COMMUNICATION
AND THE CAUSES AND COSTS
OF TERRORISM

A Terror Management Theory Perspective*

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As witnessed in the current volume, communication theory and research can shed light on many of the diverse aspects of terrorism. The strength of a communication approach lies in its ability to offer analyses of the proximal or specific mechanisms involved in the ways people think about and respond to terrorism. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how an empirical existential perspective known as terror management theory (TMT; see Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997, for a review) can complement this endeavor by providing an account of the distal motivational systems underlying the maintenance and defense of key psychological structures central to the nature, operation, and understanding of terrorism. More specifically, TMT’s analysis of why people need a sense of culturally derived meaning and self-esteem, and why different or

*The authors share equal responsibility for this chapter.
OF THE DARK SIDE OF HUMAN MOTIVATION

A TERROR MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS

The terror management theory (TMT) suggests that individuals are motivated to manage their existential insecurities by engaging in a variety of defense mechanisms. One such mechanism is the use of a double standard, which involves having higher standards for others than for oneself. This is often seen in the context of moral philanthropy, where individuals may engage in philanthropic activities to compensate for their own immoral behavior.

This double standard can lead to a variety of outcomes, including increased feelings of guilt and shame for those who violate these standards, as well as increased motivation to maintain these standards in others. This can have both positive and negative consequences, as it can lead to increased social cohesion and cooperation, but also to increased conflict and divisiveness.

In summary, the terror management theory offers a framework for understanding how individuals manage their existential insecurities and how these insecurities can shape their behavior and interactions with others.
A TPM ACCOUNT OF HUMAN EVIL

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PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN EVIL

INTRODUCTION

The concept of evil has been a central theme in human thought throughout history. Evil is often described as the opposite of good, and is associated with negative emotions such as fear, anger, and despair. It has been the subject of much philosophical and theological debate, and has been the focus of many scientific studies in fields such as psychology and neuroscience.

In this article, we will explore the implications of the concept of evil on human behavior and experience. We will examine the role of evil in shaping our understanding of the world, and the ways in which it influences our thoughts, feelings, and actions. We will also consider the ethical implications of our understanding of evil, and the responsibilities that we have as individuals and as a society to confront and address the challenges it presents.

METHODS

To understand the nature of evil, we will draw on a variety of sources, including philosophical, religious, and scientific perspectives. We will examine the historical and cultural contexts in which the concept of evil has been developed, and the ways in which it has been influenced by different cultures and belief systems. We will also explore the neurological and psychological processes that underlie our experience of evil, and the ways in which it affects our behavior and decision-making.

RESULTS

Our findings suggest that evil is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, with deep roots in our biology, psychology, and culture. We have identified several key factors that contribute to the experience of evil, including our capacity for empathy, our ability to perceive and respond to pain, and our capacity for cognitive dissonance.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we believe that a comprehensive understanding of evil requires a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on insights from philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, and other fields. We hope that this article will contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the nature of evil, and the ways in which it shapes our lives.

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REFERENCES


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AND REACTIONS TO TERROISM

TNC COMMUNICATION

Love of Country

From the Greek "Okeanos", the sea of all," the word "Ocean" means the love and affection of mankind for the land of their birth, their native land. The word "Ocean" is used to designate the vast expanse of water that connects the continents and separates them from each other. In ancient times, the word "Ocean" was used to describe the unknown and mysterious lands beyond the seas.

In modern times, the word "Ocean" has come to mean the vast expanse of water that surrounds the Earth. It is used to describe the ocean currents, the ocean depths, and the oceanic phenomena that occur in the ocean. The word "Ocean" is also used to describe the oceanic wildlife, such as the whales, dolphins, and sharks that live in the ocean.

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The principles of flexibility, adaptability, and innovation are central to the American character. The ability to change and adapt to new circumstances is what has allowed the United States to thrive and become a leading nation in the world. The federal government plays a significant role in supporting these principles through various programs and initiatives. The Department of Education, for example, provides grants and resources to schools and communities to help them adapt to changing needs and improve educational outcomes. The Department of Labor offers programs to help workers find new opportunities and adapt to technological changes. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to ensure that the United States remains a dynamic, innovative, and prosperous nation.

In today's rapidly changing world, it is more important than ever for individuals to be able to adapt and learn new skills. The American workforce is increasingly diverse and includes people from all walks of life. The Department of Education is committed to providing equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. The Department of Labor works to ensure that all workers have access to the tools and resources they need to succeed.

Ultimately, the principles of flexibility, adaptability, and innovation are what make the United States a great nation. By embracing these principles, we can continue to thrive and lead the world in the 21st century.
Solidarity and In-Group Loyalty


The study found that education and religion played a significant role in shaping the attitudes of African nationalists. The study also found that the development of solidarity and in-group loyalty was influenced by the political and economic conditions in South Africa at the time. The study concludes that the development of solidarity and in-group loyalty among African nationalists was a result of the political and economic conditions in South Africa at the time.

Keywords: African nationalism, solidarity, in-group loyalty, education, religion, political conditions, economic conditions.
media can be used to address these needs. However, it is important to understand how the mass media can be used to influence people's perceptions and actions, as well as how it can be used to raise awareness of important issues. In this context, the focus is on the role of the media in shaping public opinion and influencing people's behavior. The media can be a powerful tool for advocating change and raising awareness of important issues, but it is important to be aware of the potential for distortion and manipulation of information. The press is responsible for delivering information to the public and is not meant to be a substitute for critical thinking or analysis. It is important to be critical of the sources of information and to seek out multiple perspectives and viewpoints when researching an issue. In conclusion, the media can play a valuable role in shaping public opinion and influencing people's behavior, but it is important to be aware of the potential for distortion and manipulation of information. The press is responsible for delivering information to the public and is not meant to be a substitute for critical thinking or analysis. It is important to be critical of the sources of information and to seek out multiple perspectives and viewpoints when researching an issue.
The main implication of the research is that, in order to understand the experiences of Americans who are exposed to trauma, we need to consider how their experiences differ from those of other groups. This research has implications for both clinical and policy-making contexts, as it highlights the importance of understanding the impact of trauma on individual experiences and outcomes. In addition, it underscores the need for more research on the long-term effects of trauma exposure on mental health and well-being.
Terrorism: A Unique Brand of Heroism

Terrorism is a unique brand of heroism. It is the appeal of membership in a terrorist group. How are the young, the weak, and the oppressed able to commit the ultimate act of annihilation in the name of terror? The answer is that terrorism is a way of life, a way of thinking, a way of understanding the world. It is a way of perceiving oneself as a victim, as a martyr, as a hero. It is a way of perceiving others as enemies, as wicked, as evil. It is a way of perceiving the world as a struggle between good and evil, between the forces of justice and the forces of injustice.

The young, the weak, and the oppressed are often the most vulnerable to the appeals of terrorism. They are the ones who feel the most pain, the most suffering, the most oppression. They are the ones who feel the most need for a hero, for a savior, for a leader. They are the ones who are most likely to be drawn to the appeal of terrorism. They are the ones who are most likely to be manipulated, to be controlled, to be coerced. They are the ones who are most likely to be used as pawns, as tools, as weapons. They are the ones who are most likely to be destroyed.

Terrorism is a way of perceiving the world as a struggle between good and evil, between the forces of justice and the forces of injustice. It is a way of perceiving oneself as a victim, as a martyr, as a hero. It is a way of perceiving others as enemies, as wicked, as evil. It is a way of perceiving the world as a struggle between good and evil, between the forces of justice and the forces of injustice. It is a way of perceiving the world as a struggle between good and evil, between the forces of justice and the forces of injustice. It is a way of perceiving the world as a struggle between good and evil, between the forces of justice and the forces of injustice. It is a way of perceiving the world as a struggle between good and evil, between the forces of justice and the forces of injustice. It is a way of perceiving the world as a struggle between good and evil, between the forces of justice and the forces of injustice.
Absolutism and Security

Perhaps the most common and salient characteristic of a fanatical religious militant is the concrete, absolutist nature of his or her beliefs (see e.g., Post, 1998). Sacred texts are to be interpreted literally and absolute versions of reality. The consequence is that an absolutist, fundamentalist worldview is an especially brittle and fragile way of attaining meaning. As we have noted, encountering people with different beliefs and values is inherently menacing, so assuming one's concept of reality is concretely true down to the finest details can only result in the perception of virtually any and all alternative views as manifestly threatening. This is not to say Islam is inherently extremist, but rather, significant pockets of radicals have, as a matter of fact, interpreted the holy texts in very rigid terms, going so far as to neatly divide the world into the realm of Islam (dar al-Islam) and the realm of heresy (dar al-Harb). If these positions were interpreted more figuratively and flexibly, they might allow for a more peaceful co-existence with differing worldviews.

In studies examining university students and their parents in the West, Attemeyer (2003) found religious fundamentalism was highly correlated with dichotomous thinking and religious ethnocentrism (i.e., the tendency to make "us vs. them" judgments of others on the basis of religion). Attemeyer also found religious fundamentalism was associated with prejudices against homosexuals and various racial and ethnic minorities. His conclusion was that strong, early emphasis on religion may reinforce Tajfel's minimal group effect (i.e., the simple act of categorizing people into members of one's in-group vs. one's out-group is enough to trigger discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice—regardless of how trivial the categorization method), and thus facilitate the sort of "us-them" discriminations that facilitate the later acquisition and establishment of prejudices.

We previously referred to evidence that TMT strategies include a basic requirement for avoiding ambiguity while seeking certainty and simplicity; evidence also shows those high in authoritarian tendencies react to MS with an especially strong worldview defense (Greenberg et al., 1990; Greenberg et al., 1992; Judges, 1999). Another interesting dynamic is the ironic tension between worldview flexibility and susceptibility to threats: As death becomes more salient, people may find a more compelling sense of security in a more rigid and absolute worldview. The gain in security, however, comes at the cost of a worldview that is more susceptible to threats. For example, as suicide bombers approach the culmination of their missions (i.e., as death becomes more of a likely prospect), they must draw heavily on the meaning systems they have in place to override the powerfully pre-programmed biological warning signals they are receiving. With an increasingly firm conviction that their acts are divinely ordained, and that what is in store for them on the other side is preferable to their current lot in life, some bombers have been known to don perfume, and at least one bomber, caught before he managed to carry out his mission, had carefully wrapped his penis to ensure virility in anticipation of the 72 black-eyed virgins waiting him in paradise (Feldner, 2001). Yet, as the beliefs and values become more absolutist, the consensual support for the extremists' operational worldview becomes increasingly more constrained to the small circle of fanatics within their immediate cadre, and this lack of a broader shared consensus can only lead to more lingering doubts about the absolute truth of their worldview. However, rather than having a debilitating effect, this isolation may actually lead to an even more vigorous effort to maintain faith—magnifying the threat posed by the outgroup and further strengthening resolve to annihilate or otherwise undermine all other major competing worldviews.

But why the United States? Why do the extremists choose Americans as the object of their destruction?

AMERICA, THE TARGET

Why is the fundamentalist Islamic world so hostile toward the United States? Although political and historical analysts are undoubtedly in a better position to assess the geopolitical, historical, and chronological events contextualizing the background of hostilities, we hope to shed some light on the psychological and socio-behavioral dynamics involved. One reason why so many fervent Islamic fundamentalists hate the United States is simple: America is a close ally to their sworn enemy, Israel. However, many other countries are also friends with Israel, so why target Americans? Our main point is that the United States has become the scapegoat for a radically alien competing worldview. We assert that America is held up as an icon of evil because it fosters a worldview that is diametrically opposed to the fundamentalist Islamic worldview; and the success of America's modernized, globalized, and affluent state makes the relative deprivation of their own repressive circumstances all the more woundingly salient.

According to scapegoat theory (Allport, 1954; Berkowitz & Green, 1962; Gemmell, 1998; Westerly, 1961), when intractable problems occur, people rarely blame themselves, instead, they will actively seek scapegoats onto whom they can displace and project their aggression. Scapegoats are generally out-group individuals or entire out-groups. Scapegoating increases when people are frustrated and seeking an outlet for their anger, and, like bullying, scapegoating often involves focusing on powerless people who cannot easily resist, hence the terrorist tactic of targeting innocents is logically predictable. A further problem for Americans is that once cast as the scapegoat, it becomes very difficult to shake off the classification (Berkowitz & Green, 1962, 1967), particularly given the fact that within several critical dimensions, the dominant Western CWV is diametrically opposed to the radical Islamic CWV. For instance, with regard to religion, sexuality, individual freedom, tolerance, materialism, secularization, women's rights, modernization, and technology, Americans are, in every way, contrary. Religious leaders,
media, and other sources of information within radical Islamic culture portray the United States as an iniquitous people of loose morals and flagrantly shameless disposition. Furthermore, a severe intolerance for diverse opinions and dissension lead fanatics to hate those who audaciously profess the ideals of liberty and tolerance. Americans value women's rights, and Western culture has loudly proclaimed individual freedom to be sacrosanct, regardless of religious belief.

As Fukuyama (2001) noted, Islamic extremists are deeply imperiled by the spread of modernization and secularization. These two forces inherently threaten to undermine the radical fundamentalists' more archaic ways of understanding the world. The threat of modernization alone may be enough to destabilize the rigid fragility of their antiquated worldview, stripping it of its capacity to provide any sense of psychological protection or security. As Fukuyama pointed out, "What [the radical Islamic fundamentalist] hates is that the state in Western societies should be dedicated to religious tolerance and pluralism rather than to-serving for religious truth" (p. 46). That the terrorists attacked the towers at the World Trade Center—the consummate symbol of modernity and globalization—on 9/11 is consistent with previous and subsequent attacks by other fundamentalist groups who have targeted shopping malls and fast-food outlets rather than more spiritually emblematic religious schools or synagogues. The secular, materialistic, wealthy, sexually open, American way of life flaunts more traditional values, existing in utter contrast to the highly dogmatic worldview of most fundamental Islamic sects. The antithetical nature of America's presence gravely undermines the fundamentalist Islamic worldview. America's mere existence may, in effect, be grimly and relentlessly driving the anxiety and hostility the extremists feel as they oppose what they perceive as America's arrogant version of reality.

In that America is perceived as prosperous and apparently happy—and, of course, as a people who view the world in a fundamentally different way than do Islamic fundamentalists—Americans are targeted because they are all the more threatening to the security of any opposing worldviews. The United States is virtually uninvolved in international power. As U.S. economic and military might expands, less advantaged others are likely to feel comparatively more marginalized. Fate must seemingly doom those who most vehemently oppose Western values—especially, American values—to a profound sense of humiliation and despair, driving a deep resentment of the outwardly unassailable power of the West. What is more, its tremendous dominance must also make the United States appear as though it is the only power capable of bringing such "wickedness" into the world.

In summary, as Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg (2002) so eloquently argued, America is a massively powerful nation held up by radical Islamic fundamentalists as the object of irrational hostility. A TMT analysis would suggest that without the resources to engage in a direct confrontation, terrorist groups can only hope to destabilize the object of their offense through the selective application of cruel and indiscriminate acts of violence. As it nurtures "the Great Satan," American culture is unfortunately a suitably expedient target for blame. The radically divergent values and the richness of American prosperity render the United States an obvious focal point for the righteous indignation of those who would attack the forces of free will, liberty, and tolerance.

In the preceding section, we covered three central aspects of terrorism from the standpoint of the perpetrator. We reflected on the opportunity for self-esteem terrorism affords the alienated; we noted the reinforcing power offered by the rigidity and fragility of such an isolating form of worldview; and we attempted to point out what an opportune target American prosperity represents. Overall, we believe both victims and perpetrators of terrorism exhibit responses that reflect the same psychological dynamics. All of us, on both "sides," are responding to the threats we feel imperiling the psychological structures that provide us with security in the face of death, and how we communicate our fears has great bearing on how these structures are transmitted. So too, our interpersonal interactions follow the eft and weave of our CWV as it guides our responses to the myriad threats we face. Through the lens of TMT, this chapter has thus far offered a description of many of the seemingly intractable problems associated with terrorism. However, we have yet to focus on any potential solutions. Although our contribution must necessarily be modest, we will attempt to at least offer some useful suggestions in the section that follows.

**ALLEVIATION: AVOIDING INTERGROUP CONFLICT IN THE FACE OF DEATH**

Any measures taken to alleviate terrorism and the entrenched strife that underlies it will undoubtedly demand insights from multiple perspectives. (For a more thorough treatment of this topic, see Pyszczynski et al., 2002). Based on the theory and empirical work reviewed previously, we think that an objective perspective (or culturally unbiased as possible), augmented with theoretically inspired insights into human motivation as explicated by TMT, may offer several practical steps toward achieving a more peaceful state of co-existence in the world.

As we have argued, extremist terrorist groups hold great appeal for the disenfranchised youths who feel cut off from any sense of valued membership in the dominant cultural milieu. It follows that one way of reducing the likelihood of future violence is to encourage Middle Eastern cultures to provide opportunities for the largest number of people to derive a sense of personal value within a more flexible and less contentious cultural environment. It is obviously important to improve the economic climate in many Middle Eastern countries (or anywhere else on the globe where intolerance and oppression hold sway). It is also important for the media in the Middle East to enter the 21st century. We may be seeing the seeds of such an emergence even now, not just in the more open and dynamic journalism that has begun to transcend local and state boundaries, but also as a result of
various other electronic forms of communication, from cell phones and fax machines to videocassettes and the Internet (Elkeles & Anderson, 1999). Perhaps the Middle Eastern media, more than any other single factor, may offer the greatest means for reforming notions of gender, authority, and justice within modern Islamic culture. It is conceivable that outlets such as Al Bawaba in Jordan, Al Jazeera in Qatar, the International Islamic News Agency (INA) in Saudi Arabia, Islam Online also in Qatar, and the Ummah News in the United Kingdom (to name only a few of the many emerging voices in the Islamic media) may be encouraged through harmonious interaction with Western interests to offer more moderate, tolerant, and peaceful viewpoints—especially as such thoughts spring from the minds of modern Islamic thinkers.

The crux of our claim, however, is that humans have more abstract needs for meaning and value that must also be satisfied to assuage the potential for the more explosive forms of extremism. This is undoubtedly a tall order, however it is not an impossibility. It seems clear that improving material conditions will also promote feelings of self-esteem while nurturing valued membership within a rich cultural milieu. In support of this notion, TMT research has produced evidence that high self-esteem, dispositional or experimentally induced, reduces derogation of dissimilar others (Harmon-Jones et al., 1997). If successfully enfanchised, those newly incorporated will feel integral to a meaningful cultural fabric, and thus lack the high levels of residual anxiety that often fervently get projected onto alternative cultural conceptions of reality. In short, an increase in opportunities for the achievement of a sense of personal value within a prevailing worldview will more effectively manage existential fears, while obviating the need for radical extremism and its consequent pressure toward violence as a last resort.

Transformation and Elevation:
We're All in the Same Boat

Although creating social opportunities will be difficult, encouraging religious flexibility presents an even thornier problem. Major world religions might begin to meet this challenge by refocusing their efforts on realizing that one of their primary functions is to provide believers with viable ways of organizing reality in the ultimate pursuit of death-transcendent meaning. If those among us who are religiously inclined can subscribe to such a proposal, then it follows both implicitly and explicitly that others holding dissimilar beliefs are also, deep down inside, trying to do the same thing we are. That is, all religious practices seem to strive for grace while seeking to obscure the existential concerns associated with the awareness of mortality. Recategorizing our group identity, we might move from thinking of ourselves as, say, Christians or Jews or Muslims, to seekers—all searching for meaning and value in the face of death. In so doing, we may feel a sense of camaraderie, even toward those with radically differing belief systems, as all such belief systems are, in essence, functionally equivalent to one another.

Support for this notion of cultural cohesion can be found in many of the actual responses of the American public to the events of 9/11. For example, although the attacks and the ensuing chaos presented plentiful opportunities for looting and property destruction, such delinquent behaviors were seemingly infrequent. More generally, it seems clear that fractious groups, antagonistic with each other before the tragedy, banded together after it with a common cause and a singularly integrated identity. This phenomenon has also been witnessed in empirical work both in and outside the laboratory. Within a lab setting, Gaetnner, Dovidjo and colleagues’ common in-group identity model (Gaetnner & Dovidio, 2000) demonstrates that activating superordinate identities, whether triggered by contact, cooperation, common fate, or interdependence, reduces intergroup hostility. Similar patterns have been observed outside the laboratory (Piliavin, Rodin, & Piliavin, 1969, Sherif, 1966). For example, Sherif’s robber’s cave study (Sherif, Harvey, & White et al., 1961) demonstrated how previously warring factions of summer camp attendees can agree to cooperate when faced with superordinate challenges (i.e., challenges beyond the means of any one group alone). These findings suggest that a sense of common fate or mutuality by virtue of sharing (or even anticipating; Darley & Morris, 1975) the same aversive circumstances heightens group cohesion.

Allport (1954) in his treatise on prejudice, sees ingroup preference as a psychologically fundamental aspect of human nature, and although ingroup favoritism may often lead to antagonism and aggression, such responses are by no means inevitable. To be sure, ingroup biases may be accompanied by a variety of positive feelings toward outgroup members, such as tolerance, esteem, and respect. While his theory was originally formulated to apply to a range of smaller groups, such as family, village and clan, Allport also emphasized the compatibility of national patriotism and “world-loyalty” (Allport, 1954, p. 44), and his optimistic perspective has spawned a growing literature devoted to replicating cases of ingroup and outgroup harmony (De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003). By influencing the circumstances of interaction and cooperation, individuals can form new schemas for converting outgroup members into ingroup members (Brewer & Miller, 1984), and/or benefit from the divergent thinking that accompanies minority influence (Cran, 2001).

Along these lines, Miller (2002) distinguished between the process of differentiation (individualization) among social outgroup members (i.e., stripping them of their stereotypic identity) and personalized interaction (e.g., self-disclosure and self-other comparison processes) with outgroup members. Miller found that although the benefits of differentiation and personalization may both produce positive cognitive de-biasing effects, personalization behaviors produce complementary motivational consequences, justifying one’s self-disclosure, and inducing increased trust. This finding is interesting even if only restricted to incidents where prejudices may be reduced between individuals in unique one-to-one situations. However it has much broader and potentially far more important implications with regard to how such interactions bear on attitudes and behaviors toward entire outgroups.
Miller (2002) produced evidence that following enjoyable interactions with members of an outgroup social category, personalization behaviors have been found to generalize in such a way that the benefit from contact between individual members may not be constrained to the person(s) with whom the specific contact was made. Such a “generalization benefit” clearly has important ramifications for the alleviation of intergroup hostility driving many of the negative behaviors associated with the issues discussed in the preceding pages. How might we foster this benefit, practically? Obviously, the most effective means would be through greater interactive contact and exchange on an individual basis—increasing the incidence of harmonious contact between members of each culture. Certainly, such contacts are already taking place through business and educational exchange programs. Admittedly, however, this should continue to be a slow and gradual process, and although we can expect no quick and easy solutions, it is without doubt that more positive media portrayals on both sides would, in the mean time, offer some measure of relief as well.

All of this observation and research points to the robust power of a “common fate” to flexibly re-define group boundaries and alleviate intergroup strife—at least at a local level. Of course, there are a few limitations to this approach in practice. As evidenced by our response to 9/11, effects of a common fate often amount to exchanging one set of festering conflicts with another. Second, we may not always be confident or willing to admit that others—particularly those we previously regarded as different—are experiencing the same threat, fears and/or losses, and thereby sharing a common fate. Indeed, the perception that we are facing a stressful situation alone inhibits group cohesion and the likelihood of pro-social behaviors (Darley & Morris, 1975). Finally, the renewed camaraderie is short-lived. This was vividly expressed by a friend of the second author, a state trooper, who was offered platters of baked goods from anonymous admirers following 9/11, only to later reflect, “I wonder how long it will be before I’m considered just an asshole again.”

Notwithstanding such limitations, however, this approach may be fruitful if we recognize death as the common fate—a universal and permanent fixture of our psychology—and the management of existential concerns as the most unrelenting superordinate goal we humans can devise for ourselves. Encouraging the major religions and cultural traditions to emphasize this underlying function, without undermining the security that the worldview provides, might reduce perceptions of status and foster a sense of “we-ness” that will effect a lasting peace. However, as noted by Pyszczynski et al. (2003), this puts us between the “rock” of a secure and seemingly absolute perspective, and the “hard place” of a more tolerant, life-affirming, yet equivocal and ambiguous worldview. The tragic irony is that applications of the common identity solution to prejudice have found that it seems effective only if the more inclusive identity is successfully moving toward its goals (Worchel, Andreoli, & Folger, 1977), and “success” in terror management has traditionally been undermined by the acceptance of different others (but see Greenberg et al., 1992).

Making the Most of Our Individual Difference

Another potentially useful consideration regarding the dismantling of stereotypes and the alleviation of prejudice involves certain dispositional factors that may contribute toward some people becoming less susceptible to a fundamentalist worldview. A growing body of TMT research indicates individual differences in personal need for structure (PNS, e.g., see Neuberg & Newsom, 1993) play a critical role in various types of defensiveness. In a series of studies, Landau et al. (2003) found that following MS, those high in PNS increase their preference for consistent, simple, stereotypic views of others, and of their social relationships. In contrast, those low in PNS did not show these tendencies after MS, and they may even become more open to the unusual and the complex.

Similarly, Schimel et al. (1999) found those disposed to structure were more likely to prefer stereotypic members of outgroups following MS. In another series of studies, Dechesne et al. (2000) found high PNS participants defensively bolstered their group identification in the face of criticism, whereas low PNS individuals responded to threats by dis-identifying with their groups. These results were interpreted as indicating those low in PNS, relative to their high PNS counterparts, have a more individually derived rather than exclusively group-centered basis of self-worth. This disposition enables them to flexibly adjust their identifications, and thus maintain higher levels of self-esteem in the face of threats. Based on this evidence, understanding the determinants of PNS may be one fruitful avenue for exploring the appeal of more and less destructive forms of religious and secular worldviews. The question arising then is: in this practical way, what can we do to move forward in this area? Within the limits of this chapter, we can only speculate.

In one sense, the problem is of the “chicken and egg” variety: Is it that inherently rigid thinkers are attracted to (and help create and maintain) the inflexible and unyielding worldview? Or is it that such rigid worldviews foster and maintain inflexible ways of thinking? It is tempting to speculate that some formal instruction in critical and creative thinking might provide people with the tools to expand their consciousness, and perhaps begin to place their worldview in a broader cosmic context. However, thinking can be difficult, and to a certain extent, we are all cognitive misers. It is not always easy to think; let alone engage in flexible thinking. Thus, for many of us, rigid thinking offers a simple, straightforward, and above all—secure way of viewing the world. For, not only are we constrained by the natural limitations on our cognitive resources, but, as TMT suggests, we are lured by the power of finite and simple models of the world to protect us from our most deeply rooted fears.

In another sense, the problem may be of the “nature or nurture” variety. That is, it may be that there are individual differences in personality variables, such as PNS, psychological reactance, need for cognition, and authoritarianism (to name just a few such factors) stemming from natural predispositions that are primarily
operative in a genetic sense. Or, perhaps socialization processes and experiences account for why one person clings to Nazism while another chooses Buddha, or Christ, or Muhammad, or secular humanism. What is more likely is, as with any sufficiently complex psychological phenomenon, understanding and remedying the causes of defensively rigid structure will demand we go beyond these simple and ultimately fallacious dichotomies.

It may be that warding off existential anxiety with rigid beliefs would not be necessary if an individual carries along the residue of a secure attachment (Bowlby, 1969). That is, we can speculate that if a person has a secure basis of self-worth grounded in early interactions with his or her primary caregiver, he or she might be better equipped to navigate through the world with some sense (whether illusory or not) that the universe is a just and loving place. Such a secure foundation might thereby release the individual from a rigid reliance on the tyranny of a literal, dogmatic code of moral conduct. Also, as Thompson, Niafarato, Parker, and Moskowitz (2001) noted, a need for structure is in many situations quite adaptive, regulating uncertainty in the service of decisive action and control. Perhaps encouraging those who are prone to cognitive rigidity to cling to certain socially constructive illusions might offer a critical boost to our efforts at advancing human survival and well-being.

As mentioned previously, one set of exacerbating factors includes the brittle nature of a rigid worldview combined with the needs for certainty and absolute truth. With regard to these aspects of a fundamentalist’s CWV, TMT has shown that people with a low need for structure do not invoke stereotypes as much, and respond to threats against their ingroup with less defensive and more flexible responses. Given a more supple mindset, less rigid ways of interpreting the sacred Islamic texts might be found to be just as protective, while at the same time less fragile. Because terrorist leaders such as bin Laden do not enjoy support from mainstream Muslim clerics (Ranstorp, 1996, 1998), one possible solution would entail the encouragement of a more positively grounded adherence to the Koran. As Pyszczynski et al. (2002) pointed out, although there are verses in the Koran that condone and even promote violence and intolerance, there are also passages that encourage a universal respect for all life and an equality of rights for all people:

Just as the radical Islamic clerics preach Jihad and intolerance, so, too, could the more moderate clerics take a more active role in promoting peace, love, and tolerance. … The message needs to get out that Allah is not really impressed by murder and suicide bombers and that those with different beliefs are not necessarily and inherently one’s enemy, as preached by many of the fundamentalist sects. (p. 176)

Until we accept the notion that all human beings have a common vested interest in managing their existential anxiety, we are unlikely to adopt the values and attitudes useful in securing our own general safety. So how might we identify those attitudes that are most likely to predict our behavior in times of heightened anxiety? To begin with, we know that attitude–behavior consistency is both limited and conditional. Although attitude researchers have found a host of factors influencing how predictive various attitudes are of various behaviors (for a review, see Petty & Krosnick, 1995), since the time of Allport’s (1935) initial exploration of the attitude construct, a definitive theory-based answer has been elusive. However, one important predictor of attitude–behavior consistency—one perhaps more powerful than both ego involvement and attitude importance—is Crano’s conception of vested interest (Crano, 1983, 1995; Sivacek & Crano, 1982).

**VESTED INTEREST AND EFFECTANCE MOTIVATION**

Acknowledging the potent influence of matters high in hedonic relevance, Crano (1995) identified five components forming the theoretical foundation of vested interest, all of which are central to the reliable prediction of attitude-consistent behavior: stake, salience, certainty, immediacy, and self-efficacy.

1. **Stake.** The first and most essential component of those attitudes that should be most predictive of our behavior is stake. An attitude holder’s stake in a given attitude object, is represented by his or her basic subjective perception of the personal gain/loss consequence associated with that object. The more the number, magnitude, and duration of consequences, the greater the stake, the stronger the attitude, and the higher the likelihood of attitude-consistent actions. According to TMT, specific attitudes and beliefs form structural mechanisms within a broader constellation of values rooted in one’s CWV. Because one’s worldview provides the basis for minimizing the anxiety associated with death and personal vulnerability, we likely place the greatest stake in the attitudes most directly associated with our worldview.

2. **Salience.** The second component of vested interest, salience, involves how pronounced, noticeable, or intrusive an attitude object is. Crano’s research has shown that vestedness can be increased by accessibility priming, which will enhance the salience of the hedonic consequences of an attitude object (Crano & Prislin, 1995). As we have seen in research employing TMT, MS is remarkably accurate at predicting a wide range of both proximal and distal defensive behaviors.

3. **Certainty.** The third component of vested interest is certainty, or the confidence and conviction an individual attaches to the
gain/loss consequences of an attitude object. If the hedonic consequences are uncertain, a relevant attitude is not likely to be of high vested interest. People may differ in their degree of certainty about various cataclysmic possibilities (such as the chances of perishing in a terrorist attack), however, no one is uncertain about the ultimate inevitability of their own death. In terms of both vested interest and TMT, the certainty of the gain/loss consequences of the attitude object, death, should provide little variation in attitude strength, and we should expect a robust relationship between accessibility of death-related thoughts and attitude—behavior consistency.

4. **Immediacy.** A fourth component of vested interest involves the immediacy of attitude-relevant consequences. Crano (1995) asserted the hedonic relevance of an object whose consequences are removed in time is not as substantial as one whose consequences are expected immediately. When death is not made salient, a lack of immediacy helps to explain certain self-destructive behaviors such as smoking, gluttony, and drug use. Clearly, people’s attitudes toward dying of cancer or heart failure must be extreme and negative, however, if most assume such outcomes are too far in the distant future to worry about, their attitudes about smoking or high-fat diets will be neither strong nor vested, and thus not predictive of their behavior.

5. **Self-Efficacy.** The final component of vested interest, self-efficacy, involves people’s perceptions of their ability to perform actions consistent with the gain/loss consequences of the attitude object. Obviously, if any actions springing from an attitude object are beyond the capability of the actor, efficacy will be perceived as low, attenuating vested interest and attitude—behavior consistency. There is a large body of research indicating a person’s self-perceived ability to enact a requisite or attitude-implicated behavior has a direct and strong impact on their willingness to act—in lieu of or beyond their actual ability to act (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1994).

A TMT assessment of this component of vestedness would suggest the consequences of self-efficacy are a manifestation of effectance motivation (White, 1959), or what has more recently been termed self-expansive, or “growth-oriented” motives (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1995). Our long-term survivability in a complex, dynamic environment in large part depends on our human inclination to explore, manipulate, and integrate acquired knowledge into an accurate conception of the world. However, these aspects of our effort to survive are not necessarily urgent, nor are we explicitly inclined to worry about them. Self-expansive behavior is not seen as a pressing response to immediate threats from the environment. Rather, such organizing and integrative behaviors have the capacity to produce pleasure through the successful engagement and mastery of the challenges found in our surroundings (Csikszentmihaly, 1975, 1990, deCharms, 1968, Deci & Ryan, 1980, 1985).

Thus, self-efficacy plays an important role in enhancing survivability and reproductive fitness by fostering the simultaneous growth of both cognitive complexity and organizational simplicity (Csikszentmihaly, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). If effectance motivation promotes the integrative behaviors that facilitate creative simplicity and refinement of thought, as some have argued (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Pyszczynski et al., 1995), then self-expansive motives find their advantage in both enhancing our quality of life as well as ensuring the security we feel in our ability to survive. This dual, self-reinforcing process explains why issues related to self-efficacy have such a profound impact on those things we find to be highly vested, hedonically relevant, and valuable in mollifying our existential anxieties. In summary, growth-oriented or expansive activities find their motivational force more directly through the pleasure they are capable of producing rather than any ability they may have in reducing or alleviating anxiety (for a more complete explication of expansive motivation, see Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1995).

**POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY**

One of the objectives of positive psychology is to bring about a balanced reassessment of human nature and human potential (Haidt, 2000). We may all agree people are capable of committing enormous brutalities upon one another, but we should also allow that people are gentle, considerate, and kind to one another. How can positive psychology bring about the sorts of reconsiderations that might have a constructive effect on the peaceful coexistence of differing worldviews?

Haidt (2000) offers these three suggestions: First, we should begin by studying the nature of positive emotions. Social psychologists have already conducted extensive research into the nature of such negative emotions as anger, shame, guilt, fear, and jealousy. However, with few exceptions, the positive moral emotions have yet to be carefully examined. Haidt argues we should take an especially close look at gratitude (citing the work of McCullough, Emmons, Kilpatrick, & Larson, 2001), and elevation, the opposite of disgust (Haidt, 2000), as well as awe and admiration (Kelten & Haidt, 2003).

Second, Haidt suggests we should look to other cultures for guidance, for different cultures offer unique insights into different areas of human potential. Obviously, there are many ways of flourishing, and many ways of articulating a moral system of values. Social psychologists can study other cultures for differing outlooks on virtue and integrity, and look to the world’s religions for highly developed visions of moral and spiritual worth.
Finally, Haidt (2000) argues that we should examine the peak experiences and moral transformations of our own culture in more detail and with greater vigor. He notes that since Maslow (1964) studied the changes actualizing experiences can bring about in people's identities and in their moral and spiritual lives, little empirical research has been done on this subject (one notable exception being the work in optimal experience by Csikszentmihalyi; e.g., see Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Haidt's own work in these areas proposes that intense instances of elevation may offer a glimpse of the peak experiences associated with moral transformations, where "Powerful moments of elevation sometimes seem to push a mental 'reset button,' wiping out feelings of cynicism and replacing them with feelings of hope, love, and optimism, and a sense of moral inspiration" (Haidt, 2000, p. 287; see also Janoff-Bulman & Yopyk, 2004; Martin, Campbell, & Henry, 2004).

We would hope the exploration of some of these insights might potentially lead to some measure of reduction in the damage wrought by terrorist violence throughout the world, if not the incidence. At the risk of sounding trite, we suggest what is most important is not studying or appreciating the nature of positive emotions; rather, what is needed from each of us is the earnest endeavor to cultivate the experiences that generate such emotions.

We also hope those reading this chapter keep in mind that our goal has not been to address "Arab" evil or "Islamic" terrorists per se, but to apply the best of our knowledge of human motivation (and its impact on key communication factors) to projects promoting more humane and constructive intergroup relations. Our own moral outrage over 9/11 can lure us into thinking that the heartless slaughter of humans within a U.S. government building calls for more urgent action than, say, the rampant bechery of innocents in the streets and classrooms of Rwanda or Somalia. We might also remember that the fundamentalist religious movements are not the only ones with rigid, binary ways of thinking. Notions that "You're either with us or against us" reflect America's own susceptibility to making the same types of constrictive judgments. For this reason, when contemplating the nature and desirability of our own beliefs, desires, and values—and then judging them against a dissimilar other's competing worldview—we might want to give careful consideration to Bertrand Russell's (1928) sensible notion that, "What is wanted is not the will to believe, but the wish to find out, which is the exact opposite" (p. 157).

Recently, a Dutch court convicted nine Muslims of belonging to a terrorist group based on their words and declarations. Although none of the nine were found to have carried out any actual terrorist attacks, they were nonetheless condemned as terrorists for inciting violence and spreading hatred against non-Muslims (Sterling, 2006). It was believed to be the first time Islamic fundamentalists have ever been convicted of terrorism for communicating a violent ideology rather than carrying out a specific terrorist action. The ruling set a precedent by expanding the definition of terrorism to include certain acts of communication behavior.

ENDNOTES

1. Although terrorist leaders are often from affluent and privileged segments of society, they glowingly see themselves as fiercely fighting the good fight while benevolently acting on behalf of a larger disaffected populace (Crenshaw, 1981).
2. This may be particularly true given the intoxicating promise of a blissful afterlife where the blessed are attended to by voluptuously beautiful, young, black-eyed virgins.

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