JUSTICE AND IDENTITY: PSYCHOLOGICAL MOTIVES FOR TERRORISM

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Abstract

Terrorism poses a significant challenge for psychology. Motivation to engage in such violent and anti-normative behavior has yet to be understood. The two studies described in the present thesis examined what psychological motivations might account for peoples' involvement in terrorism. Study 1 explored the collective narratives of participants with ties to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Participants' narratives conveyed the explicit theme of justice and the implicit theme of identity as motives for extreme violence. Based on these findings, study 2 investigated if social identity and justice motives would exceed a control condition in inciting participation in terrorism. In a laboratory setting, participants were recruited to partake in a fictitious terrorism plot. Recruitment that emphasized social identity motives was relatively more compelling for participants than justice motives. Results for both studies warrant further research into the psychological role that justice and identity might play in the use terrorism.
Résumé

Le terrorisme pose un grand défi pour la psychologie. Les motivations pour ces actes violents et anormaux restent un mystère. Dans cette thèse, deux études examinent quelles motivations psychologiques pourraient mener au terrorisme. L'étude 1 a exploré les récits collectives de participants ayant des liens avec les Tigres pour la Libération du Eelam Tamoul. Les récits des participants ont communiqué le thème explicite de la justice et le thème implicite de l'identité comme motivations pour la violence extrême. En se basant sur ces résultats, l'étude 2 a investigué si les motivations reliées à l'identité sociale et à la justice inciteraient au terrorisme plus qu'une condition contrôle. Dans un laboratoire, les participants se sont fait recruter pour un complot terrorist fictif. Le recrutement qui soulignait les motivations reliées à l'identité sociale ont eu relativement plus de succès que celui qui soulignait les motivations reliées à la justice. Les résultats de ces deux études démontrent le besoin de recherches additionnelles sur le rôle psychologique de l'identité et de la justice comme justifications pour l'utilisation du terrorisme.
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Justice and Identity: Psychological Motives for Terrorism

How could someone possibly make the decision to set off a bomb in a crowded market? For most people, in most circumstances, engaging in such a violent act is inconceivable. Yet, people do it, and it is now portrayed in the media as the new plague of our time: terrorism. This anti-normative, anti-social behavior poses a great challenge for psychology, which does not yet have an explanation for how someone rationalizes this otherwise unacceptable behavior.

The two studies described in the present thesis begin to address some of the psychological processes contributing to the legitimization of such violence. In particular, I investigate how members of disadvantaged minority groups justify the use of violence in their attempt to instigate social change. In focusing on the psychological justifications of the act, I am essentially treating terrorism as a strategy, or a means to an end (as Crenshaw, 2001; Pape, 2003; Weinberg, 1991), and not an ideology, or an end in itself (e.g. Post, 1990).

The field of terrorism research still lacks a consensual definition of terrorism (Hudson, 1999; Jaggar, 2005; Merari, 1993; Silke, 2001). In a review of both the academic and governmental literature, Schmid and Jongman (1988) discovered 109 different definitions of terrorism. Not only is this a problem for academia, but even within the world’s largest collection of counter-terrorist agencies, the United-States government, definitions vary. The Department of Defense’s definition differs from the FBI’s, and both differ from the State Department’s (White, 2006, p. 6). Equally uncertain is the United Nations, who has yet to settle on a definition.
Throughout this thesis, terrorism refers to violent acts by non-state actors directed at non-combatants or property, carried out for political, religious, or ideological gain. Although this definition encompasses most acts of terror, it may prove unsatisfactory in ambiguous situations. For these cases, readers must trust their own judgment, as terrorism is "akin to pornography: difficult to define, but you know it when you see it" (US navy terrorism expert cited in Harmon, 1992).

First Generation Explanations: Psychopathology Models

Most initial psychological theories about the use of terrorism focused on the actors' personality traits. These theories depict terrorism as a product of psychopathology, mostly stemming from unresolved psychodynamic problems. Such explanations have been used to describe the French-Canadian terrorist group the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) during the 1970s. Morf (1970) described FLQ members as "generally rejecting the father and values he represents", while being driven by "sexual lust, craving for notoriety, and thirst for power". Other proponents of the psychopathology model are Knutson (1981), who argued that terrorists reject their prescribed societal role and assume a "negative identity", and Crayton (1983) who argued that terrorism is an expression of narcissistic rage.

Although this continues to be a cited as a theoretical stance, there is overwhelming evidence, through assessments of members from various revolutionary and terrorist groups, that psychological maladies do not predict participation in collective violence (Post, 1990a). Studies on members of the Irish Republican Army have not found them to exhibit any form of mental illness (Heskin, 1984). More recently, a qualitative
investigation of 1581 biographies of men and women involved in the Nazi genocide was unsuccessful in its search for mental illness as a factor that might explain the atrocities (Mann, 2000). Even when considering factors across different groups, the generalized finding is an absence of psychopathology (McCauley, 1987).

Since its inception, the psychopathology model of terrorism has been discounted in political science (Pape, 2003), sociology (Tilly, 2003), and even in private practice (Ruby, 2002). The field of terrorism research has thus reached the general conclusion that mental illness does not predict terrorism (Sageman, 2004). In hindsight, the implausibility of the psychopathology model is not surprising. Terrorism is almost always a component of an organized coherent campaign (Pape, 2003). Being a team effort requiring detailed well-timed planning, a group motivated to carry out a terrorist act would most likely avoid the “unpredictable or uncontrolled behavior” exhibited by people who have certain mental illnesses (Hudson, 1999).

Second Generation Explanations: Social Factors

“We fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terror.”

G. W. Bush, 2002

Once interest in intra-personal factors faded, the field of terrorism research directed its attention to elements outside the individual. Prominent theories of this second generation of explanations focused on the influences of underdeveloped economies and low education as conditions giving rise to terrorism. This terror-economy link can be ascribed to influential research associating crime with low socio-economic status (SES), and lack of education.
Becker (1968) was one of the first to present a rational actor model of criminal behavior. In his model, actors prospectively compare the expected costs and expected benefits of offending. Thus, people commit crimes when their expected gains exceed the expected costs. The model incorporates the probabilities of policing, apprehension, conviction, and punishment as part of the offender's expected costs.

This rational actor model of crime gained support through studies relating crime rates to socio-economic status. One argument is that during economic recessions, crime - especially concerning property - tends to grow rapidly, whereas during more economically favorable periods, it is apt to fall (Chiricos, 1987). It is hypothesized that during economically robust episodes, more people are employed and/or earn better wages, and are therefore less likely to be attracted to crime. In contrast, economic recessions result in greater unemployment and poverty, which in turn drives more people toward criminal behaviour.

Thus, the relationship between unemployment and crime-rate is well established. However, not all researchers are willing to make the inferential leap from crime to terrorism (Crenshaw, 1981; Merari, 1993). Contrary to the economic model of crime, evidence is accumulating that terrorism is apparently positively related to an individuals' income and education. Recent surveys with inhabitants of conflict zones have shown that higher education is a predictor of support for terror tactics (Berrebi, 2003; Krueger & Maleckova, 2002), while others have shown that people engaged in terrorism are not lacking economic opportunity (Atran, 2003; Hoffman, 2002). In one analysis of global Salafi mujahedin, individuals whose struggle is to revive the practices of early Islam,
Sageman (2004) substantiates this trend by tracking down the demographic data for 102 mujahedin: three fourths of his sample were from the upper or middle classes.

Disregarding SES factors, crime itself does not seem to predict terrorism. In one of the few empirical investigations of terrorism, prior involvement in criminal activity did not correlate with terrorist activity (Sageman, 2004). If a relationship does exist, crime is most likely a form of financial support for terrorism (e.g. Bell & Humphreys, 2006).

The most plausible explanation for these trends is that terrorism is less like a property crime and more like an extreme form of political engagement. Educated people from privileged backgrounds are more likely to participate in politics (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995). Political involvement requires some minimum level of interest, expertise, commitment to issues, and effort, all of which are more likely if people are educated enough and prosperous enough to concern themselves with more than economic subsistence.

The research reviewed thus far portrays the potential terrorist as well educated, economically comfortable, and in relatively good mental health. Hence, terrorists are probably not motivated by financial desperation, or “brainwashed” in the absence of education. Indeed, most first and second generation explanations have been discounted. Although these might seem like setbacks towards understanding the psychology of terrorism, challenging these explanations has been useful in guiding researchers to consider terrorism as a “tool” instead of a “syndrome” (see Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006).

Research into the psychology of terrorism as a tool is still in an embryonic stage. As of yet, there is no proven explanation of how someone rationalizes setting off a bomb
in a crowded market. Clearly, investigating the psychology of terrorism still requires much exploratory work. As theory is absent to guide this exploration, I chose to begin by talking with those who have first hand experience in the matter. In Study 1, I collected the spontaneous narratives of members of a group presently engaged in terrorism. The exploratory nature of this first study was designed to elicit a framework, grounded in data, to guide a laboratory experiment developed in the second study.

Study 1: **When Terrorism is Just and Justified**

The research reviewed thus far indicates that terrorism is perpetrated by relatively "normal" people who base their decisions on rational choice. The perspective that terrorism is the product of rational choice has gained growing acceptance (Harmon, 1992 p.9). It might even be argued that *rationality* is the only universal factor found so far in the social sciences' rather unsuccessful quest to understand the psychology of terrorism.

**Justification**

This rationality points towards the feature that makes terrorism so shocking: people can psychologically justify this seemingly gratuitous violence. The shock comes from the fact that, in most contexts, violence is simply not justifiable. Cases of extreme violence such as terrorism seem to be even less justifiable, as they are usually "the very things which are banned by tradition, decency, and law even in a state of full-scale war" (Bandura, 1990). How can a rational actor justify these actions?

Consistent with the rational-actor perspective, Bandura (1999) has argued that justification is the key to "morally disengaging" oneself when conducting anti-normative
violence. People internalize moral standards through normal social psychological processes. We abide by these standards with the help of self-regulatory mechanisms. In other words, we refrain from transgressing these internalized moral standards to avoid condemning ourselves. These internal reprimands, which we seek to avoid by following moral standards, are what Bandura refers to as *self-sanctions* (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Justification, which is a cognitive reconstruction of the behavior, disengages us from these self-sanctions.

A study conducted by Martin, Scully, & Levitt (1990) echoes Bandura's claim that justification is an important antecedent of violence. Through content analysis of revolutionary leaders' speeches and writing, the authors found that violence by the ingroup was overwhelmingly described as legitimate and fair, while outgroup perpetrated violence was described as totally unjust.

Thus, justification for violence is seemingly a necessary prerequisite for the behavior to occur. However, this theoretical assumption has yet to be fully tested with people involved in these acts of violence. Consequently, this assumption constitutes this study's first hypothesis, and will be tested in an exploratory fashion by talking with members of a group that engages in terrorism. I predict that: *members of a group that engages in terrorism will endeavor to justify the violence perpetrated by their group.*

Although it is necessary to investigate this justification process, reducing terrorism to an evasion of self-sanctions would be to ignore the innately social aspect of the behavior. Terrorism takes place in the context of established social norms, and is a deliberate transgression of these. Justification must then be employed not only to
disengage from one’s own standards, but also to respond to the constant reminders of the overarching societal standards condemning such violent acts.

The norms regarding violence are promulgated by official and unofficial sources. Government laws and social consensus prescribe which contexts permit violence (e.g., during a hockey game) and which contexts forbid it (e.g., between spouses). As Bandura (1990) notes, justification enables us to override these prevailing norms that we have internalized. Hence, the effectiveness of psychological justification should be influenced by the legitimacy of the overarching system, which prescribes the norms that one might override.

**System legitimacy**

The psychological role of the system’s legitimacy has been emphasized by Jost and his colleagues in the context of the currently influential theory of system justification (Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002). They argue that people have a tendency to view the social order as just, and their position in this order is the result of an overarching justice. This might not be a surprising claim for the advantaged members of society. However, this was also found for those less-privileged. Not only have disadvantaged members of society internalized their position in the social hierarchy, but they actively support the very system that maintains their disadvantage (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

The justice of these social differences is thought to be maintained partly through the use of group stereotypes (Jost & Burgess, 2000; Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001). Disadvantaged group members can legitimize the system by holding positive stereotypes about members of the advantaged group, while maintaining negative stereotypes about...
their own group. Such negative self-stereotyping and outgroup preference have been observed with a variety of disadvantaged minority groups in New-Zealand (Vaughan, 1978), South-Africa (Dawes & Finchilescu, 2002), and with Jewish populations (Sarnoff, 1951).

Of course, not all disadvantaged groups support the system that maintains their disadvantage. Many do, but history is filled with protests, revolutions, and coup d'états. In this regard, Jost has offered a framework for understanding how our psychological needs for legitimization might come into conflict. According to system justification theory, people legitimize on three levels: personal, the group, and the system (Jost & Burgess, 2000). In some instances, one level's legitimization might prove to be innately incompatible with another level. Such an incompatibility can be seen with the example of a poor mother and her starving child. At the personal level, her baby's hunger legitimizes her stealing food. However, the mother knows that, at the system level, theft is illegitimate in all circumstances. In the context of intergroup violence, conceptualizing legitimization on three levels leads to the predictable claims that disadvantaged people who uphold the system are less likely to protest (group justification), whereas those who condemn the system would be more likely to legitimize their group's behaviors.

Accordingly, system justification theory forms the basis of this study's second exploratory hypothesis. For group justification to occur, which in this context translates into legitimizing their own anti-normative behavior, members must coincidently reject the system. Hence, I predict that the perception of system illegitimacy allows members of a group that engages in terrorism to justify their collective violence.
In summary, two exploratory hypotheses were examined by analyzing the spontaneous narratives of members of a group presently engaged in terrorism. Based on the importance that justification is thought to have when conducting violence (Bandura, 1999; Hafez, 2007; Martin, Scully, & Levitt, 1990, Tyler & Smith, 1998), the first hypothesis was that members of a group that engages in terrorism will endeavor to justify the violence perpetrated by their group. However, system justification theory predicts that these anti-normative behaviors can only be justified at the group level if legitimacy of the system is perceived as low (group vs. system justification; Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001). Thus, the second hypothesis was that the perception of system illegitimacy allows members of a group that engages in terrorism to justify their collective violence.

Research Context

To test these predictions, this first study examined the spontaneous narratives of a real-world minority group presently engaged in conflict: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Since the early 1970s, the LTTE have been at war on behalf of the Tamil minority against the Sri Lankan government who favors a pro-Sinhalese agenda (Bell, 2004).

Sri Lanka is an island country that lies off the southeast coast of India. The majority of its population are Sinhalese (75%) and the minority consists of Tamils (18%). The two groups not only come from different historical roots but also speak different languages (Sinhala vs. Tamil) and practice different religions (Buddhism vs. Hinduism).

Sri Lanka gained political independence from Britain in 1948. When the British left, the Sinhalese majority sought to redress what they considered to be 150 years of
British rule that favored the Tamil minority (Bell, 2004). Hence, ruling administrations pursued an aggressive pro-Sinhalese agenda and in 1956, the government passed the Sinhala Only Act, making Sinhala the official language of Sri Lanka. This is viewed as the tipping point for Tamils’ tolerance of systemic discrimination.

The Sinhala Only Act led to many attempts at political negotiations, accompanied by violent protests by the Tamil minority. In 1972, an organized militancy emerged from the Tamil heartland, calling for a separate sovereign state: Eelam. They called themselves The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. This group was initiated by students who were angered that the university admission criterion had been replaced by a regional quota system heavily favouring the Sinhalese. By 1977, LTTE members were training in the Middle East with the Palestine Liberation Organization (Bell, 2004). The LTTE are suspected of having assassinated two world leaders: Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan president Ranasinghe Premadasa (Pape, 2003). Within its military, the LTTE has a special unit, the Black Tigers, who specialize in suicide bombings (Trawick, 1997). Since its inception, the LTTE has been recognized as a terrorist organization in 33 countries including the United States of America, Great Britain, and Canada. However, the Tamil community does not consider the LTTE’s actions as terrorism (Hyndman, 2003).

Since the beginning of this conflict, 66000 people have disappeared or been killed in this inter-group violence. The violence set a wave of Sri Lankan emigrants to Europe and Canada which had more accommodating refugee laws. Today, Canada has the largest population of Sri Lankan Tamils outside of South Asia (Bell, 2004). Amongst these, there
is an estimated 8000 Tamils with paramilitary training living in Toronto (Metropolitan Toronto Police Tamil Task Force, 1998).

Method

Participants

Ten Tamil immigrants living in Montreal participated in the study (8 men and 2 women, \( M_{\text{age}} = 52.5 \) years). All were born in Sri-Lanka, had self-proclaimed ties to the LTTE, and had first-hand experience in the conflict. They could speak and understand English well enough to conduct the interview.

Recruitment was accomplished by approaching all major Tamil organizations and Hindu temples in Montreal. After a period of relationship building, the leaders of these organizations were cooperative in approaching their contacts within the LTTE, and provided the names of those who were willing to participate. From these initial contacts, snowball sampling (see Marlow, 2001) was used: identified members of the target population (i.e. LTTE) contacted others in that population, and recruited their participation. Recruiting emphasized how their contribution might benefit society’s understanding of disadvantaged minority groups in conflict. People were not offered compensation so as to avoid undermining people’s intrinsic motivation to participate.

Of the ten Tamils who were interviewed, one participant refused to be tape-recorded, yet he completed the post-interview questionnaire. Additional recruitment was thwarted when, during the interview period, Canadian legislation passed a bill recognizing the LTTE as a terrorist organization on April 8th 2006 (Government of Canada, 2006).
Procedure

Data collection was conducted in two phases. First, participants took part in an open-ended, semi-structured, interview. Second, participants completed a structured questionnaire pertaining to the content of their interview.

Collective Narrative

For the interview portion of this study, participants were asked to “tell the story of your people”. This method, commonly called the collective narrative, is a valuable objective method of testing social psychological hypotheses. In psychology, the narrative procedure has primarily targeted the individual level, using objective coding procedures developed by Baerger and McAdams (1999). However, this methodology has since been adapted by the Intergroup Relations and Aboriginal People laboratory at McGill University to study group level processes, such as collective identity (Bougie, 2005, see also Taylor, 2002). This methodology is also used in sociology and political science, where collective narratives are considered “meaning-providing” (Salomon, 2004), and thought to form the explanations that a group holds about itself (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Participants were asked to structure their narrative into four chapters, like chapters in a book, each corresponding to an important period in Sri Lanka’s history (Bush, 2003). The first chapter was from British rule until Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948. The second chapter started at Independence, and ended in 1971, when an important attempt to overthrow the government took place, and the ensuing governmental response killed almost 15000 people, mostly Tamils. The third chapter was from the 1971 rebellion until the 1983 riots, what many consider the official start of the civil war. The fourth chapter
was from the 1983 riots until the present time. Participants were requested to spend about 20 minutes on each chapter. A visual aid outlining the four chapters was placed in front of the participant to help structure the narrative. The complete set of instructions for the collective narrative is in appendix A.

**Questionnaire**

Following the spontaneously generated collective narrative, participants completed a questionnaire with the assistance of the experimenter. The experimenter read a series of statements, and the participant indicated his or her level of agreement with these statements. Responses were made on 10-point Likert scales anchored at one end by *disagree* (1) and at the other by *agree* (10). The first set of statements concerned group and system legitimacy, and were asked about each of the four chapters of the collective narrative. Representative statements were “In chapter X, it was possible to use the system to change the Tamil condition?”, “In chapter X, Tamils engaged in negotiations to improve their situation”, “In chapter X, the Tamils used justified violence against the government.” The second set of statements concerned group stereotypes and lay theories about the conflict. Representative statements were “The government prefers to use violence than negotiation tactics”, “Tamils are violent people”, “If violence is not used, the Tamil condition will never improve”. The complete questionnaire is reproduced in appendix B.
Coding of Collective Narratives

The collective narratives were transcribed verbatim and submitted to empirical analysis. Three university undergraduates, all naïve to the hypotheses, identified and coded all acts of violence in the transcribed narratives. Acts of violence were coded for (1) the agent of the violence (ingroup, outgroup, third party), (2) the recipient of the violence (ingroup, outgroup, third party), and (3) spontaneous mention of a justification for the violence.

Results

Collective Narratives

In the nine narratives collected, 316 occurrences of violence were spontaneously mentioned. Each participant mentioned an average of 35.1 occurrences of violence in their narrative; 8.7 per chapter. Throughout their narratives, outgroup perpetrated violence was mentioned more than twice (62%) as frequently as ingroup perpetrated violence (28%). Third party perpetrated violence made up 9% of the occurrences mentioned, while other occurrences (1%) were too ambiguous for coding.

There was a significant relationship, $\chi^2(1, N = 291) = 9.78$, $p < .001$, between the agent of violence (ingroup or outgroup) and the presence of a justification for that violence. Tamil participants mentioned justifications for 44.2% of the acts of violence perpetrated by their own group. In contrast, Tamil participants mentioned justification for only 17.8% of the acts of violence perpetrated by the Sinhalese government (see Figure 1).
Figure 1. Presence of justification for 316 occurrences of ingroup and outgroup violence.

Here, it is important to note that these results capture explicit information contained in the narratives. That is, coders were rigorous in identifying when participants explicitly mentioned specific reasons for violent acts. However, the narratives also contained implicit storylines, with underlying themes that could not be captured by the empirical methodology chosen for this study. The most prominent implicit theme throughout these narratives was the importance of their collective identity. "We can't stand anymore, and we have to protect Tamils" (interview, February 13, 2006), "... they raped the sisters and my Tamil people" (interview, March 17, 2006), "[For] every Tamil, they heart was burned that day" (interview, June 18, 2006). Although violence may have been perpetrated for various explicit reasons, there seemed to be one major underlying reason: preserving a threatened Tamil identity.
Questionnaires

Stereotypes

Participants were asked to rate, using a 10-point Likert scale, their agreement with stereotypical statements about ingroup and outgroup members being violent. Interestingly, these questions elicited many comments from participants, who verbally denied any meaningful differences between Tamils and Sinhalese. However, their numerical ratings did not reflect this consensus. Participants consistently rated outgroup members as more violent than ingroup members, \( t(8) = 2.34 \ p = .05 \). They rated on average 3.9 (out of 10) their agreement that “Sinhalese are violent people”, while rating on average 1.5 (out of 10) their agreement that “Tamils are violent people”.

Group vs. System Legitimacy

Ratings for questions concerning group and system legitimacy are brought together in Figure 2. System legitimacy, represented here with (a) the possibility to use the system to change the Tamil condition, and (b) the Tamils’ inclination for using negotiations, decreased throughout the three\(^1\) chapters of participants’ collective history. Conversely, ingroup legitimacy, represented here as Tamils’ right to use violence, steadily rose during the same period. Thus, despite their doubt of the system’s legitimacy, attempts were made to use the system by means of negotiation before violence was increasingly justified. This justification seems to increase in perfect opposition to negotiation attempts, suggesting that each has an effect on the other.

\(^1\) Most questionnaire items were asked for three chapters, and not four as in the collective narrative. The first chapter, from British rule until Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, was not submitted to legitimacy questions as the conflict started after this period.
Figure 2. Ingroup and system legitimacy for three chapters of the collective narrative.

Discussion

"They're just pointing to the Tamil as terrorists. Why they don't want to see the Sinhalese side, what they are doing to the Tamils?"

Participant, June 18th, 2006

To an outsider, acts of extreme violence carried out by a group seem unacceptable. However, in the midst of violent conflict, people tend to approve ingroup militant actions. To carry out these anti-normative actions, it has been theorized that certain psychological processes enable people to sidestep internalized codes of morality. In a study with people involved in a real-world conflict, I found that participants provided significantly more justifications for ingroup initiated violence as compared to outgroup initiated violence. This result supports the claim that justification plays a crucial role...
when engaging in acts of violence, as is central to Bandura's (1990, 1999) theory of moral disengagement.

Although we have evidence of the theoretical relationship between justification and collective violence, caution is warranted against an alluring inferential leap. These results highlight the importance of justification, yet the specific psychological role it plays remains unknown. Instead of disengaging us from self-reprimands, which in turn facilitates the conduct of violence, an alternate interpretation can be proposed. People might be offering more justification simply because group membership offers insight into the reasons for conducting this violence. Participants would presumably have more knowledge of their own group's reasons as compared to another group's.

However, this alternate interpretation seems unlikely given the results that relate to hypothesis 2. Here, I contended that system illegitimacy allows members of a group that engages in terrorism to justify their collective violence. Participants' ratings of items representing group and system legitimacy throughout their group's history supported this hypothesis. This finding is consistent with legitimacy theorists' claim that a decrease in system justification is associated with increased group justification (Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001). A substantiated relationship between group and system legitimacy also strengthens the case that justification plays a psychologically meaningful role in ingroup violence, as opposed to the alternate explanation proposed above. The use of stereotypes, represented here by participants rating outgroup members as significantly more violent than ingroup members, is yet further evidence that processes involved in system justification are at play.
A limitation of the present study is the small sample size. Potential participants had more reasons not to participate than to participate in the study. Because the LTTE is considered a terrorist organization in Canada (amongst many other countries), potential participants were afraid to share their experiences with us, for fear of being accused of LTTE membership.

Despite the modest sample size, this first study points towards the importance of justice and identity in terrorism. Violence was implicitly viewed as self-defense against perceived threats to one’s collective identity. Explicitly, this violence was rendered “just”, “fair”, or “legitimate”, a crucial psychological process enabling the anti-normative behavior to occur.

However, justice is not only needed at an individual level. Jost and his colleagues have discussed how legitimacy is sought out at the personal, group, and system levels (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). The Tamil Tigers’ spontaneous narratives reflected this. Tamils Tigers denied legitimacy to the system, and appropriated legitimacy to their cause and violent actions. The Sinhalese government was viewed as unjust while the Tiger’s fight was just.

Justice, when granted to the system, is powerful enough to keep disadvantaged people in their disadvantaged position (Jost & Banaji, 1994). However, if justice is usurped from the system and conferred to group motives, it may sanction unimaginable collective action. In an exploratory fashion, the results from this study indicate that justice and identity, two overriding themes during Tamil Tigers’ narratives, seems to be motivating factors concerning acts of extreme antinormative violence. Results also draw attention to the psychological process of justification, which seems to enable a person to
morally disengage his or her self from these acts, allowing for the behavior to occur and avoiding guilt thereafter. The logical next step is to investigate the role of justice, identity, and justification in the more controlled setting of the laboratory.

**Study 2: Justice and Identity in the Laboratory**

As theories based on mental illness, financial desperation, and lack of education have been discredited, researchers now consider terrorism a strategy (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006), which is most likely the product of a rational decision (Crenshaw, 1990; Hafez, 2006). As with any complex decision, the choice to engage in an extreme act of violence is almost certainly subject to many social psychological influences.

Study 1 highlighted the role of two psychological motives, justice and identity, and one psychological process, justification, which are seemingly involved in the rational decision to engage in terrorism. Several theories have been offered to explain the psychological prerequisites of terrorism. Two prominent theories, Borum’s process of ideological development and Moghaddam’s staircase to terrorism, both call attention to justice and justification in their explanations. However, both also seem to overlook identity motives.

*Borum’s Theory: The Process of Ideological Development*

Borum (2003, 2004) proposes the existence of a common psychological pathway applicable to most people who adopt an extremist ideology that justifies terrorism (see Figure 3). The first steps in this pathway involve evaluating one’s disadvantage in light of systemic injustice. Borum reinforces the point that a disadvantaged position, such as
poverty, is not in itself an incentive to challenge the status quo so long as justice is maintained. However, if this disadvantage results from a lack of justice, the person will move along the pathway. After attributing this unjust disadvantage to a specific outgroup, the last step involves dehumanizing members of this outgroup. Dehumanizing is a moral-disengagement process highlighted by Bandura (1999) in his analysis of acts of violence. The disadvantaged group member, through blaming and dehumanizing, now has the psychological justification for terrorism.

![Figure 3. Borum’s (2003) theory of terrorism.](image)

**Moghaddam’s Theory: The Staircase to Terrorism**

Moghaddam (2005; 2006) has outlined how group-level comparisons, interactions with other groups, and social psychological processes can lead to acts of terrorism. Moghaddam uses the metaphor of a staircase, where each floor represents a necessary psychological condition for the next. In keeping with the actual statistics, Moghaddam asserts that very few have all the necessary conditions to get to the top of the staircase where terrorism is justified.
The theory starts on the ground floor, where people experience feelings of deprivation and perceived injustice about their relative lower status. Those who will advance to the first floor are those who seek options to fight this injustice. Some of these will displace their aggression onto a specific target for their disadvantaged position, getting to the second floor. A portion of these people will disengage from mainstream values (3rd floor), and solidify us-versus-them thinking (4th floor). Finally, some will reach the 5th floor by sidestepping inhibitory mechanisms about killing, thus being in a position to psychologically justify the use of terrorism.

**Evaluation of Borum’s and Moghaddam’s Theories**

Borum and Moghaddam have outlined psychological explanations that are intuitively compelling. In contrast to previous theories, these two models probably capture more of the complexity surrounding one’s involvement in terrorism. However, with complexity comes a certain weakness, that of verifiability. Borum’s pathway contains many stages, while Moghaddam’s staircase has even more. The practical feasibility of collecting data to test each stage would require cunning ingenuity, if it is at all possible.

Collecting data to validate these theories is one problem. However, an arguably more critical issue is the lack of empirical data on which these theories are built. Besides anecdotal evidence, no data was used in the formulation of these theories. This lack of empirical data weakens their theoretical stance. In order to evolve a genuine understanding of the psychological process involved in terrorism, empirically driven
theories are crucial. If theories do not produce testable hypotheses, understanding will remain at a standstill.

Despite their lack of empirical foundations, Borum’s process of ideological development and Moghaddam’s staircase to terrorism stress the role of justice in terrorism, as did the spontaneous narratives of LTTE members in the Study 1. However, these narratives also stressed the importance of identity, a theme which seems to be important but implicit in Borum and Moghaddam’s theories. Consequently, the role of justice and identity will be examined in this laboratory based second study. To guide my theoretical framework, I will draw upon two well-established social-psychological theories of intergroup conflict: equity theory and social identity theory.

*Equity Theory*

Equity theory is a framework for understanding interpersonal relations which assumes that justice, in the form of equity, holds important psychological value for people (Adams, 1965). The conditions under which injustice is perceived at the interpersonal level are also thought to occur at the group level, and are at the source of intergroup conflict.

According to equity theory, justice is defined by people’s assessment of the ratio of inputs and outputs in a given relationship (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). Inputs are contributions to the relationship, such as talent, effort, loyalty, and personal sacrifice. Outcomes are rewards derived from the relationship, such as money, security, esteem, and recognition. Justice is not perceived simply when each party contributes the same inputs, and receives the same outcomes. Rather, justice is measured by comparing the
ratios of inputs and outcomes of each party in the relationship. Thus, justice is maintained even if one party contributes more to the relationship, as long as that party receives more outcomes.

Defining justice as a ratio of inputs and outcomes leads to the four main principles of equity theory (Walster et al., 1978). First is the principle that individuals try to maximize their outcomes, which are rewards minus costs. Secondly, individuals in a relationship can each maximize their personal outcomes with an equitable distribution of overall outcomes. This leads to the third principle, where inequitable relationships cause distress, as it disrupts everyone chance to maximize their individual outcomes. Thus, the fourth principle dictates that people are motivated to restore equity in inequitable situations.

These principles can be seen at play in an experiment conducted by Hoffman and Spitzer (1985). They devised a simple game in which two people were asked to split $14. The game allowed participants to divide the money however they wanted. If no agreement was reached, then the first player would receive $12 and the second player would receive nothing.

If people were simply motivated to maximize their outcome, we might expect the first player to demand $13, while the second player should agree to $1. If the latter asked for anything more, the first player would simply disagree and collect $12. However, something very different happened during the actual experiment: players generally agreed to split the money evenly. It appears that people are often more motivated by justice, than maximizing their benefits.
The psychological importance of justice on an interpersonal level has been extrapolated to the group level, making equity between groups predictive of social behavior. Thus, the same basic principles of equity theory apply: if a group receives less (or more) than what it deserves, inequity is perceived, and restoration of equity is sought.

Conflicts are often viewed to be rooted in perceived injustice. In such a situation, equity theory has clear predictions concerning which strategies will be adopted to restore justice (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). Those who are benefiting from the injustice, i.e. advantaged-group members, are more likely to psychologically restore equity. This is accomplished by distorting reality either by increasing the ingroup’s inputs (self-entitlement), or devaluing the outgroup’s inputs (blaming the victim, see Lerner, 1971).

In contrast, those who are suffering from the injustice, i.e. disadvantaged-group members, are more likely to demand actual restoration of equity. This can be accomplished by increasing their outcomes through compensation, or decreasing the advantaged group’s outcomes by means of retaliation.

The disadvantaged group’s attempt at restoring justice in the relationship is of particular interest for the present experiment. Retaliation can take many forms, some of which may includes protest and violence. Restoring equity was given as an explanation for the September 11 2001 attacks on the United States:

“We had not considered attacking the towers, but things reached the breaking point when we witnessed the inequity and tyranny of
Unquestionably, feelings of injustice play an important role in bringing about intergroup confrontations. Retaliation, with the ultimate goal of correcting injustices, has been considered to be a basic motivation for terrorism (Gurr, 1968; Hacker, 1976). In this sense, equity theory provides much explanatory power concerning intergroup violence. However, justice may not always be the main priority for group members. Other priorities, such as protecting the collective identity in the case of LTTE members in Study 1, must also be considered.

Competing Social-Psychological Motivations

As equity theory predicts, most people feel distressed when rewards have been distributed inequitably. However, Leung, Kwok-Kit, and Lind (2007) have studied the effects of group identification on perceptions of justice. Their results show that, contrary to results usually found at the individual level, group gains became more important than justice when people strongly identify with their group. This study draws attention to the interplay of identity and justice in intergroup relations.

With regard to confrontations between groups of unequal status, other motivational themes have been found in addition to justice. In a literature review, Borum (2004) noticed that authors essentially cite three psychological motives for terrorist

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2 Excerpt of Osama bin Laden's speech released on October 29, 2004, as broadcast by Al-Sahab Institute for Media Production, which is known to produce videos for Al Qaida (The Middle East Media Research Institute, 2004).
behavior: injustice, identity, and belonging. Themes of identity and belonging have been largely ignored by earlier academic and governmental analyses of terrorism (Kaufmann, 1996). However, since 9/11, identity has gained consideration for explaining psychological motives involved in terrorism (e.g. Brannan et al., 2001; Moghaddam, 2006; Taylor & Louis, 2004). Not only are researchers considering the role these variables might play in terrorism, but when compared to justice, there is evidence that motivations stemming from identity needs might have more influence.

Identity Motives in Terrorism

In a study investigating Arab support for violence against the West, Levin, Henry, Pratto, and Sidanius (2003) studied the influence of justice desires and group identification, that is the importance a person attributes to being a member of a group. They found Arab identification to be the better predictor of support for terrorist organizations. Desires for group equality were not associated with stronger support for terrorist organizations once the mediating effect of Arab identification was taken into account.

It seems that justice motivations somehow influence identity motivations, the latter being the real trigger for engaging in conflict. Because of this mounting evidence in relation to terrorism, collective identity will be the second theme utilized in this laboratory based study. However, it is unclear exactly what psychological aspect of collective identity is at work. Consequently, to guide my theoretical framework, I will

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3 Using social identity theory as a framework, the theme of “belonging” will be incorporated into the theme of “identity”.
draw upon another well-established social-psychological theory of intergroup conflict: social identity theory.

_Social Identity Theory_

_"We never, until the war, thought of ourselves as Muslims"._

Mikica Babic, schoolteacher, Bosnia.

Cited in Kauffman (1996)

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) is founded on the assumption that group members are motivated to attain a positive and distinctive social identity. Its core premise is that members of low status groups are motivated to improve their status, and that high status group members seek to maintain their relative advantage.

Social identity theory, and its underlying assumptions, can be understood as resulting from two psychological processes. First, there is the natural, universal, human tendency to categorize and stereotype people. Empirical research addressing this tendency reveals that people judge themselves and members of their group as sharing more positive characteristics than members of an outgroup (Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). A second process that is central to social identity theory involves the universal motivation people have to secure for themselves a positive identity.

To understand the importance of this second process at a group level, one must recognize the important interplay between one's personal and collective identities. Collective identity is derived from group membership and plays an important role for a person's overall identity. Thus, for example, the status of a group will have an impact on
a group member's self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). With personal and collective identities interlinked, members of a group are presumed to share the motive of seeking (or maintaining) a positive social identity, which, in turn, supplies its group members with self-esteem.

Thus, relations between groups can be understood as arising from psychological motives that are driving people towards a positive and distinct social identity. Individuals, whose group membership provides them with a negative—or not positive enough—identity, are likely to either seek social mobility or social change. The former involves changing group membership, and the latter "necessarily involves confrontation" (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). A negative social identity can be especially threatening for those who highly identify with their group. For these members, challenging the intergroup hierarchy is a preferred solution.

Social identity theory has generated a vast literature, and has been highly influential as an explanation of psychological motives involved in intergroup conflict (see Ashmore, Jussim, & Wilder, 2001; Louis, Taylor, & Neil, 2004; Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999; Reicher, 2004). Potentially, social identity theory might also explain the use of terrorism (Brannan et al., 2001).

In an interesting survey, Post, Ruby, and Shaw (2002) compiled a list of theoretical factors that increase the risk for a group to use terrorist tactics. These risk-factors were collected by asking the opinions of six leading experts in the field of terrorism and political violence (R. Crelinsten, M. Crenshaw, T. Gurr, B. Hoffman, A. Merari, and E. Sprinzak). An important risk factor that emerged from this survey was
threats to “core symbols of group identity”. Such a risk-factor is concordant with social identity theory.

Research on the Iraqi insurgency has discovered instances of strategically raising awareness of social identity issues to motivate people to engage in terrorism. Investigating the symbolism surrounding martyrdom in Iraq, Hafez (2007) analyzed the literature of jihadists since the beginning of the American led invasion. These include video clips, audio recordings, biographies of suicide bombers, online magazines, and still images posted on the internet. Hafez concludes that martyrdom operations in Iraq are symbols “to redeem the suffering and humiliation of their fellow Muslims”. In other words, to strengthen their damaged social identity.

Hypothesis

Based on my review of the literature, motivations related to establishing intergroup equity and improving one’s social identity seem to be leading psychological factors potentially driving those involved in conflict. This conclusion reflects the spontaneous narratives of people engaged in terrorism collected in Study 1, where motivations related to justice and identity were highlighted. In the following experiment, I examine the effect of arousing social identity motivations and justice motivations on the likelihood to participate in a fictitious terrorist plot. Thus, in a role playing scenario, I predict participants are more likely to engage in terrorism when justice or identity motivations are evoked, as compared to a control condition. Specifically, I hypothesize that presenting arguments about improving group status (social identity motivations) or arguments about reestablishing intergroup equity (justice motivations) will motivate
participants to engage in a terrorist plot. These two conditions should be more persuasive than presenting arguments detailing the need for change in the social system (control condition).

Method

Participants

185 students from McGill University participated in Study 2. Of these, four did not follow the experiments’ protocol, and one underwent the manipulation, but did not complete the in-lab questionnaire. Data from these individuals were not included in the analyses.

The final sample consisted of 180 participants, where 106 were women and 71 were men (three did not indicate their gender), and age ranged from 18 to 41 (M age = 20.5 years). 13.9% of the sample enrolled through the psychology department’s extra-credit program, and were given 1.5 credit upon completion of the study. The remaining participants were either recruited in large classrooms, or answered an ad placed on the university’s online classifieds, and were compensated $10 for their time.

Part 1 – Online Questionnaire

Before coming to the laboratory, participants were required to complete an online questionnaire that contained four scales to measure individual differences that may explain certain trends in the responses to the experimental manipulations. The first scale appearing in this online questionnaire was the Personal Need for Structure scale (PNS; Neuberg & Newsom, 1993). Through 11 items, this scale assesses people’s predisposition
to cognitively structure their worlds in simple, unambiguous ways, which some have associated with extremist ideology and support for terrorism (Kruglanski, 2007). This scale can be consulted in appendix C.

The second scale in the online questionnaire was the Self-Construal Scale (SCS; Singelis, 1994). The SCS consists of 24 items that measure a persons' relatedness to others. The SCS has two subscales, one measures the self-construal as interdependent (formerly known as the concept of collectivism), and the second measures the self-construal as independent (formerly known as the concept of individualism). The purpose of this measure is to monitor if an interdependent self-construal affects group identification. Ultimately, interdependence might, through enhancing identification, regulate collective action (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). The SCS is reproduced in appendix D.

The third scale in the online questionnaire was the Splitting of Other’s Images subscale of the Splitting Index (Gould, Prentice, & Ainslie, 1996). Through eight items, this scale assesses a person’s propensity to use splitting, the psychological defense mechanism of seeing oneself or others as either all good or all bad. From an object-relations point of view, the use of this defense mechanism is quite normal in the early stages of life. However, healthy psychological development enables people to replace this defense mechanism with a more nuanced outlook (Mitchell & Black, 1995). A personality structure with over-reliance on splitting is thought to be “disproportionately represented among terrorists” (Post, 1990b, p. 31). Splitting is due to early narcissistic wounds, where the self is split into a positive me and a negative not me. The latter is projected onto a specific target that becomes a scapegoat, and an alluring target for
terrorist attacks (Sageman, 2004). The Splitting of Other's Images subscale is reproduced in appendix E.

The fourth and final scale in the online questionnaire was the Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking (Arnett, 1994). This is a 20 item scale which measures attraction towards novel and intense experiences. This scale is reproduced in appendix F.

Demographic information was also collected on the online questionnaire, such as age, gender, academic major and minor. Self-reported English proficiency was measured, using a five-point scale, on three items concerning their comprehension of spoken, slang, and written English.

**Part 2 – Role-Play**

Participants were scheduled to partake in the second part of the experiment within one week of having completed the online questionnaire. In the laboratory, participants were asked to pretend to be a member of a group in conflict, and asked to read two texts: the first text described the conflict, the second text related a plea from a prominent member of their group asking them to participate in a bombing plot against the other group.

Upon arrival in the laboratory, each participant was told that the study's main goal was to understand intergroup conflict. In order to do this, we used a role-playing scenario applied to a conflict between Belneer and Estirians. Although these groups were fictitious, this was not mentioned unless participants inquired, and very few did. Without any additional information, participants were asked to immediately choose which of these groups they preferred being a member of. Each participant was then ink-stamped, on their
writing-hand, a small logo with the name of their chosen group (Estirian or Belneer). Asking the participant to select the group and ink-stamping the group logo was done to increase their sense of identification to their group.

Each participant was required to read two texts. First was the historical background, a 632 word factual description of the conflict between the Estirians and the Belneer. The historical background text involved an integration of elements related to three intergroup conflicts that involved terrorism: the conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers, the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and the conflict between the British government and the Provisional Irish Republican Army. All participants received one of two versions of the historical background which depicted their group (Estirian or Belneer) in a disadvantaged minority position. One version of the historical background is reproduced in appendix G.

The second text was the recruitment speech, a short monologue from a man trying to recruit the participant into a bombing plot against the outgroup (see appendix H). Participants were randomly assigned to read one of six recruitment speeches, which were distinguishable along two dimensions. First, these texts differed by the type of arguments used to justify the bombing (3 levels). One version focused on restoring equity between the two groups involved in the conflict, henceforth called the justice condition. A second version focused on elevating the status of the disadvantaged group involved in the conflict, henceforth called the social identity condition. The third version was a control condition and emphasized the need for change for the groups involved in the conflict. The second dimension along which the recruitment speeches differed was the mention of social recognition for their participation. Although not a focus of the present study, social
recognition has been discussed as a potential incentive for terrorism (Hafez, 2006), and therefore added to measure its impact on the results. Half of the recruitment speeches mentioned either promised social recognition for their participation, or required a pledge of secrecy (i.e. no social recognition).

Thus, participants received, by random assignment, one of the six recruitment speeches that differed by argument (three levels: social identity – justice – control) and social recognition (two levels: social recognition vs. no social recognition). In all versions, the participant was asked to help place a bomb in a crowded market frequented by the outgroup.

To ensure equivalence of all six conditions, each version of the recruitment speech had the same number of words (458 ± 2). All versions had basically the same text, but varied on two paragraphs. One of these paragraphs corresponded to the type of argument used. For example, the condition eliciting social identity motives contained sentences such as “It is time to restore pride in who we are.” The condition eliciting equity motives contained a sentence such as “It is time to put an end to this terrible injustice.” The control condition contained a sentence such as “The state of affairs in our country cannot go on any longer”. The second varying paragraph either mentioned that the participant would receive social recognition for being involved in the bombing plot (e.g.: ... you will be a celebrated Belneer hero) or not receive social recognition for being involved in the bombing plot (e.g.: ... the plan must be conducted with the utmost secrecy). All versions were pre-tested for “writing fluency” to ensure that these manipulations did not render one version “better written” than another.
Following the historical background text and the recruitment speech, participants were asked to open a large envelop which contained a questionnaire. Here, the first question concerned their response to the recruitment speech. Participants could choose amongst five options, listed in Table 1.

Table 1.

*Choices for Responding to the Recruitment Speech*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agree, offer support &amp; participate in the proposed bombing plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree, offer support but not participate in the proposed bombing plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree, understand and remain ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree, not support and remain silent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree, not support, tip off police</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After this forced choice question, participants were asked to rate, on a 10-point Likert scales anchored at one end by *very unlikely* (1) and at the other by *very likely* (10), the likelihood of engaging in eight other types of behaviors that challenged the intergroup status quo. These eight behaviors were pretested to ensure a continuous increase in severity. These behaviors varied from gathering signatures for a petition to bombing a crowded market.

Participants then completed five items designed to assess whether or not the manipulations in the recruitment speeches did prime social identity and justice motives. Two of the items focused on fairness and equality, to verify if justice was primed. The three other items focused on respect, pride, and distinctiveness, to verify if social identity motives were primed.
The questionnaire also contained five items to measure group identification, which were selected and adapted from a 10 item scale constructed by Grieve and Hogg (1999; $\alpha = .87$). On ten point Likert scales, participants indicated how much they felt they belonged to the in-group, how much they felt strong ties with the in-group, how pleased they were to belong to the in-group, how much they identify with the in-group, and to what extent they would prefer to belong to the in-group or the out-group. The questionnaire ended with items concerning their real-life collective identity. The participants had to indicate if they are a member of a minority group, to name that group, and if their group is presently, or has been, involved in a conflict.

Results

Before addressing the impact of the manipulations, the efficacy of the scenario was verified. This was done by considering participants’ identification with the groups they chose, the realism of the conflict depicted in the texts, and the priming effects of the manipulations.

Identification and Realism

Participants’ identification with their fictitious group was taken as a measure of their level of participation in the role-playing scenario. The five questionnaire-items concerning identification were pooled and averaged to create an index. Overall, participants reported relatively high identification ($M = 6.13, SD = 1.77$). These levels

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4 Their 10 item scale was originally based on research from Hains, Hogg, & Duck (1997) and Hogg & Hains, (1996).
can be compared to levels of a previously conducted pilot test \((N = 9, M = 4.11)\), during which participants were not ink-stamped on their hand with the group symbol.

Additionally, participants reported, on a 10 point scale, that the situation presented in the historical background resembled a real-world conflict \((M = 8.47, SD = 1.57)\). This perception of a realistic scenario, coupled with a strong identification with their fictitious group, indicates that participants were successfully engaged in the role-playing scenario.

*Priming Effects of the Manipulations*

Five questions were included in the questionnaire to verify if manipulations in the recruitment speech actually activated the accurate social-psychological motivations. Two questions inquired about the level of equity in the intergroup situation, and three questions pertained to their group's social identity.

Participants in the justice condition rated fairness (Figure 4.a) and equality (Figure 4.b) lower than in the two other conditions, indicating that justice was effectively primed. The effectiveness of the social identity condition was less clear. Here, participants rated ingroup members as less proud to be group members than participants in the two other conditions (Figure 4.c). However, participants in the social identity condition rated their group as less respected than participants in the control condition, but were matched by the ratings of those in the justice conditions (Figure 4.d). Participants in all conditions equally rated their group as distinct from the outgroup (Figure 4.e). Thus, it would seem that distinctiveness and respect were also primed in the justice condition.
Manipulating these constructs in a more independent fashion will be necessary for future experiments.
Figure 4. Ratings of fairness in the intergroup situation (a), equality in the intergroup situation (b), pride about ingroup (c), respect towards ingroup (d), ingroup’s distinctiveness (e).
Participation in the Bombing Plot

After reading both the historical background and the recruitment speech, participants first had to indicate their response to the plea to participate in a bombing plot against the other group. An overall chi square test found no relationship between the type of arguments presented (social identity, justice, control), the presence of social recognition, and the response to the recruitment speech. Five people chose to participate in the bombing plot. For the rest, there was an overall preference (60.6%) across all experimental conditions to offer support to the extremist movement and their bombing plot, but not to participate personally. It seems as the intergroup situation rendered the bombing justified for the majority of participants, however they did not want to be personally involved.

Overall, the type of argument seems to have no effect on participants' responses to the recruitment speech, as may be seen in Table 2. However, a closer look is warranted for the few who did choose to participate in the bombing plot. The social identity condition produced four bombers, which seems appreciably more than the single bomber in the justice condition, or none in the control condition. A chi square test yielded a marginally significant relationship, \( \chi^2 (2, N = 15) = 5.59, p = 0.06 \), where people given social identity arguments were more likely to bomb than people given arguments based on justice or control.
Table 2.

Responses to the Recruitment Speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forced choice options</th>
<th>Type of Arguments</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree, offer support &amp; participate in the bombing plot</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree, offer support but not participate</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree, understand and remain ambivalent</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree, not support and remain silent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree, not support, tip off police</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Defining the Dependant Variable

Following their response to being recruited to participate in a bombing plot, participants were asked to rate the likelihood of engaging in the eight different types of behaviors that challenge the intergroup status quo. These eight items were subjected to a principal components analysis. Judging by Kaiser’s (1960) eigenvalue rule and the visual inspection of the scree plot (as proposed by Cattell, 1966), this analysis generated two components. The first component yielded an eigenvalue of 3.5 and accounted for 43.76% of the variance, and the second component yielded an eigenvalue of 1.59 and accounted for 19.93% of variance.

Factor loadings resulting from a Varimax oblique rotation are presented in Table 3. Items whose loadings of .32 and above were included in the definition of their respective components (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). However, two items crossloaded on
both factors (identified by their italicized loadings). Following a recommendation by Costello and Osborne (2005), these items were discarded from the analysis.

Table 3.

*Rotated Varimax Component Matrix for Behaviors that Challenge the Status Quo*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions (if participant chose to role-play being Estirian)</th>
<th>Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gather signatures for a collective petition to be given to the Belneer government</td>
<td>-.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage a peaceful protest in front of parliament, despite the ban on public protests</td>
<td>.198</td>
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<tr>
<td>Painting government property with pro-Estirian graffiti</td>
<td>.600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disrupt parliament proceedings by staging an aggressive riot, encouraging property damage</td>
<td>.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomb a Belneer government building at 2am, while it is empty</td>
<td>.828</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help to kidnap the Belner finance minister, and keep her hostage</td>
<td>.817</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help to assassinate a military general who ordered the army into Estirian villages</td>
<td>.807</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bomb a crowded Belneer market</td>
<td>.649</td>
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All items that loaded highest on the first component were the most antinormative behaviors to choose from, and all included violence. Thus, this factor was named Terrorism. The items loading on the second component are also behaviors that confront the government, but by peaceful means. Hence, this component was labeled Peaceful Protest. Components with fewer than three items, such as Peaceful Protest, are generally considered weak and unstable (Costello & Osborne, 2005). However, there were few items in the factor analysis to begin with. I also chose to recognize Peaceful Protest as it was easily interpretable and made theoretical sense in contrast to Terrorism.
The effects of the manipulated variables, type of argument and presence of social recognition, were tested using the Terrorism component as a dependent variable. The type of argument presented (social identity, justice, or control) and the presence or absence of social recognition did not have the predicted effect on Terrorism, \( F(2, 174) = 1.39, p = .25 \), as presented in Figure 5. These results are counter to my hypothesis that presenting arguments about improving group status (social identity motivations) or reestablishing intergroup equity (justice motivations) would motivate participants to engage in a terrorist plot more than presenting arguments simply outlining the need for change in the social system (control condition).

![figure 5](image)

*Figure 5.* Means for the component Terrorism in each experimental condition.

However, different results emerged once gender was taken into consideration. A three-way ANOVA, assessing the impact of type of argument, social recognition, and gender yielded two significant results. First, gender produced a main effect \( F(1,175) = \)
11.66, \( p = .001 \), where men rated significantly higher their likelihood to participate in terrorist-like activities than women, and this across all experimental conditions.

Second, there was a three-way interaction between type of argument, social recognition, and gender, \( F(2,175) = 4.01, p = .02 \). In the absence of social recognition, men were more likely to engage in Terrorism in the social identity condition (\( M = 4.82, SD = 2.23 \)) than in the justice condition (\( M = 2.77, SD = 2.32 \)), \( t (36) = 2.56, p = .02 \). Terrorism in the social identity condition was also rated significantly higher than Terrorism in the control condition (\( M = 2.39, SD = 1.88 \)), \( t (36) = 2.628, p = .01 \). However, Terrorism in the justice condition did not differ significantly from Terrorism in the control condition, \( t (36) = 0.409, p = .69 \). As is presented in Figure 6, the prediction that social identity and justice motivations would provoke increased likelihood to participate in a terrorist plot as was only partially confirmed. Arguments related to social identity did increase men’s likelihood to participate in terrorism when social recognition was not offered.
Aside from gender, the type of argument and the presence of social recognition did not interact with any other individual difference measures. Personal need for structure, type of self-construal, tendency for splitting, sensation seeking, or age, did not systematically vary responses to experimental conditions.

However, the Terrorism component did correlate with several of the individual differences measures. Terrorism was negatively correlated with scores on the Personal Need for Structure scale, \( r (178) = - .19, p = .01 \), which conflicts with Kruglanski’s (2007) hypothesis that people who are averse to ambiguity are attracted to extremism and terrorism. Terrorism also correlated positively with sensation seeking, as scored on the Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking, \( r (177) = .32, p < .00 \), and the Splitting of Other’s Images subscale of the Splitting Index, \( r (178) = .19, p = .01 \).
Discussion

I have criticized psychological theories of terrorism for lacking empirical foundations. Most of the theories are neither based on data, nor can data be obtained to validate them. Consequently, I performed a laboratory study based on observations from people who are associated with terrorism, with predictions from established theories in intergroup relations.

A major challenge in creating such a laboratory study is its external validity. The artificial nature of laboratory studies has been stereotyped as being effective in identifying only trivialities, all of which can not be generalized to the real world (Anderson, Lindsay, & Bushman, 1999). Such worries might be amplified with a study such as this one, concerning a phenomenon as complex and exotic as terrorism.

However, this experimental role-playing scenario produced encouraging results. Only a small fraction of the sample, 2.8%, chose to participate in the bombing plot. This can be considered an indication of the realism of the experiment: participants took this extreme course of action very seriously. Such responses make the role-playing paradigm a promising avenue for laboratory-based research on terrorism.

For this experiment, I predicted that arguments about improving group status (social identity motivations) and arguments about reestablishing intergroup equity (justice motivations) would induce participants to engage in a terrorist plot, more so than presenting arguments simply outlining the need for change (control condition). The results partially confirmed this prediction. Social identity motivations did surpass the control condition in provoking participants to engage in a fictional terrorist plot. However, this effect was only for men who were not offered social recognition.
These findings do not clearly confirm that identity and justice motives are involved in justifying terrorism. However, social identity related motivations seem to be notably important. Future research, with perfected manipulations, will be better suited to confirm this claim.

If motivations related to social identity can explain a portion of terrorist behavior, this knowledge might be a basis for future research of counter-terrorism strategies. Just as social identity theory predicts when conflict will occur, the theory can be used for conflict resolution. Social identity theorists have researched promising conflict reduction strategies, such as recategorizing and decategorization (Brewer, 1996; Gaertner et al., 2000; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989). These strategies involve imposing a common in-group categorization, or making a superordinate identity salient to groups in conflict.

The gender effect found in this study is consistent with previous research. Men have been observed to dominate violent conflict (Sandole, 2002) and terrorism (Moghaddam, 2006, p.25). It also corresponds to a “terrorist” profile developed by Russell and Miller (1983). Based on a compilation of published data regarding over 350 individual terrorist cadres and leaders across 18 different Palestinian, Japanese, German, Italian, Turkish, Irish, Spanish, Iranian, Argentina, Brazilian, and Uruguayan terrorist groups active from 1966 to 1976. The profile describes a young unmarried male who is an urban resident, from a middle-upper class family, with university education and a strong political philosophy. Although this might describe the participants who scored higher on Terrorism, this description also fits most male undergraduates who participated in this study.
Explaining why the expected results only occurred for those who were not offered social recognition is speculative. Social recognition directly affects the ego. In this sense, social recognition might have caused the participant to focus on the self, making the personal identity salient while disengaging from one’s social identity. As a result, the social recognition motivations might have cancelled social identity motivations.

An unexpected finding was the negative correlation between participants’ scores on the Personal Need for Structure scale (Neuberg & Newsom, 1993) and the Terrorism component. This result contrasts with a theoretical relationship between uncertainty, need for closure, and support for extreme ideologies and terrorism outlined by Kruglanski (2007). Certain people have a high “need for closure”, namely a preference for predictability and order, coupled with an aversion for ambiguity (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Increased need for closure may lead people to seek ideologies or groups that appear to provide such closure. Even if such a group were to promote violence, a heightened need for closure increases people’s likelihood to support ingroup goals (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006). In conflict situations, need for closure is thought to contribute to the dichotomous us vs. them thinking required to conduct terrorism (Federico, Golec, & Dial, 2005).

The relationship between need for closure and terrorism has yet to be empirically supported, and the PNS scores in this study challenge it. Perhaps the short-lived scenario of the experiment did not allow for participants’ need for closure, a stable personality trait, to affect the results.

In study 1, spontaneous narratives of LTTE members emphasized the underlying motivations of justice and identity in terrorism. In study 2, results of a laboratory
experiment partially demonstrated that identity motivations seemingly induce participants
to partake in a fictional terrorist plot. It is clear that additional research of these social-
psychological motivations to explain terrorism is needed. Future laboratory and field
experiments might gain valuable insight into the psychology of terrorism by grounding
their theoretical frameworks in justice and identity.

At this stage, it might be prudent for researchers to refrain from elaborating all-
encompassing theories of terrorism. The decision to engage in these acts of extreme
violence are very rare and complex, and its psychological raison d'être remains unknown.
A better use of research efforts would be to gather data, and test hypotheses, however
limited their scope may be. Given the lack of knowledge, explaining any part of the
variance can be considered a significant contribution towards understanding the
psychology of terrorism.
References


Appendix A: Instructions for collective narrative

This is an interview about the story of your people, the Tamils of Sri Lanka. We are asking you to play the role of a storyteller about the Tamils, to construct for us the story of your people's past.

As social scientists, our goal is to collect as many different collective narratives as we can to try to understand how different groups relate to each other in Sri Lanka. We are not interested in a historian's point of view. We are interested in how ordinary adults like yourself tell us the story.

We are not interested in evaluating your knowledge of history, of whether you know the facts or specific dates. This interview should not be viewed as a history test.

The interview is divided into two sections. First, I will ask you to tell me the story of how the conflict started in Sri Lanka. Then I will ask you a series of specific questions.

I'd like you to start your story around before Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948. We would like you to divide your stories into chapters, so take a couple of minutes before we start to look at the chapter outline we think might help you for your story. Think about the different people and groups in your story... whenever you are ready, I will turn on the tape-recorder.
Appendix B: Questionnaire for study 1

System Legitimacy
As an outsider, it is difficult for us to really know what is happening in the conflict in Sri Lanka. Following is a list of statements about the groups involved in the conflict, and statements about the general situation throughout Sri Lankan history. We are not saying they are true or false. We would like to hear your opinion about it. Please rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much you agree with the following statements.

In Chap.2, it was possible to use the system to change the Tamil condition.

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In Chap.2, Tamils engaged in negotiations to improve their situation.

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In Chap.4, Tamils engaged in negotiations to improve their situation.

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In Chap. 2, Tamils had no choice but to use violent actions.

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In Chap. 2, the government used justified violence against the Tamils.

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Theories
The conflict in Sri Lanka has been often reported in the news. Following is a list of explanations we have heard as to why a certain group uses violence. We are not saying they are true. We would like to hear your opinion about it. Please rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much you agree with the following statements we have collected about the conflict.

The government prefers to use violence than negotiation tactics.

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Sinhalese are violent people.

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Tamils are violent people.

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What the LTTE is doing is justified.

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If violence is not used, the Tamil condition will never improve.

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The Tamils people use violence to defend themselves.

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Tamils would prefer to sit down and negotiate.

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Tamils and Sinhalese have been fighting for so long, it can not change.
If the Sinhalese government treated the Tamils fairly, the LTTE would continue to attack.

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Violence is bad, but the LTTE has no choice.

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If the international community knew how the Tamils were treated, they would not call the LTTE terrorist.

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Appendix C: Personal Need for Structure scale

Read each of the following statements and decide how much you agree with each according to your attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. Please respond according to the following 6-point scale:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = moderately disagree
3 = slightly disagree
4 = slightly agree
5 = moderately agree
6 = strongly agree

1. It upsets me to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it.
2. I'm not bothered by things that interrupt my daily routine.
3. I enjoy having a clear and structured mode of life.
4. I like to have a place for everything and everything in its place.
5. I enjoy being spontaneous.
6. I find that a well-ordered life with regular hours makes my life tedious.
7. I don't like situations that are uncertain.
8. I hate to change my plans at the last minute.
9. I hate to be with people who are unpredictable.
10. I find that a consistent routine enables me to enjoy life more.
11. I enjoy the exhilaration of being in unpredictable situations.
12. I become uncomfortable when the rules in a situation are not clear.
Appendix D: Self-Construal scale

Please rate your agreement or disagreement with each statement below on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1. I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.
2. I'd rather say "NO" directly, than risk being misunderstood.
3. It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.
4. Speaking during class is not a problem for me.
5. My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.
6. Having a lively imagination is important to me.
7. I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor.
8. I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.
9. I respect people who are modest about themselves.
10. I am the same person at home that I am at school.
11. I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.
12. Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.
13. I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.
14. I act the same way no matter who I am with.
15. I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans.
16. I feel comfortable using someone’s first name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am.
17. It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.
18. I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I’ve just met.
19. I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I’m not happy with the group.
20. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.
21. If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.
22. My personal identity independent of others, is very important to me.
23. Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.
24. I value being in good health above everything.
Appendix E: Splitting of Other’s Images subscale of the Splitting Index

Please rate your agreement or disagreement with each statement below on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1. Being able to keep my friends is one of my strong points.
2. I have doubts about my closest friends.
3. My friendships are almost always satisfying.
4. My feelings towards those close to me remain constant.
5. I have always been aware that my close friends really cared for me.
6. My opinions of my friends rarely change.
7. I almost always feel good about those close to me.
8. I have many long-lasting friendships.
Appendix F: Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking

For each statement, indicate if
(A) describes me very well
(B) describes me somewhat
(C) does not describe me very well
(D) does not describe me at all

1. I can see how it would be interesting to marry someone from a foreign country.
2. When the water is very cold, I prefer not to swim even if it is a hot day.
3. If I have to wait in a long line, I’m usually patient about it.
4. When I listen to music, I like it to be loud.
5. When taking a trip, I think it is best to make as few plans as possible and just take it as it comes.
6. I stay away from movies that are said to be frightening or highly suspenseful.
7. I think it’s fun and exciting to perform or speak before a group.
8. If I were to go to an amusement park, I would prefer to ride the rollercoaster or other fast rides.
9. I would like to travel to places that are strange and far away.
10. I would never like to gamble with money, even if I could afford it.
11. I would have enjoyed being one of the first explorers of an unknown land.
12. I like a movie where there are a lot of explosions and car chases.
13. I don’t like extremely hot and spicy foods.
14. In general, I work better when I’m under pressure.
15. I often like to have the radio or TV on while I’m doing something else, such as reading or cleaning up.
16. It would be interesting to see a car accident happen.
17. I think it’s best to order something familiar when eating in a restaurant.
18. I like the feeling of standing next to the edge on a high place and looking down.
19. If it were possible to visit another planet or the moon for free, I would be among the first in line to sign up.
20. I can see how it must be exciting to be in a battle during a war.
Appendix G: Historical background text

[The following is a summary of the intra-state conflict that has ravaged the country of Killibati for the past decades.]

The Belneer and the Estirians are two groups that have lived on the island of Killibati (population 19 million people) for hundreds of years. The Estirians are by far the larger group. They comprise of 69% of the Killibati population, speak their own language, Estevali, practice the religion of Esta, and have traditionally lived in the Middle and Northern regions of the country. The Belneer, on the other hand, make up 27% of the country’s population, speak Belnu and practice Belanta, and have traditionally lived in the Southern regions of Killibati. The remaining 4% of the population are immigrants from neighboring countries.

Throughout the period from 1921-1952, a major colonialist power conquered and controlled Killibati. During this period, the colonialists instituted their own rule and controlled governmental, economic, and educational policies. In the 1950s, the costs of maintaining administrative and military control of Killibati outweighed the revenues made from exploiting the local resources. Thus, the colonialists decided to give up control of Killibati, and held an election for the local population to determine the new government. This led to widespread fear among the Belneer. Because they were so vastly outnumbered, Belneers were concerned that they would not have adequate representation in the government, and that their interests would be marginalized relative to those of the Estirians. As expected, the elected government reflected the major difference in population size between the two ethnic groups, with Estirian candidates campaigning on pro-Estirian platforms sweeping the popular vote.

Belneer concerns were compounded by new legislation in 1960 proposed by the Estirian-controlled government stipulating that Estevali would be the only language of the state, and Esta the official religion. Over time, the Belneer found themselves overlooked for governmental positions, and their young people were consistently being denied entry to state universities. Belneer students were forced to turn to Belneer universities in the South, which suffered from inadequate funding by the state. With Belneer frustrations mounting, they staged a series of unsuccessful legal challenges followed by civil rights marches in 1964, in which they demanded an end to discriminatory policies in the country and official recognition of their language and religion. During one of those marches, events turned violent when protesters clashed with Estirian-government police, resulting in a dozen of casualties. In the aftermath of the skirmish, the situation for the Belneer deteriorated even further. Citing security threats, the government banned all public gatherings, and anti-government sentiment in the Belneer press was punishable with prison sentences. In the face of increasing government-backed discrimination, the Belneer set up a private militia called the Belneer Liberation Movement (BLM), which made the first formal call for the establishment of a separate state within the lands of Killibati in 1971.

The BLM was immediately placed on the list of banned organizations by the government, and the army called up its reserves in preparation of any eventual confrontations.

Soon after its inception, the BLM carried out its first operation, assassinating the Estirian minister of tourism in 1973. In response, the government sent its army to BLM strongholds in the southern part of the country, attempting to quickly crush the BLM using overwhelming military force. After months of fierce battles and increasing casualties on both sides, the fighting subsided, leaving the
two ethnic factions with a stalemate. The government has since adopted a series of pressure tactics intended to undermine the BLM, such as detaining random Belmeer citizens on ambiguous charges of aiding and financing the BLM. Additionally, the government has increased its military operations against the BLM, which in-turn has fuelled more anti-government sentiment, and increased the militia’s recruitment. The people of Killibati have now been embroiled in fully-fledged civil war for more than 30 years, where more than 55,000 people have been killed or injured, the vast majority of whom are Belmeer.
Appendix H: Recruitment speeches

(Condition: Justice - No Social Recognition - 322 words)

Picture yourself attending a talk organized by the Estirian Student Association, taking place at your university. The talk is given by a prominent member of the Estirian community, and he is discussing the struggles facing students in Killibati. At the end of the talk, a reception is held in the hall, where appetizers and drinks are served. You start chatting with a small group of Estirian students when, all of a sudden, one of your professors walks over with the speaker. After shaking your hand, the professor turns to the speaker, and says: “This is the student I was talking to you about.” After a short formal exchange, you all go to a quiet classroom down the hall. After ensuring that no one has followed, the speaker closes the door, turns to you, and says:

The injustice in Killibati cannot go on any longer. We have been suffering for years and years, and many generations of Estirians have known nothing but misery. Over the past decades, they have ignored our requests, shut down our newspapers, kidnapped our leaders, and stripped us of our rights.

I ask you to think of our group’s struggle with this never-ending discrimination. Every year, State Universities accept Belneer students over Estirian students with equal or better grades. As it stands, no matter how qualified an Estirian candidate is, he has no chance of getting a good job. Even those Estirians who have managed to get a job get paid less for doing the same work as a Belneer employee. We are equals, and yet we are never treated equally.

It is time to put an end to this terrible injustice. The Estirian Liberation Movement (ELM) is determined to restore equality in Killibati. If they will not listen to our complaints and our protests, we must act decisively. This is why the ELM is planning to place a bomb in the Belneer market, where Belneer spend the easy money they make while we continue to work for no reward.

To accomplish this important mission, we need students, the young elite of our people. Your professor told me how valuable a person like you could be to our organization. With the help of motivated and intelligent students such as yourself, the ELM can continue to work towards reestablishing justice in our country.

Should you agree to help us, you must understand that the plan must be conducted with the utmost secrecy. No one can or will know the great deed you will have performed. Aside from me, no one else must know; not your family, nor your friends, nor your loved ones; absolutely nobody.

You could really help our cause… We cannot endure this discrimination forever, it is time to act! Will you help us?
Picture yourself attending a talk organized by the Estirian Student Association, taking place at your university. The talk is given by a prominent member of the Estirian community, and he is discussing the struggles facing students in Killibati. At the end of the talk, a reception is held in the hall, where appetizers and drinks are served. You start chatting with a small group of Estirian students when, all of a sudden, one of your professors walks over with the speaker. After shaking your hand, the professor turns to the speaker, and says: “This is the student I was talking to you about.” After a short formal exchange, you all go to a quiet classroom down the hall. After ensuring that no one has followed, the speaker closes the door, turns to you, and says:

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Should you agree to help us, you must understand that you will be a celebrated Estirian hero. Many people will know the great deed you will have performed, and your name will forever be remembered in Estirian history. Everyone will recognize your great courage: your family, your friends, your loved ones.

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My fellow Estirian, the injustice in Killibati cannot go on any longer. We have been suffering for years and years, and many generations of Estirians have known nothing but misery. Over the past decades, they have ignored our requests, shut down our newspapers, kidnapped our leaders, and stripped us of our rights.

Our great Estirian identity is ridiculed on a daily basis. Our official language and religion are still not recognized by the Belneer government. We are considered second class citizens in our own country, where once our forefathers walked with heads held high. Today, we are forced into jobs that the Belneer consider too degrading for themselves.

It is time to restore our pride in who we are. The Estirian Liberation Movement (ELM) is determined to improve the status of Estirians in Killibati. If they will not listen to our complaints and our protests, we must act decisively. This is why the ELM is planning to place a bomb in the Belneer market, where rich Belneer spend the money they make while we continue to work demeaning jobs.

To accomplish this important mission, we need students, the young elite of our people. Your professor told me how valuable a person like you could be to our organization. With the help of motivated and intelligent students such as yourself, the ELM can continue to work towards reestablishing our position as a respected group in our society, where we can be proud of our language, religion, and heritage.

Should you agree to help us, you must understand that the plan must be conducted with the utmost secrecy. No one can or will know the great deed you will have performed. Aside from me, no one else must know; not your family, nor your friends, nor your loved ones; absolutely nobody.

You could really help our cause... We cannot endure this disgrace forever, it is time to act! Will you help us?
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Did you know your professor and I went to the same high-school when we were your age? We met at a meeting organized by the Estirian Student Association, an event very similar to this one. It seems so long ago now, but I can remember it as though it was yesterday. You’d be surprised at how similar things were in Killibati back then.

When I look back at all we faced because of the Belneer, there has been virtually no progression, no improvement, no change for us. Despite our efforts at changing the status quo in Killibati, we have been unsuccessful so far, but we must continue trying.

The state of affairs in our country cannot go on any longer. The government has not acted on our requests for change for many years. As long as we remain silent, our situation will stay as it is, which is unacceptable. The Estirian Liberation Movement (ELM) can no longer keep quiet in face of these conditions. That's why the ELM is planning to place a bomb in the Belneer market, where Belneer spend the money they make while we continue to live our same difficult lives.

To accomplish this important mission, we need students, the young elite of our people. Your professor told me how valuable a person like you could be to our organization. With the help of motivated and intelligent students such as yourself, the ELM can take a bold step towards altering our reality in Killibati.

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