

Terrorists: How different are they?

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Terrorists: How different are they?

Ever since September 11th, terrorism has been on virtually all of our minds. And now, some eighteen months later, as the nation perches on the brink of war with Iraq, our fears remain. The frustration that most people experience in the aftermath of extreme violence is largely the result of the question why. Why would anyone want to commit so heinous a crime? How could they live with themselves? [Terrorism](#) is a widely researched topic, but it seems to be particularly salient now, as it hits closer to home. Are [terrorists](#) different than the rest of us? Are they different than serial killers? If brain equals behavior, then yes, they are. But perhaps that equation is only true in some cases.

Because the acts that terrorists execute are so disturbing, many people think they must be crazy - that there must be something fundamentally wrong with them or with their brains. There is an ongoing debate on this matter - especially since different research shows variations in the extent to which terrorists are perceived as "crazy." Clark McCauley, Professor of Psychology at Bryn Mawr maintains that terrorists are not crazy. In fact, they are quite normal and their psychology is normal. According to Professor McCauley, research has found "[psychopathology](#) and personality disorder no more likely among

terrorists than among non-terrorists from the same background" (1). For most, this is an unfavorable result, for not only does it mean that anyone is capable of committing acts of terror, but it also means that there is little distinction between "us" and "them" - in fact, the "us and them" distinction may not really exist, at least not on a biological or psychological level (if we are truly essentially ...

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...Science Research Council website.

<http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/mccauley.htm>

2) How a Terrorist Thinks , from Clear Direction, Inc. website.

<http://www.cleardirection.com/docs/articles/terrorist.asp>

3) The Mind of the Terrorist Fundamentalist , site is kind of scary looking.

<http://www.meaningsoflife.com/book.htm>

4) Long, David E. The Anatomy of Terrorism. New York: The Free Press, 1990.

5) Rapoport, David C. Inside Terrorist Organizations. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001.

6) What Makes Serial Killers Tick? , from Court TV's Crime Library website.

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/notorious/tick/victims_1.html

7) Freedman, Lawrence. Superterrorism Policy Responses. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2002.

8) Thought Police Peek Into Brains , from Wired News website.

<http://www.wired.com/news/business/0,1367,47221,00.html>

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