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This is a place to discuss, debate and think about the world, politics, religion and anything affecting the planet that we might want to draw to the attention of all of the group's members, and anybody else who might be interested in visiting here. All that I ask is that all those taking part avoid abusive comments. Any subject is acceptable. The idea is to try to think about things outside of the box and to be prepared to see another point of view even if very different from our own. That's a broad remit, my friends, so I hope you'll continue posting here, and, hopefully, we'll all end up with broader outlooks on life.

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Suicide Bombers and Evolution

by [Munzly](#) @ 2010-02-26 - 05:42:13

I have often wondered what makes a suicide bomber tick - if I may be excused the pun with such a serious subject - Why should anyone in their right mind give up their life for such a poor return?

Well, apparently this may not be religious insanity, but the working of our old friend Evolution; labelled in this case as "spite."

Here are a couple of quotes from an article in Science News presenting the arguments:

Evolutionary theorists had debated whether spiteful behavior could arise. But until this decade, we didn't really think you could get spite, West says. Now, he accepts as spiteful the parasitoid wasp larvae that become sterile soldiers and kill unrelated competitor larvae within the host. Bacteriocins also fit the spiteful pattern, West says, and are one of the best couple of examples. From an evolutionary point of view, spite poses entertaining puzzles. As Andy Gardner of the University of Oxford in England puts it, Why would it ever pay an individual to perform a behavior that reduces its own reproductive success? This seems to go against the idea of the 'survival of the fittest.'

For a bacterium, spite may be beneficial because it reduces the reproduction of competitors. The spiteful individual may die, but close relatives can pass along shared genes, which won't be as diluted by the competitors' in the next generation's gene pool. For a bacterium or nonreproducing female insect, Gardner says, even suicidal spite can pay, if she manages to take out enough of her enemies with her.

KULTURE CORNER



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They are of course dicussing such things as soil bacteria, nematode worms, wasp larvae etc. and not humanity's more peculiar political actions. However I can't help thinking the theory may apply.

The full article is available [HERE](#).

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 **la_spice**
2010-02-26 @ 08:54:21

The spiteful angle is a very good one the recent cases of parents who choose to wipe of their own children before killing themselves is a similar example.

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 **menhir**
<http://www.myword.blog.co.uk>
2010-02-26 @ 09:50:18

The things people research. This must be quite old, it is a subject focus I have come across before in other species. The other possibility is that because the research already existed someone set out to prove or disprove the thesis. Obviously they have endorsed it.

I appreciate as you do, this is not a tongue-in-cheek-subject, but I do feel that while spite is an aspect of human, [and animal] nature we do know exists, in isolation, it is lightweight in the discussion about why bombers bomb out their lives and that of others. We are dealing with a number of complex mindsets and combinations of factors.

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 **Munzly**
<http://poppycock.blog.co.uk/>
2010-02-26 @ 21:21:20

The "Evolutionary Spite" aspect of suicide bombing is a factor at the socio-political strategic level, while the cultural factors you list are causal at the tactical level.

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 **menhir**
<http://www.myword.blog.co.uk>
2010-02-26 @ 21:52:33

Spite is a specific descriptive linguistic term and its definition is too narrow for this particular focus, in my view.

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yet.

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Munzly
<http://poppycock.blog.co.uk/>
 2010-02-26 @ 22:41:42

I agree with you, the word as in common usage is not so appropriate. However I'm merely echoing it from the article. Obviously it needs the "Evolutionary" qualifier to be specific to this case.

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menhir
<http://www.myword.blog.co.uk>
 2010-02-26 @ 22:49:27

On a personal note, I would say it needs a lot of qualifying to be specific to most broad spectrum circumstances. At a more simplistic level, spite does have some merit.

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jenray Pro
<http://www.jenniferhunter.co.uk>
 2010-02-26 @ 10:57:27

could well be, Munzly...but more I would have thought to do with our reptilian brain exerting its influence excessively again...territoriality, ritual, aggression and social hierarchy...the suicide bomber is practicing all four of these aspects of human nature when he/she goes in and removes enemies for his/her cause...

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Munzly
<http://poppycock.blog.co.uk/>
 2010-02-26 @ 21:24:41

"Evolutionary spite" relates to the long term effect of suicide bombing as an evolutionary factor in the gene-war going on between the bomber's group and the society it is resisting.

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jenray Pro
<http://www.jenniferhunter.co.uk>
 2010-02-26 @ 23:43:34

not sure I can go along with this theory...spite is just nastiness exaggerated in humans...it's too small a feeling to be attributed to suicide bombers...too associated with young girls for me...spiteful little she cats and all that...and they can be lethal when they put their minds to it...

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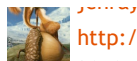
Munzly
<http://poppycock.blog.co.uk/>
 2010-02-27 @ 05:40:50

The whole point of this is that "evolutionary spite" reflects the way suicide bombers effect the evolution of their group within the human race. It does not refer to the emotional state of the bomber. That would be tactical, this is strategic. It is a tiny effect that over many generations may alter the genome of the perpetrating group.

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jenray Pro

<http://www.jenniferhunter.co.uk>

2010-02-27 @ 11:20:07

I see that, but it's really a bit far fetched, Munzly...what applies to genetic effects in bacteria and some insects could stop at them...they should find another name for this phenomenon...'spite' has too many emotional connotations...on a completely different level...if human beings refused to accept that we've inherited our sexual behaviour including paedophilia from our bonobo ancestors, their hardly likely to accept this explanation for the activities of suicide bombers...and how long have we had suicide bombers? For this to effect generations, suicide bombers must have been around since the year dot!!...

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neonmeatdreams

2010-02-26 @ 16:17:13

I think you're on the right track. I believe it's to do with young mens frustration with Society and the Worlds Evil a feeling of helplessness and insignificance in this mass of humanity. When you feel that all your actions will lead nowhere and go unnoticed then I guess people may feel that it is better to go out with a bang (literally) and leave their mark on the world. They are basically saying I can't fit in here I can't function here so fuck those that do cause if I can't have it then they shouldn't either. Spite.

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Munzly

<http://poppycock.blog.co.uk/>

2010-02-26 @ 21:35:02

Right, and that means the bomber's group creates an inhibition in the victim's society to reduce cross breeding between the two groups, thus offering an advantage to the Bomber's group's genes by keeping them less diluted. In fact I doubt if it has much short-term effect, but then evolution works on minute changes over long periods of time, so the effect is probably enough to do that.

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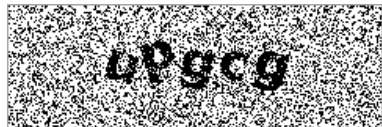
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