

Who Can Resist the Pull of the Crowd?

Part 1 of 2

by Berit Kjos - May 20, 2004

For background information, read ***Brainwashing and Education "Reform"***

<http://www.crossroad.to/Quotes/brainwashing.html>

"In alerting criminal investigators, Specialist Darby, a 24-year-old from Maryland, stood out from other soldiers who learned of the abuse.... Many other people including medics, dog handlers and military intelligence soldiers -- and even the warden of the site where the abuses occurred -- saw or heard of similar pictures of abuse, witnessed it or heard abuse discussed openly at Abu Ghraib.... Mistreatment was not only widely known but also apparently tolerated, so much so that a picture of naked detainees forced into a human pyramid was used as a screen saver on a computer in the interrogations room."^[1] Kate Zernike

"You shall not follow a crowd to do evil...." Exodus 23:2

Through the ages, human cruelty and crowd behavior have perplexed moral leaders but inspired the ruthless. Man's natural inclinations to do unthinkable things when part of a passion-driven group would grieve the merciful, but it became a source of power in the hands of ambitious rulers. And while the positive side of this crowd mentality is now called *synergy* by visionary change agents, its negative effects can be seen in the mindless brutality that would incite murderous riots, lynchings, pogroms and persecution around the world.

"Little adapted to reasoning, crowds are quick to act," explained Gustave Le Bon in his 1899 book called ***The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind***. "How powerless they are to hold any opinions other than those which are imposed upon them.... [They are led] by seeking what produces an impression on them and what seduces them." He continued:

"[Crowds possess] a collective mind which makes them feel, think and act in a manner quite different.... a sentiment of invincible power which allows [him] to yield to instincts which, had he been alone, he would... have kept under restraint."^[2]

In ***Brainwashing***, a 1956 expose of brainwashing tactics used by Communist prison guards on Western prisoners-of-war, Edward Hunter echoes Le Bon's warning:

"Brainwashing is a system of befogging the brain so a person can be seduced into acceptance of what otherwise would be abhorrent to him. He loses touch with reality. Facts and fancy whirl round and change places.... However, in order to prevent people from recognizing the inherent evils in brainwashing, the Reds pretend that it is only another name for something already very familiar and of unquestioned respect, such as education or reform." ***Brainwashing and Education 'Reform'***

The moral weakness of the collective mind has been researched and exploited throughout history. Lenin, Hitler and countless other tyrants saw psychology as an essential tool for managing the masses, for eradicating or reinventing Christianity, and for ruling the world. And today, the psycho-social strategies that served their purposes so well have been fine-tuned and strengthened by digital data systems that put their detestable old spy tactics to shame.

All around us, we see the ripening fruit of seven decades of increasingly psychologized education.

Tolerance of evil and "group thinking" are closing minds to God-given wisdom. And since today's collective "holism" is incompatible with God's holiness, few dare take a contrary stand on truth. Such courage might even be viewed as intolerance. Neither individualism nor God's grace has any place in this horrendous system of mind control. Yet, Hitler's pragmatic concept of "mental health" -- equating "health" with collective thinking and conformity to the "right" kind of group -- is transforming churches as well as cultures around the world.

So while Specialist Darby refused to conform, [1] most people condoned, concealed or carried out the abusive tactics. But we shouldn't be surprised. "Thirty years before the sadistic humiliation of Iraqi prisoners, the same behavior was exhibited at Stanford University," according to Pat Nolan, President of Justice Fellowship.[3] In his article, "***Iraqi Prisoner Abuse and the Importance of Self-Restraint***," he compares the brutal images from the Abu Ghraib prison with similar sadism among graduate students during a notorious 1971 research project. In this experiment, the participating Stanford students were divided into two groups: prisoners and guards. Nolan begins with a quote from the ***New York Times*** by John Schwartz:

"Within days the 'guards' had become swaggering and sadistic, to the point of placing bags over the prisoners' heads, forcing them to strip naked and encouraging them to perform sexual acts.' Their professor was so profoundly shocked by this behavior that he stopped the study after six days, rather than two weeks [as] he had planned.

"None of us should feel smug. While we all hope we would not have taken part in such abasement of our fellow human beings, we are all stained with original sin. Alexander Solzhenitsyn said that 'the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being.' It is only by restraining these base impulses that we can be civilized." [3]

It's shocking, isn't it? So is a study done ten years earlier. Back in 1961, Yale psychologist, Dr. Stanley Milgram, divided paid volunteers into two groups: teachers and learners. The "teachers" were told to punish slow "learners" with electric shocks that would rise in intensity with each wrong answer:

"Dr. Milgram wanted to obtain an insight as to why the Nazi war criminals who committed atrocities against humanity willingly participated in the deaths of millions of people. Often their excuse was, 'I was just following orders and doing my job, sir.' Were these men and women abjectly evil, following orders, or was there another reason?

"Dr. Milgram's experiments gave some insightful answers that help show why Hitler and other tyrants throughout recorded history have often had the popular support of the population. The willingness of ordinary people to commit cruel acts against their fellow man exists today in all nations as it has in the past...

"At 75, 90, and at 105 volts the learner would groan with pain. At 120 volts the learner complained that the pain of the shocks was unbearable. When the teacher showed any reservation about administering the higher voltages for wrong answers, the scientist would explain that the shocks are not lethal and the learner will suffer no permanent damage from the shocks." [4]

The "learners" didn't actually feel the electric shocks. They had been coached to act the role of a victim and pretend they felt excruciating pain. But the "teachers" who followed orders and administered the cruel punishment didn't know that. They heard the "learners" cry out in agony. Many felt uncomfortable pulling the levers. Yet, few resisted the seemingly heartless commands of the "scientist" who facilitated the project. To most participants, complying with the group project and obeying their leader overshadowed any sense of wrong.

Why Few Resist

Thank God, not all would submit to ruthless orders and mindless team performance. Referring to the

Yale study above, Ahanad O'Connor wrote,

"In numerous studies over the past few decades, psychologists have found that a certain percentage of people simply refuse to give in to pressure - by authorities or by peers - if they feel certain actions are wrong. ...

"In the noted experiment 40 years ago when Dr. Stanley Milgram showed that most people will deliver a lethal dose of electricity to another subject if instructed to do so by a scientist in a white lab coat, a minority still said no.

"These people are rare,' said Dr. Elliot Aronson, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, who studies social influence. 'It's really hard for us to predict in advance who is going to resist by looking at things like demographic data or religious background.' [5]

Do you wonder why moral courage is so rare these days? Then, take a look at our education system - the culmination of long-term plans to merge Education, Labor and Mental Health programs in a common effort to prepare "healthy" human resources for the global community. Starting in elementary school, children learn to conform to group values. They must think and act holistically, and measure their own worth in terms of their value to the group or "greater whole." Individualism and offensive Biblical values are out; collective thinking and group conformity are in. If children refuse to comply, the state's mandatory assessments will expose the problem, and their permanent (lifelong) digital data file will record their lack of "cooperation" and failure to be "a group player." [See *Character Training for Global Citizenship*: <http://www.crossroad.to/text/articles/ctfgc9-98.html>]

The ultimate goal was exposed by Professor Raymond Houghton in *To Nurture Humaneness* (published by the curriculum arm of the massive National Education Association in 1970). He wrote:

"...absolute behavior control is imminent... The critical point of behavior control, in effect, is sneaking up on mankind without his self-conscious realization that a crisis is at hand. Man will... never self-consciously know that it has happened." [6]

Hard to believe? Ahanad O'Connor explains an important part of this problem: "The power to resist coercion reflects what psychologists call internal locus of control, or the ability to determine one's own destiny. People at the other end of the scale, with external locus of control, are more heavily influenced by authority figures." [5]

Interesting that he would mention "Locus of Control" -- a significant factor in today's student data file. While change agents want students to have an internal locus of control with regard to their parents, they also want them to yield their individual choices to the external control of the peer group. In other words, they want students to be released from the external control of traditional authorities who might hold them accountable to Biblical values. Yet they want to build dependence on the "group" and its facilitator, since peer pressure will be the primary means of changing the student's values and molding the collective thinkers needed for the 21st century workforce. Complex as it sounds, this concept is familiar to those who have followed education technology during the last decade.

In ***Brave New Schools***, Chapter 3, we included a question from Pennsylvania's state assessment that illustrates this point. Since the new government tests match national and international standards, they expose what all students must learn to fit into the planned society.

Anita Hoge, a concerned mother, exposed these connections in the early nineties. When researching Pennsylvania's EQA (Educational Quality Assessments) and its relationship to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), she noticed an alarming emphasis on group conformity as a mark of good "citizenship." While emphasizing the new attitudes needed for citizenship, the NAEP left out factual objectives concerning the American form of government.

She noticed that in the following NAEP's test assignment, students were not given the option of saying "no" to vandalism -- only to the three incentives. The context seemed to assume that -- given

the right incentives -- all students would participate in the suggested lawlessness:

There is a secret club at school called the Midnight Artists. They go out late at night and paint funny sayings and pictures on buildings. A student is asked to join the club. In this situation, I would join the club when I knew...			
	YES	MAYBE	NO
1. My best friend asked me to join.			
2. Most of the popular students were in the club.			
3. My parents would ground me if they found out I joined.			

Guess what the "right" answers were? Hint: The state seeks responses that demonstrate "willingness to honor self-made commitments to individuals or groups." [7] This response falls into the "citizenship" category which measures "Personal responsibility and integrity." Knowing that today's global values give new meaning to words like responsibility and integrity, one can begin to understand why the desired answers would be "Yes" to 1 and 2.

The key is control, explained Anita Hoge. To transform nations, trained leaders must manage group behavior. And periodic assessments of the student's locus of control and rate of change are needed to continually update a student's IEP (Individual Education Plan). By using computers programmed according to each child's needs, weaknesses, interests, felt needs, and resistance (or locus of control), they hope to mold citizens who can be managed through group pressure -- even as the students are assured that they "own" their choices and think independently.

As churches become increasingly dependent on similar technology and continual assessments, they gradually adapt to the government process of surveillance, control and psychosocial manipulation through facilitated groups and dialectic thinking. The following chart could apply to any social institution involved in systems management and data tracking. The words used are inadequate to explain all the differences between the three categories, for words such as "citizenship" are redefined to fit each new paradigm. [See Character Training for Global Citizenship]

From Personal Freedom to Collectivism and Control

	Christian paradigm Biblical	Humanist Paradigm Modern	Global Paradigm Postmodern
Source of values:	God and His Word, parental training	Fact, logic & wants	Imagination & feelings (through facilitated dialogue and peer pressure)
Locus of Control	1. External (Biblical authorities: God, Bible, parents, pastor, etc.) 2. Internal (Holy Spirit, conscience)	1. External: information, relationships 2. Internal: reason & feelings	1. External: Peers, facilitators & suggestions (curricula, storytelling, entertainment...) 2. Internal: Imagination and feelings
Thoughts & opinions	Objective - based on Biblical truth, fact, faith and reason	Objective & subjective - based on facts, presumed truths, reason and relativism	Subjective - based on wants, cravings, the rejection of any absolute truths or unchanging values. (1 John 2:15-17)
Education	Learn truth, wisdom, work	Learn facts, skills,	Become a collective thinker,

goals	skills and citizenship	citizenship	team-player, community server, ready to flow with "continual change." (Proverb 12-13)
Methods	Teach truth and facts, encourage self-discipline, train in skills and Christian virtues	Teach facts and logic, encourage self-discipline, train in skills and humanist character qualities.	Use psycho-social manipulation and continual assessments to measure change, resistance, "progress," etc. (Legalizing Mind Control)
Right & wrong	Don't tolerate sin (but love sinners)	Tolerate all lifestyles (Rom 12:2, 9)	Don't tolerate dissenters (Zero Tolerance)
Accountable & belonging	To God	To Self	The group and its ever-changing, hierarchical system (Unity & Community)
Trust -	God and His Word, not self	Human reason (Col 2:8)	Your feelings (unaware of manipulation by facilitators and psychosocial tactics)

"The great democratic danger," wrote Alan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind*, "is enslavement to public opinion." [8] This is no small threat in today's marketing atmosphere where high tech pollsters and opinion masters know all about our wants, needs and resistance to tempting thrills and tastes. And now trained facilitators everywhere can use similar information to appeal to the felt needs of their clients or group members. If Americans yield to amoral group opinions, who will take charge? Who will inspire those opinions? Who will control mass behavior?

The answer might lie in the vast global networks of leadership training systems that mold pastors as well as leaders and facilitators for schools, governments, corporations and non-profit institutions. One of the most influential training grounds is the Aspen Institute where little Elian Gonzales was remediated before he could return to Cuba. One of its former lecturers was Bob Buford, the founding President both of the Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management [9] and the Leadership Network. [10]

The latter trains large churches to follow the latest business management techniques. Those tactics include the dialectic process conceived by occult philosopher, Georg Hegel, then used by Karl Marx to break down walls between the holy (Christianity) and the unholy (communism). Now leaders around the world use it as a means to replace Biblical separation with feel-good unity and group synergy. In other words, this "unity in diversity" creates the "spiritual energy" needed to motivate the masses to go along with "continual change."

The negative side of such synergy is obvious: minds are closed to unwanted facts, rational arguments, and unpopular Scriptures -- but open to group values and opinions. Those opinions are likely to include hostility toward any Christian who refuses to become part of the dialectic process or conform to the crowd mentality.

Do you still wonder why so few are willing to take a moral stand and resist such group thinking? Or how someone might be released from the seductive grasp of this sought-after group synergy? Half a century ago, Dr. Solomon E. Asch helped answer the second question. His experiments on "compliance" showed that...

"...people are more likely to break from a group if they have an ally. Subjects in his experiment were asked to look at different lines on a card and judge their lengths. Each subject was unknowingly placed in a group of "confederates" who deliberately chose a line that was obviously wrong. About a third of the time, the subjects would give in and go along with the majority."

... "But if one confederate broke from the group and gave another answer, even a wrong answer, the subjects were more likely to give the response they knew was correct.

... "The more you feel support for your dissent, the more likely you are to do it," said Dr. Danny Axsom, an associate professor of psychology at Virginia Tech." [5]

Such support has been sadly lacking in many classrooms, purpose-driven churches and corporate teams. The cost of resistance has seemed too great! People who conform are rewarded with acceptance, appreciation, applause and celebration. They belong in the group. But resisters face rejection and exclusion, which brings more emotional pain than most are willing to endure. (See the personal testimonies in "Dealing with Resisters)."

God's Strength In Our Weakness

Many look to psychologists for insights and solutions, but our Lord says, *"Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" 1 Corinthians 1:20*

Only our Maker can truly understand our natural inclinations, our personal weaknesses and our need for His grace. (Psalm 139:1-16) That's why He gave us ample warnings that show us how to triumph in Christ no matter what pressures we face. Consider these:

"... in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors.... From such people turn away!

"...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned..." 2 Timothy 3:1-5

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2

"Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'" 1 Corinthians 16:33

"...if sinners entice you, do not consent." Proverbs 1:10

"Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Ephesians 6:10-13

Along with His wise and unchanging guidelines, God also provides the strength needed to endure any rejection we might face for His sake. What He promised Paul, He will also do for us when we put Him first. He said, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9-10*

In the last two thousand years, millions of faithful Christians have relied on that amazing grace. They faced beatings, humiliations, torture and death for choosing to follow God rather than man. Through it all, they were conformed, not to human crowds, but to the life and death of Jesus Christ. They knew that their beloved Lord, Himself, was put to death through the consensus of a crowd driven to murderous hatred by the religious establishment:

"Now at the feast [Pontius Pilate] was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, 'Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?' For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.

"But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, 'What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?'"

"So they cried out again, 'Crucify Him!' Then Pilate said to them, 'Why, 'what evil has He done?' But they cried out all the more, 'Crucify Him!'" Mark 15:6-14

Did you notice the irrational responses from a crowd that spoke as one, stirred to anger by clever leaders? That's the collective mind, driven by negative synergy (syn = together + energy), which makes ordinary humans set aside moral standards and home-taught values. It's the dark side of solidarity, and it makes "nice" civilized people all too vulnerable to evil behavior.

But once again, God's unchanging Word shows the safe and victorious way. Take Psalm 1 to heart and teach it to your children. The last half would fail today's political correctness test, but we would be wise to heed it:

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water....

The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Part 2 will deal with specific ways to resist today's subtle forms of brainwashing. Some will be based on Edward Hunter's interviews with former prisoners-of-war in Communist prisons in Asia and Eastern Europe during the 1950s. All will be validated through God's Word. In his book, Brainwashing and Education 'Reform,' Edward Hunter wrote,

"Indoctrination, persuasion, explanation, publicity and public relations, education, examination and re-examination, criticism and self-criticism -- each of these only cover a single facet of brainwashing."

"What was evident out of the experiences of the brainwashed was that two men could undergo similar pressures under the same set of circumstances and one would crack and the other not. But why was it that the man who seemed to possess most of the advantages was frequently the one to break?....

"I began asking.... To what do you attribute your survival?' The replies showed how a mind could defeat the most subtle pressures ever devised by a witch doctor or a corticovisceral psychiatrist." [11]

Endnotes:

1. Kate Zernike, "Handful Of Soldiers Spoke Out, As Many Kept Quiet On Abuse," *New York Times*, May 22, 2004.
2. Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd* (Burlington, VT: Fraser Publishing Co., 1982 -- almost a century after Le Bon wrote the book), xvi, xx, 9.
3. Pat Nolan, "Iraqi Prisoner Abuse and the Importance of Self-Restraint," *Justice Report*, Vol. 3, No. 18,

May 12, 2004.

http://www.pfm.org/JusticeTemplate.cfm?Section=Justice_Home&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=12422

4. John Taft, "Pancake Juries' bow to authority figures," *News with Views*, September 27, 2003,

<http://www.newswithviews.com/Taft/john3.htm>

5. Anahad O'Connor, "Pressure to Go Along With Abuse Is Strong, but Some Soldiers Find Strength to Refuse," *New York Times*, May 14, 2004. <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/14/international/14RESI.html?pagewanted=1>

6. Raymond Houghton, *To Nurture Humaneness*, ASCD (curriculum arm of the NEA), 1970

7. Anita Hoge, from audio cassette portion of *Talking Papers: A 'Hands on' Tool for parents to understand outcome-based education* (West Alexander, PA: self-published, 1994). "The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) developed nine general citizenship objectives. These national objectives were used to provide the frame of reference for what was to be measured."

8. Alan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987); 246.

9. The former Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management is now called Leader to Leader Institute.

See <http://www.pfdf.org/>

10. The Leadership Network at <http://www.leadnet.org/site/index.asp>

11. Edward Hunter, *Brainwashing* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1956), pages 266, 268.