

The Psychology of Power and Evil: All Power to the Person? To the Situation? To the System?

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Abstract

To understand anti-social behavior by individuals, which includes violence, torture and terrorism, I endorse a greater reliance on situational variables and processes than has been traditional in psychology. The dominant dispositional orientation, embedded in a psychology of individualism, focuses on internal factors that people bring into various situations, such as genetic, personality, character, and pathological risk factors. While this perspective is obviously important to appreciating the integrity of individual functioning, it is vital to add an appreciation of the extent to which human actions may come under situational influences that can be quite powerful. Those influences have not been fully recognized within psychology or society in trying to explain unusual or “evil” behaviors, such as that of the abuses of Iraqi prisoners by United States military police guards at Abu Ghraib Prison. How one understands the root causes of such behaviors then impacts treatment and prevention strategies. This view has both influenced and been informed by a body of social psychological research and theory. The situationist approach is to the dispositional as public health models of disease are to medical models. It follows basic principles of Lewinian theory that propel situational determinants of behavior to a foreground well beyond being merely extenuating background circumstances. Unique to this situationist approach is using experimental laboratory and field research as demonstrations of real world phenomena that other approaches only analyze verbally or rely on archival or correlational data for answers.

The basic paradigm to be presented illustrates the relative ease with which “ordinary,” good men and women are induced into behaving in “evil ways” by turning on or off one or another social situational variable. The plan of this chapter is to outline some of my laboratory and field studies on deindividuation, aggression, vandalism, and the Stanford Prison Experiment, along with a process analysis of Milgram's obedience studies, and Bandura's analysis of “moral disengagement.” This body of research demonstrates the under-recognized power of social situations to alter the mental representations and behavior of individuals, groups and nations. I explore briefly extreme instances of “evil” behavior for their dispositional or situational foundations – torturers, death squad violence workers and terrorist suicide-bombers. Finally, we turn to consider the opposite side of the coin, by focusing on the positive virtues of heroism and ways in which society and educational systems can promote pro-social values.

¹. This chapter is a modified version of my PowerPoint presentation for the DHS course, The Psychology of Terrorism, organized by the faculty of the National Center on the Psychology of Terrorism. It relies on my recent chapter, The social psychology of good and evil: Understanding our capacity for Stanfkindness and cruelty. Published in *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. Arthur Miller (Ed.). (pp. 21-50). New York: Guilford.

Evil is intentionally behaving -- or causing others to act -- in ways that demean, dehumanize, harm, destroy, or kill innocent people. This behaviorally-focused definition makes an agent of agency responsible for purposeful, motivated actions that have a range of negative consequences to other people. It excludes accidental or unintended harmful outcomes, as well as the broader, generic forms of institutional evil, such as poverty, prejudice or destruction of the environment by agents of corporate greed. But it does include corporate responsibility for marketing and selling products with known disease-causing, death-dealing properties, such as cigarette manufacturers, or other drug dealers. It also extends beyond the proximal agent of aggression, as studied in research on interpersonal violence, to encompass those in distal positions of authority whose orders or plans are carried out by functionaries. This is true of military commanders and national leaders, such as Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Saddam Hussein, and other tyrants for their complicity in creating political systems of destruction in their own nations and in the world.

The same human mind that creates the most beautiful works of art and extraordinary marvels of technology is equally responsible for the perversion of its own perfection. This most dynamic organ in the universe has been a seemingly endless source for creating ever more vile torture chambers and instruments of horror in earlier centuries, the “bestial machinery” unleashed on Chinese citizens by Japanese soldiers in their rape of Nanking (see Iris Chang, 1997), and the recent demonstration of “creative evil” of the destruction of the World Trade Center by turning commercial airlines into weapons of mass destruction. How can the unimaginable become so readily imagined?

My concern centers around how good, ordinary people can be recruited, induced, seduced into behaving in ways that could be classified as evil. In contrast to the traditional approach of trying to identify "evil people" to account for the evil in our midst, I will focus on trying to outline some of the central conditions that are involved in the transformation of good, or average, people into perpetrators of evil. In the experimental research to be described, “evil” really amounts to the research participant acting in ways that harm others in that same setting.

Locating Evil Within Particular People: The Rush to the Dispositional

"Who is responsible for evil in the world, given that there is an all-powerful, omniscient God who is also all-Good?" That conundrum began the intellectual scaffolding of the Inquisition in the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe. As revealed in *Malleus Maleficarum*, the handbook of the German Inquisitors from the Roman Catholic Church, the inquiry concluded that the Devil was the source of all evil. However, these theologians argued the Devil works his evil through intermediaries, lesser demons and of course, human witches. So the hunt for evil focused on those marginalized people who looked or acted differently from ordinary people, who might qualify under rigorous examination of conscience, and torture, to expose them as witches, and then put to death. They were mostly women who could readily be exploited without sources of defense, especially when they had resources that could be confiscated. An analysis of this legacy of institutionalized violence against women is detailed by historian Anne Barstow (1994) in *Witchcraze*. Paradoxically, this early effort of the Inquisition to understand the origins of evil and develop interventions to cope with evil instead created new forms of evil that fulfilled all facets of my definition. But it exemplifies the notion of simplifying the complex problem of widespread evil by identifying individuals who might be the guilty parties, and then making them pay for their evil deeds.

The authoritarian personality syndrome was developed by a team of psychologists (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) after WW II, trying to make sense of the Holocaust and the broad appeal of national Fascism and Hitler. Their dispositional bias led them to focus on a set of personality factors underlying the fascist mentality. However, what they overlooked were the host of processes operating at political, economic, societal, and historical levels of analysis to influence and direct so many millions of individuals into a constrained behavioral channel of hating Jews and admiring the apparent strength of their dictator.

This tendency to explain observed behavior by reference to dispositions, while ignoring or minimizing the impact of situational variables has been termed the Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE) by my colleague, Lee Ross (1977). We are all subject to this dual bias of over-utilizing dispositional analyses and under-utilizing situational explanations when faced with ambiguous causal scenarios we want to understand. We succumb to this effect because so much of our education, social and professional training, and societal agencies are geared toward a focus on individual, dispositional orientations. Dispositional analyses are a central operating feature of cultures that are based on individualistic rather than collectivist values (see Triandis, 1994). Thus, it is individuals who get praise and fame and wealth for achievement and are honored for their uniqueness, but it is also individuals who are blamed for the ills of society. Our legal systems, medical, educational and religious systems all are founded on principles of individualism.

Dispositional analyses of anti-social, or non-normative, behaviors always include strategies for behavior modification to make the deviant individuals fit better by education or therapy, or to exclude them from society by imprisonment, exile or execution. However, locating evil within selected individuals or groups always has the 'social virtue' of rendering society or its institutions as blameless. The focus on people as causes for evil then exonerates societal structures and political decision-making for contributing to the more fundamental circumstances that create poverty, marginal existence for some citizens, racism, sexism and elitism.

Most of us take comfort in the illusion that there is an impermeable line separating those bad people from us good people. Its rigid boundaries constrain good from becoming bad, or bad from ever being reversed into fostering good outcomes. That view also means we have little interest in understanding the motivations and circumstances that contributed to how those bad people first came to engage in evil behavior. I find it good to remind myself of the geo-political analysis of the Russian novelist, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, a victim of persecution by the Soviet KGB, that the line between good and evil lies in the center of every human heart.

The Transformation of The Good Dr. Jekyll into the Evil Mr. Hyde

I am sure that most readers were as fascinated as I was with the Robert Louis Stevenson's tale of the behavioral transformation of good Dr. Jekyll into the murderous Mr. Hyde. That dramatic change required some strange chemical formula. I wondered, along with others, if such a transformation could be accomplished without drugs. Were there other means that people could use to change human behavior in such extreme fashion? I would later discover that social psychology had recipes for such transformations.

It has been my mission as a psychologist to understand better how virtually anyone could be recruited to engage in evil deeds that deprive other human beings of their dignity, humanity and life. So I have always begun my analyses of all sorts of anti-social behavior, even the most horrendous instances of evil, with the question: "What could make me do the same thing?" And further, I wonder what were the set of situational and structural circumstances that empowered others – maybe similar to me -- to engage in deeds that they too once thought were alien to their nature. This first led me to set aside any false pride that, "I am not that kind of person," once I

acknowledged any circumstances under which I might become that kind of person. Then it led me to want to investigate a range of conditions under which ordinary people like me could do things that violated the traditional sense of morality.

I argue that the human mind is so marvelous that it can adapt to virtually any known environmental circumstance in order to survive, to create, and to destroy as necessary. We are not born with tendencies toward good or evil, but with mental templates to do either, more gloriously than ever before, or more devastatingly than ever experienced before—as the World Trade Center disaster of September 11, 2001 revealed. It is only through the recognition that we are all part of the human condition, that humility takes precedence over unfounded pride in acknowledging our vulnerability to situational forces. Although the research I will present next has been fascinated with identifying the variables and processes by which ordinary people can be seduced or initiated into engaging in evil deeds, it is apparent that the time has come to better understand how to enable ordinary people to resist such forces and how to promote pro-social behavior. If we want to develop mechanisms for combating transformations of good people into evil perpetrators, it is essential to learn first the causal mechanisms underlying those behavior changes. We need to discover the range of identifiable variables involved in the complex processes that influence so many of us to do so much bad, to commit so much evil throughout the globe. Space does not allow me to review the many contributions of my colleagues to these issues, thus I recommend their works to concerned readers. Please see the breadth of ideas that have been presented by social psychological colleagues, Baumeister, 1997; Darley, 1992; Staub, 1989, and Waller, 2002, for starters.

Blind Obedience to Authority: The Milgram Investigations

Stanley Milgram (1974) developed an ingenious research procedure to demonstrate the extent to which situational forces could overwhelm individual will to resist. He ‘shocked the world’ with his unexpected finding of extremely high rates of compliance to the demands of an authority figure to continue shocking an innocent victim to the maximum possible level (also see Blass, 2004). He found that about 67% of research participants “went all the way” up to the top shock level of 450 volts in shocking another person that were supposedly helping. Milgram’s study revealed that ordinary American citizens could so easily be led to engage in “electrocuting a nice stranger,” as the Nazis had been led to murder Jews.

After this initial demonstration with Yale College students, Milgram went on to conduct 18 experimental variations on more than a thousand subjects from a variety of backgrounds, ages, both genders and all educational levels. In each of these studies he varied one social psychological variable and observed its impact on the extent of obedience to the unjust authority’s pressure to continue to shock the “learner-victim.” The data told the story of the extreme pliability of human nature: Almost everyone could be totally obedient or almost everyone could resist authority pressures. It all depended on the situational variables he introduced in each study. He was able to demonstrate that compliance rates could soar to 90 percent of people who delivered the maximum 450 volts to the Learner-Victim, or could be reduced to less than 10 percent of total obedience – by introducing one variable into the compliance recipe.

Want maximum obedience? Provide social models of compliance by having participants observe peers behaving obediently. Want people to resist authority pressures? Provide social models of peers who rebelled. Interestingly, almost no one shocked the Learner-Victim when he actually asked to be shocked. They refused authority pressure when the target person acted like a masochist who wanted to be shocked. In each of the other variations on this diverse range of ordinary American citizens from two towns in Connecticut, low, medium, or high levels of

compliant obedience could be readily elicited as if one were simply turning a Human Nature Dial.

What is the expected base rate of such obedience in the Milgram setting according to experts on human nature? When forty psychiatrists were given the basic description of this experiment, their average estimate of the percent of United States citizens who would give the full 450 volts was only one percent! Only sadists would engage in such sadistic behavior, they believed. These experts on human behavior were totally wrong because they ignored the situational determinants of behavior in the procedural description of the experiment. Their training in psychiatry had led them to overly rely on the dispositional perspective that comes from their professional training. This is a strong instance of the operation of the fundamental attribution error in action.

In a sense what was also unique about the Milgram paradigm was its quantification of evil in terms of the shock level each person chose or resisted on the shock generator that allegedly delivered shocks to a mild-mannered confederate who played the role of the pupil or learner while the subject enacted the teacher role. (No one ever actually got shocked, but the participants believed they were actually delivering ever more painful shocks with each increasing shock button).

Ten Steps to Creating Evil Traps for Good People

Let's outline some of the procedures in this research paradigm that seduced many ordinary citizens to engage in this apparently harmful behavior. In doing so, I want to draw parallels to compliance strategies used by "influence professionals" in real-world settings, such as salespeople, cult recruiters, and our national leaders (see Cialdini, 2001).

Among the influence principles to be extracted from Milgram's paradigm for getting ordinary people to do things they originally believe they would not are the following ten:

1) Offering an Ideology so that a big lie provides justification for any means to be used to achieve the seemingly desirable, essential goal. Presenting an acceptable justification, or rationale, for engaging in the undesirable action, such as wanting to help people improve their memory by judicious use of punishment strategies. In experiments it is known as the "cover story" because it is a cover-up for the procedures that follow which might not make sense on their own. The real world equivalent is known as an "ideology." Most nations rely on the same ideology of "threats to national security" before going to war or suppressing dissident political opposition. It is a convenient familiar ideological theme that fascist governments and military juntas have used to destroy socialist or communist opposition. When citizens fear that their national security is being threatened they are willing to surrender their basic freedoms when the government offers them that exchange. In the United States, the fear of the threat to national security posed by terrorists has led too many citizens to accept torture of prisoners as a necessary tactic for securing information that could prevent further attacks. That reasoning contributed to the background of the abuses by the American guards at Abu Ghraib prison. See the provocative analysis by Susan Fiske and her colleagues on why ordinary people torture enemy prisoners (Fiske, Harris, & Cuddy, 2004).

2) Arranging some form of contractual obligation, verbal or written, to enact the behavior.

3) Giving participants meaningful roles to play (teacher, student) that carry with them previously learned positive values and response scripts.

4) Presenting basic rules to be followed, that seem to make sense prior to their actual use, but then can be arbitrarily used to justify mindless compliance. Make the rules vague and change them as necessary.

5) Altering the semantics of the act, the actor, and the action, (from hurting victims to helping learners by punishing them)—replace reality with desirable rhetoric.

6) Creating opportunities for diffusion of responsibility for negative outcomes; others will be responsible, or it won't be evident that the actor will be held liable.

7) Starting the path toward the ultimate evil act with a small, insignificant first step (only 15 volts).

8) Having successively increasing steps on the pathway be gradual, so that they are hardly noticed as being different from one's most recent prior action. (By increasing each level of aggression in gradual steps of only 30 volts, no new level of harm seemed like a noticeable difference to the Milgram participants.)

9) Changing the nature of the influence authority from initially "Just" and reasonable to "Unjust" and demanding, even irrational, elicits initial compliance and later confusion, but continued obedience.

10) Making the "exit costs" high, and making the process of exiting difficult by allowing usual forms of verbal dissent (that make people feel good about themselves), while insisting on behavioral compliance ("I know you are not that kind of person, just keep doing as I tell you.")

Such procedures are utilized across varied influence situations where those in authority want others to do their bidding, but know that few would engage in the "end game" final solution without first being properly prepared psychologically to do the "unthinkable."

On Being Anonymous: Deindividuation and Destructiveness

The idea for my doing research that utilized anonymity as an independent variable in the study of aggressive behavior came not from a psychological theory but rather from a novel. William Golding's (1962) Noble prize-winning novel of the transformation of good British Christian choir boys into murderous little beasts centers on how the change in one's external physical appearance leads to a change in one's mental state and behavior. Painting one's self, changing one's outward appearance, made it possible for some boys to disinhibit previously restrained impulses to kill a pig for food. Once that alien deed of killing another creature was accomplished, then they could continue on to kill with pleasure, both animals and people alike. Is it psychologically valid that external appearance could impact internal and behavioral processes? That is the question I answered with a set of experiments and field studies on the psychology of deindividuation (Zimbardo, 1970).

The basic procedure involved having young women deliver a series of painful electric shocks to each of two other young women whom they could see and hear in a one-way mirror before them. Half were randomly assigned to a condition of anonymity, or deindividuation, half to one of uniqueness, or individuation. The four college student subjects in each deindividuation group had their appearance concealed by hoods, their names replaced by numbers and treated as a group not as individuals. The comparison group consisted of those in an individuation treatment who wore name tags and made to feel unique. Both were in four-woman groups and asked to make the same responses of shocking each of two woman "victims" over the course of 20 trials. The cover story was that these "victims" were trying to be creative under stress, so the job of our subjects was to stress them by administering painful electric shocks while I, as the experimenter, gave them the creativity test. Unlike the Milgram paradigm, there was no authority insisting on their aggressive behavior because I was in the adjacent room, seen in the two-way observation mirror by the subjects along with each of the two alleged women in the creativity study. The dependent variable was the duration of shock administered, not shock level intensity.

The results were clear: Women in the deindividuation condition delivered twice as much shock to both victims as did the women in the individuated comparison condition. Moreover,

they shocked both victims, the one previously rated as pleasant and the other unpleasant victim, more over the course of the 20 trials, while the individuated subjects shocked the pleasant woman less over time than they did the unpleasant one. (Again, no shocks were actually administered, although all participants believed they had delivered shocks to each of the two women, who acted out being hurt by the shocks. One important conclusion flows from this research and its various replications and extensions, some using military personnel from the Belgian army. Anything that makes someone feel anonymous, as if no one knows who they are, reduces a sense of accountability and creates the potential for that person to act in evil ways -- if and when the situation gives permission for violence.

Anonymous Children Become Aggressive at Halloween

We know that people also mask themselves for hedonistic pleasures, as at Carnival rituals in many Catholic countries. Children in America and some other countries put on masks and costumes for Halloween parties. My former student, Scott Fraser, (1974) arranged for elementary school children to go to a special, experimental Halloween party given by their teacher. There were many games to play and for each game won, tokens were earned that could be exchanged for gifts at the end of the party. Half the games were non-aggressive in nature, and half were confrontations between two children in order to reach the goal. The experimental design was a within group, A-B-A format; no costumes (A), costumes (B), no costumes (A). Initially while the games were played the teacher said the costumes were on the way so they would start the fun while waiting. Then the costumes arrived and were worn as the games continued, and finally, the costumes were removed to go to other children in other parties, and the games went on for the third phase; each phase for about an hour.

The data are striking testimony to the power of anonymity. Aggression increased significantly as soon as the costumes were worn, more than doubling from the initial base level average. But when the costumes were removed, aggression dropped back well below initial level base rate. Equally interesting was the second result, that aggression cost the children a loss of tokens. Acting in the aggressive games took more time than the non-aggressive games and only one of two contestants could win, so overall it cost money to be aggressive, but that did not matter when the children were costumed and anonymous. The least number of tokens won was during the second, anonymity phase, where aggression was highest. A third important finding was that there was no carry-over of aggressive behavior from the high B phase level to the last A phase level, which was comparable to the initial A phase. The behavior change due to the anonymity had not created a dispositional, internal change, only an outward response change. Change the situation, voila the behavior changes in predictable fashion.

Cultural Wisdom: How to Make Warriors Kill in Battle But Not at Home

Let's leave the laboratory and fun and games at children's parties to the real world where these issues of anonymity and violence may take on life and death significance. Some societies go to war without having the young male warriors change their appearance, while others always include ritual transformations of appearance by painting or masking the warriors (as in Lord of the Flies). Does that change in external appearance make a difference in how warring enemies are treated? Harvard anthropologist, John Watson (1974) posed that question after reading my Nebraska Symposium chapter (Zimbardo, 1970). The Human Area Files were his data source to collect two pieces of data on societies that did or did not change appearance of warriors prior to going to war and the extent to which they killed, tortured or mutilated their victims.

The results are striking confirmation of the prediction that anonymity promotes destructive behavior—when permission is also given to behave in aggressive ways that are ordinarily prohibited. Of the 23 societies for which these two data sets were present, the majority (12 of 15, 80 %) of societies in which warriors changed their appearance were those noted as most destructive, while that was true of only one of the eight where the warriors did not change appearance before going to battle. Ninety percent of the time when victims were killed, tortured or mutilated it was by warriors who had first changed their appearance.

Thus, cultural wisdom dictates that a key ingredient in transforming ordinarily non-aggressive young men into warriors who can kill on command is to first change their external appearance. War is about old men persuading young men to harm and kill other young men like themselves in a war. It becomes easier to do so if they first change their appearance, to alter their usual external façade by putting on uniforms, or masks, or painting their faces. With that anonymity in, out goes their usual internal focus of compassion and concern for others. When the war is won, the culture now dictates that their warriors return to their peaceful status – readily accomplished by removing their uniform, taking off the mask, and returning to their former external façade.

Bandura's Model of Moral Disengagement and Dehumanization

The psychological mechanisms involved in getting good people to do evil are embodied in two theoretical models, the first elaborated by me (1970) and modified by input from subsequent variants on my deindividuation conceptions, notably by Diener (1980). The second is Bandura's model of moral disengagement (1988) that specifies the conditions under which anyone can be led to act immorally, even those who usually ascribe to high levels of morality.

Bandura's model outlines how it is possible to morally disengage from destructive conduct by using a set of cognitive mechanisms that alter: a) one's perception of the reprehensible conduct (engaging in moral justifications, making palliative comparisons, using euphemistic labeling for one's conduct); b) one's sense of the detrimental effects of that conduct (minimizing, ignoring, or misconstruing the consequences); c) one's sense of responsibility for the link between reprehensible conduct and their detrimental effects (displacing or diffusing responsibility), and d) one's view of the victim (dehumanizing him or her, and attributing the blame for the outcome to the victim).

Bandura and his students (Bandura, Underwood, and Fromson, 1975) designed a powerful experiment that is an elegantly simple demonstration of the power of dehumanizing labels. It reveals how easy it is to induce intelligent college students to accept a dehumanizing label of other people and then to act aggressively based on that stereotyped term. A group of four participants were led to believe they were overhearing the research assistant tell the experimenter that the students from another college were present to start the study in which they were to deliver electric shocks of varying intensity to them (allegedly as part of a group problem-solving study). In one of the three randomly assigned conditions, the subjects overheard the assistant say to the experimenter that the other students seemed "nice." In a second condition, they heard that the other students seemed like "animals," while for a third group the assistant did not label the students in the other group of college students.

The dependent variable of shock intensity clearly reflected this situational manipulation. The experimental subjects gave most shock to those labeled in the dehumanizing way as "animals," and their shock level increased linearly over the ten trials. Those labeled "nice" were given the least shock, while the unlabelled group was in the middle of these two extremes. Thus, a single word – "animals" -- was sufficient to incite intelligent college students to treat others so labeled as if they knew them enough that that they deserved to be harmed.

What is also of interest is a close examination of the graphed data shows that on the first trial there is no difference across the three experimental treatments in the level of shock administered, but with each successive opportunity, the shock levels diverge. Those shocking the so-called “animals” shock them more and more over time, a result comparable to the escalating shock level of the deindividuated female students in my earlier study. That rise in aggressive responding over time, with practice, or with experience, illustrates a self-reinforcing effect of aggressive or violent responding – it is increasingly pleasurable. Perhaps the pleasure is not so much in inflicting pain to others as in the sense of power and control one feels in such a situation of dominance.

On the plus side in this study, that arbitrary labeling also resulted in others being treated with greater respect if someone in authority labeled them positively. Compared with the neutral, no information condition, those perceived as “nice” were least harmed. There is an important message here about the power of words, labels, rhetoric, of stereotyped labeling, to be used for good or evil.

Suspension of The Usual Cognitive Controls Guiding Moral Action

What my model adds to the mix of what is needed to get good people to engage in evil deeds is a focus on the role of cognitive controls that usually guide behavior in socially desirable and personally acceptable ways. It can be accomplished by knocking out these control processes, blocking them, minimizing them, or reorienting them. Doing so, suspends conscience, self-awareness, sense of personal responsibility, obligation, commitment, liability, morality and analyses in terms of costs/ benefits of given actions. The two general strategies for accomplishing this objective are: reducing cues of social accountability of the actor (no one knows who I am, nor cares to), and reducing concerns for self-evaluation by the actor. The first cuts out concerns for social evaluation, for social approval, and does so by making the actor feel anonymous. It works when one is functioning in an environment that conveys anonymity and diffuses personal responsibility across others in the situation. The second strategy stops self-monitoring and consistency monitoring by relying on tactics that alter one's state of consciousness (through drugs, arousing strong emotions, hyper-intense actions, getting into an expanded present-time orientation where there is no concern for past or future), and by projecting responsibility outward onto others.

My research on deindividuation and that of other social psychologists (see Prentice-Dunn & Rogers, 1983) differs from the paradigm in Milgram's studies in that there is no authority figure present urging the subject to obey. Rather, the situation is created in such a way that subjects act in accordance to paths made available to them, without thinking through the meaning or consequences of those actions. Their actions are not cognitively guided as they are typically, but directed by the actions of others in proximity to them, or by their strongly aroused emotional states, and by situationally available cues, such as the presence of weapons (see Berkowitz, 1993).

The Evils of Vandalism Spread Through Anonymous Environments

It is possible for certain environments to convey a sense of anonymity on those who live or behave in their midst. Where that happens, the people living there do not have a sense of community. Vandalism and graffiti may be interpreted as an individual's attempt for public notoriety in a society that deindividuates them, that gives them no legitimate outlets for personal recognition. Vandalism maybe an attempt to have an impact on one's environment through destruction when doing so constructively does not seem possible.

I did a simple field study to demonstrate the ecological differences between a places where anonymity ruled versus a sense of community dominated the scene. I abandoned used, but good condition cars in the Bronx, New York City and in Palo Alto, California, one block away from New York University and Stanford University, respectively. License plates were removed and hoods raised slightly -- to serve as ethological "releaser cues" for the potential vandals' attack behavior. It worked swiftly in the Bronx, as we watched and filmed from a vantage point across the street. Within 10 minutes of officially beginning this study, the first vandals surfaced. This parade of vandals continued for two days, when there was nothing left of value to strip, then the vandals began destroying the remains. In 48 hours we recorded 23 separate destructive contacts by individual or groups, who either took something from the abandoned vehicle or did something to wreck it. Curiously, only one of these episodes involved adolescents, the rest were by adults, many well dressed and many driving cars, so that they might qualify as at least lower middle-class. Anonymity can make brazen vandals of us all. But what about the fate of the abandoned car in Palo Alto? Our time-lapse film revealed that no one vandalized any part of the car over a 5-day period. When we removed the car, three local residents called the police to say that an abandoned car was being stolen (the local police had been notified of our field study). That is one definition of "community," where people care about what happens on their turf even to the person or property of strangers. I think they do so based in part on their reciprocal assumption that others in that neighborhood would also care about them.

I now feel that any environmental, societal conditions that contribute to making some members of society feel that they are anonymous, that no one knows who they are, that no one recognizes their individuality and thus their humanity, makes them potential assassins and vandals, a danger to my person and my property -- and yours (Zimbardo, 1976).

Curiously, this little field demonstration which was publicized in Time Magazine (Feb. 28, 1969, Diary of a Vandalized Car) was the only empirical research presented in support of a controversial theory about crime, known as "Broken Windows Theory". Political scientist James Q. Wilson and criminologist George Kelling outlined their novel theory about the twin causes of crime in a popular Atlantic Monthly article (March, 1982). Crime is a product of individual criminals and situational conditions of public disorder. When people see abandoned cars in the streets, graffiti everywhere and broken windows not covered, it is a sign that no one really cares about that neighborhood. That perception of public disorder or disarray then lowers inhibitions against further destructive or criminal actions of those who are not ordinarily criminal. Their solution to crime: remove abandoned cars, paint out graffiti and fix broken windows. When that advice was followed in New York City, crime rates dropped significantly the next year. I was pleased that this little study could have such big indirect effects.

The Hostile Imagination Created by Faces of the Enemy

We need to add a few more operational principles to our arsenal of weapons that trigger evil acts among men and women who are ordinarily good people. To do so we need to rise above the research focusing on individual actors and look to nation-states. We can learn about some of these principles by considering how nations prepare their young men to engage in deadly wars and prepare citizens to support the risks of going to war, especially a war of aggression. This difficult transformation is accomplished by a special form of cognitive conditioning. Images of the "Enemy" are created by national propaganda to prepare the minds of soldiers and citizens to hate those who fit the new category of your enemy. This mental conditioning is a soldier's most potent weapon, without it, he could probably never fire his weapon to kill another young man in the cross-hairs of his gun sight. A fascinating account of how this "hostile imagination" is

created in the minds of soldiers and their families is presented in *Faces of the Enemy* by Sam Keen (1991; 2004), and his companion DVD.

Archetypes of the enemy are created by propaganda fashioned by the governments of most nations against those judged to be the dangerous "them," "outsiders," "enemies." These visual images create a consensual societal paranoia that is focused on the enemy who would do harm to the women, children, homes, and god of the soldier's nation, way of life, and so forth. Keen's analysis of this propaganda on a world-wide scale reveals that there are a select number of categories utilized by "homo hostilis" to invent an evil enemy in the minds of good members of righteous tribes. The enemy is: aggressor; faceless; rapist; godless; barbarian; greedy; criminal; torturer; death; a dehumanized animal, or just an abstraction. Finally, there is the enemy as worthy, heroic opponent to be crushed in "mortal combat" -- as in the video game of the same name.

Can Ordinary Old Men Become Murderers Overnight?

One of the clearest illustrations of my fundamental theme of how ordinary people can be transformed into engaging in evil deeds that are alien to their past history and to their moral development comes from the analysis of British historian, Christopher Browning. He recounts in *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (1993) that in March, 1942 about 80 percent of all victims of the Holocaust were still alive, but a mere 11 months later about 80 percent were dead. In this short period of time, the *Endlösung* (Hitler's 'Final Solution') was energized by means of an intense wave of mass mobile murder squads in Poland. This genocide required mobilization of a large-scale killing machine at the same time as able-bodied German soldiers were needed on the collapsing Russian front. Since most Polish Jews lived in small towns and not the large cities, the question that Browning raised about the German high command was "where had they found the manpower during this pivotal year of the war for such an astounding logistical achievement in mass murder?" (p. xvi).

His answer came from archives of Nazi war crimes, in the form of the activities of Reserve Battalion 101, a unit of about 500 men from Hamburg, Germany. They were elderly, family men too old to be drafted into the army, from working-class and lower middle-class backgrounds, with no military police experience, just raw recruits sent to Poland without warning of, or any training in, their secret mission -- the total extermination of all Jews living in the remote villages of Poland. In just 4 months they had shot to death at point blank range at least 38,000 Jews and had another 45,000 deported to the concentration camp at Treblinka.

Initially, their commander told them that this was a difficult mission which must be obeyed by the battalion. However, he added that any individual could refuse to execute these men, women and children. Records indicate that at first about half the men refused and let the other police reservists engage in the mass murder. But over time, social modeling processes took their toll, as did any guilt-induced persuasion by those reservists who had been doing the shooting. By the end of their journey up to 90 percent of the men in Battalion 101 were involved in the shootings, even proudly taking photographs of their up-close and personal killing of Jews. Like the photos of the guards at Abu Ghraib prison, these policemen put themselves in their "trophy photos" as proud killers of the Jewish menace.

Browning makes clear that there was no special selection of these men, only that they were as "ordinary" as can be imagined -- until they were put into a situation in which they had "official" permission and encouragement to act sadistically and brutishly against those arbitrarily labeled as the "enemy." He also compares the underlying mechanism operating in that far off land at that distant time to both the psychological processes at work in the Milgram research and the Stanford Prison Experiment.

Educating Hatred and Destructive Imaginations

The second broad class of operational principles by which otherwise good people can be recruited into evil is through education/ socialization processes that are sanctioned by the government in power, enacted within school programs, and supported by parents and teachers. A prime example is the way in which German children in the 1930's and 40's were systematically indoctrinated to hate Jews, to make them the all-purpose enemy of the new German nation. Space limitations do not allow full documentation of this process, but I will include several examples of one way in which governments are responsible for sanctioning evil.

In Germany, as the Nazi party rose to power in 1933, no target of Nazification took higher priority than the re-education of Germany's youth. Hitler wrote, "I will have no intellectual training. Knowledge is ruin to my young men. A violently active, dominating, brutal youth -- that is what I am after." (The New Order, 1989, pp. 101-2). To teach the youth about geography and race, special primers were created and ordered to be read starting in the first grade of elementary school (see Brooks, 1989). These "hate primers" were brightly colored comic books that contrasted the beautiful blond Aryans with the despicably ugly caricatured Jew. They sold in the hundreds of thousands. One was titled: Trust No Fox in the Green Meadows and No Jew on His Oath. What is most insidious about this kind of hate conditioning is that they were presented as facts to be learned and to be tested upon, or from which to practice new penmanship. In the copy of the "Trust No Fox" text that I reviewed, a series of cartoons illustrates all the ways in which Jews deceive Aryans, get rich and fat from dominating them, are lascivious, mean and without compassion for the plight of the poor and the elderly Aryans.

The final scenarios depict the retribution that Aryan children get first by expelling Jewish teachers and children from their school -- so that "proper discipline and order" can now be taught, prohibiting them from community areas, like public parks, then expelling them from Germany. The sign in the cartoon reads ominously, "One-way street." Indeed, it was a unidirectional street that led eventually to the concentration camps and crematoria that were the center piece of Hitler's Final Solution for genocide of the Jews. Thus, this institutionalized evil was spread pervasively and insidiously by perverting education away from critical thinking exercises that open student minds to new ideas and toward thinking critically and close-mindedly about those targeted as the enemy of the people. By controlling education and the propaganda media, any national leader can produce the fantastic scenarios depicted in George Orwell's (1981) frightening novel, 1984.

The institutionalized evil that Orwell vividly portrays in his fictional account of state dominance over individuals goes beyond the novelist's imagination when its prophetic vision is carried into operational validity by powerful leaders of a cult, or by agencies and departments within the current national administration of the United States. I have outlined the direct parallels between the mind control strategies and tactics Orwell attributes to "The Party" and those that Reverend Jim Jones used in dominating the members of his religious/ political cult, Peoples Temple (Zimbardo, 2005). Jones orchestrated the suicide/ murders of more than 900 American citizens in the jungles of Guyana twenty five years ago, the finale of his grand experiment in institutionalized mind control. I learned from former members of this group that not only did Jones read 1984, he talked about it often and had a song commissioned by the church's singer entitled "1984 is coming," that everyone had to sing at some services.

The Stanford Prison Experiment: Institutional and Systemic Power to Corrupt

This research synthesized many of the processes and variables outlined earlier; those of anonymity of place and person that contribute toward creating states of deindividuation, of dehumanization of victims, of giving some actors (guards) permission to control others (prisoners), and placing it all within a unique setting (the prison) that most societies throughout the world acknowledge provides some form of institutionally approved sanctions for evil though the extreme differentials in control and power that prison foster.

In 1971, I and my students (Zimbardo, Haney, Banks, & Jaffe, 1973) designed a dramatic experiment that would extend over a two-week period to provide our research participants with sufficient time for them to become fully engaged in their experimentally assigned roles of either guards or prisoners. Having participants live in that setting day and night, if prisoners, or work there for long 8-hour shifts, if guards, would also allow sufficient time for situational norms to develop and patterns of social interaction to emerge, change and become crystallized. The second feature of this study was to ensure that all research participants would initially be as normal as possible, healthy physically and mentally, and without any history of being involved in drugs or crime or violence.

These preconditions were essential if we were to untangle the situational versus dispositional knot: What the situation elicited from this collection of similar, interchangeable young men versus what was emitted by the research participants based on the unique dispositions they brought into the experiment. The third feature of the study was the absence of any prior training in how to play the randomly assigned roles of prisoner and guard, to leave that up to each subject's prior societal learning of the meaning of prisons and the behavioral scripts associated with the oppositional roles of prisoner and guard. The fourth feature was to make the experimental setting as close to a functional simulation of the psychology of imprisonment as possible. The details of how we went about creating a mind set comparable to that of real prisoners and guards is given in several of the articles I wrote about the study (see Zimbardo et al., 1973; Zimbardo, 1975).

Central to this mind set were issues of power and powerlessness, dominance and submission, freedom and servitude, control and rebellion, identity and anonymity, coercive rules and restrictive roles. In general, these social psychological constructs had operational reality by putting all subjects in appropriate uniforms, using assorted props (handcuffs, police clubs, whistles, signs on doors and halls), replacing corridor hall doors with prison bars to create prison cells, having no windows or clocks to tell time of day, institutional rules that removed/substituted individual names with numbers (prisoners) or titles for staff (Mr. Correctional Officer, Warden, Superintendent), and that gave guards control-power over prisoners.

Subjects were recruited from among nearly 100 who answered our advertisements in the local city newspaper. They were given a background evaluation that consisted of a battery of five psychological tests, personal history, and in-depth interviews. The 24 who were evaluated as most normal and healthy in every respect, were randomly assigned half to the role of prisoner and half to be guards. The student-prisoners underwent a realistic surprise arrest by officers from the Palo Alto Police Department, who cooperated with our plan. The arresting officer proceeded with a formal arrest taking the "felons" to the Police Station for booking, after which each prisoner was brought to our prison in the reconstructed basement of our Psychology Department.

The prisoner's uniform was a smock/ dress with a prison ID number. The guards wore military-style uniforms and silver-reflecting sunglasses to enhance anonymity. At any one time there were 9 prisoners on "the yard," 3 to a cell, and 3 guards working 8-hour time shifts. Data were collected in terms of systematic video recordings, secret audio recordings of conversations

of prisoners in their cells, interviews and tests at various times during the study, post-experiment reports, and by direct, concealed observations.

For a detailed chronology and fuller account of the behavioral reactions that followed, readers are referred to the above references, and to Zimbardo, Maslach, & Haney (1999), and to our web site: www.prisonexp.org (an Italian translation has recently been made by Piero Bocchiaro).

For current purposes, let me simply assert that the negative situational forces overwhelmed the positive dispositional tendencies. The Evil situation triumphed over the Good people. Our projected 2-week experiment had to be terminated after only 6 days because of the pathology we were witnessing. Pacifist young men were behaving sadistically in their role of guards, inflicting humiliation and pain and suffering on other young men if they had the inferior human status of prisoner. Some guards even reported they were enjoying doing so. Others, who had been intelligent, healthy college students were behaving pathologically, many having "emotional breakdowns," as in stress disorders, so extreme that five of them had to be terminated within that first week. Their fellow prisoners who adapted better to the situation were those who mindlessly followed orders, became blindly obedient to authority, who allowed the guards to dehumanize and degrade them ever more with each passing day and night. The only personality variable that had any significant predictive value was that of F-scale authoritarianism: the higher the score, the more days the prisoner survived in this totally authoritarian environment.

I terminated the experiment not only because of the escalating level of violence and degradation by the guards against the prisoners that was apparent when viewing the video tapes of their interactions, but also because I was made aware of the personal transformation that I was undergoing personally. I had become a Prison Superintendent, the second role I played in addition to that of Principal Investigator. I began to talk, walk and act like a rigid institutional authority figure more concerned about the security of "my prison" than the needs of the young men entrusted to my care as a psychological researcher. In a sense, I consider that the most profound measure of the power of this situation was the extent to which it transformed me. Finally, we had extended debriefing sessions of guards and prisoners at the end of the study, and for periodic checkups over many years. Fortunately, there were no negative lasting consequences of this powerful experience

The Evil of Inaction

"The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing," is an important message to highlight our next section, it comes from statesman, Edmund Burke.

Our usual take on evil focuses on violent, destructive actions, but non-action can also become a form of evil, when helping, dissent and disobedience are called for. Social psychologists heeded the alarm when the infamous Kitty Genovese case made national headlines. As she was being stalked, stabbed and eventually murdered, 39 people in a housing complex heard her screams and did nothing to help. It seemed obvious that this was a prime example of the callousness of New Yorkers, as many media accounts reported. A counter to this dispositional analysis came in the form of a series of classic studies by Bibb Latane and John Darley (1970) on bystander intervention. One key finding was that people are less likely to help when they are in a group, when they perceive others are available who could help, than when those people are alone. The presence of others diffuses the sense of personal responsibility of any individual.

A powerful demonstration of the failure to help strangers in distress was staged by John Darley and Dan Batson (1974). Imagine you are a theology student on your way to deliver the sermon of the Good Samaritan in order to have it videotaped for a psychology study on effective

communication. Further imagine that as you are heading from the psychology department to the video taping center, you pass a stranger huddled up in an alley in dire distress. Are there any conditions that you could conceive that would not make you stop to be that Good Samaritan? What about time press? Would it make a difference to you if you were late for your date to give that sermon? I bet you would like to believe it would not make a difference, you would stop and help no matter what the circumstances. Right? Remember you are a theology student, thinking about helping a stranger in distress, which is amply rewarded in the biblical tale.

The researchers randomly assigned students of the Princeton Theological Seminary to three conditions that varied how much time they thought they had between being given their assignment by the researchers and getting to the communication department to tape their Good Samaritan speeches. The conclusion: Don't be in a victim in distress when people are late and in a hurry, because 90 percent of them are likely to pass you by, giving you no help at all! The more time the seminarians believed they had, the more likely they were to stop and help. So the situational variable of time press accounted for the major variance in helping, without any need to resort to dispositional explanations about theology students being callous or cynical or indifferent, as Kitty Genovese's non-helpers were assumed to be.

In addition to perpetrators of evil, there are almost always those who know what is going on and do not intervene to help, to challenge the evil, and thereby they enable evil to persist by their inaction when they should have acted. They were the good guards in the Stanford Prison Experiment who did no harm to the prisoners but never once opposed the demeaning deeds of the bad guards. In the Abu Ghraib prison abuse case, it is clear that many people knew of the abuses, even doctors and nurses, but never intervened. (see Zimbardo, 2004).

Torturers and Executioners: Pathological Types or Situational Imperatives?

There is little debate but that the systematic torture by men of their fellow men and women represents one of the darkest sides of human nature. Surely, my colleagues and I reasoned that here was a place where dispositional evil would be manifest among these torturers who did their dirty deeds daily for years in Brazil as policemen sanctioned by the government to get confessions through torturing enemies of the state. We began by focusing on torturers, trying to understand both their psyches and the ways they were shaped by their circumstances, but we had to expand our analytical net to capture their comrades-in-arms who chose or were assigned to another branch of violence work -- death squad executioners. They shared a "common enemy" -- men, women, and children who, though citizens of their state, even neighbors, were declared by "the authorities" to be threats to the country's national security. Some had to be eliminated efficiently, while others who might hold secret information had to be made to yield it up and confess to their treason.

In carrying out this mission, these torturers could rely in part on the "creative evil" embodied in torture devices and techniques that had been refined over centuries since the Inquisition by officials of The Church, and later of the National State. But they added a measure of improvisation to accommodate the particular resistances and resiliencies of the enemy standing before them, claiming innocence, refusing to acknowledge their culpability, or not being intimidated. It took time and emerging insights into human weaknesses to be exploited for these torturers to become adept at their craft, in contrast to the task of the death squads, who with hoods for anonymity, good guns, and group support, could dispatch their duty to country swiftly and impersonally. For the torturer, it could never be just business. Torture always involves a personal relationship, essential for understanding what kind of torture to employ, what intensity of torture to use on this person at this time. Wrong kind or too little: No confession. Too much, the victim dies before confessing. In either case, the torturer fails to deliver the goods. Learning

to select the right kind and degree of torture that yields up the desired information, makes rewards abound, and praise flow from the superiors.

What kind of men could do such deeds, did they need to rely on sadistic impulses and a history of sociopathic life experiences to rip and tear flesh of fellow beings day in and day out for years on end? Were these violence workers a breed apart from the rest of humanity, bad seeds, bad tree trunks, bad flowers? Or, is it conceivable that they could be programmed to carry out their deplorable deeds by means of some identifiable and replicable training programs? Could a set of external conditions, situational variables, that contributed to the making of these torturers and killers be identified? If their evil deeds were not traceable to inner defects, but rather attributable to outer forces acting on them -- the political, economic, social, historical, and experiential components of their police training -- then we might be able to generalize across cultures and settings those principles responsible for this remarkable transformation. Martha Huggins, Mika Haritos-Fatouros and I interviewed several dozen of these violence workers in depth and recently published a summary of our methods and findings (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros, & Zimbardo, 2002). Mika had done a similar, earlier study of torturers trained by the Greek military junta, and our results were largely congruent with hers (Haritos-Fatouros, 2003).

Sadists are selected out of the training process by trainers because they are not controllable, get off on the pleasure of inflicting pain and thus do not sustain the focus on the goal of confession extraction. From all the evidence we could muster, these violence workers were not unusual or deviant in any way prior to practicing this new role, nor were there any persisting deviant tendencies or pathologies among any of them in the years following their work as torturers and executioners. Their transformation was entirely understandable as a consequence of: the training they were given to play this new role; group camaraderie; acceptance of the national security ideology, and of the belief in socialist-communists as enemies of their state. They were also influenced by being made to feel special, above and better than peers in public service, by the secrecy of their duties, by the constant pressure to produce desired results regardless of fatigue or personal problems. We report many detailed case studies that document the ordinariness of these men engaged in the most heinous of deeds, sanctioned by their government at that time in history, but reproducible at this time in any nation's obsession with national security and fears of terrorism that permit suspension of basic individual freedoms.

Suicide Bombers: Mindless Fanatics or Mindful Martyrs?

Amazingly, what holds true for these violence workers is comparable to the nature of the transformation of young Palestinians from students to suicide bombers killing Israelis. Recent media accounts converge on the findings from more systematic analyses of the process of becoming a suicidal killer (see Atran, 2003; Bennet, 2003; Hoffman, 2003; Merari, 1990, 2002; Myer, 2003). There have been more than 95 suicide bombings by Palestinians against Israelis since September, 2000. Originally and most frequently the bombers were young men, but recently a half dozen women have joined the ranks of suicidal bombers. What has been declared senseless, mindless murder by those attacked and by outside observers, is anything but that to those intimately involved. It was believed that it was poor, desperate, socially isolated, illiterate young people with no career and no future who adopted this fatalistic role. That stereotype is shattered by the actual portraits of these young men and women, many are students with hopes for a better future, intelligent, attractive, connected with their family and community.

Ariel Merari, an Israeli psychologist, who has studied this phenomenon for many years, outlines the common steps on the path to these explosive deaths. Senior members of an extremist group first identify particular young people who appear to have an intense patriotic fervor based on their declarations at a public rally against Israel, or supporting some Islamic cause or

Palestinian action. These individuals are invited to discuss how serious they are in their love of their country and hatred of Israel. They are then asked to commit to being trained in how to put their curses into action. Those that do, are put into a small group of 3 to 5 similar youth who are at varying stages of progress toward becoming agents of death. They learn the tricks of the trade from elders, bomb making, disguise, selecting and timing targets. Then they make public their private commitment by making a video tape, declaring themselves to be “living martyrs” for Islam, and for the love of Allah. In one hand they hold the Koran, a rifle in the other, their head-band declares their new status. This video binds them to the final deed, since it is sent home to the family of the recruit before they execute the final plan. The recruits also realize that they will not only earn a place beside Allah, their relatives will also be entitled to a high place in heaven because of their martyrdom. Then there is a sizable financial incentive that goes to their family as a gift for their sacrifice.

Their photo is emblazoned on posters that will be put on walls everywhere in the community the moment they succeed in their mission – to become inspirational models. To stifle concerns about the pain from wounds inflicted by exploding nails and other bomb parts, they are told that before the first drop of their blood touches the ground they will already be seated at the side of Allah, feeling no pain, and only pleasure. As an ultimate incentive for the young males is the promise of heavenly bliss with scores of virgins in the next life. They become heroes and heroines, modeling self-sacrifice to the next cadre of young suicide bombers.

We can see that this program utilizes a variety of social psychological and motivational principles to assist in turning collective hatred and general frenzy into a dedicated, seriously calculated program of indoctrination and training for individuals to become youthful living martyrs. It is neither mindless nor senseless, only a very different mind set and with different sensibilities than we have been used to witnessing among young adults in our country. A recent television program on female suicide bombers went so far as to describe them more akin to the girl next door than to alien fanatics. That is what is so frightening about the emergence of this new social phenomena, that so many intelligent young people can be persuaded and directed toward envisioning and welcoming their lives ending in a suicidal explosive blast.

To counteract the powerful tactics of these recruiting agents requires providing meaningful life-affirming alternatives to this next generation. It requires new national leadership that explores every negotiating strategy that could lead to peace and not to death. It requires these young people to share their values, their education, their resources, to explore their commonalities not highlight differences. The suicide, the murder, of any young person is a gash in the fabric of the human connection that we elders from every nation must unite to prevent. To encourage the sacrifice of youth for the sake of advancing ideologies of the old might be considered a form of evil from a more cosmic perspective that transcends local politics and expedient strategies.

Summing Up Before Moving On

I will end with some notions about what is involved in reversing the negative processes we have been considering by outlining some ideas about transformations into goodness. Before doing that, I want to briefly report on my role as expert witness for one of the guards involved in abusing prisoners at Abu Ghraib. In October, 2004, I testified via closed circuit television to the military trial judge in Baghdad in defense of Sgt. Ivan Frederick. I will outline some of the key issues that I raised and what I learned about situational power from that trial and from my access to the many reports of the military investigations and from my personal analysis of this young soldier.

It is a truism in psychology that personality and situations interact to generate behavior, as do cultural and societal influences. However, I have tried to show in my research over the past 30 years that situations exert more power over human actions than has been generally acknowledged by most psychologists nor recognized by the general public. However, this situationist approach continues to be dominated by the traditional dispositional perspective fueled by reliance on the individualist orientation central in Anglo-American psychology, and in our institutions of medicine, education, psychiatry, law and religion. Acknowledging the power of situational forces does not excuse the behaviors channeled by their operation. In many circles, any attempts at situational analyses are dismissed as nothing more than “excusiology.” People are assumed to always be in control of their behavior, to act from free will, and thus be personally responsible for any and all of their actions. Unless insane, individuals who do wrong should know that they are doing wrong and be punished accordingly. The situation is taken to be nothing more than a set of minimally relevant extrinsic circumstances.

The importance of adopting the situational perspective provides a knowledge base to shift attention away from simplistic “blaming of the victim,” and ineffective individualistic treatments designed to change the evil doer, toward more profound attempts to discover causal networks that should be modified if that behavior is to be prevented, circumvented or stopped. Sensitivity to situational determinants of behavior, also guides risk alerts for avoiding or changing prospective situations of vulnerability (see Richard, Bond, & Stokes-Zoota, 2003, for a quantitative summary of the effects of 100 years of social psychological research).

Several related dimensions come to the fore from the ideas outlined here. First, we should be aware that a range of apparently simple situational factors can function to impact our behavior more compellingly than seems possible. The research outlined here, along with others of my colleagues presented in this volume, points up the influential force of: role playing, rules, presence of others, emergent group norms, group identity, uniforms, anonymity, social modeling, authority presence, symbols of power, time pressures, semantic framing, stereotypical images and labels, among others.

Second, the situationist approach redefines heroism. When the majority of ordinary people can be overcome by such pressures toward compliance and conformity, the minority who resist should be considered heroic. Acknowledging the special nature of this resistance means we should learn from their example by studying how they have been able to rise above such compelling pressures. That suggestion is coupled with another that encourages the development of an essential but ignored domain of psychology – heroes and heroism.

Third, the situationist approach should, in my view, encourage us all to share a profound sense of personal humility when trying to understand “unthinkable,” “unimaginable,” “senseless” acts of evil. Instead of immediately embracing the high moral ground that distances us good folks from those bad ones, and gives short shrift to analyses of causal factors in that situation, the situational approach gives all others the benefit of “attributional charity” in knowing that any deed, for good or evil, that any human being has ever done, you and I could also do -- given the same situational forces. If so, it becomes imperative to constrain our immediate moral outrage that seeks vengeance against wrong doers; instead to uncover the causal factors that could have led them in that aberrant direction.

The obvious current instantiation of these principles is the rush to the “evil” disposition to characterize terrorists and suicide bombers instead of working to understand the nature of the psychological, economic and political conditions that foster such generalized hatred of an enemy nation, including our own, that young people are willing to sacrifice their lives and murder other human beings. The “war on terrorism” can never be won solely by plans to find and destroy terrorists, since any individual, anywhere, at any time, can become an active terrorist. It is only by understanding the situational determinants of terrorism that programs can be developed to win

the hearts and minds of potential terrorists away from destruction and toward creation. Not a simple task, but an essential one that requires implementation of social psychological perspectives and methods in a comprehensive, long-term plan of attitude, value and behavior change.

Understanding What Went Wrong in Abu Ghraib Prison

The abuses by American prison guards against Iraqi prisoners in that prison horrified the sensibility of people around the world, in part because it was the first time in history that such abuses were detailed in graphic photographic images. How could these men and women do such terrible things to helpless prisoners? They were condemned by the military leadership as “morally corrupt,” and by the press as a few “bad apples.” They were made to appear as exceptions to the rule of American soldiers being good young men and women proudly serving their country to preserve freedoms and advance the cause of democracy. Their images of wanton abuse humiliated the U. S. Military and was a blow to the image of the Bush administration. The initial focus of the government “to get to the bottom” of this mess clearly followed the dispositional orientation to blame pathological behavior of this kind on those with sadistic personalities and other personal pathologies.

I became an expert witness for one of those army reserve guards who was the sergeant in charge of the night shift where all the mayhem occurred. I did so in part to understand in depth the nature of that situation and the human nature of this young man, Sgt. Ivan “Chip” Frederick from reviews of all available investigations and personal contact and assessments of this soldier.

I testified on his behalf from a remotely televised setup at the U. S. Navy Base in Naples, Italy to the ongoing trial in Baghdad (which I refused to go to for fear of my safety). I will briefly outline what I learned about that person, that situation, and that system, and describe the sentence of the Military Judge.

Everything I could learn about the Abu Ghraib prison, Tier 1-A, the “soft torture” interrogation center of that prison revealed to me that virtually all of the social psychological processes operating in the Stanford Prison Experiment were at work on the night shift in that prison. In fact, one of the independent investigations (headed by James Shlesinger) specifically details the parallels between the two prisons, my mock prison and that all too real horror prison.

In addition, the guards were not trained soldiers but Army Reservists forced into this job, with no mission-specific training for such a difficult role, no supervision ever by superiors and no personal accountability. There was an emergent norm operating of support & reward for prisoner humiliation and encouragement of physical abuse to prepare the prisoners for interrogation by “softening them up.” This implicit norm was advanced by the civilian contract interrogators, the Military Police, the CIA, and on up the entire chain of military and administration command.

I asked the Judge to consider the evidence in each of these three domains prior to delivering his verdict and sentencing of this soldier:

Dispositional: Evidence for any personal pathologies, sadistic tendencies that he brought into that situation. Also evidence of any positive traits, values and personal background.

Situational: Evidence of the terrible working conditions on that night shift in that prison and in particular the nature of the situation faced by this soldier.

Systemic: Evidence of the broader conditions that spawned and sustained that situation, focusing on the nature of the leadership and the objectives of that interrogation center.

With regard to the disposition of this so-called “bad apple,” I was able to report that this soldier was totally and unequivocally “normal” on all measures that had been administered by an Army clinical psychologist (and independently validated by a civilian expert in assessment). .

There was no evidence of any psychopathology, no sadistic tendencies, The only negatives were: obsessive about orderliness, neatness, discipline, personal appearance-- all found missing in action in the filth, chaos and daily disarray at Abu Ghraib! I spent a full day with Chip and his wife, conducted an in-depth four-hour interview, which led me to conclude that:

This army reservist is an All-American young man, almost stereotypically so. He is very Patriotic, the son of a West Virginia coal-miner, attends Baptist Church services regularly, hunts, fishes, plays softball, has many close friends, in a strong marriage to Martha, an African-American woman, is a loved step father to her two daughters, and was in good physical and mental status when he first arrived at this prison. He had been a good guard in low-security, small town civilian prison with 100 inmates. Chip had been in the Army Reserve for many years without any negative incidents on his record. He was a model soldier-army reservist, proud to serve in Iraq on first duty before assignment to Abu Ghraib prison, worked with children in a small village and was starting to learn Arabic to better communicate with Iraqis.

With regard to the situational conditions, the behavioral context, I was able to describe an impossible set of working conditions that bordered on the inhumane—for both guards and prisoners. First it was evident that directly comparable processes were operating in that prison as were observed in the Stanford Prison Experiment, such as – deindividuation, dehumanization, moral disengagement, social modeling, conformity pressures, anonymity of place, passive observing bystanders, power differentials, use of enforced nakedness, sexually humiliating tactics, and most of the other contextual variables that were part of SPE. Additionally, the worst abuses in both settings took place on the night shift. The working conditions faced by Chip Frederick were inhumane, consisting of 12- hr night shifts (4PM-4AM, 7 days a week, for 40 days with not a day off, then 14 days after one day off. If that incredible work demand was not bad enough, the level of exhaustion and stress was exacerbated by the chaotic conditions, unsanitary and filthy surroundings that made it smell like a putrid sewer all the time, with limited water for showering, and frequent electrical blackouts that created dangerous opportunities for prisoner attacks. This young man with no mission-specific training was put in charge of more than 300 prisoners initially but that number soon swelled to more than 1,000, along with being in charge of 12 army reserve guards, 60 Iraqi police, who often smuggled contraband to the inmates. He rarely left the prison, when off duty he slept in a cell in a different part of prison, missed breakfasts, stopped exercising, or socializing. Tier 1-A became his total reference setting.

This would qualify him for total job burnout (Maslach, 1982). If all that was not bad enough as situational forces that distorted usual judgments and decision making, there was the intense daily fear that Chip and the other guards felt because this prison was under frequent insurgency attacks, with 5 U.S. soldiers and 20 prisoners killed, and many others wounded by almost daily shelling during the time that Chip was in that job. Finally, we have to factor in his feelings of revenge against seven prisoners who had rioted in another part of the prison and were sent to Tier 1-A for “safe keeping,” and also revenge against four other Iraqi prisoners who had raped a boy prisoner. Frederick had complained to a superior officer about such dangers of housing adolescents and adults together (as well as mentally disturbed prisoners and those with Tuberculosis and other contagious diseases in the general population) but was reprimanded for not realizing it was a war and emergency measures had to be taken. Two other situational contributors to the abuse were the presence of a dominating, charismatic group leader who initiated some of the abuses and encouraged other guards to join in, and the presence of digital cameras that made it easy to document and perhaps even to facilitate the domination of these guards over their prisoners in these “trophy photos.”

With regard to systemic influences that created this bad barrel into which the army thrust Chip Frederick and the others, I turn to the summaries of all five military investigations that are available. They all point blame at “failures of leadership, lack of leadership, indifferent

leadership, conflicting leadership demands. These independent investigations highlight the total absence of accountability, and the lack of supervision or oversight. The Superintendent of the prison never visited this part of her prison complex because she was told by her senior officers not to do so. That meant everyone knew there was no top-down surveillance. These reports point out the fact that none of these guards had received any mission-specific training for this demanding job with inmates who were so culturally different from them and who did not speak their language. Guards. These reports continue to document the lack of vital resources on that prison tier. There was not any medical or mental health program for these 10,000 prisoners.

A critical systemic consideration is that Tier-1A was created for Interrogation of detainees assumed to have vital information, about terrorist groups or insurgent. These interrogations relied on a variety of "soft torture" tactics by civilian interrogators and others. These guards were encouraged to stress and abuse detainees, and were reinforced for breaking them down to prepare them to make confessions.

A few quotes from one of the reports (by General Faye) are pertinent to understanding the systemic influences operating in that prison situation and on those prison guards.

"By not communicating standards, policies, and plans to soldiers, these leaders conveyed a tacit approval of abusive behaviors toward prisoners.

"There is both institutional and personal responsibility at higher levels."

"For a period of 7 months, Military Intelligence personnel allegedly requested, encouraged, condoned or solicited Military Police personnel [the Army Reserve guards] to abuse detainees, and/ or participated in detainee abuse, and/or violated established interrogation procedures and applicable laws..."

"Abuses would not have occurred had [military] doctrine been followed and mission training conducted."

"The Environment created at Abu Ghraib contributed to the occurrence of such abuse and the fact that it remained undiscovered by higher authorities for a long period of time."

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The military judge took none of these arguments into account when he issued his sentence, none mitigated Frederick's receiving the maximum penalty. The judge asserted that he was personally responsible for the abuses, he should have known better, he knew it was wrong, so, he had free will to do what was right and he did the morally wrong action, as part of a conspiracy with other guards. Thus, he sentenced this "good apple" to be imprisoned for 8 (eight) years, to be dishonorably discharged, to have his rank lowered to private, to deprive him of 22 years of his army reserve retirement funds, and he was sent to Kuwait in solitary confinement (until he was ready to testify against other guards whose trials would be held in the United States).

For me, this verdict represents the triumph of a mindless dispositional view of such unusual behavior. It totally places full blame on the person, ignores the host of situational

variables that contributed to the abusive behavior and absolves the corrupt, irresponsible military and political system that created that situation in its rush to war against terrorism. It takes us back to the Inquisition. The issue was never the guilt of this young soldier since he pleaded guilty as charged. The issue was whether the Court would acknowledge this entire set of circumstances that so obviously transformed some one who entered that situation as a model soldier and a good citizen and soon was transformed into becoming a perpetrator of notorious evil. Our legal system does not have a mechanism for dealing with the challenges posed by psychological analyses of situations and systems (Ross & Shestowsky, 2003).

Promoting Civic Virtue, Moral Engagement and Human Goodness

In this final section we turn to consider briefly the enormous challenge facing the world today to promote civic virtue and resistance against situational temptations to engage in the kinds of evil behavior discussed in this chapter. There is no simple solution; were there one it would have been enacted long before by those far wiser than I. My goal is to outline some speculations about what might be done at individual, situational and systems levels to combat the seductive influences on people to transgress against others and violate fundamental moral principles. My analysis will continue to be from a broad social psychological perspective (but also see the important ideas advanced by Seligman (2002) about the role of positive psychology and Shermer's views, 2004).

At the individual level, let us first image the reverse of the Milgram experiment in which the objective was to create a setting in which people would comply with ever increasing demands to do good, to gradually behave in more altruistic ways, to slowly but surely move further in agreeing to ever more positive, pro-social actions. Instead of the paradigm arranged to facilitate the slow decent into evil, we substitute a paradigm for the slow ascent into goodness. As a thought experiment for you, the reader, how could you design a setting where that was possible? As a starter, perhaps imagine for any participant in our escalation into goodness experiment that we arrange a hierarchy of experiences, actions that range from only slightly more positive than he or she is used to doing to ever more extreme "good" actions, all the way up to those that are hardly imaginable as personally possible. It might be a time-based dimension for those who do not do good deeds because they don't have the time to spare. The first "button" on the Goodness Generator might be to spend 10 minutes writing a thank you note to a friend. Next level might be 20 minutes giving advice to a troubled child, Increasing the pressure in the new paradigm might then be that the participant agrees to give 30 minutes to prepare a meal for a needy person. Then the altruism scales upward to spending an hour doing another good deed, baby sitting for a few hours to allow a single parent a break in routine, working an evening in a "soup kitchen" to help feed those in need of food, giving a day to take a group of orphaned children to the zoo, committing to giving some precious time every week to some other good cause, and so forth. If the gradual escalation principle can work to get good people to do evil deeds as Milgram has shown, can we reverse the process using a similar paradigm to get ordinary people to do increasingly good things? Ideally, our experiment in social goodness would end when the person was doing something that he or she could never have imagined doing previously, acting in such an extremely altruistic, beneficent manner that had been alien to one's self concept. Obviously, we want to extend this concept to practical ways of subtly leading people down the path of taking ever increasingly good actions that help others and enhance their society. The goodness track could also have to do with contributions to making the environment more sustainable. It might go from minimal conservation activities to ever more substantial ones, giving money, time, and personal involvement in "green" causes. I invite readers to expand on

this notion for a host of domains where society would benefit as more citizens “went all the way.”

If we consider some of the social psychological principles that fostered the evils I have noted earlier, then again as with the Goodness Generator example, let’s use variants of those principles to get people to accentuate the positives and to eliminate the negatives in their lives. Here are my 11-steps toward promoting civic virtue that are in opposition to the 10-steps toward evil that I outlined from extending the Milgram paradigm to our lives.

Encouraging admission of one’s mistakes, accepting errors in judgments, being willing to say that you were wrong. Openly doing so reduces the need to justify the mistakes, to continue the wrong or immoral action. It undercuts the motivation to reduce dissonance by asserting or believing in the public commitment when it was a bad decision.

Encouraging “Mindfulness” (Langer, 1989) in which people are reminded in a variety of ways not to live their lives on automatic pilot, but to take a moment to reflect on the immediate situation, to think before acting, to not go mindlessly into situations where angels and sensible people fear to tread.

Promoting a sense of personal responsibility and accountability for all of one’s actions, making people aware that conditions of diffused responsibility merely disguise their own individual role in the outcomes of their actions.

Discouraging even the smallest transgressions, cheating, gossiping, lying, teasing and bullying. They provide the first steps toward escalating downwards to ever worsening behaviors.

Learning to distinguish between Just Authority, to whom respect and even obedience may be appropriate, and Unjust Authority (as in the Milgram study), to whom disrespect and disobedience are necessary to oppose and change that tyrant.

Supporting critical thinking from the earliest times in a child’s life and maintaining it throughout life. Asking for evidence to support assertions, demanding that ideologies be sufficiently elaborated to separate rhetoric from reality-based conclusions, to independently determine whether specific means ever justify vague and harmful ends.

Rewarding social modeling of moral behavior, elevating for societal recognition those who do the right thing, with rewards for “whistle blowers,” such as the U.S. army reservist, Joe Darby, who exposed the abuses at Abu Ghraib, and those who expose wrong doing in government and corporation, and by the Mafia.

Respecting human diversity, appreciating human variability and the differences among people as a fundamental way to reduce our in-group biases that lead to derogating others, prejudice and the evils of discrimination.

Changing social conditions that make people feel anonymous, instead supporting conditions that make people feel special, so that they have a sense of personal value and self worth.

Becoming aware of when conformity to the group norm is counter-productive and should not be followed, when independence should take precedence and be adopted regardless of social rejection by that group.

Never allowing one’s self to sacrifice personal freedoms for the promise of security, it is always a bad deal because the sacrifices are real and immediate and the security is a distant illusion. This is as true in marital arrangements as it is in being a good citizen in a nation where the leader promises to make everyone safer against a current threat by giving up some of their personal freedoms so that the leader can have more power. That bad bargain usually translates to more power Over Them, as well as over the enemy. It is the first step in creating fascist leaders even in democratic societies, as Erich Fromm (1941) reminded us about Hitler, but is as true today in many nations.

I hope that my future research and social-political actions as a citizen-scientist will be more directed toward understanding how to promote goodness in the world than to demonstrate how easy it is to seduce good people to become perpetrators of evil.

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