2020

Confronting the Shadow: Psychoanalytic Accounts of Adolf Hitler and the Belief in Pure Evil

Angelica Jones
University of Maine at Farmington

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umf.maine.edu/honors_theses

Confronting the Shadow: Psychoanalytic Accounts of Adolf Hitler and

the Belief in Pure Evil

Angelica Jones

Honors Thesis

Advisor: Dr. Steven Quackenbush

University of Maine, Farmington

In 2002, CBS announced their plans to release a miniseries about Adolf Hitler before he became the ruthless Fuehrer. At the time, most films told the story of Hitler after he had achieved power and portrayed him as an evil dictator. This series planned to focus on the trials and tribulations of a much younger Hitler, long before he had clear political ambitions. This was a Hilter that an ordinary person might identify with: *an unhappy child, a disgruntled teeanger*, and *a young man struggling to find his place in the world.*   The planned series stirred up a great deal of controversy, as critics feared it would cause younger audience members to sympathize with Hitler. According to one critic, Abraham Foxman, "Why the need or the desire to make this monster human? The judgment of history is that he was evil, that he was responsible for millions of deaths. Why trivialize that judgment of history by focusing on his childhood and adolescence? Have we run out of subjects to focus on?" (Weinraub, 2002, para. 2). Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, was also concerned about a series that mainly focused on Hitler's early life. According to Rabbi Hier, "It's telling only half of a terrible story. Teenagers may watch the young Hitler and say he just needed more guidance and attention, he wasn't that bad, if he only had a better home life. It creates a kind of sympathy and new attitude toward Hitler" (Weinraub, 2002, para. 8). The script, which was initially based on a biography by Ian Kershaw, was eventually changed. Scenes showing Hitler's childhood were shortened, and an epilogue was added documenting the destruction he caused (Keveney, 2003).

The miniseries, *Hitler: The Rise of Evil.* was finally released in May 2003. The series follows Hitler's rise to power, and also focuses on the lives of some of the people who stood against him. It does not ignore the childhood of Hitler, but it effectively depicts him as a rather strange child. A later scene shows Hitler as a young adult beating a dog he adopted during

World War I for disobeying him. In the series, Hitler is cruel toward the people around him,

including his niece Geli Raubal and his later wife Eva Braun. In other words, he is portrayed as

odd, selfish or cruel from the beginning to the end of the movie.

Although the finished series ended up being different from what was originally planned,

the producers still believed it was important to present Hitler in a realistic manner. According to

the president of the Alliance Atlantis Entertainment Group, Peter Sussman, "The devil doesn't

always come with horns or spewing fire. Evil isn't always easily recognizable. Sure there were

people who believed in Hitler and thought he was appealing. And that's the worst kind of evil"

(Weinraub, 2002, para. 15). Even after the script was changed, some critics were still concerned

that audience members would sympathize with Hitler due to the way he was portrayed in the

series.   And yet others were bothered by the fact that the miniseries failed to vividly portray

Hitler as the Evil man he clearly was. The film limits itself to Hitler's youth and subsequent rise

to power (through 1934). One critic goes so far as to condemn the writers for using *prose* (just

before the closing credits) to document Hitler's future atrocities:

> *Most pointlessly of all, this Rise stops abruptly at the mid-1930s. Yet knowing that the*
>
> *historical worst is yet to come, the producers run long closing text notes about*
>
> *concentration camps and gas chambers. It's as if they thought, Well, we're obviously*
>
> *such hacks we can't tell this story visually, so we'll save the really horrific stuff for some*
>
> *prose that will make us look solemn and thoughtful* (Tucker, 2003, para. 6, italics added).

To be sure, it is possible to lay out a relatively uncontroversial chronology of Hitler's life from

childhood to adulthood. Originally from Austria, Adolf Hitler moved to Vienna after the death

of his mother and gradually became interested in politics. In 1913, he moved to Munich and

joined the army soon after the start of World War I. He was injured during the Battle of Ypres

and was sent to a hospital to recover. A month later, he was notified of Germany's defeat in

World War I. He and many other Germans believed that the defeat was attributable to traitors at

home ("Adolf Hitler," n.d.).

Hitler returned to Munich in 1918 and joined the Germans Workers' Party (later renamed

the Socialist German Workers Party or Nazi Party), and became their most active orator. Hitler

led the party to believe that propaganda was the only way to bring nationalism to the public. As

his support grew, he ran against Paul von Hindenburg for president in 1932. He lost the election

but became chancellor. The following year, the Enabling Act was passed as a result of a fire at

Germany's parliament building. The act gave full powers to Hitler, who shortly thereafter began

his quest to expand Germany. In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws were passed, which deprived Jews

of their German citizenship, and made it illegal to marry individuals of "German or related

blood." As the persecution of Jews increased in Germany, Hitler built alliances with Japan and

Italy, and began his invasion of Western Europe; he annexed Austria and gained control of

Czechoslovakia. Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Poland, and most of France were under Hitler's

control between the years of 1938 and 1945. After the Nazi's failed attempts at taking

over the Soviet Union, they were defeated by the Allies in 1945. Hitler, along with his wife Eva

Braun, committed suicide on April 30, 1945 (Schramm, 1971).

During World War II, General William Donovan from the U.S. Office of Strategic

Services (OSS) recruited experts to "gather, analyze, and disseminate information from foreign

sources" (Hoffman, 1992, p. 265). A number of psychologists employed by the OSS gathered

information about Nazism and Adolf Hitler. Walter C. Langer, along with Ernst Kris, Bertram

Lewin, and Henry Murray, began working on a project to analyze Hitler's personality. Langer

personally interviewed people who had come into close contact with Hitler and used Hitler's

book, *Mein Kampf*, as the foundation for an in-depth study. Henry Murray eventually withdrew

from the project and initiated his own study of Hitler several months later. In 1943, Walter C.

Langer finished his secret psychological report on Hitler and presented it to the OSS. The study

was unavailable to the public until 1972, when Langer decided to publish it (Hoffman, 1992).

Langer states that Hiter's personality structure is similar to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. That

is, he can switch personalities at any given moment. One of his personalities is the "Fuehrer,"

who comes up with plans, gives speeches, and ignores all moral and ethical principles. His

actual personality, "Hitler," is lazy, awkward, and unable to lead. According to Langer, his

Fuehrer personality is a "grossly exaggerated and distorted conception of masculinity as Hitler

conceives it," which is a trait that is common among psychopaths (Langer, 1972, p. 130). What

makes Hitler dangerous, however, is that he is able to convince millions of people, himself

included, that the Fuehrer personality is his actual self. Langer believes that Hitler searched for a

male figure to look up to, since he was not able to look up to his own father. This is evident in

the way he speaks to authority figures, calling them by their full titles and being submissive in

their presence. It is as if he is searching for a superman-like figure, and as soon as the person he

looks up to shows signs of weakness, the person is deposed from the pedestal Hitler placed them

on. In the end, Hitler realized that he needed to become this superman-like figure himself, since

he was unable to find someone who met these criteria (Langer, 1972).

Henry Murray's analysis (also commissioned by the O.S.S.) is similar to Langer's and

includes virtually identical predictions regarding Hitler's future behavior. However, Murray

focuses more than does Langer on the problem of dealing with the legacy of Adolph Hitler after the war. Murray labeled Hitler a paranoid schizophrenic, but stresses that Hitler was able to control his hysteria, using it to manipulate the Germans. Murray believes that Hitler's personality was an example of a "counteractive type," where a person's main goal is to overcome their weaknesses and become, in the mind of the counteractive personality, their ideal self. According to Murray, Hitler's need for dominance and superiority, as well as his admiration for those with power, stemmed from his own feelings of inferiority and rejection. Murray fears that Hitler would continue to be a tragic hero in the minds of the German people unless their beliefs about Hitler were challenged. As such, Murray recommends that Hitler be admitted into an asylum for the mentally ill if he were to be captured. This would more effectively destroy his image than if he were executed by the allies. On the other hand, this would merely leave a void in the hearts of the German people. So, Murray stresses the importance of providing the Germans with an alternative ideal figure. The long term goal is to move the German people away from fascism and toward Western Democracy (Murray, 2004).

General Donovan also asked the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson to examine the behavior of German Nazis. In 1942, Erikson completed a study entitled *On Nazi Mentality*. In 1950, this study was published in what became his most frequently-cited book, *Childhood and Society*. In his essay, Erikson discussed the main reasons Nazism appealed to Germans in the 1930s. According to Erikson, many German fathers were actually quite similar to Hitler's father. As such, the German people began to identify with Hitler's rebellious tendencies and implicit struggle with a father who could be quite strict and controlling. In other words, they accepted

him simply because they were able to relate to him. Hitler was thus able to exploit this sense of communion to attract the German people to his cause (Erikson, 1950).

One feature common among these psychoanalytic accounts of Hitler's personality is that they render him comprehensible. Whether right or wrong, they can be read as the beginning of an attempt to interpret Hitler utilizing the same theoretical concepts (defense mechanisms, conflict with authority, etc.) that can be used to make sense of virtually anyone else.   Another noteworthy feature of these psychoanalytic accounts is that they were all completed before the world found out about most of his atrocities. While more recent analyses may shed additional light on Hitler's behavior, the early analysis of Langer, Murray, and Erikson are relatively free of the "Evil Hitler" myth that eventually emerged in popular culture.

In the first section of this thesis, these early psychoanalytic accounts of Hitler's development will be considered in depth. Specifically, I will elaborate more fully on the case studies of Hitler prepared by Langer and Murray, as well as Erik Erikson's analysis of German fascism. In the second section, I will proceed to discuss "Pure Evil" as an alternative explanation for human misbehavior, including the malevolence of Hitler.   I will then describe an original study that considers the role played by a Belief in Pure Evil (BPE) in college students' response to (a) a proposed miniseries that presumably humanizes Hitler, and (b) various psychological accounts of Hitler's development. Paradoxically, appeals to Evil as an explanatory construct may obscure awareness of the very conditions that allow Evil to flourish.

Langer's Analysis of Adolf Hitler

Psychoanalysts Walter C. Langer, Ernst Kris, Bertram Lewin, and Henry Murray collaborated on a project to analyze Hitler's personality. Langer was the principal investigator of

the research and personally interviewed people who had come into close contact with Hitler and used Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, as the foundation for an in-depth study. Langer starts the analysis by pointing out that the world underestimated Hitler. Langer claims that labeling Hitler as a "madman" may have been beneficial initially, since this label suggested that he need not be taken seriously. According to Langer, this "naive view" was partially responsible for World War II.

Furthermore, Langer states that Hitler was not the only one to blame for the war. "It was not only Hitler the madman who created German madness, but German madness that created Hitler" (Langer, 1972, p. 138). In fact, Langer believes that many Germans realized that the path their leader was taking would eventually lead to destruction, but they continued to follow him. Therefore, Langer believes that Hitler is not a "personal devil," but rather "the expression of a state of mind existing in millions of people" (Langer, 1972, p. 138). For that reason, it would not be enough to simply remove Hitler. That would be the necessary first step, but it would also be essential to treat the "underlying disease." In effect, Hitler and his followers are two sides of the same coin.

Similar to other "psychopaths," Hitler had an unstable home life and did not have a father figure to look up to. To the outside world, Hitler's father, Alois Hitler, appeared to be a respectable man and a "faithful civil servant," (Mein Kampf, as cited in Langer, 1972, p. 142). At home, Alois Hitler was abusive toward his family. Therefore, Adolf found himself confused and was not sure who to identify himself with. He began to search for powerful father-like figures outside the home. He placed these men on a pedestal, but as soon as he learned of their

shortcomings or "weaknesses" he was disappointed, and ended up deposing them from the pedestal.

Langer believes Hitler spent his whole life looking for the perfect "hero" to look up to, but always ended up disappointed. It is also interesting to note that he insisted upon addressing these powerful individuals by their full titles, which is something his father demanded of his children. His father wanted to be addressed by his full title as well. For himself, Adolf Hitler chose the title "Fuehrer" because he spent his whole life looking for the perfect, powerful father figure, but was unable to find him until he discovered it in himself. His goal then, became to take on this role for the German people. Their willingness to submit to him suggests that they were similarly searching for a powerful father figure. Langer also states that the father in the typical German family was similar to Hitler's own father, which helps explain why their needs echoed those of Hitler.

On Langer's reading, Hitler had a strong bond with his mother, Klara Hitler. Since she had lost children before Adolf, she paid special attention to him and even spoiled him. Adolf Hitler was fond of his mother, but his father would "intrude and disrupt the happy relationship" (Langer, 1972, p. 150). In Langer's view, there is evidence to suggest that Adolf Hitler developed an Oedipus complex. Langer was clearly inspired here by the work of Sigmund Freud, a psychoanalyst who believed that boys between the ages of three and five develop sexual feelings for their mothers. As a result, the father becomes a rival and the child feels as if he has to compete with his father for his mother's love. This is the original Oedipal triangle.

According to Freud, the child should eventually be able to repress these feelings of love for his mother and identify with his father. In Adolf Hitler's case, the Oedipal triangle became

more complex. He developed feelings of resentment toward his father for demanding his

mother's attention, yet he also resented his mother for so readily submitting to his father, and

failing to be the sort of mother that he needed. As such, there was profound ambivalence toward

his mother from the very beginning. His view of women was affected by this dynamic. He

eventually lost respect for women and regarded them as "seductresses responsible for men's

downfall" (Langer, 1972, p. 152).

From a young age, he felt alone in a hostile world and felt that he could not trust anyone.

He never developed close friendships and was often distant with women. Hitler fixated instead

on Germany, the true love of his life.   Germany, he knew in his heart, would not disappoint him

as his actual mother did.

Unconsciously, the feelings he had developed toward his mother began to transfer over to

Germany. According to Langer (1972), "Germany, like his mother, was young and vigorous and

held the promise of a great future under suitable circumstances. Furthermore, he felt shut off

from Germany as he now felt shut off from his mother, even though he secretly wished to be

with her" (p. 153). Germany, then, became a symbol of his ideal mother. Langer points out that

while most Germans refer to Germany as the "Fatherland," Hitler refers to it as the

"Motherland." Austria, on the other hand, symbolized his father and Hitler transferred his

feelings of hatred toward Austria. By projecting his feelings toward his mother and father onto

Germany and Austria, respectively, Hitler was able to reveal his true feelings toward his parents

without directly referring to them. Therefore, he was trying to solve his personal conflicts by

correcting the "injustices of his childhood" (Langer, 1972, p. 154).

Hitler saw an opportunity to fight for his ideal mother when the war broke out. He would be able to publicly declare his love for her and "advocate the death of his father" (Langer, 1972, p. 178). Hitler would also be able to prove his "manhood" and finally be accepted by his mother. It is possible that this is the reason he enlisted in the German army rather than the Austrian army. By being an obedient soldier, he was able to prove himself to his ideal mother. However, when he realized Germany was losing the war, it was as if someone was degrading his mother. He reacted in a hysterical manner when he learned of Germany's defeat. Langer believes that Germany's loss made Hitler feel weak, since he was unable to defend his ideal mother.

When he received the news of Germany's defeat, Hitler was in the hospital suffering from hysterical blindness, at least according to the attending physician. This is a form of blindness attributable to emotional stress rather than some organic cause. Interestingly, it was in this hospital that Hitler had a vision that he was chosen to carry out a mission to "liberate" the Germans.

Langer claims that most children believe they are special and destined to do great things, but develop a more realistic sense of self as they grow older. Hitler too began life with a sense of his own privileged status. After all, Hitler's mother had lost children prior to his birth. Adolf survived, which suggested that he was somehow protected at the expense of his departed siblings. This sense of specialness was further strengthened when he lost his brother who was born after him. He also suffered multiple near-death experiences during the war. He had to wonder why he survived while his comrades died around him. Therefore, he began to believe that he was under divine protection. In fact, he might even be of divine *origin.*

When Hitler moved to Vienna in his early 20s, he lived in "filth and poverty" (Langer, 1972, p. 182) and refused to work to improve his living conditions. Despite his narcissistic self-image, he was a profoundly lazy young man. When he realized that living in squalor was not the path to the future he wanted for himself, he fled to Munich hoping to improve his life. Interestingly, when Hitler joined the army, he became obsessed with cleanliness and went as far as to degrade another man for not keeping himself clean, calling him a "manure pile" (Langer, 1972, p. 186).

Langer states it is possible that once Hitler was in Munich, he began to use projection as a defense mechanism. Projection, another concept developed by Sigmund Freud, involves a person "projecting" disturbing emotions onto a different object, person, or animal. In Hitler's case, antisemitism can be seen as a clear example of projection. Simply put, the Jew came to symbolize everything Hitler hated in himself. According to Langer (1972), "It was as though in trying to convince others of the dangers of Jewish domination, he was really trying to convince himself of the dangers of being dominated by his perversion [e.g., filthiness, weakness]" (pp. 184-185).

In classic projection, "the old personality is automatically suppressed, and its characteristics are projected onto some external object against which the new personality can carry on the struggle" (Langer, 1972, p. 194). The external object in Hitler's case was the Jew. This was easy for Hitler because the Jew reminded him of his filthy Vienna days, and other unacceptable aspects of his past. Therefore, he despised the Jew as much as he despised his old self. Hitler needed to prove to himself that he was no longer the person he used to be. Therefore, the Jew became the object of his rage. However, Hitler would never be satisfied by

acting out against this object, as no such attack could ever free him from his unconscious feelings of dirtiness and self-contempt. According to Langer, Hitler believed that "every brutality must be followed by a greater brutality, every violence by a greater violence" (Langer, 1972, p. 197). This cycle of hate can be attributed to the fact that Hitler was never truly satisfied, no matter how much power he acquired. He continued making increasingly extreme demands so that he could prove he was indeed the powerful Fuehrer who would not bow before anyone.

Hitler was adamant that "moral conscience" was a Jewish invention and was a sign of weakness. Langer believes that this was Hitler's way of ridding himself of a bad conscience and suppressing his guilt. He also criticized the intellect, saying "We must distrust the intelligence and the conscience and must place our faith in our instincts" (Langer, 1972, p. 190). Therefore, Hitler was "left at the mercy of his passions, instincts, and unconscious desires" (Langer, 1972, p. 190). It was these feelings that led him to believe that he was the "Chosen One" who would save the German people. It made him feel like he had been saved in the past to fulfill this purpose. According to Langer, "He believed it because he wanted to believe it— in fact, had to believe it in order to save himself" (Langer, 1972, p. 191). Hitler began to interpret all his past struggles as a fate that eventually led him to become the Fuehrer.

Hitler's ability to appeal to masses of people is one of the main reasons he was able to become the Fuehrer. For Hitler, the masses are like women in that they are motivated by "feelings and sentiment" (Mein Kampf, as cited by Langer, 1972, p. 203). Therefore, "his unconscious frame of reference when addressing a huge audience is fundamentally that of talking to a woman" (Langer, 1972, p. 203). By regarding his audience as feminine, he is able to

appeal to the part of them they attempt to repress: the part of them that wants to submit to someone.

Significantly, Hitler may have readily identified with the feminine qualities he saw in his audience. One notable Nazi official, Gregor Strasser, noted that Hitler avoided engaging in a "straightforward" argument. According to Strasser, "He is afraid of logic. Like a woman he evades the issue and ends by throwing in your face an argument entirely remote from what you were talking about" (Langer, 1972, p. 201). Langer speculates that this may be because he does not want to take a chance and be defeated in an argument, since that would tarnish his reputation. He is said to have walked out of meetings where he thought he might be challenged or "dominated" by another person.

When Langer (1972) submitted his completed analysis in 1943, it was not yet clear how the story of Hitler would end. Langer recognized that the ideal outcome would be for Hitler to fall into the Allies' hands, but he also stated that this would be highly unlikely, since Hitler would do everything in his power to avoid being captured. Interestingly, Langer predicted that it is most likely for Hitler to commit suicide. He stated that it would not be a simple suicide, but rather "he would stage the most dramatic and effective death scene he could possibly think of" (Langer, 1972, p. 212).

Henry Murray's Analysis of Adolf Hitler

According to Henry Murray, Adolf Hitler was able to play many different roles. There is the "expressionless" Hitler who stands in front of masses with his arm raised as people shout praises. The "embarrassed" Hitler is nervous, submissive, and ill at ease when he is in the presence of someone he perceives as more powerful than himself. The "gracious" Hitler is

modest, good-natured, and friendly when meeting his admirers. The "sentimental" Hitler wept

for his dead niece and was sympathetic toward his people. The "tactical" Hitler comes in to

make the right decisions. The "mystical" Hitler keeps his life story hidden and hints "at a

thousand years of superiority for the German folk" (Murray, 2004, p. 90). The "possessed"

Hitler talks to the masses and gets them riled up. The "hysterical" Hitler flies into a fit of rage

when faced with hardship. The "apathetic" Hitler is described as "indolent, limp, and

indecisive" (Murray, 2004, p. 90). Finally, the "soapbox" Hitler is ready to go off on a tirade,

even when there is only a single individual present. Murray believed that the tactical Hitler, the

mystical Hitler, and the possessed Hitler are responsible for helping him attain power. These

"powerful inhabitants" of Hitler's multifaceted personality convinced the German people that

Hitler was fit to be their leader.

     According to Murray, there is reason to believe that Hitler was often submissive when in

his father's presence, but would become rebellious and defiant when his father was absent.

Murray believes that Hitler was unable to develop a steady character as a result of his parents'

differing parenting styles. His father was strict, whereas his mother was lenient. As a result, his

attitude would bounce from subservience to please his father to "unruliness" in his absence

(Murray, 2004, p. 105). While little is known about Hitler's relationship with his mother, it is

clear from the little information in *Mein Kampf* that he was dependent on her and loved her.

Hitler also had respect for his father because of the power his father held but viewed his mother

as weak for submitting to his father. As stated in *Mein Kampf*, "I had respected my father, but

loved my mother" (Mein Kampf, as cited by Murray, 2004, p. 108).

However, Murray notes that "respect" meant more to Hitler than "love." In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler writes, "And I would overcome these obstacles, always bearing in mind my father's example, who, from being a poor village boy and a cobbler's apprentice had made his way up to the position of civil servant" (Mein Kampf, as cited by Murray, 2004, p. 110). In fact, Hitler imitated some of his father's traits: "his will to power, his pride, aggressiveness, and cult of brutality are all in keeping with what we know of the personality and conduct of Alois Hitler" (Murray, 2004, p. 109). He even copied his father's mustache at one point and had a portrait of his father hung in his study at Berchtesgaden. There were no pictures of his mother. Furthermore, Murray suspects that Alois Hitler had great respect for individuals with power and envied them while looking down upon those who were perceived as less powerful than himself. These qualities were clearly reflected in the worldview of his son.

There is also evidence to support the idea that Hitler felt rejected by his family. Murray lists some of the reasons these feelings may have emerged in the young Hitler, including the birth of his younger sister Paula, the opposition of his father, repeated failures at school, his lack of friends, and the death of both his parents by the time he was young adult, forcing him to face an adult world without parental support. He searched for parental figures during his lifetime, and it is noteworthy that several older women took on a mother-like role in Hitler's life. He also had a teacher, Ludwig Poetsch, whom Hitler viewed as a father figure.

Murray points out that Hitler spent his life "condemning people who belong to his layer of society" (Murray, 2004, p. 117). One of Hitler's sisters, Paula Hitler, was married to a Jewish man. One of his cousins was "feeble-minded," and his godfather was a Viennese Jew. Murray believed that Hitler's personality was an example of a "counteractive type," where a person's

main goal is to overcome their weaknesses and become their ideal self (which stands "counter" to the pathetic self they would otherwise be). For his part, Hitler rejected his past self, including his extended family, and struggled to be someone he was not.

In his search for a new persona, Hitler's antisemitism emerged as a salient aspect of his ideology. His teacher, Ludwig Poetsch, glorified Germany and looked down upon those with "impure blood," which no doubt impacted Hitler's worldview. He also viewed Germany as more powerful than his native Austria. Not surprisingly, Hitler had reason to distance himself from his inferior Austrian self, and embrace instead the self-image of a powerful German. To him, the characteristics of a powerful individual included "courage, military valor, brutality, and absence of sympathy or compassion" (Murray, 2004, p. 161). Significantly, by identifying himself with Germany, Hitler was able to rebel against his Austrian father.

After enlisting in the army, Hitler felt a sense of relief because he had found a place where he belonged and he felt proud to be able to fight for Germany. As previously mentioned, he was described as subservient toward superior officers, and even offered to do their laundry. After World War I, Hitler once again struggled to fit into society. He was described by an acquaintance as "a stray dog looking for a master" (Murray, 2004, p. 133).

In the National Socialist party, Hitler finally found a place where he belonged and had people who looked up to him. When he realized he could speak to large masses of people and convince them to join his cause, he decided to continue on in politics. The biggest threat to this movement, however, was communism, which promoted equality.

Hitler favored the strong and had feelings of contempt toward the weak. He had no sympathy for the under-dog and wanted the weak to submit. His beliefs, however, aligned with

those of the German people. According to Murray (2004), "it was this feeling of oneness with

Germany and the fact that he could identify his revengefulness with the need for aggression

latent in the German nation which enabled him to hold his ground" (p. 178). The German people

needed a scapegoat who could be blamed for all their problems, and Hitler was able to provide

them with that. Having a common enemy also brought the people together. According to Hitler,

"The leader is he who most strongly senses the needs and desires of the unified nation" (Mein

Kampf, as cited by Murray, 2004, p. 180).

Murray labels Hitler a paranoid schizophrenic, but stresses that Hitler was able to control

his hysteria, using it to manipulate the Germans. Despite his political success, Murray states that

Hitler had a "weak ego." That is, he lacked discipline and self-control. As a young boy, his

activities are described as "irregular" and "aimless" (Murray, 2004). He disliked hard work and

even failed classes when he was younger before finally dropping out of school. After gaining

power, he would often show up to meetings late and suffered from periods of indecisiveness and

confusion. According to one of his military officers, Ernst Rohm, "Usually he solves [problems]

suddenly, at the very last moment…only because he vacillates and procrastinates" (Murray,

2004, p. 141).

Murray also believes that Hitler has "insight deficiency" due to his inability to admit his

errors. Furthermore, he gets things done simply because he "operates on thalamic energy rather

than on conscious will and rational planning" (Murray, 2004, p. 142). In other words, he acts on

impulse rather than coming up with a plan. This force comes from the Freudian "id" (prerational

instinctual energy) which, in Hitler's case, dominates the "ego" (rational decision making).

Hitler's "superego" (conscience) has been repressed to the point where it is almost nonexistent.

However, Murray states that there are times when something resembling a superego emerges in Hitler's psyche. For example, constituents reported that he was unable to sleep for several nights after the bloody purge of 1934, perhaps because he actually felt guilty. Murray believes that many of his decisions as Fuehrer, such as having people who stood against him executed, can be seen as a way to appease his own conscience. In Murray's opinion, "Having once started on a career of brutality, he can only quiet the pain of a bad conscience by going on with ever greater ruthlessness to achieve successes" (Murray, 2004, p. 151).

Murray determines that Hitler's personality traits align with those of the counteractive narcissist. The counteractive narcissist is extremely sensitive to criticism. According to Hanisch, one of Hitler's old friends from his time in Vienna, "Hitler could not stand to be contradicted. He would get furious. He couldn't restrain himself, would scream and fidget with his hands" (Murray, 2004, p. 186). The counteractive narcissist also demands attention and refuses to do things anyone else's way. He often makes decisions himself and resents "disagreements and interferences" (Murray, 2004, p. 187). Further, the counteractive narcissist does not acknowledge help received and does not like expressing gratitude. He may belittle the worth of others, especially when he feels threatened by them. Counteractive aggression or "repaying an insult in double — a tooth for a tooth" is also common for the counteractive narcissist (Murray, 2004, p. 190). He may even imagine himself belittled in some way and jump to his own defense. Once provoked, he suppresses his superego and acts out his revenge.

Hitler's dominant defense mechanism, according to Murray, was projection. For example, in *Mein Kampf,* Hitler draws attention to the "dirty clothes and...none too heroic appearance" of Jewish people (Mein Kampf, as cited by Murray, 2004, p. 154). However, his

friend in Vienna, Hanisch, states that at one point, Hitler's own appearance was quite similar.

Hanisch claims to have joked with Hitler about how he must be "of Jewish blood." Another

example of projection might be seen in Hitler's condemnation in *Mein Kampf* of "these impudent

rascals (intellectuals) who always know everything better than anybody else,"(Mein Kampf, as

cited by Murray, 2004, p. 154) even as Hitler viewed himself as an expert in virtually anything

that mattered.

As was the case with Langer's 1943 study, Murray's analysis was complete at a time

when the fate of Hitler, and western Europe, was not yet clear. Writing in 1943, Murray was not

certain that it would be sufficient to simply defeat Hitler. In fact, he feared that Hitler would

continue to be a tragic hero in the minds of the German people unless their beliefs about him

were challenged. As such, Murray suggests that Hitler be admitted into an asylum for the

mentally ill if he were captured. This would more effectively destroy his image than if he were

executed by the allies. On the other hand, this would also leave a void in the hearts of the

German people. So, Murray stresses the importance of providing the Germans with an

alternative ideal figure. The long term goal is to move the German people away from fascism

and toward Western Democracy (Murray, 2004).

Erik Erikson's Analysis of Hitler

In 1942, Erikson completed an essay entitled *On Nazi Mentality*. In 1950, this paper was

included as a chapter in what became his most frequently-cited book, *Childhood and Society*.

From the very beginning, Erikson describes Hitler and his entourage as "the most ruthless

exploiters of a nation's fight for a safe identity" (Erikson, 1950, p. 326). He points out that the

sentence structure and tone in *Mein Kampf* seems to be an attempt by Hitler to make his life story

sound like a fairy tale or myth. However, Erikson notes that a myth is not completely baseless; it "blends historical fact and significant fiction" (Erikson, 1950, p. 327). Therefore, to understand the beliefs of the German people, it is essential to consider Hitler as they saw him. This mythical Hitler, according to Erikson, unconsciously associates his Oedipus Complex with Germany's problems. In other words, Hitler believes that his mother (Germany) betrayed him by not standing up to the man who was abusive toward her (Austria).

In an attempt to explain the young Germans' states of mind, Erikson examines a typical German household. The German child grows up with an extremely strict father. The mother obeys whatever the father requests of her and behaves differently in front of the father. She is not affectionate toward the little boy and he begins to understand that the only way for him to receive his mother's love is when his father is not around. On the other hand, the child also notices how the father is submissive around his own superiors. Therefore, as the little boy grows older and begins to form his own identity, there is "a strange mixture of open rebellion and 'secret sin'" (Erikson, 1950, p. 332). In other words, even though the boy does not want to be like his father, he does not have a male role model to look up to and as a result ends up unwittingly taking in some of his father's characteristics. As a substitute for his inadequate mother, the German adolescent boy would typically look to gangs (and other social groups outside the home) to provide a sense of belonging. In the end, the boy would have to sacrifice his hopes of becoming his own person and settle for a mediocre life, eventually getting married and having children of his own.

Hitler wanted to prove that he was better than his father and therefore rebelled so that he would not be just another "faithful civil servant" (Mein Kampf, as cited by Erikson, 1950, p.

330). As such, he was an ideal leader for the German people since he successfully carried out

the rebellion against his father that many of the people were unable to. Hitler made the average

German man feel like no father could stand in the way of what he really wanted: the love of his

mother. Significantly, unlike the typical German man, Hitler himself never took a father-like

position in German culture; instead, he was the "glorified older brother" (Erikson, 1950, p. 337).

As for his mother, Hitler paints two different pictures: the loving, playful and generous

mother who took care of her children and the treacherous mother "in league with sinister forces"

(Erikson, 1950, p. 339). Hitler, along with most of the young men in Nazi Germany, had the

same paradoxical beliefs about Germany as he did about women. However, Erikson also notes

that these extreme beliefs were reflected in the Germans' general philosophy of life.   Their

world was experienced as either (a) superior and great or (b) mean and treacherous. Such

dichotomous splitting is common in the worldviews of adolescents in many cultures. But

Hitler's Germany never really grew up. Rather, it surrendered to the "imagery of ideological

adolescence" (Erikson, 1950, p. 344).

According to Erik Erikson, Hitler knew how to attract the German people to his cause. In

his impassioned speeches, he was able to assess what his audience wanted to hear and deliver it

to them. As such, Hitler's rhetoric reveals as much about the audience as it does about himself.

The German people feared not only foreign invasion, but also foreign values. Hitler promised

not only to invade the areas surrounding the Reich, but also to conduct "a complete purge of the

corrupt foreign values which had invaded German culture" (Erikson, 1950, p. 348). In the end,

Erikson states that "it is a fatal error to assume that National Socialism came about in spite of

Germany's intellectual greatness. It was the natural result of the particular social - or rather asocial - orientation of its great men" (Erikson, 1950, p. 349).

A Lay Theory: Hitler as *Evil*

The various theoretical accounts considered above are predicated on the belief that Hitler is comprehensible. He can be understood utilizing the same concepts and principles that can be employed to make sense of any person. To be sure, all these theories are debatable, and certainly not comprehensive. Each emphasizes a different facet of Hitler's world, with Langer drawing attention to early family experiences, Murray focusing on personality dynamics, and Erikson considering the broader culture. Further, a truly comprehensive theory would need to enrich and revise Langer, Murray, and Erikson's accounts in light of more recent theory and research.

But why bother? In the end, what really matters is that Hitler was a profoundly Evil man. So considered, it may never be possible for a psychological theory to shine light on the shadow that is Hitler.   Such, anyway, may be the point of view of a large segment of the general public.

 Baumester (1999) has argued that "pure evil" functions as a cultural myth with the following attributes: "1) pure evil involves the intentional infliction of harm, 2) pure evil is driven primarily by the wish to inflict harm, 3) the victim of evil is innocent and good, 4) evil represents the antithesis of order, peace, and stability, 5) pure evil comes from the "outside" [or "outsiders"], 6) pure evil is stable in the person, 7) pure evil is marked by egotism, 8) pure evil is associated with difficulty in maintaining control over emotions, especially anger and rage" (pp. 72-75).

Although individuals' conception of Evil can vary, Webster and Saucier (2013) suggest that a Belief in Pure Evil (BPE) is a meaningful psychological concept. Simply put, BPE is a

schema that individuals employ to make sense of bad things that happen in our world. For those

who embraced such a belief, there is no need to tolerate, try to understand, or even try to help

individuals who are evil.

Webster and Saucier (2013) developed a questionnaire designed to measure BPE.

Sample items on this survey include "*Some people are just pure evil,*" "*Evil people harm others*

for the joy of it," and "*Evil people have an evil essence, like a stain on their souls, which is*

almost impossible to get rid of." Individuals with these beliefs often support harsher

punishments (such as the death penalty) and do not support rehabilitation or anything that would

help people who commit horrible crimes. They view the world as a dangerous place and support

"group-based dominance" (Webster and Saucier, 2013). They may also have a hard time

forgiving people who have wronged them in the past. It is likely that people with these beliefs

want to make the world a better place and have good intentions, but support more aggressive

methods because they do not see any other solution (Webster and Saucier, 2013).

More recently, Webster and Saucier (2015) examined people's reactions toward (a)

perpetrators who showed "stereotypically evil" traits and (b) individuals who committed an evil

act, but were otherwise "good' people. Participants were given one of two fictional news

articles. In one of these articles, a perpetrator is described as a man who kept to himself and

liked to taunt children in the neighborhood. In the second, the perpetrator is described as a

family man who is looking forward to going camping. In both scenarios, the perpetrator

confesses to a murder to the police. After reading the scenarios, participants were given

questionnaires assessing their views of the perpetrator. The researchers found that participants

were more likely to support harsher punishment for the perpetrator if he showed "stereotypically

evil" characteristics, as depicted in the first fictional news article. Interestingly, individuals who

had higher BPE scores supported harsher punishments, and this true regardless of which fictional

scenario the participants read. In fact, it was found that BPE had a greater impact on support for

a harsh punishment than did the details of the scenario itself.   In other words, the story of the

perpetrator was less relevant to the evaluation than "people's preconceived beliefs about evil"

(Webster and Saucier, 2015, p. 77).

Vasturia, Webster and Saucier (2017) conducted a follow-up study to assess how

participants would view the actions of a perpetrator who did not have control over their behavior

because of a brain tumor. There were eight different "articles" presented to participants about a

mall shooting: the shooting either had multiple victims or one, the perpetrator either had a brain

tumor or did not, and the perpetrator either presented with characteristics typical of "evil"

individuals or did not. Interestingly, participants with higher BPE scores supported harsher

punishment regardless of the scenario; they favored harsher punishments even when the

perpetrator did not otherwise exhibit "evil" characteristics, and even when the perpetrator

suffered from a brain tumor.

Hitler and the Myth of Pure Evil: An Original Study

In light of the clear role played by a Belief in Pure Evil (BPE) in interpretations of social

phenomena, it would be worthwhile to explore how this belief might shape an understanding of

disturbing historical phenomena, including the life and legacy of Adolf Hitler. As noted above,

Webster and Saucier (2013) conceptualize BPE as a schema that individuals employ to make

sense of bad things that happen in our world. Significantly, BPE may interfere with our capacity

to explore alternative explanations for such events. For example, a person with high BPE may

be especially resistant to psychological explanations for the evil behaviors of a person like Adolf

Hitler. They may be especially resistant to efforts to humanize Hitler, a salient concern among

many when CBS announced its upcoming miniseries on Hitler, as previously discussed. In this

spirit, I predicted that scores on a measure of BPE will be positively associated with (a)

agreement with a claim that a proposed miniseries that potentially "humanizes" Hitler should not

appear on television, and (b) disagreement with various attempts by psychologists (i.e., Langer,

Murray, and Erikson) to "explain" Hitler.

Thirty-one students at a public liberal arts college volunteered for this study. A link to

the questionnaire was sent to psychology professors at the University of Maine at Farmington,

who then forwarded it to their students to fill out. The majority (77%) of the participants were

psychology majors. Subjects were informed that they would be participating in a study

exploring "Images of Hitler in Contemporary Culture." They were also informed that "the study

involves the completion of several questionnaires assessing social attitudes, including opinions

regarding Hitler, Nazis, and the phenomenon of evil. The questionnaires will require

approximately 30 minutes to complete." All participants were asked to complete an informed

consent form (see Appendix A) and then complete a series of questionnaires:

The first questionnaire, developed by Webster and Saucier (2013), was designed to

assess participants' *Belief in Pure Evil*.   Participants were asked to rate on a seven-point Likert

scale the extent to which they agreed with 22 statements consistent with a popular metaphysics

of Evil (1= disagree very strongly, 7= agree very strongly). Sample items from this scale

include, "Some people are just pure evil," "Evil people make me sick because they get such

pleasure out of harming other people," and "People who commit evil acts always mean to harm

innocent people." The complete questionnaire is provided in Appendix B. BPE scores were

obtained for each participant by computing the average scores for the complete set of 22

statements.

In order to assess prior knowledge about Hitler and fascism, participants were asked two

open ended questions:

- In 75 words or less (i.e., just a few sentences), please summarize what you know

  about the life of Adolf Hiter.

- In 75 words or less (i.e., just a few sentences), please summarize what you know

  about German fascism in the 20th century.

After sharing their thoughts about Hitler and fascism, participants were presented with the

following newspaper article (abridged from an article describing the controversy associated with

the planned CBS Hitler miniseries):

CBS MINISERIES PROFILING YOUNG HITLER DRAWS FIRE

Paul Brownfield TV correspondent

Television seems willing to take on any sensitive subject...but it has been more careful when it comes to Adolf Hitler, confining depictions to news documentaries or portraits of the adult fuehrer.

Now, in an unprecedented move, a planned CBS miniseries called *Hitler* is attempting to portray the most infamous villain of the 20th century in a way he has never been seen before: as a human being. The project, which is scheduled to air over two nights...is based on British historian Ian Kershaw's book Hitler: 1889-1936: Hubris. The accuracy of Kershaw's work on the pre-World War II Hitler is not being questioned. What has raised concerns is the inflammatory nature and commercial imperatives of a TV movie that would chronicle Hitler's progression from childhood to adulthood, from outcast starving artist to leader of the Third Reich, without depicting the horrific result of this rise.

Some see the project as a naked play for ratings, using a figure whose name instantly titillates.

"History has made a judgment of the man, he's a monster," said Abraham H. Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. "So now, why do we need to know when he dated, how he dated? The next one will be Hitler as a preteen, we'll find out he's a bed-wetter. We know who he is, we know what he did, what are we going to learn?"

Representatives of CBS and Canada's Alliance-Atlantis, which is producing the TV movie, have responded that their aim is to explore the roots of evil, to examine what from Hitler's past made him into the century's most reviled leader.

After reading this excerpt, participants were asked to rate on a seven-point likert scale the extent to which they agreed with 4 statements about the planned miniseries (1= disagree very strongly, 7= agree very strongly):

1. The mini-series should not appear on television.
2. If the mini-series does appear on television, the script should be altered so that it does not create the impression that Hitler had a normal childhood.
3. If the mini-series does appear on television, the script should be altered so that Hitler is portrayed as profoundly evil.
4. If the mini-series does appear on television, the script should be altered so that it does not offer a psychological *explanation* for Hitler's attitudes and behaviors.

Finally, participants were presented with four theoretical conjectures of Hitler associated with the work of Walter Langer, Henry Murray, and Erik Erikson. Specifically:

1. According to Erik Erikson, Hitler knew how to attract the German people to his cause. In his impassioned speeches, he was able to assess what his audience wanted to hear and deliver it to them. As such, Hitler's rhetoric reveals as much about the audience as it does about himself.
2. According to Walter Langer, "It was not only Hitler the madman who created German madness, but German madness that created Hitler." In fact, Langer believes that many Germans realized that the path their leader was taking would eventually lead to destruction, but they continued to follow him. Therefore, Langer believes that Hitler is not a "personal devil," but rather "the expression of a state of mind existing in millions of people."
3. According to Henry Murray, Hitler was unable to develop a stable personality structure as a result of his parents' differing parenting styles. Specifically, his father was strict, whereas his mother was lenient. As a result, his attitude would bounce from subservience to please his father to "unruliness" in his absence.
4. According to Henry Murray, Hitler's need for dominance and superiority, as well as his admiration for those with power, stemmed from his own feelings of inferiority and rejection.

After reading each of these conjectures, participants were then asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with each item on a seven-point Likert scale (1= disagree very strongly, 7= agree very strongly).

The Unexamined Shadow: Hitler in Light of a Belief in Pure Evil (BPE)

In general, participants varied considerably with respect to their Belief in Pure Evil (M = 3.37; SD = 1.17).   A histogram is presented below:

BPE Scores (Histogram)
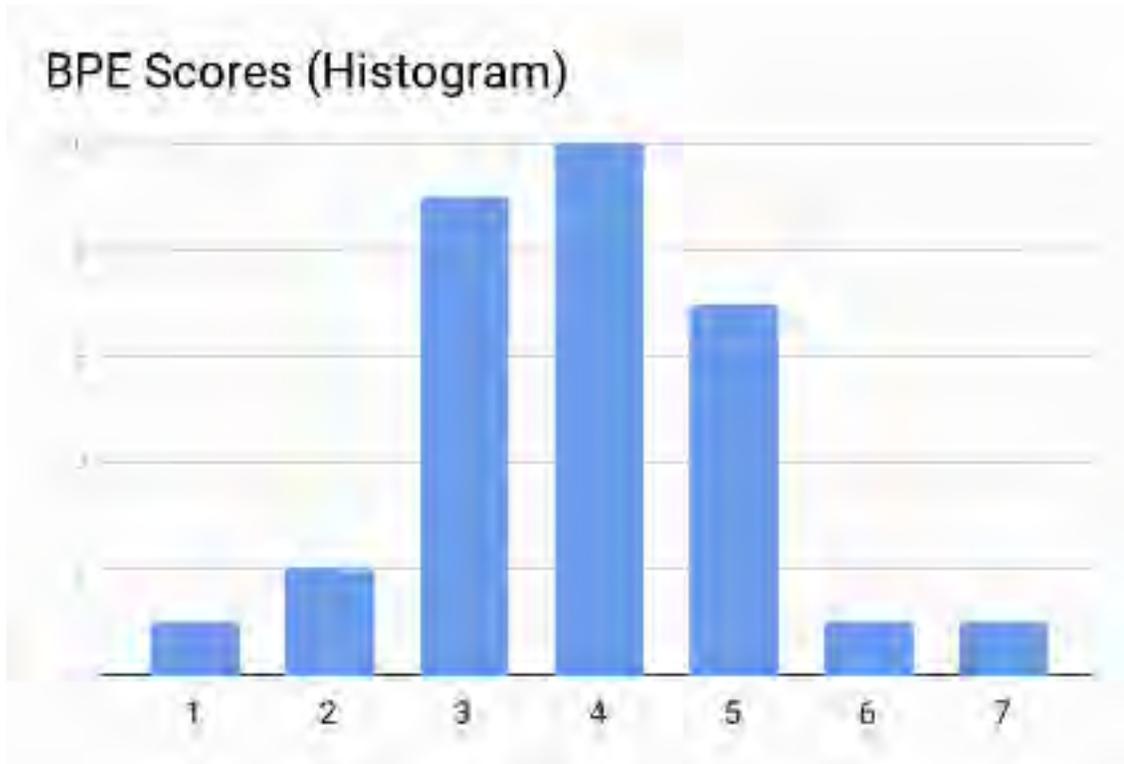
The broad range of BPE scores suggest that a Belief in Pure Evil is a meaningful individual

difference variable among students at a Maine public liberal arts university. It is also worth

noting that most participants reported that they were familiar with Hitler, but fewer seemed

aware of German fascism as an historical phenomenon. All responses to the relevant open-ended

questions are provided in Appendix C.

To assess the extent to which a Belief in Pure Evil is associated with responses to

Hitler-relevant stimuli, a series of pearson-product moment correlation coefficients were

computed with BPE scores serving as the independent variable and various responses to the

Hitler miniseries and psychoanalytic accounts of Hitler serving (separately) as dependent variables.

With respect to the proposed controversial miniseries, there was no significant relationship observed between BPE and a desire to keep the miniseries off the air entirely. However, BPE was positively associated with endorsement of the following statements:

- If the mini-series does appear on television, the script should be altered so that it does not create the impression that Hitler had a normal childhood. ($r = .46$, $p = .010$)

- If the mini-series does appear on television, the script should be altered so that Hitler is portrayed as profoundly evil. ($r = .47$, p .007)

- If the mini-series does appear on television, the script should be altered so that it does not offer a psychological explanation for Hitler's attitudes and behaviors ($r = 0.59$, $p < .001$)

With regard to psychological theorizing, a BPE was associated with a tendency to *disagree* with Henry Murray's claim that Hitler's need for dominance and superiority, as well as his admiration for those with power, stemmed from his own feelings of inferiority and rejection (r=-.431, p = .015). However, BPE was not significantly related to responses to the other three theoretical conjectures considered in the present study.

This general pattern of results is consistent with the thesis that participants with a strong Belief in Pure Evil are especially resistant to efforts to humanize Hitler, especially when this humanization takes the form of a miniseries that fails to reveal Hitler for the Evil man he was. To be sure, participants with high BPE scores did not want to force the show off the air. However, they clearly wanted some changes made, including alterations of the script to (a) avoid creating the impression that Hitler was a "normal" child, (b) make sure that Hitler is portrayed as

profoundly evil, and (c) eliminate psychological "explanations" for Hitler's attitudes and behaviors.

Melvin Lerner's Just World Theory may help explain these results. According to Lerner (1980), people have a strong need to believe in a "just world;" where evil is punished and good is rewarded. When specific events threaten this belief, there is a tendency to seek explanations that help restore a sense that the world is indeed just. For example, some people may "blame the victim" of a random crime, as this restores a sense that only "faulty" people are likely to be victimized. Another strategy documented by Lerner is a tendency to split the world into two spheres: (a) the place where justice reigns supreme (e.g., my neighborhood, my culture), and (b) the place where justice is absent (e.g. the underworld, the other side of the wall). So, a belief in a just world can be maintained if threats to that belief can be pushed into another realm entirely (and kept out of the community of justice).

It is this second strategy that may help explain the results of the present study. If Hilter were to be "explained," then there is a risk that he might be included in the community of justice. He would be "one of us," and comprehensible on the same terms.   But individuals who believe in pure evil know that there's an "other side of the wall" where dark shadows hide, and justice has no place. If Hitler is recognized as evil, there is no need to identify with him in any way whatsoever.   Quite the contrary, it is important to recognize Hitler for what he is, and keep as much distance as possible. As such, participants with a stronger BPE had no special problem with a Hitler miniseries, but wanted the script to be altered so that Hitler was in no way humanized.

Interestingly, participants with higher BPE scores were more likely to disagree with Henry Murray's theory about Hitler's need for dominance stemming from inner feelings of inferiority. One possible explanation is that individuals with a stronger BPE find it unlikely that the "all dominant" monster who sentenced millions to their deaths could ever really feel inferior. After all, those who believe in pure evil also believe that evil people "are actually proud and smug about having harmed other human beings" (Question #12 on the BPE questionnaire). Those with a stronger BPE may want to uphold this picture of the ruthless Fuehrer so that they do not relate to him.   It is "normal" for people to feel inferior at times, and the image of a ruthless Fuehrer full of self-confidence excludes him from the community of "normal."

Participants were also asked to discuss what they knew about the life of Adolf Hitler (see Appendix C). Not surprisingly, most participants addressed his antisemitism, his role in starting World War II, and how he was responsible for millions of lives lost. Many participants also noted that he was a failed artist and that he may have had a tough childhood. Two participants noted that Hitler genuinely believed he was doing the right thing for his country. Two other participants stated that his tough childhood may have been partially responsible for making him into the person he later became. One participant believes that he had a vision, but due to circumstances, he was pushed toward a different path. The participant clearly mentions that this is no excuse for his behaviors, but wonders if things may have been different had Hitler succeeded as an artist. Finally, one participant states that he was put in a powerful position and not given proper guidance. In the end, he ended up abusing that power. This participant also says it is possible that he may have had an illness that seriously impaired his thinking. Again, the participant clearly states that none of this is an excuse for his behaviors.

Clearly, there is considerable variation in the participants' understanding of Hitler. Some are quite willing to consider psychological and sociological explanations for Hitler's actions. Yet others are seemingly averse to such explanations. Baumeister believes that some people do not want an explanation as to why someone hurt them. In an attempt to demonize the perpetrator, the victims may "distort the other's actions to fit the myth of pure evil" (p. 73). The myth of pure evil, then, is harmful because individuals are unable to truly understand perpetrators. Rather, they continue to expect "a demon in human form" (Baumeister, 1996, p. 379).

In conclusion, it is important for people to be aware of their tendency to classify individuals who commit evil acts into different categories. While this tendency may be stronger for some more than others, becoming aware of it may be the first step toward understanding one's own worldview.

The present study had some limitations. Participants filled out the questionnaire at home. As such, it is possible that they may have discussed the questions with someone else and their answers may have been influenced as a result. Furthermore, most participants were psychology majors. Having participants with a variety of different majors may have accrued different results.

To further explore participants' BPE, it would also have been interesting to add a question asking participants if they believed Hitler was evil. Additionally, while this study did not focus on participants' major, it may be interesting for a future study to measure participants' BPE depending on their major. There are many other factors that may influence participants

BPE, including age, religion, and cultural background. BPE is a fascinating concept and there

are many different variables to consider for future studies.

References

Adolf Hitler. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/adolf-hitler.

Baumeister, R. F. (1999). *Evil: Inside human cruelty and violence*. New York, NY: Henry Holt

and Company.

Darley, J. M. (1992). Social organization for the production of evil. *Psychological Inquiry, 3*,

199-218.

Erikson, E. H. (1950). The Legend of Hitler's Childhood. *Childhood and Society* (326-358).

New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Hoffman, L. E. (1992). American psychologists and wartime research on Germany 1941-1945.

American Psychologist, 47(2), 264-273.

Keveney, B. (2003, May 13). Miniseries 'hitler' examines the seeds of evil: [FINAL edition]. *Usa

Today*. Retrieved from

https://library.umaine.edu/auth/EZproxy/test/authej.asp?url=https://search.proquest.com/

docview/408959326?accountid=27252

Langer, W. C., Langer, W. L., & Waite, R. G. L. (1972). *The Mind of Adolf Hitler: The Secret

Wartime Report*. New York, NY: Basic Books Inc.

Lerner M. J. (1980). *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*. Boston, MA: Plenum.

Murray, H. A. (2004). Analysis of the Personality of Adolph Hitler. Retrieved from

http://library.lawschool.cornell.edu/WhatWeHave/SpecialCollections/Donovan/Hitler/

upload/Vol_XC_PRF.pdf

Schramm, P. E. (1971). *Hitler: The man and the military leader*. Chicago, IL: Quadrangle

Books.

Tucker, K. (2003, May 16). Hitler: The rise of evil. *Entertainment Weekly*. Retrieved from

    https://ew.com/article/2003/05/16/hitler-rise-evil/

Vasturia, D., Webster, R. J., & Saucier, D. A. (2017). Demons with firepower: How belief in

    pure evil relates to perceptions and punishments of gun violence perpetrators. *Personality*

    and Individual Differences, 122, 13-18.

Webster, R. J. & Saucier, D. A. (2013). Angels and demons are among us: Assessing individual

    differences in belief in pure evil and belief in pure good. *Personality and Social*

    Psychology Bulletin, 39(11), 1455-1470. doi: 10.1177/0146167213496282

Webster, R. J. & Saucier, D. A. (2015). Demons are everywhere: The effects of belief in pure

    evil, demonization, and retribution on punishing criminal perpetrators. *Personality and*

    Individual Differences, 74, 72-77.

Weinraub, B. (2002, August 20). Planned mini-series on Hitler's early life brings criticism. *New*

    York Times. Retrieved from

    https://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/20/arts/planned-mini-series-on-hitler-s-early-life-brin

    gs-criticism.html

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

I, _____, have carefully listened to and fully

understand the purpose of this research and the procedures to be followed. I understand that my

records will be kept confidential, my participation is voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any

time without penalty. I also recognize that I may skip any questions I don't wish to respond to.

The survey will require approximately 30 minutes to complete. Results of this research may be

shared in the form of one or more publications and verbal presentations. If I have any concerns

or inquiries about my rights as a subject or the manner in which this research is conducted, I

understand that I can contact Karol Maybury, Chair of the Institutional Review Board,

University of Maine, Farmington [(207) 778-7067; karol.maybury@maine.edu]. I am 18 years

or older. By signing below, I assert that I fully understand the above and give my consent to

serve as a subject in this research. (If you would like a summary of the results, please make the

request of the researcher at the contact given above).

_____   _____

(Signature)   (Date)

Appendix B

Social Attitudes Questionnaire

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

1. Some people are just pure evil.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7
    Disagree   Agree
    very strongly   very strongly

2. People who commit evil acts often dedicate their entire lives plotting ways to intentionally hurt good people.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7
    Disagree   Agree
    very strongly   very strongly

3. People who commit evil acts always mean to harm innocent people.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7
    Disagree   Agree
    very strongly   very strongly

4. Evil people take every opportunity to make other people's lives a living hell.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7
    Disagree   Agree
    very strongly   very strongly

5. The evildoer's goal is simply to harm other people.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7
    Disagree   Agree
    very strongly   very strongly

6. Evil people hurt others because they enjoy inflicting pain and suffering.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7
    Disagree   Agree
    very strongly   very strongly

7. Evil people harm others for the joy of it.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7
    Disagree   Agree
    very strongly   very strongly

8. Evil people make me sick because they get such pleasure out of harming other people.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7
    Disagree   Agree
    very strongly   very strongly

9. We should stop trying to understand evil people and spend more time getting rid of them
    from this world.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7
    Disagree   Agree
    very strongly   very strongly

10. Evil people "get off" by being violent and abusive to other human beings.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7
    Disagree   Agree
    very strongly   very strongly

11. Evil people are just compelled to harm others.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree						Agree
very strongly						very strongly

12. Evildoers are actually proud and smug about having harmed other human beings.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree						Agree
very strongly						very strongly

13. Evil people are selfish and only think about themselves.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree						Agree
very strongly						very strongly

14. Evil people have an evil essence, like a stain on their souls, which is almost impossible to get rid of.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree						Agree
very strongly						very strongly

15. We could obtain a more peaceful society by simply wiping out all the evildoers.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree						Agree
very strongly						very strongly

16. Evildoers want to destroy all that is good in the world.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree very strongly						Agree very strongly

17. If we catch an evildoer, we should just lock them up and ensure they never get out.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree very strongly						Agree very strongly

18. Even the forces of good cannot change an evildoer's heart.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree very strongly						Agree very strongly

19. If we could just get rid of the evildoers— those "bad apples"—we would have a much more peaceful society.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree very strongly						Agree very strongly

20. There is no point in trying to reform evil people.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree very strongly						Agree very strongly

21. Evil people intend to disrupt our peaceful society with their harmful acts.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree very strongly						Agree very strongly

22. Evil people are so narcissistic and full of themselves.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree very strongly						Agree very strongly

Appendix C

In 75 words or less (i.e., just a few sentences) please summarize what you know about the life of Adolf Hitler.

Participant 1: Hitler was responsible for the deaths of countless innocent people.

Participant 2: I'm pretty sure I read Hitler had an interesting childhood. I think he loved dogs or something. I don't know too much just mostly about the ten stages of genocide.

Participant 3: I don't know much about his younger life, or his adult life for that matter. I know what he did was evil, merciless, and grounded on nothing but personal biases. His actions impacted millions during his time and will for generations.

Participant 4: He was abused as a child by his stepfather, was rejected from art school, and fought in WW1. He rose to power in Germany by feeding off of the insecurities of the German people and genuinely thought that he was doing the right thing for Germany.

Participant 5: I know that he killed an overwhelming number of Jewish people to "purify" the world. I know that he helped cause WW2 and that he was in WW1.

Participant 6: He was very charismatic and an opportunist. Saw that after WW1 Germany was pissed as it's pride was hurt. Turned the general public's view towards a goal to express their anger.

Participant 7: From what I understand, he was born in Austria and born into a poor family. He was rejected from art school, and after he spent years working his way into German politics, and eventually overthrew the German government.

Participant 8: He was the leader of the third reich. Adolf Hitler aspired to create the perfect Arian race, blond hair and blue eyes. He used the anger in the minds of Germany following the First World War to fuel his propaganda about the Jewish religion, among others. Millions of deaths resulted from his reign of terror in what was then considered "Nazi Germany".

Participant 9: He believed that those with blue eyes and blonde hair were the "superior race" and that Jew should not live. He became a Dictator of Poland where he strived to eradicate the Jewish communities that resided there.

Participant 10: Hitler wasn't always an evil person. After a rough childhood and young adult life, including a rejection from art school he became obsessed with gaining power and control.

Participant 11: Hitler was a young german man who wanted to be an artist. It didnt work out so he did politics and rose through the ranks with devicive hateful rhetoric and subsequently instated his dreams, mass murdering and subjugating the Jewish people to further his own ends.

Participant 12: I know that Hitler experienced a painful childhood. I believe his mother and brother died when he was very young, and he was very close with both of these family members. I also believe his father was abusive. Hitler was a great speaker, and was loved by his community and this was how he gained their trust.

Participant 13: Became the leader of the Nazi Party following WWI. Directly responsible for the Holocaust and indirectly responsible for the start of WWII in Europe.

Participant 14: He had an odd childhood, one parent, his mom I think, was Jewish. He became a leader that terrorized people under the belief he was making the world better. He comitted mass genocide amd coaxed entire nations into doing the same.

Participant 15: To be honest, I never learned about him. None of the history classes I took in high school taught me about Hilter (probably due to certain teachers teaching different things in the same class). Obviously, I know who he was and know some about the harm that he inflicted on the Jewish. Basically, he ordered all Jewish people to death or sent them in concentration camps. If you were not Jewish and were housing Jewish people, you also would be punished. He also ordered the kills of many other demographics.

Participant 16: He was German leader of the Nazis. He was not born in Germany but moved there. He formed the German government into a dictatorship. He worked to eliminate Jewish people from Germany. Under his leadership millions of civilians were killed.

Participant 17: Adolph Hitler was a German politician at the head of the Nazi Party. He was a dictator who initiated WW2. Hitler strongly hated Jews. His antisemitism became radical when he decided to "remove" the Jews from German society which led to a mass murder. But Hitler's racism was not just against the Jews, people with mental disabilities and so on were also discriminated and/or killed for not being part of the superior race. Hitler was finally arrested and wrote a book while in prison, before committing suicide.

Participant 18: I know the basics of his early home and educational life and his internalized antisemitism. How, as a person, didn't seem to terrible, but used that internalized hatred to commit mass genocide.

Participant 19: He had a very complicated relationship with his father, his mother passed away young, he was a patriot to the extreme. He found purpose in the army but was then kicked out due to injury (world war 1). He was a failed painter. He was obsessed with unifying Germany and restoring it to it "Glory days". He and many other Germans felt beaten down by there defeat in WW1 and the e anomy was crashing which destabilized the country and made it vulnerable to Adolf because he was such an intelligent and charismatic speaker. He Started preaching about the "Master Race" later and only took over the government after he had amassed enough support and following. He invaded other countries slowly. He then set in motion one of the most horrific acts of Genocide the world has ever seen. He was also a brilliant politician, PR man, speaker, showman, tactician, and of course drunk on his own hate and desire to see Germany as the greatest country on earth. he began losing the war and eventually took his own life before he cold be captured.

Participant 20: I know that he was once an inspired man who sought a very different path, but due to his circumstances and his dream being ignored he turned his rage and his humiliation into blame and hostility. No, this wasn't the cause of his actions but it makes you wonder how different his life could have been if he pursued art.

 Participant 21: Hitler was a German leader in the Nazi party. He was in power or Germany and started WW2 by invading Poland.

Participant 22: Adolf Hitler was the leader of the Holocaust, which killed thousands and thousands of innocent people. He killed those people, because they were Jewish.

Participant 23: What I have often heard is that he started out in an abusive household and was kind of a social outcast or "nobody" during his youth and later into adulthood until he saw an opportunity to make a difference-whether it was with good intention or not. I heard a couple times that once he was in power, or even beforehand for all I know, he blamed Jewish people for the economic failure and also viewed them as "parasites" for that reason, and that is a primary reason why he wiped a lot of them out.

Participant 24: I do not know much, only that he led many Germans to kill Jewish people.

Participant 25: I know that he was a man who had something cold in his heart and soul. I have heard that he was struggling with syphilis and yes, he is what society considers to be an "evil

man", but "evil" people who are put in powerful positions tend to abuse these positions and if not guided, they will make all of the wrong choices. This isn't an excuse for his behavior, I just believe that he had a physical illness that could've caused brain damage and damage to his nervous system, skewing his judgment (neurosyphilis).

Participant 26: I don't know much about his life besides that he became the leader of the Nazi party and maintained dictatorship over Germany until 1945. I'm not familiar with his childhood or his family. I'm pretty sure he was in the military before he developed the Nazi party.

Participant 27: Adolf Hitler was a serviceman and politician in Germany in the 1910s-1945, He led Germany into economic strength by attempting to control the population and viewed his goals as ideal. His main goal was to make Germany a world leader very quickly. He failed in seeing the harm he was doing at the time.

Participant 28: He was an art student (a talented painter) rejected multiple times by schools featuring Jewish administrators. He held this against the Jewish people in subsequent decades.

Participant 29: I know he attempted to be an art student, had a Jewish girlfriend who died in a river, over took Germany and blamed the struggles on the Jewish society

Participant 30: I don't know much about Adolf Hitler but I know he committed evil crimes against Jewish people. He wanted to exterminate their entire race and wanted to stop at nothing to ensure they were gone.

Participant 31: He was a horrible person and killed many people in concentration camps.

In 75 words or less (i.e., just a few sentences) please summarize what you know about German fascism in the 20th century.

Participant 1: German fascists sought to unite the German people who were separated after WW1. They set out to conquer land and achieve power to attain this unity; their anti-Semitic propaganda fueled their genocide of Jewish people.

Participant 2: Not much

Participant 3: Not much. I was never taught about that kind of stuff in high school or college.

Participant 4: A certain type of person was glorified, while millions of minorities (Jewish people, LGBT, or people with disabilities, etc) were killed. They made it a goal to destroy culture, and

stole millions of works of art to take away what little these countries had left. It was all about erasure.

Participant 5: I don't know anything

Participant 6: Uhh, nah, not a lot. Blue eyes, blonde hair (Aryan features?)

Participant 7: Very little. I know the German government used the military in order to maintain control over the German people.

Participant 8: [No Answer]

Participant 9: I don't

Participant 10: I honestly don't know anything about german fascism other than hitler was a dictator

Participant 11: German facism was heavy on authoritative and draconian principles. It was also heavily tied to anti-semitism, and this was used as a platform to push the Jews down. There were lots of other factors within the evil facism that made this even worse, like eugenics.

Participant 12: I do not know a lot about German fascism in the 20th century. I understand that Hitler lead the Nazi's in capturing Jewish people, people who weren't white, and people who did not have blonde hair and blue eyes.

Participant 13: German fascism was done by using propaganda to influence people's opinions. The Nazi party was the only political party in German for many years, leading to a fascist government.

Participant 14: Not much at all. Just that it's not great

Participant 15: I don't think I know anything... I believe its something about some kind of movement, therefore the movement of killing millions of people.

Participant 16: Nothing

Participant 17: "Mussolini was the one to establish the first fascist regime, followed by others, including Nazi Germany.
Fascist parties in Germany focused on campaigns against immigrants."

Participant 18: I know how strict and violent it was. Not too many details.

Participant 19: Germans were beaten down morale and economically from WW1 and they began turning to fascism because the country was falling apart and they felt demoralized. It also enabled them to blame there problems on one particular group.

Participant 20: I genuinely don't know much about it. To my knowledge it was very totalitarian and those who did not see eye to eye with the government were oppressed, or worse, punished for their differing opinions and refusal to abide by the rules set by the government.

Participant 21: Not much except that there was a rise for in the Germany and people wanted a more unified feeling with strong leadership

Participant 22: [No Answer]

Participant 23: I learned about this years ago, but I barely remember a thing, so I can't really say I know much about this. I just know it was a poor social structure that was potentially dangerous, and that is why it had to change. It was unjust and irrational.

Participant 24: Nothing.

Participant 25: I know that Germans believed that Jews were filthy and that they were the reason for something like the economy dropping or something? I also feel like they hated Jews because of something having to do with Jesus and how the Jews "killed" Jesus in a way, thinking he wasn't their messiah? I'm not sure, though. I do know that the Germans were brainwashed by Hitler and that even though lots of Germans were actually Jews, that wasn't good enough and they wanted to get rid of Jews all together.

Participant 26: I know fascism is the idea that everyone in to obey a strict authoritarian government, and that medical science had focused on eugenics at the time. There was a lot of patriotism and   no one was allowed to oppose the political agenda.

Participant 27: The overall idea of german fascism in the early 40s was to create an Aryan race, where those within the race were seen as genetically superior. this was a result of an economic depression, the cause was thought to be overpopulation, and the easiest demographic to target was Jewish people due to the stigma that they were financially frugal, and that was bad for the economy.

Participant 28: A sort of nativism or jingoism glorifying the Aryan race and the multi-faceted eradication of Jews, the disabled, the elderly, the queer, and other minorities. In retaliation for the economic downfall following World War One and the Treaty of Versailles.

Participant 29: None? I don't really know I know that they had concentration camps, Jewish had to wear those stars on their coats, has chambers, boot camps for German youth etc ?

Participant 30: In all honesty I don't really know anything about German fascism in the 20th century.

Participant 31: Holocaust