A Situationist Perspective on the Psychology of Evil: Understanding How Good People Are Transformed into Perpetrators.

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Abstract

I endorse a situationist perspective on the ways in which anti-social behavior by individuals, and of violence sanctioned by nations, is best understood, treated and prevented. This view has both influenced and been informed by a body of social psychological research and theory. It contrasts with the traditional dispositional perspective to explaining the whys of evil behavior. The search for internal determinants of anti-social behavior locates evil within individual predispositions – genetic "bad seeds," personality traits, pathological risk factors, and other organismic variables. 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 vital 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.

I will start with a series of "oldies, but goodies" -- 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." My analysis is extended to the evil of inaction by considering bystander failures of helping those in distress. This body of research demonstrates the under-recognized power of social situations to alter the mental representations and behavior of individuals, groups and nations. Finally, I explore extreme instances of "evil" behavior for their dispositional or situational foundations – torturers, death squad violence workers and terrorist suicide-bombers.

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[1] . The political views expressed in this chapter represent solely those of a private citizen-patriot, and in no way should be construed as being supported or endorsed by any of my professional-institutional affiliations.

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 Hilter, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, and others who history has identified as tyrants for their complicity in the deaths of untold millions of innocent people.

History will also have to decide on the evil status of President Bush's role in declaring a pre-emptive, aggressive war against Iraq in March, 2002, with dubious justification, that resulted in widespread death, injury, destruction and enduring chaos. We might also consider a simpler definition of evil, proposed by my colleague, Irving Sarnoff, that "Evil is knowing better, but doing worse."

We live in a world cloaked in the evils of civil and international wars, of terrorism -- home-grown and exported -- of homicides, of rapes, of domestic and child abuse, and more forms of devastation. 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 weaponizing commercial airlines. We continue to ask why? Why and how is it possible for such deeds to continue to occur? How can the unimaginable become so readily imagined? And these are the same questions that have been asked by generations before ours.

I wish I had answers to these profound questions about human existence and human nature, but can deal here only with their more modest versions. 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 people into perpetrators of evil.

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.

Psychodynamic theory, as well as most traditional psychiatry, also locates the source of individual violence and anti-social behavior within the psyches of disturbed people, often tracing it back to early roots in unresolved infantile conflicts. Like genetic views of pathology, such psychological approaches seek to link behaviors society judges as pathological to pathological origins -- defective genes, "bad seeds," or pre-morbid personality structures. But the same violent outcomes can be generated by very different types of people, who give no hint of evil impulses. My colleagues and I (Lee, Zimbardo, & Berthoff, 1973) interviewed and tested 19 inmates in California prisons who had all recently been convicted of homicide. Half of these killers had a long history of violence, showing lack of impulse control (on the MMPI), were decidedly masculine in sexual identity, and generally extroverted. The other ten murderers were totally different. They had never committed any criminal offense prior to the current homicide -- their murders were totally unexpected given their mild manner and gentle disposition. Their problem was excessive impulse control that inhibited their expression of any feelings. Their sexual identity was feminine or androgynous, and the majority was shy. These "Shy Sudden Murderers" killed just as violently as did the habitual criminals, and their victims died just as surely, but it would have been impossible to predict this outcome from any prior knowledge of their personalities that were so different from the more obvious habitual criminals.

The authoritarian personality syndrome was developed by a team of psychologists (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) after WW 11, 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 taking society "off the hook" as blameworthy, as exonerating 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. What are other characteristics of this dispositional orientation to understanding evil? I think it implies a two-category world -- of good people, like US, and of bad people, like THEM. That clear cut dichotomy is divided by a line that separates

good and evil. We then take comfort in the illusion that such a line is impermeable, constraining cross-overs in either direction. We could never imagine being like them, of doing their unthinkable dirty deeds, and do not admit them into our company because they are so essentially different as to be unchangeable. That also means we forfeit the motivation to understand how they 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.

On the Transformation of Good People Into Agents of Destruction

My bias is admittedly more toward situational analyses of behavior, which comes both from my training as an experimental social psychologist, and also from having grown up in poverty in a New York City ghetto of the South Bronx. I believe that dispositional orientations are more likely to correlate with affluence, since the rich want to take full credit for their success, while situationists arise more from the lower classes who want to explain away -- onto external circumstances -- the obvious dysfunctional life styles of those around them. But I am primarily concerned with understanding the psychological and social dynamics involved when an ordinary, "good" person begins to act in anti-social ways, and in the extreme, behaves destructively toward the property or person of other people. I have seen first hand my childhood friends go through such transformations, and always wondered how and why they did, and whether I could also change like that. I was similarly fascinated with the behavioral transformation tale of Robert Louis Stevenson's good Dr. Jekyll into the murderous Mr. Hyde. What was in his chemical formula that could have such an immediate and profound impact? But then even as a child, I wondered, were there other ways to induce such changes, since my friends did not have access to his elixir of evil before they did such bad things to other people. I would later discover that social psychology had recipes for such transformations.

Our mission is 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. The dispositional analysis has the comforting side effect of enabling those who have not yet done wrong to righteously assert, "Not me, I am different from those kinds of people who did that evil deed!" By positing a "Me-Us-Them" distinction, we live with the illusion of moral superiority firmly entrenched in the pluralistic ignorance that comes from not recognizing the set of situational and structural circumstances that empowered others -- exactly like us -- to engage in deeds that they too once thought were alien to their nature. We take false pride in believing that "I am not that kind of person."

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 seen. It is only through the recognition that no one of us is an island unto itself, that we are all part of the human condition, that humility takes precedence over unfounded pride in acknowledging our vulnerability to situational forces. If we want to develop mechanisms for combating such transformations, it seems essential to learn to appreciate the extent to which ordinary people can be seduced or initiated into engaging in evil deeds. We need to focus on discovering the mechanisms among the causal factors that influence so many to do so much bad, to commit so much evil throughout the globe. Please see the breadth of ideas that have been presented by social psychological colleagues, Baumeister, 1997; Darley, 1992; Staub, 1989; Waller, 2002.

The Milgram Obedience Experiments

The most obvious power of the experimental demonstration by Stanley Milgram (1974) of blind obedience to authority lies in the unexpectedly high rates of such compliance with the majority, two-thirds, of the subjects "going all the way" in shocking a victim with apparently lethal consequences. His finding was indeed shocking to most of those who read about it or saw his movie version of the study because it revealed that a variety of ordinary American citizens could so readily be led to engage in "electrocuting a nice stranger." But the more significant importance of his research comes from what he did after that initial classic study with Yale College undergraduates. What most people do not realize is that Milgram's conducted 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." He was able to demonstrate that compliance rates could soar to 90 percent who delivered the maximum 450 volts to the hapless victim, or could be reduced to less than 10 percent of total obedience – by introducing one variable into the compliance recipe.

Obedience was maximized by first observing peers behaving obediently; it was dramatically reduced when peers rebelled, or when the victim acted like a masochist asking to be shocked. What is especially interesting to me about this last result were the data Milgram provides on the predictions of his outcome by forty psychiatrists who were given the basic description of the classic experiment. Their average estimate of the percent of U.S. Citizens who would give the full 450 volts was fewer than one percent. Only sadists would engage in such sadistic behavior, they believed. In a sense this is the comparison level for appreciating the enormity of Milgram's finding. These experts on human behavior were totally wrong because they ignored the situational determinants of behavior in the procedural description of the experiment and over relied on the dispositional perspective that comes from their professional training. Their error is a classic instance of the FAE at work. In fact, in this research, the average person does not behave like a sadist when a masochistic victim encourages him or her to do so.

Milgram's intention was to provide a paradigm in which it was possible to quantify "evil" by the extremity of buttons pushed on a 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. Let's outline some of the procedures in this research paradigm that seduced many ordinary citizens to engage in evil. 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).

Ten Ingredients in the Situationist's Recipe for Behavioral Transformations.

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:
a) 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," such as "national security," that often provides the nice big lie for instituting a host of bad, illegal, immoral policies.
b) Arranging some form of contractual obligation, verbal or written, to enact the behavior.
c) Giving participants meaningful roles to play (teacher, student) that carry with them previously learned positive values and response scripts.
d) 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. "Failure to respond must be treated as an error," was a Milgram rule for shocking omissions the same as false commissions. But then

what happens when the learner complains of a heart condition, wants to quit and later screams out followed by a thud and silence? The learner's inability to respond to the teacher's testing because of death or being unconscious must be continually shocked since omission equals commission. It does not make sense at all since how could the teacher be helping improve the memory of the learner who is incapacitated or dead? But all too many participants stopped engaging in such primitive, obvious critical thinking exercises as their stress mounted.

e) Altering the semantics of the act and action, from hurting victims to helping learners by punishing them.

f) 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.

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

h) Increasing each level of aggression in gradual steps, that do not seem like noticeable differences (only 30 volts).

i) Gradually changing the nature of the Influence Authority from "Just" to "Unjust," from reasonable and rational to unreasonable and irrational.

j) Making the "exit costs" high, and the process of exiting difficult by not permitting usual forms of verbal dissent to qualify as behavioral disobedience.

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." I would encourage readers to do the thought exercise of applying these compliance principles to the tactics used by the Bush administration to get Americans to endorse going to war against Iraq.

Lord of the Flies and the Psychology of Deindividuation

William Golding's (1962) Noble prize-winning novel of the transformation of good British choir boys into murderous beasts centers on the point of change in one's external physical appearance leading 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, given identifying numbers in place of their names. The comparison individuation subjects were called by their names and made to feel unique, although also in a four-woman group and asked to make the same responses of shocking each of two woman "victims" – all with a suitable cover story, the big lie that they never questioned.

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. One important conclusion flows from this research and its various replications and extensions, some using military personnel.

Anything that makes someone feel anonymous, as if no one knows who they are, creates the potential for that person to act in evil ways if the situation gives permission for violence.

Halloween Disguises and Aggression in Children.

We know that people also mask themselves for hedonistic pleasures, as at Carnival rituals in many Catholic countries. Children in America put on masks and costumes for Halloween parties. 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 matched in content but involved being aggressive to win the contest, with physical confrontations between two children in order to reach the goal. The experimental design was an ABA format; no costumes initially while the games were played, then the costumes arrived and were worn as the games continued, and finally, the costumes were removed 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 had negative instrumental consequences on winning tokens, 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.

Cultural Wisdom of Changing Warriors' Appearances.

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. 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. So cultural wisdom dictates that when old men want usually peaceful young men to harm and kill other young men like themselves in a war, it is easier to do so if they first change their appearance, to alter their usual external facade, put on uniforms or masks or paint their faces. With that anonymity in, out goes their usual internal focus of compassion and concern for others.

The Theoretical Model of Deindividuation and Bandura's Model of Moral Disengagement

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).

Dehumanization In Action: 'Animals" By Any Other Name Are College Students.

A remarkable experiment by Bandura, Underwood, and Fromson (1975) 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 (according to the dictates of a reasonable cover story). 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 alleged other group.

The dependent variable of shock intensity clearly reflected this situational manipulation. The 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. On the plus side, that arbitrary labeling resulted in others being treated with greater respect if someone in authority labeled them positively. 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, belies a self-reinforcing effect of aggressive or violent responding – it is increasingly pleasurable.

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: to reduce 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.

     Environmental Anonymity Breeds Vandalism.

     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.

     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, with the reciprocal assumption that they 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).

The Faces of the "Enemy:" Propaganda images condition men to kill abstractions

     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. 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), and his companion video. 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.

Ordinary Men Murder Ordinary Men, Women, and Children – Jewish Enemies.

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 soldiers were needed on the 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 but any individual could refuse to execute these men, women and children. Records indicate that at first about half the men refused and let the others do the mass murder. But over time, social modeling processes took their toll, as did any guilt-induced persuasion by buddies who did the killing, until at the end 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.

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." Let's go from the abstract to the personal: Imagine it was your father shooting to death a helpless mother and her infant child, and then imagine his answer to your question, "Why did you do it, daddy?"

The Spurious Creation of Evil Terrorists and Spread of National Fears Leading to the War on Iraq

Fast forward to our time, our nation, and the fears of terrorism instilled by the destruction of the World Trade Center Towers since that unforgettable day of September 11, 2001. The initial press and official reaction was to label the perpetrators of this horrific deed, as "hijackers," "murderers," "criminals." Soon the label changed to "terrorists" and their deeds described as "evil." "Evil" became the coin of the realm of the media and the administration, being used with ever more frequency and with an ever widening net of inclusiveness. Osama bin Laden, the mastermind of 9-11, was the first culprit designated as evil. But when he proved elusive and escaped from the war zone in Afghanistan, it became necessary for the administration's war on terrorism campaign to put a new face and a new place on terrorism. Of course, terrorism which works its generation of fear and anxiety by being faceless and placeless. Several countries were labeled by our president as the "axis of evil," with the leader of one of those countries, Iraq,

designated as so evil that he, Saddam Hussein, had to be removed from power by all means necessary.

A propaganda campaign was created to justify a pre-emptive war against his regime by identifying the clear and imminent threat to the national security of the United States posed by the alleged weapons of mass destruction (WMD) this evil leader had at his disposal. Then a link was erected between him and terrorist networks to whom he would sell or gift these WMD. Over time, many Americans began to believe the falsehoods that Saddam Hussein: was involved in the 9-11 terrorist attacks; was in complicity with Osama bin Laden, and had operationally ready an arsenal of deadly weapons that threatened U. S. security and well being. Magazine images, newspaper accounts, and vivid TV stories contributed to the Evilization of Saddam Hussein over the course of one year.

The vulnerability to terrorism that Americans continued to experience personally and deeply -- in part sustained and magnified by the administration's issuing of repeated (false) alarms of imminent terrorist attacks on the homeland – was relieved by going to war. The public and Congress strongly supported a symmetrical war to rid Iraq of the feared WMD, and destroy Hussein's evil menace. Thus, the United States for the first time in its history believed it was justified in waging an aggressive war that cost billions of dollars, untold thousands of deaths of soldiers and civilians, totally destroyed a nation, weakened the UN, and may enmesh the U. S. in a long, Vietnam-like "no exit" scenario.

When no WMD were uncovered despite the alleged best intelligence reports and aerial photos of them presented by the Secretary of State to the UN, collective cognitive dissonance has maintained the belief that is was still a necessary and good war against evil (Festinger, 1957). Who cares what the truth really is about the deceptive reasons for going to war if the United States is now safer, and their president is a commander-in-chief of decisive action -- as his image crafters have craftily depicted in the media. This national mind control experiment deserves careful documenting by unbiased social historians for the current and future generations to appreciate the power of images, words and framing that can lead a democratic nation to support and even relish in the unthinkable evil of an aggressive WAR.

The Socialization into Evil: How the "Nazi Hate Primers" Prepared and Conditioned the Minds of German Youth to Hate Jews

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 U. S. 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, 2003a). 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. I will leave it to the reader to explore the similarities between the mind control practices in *1984* and those being practiced on U.S. citizens in the past few years (see Zimbardo, 2003b).

The Stanford Prison Experiment: A Crucible of Human Nature Where Good Boys Encountered an Evil Place

Framing the issues we have been considering as who wins when good boys are put in an evil place, casts it as a neo-Greek tragedy scenario, where "the situation" stands in for the externally imposed forces of "the gods and destiny." As such, we can anticipate an outcome unfavorable to humanity. But in more mundane psychological terms, 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 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. This was 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 new web site: www.prisonexp.org. 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 (see the analysis by Christina Maslach of how she intervened to help bring light to that dark place and end the study, in Zimbardo, et al., 1999). 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.

Before moving on, I would like to share parts of a letter sent to me recently (email communication Oct. 18, 2002) by a young psychology student, recently discharged from military service. It outlines some of the direct parallels between the aversive aspects of our simulated prison many years ago and current despicable practices possible in some military boot-camp training. It also points up the positive effects that research and education can have.

> "I am a 19 yr. old student of psychology [who watched] the slide show of your prison experiment. Not too far into it, I was almost in tears... I joined the United States Marine Corps, pursuing a childhood dream. To make a long story short, I had become the victim of repeated illegal physical and mental abuse. An investigation showed I suffered more than 40 unprovoked beatings. Eventually, as much as I fought it, I became suicidal, thus received a discharge from boot camp….
>
> The point I am trying to make is that the manner in which your guards carried about their duties and the way that Military Drill Instructors do is unbelievable. I was amazed at all the parallels of your guards and one particular D.I. that comes to mind. I was treated much the same way and even worse in some cases.
>
> One incident that stands out was in an effort to break platoon solidarity, I was forced to sit in the middle of my squad bay (living quarters) and shout to the other recruits "if you guys would have moved faster, we wouldn't be doing this for hours" referencing every single other recruit holding over their heads very heavy foot lockers. The event was very similar to the prisoners saying #819 was a bad prisoner. After my incident and after I was home safe some months later, all I could think about was how much I wanted to go back to show the other recruits that as much as the D. I.'s told the platoon that I was a bad recruit, I wasn't.
>
> Other behaviors come to mind like the push ups for punishment, shaved heads, not having any identity other that being addressed as and referring to other people as "Recruit So-and-so" which replicates your study. The point of it all is even though your experiment was conducted 31 yrs. ago, my reading the study has helped me gain an understanding I was previously unable to gain before, even after therapy and counseling. What you have demonstrated really gave me insight into something I've been dealing with for almost a year now. Although, it is certainly not an excuse for their behavior, I now can understand the rationale behind the D. I.'s actions as far as being sadistic and power hungry."

The Failure of the Social Experiment of U. S. Corrections.

As much joy that such personal reactions bring to someone whose vision has always been for psychological research to make a difference in people's lives, I have been saddened in reflecting on the lack of impact of the Stanford Prison Experiment on corrections in the United States. When Craig Haney and I recently did a retrospective analysis of our study with contrasting views of U.S. and California correctional policies over the past 30 years, our conclusions were disheartening (Haney & Zimbardo, 2000). Prisons continue to be failed social experiments using a dispositional model of punishment and isolation of offenders rather than any sense of modifiable situational determinants of crime, or of basic rehabilitation practices that might reduce persistently high rates of recidivism. The United States is now the prison center of the universe, with more than 2 million citizens incarcerated, greater than any other nation, and growing. What our analysis revealed was that prison conditions had significantly worsened in the decades since our study as a consequence of the politicization of prisons, with politicians, prosecutors, DAs, and other officials taking a hard line on crime as a means of currying favor of an electorate made fearful of crime by media exaggerations. Misguided policies about sentencing for crack cocaine use and sale, and the "Three Strikes" rulings have put a disproportionately large number of Blacks and Hispanics behind bars for long sentences. There are now more Black men wasting away in the nation's prison system than fulfilling their potentials in our higher educational system.

The Evil of Inaction

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 Latané 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 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. Another instance of the FAE, one that needs to be reversed.

The Worst of the Apples in the Evil Barrel: Torturers and Executioners?

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: Senseless Fanatics or Martyrs for a Cause?

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 ask 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 then 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.

Conclusions

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. Along with a hardy band of experimental social psychologists, I have conducted research demonstrations in part designed as a corrective balance to the pervasive fundamental attribution error. 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. Rather, it 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. Sensitivity to situational determinants of behavior, also guides risk alerts for avoiding or changing prospective situations of vulnerability.

Please consider this Zimbardo homily that captures the essence of the difference between dispositional and situational orientations: "While a few bad apples might spoil the barrel (filled with good fruit/ people), a vinegar barrel will always transform sweet cucumbers into sour pickles -- regardless of the best intentions, resilience, and genetic nature of those cucumbers." So does it make more sense to spend resources to identify, isolate and destroy bad apples or to understand how vinegar works, and teach cucumbers how to avoid undesirable vinegar barrels?

My situational sermon has several related dimensions. 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 current administration 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.

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