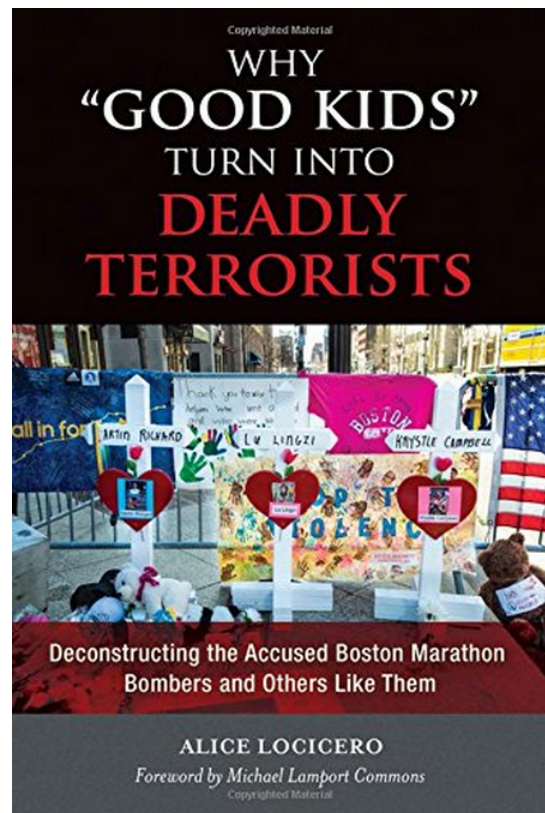
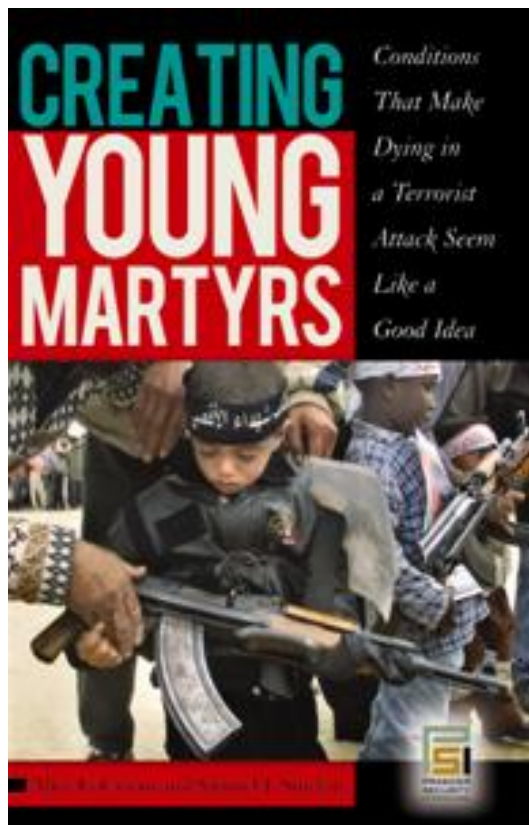


HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT “GOOD KIDS” CAN BECOME TERRORISTS, AND HOW CAN WE PREVENT IT?

Terrorism expert and Boston-based author Dr. Alice LoCicero explains why good kids become terrorists and offers solutions.



Soon to be released in paperback: *Creating Young Martyrs*
Newly released, *Why “Good Kids” Turn Into Deadly Terrorists*
Both now available in Hard Cover, E-Book or Kindle

by Dr. Alice LoCicero¹

¹ Dr. Samuel Justin Sinclair co-authored *Creating Young Martyrs*.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Terrorism expert explains how communities can
prevent homegrown terrorism**

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – In her new book, *Why “Good Kids” Turn Into Deadly Terrorists*, clinical researcher and psychologist Dr. Alice LoCicero argues that the exploitation, by opportunistic zealots, of children and young adults—whether from Sri Lanka, Somalia, Tunisia, or her own hometown of Cambridge, MA—can be stopped. After years of research into youth violence and martyrdom, Dr. LoCicero explains that communities have the power to better understand and successfully thwart recruitment efforts. With the upcoming trial of accused Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnev, there has never been a better moment to explore how we can work toward helping impressionable youth from becoming pawns in battles they do not fully understand.

A longtime psychologist, professor and trauma responder, Dr. LoCicero’s research focuses on children recruited to lives immersed in violence. She has met with young victims of trauma from Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe, and the United States. As the co-founder of the Society for Terrorism Research, Dr. LoCicero is a topic expert poised to guide the American public as it launches into an urgent nationwide discussion, already underway because of events in Syria, that will only become more topical with the trial of 21-year old Tsarnev.

Dr. LoCicero’s research and analysis is now available in her most recent book, *Why “Good Kids” Turn Into Deadly Terrorists: Deconstructing the Accused Boston Marathon Bombers and Others Like Them* (Praeger, 2014). “When the Boston marathon bombing occurred, and when I learned that the bombers were from my town of Cambridge and attended the same high school as my children, I felt compelled to understand how this could happen, and how to prevent it from happening again,” says Dr. LoCicero. “It has turned out to be a topic of importance for all Americans, and indeed for communities across the world, as parents try to prevent their children from being seduced into terrorist groups.”

This timely book answers such questions as: What are the warning signs that youths are being drawn into terrorism? How can we avoid allowing children to be persuaded that violence is altruistic and honorable? Is it possible to help kids realize their potential in healthier and more productive ways? The book will spur meaningful conversations among parents, community leaders, teachers, politicians, and policymakers about what we can do to prevent such recruitment. It also addresses larger, related questions, such as whether humans are naturally violent, who benefits when young individuals engage in terrorism, and why minors are recruited to become killers. Dr. LoCicero’s conclusions regarding prevention are consistent with those of researchers working separately in Europe and other parts of the US.

Dr. LoCicero is a clinical and research psychologist who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is core faculty at the Center for Multicultural Training in Psychology at Boston Medical Center. In addition to this most recent book, she is also the author of, *Creating Young Martyrs: Conditions That Make Dying in a Terrorist Attack Seem Like a Good Idea* (Praeger, 2008).

Meet Alice LoCicero



Dr. Alice LoCicero is a clinical and research psychologist who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is a member of the core faculty at the Center for Multicultural Training in Psychology at Boston Medical Center. Prior to this, she was chair of the department of social science at Endicott College, Beverly, Massachusetts. Earlier in her career she was a staff psychologist at Children's Hospital, Boston, and a faculty member at Tufts University and at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. LoCicero has provided crisis intervention and psychological first aid to survivors and family members of numerous mass disasters in the United States, and has met with youthful victims of trauma from five continents. Her interest in youth who are recruited to violence began when she founded and directed a clinical service for court-involved children in Chelsea, Massachusetts.

Co-founder and past president of the Society for Terrorism Research, Dr. LoCicero has given keynote addresses on terrorism in the EU and the US. In 2007 and 2010, she chose to take on considerable personal risk in visiting Sri Lanka to study children at risk of recruitment to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers), one of the most notorious terrorist groups in history. During her two trips there, she interviewed children and adults affected by the Indian Ocean Tsunami, civil war, and terrorism. She also provided consultation and training to childcare providers and teachers working with children who had survived the war, but were orphaned or otherwise separated from their parents, including some who had been members of the Tamil Tigers. She reported on her work in Sri Lanka in the book *Creating Young Martyrs: Conditions That Make Dying in a Terrorist Attack Seem Like a Good Idea*.

Following the 2013 bombing of the Boston Marathon, Dr. LoCicero researched the historical, social, cultural, and personal factors that, in interaction, can cause good kids in the United States to become so-called "homegrown terrorists," a study that resulted in her most recent book, ***Why "Good Kids" Turn into Deadly Terrorists: Deconstructing the Accused Boston Marathon Bombers and Others Like Them***.

In addition to contributing to the scholarly advancement of the field of youth and violence, Dr. LoCicero provides pro bono services as a member of the Massachusetts Disaster Behavioral Network. She is President of the Board of Directors of Community Legal Services and Counseling Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a nonprofit agency that combines legal and counseling services in the areas of domestic violence, housing, disability, and immigration.

Praise for Alice LoCicero's books

Why “Good Kids” Turn Into Deadly Terrorists: Deconstructing the Accused Boston Marathon Bombers and Others Like Them

The author gives a careful psychological analysis of the events ... as a structure that can be studied sociologically from outside and psychologically from the inside. The entire process of recruitment of “terrorists” in Sri Lanka, Southern Sudan, South America and all over the world are reviewed to give an external assessment of the structure. By “deconstructing” the events and the accused Boston Marathon Bombers, ... [LoCicero offers] constructive explanations of causes, motives, historical and cultural variables and correlates.

James Beshai, Ph.D., Psychologist, formerly professor at American University of Cairo Egypt, and at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, author of “The Challenge of Understanding Muslim Americans.”

Creating Young Martyrs: Conditions That Make Dying in a Terrorist Attack Seem Like a Good Idea

“What could possibly lead young people, in their teens or even younger, to knowingly take their own lives in order to kill others? LoCicero and Sinclair provide thoughtful, original, and provocative answers to this question. Unlike other recent discussions of the motives that drive terrorist violence, the authors take a developmental and cultural perspective, focusing on the evolving mind of the young person who lives in a world in which his or her people are dominated by powerful others and basic human rights and opportunities are scarce. Based on the best modern and classic scholarship and their own in-depth interviews with young and older persons in war-torn regions, they provide a powerful analysis that is sure to add to our understanding of one of the most vexing problems facing today's world.”

Tom Pyszczynski, Ph.D, Professor of Psychology, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

The importance of this book ... lies in its imaginative construction of the real choices faced by children recruited for war. Without minimizing the horror and terror of warfare, it portrays a complex process of decision making that often involves the weighing of personal risk against the pull of other cultural and social forces. The result is a study of child soldiers that avoids the cliché-ridden commentary that informs most studies of this subject and lets us see children as real social actors in times of conflict.

David Rosen, J.D. Ph.D, Professor of Anthropology and Law, Fairleigh Dickinson University

The war on terror can never be won with guns, but rather by understanding the forces that drive an individual to become a terrorist and then constructively addressing those forces. This book makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of why children are driven to terrorism. The insights it offers may allow us to formulate policies that deter children at risk from engaging in terrorism.

Naresh Gunaratnam, MD., Clinical Scholar, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Ann Arbor, Michigan

This very readable book lucidly explores the life events through which children become soldiers in terrorist organizations and potential martyrs for their causes ... By going beyond the realm of individual pathology and considering development in a social environment, they shed light on a horrific phenomenon. The study of terrorism greatly needs such examples of using the psychology learned from our ordinary lives.

Arthur J. Kendall, Ph.D. President, Social Research Consultants, University Park, Maryland

“It's amazing that with all the focus on national security since 9-11, there has been very little written about trying to understand the psyche of the terrorist. Whether you're a hawk or dove, it should make sense to try to understand the psychological, family and society influences that can make young people do things that most Americans can't even begin to understand. This book does a great job. It explains the research that has been done on the terrorist mentality and ties it together with what we know about child development in general, all in a very engaging way, with anecdotes and examples from the authors' interviews with children and adults who live in a society in which war and terrorism are a way of life. *CREATING YOUNG MARTYRS* is a very enlightening read for ordinary Americans and should be must-reading for anyone working in the area of national security.”

Elizabeth A Hauck, PhD, Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Sterling, Virginia

Q&A with Alice LoCicero

Why did you write your new book?

As one of the world's top experts in children who are recruited to terrorist groups, I was sad, though not surprised, in 2013 at the first instance of so-called "homegrown terrorism," something I had predicted in my first book on child terrorists, published in 2008. It could have happened anywhere, but it happened in Boston, and the accused perpetrators were from my own town of Cambridge, Massachusetts. My neighbors, stunned that such a thing could happen here, were asking how and why it did. All this compelled me to research and write specifically about this instance of youthful terrorism, as an example of how this can happen and what we can do to prevent it in the future.

Didn't Cambridge do everything it could to support these brothers?

Cambridge did everything that any city could have been expected to do at the time the Tsarnaev brothers were growing up. But we all—inside and outside Cambridge—have to begin to do more than we did in the past. Now that we are more aware of the fact that many American youth, at a vulnerable time in their lives, are making choices that are consequential for themselves and others, often without consulting with the caring and engaged adults who could actually help them make the best choice possible, we have to find ways to make such consulting easier and more accessible. For example, adults who care about kids have to feel comfortable, and be rational, in discussing gangs, violence, and terrorism, and how kids may be seduced, misled, and recruited to act in ways that are against their own best interest, as well as the best interest of the people they love. Kids have to be helped to understand, I think, what it means to have multiple loyalties, and how they can best help others they care about.

Aren't these sorts of kids bad, crazy, deranged, suicidal, etc.?

Each person who engages in violence has, of course, their own life history, and if we look hard enough, we will find some problems, some traumas, some personal challenges, and some losses. All this is important, but by itself is not sufficient to explain why young people like the Tsarnaevs resort to horrible acts of violence against innocent people. We must look harder at the context, culture, and, especially at the deliberate and ruthless methods of recruiters who would use them for their own gain, and who care not at all about the young people's welfare. The recruiters are willing to talk young people into sacrificing their lives or at least their ability to have a productive life. They appeal to the inherent idealism of youth, and somehow convince them that the best thing they can do for people they care about is to kill other, innocent people, in order to make a statement. The young people who are recruited are, in a very counterintuitive sense, more likely to think of their action as altruistic, rather than as evil. But in their calculations, they fail to consider how much they could do if they survive, are educated, and act in non-violent manner to support others. This is the sort of thing that adults must be able to help with, in a calm and thoughtful manner. That is not, by the way, as easy as it sounds. We adults in the community will have to work hard to prepare ourselves.

What risks will people face if they try to discourage recruitment?

The greatest risk people face when they show an interest in terrorism in the US is that they will be misunderstood. Their neighbors, friends, coworkers, family members, and most worrisome, the law enforcement authorities, may think that they are too interested in terrorism, and may begin to look at them with some vague suspicion. They may be subject to increased scrutiny by security agencies. This is why I suggest that these efforts be undertaken as part of a larger group, and that officials and law enforcement be made aware that caring adults in the community are studying and creating ways to talk and listen to kids, and what their intentions are. I do not think law enforcement automatically has the wisdom or tools to intervene, though they have an important role. In Norway, interventions started with

law enforcement and are now expanding to include members of the community at large. I think ordinary, caring adults who engage with children every day are in the best position to help.

Aren't you afraid that people will disparage you for writing about the perpetrators?

Yes. And I hope people will understand after talking with me for a few minutes that my goal is prevention, plain and simple. As a social scientist, I believe that the best way towards prevention starts with knowledge.

The events surrounding the Marathon attacks shook me, just like it did all who live and work in the Boston area. There were so many losses of young people that especially tore at me. The loss of a promising young officer in the MIT police, a young man close in age to my own son and who, I learned, was a lot like many of the sincere and caring students of criminal justice I have taught over the years. Lingzi Lu, an international student from China who had just passed an important exam in statistics, who had made new friends in Boston, and who loved music. Active and engaged eight year old Martin Richard, a lovable child who advocated for peace, from a family who gave much to their community. Krystle Campbell, who was known as caring, reliable, life-affirming, and generous. Thinking about them leaves me, and all of Boston, in tears and grief at the promising young people we as a community have lost. The impact of the bombing did not end with those lives lost. Hundreds more were injured, and many of their injuries are so severe that their lives are changed forever. The Boston community has shown tremendous care and support, helping to lessen, as much as possible, the devastating impacts of the bombings. If only we could have protected those affected, and their families, by preventing the attacks.

Cambridge, Massachusetts has been home to me for decades. My children went to school in Cambridge. I worried, along with my neighbors, about whether the school our children had gone to and the city had somehow failed these young men. I remember being haunted by the question that President Obama, on April 19, asked: "what would bring these young men, who had lived in our communities and studied in our schools, to resort to violence?" I was challenged by that question. I strongly felt that it was a question that had to be answered and could be answered. And that I was in a position to help. While none of us could undo the horror of April 15, 2013, together, I believe we can shape the future to reduce the likelihood of such horror occurring again.

From 2002 to 2006, I had worked on research on terrorism. In 2006, I co-founded an international organization we call the Society for Terrorism Research, as a forum to collaborate with colleagues with similar interests. That society is still going strong. For my personal contribution to ending terrorism, I did something that several colleagues considered rash: I traveled to a country where a civil war was going on, to talk to kids about the war and about why kids would choose to fight as part of one of the world's most notorious terrorist groups, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the LTTE. I wrote about the results of that research in the book shown above, *Creating Young Martyrs*.

As I explored and researched the events in Boston, I found that some of what I had learned in Sri Lanka was parallel to what I was learning about the perpetrators of the Boston Marathon bombing. I started to write. My editor at Praeger and I decided that this research, too, should turn into a book-length report.

All the while I was studying terrorism, I was also working with those affected by it: The 9/11 families, teachers and child care workers in Sri Lanka, and refugees from many parts of the world. Each encounter with someone affected strengthened my determination to do what I could to prevent these events. I am hopeful that my book will help.

My work has included conversation with other psychologists in the EU and the US who are pursuing similar paths. We have all, separately and without prior consultation, come to similar conclusions. Preventing young people from radicalization, recruitment, and terrorist acts is a function of the community—parents, teachers, coaches, neighbors, friends. Law enforcement and government have their role, but they cannot do this alone.

How can ordinary citizens be expected to prevent terrorism?

It all begins with listening, being interested in the experiences of kids. Virtually every teenager I talk with tells me that neither their parents nor their teachers really know about the pressures they face. They try to protect their parents by keeping things private, not wanting to worry them. My colleagues and I believe that parents need to be aware and proactive in making time and creating conditions to talk to kids. Some kids are more private than others, and some would rather talk to teachers, coaches, clergy, advisors, older siblings. So we need the whole community to be aware that recruitment is not an aberration. Attempts to recruit kids to illegal and often violent actions is common. And in today's globally connected society, recruiters and the recruitment process can be virtually invisible to families and loved ones.

How can you refer to people like the accused Boston Marathon bombers as “good kids”?

When the Tsarnaev brothers were younger, all reports from teachers, peers, and others indicate that they were good kids. One of the younger brother's teachers referred to him as having a “heart of gold.” Their friends were horrified and also totally surprised that they could do such a heinous act. The same is true for kids around the world who later became terrorists. The Norwegian who participated in the Nairobi mall bombing was planning to be a physician and was viewed as a good kid. The Tunisian boy who put on a suicide vest was successful and sociable. The Tamil girl who was featured in a film about kids who joined a terrorist organization had wanted to be a nun. It is these very kids—caring, altruistic—who are targeted by unscrupulous recruiters who then manipulate the truth, bringing them to believe that the best, most caring, and most altruistic thing they can do is to bring attention to causes of concern by engaging in terrorist actions.

Is your approach likely to help prevent kids from joining ISIS?

Yes. The ISIS force is no different in the sense that it presents an image that is hideous to most, but can be presented to naïve youth as an opportunity to fight against the most powerful forces in the world, to fight for the “underdog.” Especially kids who have seen, in news report after news report, American forces fighting in dominantly Muslim countries, can easily believe that someone should “level the uneven playing field.” Recruiters use a lot of psychology and sophisticated marketing, designed to appeal to a teenager.

We have a huge task ahead: to present a realistic picture, providing time and space that will enable kids to re-evaluate the story being told by recruiters.