useful analysis and appraisal of these survey findings in the context of broader cross-cultural research.

Case 2 Employee commitment: on becoming a torturer

Introduction

What kind of person becomes a torturer? For many people it would seem obvious that only psychopaths and cranks would wish to pursue such a career. Yet, torture is currently practised by one government in three and these governments experience little or no difficulty in recruiting torturers.[1] Are there really sufficient numbers of sadists ready, able and willing to take on such a job, or are there other factors which contribute to the creation of a torturer?

There is no hard evidence that torturers are psychopaths or sadists. On the contrary, there is evidence that such people are usually screened out during the selection and recruitment process.[2] Thus, to some extent at least, torturers are selected and recruited from ordinary people:

> A deranged person who receives gratification primarily from feelings of power or from personally inflicting pain on others is usually too unreliable to be counted on by authorities to follow orders.[3]

Whilst evidence from studies of torturers is scanty and may be unreliable, that which is available suggests that torturers are ordinary people behaving in extraordinary ways and using familiar psychological mechanisms to justify their behaviour.[4] In other words, there is little evidence that torturers differ markedly from their peers at the time when they are recruited and trained as torturers.

Based on his studies of torturers employed by the State during the 1967–74 military dictatorship of Greece, the psychologist Haritos-Fatoutos argues that three situational factors foster the creation of a torturer, namely: training, incremental participation and socialisation, and economic and symbolic reward.[5]

Note that, with the widespread interest amongst contemporary writers on organisational behaviour in the management of meaning – particularly the creation and maintenance of specific organisational cultures – these three factors (not, of course, their content) are common to many management

development and employee socialisation programmes in large business organisations.[6]

Training

The first phase of training involves group bonding and isolation from the outside world. In the case of torture, this is achieved by placing recruits in remote training camps and putting them through numerous initiation rites. These include psychological and physical assault and humiliation in order to make recruits more submissive and to get them accustomed to violence. Recipients of such brutality are rarely capable of logical evaluation and their isolation from family and friends (and hence from the mores and values of the outside world) encourages an acceptance of the new moral standards established by the trainers.

Haritos-Fatoutos describes how the use of euphemisms by the trainers helped Greek recruits reinterpret their behaviour. For example, 'tea party' referred to a beating with fists and 'tea party with toast' described a beating with heavy wooden clubs. The use of such euphemistic language is, of course, common practice in organisations to put a gloss on unpleasant reality – from the Nazi Party's 'Final Solution', through the CIA's 'executive action', to the 'downsizing' and 'rationalisation' of contemporary business organisations.

Training also requires the recruit to develop a world view that divides people into the torturable and the non-torturable. Through a programme of seminars the recruit comes to believe that the act of torture is a defence of 'good' values against the 'bad' values espoused by the tortured. The latter are viewed as less than human whilst the recruits are seen as guardians of law, order and common decency. Recruits are trained to be loyal not only to the state but to the organisation, which is semi-secret and will protect them:

> Thus they are brutalised, separated from anyone who might remind them of the morality of the outside world, and fed propaganda about the sub-human status of the enemies of the state. In addition, they are assured that they will not have to take personal responsibility for their action. All this makes it possible to induce in recruits the moral shift that is a prerequisite if they are to torture prisoners.[7]

Incremental socialisation

Such a moral shift, or disengagement, is made easier by the gradual introduction of the recruit to the brutal act of torture. A typical process of

incremental socialisation and desensitisation goes through the following chronological sequence:

1. Recruits act as guards while others carry out torture.
2. Recruits carry food to the prisoners in their cells.
3. Recruits are ordered to deliver a short beating to the prisoners.
4. Recruits supervise prisoners during prolonged forced standing.
5. Recruits participate fully in torture.

Hence the recruit is pulled inexorably into the torturing process. Having gone through the first two or three steps in the socialisation process recruits find it very difficult to protest about the use of full torture as they have been corrupted by tacit acceptance of earlier (less extreme) examples of torture.

Reward

Once fully socialised, obedient torturers benefit in both symbolic and economic ways. Training fosters in-group bias. The findings of numerous social psychological studies suggests that participation in strenuous initiation rites makes group membership more desirable.[8] Torturers are always encouraged to see themselves as an elite group. Indeed, few of them openly disclose any information concerning their work or even the nature of their employment to members of out-groups. This secrecy increases the torturers' strong identification with colleagues and conformity to the will of the in-group. In addition to the symbolic value of elite group membership, this process also serves to increase prejudice against out-groups (i.e. the prisoners) to the extent that torturers tend to believe that their victims (even children) have in some way deserved their fate.[9]

Finally, Haritos-Fatoutos' research reveals that Greek torturers received economic rewards including free meals in tavernas and guarantees of employment after military service.

Issues to consider

- Despite such training and indoctrination, torturers often suffer intense stress and must find ways to justify their behaviour in order to reduce the cognitive dissonance their work creates.[10]