

Executive Summary

This paper is going to focus on the survivors of the Fundamentalists Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) and their leader Warren Jeffs and his father Rulon Jeffs through the recent television show on Netflix *Keep Sweet: Pray and Obey*. The producers of this show set out to tell the stories of the survivors of Warren Jeffs polygamist cult that was founded in 1950 by a man named Leroy S. Johnson. This show brings a wider audience to the knowledge of the crimes he has committed and gives the victims a voice. *Keep Sweet: Pray and Obey* is an eye opener to Netflix users and brings awareness to sexual assault victims. This paper will delve into the power that words can carry and the people who wield them, in particular Warren Jeffs.

The Powerful Persuasion of Personalities

Emma G. Dukes

University of West Florida

PSY 2012

Professor Ronald Blue

22 November 2022

The Powerful Persuasion of Personalities

Personality as defined by the American Psychological Association is the “enduring characteristics and behavior that comprise a person’s unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns” Everyone has a unique personality tailored for them, growing specific for that person over time using what works best for them. *Keep Sweet: Pray and Obey*, Warren Jeffs’ personality is highlighted throughout each survivor’s story to show how powerful someone’s personality can be.

No one can tell for certain how a personality is formed and honed, if it is life experiences, biology, our age, etc but there are four scientists who spent significant time researching personalities and the science behind how they are formed. The most known scientist that focused on personality is Sigmund Freud. Freud’s view on personality was that personality arises when someone has an internal battle with themselves over impulse and restraint. He believed that the brain is separated into three sectors id, ego, and superego and that psychoanalysis can help one resolve internal conflicts. Carl Jung broke away from the precedent that Freud had established and instead believed that personalities are formed from conscious experiences. Jung also believed that unconsciousness was a place for memories to harbor collectively. Much like Jung, Alfred Adler also broke away from the previous views on personality set by Freud. He focused on family and the order and structure within a home. The fourth person to focus on personality is Karen Horney. Much like the two scientists mentioned before her, she also broke from the mold that Freud had set about in the scientific community. Horney believed that personalities stem from interpersonal relations. Another complete theory of how personalities are formed is the Social Cognitive theory, that traits and biological factors play into how a person’s personality differs from the next.

Is personality biological? Is it constructed by experiences that a person has endured? Or maybe the anxiety of the possibility of a horrible experience? Not one scientist can say one or the other and be telling the truth backed with data. The fact of the matter is, no one truly knows but people can see the power that a personality has over a community. *Keep Sweet: Pray and Obey* is such a prominent example of personality and the stronghold it has over people. The Fundamentalists Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is under the leadership of Warren Jeffs where the indoctrinated must obey and submit without any question in fear of severe punishment. Isolated from the rest of the United States, people in his community are told not to question anything the Prophet Warren Jeffs says. The Prophet is seen as a direct descendant of God. An immortal being who was untouchable and would continue being reborn to spread the word of the Lord.

Rulon Jeffs is the second Prophet of FLDS and is estimated to have had over sixty wives during his lifetime. Many of them during the same time. He was so powerful that all fathers dreamed of was for their daughters to be married to the Prophet. When women are of marrying age, they are presented before the Prophet and arranged a marriage, giving a special handshake to the women he would marry. Every night that he was alive, Rulon Jeffs would force his wives in a line chronologically in the order of when they married him. Within the Fundamentalists Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, women are seen only as wives and nothing more. They are not allowed to go to school or work. All they are permitted to do is to pray and obey. All women were kept in the dark on any sex education and were manipulated into what was right and wrong when with her husband. Rulon Jeffs saying to the people was “Keep Sweet. No matter what. That’s the road to perfection” (*Keep Sweet: Pray and Obey*: “Part One” 20:53). Women especially were told to “keep sweet” no matter what, particularly to the father’s and husband’s.

Although Rulon was a manipulator, his son Warren perfected the skill of persuasion. He was seen as a prophet from his birth and his brother Wallace states in *Keep Sweet: Pray and Obey* that Warren had a “holier-than-thou attitude” (“Part One” 23:42) and was deemed untouchable by his father. Warren was not very sociable, instead he came across as abrasive. He was not special in any way compared to his brothers, he was just his father’s favorite. He knew how to understand people and then using that, how to manipulate them. Soon he got too close to his sisters and it was seen by his brothers and many of them came forward to their father about Warren. Nothing was done and they were told to never speak of it again.

Isolation was an instrumental part of FLDS and to make sure that he had complete control over what the people were learning Rulon Jeffs did not allow public school. Instead of public school children attended Alta Academy where they were taught the FLDS way. All coursework and rules are based with religious undertones that matched what the Prophet supported. Warren Jeffs was groomed specially by Rulon to first take over the school. He took quickly to this, establishing dominance over the academy within a short time. Taking outside influences out of the academy like books not approved or evolution in textbooks. This was the first step of Warren's takeover of the Fundamentalists Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

When Rulon Jeffs had a stroke, Warren saw this as an opportunity. As soon as Rulon was released from the hospital Warren immediately isolated him from the people within the church. Warren now took over as head of the church but not officially. Everything he did and said was calculated from then on out. He got to make the decisions under the guise that it was his father making the decisions and no one could question it or at least they could not bring it up. The people knew and soon the sermons turned dark and scary. Teachings of a great cleansing and

judgment day that would light the world on fire and the only salvation is if you are worthy enough.

Soon after the 2002 Olympics, Warren preached that Salt Lake, Utah was no longer holy grounds and that they had to all leave together. Everyone had to sell their houses and businesses to move to a more secluded town to be saved from the timely demise of the world. After the move and no fiery cleansing of the earth, people began to question Warren and it did not get any better when later that year Rulon Jeffs died. Many people questioned their faith because the immortal prophet died. He did not rise from the dead but Warren had taken over and stated his father was living through him. He would have people, mainly the widows of Rulon, step up to the pulpit and predict who was going to be the next prophet. Warren Jeffs quickly took this power and turned it into the cult it is known for today.

Members who want to defect from the Fundamentalists Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints have to flee in the middle of the night and are to never return to their families who are still a part of the church. Due to them never being allowed to see their families again, many did not run continuing the cycle set out before them because of the fear instilled in them. Not only did they have the fear of no support from their families but they also feared the outside world of which they had no knowledge of. They had never been allowed the freedoms of the outside world and they did not know mannerisms or etiquette in how to conduct themselves. Warren Jeffs used this fear to manipulate his followers and no longer did they know fun and previous activities were now banned. Certain clothing was also not allowed anymore and hair had to be done, there was no choice but to conform.

Warren's dominating personality grew more and more outlandish the more power he was given until eventually he had all of the power. He used his knowledge of the people in the

Fundamentalists Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to manipulate them to his own ideals. It did not matter anymore what his father may have believed because now he was the Prophet. He started with very small things but soon he was constricting everything within the FLDS. Warren Jeffs used his personality to get the church to conform to his new beliefs whether or not they agreed through his words and manipulation.

References

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Personality - American Psychological Association*. apa.org. Retrieved November 22, 2022, from <https://www.apa.org/topics/personality/>

Netflix Studios (2022, June 8). Part One. *Keep Sweet: Pray and Obey*. episode, Netflix.

Viewpoint On Mormonism (n.d.). *Splinter Group: Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS)*. Mormonism Research Ministry. Retrieved November 22, 2022, from <https://www.mrm.org/flds>