On Becoming a Terrorist: The Transformation of Human and Moral Agency

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Abstract

In this paper, the author examines the question of what happens to the individual's sense of human agency and moral perspective-taking in becoming a terrorist. The author reviews literature on the psychology of terrorism and presents a theory of agency development as a psychological approach that combines aspects of individual and social psychology to understand the personal development of terrorists. Research on the psychology of terrorism indicates that, beyond commitment to causes or religious agenda, it is the bond between individuals in small groups that disposes individuals to commit themselves to acts that may require their own deaths. However, prior to the development of this bond, transformative life events influence the individual's sense of human and moral agency and lay the groundwork for the commitment to the small group that will perform terrorist acts. The author argues that an understanding of this phenomenon will contribute to efforts to reduce the development of terrorist affiliations and inform the development of anti-terrorist strategies. Case examples illustrate theoretical perspectives.

On Becoming a Terrorist: The Transformation of Human and Moral Agency

The question "who becomes a terrorist and why?" rose to new heights on 9/11/2001. Despite the fact that terrorism is nothing new, the destruction of the World Trade Center (WTC) Twin Towers in New York City riveted worldwide attention to terrorism. Although not the first terrorist event on the US mainland, it was the most destructive and perhaps one of the most witnessed. The media, due to advances in technology, enabled the world to serve as real-time witnesses to the crumbling of the towers. President George W. Bush's response, “I can hear you! I can hear you! The rest of the world hears you! And the people—and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon![1],” was a battle cry to catch the terrorists with the ring leader identified as Osama Bin Laden. Somehow this commitment translated into the War in Iraq and a search for non-existent WMD (weapons of mass destructions). Today, some nine years later, approximately 5000 US and Allied Troops and more than 150,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed in the Iraqi war. The elusive Bin Laden is still at large, and incidents of

[1] These words were spoken by George W. Bush as he visited lower Manhattan on September 14th, 2001 and addressed rescue workers who were still combing the debris of the WTC for survivors. This was reported across news media. The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) website, www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2004/cadidates/can_bush-Sept11.html, provides the following context for the quotation, " With bullhorn in hand, he spoke to the crowd, but the noise of the work kept many from hearing the president and they repeatedly shouted they could not hear him. Mr. Bush looked out across the firefighters and volunteers and replied, "I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you. And the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon."

terrorism have increased. If the agenda is to stop terrorism, then more effective strategies are needed.

Researchers indicate that understanding what motivates terrorists will help to demystify terrorism and eliminate counterproductive courses of action against terrorism (Krueger, 2007). Understanding why and how individuals become terrorists is important to developing plans to stop terrorism. Yet, at this time, there is no unified field in psychology pertaining to terrorism. Many theorists agree that psychologies, particularly social rather than individual psychologies, are key to finding solutions to terrorism (Stout, 2004). Social psychology should clarify the social influences, perceptions and interactions of terrorism. Individual Psychology (Adler, 1956) explains behavior in terms of people's responses to externally-defined feelings of inferiority and social disadvantage. According to Individual Psychology, persons may compensate for their disadvantages by striving for success in various areas, become reconciled to the disadvantages or overcompensate for the disadvantages with neurotic behavior. This deficit model is inappropriate for understanding terrorism because, as research indicates, people who become terrorists are not necessarily socially disadvantaged (Krueger, 2007). However, understanding terrorists does raise questions about the self development of the individual as well as questions about social interactions, influences and perceptions. Understanding terrorists may require the development of psychological approaches that bridge individual and social psychology theories.

Self theories bridge individual and social psychologies in that they acknowledge that the individual's perception and understanding of self are derived from how the individual thinks others see him or her. However, unlike Individual Psychology, self theories do not presuppose that the individual develops from a standpoint of deficit and negative self-perception.

Reciprocity in self and other perception is a fundamental concept in theories pertaining to self development and social psychology, including the early psychological perspectives of William James (1892) and George Herbert Mead (1934) as well as more recent theories in sociomoral (Kohlberg, 1984) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 2006). A common tenet of self theories is that individuals do not develop in isolation from society. The image mirrored to the individual by others influences self-perception, self-understanding, personality, behavior, motivation and social functioning in general. It is examining the relationship between self development and behavior that is pertinent to understanding terrorists.

Self theories can clarify how terrorists see and understand themselves; explain the developmental path of the terrorist and the relation between self-understanding and action as terrorist. These issues may be conceptualized in terms of agency as a psychological construct in self development. Agency is often interchangeably referred to as human agency, pertaining to the agency of humans in a general sense and personal agency, pertaining to the agency of indivduals (Bandura, 2006). The concept of agency contextualizes self-understanding in terms of one's behavior in relation to others. However, agency development does not necessarily stem from a position of deficit and is not grounded in deficit responses. In this paper, the author will present a perspective of agency development, as an approach that bridges individual and social psychology, to explain the psychological development of terrorists. The next section of this

paper provides a brief review of literature on the psychology of terrorism to lay the groundwork for presenting agency development as a psychological lens for understanding the becoming of terrorists.

The Psychology of Terrorism

What is Terrorism?

Terrorist acts have existed for more than 2000 years although use of the term 'terrorism' first emerged in the 1790s in writings about the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. Through the years, it has alternated between being viewed as an effective political strategy and at other times an abomination to human decency (Laqueur, 1999). Terrorist events have occurred globally in many forms by people of various nationalities and religious affiliations. However, the preponderance of terrorist acts over the past 20-30 years has been attributed to individuals or groups with Muslim affiliations.

"Terrorism" has the peculiar characteristic of being an emotionally provocative 'label' and a subjective descriptor that is assigned to events or perpetrators depending on one's perspective. To the people directly impacted by the bombing of the WTC, to the families who lost loved ones, this was a terrorist act. To those involved in the bombings, these were political acts designed to send a message to a target, in this case, the United States of America. Hudson (1999) defines terrorist action as "the calculated use of unexpected, shocking, and unlawful violence against noncombatants (including, in addition to civilians, off-duty military and security personnel in peaceful situations) and other symbolic targets perpetrated by a clandestine member(s) of a sub national group or a clandestine agent(s) for the psychological purpose of publicizing a political or religious cause and/or intimidating or coercing a government or civilian population into accepting demands on behalf of the cause " (p.12). The perpetrators of these same acts may be characterized as freedom fighters and heroes in their homelands. The 'terrorist' characterization divides the actors into 'us' and 'them', into arenas of right and wrong, and psychopath versus innocent victims. In order to develop ways to decrease terrorism, it is important to examine what underlies the actions and to dispel misconceptions that impede the development of more constructive perspectives.

Are Terrorists Crazy?

The literature on the psychology of terrorism concurs that terrorists may be alienated from society and some terrorist groups may have been lead by mentally unstable individuals but by and large terrorists are not psychopaths (Heskin, 1984; Hudson, 1999; McCauley, 2004; Merari, 2005; Stout, 2004). Hudson (1999) documents research over the past 30 years on terrorist groups in Islamic countries, Latin America**,** West Germany and members of the IRA in Northern Ireland that indicates that there is no psychological evidence that terrorists are clinically disturbed. Taylor (1988) points out that the inability to learn from experience; the typically personal nature of psychotic actions, unreliability and the inability to submit to control make

psychopaths unlikely candidates for terrorist groups. In fact, there is nothing that psychologically differentiates terrorists from non-terrorists; they are psychologically quite normal (Hudson, 1999; Taylor & Quayle, 1994). Hudson states that there is no reason to expect terrorists to share psychological characteristics because they are in the same career. In short, there is no terrorist personality type or profile. Terrorists are not crazy, and they tend to be very normal, more like non-terrorists.

Terrorists must have intelligence and skills. Researchers agree that terrorist activities require a high level of intelligence for working with explosives, the ability to act with discretion, the ability to follow orders and sophisticated plans, and the ability to blend into crowds or to fit inconspicuously into hotels and first class cabins on airlines or other venues. As Hudson's report points out "The careful, detailed planning and well-timed execution that have characterized many terrorist operations are hardly typical of mentally disturbed individuals (Hudson, 1999)."

Some thirty years ago, Rasch (1979) observed that the argument that terrorism is pathological behavior only serves to minimize the political or social issues that motivated the terrorists into action. Attempting to characterize terrorists as psychopaths or sociopaths reduces the problem to the level of an individual aberration and absolves us from asking the big and more difficult questions about the conditions from which terrorists arise or to which they respond.

Are Terrorists Economically-deprived and Uneducated?

A common perspective of terrorism is that it is a function of economic deprivation and lack of education. Krueger (2007) notes that counter terrorist positions and responses to terrorism have been based on the premise that "economic deprivation and a lack of education cause people to adopt extreme views and turn to terrorism (p.1)." However, terrorists are usually middle class and highly educated with the exception of members of the IRA. Krueger states that IRA members tend to be poor and uneducated because the middle class in Northern Ireland failed to thrive due to mass immigration to the US and due to the activities of the Catholic Church that suppressed the development of a middle class. Empirical evidence indicates that terrorists are usually middle class, educated, and may not come from the poorest countries. They are not motivated by personal material gain but rather by political goals. Terrorism arises in situations where there are perceived to be few effective alternatives to achieve the goals of their groups and where full-fledged war is not possible. In summary, terrorists are not poor, uneducated, crazy people out for personal gain. On the contrary, the literature indicates that they care about influencing political outcomes and they are often so committed to their cause that they are willing to die for it.

Who and What do Terrorists Represent?

Reports indicate two categories of terrorists; state supported, that is supported by the government of countries, and non-state supported terrorists. According to McCauley (2004), terrorists who are not state supported tend to refer to themselves as freedom fighters or revolutionaries. The

U.S. State Department (2009) formerly identified Cuba, the Sudan, Syria, and Iran as state sponsors but at this time only Syria and Iran continue to support terrorist activities. Whether state or non-state supported, terrorists from the Islamic countries alone cover a vast area. Krueger (2007) notes that 311 foreign fighters captured in Iraq came from 27 different countries, including Egypt (78), Syria (66), Sudan (41), Saudi Arabia (32), Jordan (17), Iran (13), Palestine (12), and Tunisia (10). Many people in these countries are unified in their disdain for the West for political and religious reasons.

Data indicate that terrorists tend to attack wealthier countries. Their countries of origin, such as Saudi Arabia, tend to be to be low on civil liberties, including freedom of association, and freedom of the press. Their acts may garner empathy or understanding across the Islamic world. Palestinian Public Opinion surveys showed that 52% of respondents did not think that the attack on the WTC was a terrorist attack, similarly 82% did not consider the suicide bombing of the Dolphinarium Nightclub which killed 21 youths in Tell Aviv, Israel to be an act of terrorism but in both cases they conceded that the rest of the world would view these attacks as terrorism (Krueger, 2007). Support for attacks against Israeli targets was very high ranging from 73.9 % to 89% percent depending on the category of the respondents. Support was highest among university students, merchants and professionals, highest among the better educated and higher status professionals. These data indicate high levels of group sympathy for the causes that terrorists address.

Terrorist attacks usually occur in the country of origin against properties that represent the West, like a US embassy, hotel chain or McDonald's restaurant. Krueger (2007) states, "The West is often the target-- not because it is rich but because it is influential and because terrorism has a greater chance of succeeding when it is perpetrated against a democracy rather than an autocracy." (p.4). He reviews data in which 88% of the attacks occur in the country of origin and notes that the 9/11 attack was anomalous in that it occurred so far away from the terrorists' country of origin. In light of his findings, Krueger warns that the US will find it is more likely that people who are living in the US increasingly will be used as terrorist. Indeed between 9/11/2001 and 2007, the US reports having thwarted 19 potential attacks on US soil many of which were perpetrated by US citizens (Carafano, 2007).

The literature indicates that terrorism is not committed by individuals but by groups who hold common beliefs (Crenshaw, 1988). The literature suggests that terrorists develop their own subcultures (Ferracuti, 1982) grounded in belief systems that "include their political and social environments, cultural traditions, and the internal dynamics of clandestine groups…terrorists act rationally in their commitment to acting on their convictions" (Crenshaw as quoted in Hudson 1999, p.41). McCauley (2004) notes that terrorist groups develop allegiances to each other and to their cause. The cause is not something abstract but a personal view of the world that embodies the day to day context. This worldview may ultimately link the individual with some form of immortality but is also sustained by the power of group dynamics, including membership, loyalty, companionship and being in a group of like-minded people.

How Does One Become a Terrorist?

There is a symbiotic relationship between commitment to the group and commitment to the cause. Commitment to the group requires an understanding of the issues in order to commit to the goals of the organization. Terrorist organizations engage in practices that ensure attachment to the group. McCauley (2004) notes that documents found in the luggage of the 9/11 attackers contained numerous references to the Koran and communicated a desire to feel connected with God. McCauley describes this as the psychology of attachment to the good rather than to the evil. This means that the terrorists believe that they are doing good, acting on behalf of God, as opposed to believing that they are committing evil acts.

Terrorist organizations recruit participants from the ranks of the well-educated and middle classes. Participants are well-screened to be sure that they are capable of carrying out sophisticated terrorist missions and they are well-trained. Holloway and Norwood (1997) state that the joining process involves an interaction between the psychological structure of the terrorist's personality and the ideological factors, group process, structural organization of the terrorist group and cell and the socio-cultural milieu of the group.

In summary, terrorists tend to be very sane, well educated, largely middle class individuals who engage in extreme acts of instrumental aggression out of a deep commitment to a cause (religion, freedom, etc) that is meaningful within their individual life context (family, community, country). Research indicates that the individual has to be motivated to become a terrorist, have opportunity to join, be acceptable to the group, and have a useful skill (Hudson, 1999). In short the individual's sense of agency and moral perspective-taking empower him or her to commit terrorist acts.

Agency and Terrorism

Agency, the individual's ability to process and structure life experiences, is a psychological concept that includes internal processes such as interpretation, evaluation, prioritization, self-reflection, and decision-making regarding life experience and context (Curtis-Tweed, 2003; Damon and Hart, 1988; Taylor, 1985). The sense of agency requires self-perception, which may be understood as one’s awareness and interpretation of personal characteristics, traits, talents, and abilities. In the case of terrorism, individuals who feel that terrorist acts are justified may perceive terrorism as a viable option although not necessarily a possible action for themselves. They may lack the self-empowerment and skills required to carry out extreme acts of instrumental aggression.

Such self-perceptions are rooted in experiences of the self in context. Context, here, refers to the loci for life experience and development. A person's perception of context is dependent on transactions between self-characteristics and experience in contexts. Individuals evaluate their context and develop perceptions of themselves as agents. For example, Louise Richardson, now a terrorism expert, grew up in Northern Ireland hearing stories of English atrocities against the Irish from her relatives and friends, many of whom were IRA supporters and members. She witnessed the suffering of her people (Richardson, 2006). Her experiences

within this context and the influences of people close to her, who supported the IRA, placed the work of the IRA as an acceptable behavioral option for people within her context.

Individuals perceive a range of options for behavior that vary by person and situation. However, they not be aware of all possible options or see themselves as empowered to enact the options within their awareness. It is the sense of self-empowerment that enables the selection of perceived options for behavior. Louise Richardson envisioned herself as a participant in the struggle and wanted to join the IRA. In her life context, joining the IRA was a possible action for her. She did not become a terrorist because this option was not one endorsed by an influential part of her context; her mother actively discouraged this choice. The timing of this maternal intervention stopped Louise at that time and she went on to have other experiences that led her to channel her passion for revolution into trying to understand terrorism. For other would-be terrorists, family and significant others within the life context can be equally influential in either encouraging the individual toward or discouraging away from becoming a terrorist. Becoming a terrorist is a function of having a sense of agency to perform terrorist acts which is supported by experiences and significant others within the life context and reinforced by participation in and allegiance to terrorist organizations.

Human Agency, moral perspective-taking and terrorism

Individual Agency and small group affiliation

Becoming a terrorist requires a sense of agency. Agentic behavior generally stems from the individual's awareness of him or herself as an active agent in that he or she can make choices even though the outcome may be positive or negative in social terms. The individual may have an awareness of terrorism as an option in context that does not pertain to him or her unless terrorism becomes a viable option for personal behavior. The decision to become a terrorist is largely sustained at the level of individual needs but may be influenced by family or community needs if they are important factors to the individual. The development of the sense of agency in terrorism may be understood in terms of life transforming processes that impact how people characterize themselves in three areas: the perception of (1) context, (2) choice, and (3) the ability to effect change. Joining the terrorist organization is a life transformative process. Hudson (1999) states that terrorists start as group sympathizers, become passive supporters, are often transformed by personal encounters and then with the help of a family, friend or terrorist group member, the individual turns to terrorism. Becoming a group sympathizer increases the awareness of terrorism in the individual's life context. The transformation to passive supporter increases the possibility of terrorism in the individual's range of options or choices for behavior. Personal encounters, especially those that increase the individual's' connection to a cause or acceptance within a terrorist organization, increase the viability of personally choosing terrorism as a means to effect change. The influences of significant others in the context serve to increase the individual's commitment and sense of agency to act. Finally, obtaining membership and

training from a terrorist group, the individual is empowered with the sense of agency to become a terrorist.

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the underwear bomber, provides an example of the process of developing a sense of agency as terrorist. His context for life experiences was very normal; Abdulmutallab was an excellent student from a wealthy family, studying mechanical engineering at University College London. He was president of the Islamic Society in which, he found 'contentment and companionship' (Atran, 2009). However, Abdulmutallab was lonely and sought additional companionship through e-conversations on the Islamic Forum Web. His subsequent activities are a series of choices based on his need for affiliation. These activities transform Abdulmutallab's perception of terrorism from something that he was aware of to a behavioral option that he became empowered to enact and chose.

Abdulmutallab's activities with the Islamic Society brought him into the counterculture of group sympathizers, which according to Atran (2009), includes many young Muslims, against 'the war on terror." Abdulmutallab was transformed from group sympathizer to passive supporter when he moved to Yemen, and became involved with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. His commitment to this group was cultivated under the tutelage of Imam Anwar al-Awlaki. Abdulmutallab entered a small group subculture of a "seemingly privileged and parallel universe framed by the Takfiri vision of how the Prophet and his companions withdrew from Mecca to Medina to gain the spiritual and physical force to conquer the world" (Atran, 2009). Abdulmutallab's turn toward terrorism was cemented when he severed ties with his former friends and bonded with like-minded others who were willing to commit terrorist acts. His sense of agency to take on a suicide or martyrdom mission was the product of a gradual process of indoctrination and training that included increasing his awareness of and affiliation with terrorists in general and building a bond with a small group of terrorists. He became attached to the group and committed to the cause.

The life experiences of Faisal Shahzad[2], the Pakistani-American responsible for the Times Square Car Bomb Attempt in New York City, bear some similarities to that of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab. Like Abdulmutallab, Faisal Shahzad comes from a wealthy, well-educated background. His father was a fighter pilot who was high ranking officer in the Pakistani Air Force. Shahzad's early education and life are unremarkable. He was apparently a mediocre student who was ultimately able to attain both a baccalaureate and master's degree. He held a steady job, married, and had two children. He went to school in the US and became a naturalized US citizen.

Compared with Abdulmutallab, less has been publicized about the details of Shahzad's path from group sympathizer to terrorist. However, in 2006-2009, a change in his life perspective emerges. The New York Times reports that in February 2006, Shahzad sent an email to friends questioning the effectiveness of peaceful protest. He said, "Can you tell me a way to

[2] Information on Faisal Shahzad was derived from several internet sources including a CBS news report at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mieTrEphdk; and articles at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faisal_Shahzad; http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/7678771/ Times-Square-bomb-Faisal-Shahzad-profile.html. The trial of Shahzad was reported at http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/us_times_square_car_bomb.

save the oppressed? And a way to fight back when rockets are fired at us and Muslim blood flows? Everyone knows how the Muslim country bows down to pressure from west. Everyone knows the kind of humiliation we are faced with around the globe (Elliott, 2010)." This attitude implies a cognitive shift from group sympathizer to passive supporter. This time period further signals a time of personal transformation during which he showed signs of radicalization and seems to transform from group sympathizer to passive supporter. According to Elliott (2010), Shahzad became a more devout Muslim, praying the required 5 times daily. He also wanted his wife to wear the traditional hjiab, which is the head covering and modest clothing worn by many Muslim women based on the teachings of the Qur'an. He then started to let people know that he wanted to return to Pakistan. In 2008, he asked his father's permission to be allowed to fight for Afghanistan. His father refused. By 2009, Shahzad had quit his job, stopped paying his mortgage and split from his family.[3] This pattern of behavior, particularly the split from family and friends, is similar to Abdulmutallab's severing of ties with all elements of his life prior to becoming a terrorist as he cemented his commitment to a small terrorist group.

Shahzad's path into the group, like Abdulmutallab's, featured internet interactions. He connected with Imam Anwar al-Awlaki and built relationships with other jihadists via the internet. He then, like Abdulmutallab, received on-site training in weapons and bomb-making at a terrorist camp. In Shahzad's case, the terrorist training camp was run by a militant Islamist group, allegedly Taliban, in the Waziristan region of Pakistan. The group that Shahzad was encouraged to affiliate with was comprised of Pashtuns, the group of his ethnic origin. The Pashtuns are known to have a strong sense of tribal identity and value loyalty (Nichols, 2008). The strategy of linking Shahzad with this group would enhance the personal meaning of this affiliation and ensure his commitment to the group.

Shahzad's commitment to group and to the cause remained un-swayed by remorse even when prosecuted for the attempted bombing. He made the following comments during his remarks at his sentencing, ""Brace yourselves, because the war with Muslims has just begun…."We are only Muslims. But, if you call us terrorists, we are proud terrorists. And we will keep on terrorizing you…. "The U.S. and NATO forces who have occupied Muslim lands, we do not accept your democracy or your freedom, because we already have Sharia law." Shahzad was clearly transformed from group sympathizer to terrorist. He became affiliated with a small group of personal significance to him and his worldview was molded into something for which he would give up his life or at least has given up his freedom.

Direct Information from terrorists is sparse and often limited to post-capture interviews. However, the profiles of Abdulmutallab and Shahzad support the premise that life experiences transform the sense of agency from that of group sympathizer to terrorist. These life experiences include an increased indoctrination into a radical or fundamentalist view of Islam, inculcation into and affiliation with a small group. The individual's commitment is cemented by the

[3] Internet sources at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faisal_Shahzad, indicate that Shahzad informed his wife that he was returning to Pakistan and that it was her choice to follow him or not. She instead moved to Saudi Arabia near her parents.

severance of ties to the pre-terrorist life and to individuals who may have a non-terrorist perspective. Once individuals have developed a sense of agency to see terrorist action as a behavioral option for themselves, they are equipped with military skills and further inculcated to the cause through on-site training in a terrorist camp. The leaders of terrorist recruitment and training are intentional in their attentiveness to and indoctrination of the trainees, providing access to respected leaders, such as Imam Al-Alwaki, and using technology, such as the internet, to initiate, maintain, and foster connections. The personal agency of the terrorist is developed through an increased commitment to the group with which they become affiliated and to the cause they espouse and indoctrination in the belief that this path is the only path to effect change. This agency is ultimately enacted in the execution of terrorist acts for the sake of a cause.

Commitment to a Cause

Terrorists act agentically in small groups in the interest of a cause to which they are committed. The people who are labeled 'terrorists' believe that they are acting morally. Their sense of personal and moral agency stands at odds with dominant or mainstream perspectives of moral and socially acceptable behavior. Socially dominant groups tend to associate agentic behavior with socially acceptable behavior, to evaluate agentic behavior in terms of its outcomes for the larger society as opposed to individual expediency or the interests of marginalized groups, and to equate moral behavior with socially acceptable behavior (Curtis-Tweed, 2003).

However, people are influenced by contextual elements and their perception of choices is conditioned by those contextual elements. In addition to self-evaluations and determinations of personal and causal agency, individuals develop context specific perceptions of their agency. Such agency may include the building of affiliations and coalitions within marginalized groups as seen in the examples of Abdulmutallab and Shahzad. Issues of responsibility, evaluation and prioritization relative to personal and moral agency may center on the interests of those who are marginalized in opposition to the interests of the dominant social groups. Therefore, their agency is dynamic and not necessarily in accord with the moral perspectives of the dominant culture or social groups. Consequently, resultant behavior may be socially acceptable or socially non-acceptable.

The expectation of social acceptability in agentic behavior places a demand for social conformity on the individual agent. The violation of this demand further marginalizes the dissenter, or in this case, the terrorist who is viewed as subversive by the dominant societal groups. However, such nonconformity may be indicative of problems with social mores or social structure.

During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the behavior of many civil rights workers was socially unacceptable; many were arrested for marching or sitting in for the cause of desegregation. However, those civil rights workers saw their behavior as acts of empowerment designed to challenge and change a morally corrupt system (Beardslee, 1977). In this case the popular perception of socially acceptable behavior was at odds with that of a minority of individuals who worked to change the system. The choice of terrorism is often grounded in the

perspective that a socio-political system must be changed and nothing else will work. In the 1960's, non-violent protests, such as those led by Dr. Martin Luther King, that were effective in the U.S., were tried to no avail in Apartheid South Africa. Nelson Mandela began his anti-apartheid activities by becoming involved in politics and promoting non-violent resistance. When peaceful methods of promoting political change were ineffective, he turned to terrorism. Terrorism was perceived as a possible action in his range of options but was not employed until it became the only viable choice. Nelson Mandela, anti-apartheid-activist, leader of the militant Umkhonto we Sizwe (spear of the Nation) component of the African National Congress (ANC), was imprisoned in 1962 for being a terrorist. Like other "terrorists", Mandela was highly educated, a lawyer, a descendent of kings. The context for his life experiences was Apartheid which afforded him few civil liberties and disregarded human rights.

Similarly, the Black Panthers were classified as terrorists by the US government and systematically disbanded by the FBI. The agenda of the party was to establish revolutionary socialism through mass organizing and community based programs using militant means as needed. They were heroes in the communities that benefitted from their programs which are still replicated in various forms across the U.S.[4] The governmental response to the Panthers represented the interest of the dominant social groups and middle classes and was a response to the Panthers' militancy as opposed to their programs. In the cases of both Mandela and the Panthers, "the terrorists" were responding to oppression and social injustice.

The agency of their behavior becomes understood though the lens of history, particularly after some legislative reformation, in this case, after legislated segregation and discriminatory practices are not longer a part of the social mores. To some degree the agency of some former terrorists is elevated to the status of social acceptability in recognition of the legitimacy of their causes. This is not to say that understanding the terrorist excuses violent acts. Until 2008, even Nelson Mandela was barred from entering the US (except for UN business in New York) without special permission from the US Secretary of State because of his prior designation and conviction as a terrorist.

Understanding the relation between the seemingly incomprehensible agency of terrorists and their need for such agency is essential to developing ways to reduce the sociopolitical tensions that lead the marginalized to believe that terrorism is their only path toward change. Frameworks for understanding terrorism should consider the temporality and historicity of terrorist acts in the context of political power structures and the marginalization of groups that may comprise terrorist organizations.

Conclusion: Implications for Addressing Terrorism

Plans to reduce terrorism should address the agency development of prospective terrorists, who may be defined as those who sympathize with the causes and actions of terrorist, and challenge those elements within the individual's context that make terrorism a viable behavioral option.

[4] The legacy of the Black Panthers community programming is described on the following website (http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Survival_Programs/survival_programs.html).

Effective strategies to reduce terrorism should 1) address contextual perceptions of injustice and oppression that evoke group sympathy; 2) decrease the allure of terrorism as the only viable method of effecting socio-political change; and 3) systematically reduce opportunities for terrorist recruitment and training that empower individuals with the sense of agency to become terrorists.

Addressing Contextual Perceptions of Injustice and Oppression

Oppression and social injustice may be viewed as insidious forms of terrorism, with far-reaching and long- term sociological and psychological consequences. Many times this form of terrorism carries on in silence, without media coverage, institutionalized in gender, racial, religious discrimination, cultural superiority, and other forms of inequity sanctioned by a country's dominant groups. It elicits the violent acts of instrumental aggression that we commonly label as terrorism. According to research, the causes of terrorism include revolution, political violence, ethnic conflicts, religious and ideological conflicts, poverty, modernization stresses, political inequities, lack of peaceful communication channels, traditions of violence, the existence of a revolutionary group, governmental weakness and ineptness, erosions of confidence in a regime and deep division within governing elites and leadership groups and environmental factors, including exposure to revolutionary philosophies in universities (Hudson, 1999). Many of these causes are grounded in some form of socio-political inequity.

Current responses to terrorism do not focus on decreasing these causes. For example, Krueger notes that the guaranteeing of civil liberties has not received adequate attention in fighting terrorism. He expresses concern that the imposition of democracy on non-democratic countries can have the opposite effect of curtailing civil liberties as seen in Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. The atrocities that occurred in both of these locations stand in stark contrast to the promises of democracy and liberty espoused by the West and fuel group sympathy for terrorist causes (Haque, 2005).

Some politicians in the West take the position that their versions of freedom and democracy constitute universal values that all countries should embrace. They seek to impose Western culture and values globally without consideration for differences in worldviews. For example, Sharia law, as referred to by Shahzad, is important to many Muslims and purports religious values in ways that that differ from Western political viewpoints. Increased efforts to understand religious and political differences would decrease the sense of distance and opposition between many Muslims and the West.

Additionally, in the West and particularly in the US, the misconception that Islam and terrorism is synonymous serves to vilify Islam.[5] This fallacy creates confusion and fosters hysteria in the US. This hysteria is evident in numerous irrational responses to Muslims in the US, including the post 9/11 detention of Muslims without charge, and the misconception that all

[5]On January 6, 2010, CNN reported the results of a study by researchers at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill that indicated that the threat to the US by radical Islamic groups was over-exaggerated. http://edition.cnn.com/2010/US/01/06/muslim.radicalization.study/

Muslims are terrorists. The establishment of a Mosque near Ground Zero in New York City has drawn staunch opposition across the US as an affront to Americans although an Islamic center existed in the area prior to 9/11 and Muslims, unrelated to the bombers, were among the 9/11 casualties. These misconceptions foster group sympathy for the problems that terrorists attempt to address and further marginalize both group sympathizers and terrorist groups. Efforts to reduce group sympathy, particularly in the West, should focus on building an increased understanding of Islam, the differences between Muslim groups, and what it means to be Muslim in different parts of the World.

Moral visions of care and justice will not be cultivated in environments that are neither caring nor just and that oppress and abandon people, while simultaneously teaching them that responses against oppression and abandonment are unacceptable. Cornel West (1989) notes that American pragmatism misses the relation between a tragic perspective and revolutionary and subversive agency, which is best understood in the political struggles of ordinary people. This is the story with terrorism. Effective strategies to reduce terrorism will demonstrate awareness of the link between political struggles and subversive agency by establishing protocols for better educating the West about diverse worldviews, and establishing political agenda that acknowledges problems and attempts to find peaceful solutions. These efforts should reduce the potential of terrorism becoming a choice for behavior in the life context of individuals.

Decreasing the allure of terrorism as the only viable method of effecting socio-political change

Terrorist involvement has become romanticized for many young Muslims. Jessica Stern (2006) observes that jihad has become a' cool' way for young Muslims to express their dissatisfaction with the status quo. She says, “Most of the youth attracted to the jihadist idea will never become terrorists. But only a few of them need to in order for the danger to be quite real in a variety of ways, particularly if American policy plays into their hands." Hudson (1999) notes that they are attracted to terrorist involvement, not only because of the cause and charismatic leadership, but also because of the promise of a sense of self-importance and companionship that characterizes the small group affiliation. The fight against terrorism should channel the exuberance of young Muslims into other means of effecting social change, by including them in the development of alternative political strategies, by decreasing the image that terrorism works, and by employing the influences of family and friends who do not want their sons and daughters to die any more than the terrorist leaders allow their own sons and daughters to die.

Reducing terrorist recruitment opportunities

Changing the context for the agency development of terrorists includes challenging the recruitment methods of the terrorist organizations. The life context of would-be terrorists is similar to that of Louise Richardson's adolescent perspective of the IRA. It is filled with stories of the cause, romanticized images of mystical leaders, and the heroism and martyrdom of people they know. These images are marketed by terrorist leaders internationally via the internet

through websites, the dissemination of videos and via the media. Increased monitoring and infiltration of websites and other technological venues for recruitment and indoctrination should decrease the effectiveness of these recruitment tools.

The publicity afforded to terrorists by the media inadvertently assists them in marketing and recruitment efforts (Laqueur, 1999). Laqueur (1999) states, "The media cannot ignore terrorism, but society would certainly be better off, if the media were not driven by sensationalism (p.44)." The romanticized image of terrorism would be challenged by an inattentive media, if video updates on the exploits or heroics of terrorist leaders, martyrs and heroes if they were not published by the media.

Terrorism cannot work without foot soldiers. Terrorist recruits tend to be young people under the age of thirty compared with the terrorist leadership which is typically over age fifty. Since much of the recruitment occurs during college or university years, institutions of higher education should place greater emphasis on conflict resolution and diversity programs that encourage cross-cultural understanding and help students to share world views, including religious and political views. Laqueur (1999) notes that loneliness, boredom and the need for excitement are factors that make young people vulnerable to the allure of terrorism. Therefore, university programs should more intentionally assist students, especially international students, in developing social networks

The support and intervention of friends and family are important to redirecting the interests of the young. Even though Faisal Shahzad was ultimately recruited by terrorists, it is interesting that he did not fight for Afghanistan after his father refused him permission to do so. Family intervention likewise redirected Louise Richardson's interest in joining the IRA. The relations between family and friends are influential components of the agency development context. Terrorist leaders rely on the development of such family-like affiliations within the terrorist cells. This approach could be modified so that families and community groups that do not have terrorist allegiances can provide support for the young people in their communities and encourage their agency development in alternative directions.

In conclusion, efforts to reduce group sympathy for the struggles addressed by terrorist will reduce the pool for terrorist recruitment. However, the causes that terrorists fight for must be redressed in order to reduce the legitimacy of terrorism as the only alternative to effect socio-political change. The development of alternatives for effecting social change and reducing the allure of terrorism will reduce its viability and the potential development of a sense of agency as terrorist. Finally, efforts must intentionally thwart the recruitment and indoctrination activities of terrorist organizations that target the context for agency development.

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Published by the Forum on Public Policy