

EXAMINING EVIL

EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVIL AND PERSONALITY

by

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Abstract

Humans are complex animals capable of an array of emotions, motivations, and drives. These forms of expressions can occur in concert with each other or be in conflict. One such human expression is evil. Evil stems, in part, from a desire for dominance. An evil personality is one that has integrated the habit of exerting dominance over another person by exploitation and abuse. Evil actions are reinforced or discouraged by reward or punishment, which is the strongest predictor of whether a behavior will reoccur. Evil is also associated with brain structure. Research indicates that frontal lobe abnormalities can make a person more prone to antisocial behavior. Antisocial behavior is influenced by childhood socialization, trauma, and brain structure. Using a case study methodology, we study the behavior of several public figures (i.e., Bernie Madoff, Grafton Thomas, Karla Holmoka, and Aaron Hernandez) in an attempt to examine evil. We found that evil stems either from identifying with the aggressor (or childhood trauma), the desire for dominance leading to habitual antisocial behavior or sadism, or brain abnormalities that prevent someone from controlling the impulse to act antisocially. This study has important implications for psychiatry, psychology and the treatment of those believed to have expressed evil behavior.

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Literature Review

Evil can be understood as morally abhorrent, and deliberately sadistic or apathetic of the harm caused to others. The intention, knowledge, and level of sadism of the harm one is causing is what defines the highest evil, which exists on a continuum. To define evil, it is helpful to focus on severe evil such as physical or psychological abuse. The Dark Triad of Personality (DTP) is commonly referred to when discussing evil behavior and is described as a test that represents a set of characteristics that share in common a tendency to exploit others or even abuse (Whitbourne, 2013). DTP involves three personality characteristics: narcissism (excessive preoccupation with self), machiavellianism (tendency to use others for self gain), and psychopathy (lack of empathy). However, despite any score on the Dark Triad test, the “habit” of evil, meaning heinous actions, (instead of just personality tendencies) is necessary in order to establish that one has a personality driven by evil. For example, the person who scores high on Machiavellianism but cheats on tests habitually rather than commits violence habitually may score high on the test but not be evil. An evil (or immoral) action does not necessarily mean an evil personality, but a habit of committing evil always shows clear deviations from benevolence that have an obvious trajectory upwards in severity and evil actions of violence were repeated. Morton (2004) states that:

“We have a visceral revulsion from extremely evil acts. The revulsion is most vivid when the acts involve physical violence, but it extends to other acts produced by similar patterns of motivation, even if they do not have the same emotional immediacy. Evil acts have a quality that in Ancient times would have made us fear that the Gods might send a plague in reprisal, rather

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than simply making us despair at the incapacities of mere mortals to manage their lives together.” Because of the varying degrees of evil and the progressive trajectory in which habitual evil tends to occur, we define extreme evil such as murder, beatings, or torture as “gratuitous evil” (Russell, 2008), although, as Morton comments, there are other evil acts that do not have the emotional immediacy as overt abuse, such as a large scale fraud. (Russell, 2008)

An evil person is one who is capable of extreme acts such as rape and murder, not the person who steals solely for food where stealing would simply be “an evil” (or moral wrongdoing) but not reflective of the personality. Committing an ‘evil act’ for the purpose of survival is not necessarily a person who derives pleasure from others’ pain or is without remorse. In crimes of desperation, such as someone who steals food (so they can survive) should not be considered evil if the person would not have done it if they had not been in a dire situation. In this case, the transgressor was “driven” towards an immoral act but the antisocial behavior does not meet the threshold for evil and has a reason aside from malice. A different, but related transgression is evil by ignorance, particularly in adolescence when one may deviate and “try on” different experiences and roles as an attempt to individualize themselves (Arnett, 2000). The level of remorse and amount of sadism is what defines evil but sadism is not necessary for someone to be evil. But, the amount of pleasure someone gets from evil acts affect their remorse and can make someone who takes more pleasure in it more evil than someone who does not. Someone who does not get pleasure from it may be more “driven” to evil than committing it with more intention, such as the case of a hungry child who does not enjoy intimidating others into giving them money but feels driven to it by outside circumstances. As the behavior is “normalized” it becomes a part of their personality and someone can become evil. Additionally,

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evil by drive is still “evil,” but the level of intention, sadism, or apathy to the being of another that someone has in committing evil is what makes someone more evil than another person.

In the present study, the motivating factors associated with the phenomenon of evil and (which people could the word evil be applied to) will be analyzed. Evil is a continuum, from everyday evil such as stealing 20 dollars from a friend to bigger evils such as murder. Evil is considered to be either intentional or rooted by a drive (Berggren, 2017) that is unconscious and difficult to control. Evil by drive would mean that the person would not have committed the action if they were not driven to it by, for example, a severe mental illness like schizophrenia. That would mean that the relationship between evil and personality is mediated by severe mental illness, or biologically rooted drive, such as the case of a damaged frontal lobe that can provoke uncontrollable aggression. Intentional evil is characterized by the awareness of the harm they cause but choose to engage in the evil action again. They either justify it, enjoy it, or simply are apathetic. Often, committing intentional evil is rooted in identification with the aggressor (Ferenczi, 1988) after a traumatic event where the personality becomes fragmented (Howell, 2012) resulting in a dissociation from one’s own morals, feelings, and thoughts and replaces it with the motives of the aggressor to defend themselves in the future. It is necessary to distinguish the level of intentionality when defining a person as evil so we can best decide how to treat them clinically- by analyzing their childhood trauma, mental illnesses, possible brain abnormalities, and socialization from parents.

In the present study, it is hypothesized that one becomes “evil” when heinous acts towards others become habitual and gratifying, but that when evil stems from a desire for dominance that evil people can change. The need to claim power becomes stronger than the

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conscience and one can do, or become “evil.” To test these hypotheses, the case study method will be applied to four different criminals: Bernie Madoff, Karla Holmolka, Aaron Hernandez, and Grafton Thomas. From there, we will determine whether these people are Intentionally Evil, or high on the continuum, or if they are Evil by Drive, which is low on the continuum. These four people were chosen because they all committed horrifying crimes that traumatized and affected multiple peoples’ lives for the negative. The cruelty of the crimes and the pasts of these people are analyzed to determine the genesis of their evilness and where they fit on the continuum of evil.

Bernie Madoff: A White-Collar Criminal. Bernie Madoff will be examined to relay the fact that it is not solely violence that is evil but that evil and abuse can take many forms. Bernie Madoff, at the top of his own pyramid scheme even at the expense of his family name (Fishman, 2011). Bernie Madoff is often considered a narcissist. His supposed narcissism is thought to have been the source of his evil behavior. He was wealthy from making illegal financial transactions. He was motivated by an unending need for praise and to fulfill an image of grandiosity. Hypothesis: Bernie Madoff is evil because he perpetuated harmful actions towards vulnerable people with malice, and had the awareness of his actions at the time. This makes him Intentionally Evil.

Karla Holmolka: A Victim Who Becomes a Perpetrator. Karla Holmolka is a female murderer and rapist. The main pathway Holmolka took to being evil was through her relationship with Paul Bernardo, a serial rapist. This is not to suggest that Bernardo made her evil, but rather that Bernardo was able to sway her towards criminal activity and more antisocial behavior than

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before as there is little evidence that she had any history of violence prior to meeting Bernardo. Bernardo was very violent towards women, and he had beaten Holmolka before and was sexually violent. Holmolka, in tape recordings, called herself his slave (Pron, 2010). Holmolka was likely identifying with the aggressor. It is possible that Bernardo began abusing her and influenced her personality to become more antisocial than she ever was. She remarried after getting out of prison, she has not been convicted of any crimes since, showing that Paul was the catalyst for her criminal life. Hypothesis: Karla Holmolka was Intentionally Evil (through identifying with her aggressor) with intent to cause extreme harm.

Grafton Thomas and Severe Mental Disease: Grafton Thomas is an African American who went to assault Jews with a machete at a Hanukkah celebration. Grafton Thomas was, with almost perfect certainty, was driven by mental illness to commit his crimes rather than pure malice. This would mean that without being so severely mentally ill (paranoid schizophrenic, bipolar depression) (Mongelli & Golding, 2020) that Grafton Thomas probably never would have committed any type of violent crime. Thomas had never perpetrated any crime at all before the assaults, aside from one incident in 2018 where he brandished a knife at a police officer which led to his diagnosis. The assaults happened just weeks after he stopped taking his antipsychotic medication (Latuda), which suggests that the catalyst for the crime was the absence of the medication rather than a violent personality. Hypothesis: Grafton Thomas was Evil by Drive because despite a gentle personality, he was driven to commit evil by his mental illness that limited his ability to reason and perceive reality.

Aaron Hernandez, From Adored Hero to Villain: Aaron Hernandez is a person who had “everything,” then became unstable because of what seemed to be just his temperament, but was

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also biologically driven. Aaron Hernandez's violence could have been symptomatic of his violent home life that was wrought with domestic violence. His father was violent to him, his brother, and his mother, and thereby may have set an example of masculinity equating violence. This may have led to identification with the aggressor, and may have led him to commit crime. However, that is not all. Hernandez was reported to have severe Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) (Kilgore, 2017) which degenerated his brain in the frontal lobe and would eventually lead to dementia. A symptom of CTE is dyscontrol of aggression, and because his was so severe, it depleted his cognitive functions to the point that he was having pathological paranoia of people being after him. This suggests that without CTE and the paranoia, Hernandez would probably not have been as violent as he was or possibly at all. The likelihood of his trauma impacting his life would remain but it is possible that violence would not have resulted from it. Hypothesis: Aaron Hernandez's evil was rooted primarily in Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, making him evil by drive.

Evil Pathways

In addition to examining sadistic evil, considered the most heinous form of evil, a form without remorse, we must also examine what defines an evil personality and how one's personality becomes evil. An evil personality can be considered 'comfortable' evil, an evil that evolves over time as a habit. The importance of the habit of evil is such because we are defined by our habits, so if we make a habit of causing pain towards or exploiting, manipulating others then our character and personality may become comfortable with it. Once justified, we begin to be apathetic to guilt even if we initially felt bad or even that we didn't want to commit the evil act. Malice combined with lack of remorse makes us "evil" along with the habit of committing

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evil. An evil act that is driven by biology is still an evil action, but the person themselves is not evil. Philip Zimbardo describes evil as “knowing better, but willingly doing worse” (2007). Therefore, if the person does not know better, such as the cases of those incompetent to stand trial, then that person cannot possibly be evil.

The Relationship Between Evil and Trauma

The strongest pathway to evil is trauma, particularly that in childhood. For both Intentional Evil and Evil by Drive, childhood trauma is a significant predictor because it compels the need to defend one’s self, or it may inspire a mental illness that makes one lose perception of reality or control of their aggression. Moreover, as children develop, they take their cues from adults when they are “modeling” (Bandura, 1978) and the adults in their lives are the first to teach them right from wrong. Then, reward and punishment as a response to their bad behavior is a predictor of whether the behavior will be repeated (Bandura, 1978; Adler, 1975). If a child has a violent upbringing then that child is more likely to see evil as normalized or justified from a younger age. The child can develop traits of the Dark Triad of Personality, which encompasses Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy (Whitbourne, 2013). The Dark Triad is associated with a tendency toward lack of empathy and the exploitation of others. Without self awareness, remorse, or the desire to change, these symptoms of Dark Triad are very difficult to change once they become a habit, a reflection of personality

Evil often starts with Identification with the Aggressor (Ferenczi, 1988). When children have borne witness to the adults in their lives behaving in maladaptive ways, they absorb that “knowledge” and it results in emotional dysregulation in the mind of the child. Briere defined

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emotion regulation as "the capacity of individuals to control and tolerate intense negative emotions without avoidance behaviors, such as dissociation, substance misuse or other behaviors to reduce tension" (Ardino, 2011).

These patterns continue especially if there is a sense of "emotional aloneness" (Frankel, 2008) and the child does not feel that there is support for whatever trauma they experienced. Emotional aloneness is a key component of Identification with the Aggressor and has its roots in trauma. Some instances of maltreatment that were pathways to evil were seen in murderer and serial rapist Paul Bernardo, husband of Karla Holmolka. Bernardo had a condition where his tongue was fused to the bottom of his mouth meaning he could not speak until he was 7 years old. He claims that he was quiet and shy and was bullied throughout his school years. He also alleges that his deranged behavior was caused by his pervasive feelings of inadequacy as a person and in sexual performances. He justified what he was doing by treating it as a means to an end- the only way he could perform sexually is to be abusive (DiManno, 2018). Here we have Bernardo as an example of evil, the kind of evil that justifies itself and explains away its actions if it benefits themselves. This way, evilness can thrive without any empathy or care for others as it "solved" his own problems.

Biologically Driven Evil

A pathway to evil that is physically driven as opposed to a flaw in morality stems from a person lacking in controlling aggression, and planning, due to frontal lobe damage (Pontius & Yudowitz, 1980). In this case, the person is not fully culpable for their actions because they have no control over their actions. This abnormality must be severe enough to cross the threshold into

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absolute dyscontrol rather than just difficulty. Certain forms of CTE or other abnormalities that affect planning and emotional regulation would have to be severe enough to be more than just the “difficulty” that makes for planning and executive functioning in cases like ADHD (Bunford, 2015). Or else, we would be able to justify almost all mental illnesses. Aaron Hernandez had the most severe case of CTE that the scientist who examined his brain post mortem had ever seen (Kilgore, 2017), so he lacked the ability to plan and could not control his feelings of rage or desire for violence compared to someone else with a functioning frontal lobe could do. Pontius and Yudowitz (1980) suggests that many offenders actually have damaged or abnormal frontal lobes. Therefore, it would mean that many people who commit evil acts are driven to it in some way, but it is the justification, lack of remorse, and whether evil was formed as a habit that would be the predictors of an evil personality.

Gender Differences

One well-established finding is that men are more violent than women in general (Bennett, 2005). While this is usually attributed to their biology, there are many ways that boys are socialized to be violent and more prone to antisocial behavior. Adler (1975) stated that there are “substantial self control differences linked directly to gender,” and this has been proven in the family structure (Adler, 1975). The typical family, historically, has been composed of a dominant father and boys are raised to be “independent risk takers” and girls are raised to be more quiet and obedient, and not to disturb the status quo. Due to the risk taking and impulsive culture among boys, delinquency is more likely as dominance becomes a more important trait as they grow up. Boys are socialized either by the culture or by the value that parents place

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dominance and independence and therefore are less likely to shy away from risks such as drug use or violence. Boys are primed to behave more antisocially than girls as dominance is considered manly (Adler, 1975), so using force to make their points can become a reflex at an early age.

The differences between self-control may be attributed to two factors: 1) the fact that men can have a less developed frontal cortex (cognition and decision making) in some areas than women as well as a less developed limbic cortex (emotional responses) as a whole (Cahill, 2012). The second factor is early childhood socialization. The childhood socialization of boys primes boys to capitalize on many traits such as dominance, strength, and courage / risk taking and leads to more opportunities for delinquency, as opposed to girls who are socialized to be more submissive and agreeable (Adler, 1975). The opportunities for delinquency, however, are key because these are where habits are formed. If someone continuously engages in antisocial behavior, then they are more likely to justify themselves and the antisocial behaviors will end up a part of their personality (instead of just being isolated incidents) and their personality will become “evil.” Boys are at a biological disadvantage but their childhood socialization is what facilitates their antisocial behavior because there is no effective punishment for boys exhibiting antisocial traits since these traits are prized in society’s boys.

What is the reason that there still are so many women that fall into antisocial patterns despite their biological make-up and psychosocial conditioning? One reason is because of opportunity (Adler, 1975). Boys have more opportunities for delinquency than girls because of the nature of their socialization, but if that is so, then boys also are likely to be the first to introduce girls to delinquent behavior (Silverman & Lagrange, 2006). In situations of social

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strain, the need to be dominant is also present in a higher degree for females as the need for survival trumps the social pressure for women to be more submissive. They may be forced to reject prosocial behaviors in order to survive or defend themselves, such as the case of female gang members, then they adapt to the more dominant behaviors of men often in order to protect themselves from men. For women, we may see more cases of identification with the aggressor leading to more antisocial behavior as a pathway to evil if women develop these antisocial behaviors as a defense mechanism rather than a product of their socialization.

Men are more prone to physical aggression, but women are more prone to relational aggression (Crick, 2002). Relational aggression is aggression through the manipulation of another person's relationships, such as spreading rumors or isolating another person from friends or family. These differences are rooted in the childhood socialization of boys and girls- girls find ways to be aggressive in a subversive way that doesn't as outwardly violate social norms. The behaviors exhibited during relational aggression are not prosocial as they're a way to tarnish another's reputation or control their relationships, and unjustified aggression towards a person, even when subtle, is antisocial due to the malice intended by the relationally aggressive person. To get from "normal aggression" to evilness, the aggression has to be severe: for example, a rape as opposed to punching someone in the face. The demarcation line between normal aggression and evil lies in the intention to cause lasting and severe harm in another's life, relationships, body or mind. In summary, antisocial behavior is more common in boys for biological and psychosocial reasons, but relational aggression is more common in girls due to their socialization. When girls are more physically violent, it is often because of identification with the

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aggressor, but depending on the harm and intention to cause harm or knowledge of causing extreme harm, relational aggression can be just as evil.

Individual Differences

The most significant individual differences are due to two factors: environment, and biology. Trauma is the environmental factor that leads to the development of antisocial behaviors that precede evil. When parents exhibit emotional dysregulation, this means that the children who are “modeling” after them will learn that antisocial behaviors are appropriate. If the child does not get punished for behaving antisocially then they are likely to continue. Reward and punishment is the biggest predictor of whether a behavior will continue (Crick, 2002; Bandura, 1925). If the child is repetitively punished unfairly or abused, then they could see the world as an unfair place that targets them and this could lead to a suspiciousness that manifests in anxiety that people are going to do them wrong so it is justified that they mistreat others first (Briere et al, 2002). What they also may find is that living in an abusive household may have conditioned the child to prize dominance (Black et al, 2010) as a valued trait and may lead a child to justify bullying others (Björkqvist, 2008). What precedes one’s choice between antisocial and prosocial behaviors is the brain’s perception of how others will treat them, and will predict the way they treat others. It also matters what traits the child feels they need to express to function socially (Briere et al, 2002).

Defensive antisocial behaviors are often developed out of anxiety, a kill or be killed mentality that can present in communities of high social strain. Social strain theories argue that anger and delinquency may result from the blockage of goal seeking behavior (Agnew, 1985).

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One who commits evil (under social strain or not) may never receive the sadistic pleasure necessary to be as evil as some people but if they lack remorse then their character, as well as the actions themselves, will be constituted as evil. On the contrary, there are people who have not had significant childhood trauma or social strain, and their “evilness” is rooted in the behavior their parents modeled for them or their own desire for dominance. An example is the parent who mistreats the waiter, so the child “learns” that they “are superior” to certain people and have the right to show dominance and treat others that are “below” them poorly. This may also be shown in a schoolyard as the kid who has a lot of friends versus the kid that is shy and doesn’t have a lot of friends- the “popular” kid thinks he is above the other kid because he is “stronger” (or more highly regarded) and therefore has a “right” to keep the other kid in his place.

Biological abnormalities diminish greatly one's level of evilness. The frontal lobe is the part of the brain that regulates emotion, aggression, and planning. The ability to plan is crucial in social interactions because it enables one to adapt to interactions by flipping between social scripts. Control of aggression is crucial in applying prosocial scripts to interactions with others. If a person has a damaged frontal lobe, then it could be much harder to act prosocially even if one intends and desires.

When someone loses control of their actions due to brain damage, their true self is hijacked by the abnormality in the brain and as a result they are less culpable for actions that are considered evil. Due to the nature of brain trauma such as CTE, there are symptoms such as moodiness, depression, and aggressive behavior that are difficult to control as the damage done to the brain is not reversible. (Boston University, FAQ about CTE) This makes it very difficult to

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control the effects of CTE especially when one is not aware they have it. In other brain abnormalities that affect the frontal lobe, the effects are similar.

Methods

The present study explores the concept of evil. Evil is a very broad human phenomenon. Any systematic exploration of this complex human behavior must consider it from a multidisciplinary perspective. In the present study, we rely on the extant literature and methodological techniques from both psychiatry, psychology and sociology. Once such technique is the case study method. Because evil is socially undesirable, morally reprehensible, and often illegal we could not study this behavior using traditional methods used baccalaureate theses (e.g. surveys, research study pool). Therefore, we have chosen the case study method chiefly because it affords deep exploration of popular characters who have demonstrated evil acts, but who are not available because of death or imprisonment. We have also chosen the case study method because it allows for deep exploration to understand the psychological complexities of evil behavior.

The present sample consists of four individuals including: Aaron Hernandez, Bernie Madoff, Karla Holmolka, and Grafton Thomas.. In these case studies we will examine what led these people to their evilness and whether we will categorize them as Intentional Evil or Evil by Drive (Berggren, 2017).

Table 1: Summary of Sample

	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Age at Major Incident	SES
Aaron Hernandez	Male	Latino	23	Middle Class

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Bernie Madoff	Male	White	71	Upper Class
Karla Holmolka	Female	White	20	Upper Middle Class
Grafton Thomas	Male	Black	37	Lower Class

Case Study 1: Aaron Hernandez

Childhood Trauma

Aaron Hernandez was a football star who was convicted of the murder of Odin Lloyd on April 15, 2015 (Haislop, 2020). He became interested in football at a young age, and he was always considered gifted. Aaron's father, Dennis Hernandez, whom he was very close with, encouraged this interest with Aaron and his brother Jonathan Hernandez. His father was considered a patriarch in their neighborhood, his nickname amongst everyone being "The King" (Whiteside, 2017). He was also the patriarch of his family and Aaron considered his father to be his motivator. His father died unexpectedly during a hernia surgery in 2006 (Kilgore, 2020). Dennis Hernandez was a dominant force and expected his sons to be the same way. The value of dominance and viewing dominance as advantageous can create antisocial behavior and bullies (Björkqvist, 2008). Dennis Hernandez was also a violent alcoholic and much of his aggression was taken out on Aaron's mother but also on Aaron himself and his brother Jonathan. It is possible that Aaron Hernandez perceived dominance (even to the point of violence) as a valuable trait was part of his childhood socialization and that is what caused him to become violent and murderous. A pathway to evil for Aaron Hernandez was the extreme violence he witnessed in his home. Aaron's brother, Jonathan, writes in his book that their father once repetitively slammed his mother's head against the sink until she lost consciousness (CNN, 2018). Aaron Hernandez

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also exhibited Identification with the Aggressor. In a phone call to his mother, he blames her for how he turned out.

“I was the happiest f-----g little kid in the world, and you f----d me up. And I just lost my father, and I had to go to college. And I had nobody. What the f--- did you think I was going to do, become a perfect angel?” (Bieler, 2020)

Hernandez alludes to the fragmentation of personality (Howell, 2012) that occurs when a person, particularly a young person, suffers trauma alone. The combination of the traumatic event and “emotional aloneness” (Frankel, 2002) causes someone’s personality to adapt to that of the perceived aggressor in an attempt to process the trauma. It is possible that Aaron Hernandez’s violent family life caused him to feel alone and as a result reinforced the antisocial behaviors modeled by his parents as he dealt with it alone.

Another trauma that Hernandez had was an event that happened when he was just 7 years old. In Jonathan Hernandez’s book, he writes about how Aaron and he were playing hide and seek with two older boys, and one of the boys took Aaron into a tent and molested him (CNN, 2018). Along with the feelings of shame that tend to coincide with sexual assault (Feiring & Taska, 2005) Aaron’s homophobic and abusive father continued to exhibit extreme abuse and violence to the point where Aaron may have never got to heal from the assault and could have possibly engendered a fear of men.

Evidence of CTE

There is also the undeniable evidence of severe brain damage due to Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) due to the many head injuries endured in his football career (Kilgore, 2020). CTE’s symptoms are numerous, but are things such as moodiness, depression, and

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dyscontrol of aggression. Aaron Hernandez reported feeling disenchanting by his football career, where even though he was at the peak of his career, with a 40 million dollar contract to the Patriots football team, but did not feel fulfilled because he felt too many demands were put upon him. In a jailhouse phone call, he explains to his mother his dissatisfaction. “You have to find inner peace to be happy,” he told her. “Nothing you do is gonna make you happy. Nothing you get is gonna make you happy. Just like me, like by having money, having everything in the world. I was still miserable. Know what I mean?” (Helling, 2020)

Depression

It is clear that Hernandez has depression. Depression is symptomatic of CTE, as is memory loss, confusion, impaired judgment, impulse control problems, aggression, anxiety, suicidality, Parkinsonism, and, over time, progressive dementia. All of these symptoms, plus the trauma he experienced in his home, predisposed him to commit violent crime. The fact that Aaron Hernandez had such severe CTE means that he was not fully responsible for his crimes because there was less intention and more biological dyscontrol to account for the aggression.

Another factor in Hernandez’s violence was his homosexuality. In the hypermasculine world of football, being homosexual would, at worst, outcast him and subject him to cruelty. The best case is that there would still be whispers and he would be subjected to homophobia. As a football star, where the expectations were high for him to be “manly,” he was even less likely to come out of the closet than others. The publicity on him if he were to come out would have been intense, and many homophobic people would have lashed out and stopped supporting him. In addition, a homophobic late father had already socialized him to be ashamed of being gay, and having to keep a secret from others makes one feel alienated. The alienation he felt from others’

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homophobia could have produced anger within Hernandez, because it was unfair that he had to hide that part of himself. Resentment over being mistreated over something you don't have control over such as homosexuality can produce a type of resentment towards society which encourages antisocial traits.

There is also the factor of social strain with Aaron Hernandez. If society deems that "manly men," and straight men, are more valuable, then that could have produced a strain between Hernandez and society because to him, if he were to feel open up about his sexuality and have a male partner openly, then he could open himself up to the same type of violence his homophobic father exhibited as well as the boy that molested him. Aaron could not feel safe in society and that fostered the lack of connection to others that breeds antisocial behavior, leading to violence. The homophobia that Hernandez was concerned about could explain why he was violent only towards men but not women: though he obviously resented his mother, and his father "modeled" that beating women was okay, Aaron was not known to be abusive to his girlfriend or daughter or others which suggests that he wanted to dominate over men to both hide his homosexuality, and also out of anger towards men for their attitudes towards homosexuals.

Aaron's brother also reported in his book *The Truth About Aaron: My Journey to Understand my Brother* (2018) that Aaron became extremely paranoid, and repetitively said that people were after him or that the FBI was watching him. This could mean that since his CTE was so severe he was nearing the stage of dementia, to where he has a dramatically disadvantaged and disoriented perception of reality. This paranoia and level of delusion may have been what drove him to kill Odin Lloyd, and if we assume that the intense paranoia is because of CTE, then Aaron Hernandez is Evil by Drive.

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Aaron Hernandez's violence was likely caused by 3 factors: 1) need to be dominant that was exacerbated by anxiety regarding his sexuality, 2) identifying with the aggressor in his violent upbringing, and 3) his lack of cognitive functioning that probably drove his paranoia to the point of violence. Aaron Hernandez likely would have not been driven to kill if his brain was not as damaged as it was.

Case Study 2: Bernie Madoff

Narcissism.

Bernie Madoff is an evil person who used his powers of charm and manipulation to get many people, including vulnerable populations like the elderly, to invest in what amounted to the largest scale Ponzi Scheme ever (Fishman, 2011). In Ponzi schemes, it is enacted by one person who manages the new intake of clients and whatever cash flow there may be. Because Ponzi schemes are so centered on one individual, it would be an ideal environment for the Narcissist or Obsessive Compulsive that likes everything to be their way. We believe that Bernie Madoff is a Narcissist and he, to his own admission, has Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Forensic psychologist Steven Norton said that Narcissists are motivated by Ponzi Schemes because "The money comes in, the power comes in and that pushes them."

Another psychologist, Galieti, said "...the pyramid structure of a Ponzi scam means that there can be only one person at the pinnacle — an appealing idea for a narcissist who would just as soon not work invisible frauds inside a big investment bank." (Kluger, 2008)

Narcissists do not like being confined to rules and structures imposed by others, (Kluger, 2008) so the idea of making a large amount of money very quickly, as well as the initial

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amazement and praise coming from investors from the extremely fast pay off, is intoxicating for the narcissist who enjoys the praise and gratitude while also sadistically enjoying the act of fooling another person (Kluger, 2008). Fooling another person is an act of dominance, by earning someone's trust you receive validation that you have a trustworthy "good" personality and are likeable, and if you can trick a capable (or maybe not) person then your intelligence gets an ego boost as well.

Madoff's family confirms his manipulative skills. His son Andrew once said to a friend:

"My father had a way of winning you or imposing his will that sometimes felt good and sometimes didn't, but it was undeniable," (Fishman, 2011)

Madoff had a narcissistic way of interacting with his family members and people in his workplace. He pressured his son Andrew, who wanted to set off on his own separate business, into staying in this Ponzi scheme that was destined to hit the fan eventually. Self serving, at the expense of others, even his own blood, is the pinnacle of narcissism.

"To Andrew, his father deployed his special mix of love and bullying. Some of it was good-natured cajoling, flattery so subtle he realized it only in hindsight, some of it as direct as an offer of money." (Fishman, 2011)

Madoff also alleged himself that he has obsessive compulsive tendencies. He told NYMAG (2011), "I definitely have obsessive-compulsive tendencies," he said; everyone remembered him on his knees, straightening the venetian blinds. This attention to detail, along with his obvious narcissism, was a recipe for success but also perfect for exploiting others.

Exploitation of the Vulnerable

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Madoff had a lot of seniors that subscribed to what he was talking about. He talked a big game and he seemingly was living up to people's expectations, which is why his Ponzi Scheme lasted for a decade. "... it was said that Madoff insinuated himself into the sympathies of wealthy, often older people, the better to fleece them" (Fishman, 2011). He was manipulative enough to gain then exploit people's trust, a prime trait of Dark Triad personalities (Whitbourne, 2013). In addition, he audaciously blamed his victims for trusting him and seems to justify his behavior and admitted he knew he was being fraudulent in a quote to NYMAG (2011) where he said he "waved red flags, issued caveats that should have been obvious to even an unsophisticated investor." (Fishman, 2011) Here, Madoff tells us himself of his evilness. He shows a lack of remorse and insinuates that people should have known, and that it was their fault for trusting him. This absolves him of having to feel remorse. This is also typical of an evil person, and also someone high in dark triad traits. Lack of empathy and abusive tendencies is a common trait in those high in dark triad personality traits (Whitbourne, 2013) and is the reason that these mental illnesses are associated with evil. Bernie Madoff also had no significant traumatic event we know of- it was pure narcissism that drove his evil.

We equate evil with different types of abuse practiced habitually and with awareness, and without remorse (defined as the guilt of one's actions and desire to change). This makes Bernie Madoff Intentionally Evil, because he did evil things within his Ponzi scheme for over a decade, where at any point he could have called it quits. He made evil a habit and through practice, it became a part of his personality as a result of the betrayal of thousands of investors and his own family.

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Case Study 3 : Karla Holmolka

Karla Holmolka was born to Dorothy and Karel Holmolka in Ontario. Holmolka worked at a veterinary clinic which she later stole drugs from to commit her crimes. Holmolka met her husband, Paul Bernardo, at a restaurant near where they both attended a pet convention and the two hit it off immediately. In Canada at the time, the age of consent was 14 and Holmolka was 17 and Bernardo was 23 (Blanco, n.d.). They dated for a few months that October and Bernardo proposed to her in December. Bernardo began spending large amounts of time at Holmolka's home with her family and would flirt with her sister, Tammy, constantly. It was during this relationship that Holmolka seemed to descend into violence, encouraging and facilitating her new husband's deviant advances on her younger sister. It began with allowing him to peep into her room, and masturbating in her room while she slept. Holmolka even broke the blinds in Tammy's window to give Bernardo access (Blanco, n.d.). It would appear that Karla, still a teenager, was still experimenting with socially deviant actions as a way to individualize (Arnett, 2000) but that Paul inspired her to become increasingly violent.

Turning Point of Evil

The two of them facilitated Tammy's rape. Holmolka stole Valium from the veterinary clinic she worked at and put it in Tammy's drinks to "give" Paul her virginity for Christmas. When Tammy lost consciousness, Paul Bernardo raped her while Karla watched and video taped it. However, Tammy started vomiting and then died and Holmolka still showed no remorse. In fact, in the next couple days, they took a video in Tammy's room of Karla wearing her dead sister's clothes, holding her stuffed animals pretending to be Tammy and professing to have "liked" the rape. (Brown, 1995; Pron, 2005)

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Karla Holmolka is a perfect example of a person that was likely in the middle of the continuum of evilness to begin with- she has no reported history of violence prior to becoming involved with Paul Bernardo. She said of the rape of Tammy: "I thought it would be a onetime thing, that nobody would get hurt and it would be over," (Brown, 1995) and this shows that she justified evil, and did not see the rape of her sister as anyone "getting hurt". It also suggests, if she did not see Tammy's rape as wrong, then that she did not really see the future rapes and murders of Leslie Mahaffey and Kristin French as "wrong" either. And perhaps if she did not see rape as wrong then perhaps she did not see murder and torture to be particularly wrong either, maybe just more than she originally planned on doing. Holmolka had no remorse over killing her own sister, had no justification for it (such as self defense or being forced) and not only visibly appeared to enjoy every rape, but there is no evidence to show she took any actions to stop Bernardo or help the girls if he *was* forcing her (Pron, 2005). Karla Holmolka could have taken different steps to prevent Paul from killing that would have given her adequate protection if she really was so afraid, a claim bolstered by the fact that Holmolka's high IQ places her in the top 2% of the population (Brown, 1995). This means her mind was fully capable not only of getting away from Bernardo and helping the girls, but capable of comprehending the heinousness of the crimes lucidly. Instead, she appeared to be manipulative and painted herself as her husband's victim- claiming she went along with whatever he said and that he scared her. He, in fact, was the Scarborough Rapist, who raped or attempted to rape up to 24 women (Butts, 2018). Karla knew this and continued enabling him and acting in the same crimes, two things she could have avoided especially if she was fearful (Dimuro, 2020). It is possible he scared her considering he beat her before, but she never showed any reluctance to commit evil on the tapes, which would

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be very difficult to hide so well if one was actually that scared and remorseful. Paul Bernardo's lawyer watched the tapes that Bernardo and Holmolka made of them raping and torturing other girls, Leslie Mahaffey and Kristen French, and was left shaken. "This wasn't a lady who had been subjugated. She was happy, compliant, suggestive and willing [...] Nothing on the tapes struck me that she was being dominated or coerced" (Makin, 2018). In the tapes, Holmolka did not seem frightened or apprehensive, and for a regular person, more than likely, they would not be able to conceal their fear and guilt over hurting and raping another human, even if they felt they were "forced" by their abusive husband.

Holmolka only agreed to testify against Paul when he got arrested if she got immunity from the prosecution, and videos of her acting as a willing participant that showed no trepidation towards murder were withheld by Bernardo's lawyer for 17 months- by the time he handed them to authorities Holmolka had already accepted her plea deal. Blaming her actions on Paul, she was able to get off and now lives happily in a Canadian suburb with her children and husband. Karla Holmolka is Intentionally Evil because she not only watched and facilitated evil, but she participated in the utmost evil actions of rape, murder, and torture and manipulated the situation so she looked like a victim. Even if she was identifying with the aggressor, she was able to carry out evil actions when there were other choices she could have made that would have prevented the cruelty from taking place at all.

Case Study 4: Grafton Thomas

Grafton Thomas is known widely as an antisemite who stormed the home of a rabbi on Hanukkah in Monsey, New York, wielding a machete and injuring 5 people (Gold & Weiser,

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2019). Those who knew Grafton Thomas were shocked to hear of his violence as he had had Jewish friends growing up and was a “Shabbos Goy,” which means he performed tasks for Jewish neighbors that they could not do themselves like turning off lights on the weekly Friday holiday, Shabbat (Mongelli & Golding, 2020). He grew up in housing projects, but had a strict mother who made it a point to not allow him in the streets. His social life was allegedly composed of him and his friends at his house playing video games and as a teenager he drank beer and smoked marijuana. He was a good student who got along with others, and was in a gifted program as a child and was class president in high school. Thomas’s strict mother was considered respectable and moral, her neighbors recalling that she made sure her home was educated on and tolerant of all cultures. Grafton Thomas was never known to be violent in his life up until his Paranoid Schizophrenia diagnosis that is comorbid with a Bipolar diagnosis and Depression (Mongelli & Golding 2020).

Childhood Trauma and Mental Health

Grafton Thomas’s mental illness is so severe that the forensic psychologist that evaluated him, Dr. Andrew Levin, said that while Thomas does understand “the nature of the charges”, he is not mentally fit enough to proceed in the criminal case because “he is unable to coherently narrate events” that night in Monsey (Bandler, 2020). Grafton’s mother, Kim Thomas, says that Grafton never received mental health care, though she tried to help him get committed to a mental health clinic after his episode where he was charged with menacing a cop because he was in a psychotic episode and would not put down his knife. This was then followed by his schizophrenia diagnosis. He never got sufficient help with his mental health and when his mother visited him in jail she said “Mommy loves you, I am going to do everything I can to help.” and

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Thomas replied “We thank you”, alluding to the voices that were in his head. She also said that she can tell when his mental illnesses flare up because he stops finishing his sentences, (Mongelli & Golding, 2020) as disorganized speech is a characteristic of paranoid schizophrenia. At the time of the crime, Grafton was not on his medication from October 2019 up until the attack in December (Brum et al, 2020). His decision to not take Latuda made his delusions and psychosis much worse. Thomas, diagnosed with Paranoid Schizophrenia in his 20s, has been hospitalized several times and hears voices in his head that are “commanding or threatening” (Bandler, 2020). He had some childhood trauma from sexual abuse when he was 10 that left him feeling “angry and ashamed” but his mother said that he was able to resume normal functioning with the help of counseling. Later on, he enrolled in William Paterson University but dropped out due to his low academic performance. Allegedly, he was playing more football and smoking marijuana more than he was doing schoolwork. Afterwards Thomas’s self care began drastically diminishing. His mother observed that he became more withdrawn and had difficulty concentrating. He had a job at a perfume company and in 2008 went to Utah to see his father who rejected him and he became homeless. The rejection from his father as well as homelessness was 2 traumatic events that happened one right after the other, along with whatever Thomas might have witnessed while he was living on the streets. Thomas did not get diagnosed with schizophrenia until 2018, and the Monsey incident happened in 2019, so Thomas was also still learning to live with and manage his Schizophrenia diagnosis during the year before the Monsey attack (Bandler, 2020).

Biological Factors

Along with Thomas’s emotional trauma he had some injuries that may have made him biologically vulnerable to poor decision making, he had multiple head injuries occurring before

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his 20s, such as an incident where he fell out of a two story window as a young child, though he did not lose consciousness. He did, however, lose consciousness in multiple other instances when he was 13, while he was playing football or soccer, and another time after a car accident. (Bandler, 2020).

Due to his psychosis, we can consider Grafton Thomas more in the evil-by-drive category because it is likely that if Thomas had either been on his medication or not been psychotic that he never would have committed such a violent act. If evil had been a part of his personality within his control (intentional) then he probably would have had a history of violence before his diagnosis. His only instances of violence occurred during psychotic episodes and never before that in the decade since he's been diagnosed. So despite the heinousness of the crime we cannot consider him an evil human being because of his psychosis that limited his ability to see right from wrong. Another factor is his multiple instances of head trauma. Because of this, we cannot be sure he does not have brain damage because there has not been a written indication of any cognitive deficits associated with the accidents. But the chance of his decision making or other cognitive functions being impaired is still possible and is another factor that causes Grafton Thomas to be Evil by Drive. Grafton Thomas likely would have never been a violent person if it was not for his Schizophrenia and other comorbid disorders that made him unable to reason, and violence nor antisocial behavior was part of his personality throughout his life prior to his diagnosis so it is best to assume that Thomas belongs in the Evil by Drive category due to his lack of intention towards evil and the fact that his personality was never evil. He was declared mentally unfit for trial (Lieberman, 2020), and the reason we can consider Thomas as evil by drive is for the same reason one can plead not guilty by reason of insanity- the dyscontrol and

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inability to see reality and to know right from wrong during psychosis is why we legally do not hold very mentally ill people culpable like we do others.

Discussion

We aimed to determine how a person can become evil and what makes one person's actions more or less evil than another. We found that evil personalities and actions can be separated into two categories: Evil by drive, and Intentional Evil. Evil stems from a desire to dominate an individual, and this need is projected onto others when one "Identifies with the aggressor". Evil happens when someone considers an antisocial behavior as more advantageous (Björkqvist, 1982) than a prosocial behavior, enabling them to justify evil and continue doing it, making it a habit and a part of their personality. Evil is ultimately rooted in learned behavior. The main factor that separates evil is the degree of intention to commit evil. Intentional Evil is where you know something is morally wrong, but do not care if it hurts someone because it benefits you. Or sometimes it is pure sadism- just a desire to dominate and cause harm but not for a particular reason. Bernie Madoff had no reported traumatic events or experiences of abuse nor a brain injury, which indicates that his actions were purely malicious and self-serving, so he is Intentionally Evil. Karla Holmolka, a female serial rapist, is also intentionally evil because of her sadism even though she also was identifying with her aggressor, Paul Bernardo. The other two case studies, Grafton Thomas, a Schizophrenic, and Aaron Hernandez who had CTE, were both put in the Evil by Drive category. Hernandez and Thomas, because of their physical disadvantages, lacked the ability to reason and "know better," so they are in the Evil by Drive

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category. Philip Zimbardo's quote “Knowing better, but doing worse” is the qualifier we used to place each case study into the categories of Intentional Evil and Evil by Drive.

Sadistic Personalities. We found that there are those who have not been abused or traumatized, and do not have biological vulnerabilities driving them to commit evil. There are others who are simply “sadistic personalities”, and these people may have not experienced traumatizing situations where they were a victim that led them to identify with the aggressor, but instead they made the decision on their own to benefit themselves or make themselves feel good. We found that this is rooted in the desire for dominance and a self serving attitude. The example of Bernie Madoff stands to show as an example of a man who had no biological explanations for his evil nor any trauma to hear of. In other situations, there are people like Karla Holmolka who do identify with their aggressor, but also have a sadistic personality (possibly as a result of that abuse) that desires to do harm.

Identification with the Aggressor. If not biological, evil can stem from identification with the aggressor such as violence in the home. A person may be unconsciously identifying with the aggressor rather than having a sadistic personality or true desire to harm others. In the case of Karla Holmolka, we found that she was Intentionally Evil, identified with her aggressor, and also had a Sadistic personality that drove her to evil. Her abusive husband Paul Bernardo modeled abusive behavior to her that she did not see in her home, and we found that Karla Holmolka identified with Paul Bernardo’s outwardly aggressive and sadistic personality. She had no history of violence before becoming involved with Paul Bernardo and committed no known violent crimes since getting out of prison, showing that her violent relationship with Paul

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Bernardo inspired her to act on antisocial behaviors (that may not have otherwise come out in the way they did) through her identification with him during her own abuse. However, Karla Holmolka was not forced to commit her evil crimes and she clearly derived pleasure from her crimes, so she is in the Intentional Evil category due to her sadistic personality. If she were to have the absence of pleasure or desire to be evil despite being victimized by her abuser, it means that she would be lower on the continuum than someone who gets pleasure out of others' misery, even if it is rooted in identification with the aggressor.

Implications

The implications of this body of work is to work with individuals to predict offending and antisocial behavior and to prevent offending and antisocial behavior from reoccurring. If we have a more informed view on the etiology of negative outcomes on people's personalities, we can devise better ways to help them. In a correctional setting, we could figure out if the behavior stems from Identification with the Aggressor or trauma, pure desire for dominance that is absent of significant trauma, socialization issues or a combination of these, and then apply therapeutic techniques as it suits the individual. In the example of Aaron Hernandez, one would identify his social strain relating to being gay, then examine the disconnection from society that inspired antisocial behavior towards other men. This would be the sociological perspective that segways into psychopathology. From there, we would look at his Identification with the Aggressor based off of his violent home life during his childhood. Finally, we would examine the CTE that degenerated his brain in the frontal lobe and account for this degeneration, and lack of impulse control as a result, when we consider his actions in a therapeutic setting. It is not uncommon for

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offenders like Aaron Hernandez to have brain abnormalities that may have something to do with their actions separate from a violent personality. Studies have shown that criminal offenders exhibit a higher prevalence of PTSD (and associated symptoms) than the general population (Ardino, 2012) and can tend to have a less functional frontal lobe than non offenders. (Pontius & Yudowitz, 1980) With that in mind, we could educate inmates on the parts of the brain necessary for decision making and impulse control like the frontal lobe and can survey them to inquire if they may have had head injuries. With proper funding, we could scan the brains of inmates at their request to see if they have any abnormalities and can follow up with therapy to figure out whether they believe their crimes were committed more so because of their personalities (an Intentional Crime), meaning that the individual, for some reason, felt they had to assert dominance over someone or over a situation. Then we would investigate whether they were acting from a place of trauma or sadism. The therapeutic approach as it follows would work on the root of the sadism or trauma, and help to heal trauma if there was any. If instead it was a reaction from socialization, such as if the offender was socialized to be racist, then the therapeutic approach would be to rehabilitate and re teach new values to the offender. If the offender is not sure why they did what they did and suppose that it might have to do more so with an abnormality found in the brain scan then we would call it a Crime by Drive. Another example of a Crime by drive is the example of a crime where someone is insane and cannot perceive reality and is not guilty by reasons of insanity. Regardless of the category the crime is put in, with this approach we will be better informed to stop recurring crime and prevent future crime with better therapeutic methods. Punishment and incarceration will still be necessary, but the understanding and compassion combined with the desire to get to the bottom of the antisocial

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behavior rather than seeing it one dimensionally will better prevent and change antisocial behaviors. While there are some people who have had significant trauma, violent home lives, or other traumatic events that led them to see antisocial behaviors as a way to stay safe or get what they want, there are some people, who, without having abusive or volatile family lives, may learn in another way to assert dominance over another using force or abuse. These different types of people can all be worked with in a therapeutic setting to teach them the advantages of prosocial versus antisocial behavior.

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