's. members and their children. They also had "outreach" connections with nonmembers who needed assistance. This church was doing what Jesus said eons ago: "take care of the widows and orphans, clothe the naked, and feed the hungry", etc. The church, Jim Jones and its members made

such an impression on me, that some time later I decided to quit my Prob. job (which I loved dearly), pack up my family, enroll in a seminary, get ordained in the Presbyterian Church and guide it to provide programs to care of all peoples. Towards the end of my seminary training I realized that I could never reorganize the Presbyterian denomination of any other church for that matter. Furthermore my marriage was breaking up and I was on my own. I graduated from Seminary and went back into Probation work. Later I attended many services at PT at their San Francisco Temple and there I began to meet members of the churches staff through Tim Stoen, now the Temples attorney, Shortly thereafter I joined the Temple and later was ordained (along with Tim) as a minister of PT.

#1 The murder-massacre at Jonestown 11/18/78

#2 Have no recollection, only that my dad informed me sometime later that it was my fault that the tragedy occurred and I could have done something about it.

#3 On Nov. 18th I was in the pulpit at the SF Temple giving a sermon on the success and dedication of our family and friends in Jonestown and their accomplishments over the yrs.. At one point someone came behind me, taped me on the shoulder and requested that I come upstairs to the office, as there was an important message from the Temple's headquarters in the capital city. I protested but was informed that the short wave radio message was of a serious nature.

#4 At first I thought it to be a cruel joke, then my surviving step-son, John Cobb, a teenager at the time, came on the radio to explain that everybody in Jonestown was dead and later when he and others arrived at the site, they were astonished as they could not find any of the children's bodies any where! Later when the Guyanese officials

and the FBI arrived they discovered most on the children were under the adult corpses. After I got off the radio, I sat back in the chair I was sitting in shock and disbelief. I then felt like that world as I knew was over and I was left alone to suffer in the agony of it all. At first, I felt there was no reason to carry on the Principal we practiced and lived by until I realized I had to stay strong for those who might consider ending their lives as well. I spent a lot of time in the first few weeks consoling members from all over the bay area that we would get through this tragedy somehow.

#5 That it was not a suicidal mission. It was pure murder directed by Jim Jones and who ever supported him at that moment.

#6 My life after the massacre was good and bad. The good part was that temple members in the east bay were calling me wondering what would happen to them. Through my time spent with many of them I realized it was helping me as well to adjust and carry on.

While residing in the Fillmore dist. of S,F, there were "bounties" on any white temple member that could be identified. This went on for several mos. until I moved to the east bay (Richmond) where I was working as a Probation Offcr.

When I met with my parents during the Thanksgiving holiday of '78, my father informed me that was responsible for the tragedy in Jonestown, as I mentioned earlier. I told my mother, at that time, that I was leaving their house and that the man she was married to is no longer my father - I was not to see my dad again until the early 1990's.

I was fired from my job a year later in 1979 due to criminal records (rap sheets) found at Jonestown. I was hounded by the FBI and several news services until I left the bay area during the winter 1979 - a friend I knew from childhood, and his wife, took me into their home in the north west area of Calif. I stayed with them for well over a year until I returned to the bay area yrs. later.

#7 I had no time nor money to seek professional help.

#8 I mentioned earlier it was helping other former members cope with the disaster that kept me from possibly doing any harm to myself.

Then leaving the area after losing my job and living with friends until returning to the bay area in 1982.

#9 Not really, The last thing I'll ever do is join a church ever again. However, in the last yr. a friend of mine introduced me to a book club at the Grants Pass Center for Spiritual Living (a church if you wish to call it that). Anyhow, it's centered around the late Ernest Holmes spiritual and metaphysical teachings. Since I believed in reincarnation since childhood, I found this center for spiritual living less into religiosity and more tuned into helping and aiding others to a new age of Christianity.

#10 A few former temple kids located me in 1981-82 (who were now in their early 20's) and encouraged me to return to the bay area and take a job with them in a company (Service West) that assembled and serviced system furniture. Those ex members I worked with were none other than Stephan Jones, my stepson John Cobb and others that I knew from the temple.

#11 Don't understand the question

#12 PT was a living example of how all races and religions can work together in service to all humanity - to all peoples! I miss this part of the temple working with people of different backgrounds, races, etc. Yes, we had our internal problems with each other at times, but we spent the time and energy to find common ground on all issues that arose.

#13 To me the biggest benefit in a new rel. movement was that we were looked at in awe of our endeavor and abilities to work together for a common cause - to be in service to all peoples - to serve humanity.

As for the biggest drawbacks, we were also hated and scorned by other churches - and sadly, for the most part, black churches. They were jealous of our accomplishments, our involvement in local politics and our ability and dedication to publicly demonstrate our beliefs and service to the community at large.

#14 and #16 After Nov. 18th I had no feeling of God's presence and was quite anti-God for some time - how could a loving God let such a disaster occur, was my question - and still is of sorts.

After recovering from all the guilt and despair, I asked and continued to ask God; "why did this happen?". And if there was U.S. governmental involvement in the massacre, when will those and others be brought to justice?

#15 My relationship with God today is joyful, loving, giving, sharing, etc. It takes me back to the early understanding (sort of) that God gave humans the choice of free will.

#17 My spirituality has evolved greatly over the last 30 yrs. or so. I accept fully, and am content with, all religions - in that what ever works for you in serving humanity, is all anyone can ask of another.

#18 Am very satisfied with my life at present and how it has evolved since Nov. 18th, 1978.

#19 I am thankful that those who are diligently and honest in their researching the history of Peoples Temple from its beginnings to its end, will make it known that we were a community of people from all walks of life, races and religions dedicated to serving others in need

Appendix D. - Thom's answers as sent

How would you describe your childhood and adolescence and what were the most significant events (best and worst) in your childhood and adolescence (before joining the church)?

As a child my family was very poor, my first memory was of riding a Tricycle between rooms in our house in Sacramento California(I was 3 yrs of age) and looking out our second story window thru the trees with my friend. I later found out his name was Gary.

This same year we moved to Red Wood Valley Calif. which was way out in the Country side in a quit unpopulated area. My father had bought a house there to start a Care Home for the Elderly. One of which I became attached to; Mr Frost. He would pay me a dime 10 cents to empty his Ash Tray and tell me stories of his youth in which I was always fascinated by.

I believe this is where I gained my intrigue of peoples history. My poor Grand Father on my Father's side of the family must have been driven crazy by my constant questions of his life during the Great Depression and before.

When my Grand Father passed My Father had to take over the stories, however he seemed more informative in expressing the hardships him and his brothers went through surviving those times and with their enlistment in the U.S. Army.

In Red Wood Valley I remember being very happy as a child; by the age of 5 I would play with my Toy Cars across the street in a Ditch, making little cities, Caves to park my Cars in and roads in the side walls of the Ditch which as I recall where about 18" deep.

By the age of 7 I was climbing around and exploring the hills with my dog Nicholis (half Great Dane and half German Sheperd). I would leave in the morning and often not return until evening, boy was it fun!

At 5 is also when my parents at the urging of my Grand Parents joined the People's Temple a Pastor who recently moved here of the name Jim Jones was its' leader. My Grand Parents soon later moved from the area.

My most profound memory of this time is going to church, hated having to sit still for I don't know how long in Jim Jones garage where the first meeting where held. I soon became a "problem child".

Please describe your most significant relationships in your childhood and adolescence.

I was the youngest of 4, my siblings were all girls. As life would have it they all except one had to as they would put it "toughen me up", personally I think they liked picking on me, not that I wasn't a mischievous little brother ; I just liked getting under their skin.

One of my sisters used to hold me down and spit in my face until I would say "uncle". Might have been because I filled her shoe with dirt or something, don't know why that would upset her!

My oldest sister would beat me up and chase me up a Walnut Tree where I would stay until she stormed off in a fury. Wouldn't know why she would want to do that?!! Heh, Heh; ah the good times. Yes I was mischievous as a kid!

Now my third sister the youngest she had a momma complex (Marilee, she stayed and died in JT) took it her personal responsibility to protect her little brother. Once when I was in the 5th grade I was in a fight with 4 boys holding them off with a stick, Marilee came around the corner seeing this and she whipped up on all 4 of them and told me to run home or they would get me after school. (Home was about 7 miles away up and down hills). But I did run home.

Being an only boy my parents thought it was a good idea to arrange for another boy (Michael) who lived in San Francisco to come stay with us during the summer to be something of a

brother to me and to get him out of the city and into the country. One of the worst decisions they ever made! They thought I was mischievous he took it to a whole new level and at times resulted in a visit to our house by local law enforcement. It was his first and last summer at our house. But the relationship between him and I had been formed and we both went to the PT. The PT has begun to expand to San Francisco at this point.

Michael introduced me to smoking, ditching church and how to fight, which became handy latter on in life. I can't begin to tell you the amount of trouble we caused, for what we were caught doing didn't scratch the surface for what all we did! Later on Michael would end up in Juvenile hall (Jail for kids), luckily I wasn't with him and today he is in prison; I guess he never grew up.

LIFE IN PT

- 1) What were the circumstances under which you joined the church?

I was 5 years old. I recall the feeling of being left out as my family left to go to church and in hearing my sisters talk of the after church activities they enjoyed. So I started attending.

- 2) How would you describe your typical day at the church?

The typical day in church was in constant flux, so typical didn't exist. The Peoples temple was formed during a time of social turmoil, Black Rights were being challenged, Vietnam war was being protested, the cost of fuel was causing recession and a drought was taking place. So as society changed so did the peoples temple, which actually became more of a people's movement . Hence is when I believe Jim Joneses paranoia began.

- 3) What do you think your role in the church was?

I was too young to have a role, I became more rebellious against the peoples temple than anything. I hated attending meetings, not allowed interaction with anyone outside of "the group", not allowed to join in any after school activities, to do so meant trouble for me. I hated having everything I did being watched, scrutinized and being trapped within this group. So I guess you could say my role was to be an anarchist and escape artist.

- 4) How would you describe your relationship with Jim Jones?

I didn't, as far as I was concerned he was the enemy and the cause of all my suffering. Even in my youth I knew if I could just kill him everything would become ok. I was just too young to figure out how, or to develop the courage to do so.

- 5) How would you describe your most significant relationships inside the church?

I had 3; Michael a foster child who was just as rebellious as I and eventually went to live elsewhere, Brian who hated this place as much as I and died in Jones Town and Tina a girl with whom I was totally infatuated with from about the age 13, until she also died in Jones town.

- 6) How would you describe your spirituality and belief system while in church – did it go through any changes while being in the church?

- 7) What would you consider to be your lowest and highest points during your stay at the church?

This is almost a conundrum: Jones Town was both my high and low; For the first 2 years I was able to hang out with the local people who were hired help, they taught me how to survive in the jungle(Bush) tracking animals, making snares, which plants could be used to stun fish in order to just pick them out of the streams and various edible plant life and a vine which could be cut up high and then cut-off low in which cool drinkable water that had a lite taste of tea to it would run out. I would also go and jump into huge mud puddles getting covered with mud, I was lucky it wasn't quick-sand.

Don't know if you know the children's story "Jungle Boy" but that is what it was like for me. Running thru the Jungle and discovering all sorts of new adventures - lots of fun! Then Jim Jones started coming there.

Everything changes: Jones decides I am having too much fun. I was put on a strict work regimen (remember I am 15 yrs of age) working in the garden of multiple acres, the tree nursery and cutting plant life from the wood-rows.

All was still ok for a while, but then it was decided I wasn't working hard enough and was assigned to digging a ditch with my progress being monitored. If I didn't dig enough feet a day I didn't get to eat. If I dug more than expected I was assigned more to dig a day. I didn't miss too many meals. After completing the ditch I was assigned to the nursery again.

We still ate fairly well at this time. One meal we had water melon and I planted some of the seeds. A few months later I had more melon to eat and not thinking much about consequences of this I ate them. Some-one found out about the melons (no big surprise, I didn't know it was wrong and so didn't hide them) well was I in for a shock! I was called before every one, severely chastised, forced to eat hot peppers' and assigned to digging a new out-house (out-door bath room) 9 feet by 9 feet by 9 feet deep; again if I didn't dig a foot a day I didn't eat.

The first few feet were pretty easy and then I hit shell. At some point in Guyana's history it was cover by ocean and small shell creatures accumulated on the ocean floor before the water receded, a layer about 3 feet thick formed and this is now what I was digging thru; much like digging thru cement. I missed many meals getting thru this layer.

Eventually I dug thru the shell and was able to make progress again, this would be one of 3 out-houses' I would end up digging by hand and the worst one was 13 feet by 13 feet by 13 feet deep. not bad until your down about 7-8 feet and have to throw the dirt high enough and far enough so it wouldn't fall back in.

In addition to the digging I had to run every where I went, not allowed to talk to anyone and had my head shaved. The worst times had arrived and I for the most part lived in trouble, I was nick named Tommy trouble.

How would you describe your mental health and well-being while in the church?

As a young man (late adolescent) I was often envious of other kids not associated with the PT in regards to their freedom and in recognizing their normal life, at the same time being resentful of the life I was trapped in.

This I believe to be the core of my rebelliousness or in the least contributed to it. My father would at times take us other places away from the PT, unencumbered by their rules to get some enjoyment, but the PT slowly eliminated his ability to spend time with his family. This I believe was the beginning of his wanting to leave the PT also. Later he would become one of the first to be sent to JT to prevent his leaving, I was 12 when he was shipped out and I was on my own. My mother was to wrapped up in the PT to be a mom. Wow that hurt!

Believing I was now alone my mental health diminished, internalized my anger, desperation and eventually this mental condition would come out, being both the source of my trouble and in saving my family and I.

9) Is there anything else you would like to say about your stay in the church?

Often times people including myself will state: If you look hard enough you can find the good/positive in anything, while this may be true the more I reflect on my experiences of my youth I don't believe to be the case while living that life.

As I become older I have come to realize this experience has created several issues for me, some positive and most negative. I have had to accept the fact I don't think or rationalize every day existence the same as others. I analyze everything to the fullest extent, I tend to see the negative more prominently than the positive, anything which encroaches on my space or direction in life I am pursuing is contrived as a threat and to be battled (although I have toned this down alot).

No, I have had to accept my thinking process is not the same as others and have had to learn to function knowing this.

LIFE AFTER PT

1) What were the circumstances of your departure from PT?

About 6 months prior to the end my father told me of my sister Teena and his plan to escape and in how I had to stay out of trouble; otherwise when it was time to leave after all the arrangements had been made, if I was stuck on the "Learning Crew" they would have to leave me behind!

I was so relieved to find out they hated JT also and had made a plan. So I stayed out of trouble. Then Congressman Ryan arrived to much hoopla and cheering; it was a show to fool the Congressman. (His stay and departure is a matter of record to be found on the internet)

For my family the catalyst for deciding to run was my observing one of the elder temple members passing a note to one of the reporters; I new that note could only be for one thing, we are trapped here and want out! I did not see what was on the note but because of who passed it and the reaction on the face of the reporter I knew it had to say something along that line.

I immediately ran and to told my father, he instructed me to tell my mother as he would find my sisters and tell them and we were all to meet up at the Saw Mill to get out of there. The time had come, a little sooner than planned but here none the less.

We met at the Saw Mill, all had arrived except all the members from another family. The father of this family went back to find his son and Grand children, with our agreement if they were not back we would assume they were trapped and would return ourselves to tell the Congressman of our intention to leave and there was also another family wanting to leave.

About 20 minutes went by and they had not returned. Down to the compound we went. As it would turn out the mother of the grand children didn't want to leave and was holding back the children. Since they were not able to take the children they all decided to stay behind, knowing it would most likely end in their deaths and it did.

One of my sisters Marilee not to be convinced otherwise had decided she wanted to stay. She was left and also died.

My family along with several others climbed on the Military Dump Truck, left for the Air Strip and the rest is history.

How would you describe the reactions from the group and from your loved ones about your departure?

I was a Traitor, and didn't care what they thought. As I left I looked upon their faces of disbelief, some looked angry and vengeful. I couldn't believe how many were staying! This would probably be their last chance to escape; for the most part they remained frozen and clueless on what to do.

Others who wanted to leave were stuck unable to leave because of spouses refusing to leave and with-holding their children because of their dedication to Jones, I image somehow they believed it would all be ok and life would go on.

Some such as my only friend were held back by a dedicated father. I wish Brian and I had time to plan for this likely event. We could have snuck off and waited for the after-math to occur. But like everyone else we didn't have a clue of what was occurring with Brian paying the ultimate price.

3) Where were you on November 18th?

In Jones Town

4) How would you describe your feelings after learning about November 18th?

Relief!! Fear of the unknown in having been told so many times there are those out in society with whom a single task has been assigned; kill all defectors and certain elected officials! This was to be done if anything ever happened to the People's Temple if it perished. Pretty scary stuff.

Shortly after Mike Prokes a person within the JT hierarchy, we are told went into the JFK Airport in New York and killed himself. The common feeling among survivors was it was a cover story and he was actually murdered.

Then the Mills family parents were murdered, they were early defectors and considered influential within the PT. My family knew them personally from when we all lived in Redwood Valley Calif.

An elected official George Moscone from San Francisco Calif and also connected to the PT was murdered.

As survivors we were pretty freaked out by all of this and knew Jim Jones warning was coming to fruition. I often stared out my bedroom window during that time to determine if someone could be sitting in an apartment waiting for their opportunity to kill one of us!

As time would pass this belief would also pass and we all settled in with our day to day activities slowly letting our guard down. Then came the nut cases.

People wanting us to join their cause. I can't tell you how many people approached me in want of the notoriety of having a Jones Town survivor within their membership speaking out in their behalf of some conception of how they believed our government was suppressing the People. I told them to all go away, no way was I joining some organized group or religion.

Then came what was beyond belief, truly shocking every sense I had. I was told ex-People Temple members wanted to restart People's Temple and wanted me to join! I won't use the language of my response here, but I told them what they could do with their idea in no uncertain terms using carefully chosen words of profanity. Turns out their idea never came into reality.

As I became older and wiser I began to understand more of my experiences and learned to gain an inner strength from them. Understanding the sequence of events, the why and how it all occurred, learned to forgive my parents for being drawn into this episode of life.

I became grateful to have survived and in time learned just how lucky I and others were to have lived through it!

I didn't have one! I hated anyone and anything connected with religion. This would come to haunt me later in life.

5) How would you describe your feelings about November 18th now?

Relief it was over. I still at times think about what I could have done to change things, I believe it has a psychological term: Survivors guilt. After I complete different scenarios through my mind; everything from killing Jim Jones to fantasizing of going back in time, I remember, I was 15 to 17 years old and realize I was not mature enough to think in those terms therefore incapable of doing anything different than I did.

If a person believes in reincarnation I would say Jim Jones was Hitler come back and if a person believes in reincarnation then they also understand a soul comes back to learn and change from previous life mistakes. If reincarnation exists and that is the purpose; then I would say nothing was learned and Jim Jones will be back! And history repeats it's self - maybe?

How do you like that one? Sounds like the makings of a good horror movie.

6) What would you consider to be your major struggles while adjusting to life after PT?

As time went on I found I could most often when meeting someone could determine the type of person they were and what motivated them, within minutes define their personality traits, honesty, integrity and if they were after something. I have found many of the actual survivors from JT have this ability. It took me a while to realize this wasn't as strong in many others within normal society.

At times I found personality traits of people both disturbing in their lack of understanding other peoples' value as fellow human beings being extremely self centered and also gratifying in meeting people who reflected high moral values; almost angelic in nature, and their deep concern for others.

I find I am both drawn to the later people for the goodness they possess and also repelled by them for the standard they compel for you to rise to, not because they expect you to, but they just reach that part of your inner self. I find this intriguing and amazing! They often leave me considering and analyzing myself - disturbing.

I find I am very sensitive to people in what they don't say. This made life after JT difficult to adjust to for a long time, there are just a lot of bad people in this world and some quite evil in nature. This forces you to learn to defend yourself both physically, emotionally and psychologically.

Also very disturbing.

As an example I recall when I was 19 yrs old walking down a side street in San Francisco with a girl I had just met, being quite infatuated by her. Two men about 30 plus years of age coming towards us, I didn't think much about them as they approached, when out of know where one of them sucker punches me in the face. Why? I don't know, never met them before. I guess because they were evil and could. This has occurred 3 times in my life, the 3rd one wasn't so lucky as I had learned to become very weary of men approaching me and to be ready for anything.

I have over time learned we as humans are just one step above animals and in some ways would need to improve in order to reach their level of what we would consider humanity.

7) Considering your mental health did you seek any help after your departure?

Self medicating was a whole different experience. There was no system in place to help people like me at the time. PTS was an unknown factor at the time.

Without help it took a long time to adjust and accept I would continue living as the end of the world was always near, as this was always the case since my youth as Jones continuously preached it. My Father had his hands full helping me and all the while contending with his own recovery.

8) What would you say helped you the most with coping with your departure from the church?

Time! Time was the biggest factor and my current wife who was for some reason able to realize some of my reactions had some underlying cause and able to identify it. I personally think she had fun figuring me out as it presented her with challenges (which drives her) she hadn't run across before and so in turn she was intrigued. I benefited by her intrigue and she had a very uncanny way of getting my attention and no we didn't sit down and discuss what she thought. She would say things like; when are you going to quit running, you've been running since JT when does it stop? At first I deny, but the seed was planted and eventually I would self correct. Loved this about her, 24 years later and still love her and that twisted since of humor.

9) Have any of your PT experiences helped you with post church adjustment?

There is nothing this world can throw at me I can't survive; short of death it's self. I enjoy money but not afraid of failure, challenge me and I challenge you, anything a person throws at me eventually I will find a way to return the same and what should have mentally destroyed me only made me stronger and more resilient; this has become the outcome of JT for me and I can't help it.

BIBLIOGRAFICKÉ ÚDAJE

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Jméno a příjmení studenta/-tky: Jessika Kocábová

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Název práce: Exiting a New Religious Movement from the Perspectives of Former Peoples Temple Members

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Výběr tématu

Závažnost tématu

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Oborová přílehavost tématu

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Originalita tématu a jeho zpracování

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Formální zpracování

Jazykové vyjádření (respektování pravopisné normy, stylistické vyjadřování, zvládnutí odborné terminologie)

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Práce s odbornou literaturou a prameny (citace, parafráze, odkazy, dodržení norem pro citace, cizojazyčná literatura)

	x			
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Formální zpracování (jasnost tématu, rozčlenění textu, průvodní aparát, poznámky, přílohy, grafická úprava)

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Metody práce

Vhodnost a úroveň použitých metod

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Využití výzkumných empirických metod

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Využití praktických zkušeností

	x			
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Obsahová kritéria a přínos práce

Přístup autora k řešené problematice (samostatnost, iniciativa, spolupráce s vedoucím práce)

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Naplnění cílů práce

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Vyváženost teoretické a praktické části v daném tématu

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** 0 – nehodnoceno; 1 – výborně; 2 – velmi dobře; 3 – dobře; 4 – neprospěl/a

Návaznost kapitol a subkapitol

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Dosažené výsledky, odborný vklad, použitelnost výsledků v praxi

	x			
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Vhodnost prezentace závěrů práce (publikace, referáty, apod.)

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Otázky a náměty k diskusi při obhajobě:

Jak práce autorku obohatila?
Jaké jsou závěry a jaký dopad pro její praxe?

Celkové hodnocení práce (klady, nedostatky):

Práce originální. Vzorek vzácný. V zpracování jsou rezervy. Výsledky doporučuji v každém případě publikovat. Bohaté a vzácné prameny.

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Navrhovaná klasifikace: velmi dobrý

Datum, podpis:

10.9. 2015



*
nehodící se, škrtněte

**Posudek vedoucího/oponenta bakalářské/diplomové práce
na Pražské vysoké škole psychosociálních studií**

Jméno a příjmení studentky: Bc. Jessika Kocábová
 Obor studia: Psychologie
 Název práce: Exiting a New Religious Movement from the Perspective
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 Vedoucí/oponent* práce: PhDr. Martin Kuška, Ph.D.

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 Počet titulů v seznamu literatury: 69 (3x CZ, 59x zahraniční, 7x i-net)

0**	1	2	3	4
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Výběr tématu

Závažnost tématu		x			
Oborová přiléhavost tématu		x			
Originalita tématu a jeho zpracování		x			

Formální zpracování

Jazykové vyjádření (respektování pravopisné normy, stylistické vyjadřování, zvládnutí odborné terminologie)	x				
Práce s odbornou literaturou a prameny (citace, parafráze, odkazy, dodržení norem pro citace, cizojazyčná literatura)			x		
Formální zpracování (jasnost tématu, rozčlenění textu, průvodní aparát, poznámky, přílohy, grafická úprava)		x			

Metody práce

Vhodnost a úroveň použitých metod		x			
Využití výzkumných empirických metod		x			
Využití praktických zkušeností	x				

Obsahová kritéria a přínos práce

Přístup autora k řešené problematice (samostatnost, iniciativa, spolupráce s vedoucím práce)	x				
Naplnění cílů práce		x			
Vyváženost teoretické a praktické části v daném tématu		x			

** 0 – nehodnoceno; 1 – výborně; 2 – velmi dobře; 3 – dobře; 4 – neprospěl/a

Návaznost kapitol a subkapitol

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Dosažené výsledky, odborný vklad, použitelnost výsledků v praxi

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Vhodnost prezentace závěrů práce (publikace, referáty, apod.)

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Otázky a náměty k diskusi při obhajobě:

1. Jaká byla motivace diplomantky zpracovat téma vztahující se k události z roku 1978?
2. Bylo by možné využít dosažených poznatků diplomantky např. v preventivní práci s potenciálními evropskými rekruť islámského „státu“ (IS)? Pravděpodobně i v jejich životních příbězích a motivacích přičlenit se k IS by byly identifikovatelné podobné momenty a charakteristiky, jako u členů Peoples Temple či jiné podobné skupiny.

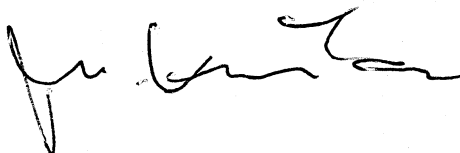
Celkové hodnocení práce (klady, nedostatky):

Předkládaná diplomová práce zpracovává unikátní data pořízená prostřednictvím e-mailových interview autorky se 4 bývalými členy „nového náboženského hnutí“ (sekty) Peoples Temple. Participantů se rozpomínali na svou situaci před téměř 4 desetiletími, v obdobích před vstupem, během členství a po opuštění sekty. Nutně vyvstává otázka věrohodnosti vzpomínek artikulovaných s takovým časovým odstupem, nicméně výzkumem získané narace působí přesvědčivě a logicky a autorka je vhodně zasazuje do kontextu syceného bibliografickými odkazy na relevantní teoretické a výzkumné práce. Diplomantka se nespokojuje pouze s metodou e-mailových rozhovorů a zpracovává získané údaje do formy kazuistik. Zajímavé výsledky poskytuje také tematická analýza rozhovorů.

Doporučení k obhajobě: doporučuji/~~nedoporučuji~~*

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