Resisting Situational Influences and Celebrating Heroism

Every exit is an entry somewhere else.

—Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

We have come to the end of our journey through the dark places that imprison the minds of our fellow travelers. We have witnessed the conditions that reveal the brutal side of human nature and have been surprised by the ease and the extent to which good people can become so cruel to others. Our conceptual focus has been on trying to understand better how such transformations take place. Although evil can exist in any setting, we have looked most closely into its breeding ground in prisons and wars. They typically become crucibles, in which authority, power, and dominance are blended and, when covered over by secrecy, suspend our humanity, and rob us of the qualities we humans value most: caring, kindness, cooperation, and love.

Much of our time was spent in the simulated prison that my colleagues and I created in the basement of Stanford University's Psychology Department. In just a few days and nights the virtual paradise that is Palo Alto, California, and Stanford University became a hellhole. Healthy young men developed pathological symptoms that reflected the extreme stress, frustration, and hopelessness they were experiencing as prisoners. Their counterparts, randomly assigned to the role of guards, repeatedly crossed the line from frivolously playing that role to seriously abusing "their prisoners." In less than a week, our little "experiment," our mock prison, receded into the background of our collective consciousness, to be replaced by a reality of prisoners, guards, and prison staff that seemed remarkably real to all. It was a prison run by psychologists rather than by the State.

The detailed scrutiny that I brought to the nature of these transformations, which have never before been fully elaborated, is aimed at bringing each reader as close as possible to that special place where we can pit person power against institutional power. I tried to convey a sense of the unfolding processes by which a host of seemingly minor situational variables, such as social roles, rules, norms,

and uniforms, came to have so powerful an impact on all those caught up in its system.

At a conceptual level, I have proposed that we give greater consideration and more weight to situational and systemic processes than we typically do when we are trying to account for aberrant behaviors and seeming personality changes. Human behavior is always subject to situational forces. This context is embedded within a larger, macrocosmic one, often a particular power system that is designed to maintain and sustain itself. Traditional analyses by most people, including those in legal, religious, and medical institutions, focus on the actor as the sole causal agent. Consequently, they minimize or disregard the impact of situational variables and systemic determinants that shape behavioral outcomes and transform actors.

Hopefully, the examples and supporting information in this book will challenge the rigid Fundamental Attribution Error that locates the inner qualities of people as the main source of their actions. We have added the need to recognize both the power of situations and the behavioral scaffolding provided by the System that crafts and upholds the social context.

We have journeyed from a make-believe prison to the nightmare reality that was Iraq's Abu Ghraib Prison. Surprising parallels emerged between the social psychological processes at work in both of those prisons, the mock one and the all-too-real one. In Abu Ghraib, our analytical spotlight focused on one young man, Staff Sergeant Ivan Chip Frederick, who made a dual transformation: from good soldier to bad prison guard and then to suffering prisoner. Our analysis revealed, just as in the Stanford Prison Experiment, the dispositional, situational, and systemic factors that played a crucial role in fostering the abuse and torture that Frederick and other military and civilian personnel heaped on the prisoners in their custody.

I moved then from my position as an impartial social science researcher to assume the role of a prosecutor. In doing so, I exposed to you, readers-as-jurors, the crimes of the top brass in the military command and in the Bush administration that make them complicit in creating the conditions that in turn made possible such wide-ranging wanton abuse and torture throughout most U.S. military prisons. As noted repeatedly, the view I have provided does not negate the responsibility of these MPs, nor their guilt; explanation and understanding do not excuse such misdeeds. Rather, understanding how the events happened and appreciating what were the situational forces operating on the soldiers can lead to proactive ways to modify the circumstances that elicit such unacceptable behavior. Punishing is not enough. "Bad systems" create "bad situations" create "bad apples" create "bad behaviors," even in good people.

For the last time, let's define Person, Situation, and System. The Person is an actor on the stage of life whose behavioral freedom is informed by his or her makeup—genetic, biological, physical, and psychological. The Situation is the be-

havioral context that has the power, through its reward and normative functions, to give meaning and identity to the actor's roles and status. The System consists of the agents and agencies whose ideology, values, and power create situations and dictate the roles and expectations for approved behaviors of actors within its spheres of influence.

In this, the final phase of our journey, we will consider advice about how to prevent or combat negative situational forces that act upon all of us from time to time. We will explore how to resist influences that we neither want nor need but that rain upon us daily. We are not slaves to the power of situational forces. But we must learn methods of resisting and opposing them. In all the situations we have explored together, there were always a few, a minority, who stood firm. The time has come to try to expand their numbers by. thinking about how they were able to resist.

If I have in some measure brought you to appreciate that under some circumstances *You* might behave in the ways that participants did in the research conditions outlined here and in the real prison of Abu Ghraib, I ask you to consider now, could you also accept a conception of *You* as a Hero? We will celebrate also the good in human nature, the heroes among us, and the heroic imagination in all of us.

LEARNING HOW TO RESIST UNWANTED INFLUENCES

People with paranoid disorders have great difficulty in conforming to, complying with, or responding to a persuasive message, even when it is offered by their well-meaning therapists or loved ones. Their cynicism and distrust create an isolating barrier that shields them from involvement in most social encounters. Because they are adamantly resistant to social pressures, they provide an extreme model for immunity to influence, though obviously at great psychic cost. At the other end of the scale are the overly gullible, unconditionally trusting people who are easy marks for any and every scam artist.

Among them are the many people who fall prey to frauds, scams, and confidence games at some time in their lives. A full 12 percent of Americans are defrauded by con-artist criminals each year, sometimes losing their life savings. It is likely that this figure is shared by people in most nations. Although the majority of those defrauded are over fifty years old, at a time of life when wisdom should prevail, many people of all ages are regularly duped by tricksters in tele-marketing, health care, and lottery scams.[1]

Remember the phony authority hoax perpetrated on an innocent teenager at a McDonald's restaurant that was described in chapter 12? Surely you asked yourself, "How could she and those adults duped by this caller be so stupid?" Well, this same hoax was effective in getting many other fast-food restaurant personnel to follow that false authority blindly. How many? Recall in a dozen different restaurant chains in nearly seventy different establishments, in thirty-two states![2] We

noted that one assistant manager in a McDonald's restaurant, who was totally duped by the phony caller-con man, asks us all, "Unless you are in that situation, at that time, how do you know what you would do? You don't know what you would do."[3]

The point is that instead of distancing ourselves from the individuals who were deceived by assuming negative dispositional attributes in them—stupidity, naivete—we need to understand why and how people like us were so completely seduced. Then we will be in a position to resist and to spread awareness of methods of resisting such hoaxes.

The Duality of Detachment Versus Saturation

A basic duality exists in the human condition of detachment versus saturation, of cynical suspicion versus engagement. Detaching ourselves from others in the fear of being "taken in" is an extreme defensive posture, but it is true that the more open we are to other people's persuasion, the more likely we are to be swayed by them. Nevertheless, open, passionate involvement with others is essential to human happiness. We want to feel strongly, to trust completely, to act spontaneously, and to feel connected to others. We want to be fully "saturated" in living. At least some of the time, we want to suspend our evaluative faculties and abandon our primitive fearful reserve. We want to dance with passion along with Zorba the Greek.[4]

Yet, we must regularly assess the worth of our social involvements. The challenge for each of us is how best to oscillate between two poles, immersing fully and distancing appropriately. Knowing when to stay involved with others, when to support and be loyal to a cause or a relationship rather than dismissing it, is a delicate question that we all face regularly. We live in a world in which some people aim to use us. In that same world are others who genuinely want us to share what they believe are mutually positive goals. How to tell which is which? That is the question, dear Hamlet and dear Ophelia.

Before we begin to deal with specific means for combating mind-controlling influences, we must consider another possibility: the old illusion of *personal invulnerability.*[5] *Them? Yes. Me? No!* Our psychological journey should have convinced you to appreciate how the array of situational forces that we've highlighted can suck in the majority of people. But not You, right? It is hard to extend the lessons we have learned from an intellectual assessment to affect our own codes of conduct. What is easily applied in the abstract to "those others" is not easily applied in the concrete to oneself. We are different. Just as no two fingerprints have identical patterns, no two people have identical genetic, developmental, and personality patterns.

Individual differences should be celebrated, but in the face of strong, common situational forces, individual differences shrink and are compressed. In such instances, behavioral scientists can predict what the majority of people will do knowing nothing about the particular people who comprise a group, only the

nature of their behavioral context. It should be clear that not even the best psychology can predict how each and every individual will behave in a given situation; some degree of individual variance always exists that cannot be accounted for. Therefore, you may reject the lessons that we are about to learn as inapplicable to yourself; you are the special case, the special end of the tail of the normal distribution. However, know that you do so at the cost of being caught with your defenses down and your tail twisted.

My advice about what to do in case you encounter a "dirty, rotten scoundrel," disguised as a nice guy or a sweet old lady, has been accumulated over many decades from many personal experiences. As a scrawny, sickly kid trying to survive on the mean streets of my South Bronx ghetto, I had to learn basic street smarts; these consisted of figuring out quickly how certain people would be likely to act in certain situations. I got good enough at the skill to become a leader of the gang, the team, or the class. Then I was trained by an unscrupulous boss, a Fagin-like character in drag, on how to deceive Broadway theatergoers into checking their hats and coats when they did not want to and to manipulate them into paying tips to get them back, when tipping was not required. As her apprentice, I became experienced in selling expensive show programs when free versions were available and in overdosing kids with loads of candy and drinks if their parents were not chaperoning them to our candy counter. I was also trained to sell magazines door to door, eliciting pity from, and thereby sales to, sympathetic tenement dwellers. Later on, I studied formally the tactics police use to get confessions from suspects, that state-sanctioned torturers use to get anything they want from their victims, and that cult recruiters use in seducing the innocent into their dens. My scholarship extended to studying the mind control tactics used by the Soviets and the methods used by the Chinese Communists in the Korean War and in their massive national thought reform programs. I also studied our own homegrown mind manipulators in the CIA, the state-sponsored MKULTRA program,° and Jim Jones's lethal charismatic power over his religious followers (described in earlier chapters).

I have both counseled and learned from those who survived various cult experiences. In addition, I have engaged in a lifetime of investigative research on persuasion, compliance, dissonance, and group processes. My writing on some of these topics includes a training manual for peace activists during the Vietnam War, as well as several basic texts on attitude change and social influence.[7] These credentials are offered only to bolster the communicator credibility of the information provided next.

Promoting Altruism via the Virtuous Authority Experiment

Let us first imagine a "Reverse-Milgram" authority experiment. Our goal is to create a setting in which people will comply with demands that intensify over time *to do good*. The participants would be guided gradually to behave in ever-more-altruistic ways, slowly but surely moving further than they could have imagined

toward ever-more-positive, prosocial actions. Instead of the paradigm arranged to facilitate a slow descent into evil, we could substitute a paradigm for a slow ascent into goodness. How could we formulate an experimental setting in which that was possible? Let us design such a thought experiment. To begin, imagine that we arrange for each participant a hierarchy of experiences or actions that range from slightly more positive acts than he or she is used to doing to ever-more-extreme "good" actions. The extremes of virtue push him or her upward all the way to engaging in actions that at first seemed unimaginable.

There might be a time-based dimension in the design for those busy citizens who do not practice virtue because they have convinced themselves that they just don't have time to spare for good deeds. The first "button" on the "Goodness Generator" might be to spend ten minutes writing a thank-you note to a friend or a get-well card to a colleague. The next level might demand twenty minutes of giving advice to a troubled child. Increasing the pressure in this paradigm might then entail the participant's agreeing to give thirty minutes of his time to read a story to an illiterate housekeeper. Then the altruism scale moves upward to spending an hour tutoring a needy student, then to babysitting for a few hours to allow a single parent to visit her sick mother, working for an evening in a soup kitchen, helping unemployed veterans, devoting part of a day to taking a group of orphaned children to the zoo, being available to talk with returning wounded veterans, and on and on upward, a step-by-step commitment to giving precious time every week to ever-more-worthy causes. Providing social models along the way who are already engaged in the requested task, or who take the initiative to ante up to the next level, should work to encourage obedience to virtuous authority, should it not? It's worth a try, especially since, as far as I know, nothing like this experiment has ever been done.

Ideally, our experiment in social goodness would end when the person was doing something that he or she could never have imagined doing before. Our goodness track could also include contributions to creating a healthy and sustainable environment that might go from minimal acts of conservation or recycling to ever more substantial activities, such as giving money, time, and personal involvement to "green" causes. I invite you to expand on this notion in a host of domains in which society would benefit as more citizens "went all the way"— doing good without any supporting ideology, for, as we know from dissonance theory, beliefs follow behavior. Get people to perform good actions, and they will generate the necessary underlying principles to justify them. Talmudic scholars are supposed to have preached not to require that people believe before they pray, only to do what is needed to get them to begin to pray; then they will come to believe in what and to whom they are praying.

Research Supports a Reverse-Milgram Altruism Effect

As noted, this reverse-Milgram experiment has never been done. Suppose we actually attempted to perform such an experiment in the laboratory or, better yet, in

our homes and communities. Would it work? Could we use the power of authority and of the situation to produce virtue? Based on what I know about human beings and the principles of social influence, I am confident that we could do a better job of bringing about righteousness in our world, employing basic principles of social influence (see Notes for some references).[8]

The reverse-Milgram experiment described here combines three simple influence tactics that have been extensively studied and documented by social psychologists: the foot-in-the-door tactic, social modeling, and self-labeling of helpfulness. I've merely brought them together in one situation for promoting altruism. Moreover, researchers have found that these tactics can be used to promote all sorts of prosocial behavior—from donating one's hard-earned money to charity to increasing recycling and even to giving blood at the next Red Cross blood drive.

Our "slow ascent into goodness step by step" makes use of what social psychologists call the *"foot-in-the-door"* (FITD) tactic. This tactic begins by first asking someone to do a small request (which most people readily perform) and then later on to ask them to comply with a related but much bigger request (which was the actual goal all along).[9] The classic demonstration of this tactic was done more than forty years ago by Jonathan Freedman and Scott Fraser.[10] They asked suburbanites to put a big, ugly sign urging "Drive Carefully" in their nice suburban yard. Fewer than twenty percent of the homeowners did so. However, three fourths of the homeowners agreed to place that sign in their yards if two weeks earlier they had taken a small step and posted in their windows an unobtrusive three-inch sign urging safe driving. The same approach works with other prosocial behavior. For example, researchers have found that merely signing a petition leads to increased monetary support of the handicapped, filling out a brief questionnaire increases the willingness of people to donate their organs to others after death, conserving a small amount of energy induces homeowners to subsequently conserve more energy, and making a small public commitment increases the recycling of paper products.[11] What is more, this FITD effect can be enhanced by chaining together a series of increasingly larger requests, putting two feet in the door—just as in our reverse-Milgram experiment on promoting altruism.[12]

Our reverse-Milgram experiment would also employ *social models* to encourage prosocial behavior. In the SPE and Abu Ghraib Prison, there was an abundance of negative models that supported abusive behavior. Turning the power of social models around to enhance positive acts can be as effective in achieving the opposite, desirable outcomes. Researchers have found that altruistic role models increase the likelihood that those around them will engage in positive, prosocial behavior. Here is just a sampling of findings: social role models have been shown to increase donations to the Salvation Army; to promote helping a stranger with a flat tire; to lower rates of aggression and promote nonviolent responses; to reduce littering; and to increase donating money to poor children and a willingness to share one's resources with others.[13] But one word of advice: Remember to

practice what you preach. Models persuade far more effectively than words. For example, in one set of experiments, children were exposed to an adult model that preached either greed or charity to them in a persuasive sermon. However, that adult then went on to practice either greedy or charitable actions. The results showed that the children were more likely to do what the model did than what the model had said.[14]

The wisdom of the Talmudic scholars previously mentioned is consistent with another social influence principle underlying our reverse-Milgram experiment: Give someone an *identity label* of the kind that you would like them to have as someone who will then do the action you want to elicit from them. When you tell a person that he or she is helpful, altruistic, and kind, that person is more likely to do helpful, altruistic, and kind behaviors for others. In the Stanford Prison Experiment, we randomly assigned young men to the roles of prisoner and guard, and they soon took on the manners and the behaviors of those roles. So, too, if we tell someone that he or she is a helpful person, he or she will take on the manners and actions consistent with that identity label. For example, researchers have found that telling someone that he or she is "a generous person" increases compliance with a request to make a large contribution to prevent multiple sclerosis; giving people feedback that they are kind makes them more likely to help someone who has dropped a large number of cards; and those given a salient identity as "blood donors" are more likely to continue to donate their own blood to a stranger whom they don't expect ever to know or meet.[15]

One of the great advantages of our species is the ability to explore and understand our social world and then to use what we know to make our lives better. Throughout this book, we have seen the power of the situation to produce evil. I now argue that we can take those same basic principles and use the power of the situation to produce virtue. I fear for the future of humanity if my argument on this point is a failure or if I fail in making my argument acceptable to you. Might I suggest that you take a small step today in carrying out the reverse-Milgram experiment in your own life? I think you are just the person to do it and to serve as a role model for others in transforming our world to one with a more positive future. If not you, then who?

A Ten-step Program to Resist Unwanted Influences

If we consider some of the social psychological principles that fostered the evils we saw during the course of our journey, then once again—as we have just done in constructing the Goodness Generator example—let us use variants of those principles to get people to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative in their lives. Given the range of different types of influence, it would be necessary to tailor resistance to each type. Combating wrong dissonant commitments requires different tactics from opposing compliance-gaining strategies used on us. Confronting persuasive speeches and powerful communicators forces us to use different principles than we need for dealing with those who would dehumanize us or

deindividuate us. Ways of undercutting groupthink are also different from ways of modifying the impact of intense recruiters.

I have developed such a compendium for you; however, it offers more depth and specifics than is possible to deal with in this chapter. The solution is to make it all available to you free, online in the special website developed as a companion to this book: www.LuciferEffect.com. That way, you can read it at your leisure, take notes, check out the reference sources on which it is based, and contemplate scenarios in which you will put these resistance strategies into practice in your life. Also, after you have encountered a particular social influence tactic used on you or on others you know, you can turn to this handy guide for solutions about what to do next time around to be in a better position to master that challenge.

Here is my ten-step program for resisting the impact of undesirable social influences and at the same time promoting personal resilience and civic virtue. It uses ideas that cut across various influence strategies and provides simple, effective modes of dealing with them. The key to resistance lies in development of the three Ss: self-awareness, situational sensitivity, and street smarts. You will see how they are central to many of these general strategies of resistance.

"I made a mistake!" Let's start out by encouraging admission of our mistakes, first to ourselves, then to others. Accept the dictum that to err is human. You have made an error in judgment; your decision was wrong. You had every reason to believe it was right when you made it, but now you know you were wrong. Say the six magic words: "I'm sorry" ; "I apologize" ; "Forgive me. " Say to yourself that you will learn from your mistakes, grow better from them. Don't continue to put your money, time, and resources into bad investments. Move on. Doing so openly reduces the need to justify or rationalize our mistakes and thereby to continue to give support to bad or immoral actions. Confession of error undercuts the motivation to reduce cognitive dissonance; dissonance evaporates when a reality check occurs. "Cutting bait" instead of resolutely "staying the course" when it is wrong has an immediate cost, but it always results in long-term gain. Consider how many years the Vietnam War continued long after top military and administration officials, such as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, knew that the war was wrong and could not be won.[16] How many thousands of lives were lost to such wrongheaded resistance, when acknowledging failure and error could have saved them? How much good could come to all of us were our political leaders able to admit their similar errors in Iraq? It is more than a political decision to "save face" by denying errors instead of saving soldiers' and civilian lives—it is a moral imperative.

"I am mindful. " In many settings smart people do dumb things because they fail to attend to key features in the words or actions of influence agents and fail to notice obvious situational clues. Too often we function on automatic pilot, using outworn scripts that have worked for us in the past, never stopping to evaluate

whether they are appropriate in the here and now.[17] Following the advice of the Harvard researcher Ellen Langer, we must transform our usual state of mindless inattention into "mindfulness," especially in new situations.[18] Don't hesitate to fire a wake-up shot to your cortex; when we are in familiar situations old habits continue to rule even though they have become obsolete or wrong. We need to be reminded not to live our lives on automatic pilot but always to take a Zen moment to reflect on the meaning of the immediate situation, to think before acting. Never go mindlessly into situations where angels and sensible people fear to tread. For the best results, add "critical thinking" to mindfulness in your resistance.[19] Ask for evidence to support assertions; demand that ideologies be sufficiently elaborated to allow you to separate rhetoric from substance. Try to determine whether the recommended means ever justify potentially harmful ends. Imagine end-game scenarios of the future consequences of any current practice. Reject simple solutions as quick fixes for complex personal or social problems. Support critical thinking from the earliest times in children's lives, alerting them to the deceptive TV ads, biased claims, and distorted perspectives being presented to them. Help them become wiser and warier knowledge consumers.[20]

"I am responsible." Taking responsibility for one's decisions and actions puts the actor in the driver's seat, for better or for worse. Allowing others to compromise their own responsibility, to diffuse it, makes them powerful backseat drivers and makes the car move recklessly ahead without a responsible driver. We become more resistant to undesirable social influence by always maintaining a sense of personal responsibility and by being willing to be held accountable for our actions. Obedience to authority is less blind to the extent that we are aware that diffusion of responsibility merely disguises our individual complicity in the conduct of questionable actions. Your conformity to antisocial group norms is undercut to the extent that you do not allow displacement of responsibility, when you refuse to spread responsibility around the gang, the frat, the shop, the battalion, or the corporation. Always imagine a future time when today's deed will be on trial and no one will accept your pleas of "only following orders," or "everyone else was doing it."

"I am Me, the best I can be." Do not allow others to deindividuate you, to put you into a category, a box, a slot, to turn you into an object. Assert your individuality; politely state your name and your credentials, loud and clear. Insist on the same behavior in others. Make eye contact (remove all eye-concealing sunglasses), and offer information about yourself that reinforces your unique identity. Find common ground with dominant others in influence situations and use it to enhance similarities. Anonymity and secrecy conceal wrongdoing and undermine the human connection. They can become the breeding grounds that generate dehumanization, and, as we now know, dehumanization provides the killing ground for bullies, rapists, torturers, terrorists, and tyrants. Go a step beyond self-individuation.

Work to change whatever social conditions make people feel anonymous. Instead, support practices that make others feel special, so that they too have a sense of personal value and self-worth. Never allow or practice negative stereotyping; words, labels, and jokes can be destructive, if they mock others.

"I respect just authority but rebel against unjust authority." In every situation, work to distinguish between those in authority who, because of their expertise, wisdom, seniority, or special status, deserve respect, and the unjust authority figures who demand our obedience without having any substance. Many who assume the mantel of authority are pseudo-leaders, false prophets, confidence men and women, self-promoters who should not be respected but rather disobeyed and openly exposed to critical evaluation. Parents, teachers, and religious leaders should play more active roles in teaching children this critical differentiation. They should be polite and courteous when such a stance is justified, yet be good, wise children by resisting those authorities who do not deserve their respect. Doing so will reduce our mindless obedience to self-proclaimed authorities whose priorities are not in our best interests.

"7 **want group acceptance, but value my independence." The** lure of acceptance into a desired social group is more powerful than that of the mythical golden ring in *Lord of **the Rings**.* The power of that desire for acceptance will make some people do almost anything to be accepted and go to even further extremes to avoid rejection by the Group. We are indeed social animals, and usually our social connections benefit us and help us to achieve important goals that we could not achieve alone. However, there are times when conformity to a group norm is counterproductive to the social good. It is imperative to determine when to follow the norm and when to reject it. Ultimately, we live within our own minds, in solitary splendor, and therefore we must be willing and ready to declare our independence regardless of the social rejection it may elicit. It is not easy, especially for young people with a shaky self-image or adults whose self-image is isomorphic with that of their job. Pressures on them to be a "team player," to sacrifice personal morality for the good of the team, are nearly irresistible. What is required is that we step back, get outside opinions, and find new groups that will support our independence and promote our values. There will always be another, different, better group for us.

 "I will **be more frame-vigilant."** Who makes the frame becomes the artist, or the con artist. The way issues are framed is often more influential than the persuasive arguments within their boundaries. Moreover, effective frames can seem not to be frames at all, just sound bites, visual images, slogans, and logos. They influence us without our being conscious of them, and they shape our orientation toward the ideas or issues they promote. For example, voters who favored reducing estate tax benefits for the rich were urged to vote against a "death tax"; the tax was exactly

the same, but its denning term was different. We desire things that are framed as being "scarce," even when they are plentiful. We are averse to things that are framed as potential losses and prefer what is presented to us as a gain, even when the ratio of positive to negative prognoses is the same.[21] We don't want a 40 percent chance of losing X over Y, but we do want the 60 percent chance of gaining Y over X. The linguist George Lakoff clearly shows in his writings that it is crucial to be aware of frame power and to be vigilant in order to offset its insidious influence on our emotions, thoughts, and votes.[22]

"J *will balance my time perspective."* We can be led to do things that are not really what we believe in when we allow ourselves to become trapped in an expanded present moment. When we stop relying on our sense of past commitments and our sense of future liabilities, we open ourselves to situational temptations to engage in *Lord of the Flies* **excesses.** By not "going with the flow" when others around you are being abusive or out of control, you are relying on a temporal perspective that stretches beyond present-oriented hedonism or present-oriented fatalism. You are likely to engage in a cost-benefit analysis of your actions in terms of their future consequences. Or you may resist by being sufficiently conscious of a past time frame that contains your personal values and standards. By developing a balanced time perspective in which past, present, and future can be called into action depending on the situation and task at hand, you will be in a better position to act responsibly and wisely than when your time perspective is biased toward reliance on only one or two time frames. Situational power is weakened when past and future combine to contain the excesses of the present.[23] For example, research indicates that righteous Gentiles who helped to hide Dutch Jews from the Nazis did not engage in the kind of rationalizing their neighbors did in generating reasons for *not* helping. These heroes depended upon moral structures derived from their past and never lost sight of a future time when they would look back on this terrible situation and be forced to ask themselves whether they had done the right thing when they chose not to succumb to fear and social pressure.[24]

"7 *will not sacrifice personal or civic freedoms for the illusion of security." The* need for security is a powerful determinant of human behavior. We can be manipulated into engaging in actions that are alien to us when faced with alleged threats to our security or the promise of security from danger. More often than not, influence peddlers gain power over us by offering a Faustian contract: You will be safe from harm if you will just surrender some of your freedom, either personal or civic, to that authority. The Mephistophelian tempter will argue that his power to save you depends upon all the people making small sacrifices of this little right or that small freedom. Reject that deal. Never sacrifice basic personal freedoms for the promise of security because the sacrifices are real and immediate and the security is a distant illusion. This is as true in traditional marital arrange-

ments as it is in the commitment of good citizens to the interests of their nation when its leader promises personal safety and national security at the cost of a collective sacrifice of suspending laws, privacy, and freedoms. Erich Fromm's classic *Escape from Freedom* reminds us that this is the first step a fascist leader takes even in a nominally democratic society.

"I can oppose unjust systems. " Individuals falter in the face of the intensity of the systems we have described: the military and prison systems as well as those of gangs, cults, fraternities, corporations, and even dysfunctional families. But individual resistance in concert with that of others of the same mind and resolve can combine to make a difference. The next section in this chapter will portray individuals who changed systems by being willing to take the risk of blowing the whistle on corruption within them or by constructively working to change them. Resistance may involve physically removing one's self from a total situation in which all information, rewards, and punishments are controlled. It may involve challenging the groupthink mentality and being able to document all allegations of wrongdoing. It may involve getting help from other authorities, counselors, investigative reporters, or revolutionary compatriots. Systems have enormous power to resist change and withstand even righteous assault. Here is one place where individual acts of heroism to challenge unjust systems and their bad barrel makers are best performed by soliciting others to join one's cause. The system can redefine individual opposition as delusional, a pair of opponents as sharing a *folie à deux,* but with three on your side, you become a force of ideas to be reckoned with.

This ten-step program is really only a starter kit toward building individual resistance and communal resilience against undesirable influences and illegitimate attempts at persuasion. As mentioned, a fuller set of recommendations and relevant research-based references can be found on the Lucifer Effect website under *"Resisting Influence Guide. "*

Before moving to the final stop in our journey, celebrating heroes and heroism, I would like to add two final general recommendations. First, be discouraged from venal sins and small transgressions, such as cheating, lying, gossiping, spreading rumors, laughing at racist or sexist jokes, teasing, and bullying. They can become stepping-stones to more serious falls from grace. They serve as minifacilitators for thinking and acting destructively against your fellow creatures. Second, moderate your in-group biases. That means accepting that your group is special but at the same time respecting the diversity that other groups offer. Fully appreciate the wonder of human variety and its variability. Assuming such a perspective will help you to reduce group biases that lead to derogating others, to prejudice and stereotyping, and to the evils of dehumanization.

THE PARADOXES OF HEROISM

A young woman challenges an authority older than she, forcing him to recognize his complicity in reprehensible deeds that are being perpetrated on his watch. Her confrontation goes further and helps to terminate the abuse of innocent prisoners by their guards. Does her action qualify as "heroic," given that scores of others who had witnessed the prisoners' distress all failed to act against the system when they realized its excesses?

We would like to celebrate heroism and heroes as special acts by special people. However, most people who are held up to this higher plane insist that what they did was not special, was really what everyone should have done in the situation. They refuse to consider themselves "heroes." Maybe such a reaction comes from the ingrained notion we all have—that heroes are supermen and -women, a cut or more above the common breed. Perhaps more than their modesty is at work. Perhaps, rather, it is our general misconception of what it takes to be heroic.

Let's now look at the best in human nature and the transformation of the ordinary into the heroic. We will examine alternative conceptions and definitions of heroism and propose a way to classify different kinds of heroic action; then elaborate on some examples that fall into these categories; and finally design a table of contrasts between the banalities of evil and of heroism. But first, let's go back to the person and the act that started this section and ended the Stanford Prison Experiment.

Recall (from chapter 8) that Christina Maslach was a recently graduated Ph.D. from the Stanford Psychology Department with whom I had become romantically involved. When she saw a chain gang of prisoners being carted to the toilet with bags over their heads as guards shouted orders at them and she witnessed my apparent indifference to their suffering, she exploded.

Her later account of what she felt at the time, and how she interpreted her actions, tells us a good deal about the complex phenomenon of heroism.[25]

> What he [Zimbardo] got was an incredibly emotional out-burst from me (I am usually a rather contained person). I was angry and frightened and in tears. I said something like, *"What you are doing to those boys is a terrible thing!"*
>
> So what is the important story to emerge from my role as "the Terminator" of the Stanford Prison Experiment? I think there are several themes I would like to highlight. First, however, let me say what the story is not. Contrary to the standard (and trite) American myth, the Stanford Prison Experiment is not a story about the lone individual who defies the majority. Rather, it is a story about the majority—about how everyone who had some contact with the prison study (participants, researchers, observers, consultants, family, and friends) got so completely sucked into it. The

power of the situation to overwhelm personality and the best of intentions is the key story line here.

So why was my reaction so different? The answer, I think, lies in two facts: I was a late entrant into the situation, and I was an "outsider." Unlike everyone else, I had not been a consenting participant in the study. Unlike everyone else, I had no socially defined role within that prison context. Unlike everyone else, I was not there every day, being carried along as the situation changed and escalated bit by bit. Thus the situation I entered at the end of the week was not truly the "same" as it was for everyone else—I lacked their prior consensual history, place, and perspective. For them, the situation was construed as being still within the range of normalcy; for me, it was not—it was a madhouse.

As an outsider, I did not have the option of specific social rules that I could disobey, so my dissent took a different form—of challenging the situation itself. This challenge has been seen by some as a heroic action, but at the time it did not feel especially heroic. To the contrary, it was a very scary and lonely experience being the deviant, doubting my judgment of both situations and people, and maybe even my worth as a research social psychologist.

Christina then raises a profound qualification. For an act of personal defiance to be worthy of being considered "heroic," it must attempt to change the system, to correct an injustice, to right a wrong:

> I had to consider also in the back of my mind what I might do if Phil continued with the SPE despite my determined challenge to him. Would I have gone to the higher authorities, the department chair, dean, or Human Subjects Committee, to blow the whistle on it? I can't say for sure, and I am glad it never came to that. But in retrospect, that action would have been essential in translating my values into meaningful action. When one complains about some injustice and the complaint only results in cosmetic modifications while the situation flows on unchanged, then that dissent and disobedience are not worth much.

She expands on a point that was raised in our discussion of the Milgram research, where it was argued that verbal dissent was only ego balm for the "teacher," to make him feel better about the terrible things he was doing to his "learner." *Behavioral disobedience* was necessary to challenge authority. However, in the Milgram experiment case there was never disobedience more significant than a silent retreat as each teacher-perpetrator exited from the distressing situation without changing it in any meaningful way. Christina's take on what the heroic minority should have done after they opposed the authority figure has never been framed so eloquently:

What did it matter to the classic original Milgram study that one third of the participants disobeyed and refused to go all the way? Suppose it was not an experiment; suppose Milgram's "cover story" were true, that researchers were studying the role of punishment in learning and memory and would be testing about one thousand participants in a host of experiments to answer their practical questions about the educational value of judiciously administered punishment. If you disobeyed, refused to continue, got paid, and left silently, your heroic action would not prevent the next 999 participants from experiencing the same distress. It would be an isolated event without social impact unless it included going to the next step of challenging the entire structure and assumptions of the research. Disobedience by the individual must get translated into systemic disobedience that forces change in the situation or agency itself and not just in some operating conditions. It is too easy for evil situations to co-opt the intentions of good dissidents or even heroic rebels by giving them medals for their deeds and a gift certificate for keeping their opinions to themselves.

What Is the Stuff of Heroism and Heroes?

When does a person who engages in an action that qualifies as a heroic act, on the basis of criteria we will lay out next, not become a "hero"? Further, under what circumstances might her or his act be considered not heroic but cowardly?

Christina's action had the positive consequence of terminating a situation that had spiraled out of control and began to do more harm than had been intended at its inception. She does not consider herself a hero because she was simply expressing her personal feelings and beliefs that were translated (by me as principal investigator) into the outcome she desired. She did not have to "blow the whistle" to higher authorities to intervene in order to stop the runaway experiment.

Compare her condition to that of two potential heroes in that study, Prisoner Clay-416 and Prisoner "Sarge." Both of them openly defied the authority of the guards and suffered considerably for doing so. Clay's hunger strike and refusal to eat the sausages challenged the guards' complete control and should have rallied his peers to stand up for their rights. It did not. Sarge's refusal to utter public obscenities despite the harassment by Guard "John Wayne" also should have been viewed as heroic defiance by his peers and rallied them not to yield to such abuse. It did not. Why not? In both cases, they acted alone, without sharing their values or intentions with the other prisoners, without asking for their support and recognition. Therefore, it was easy for the guards to label them "troublemakers" and to brand them as the culprits responsible for the guards' deprivations of the rest of the prisoners. Their acts could be considered heroic, but they cannot be considered heroes because they never acted to change the whole abusive system by bringing other dissidents on board.

Another aspect of heroism is raised by their example. Heroism and heroic status are always social attributions. Someone other than the actor confers that honor on the person and the deed. There must be social consensus about the significance and meaningful consequence of an act for it to be deemed heroic, and for its agent to be called a hero. Wait! Not so fast! A Palestinian suicide bomber who is killed in the act of murdering innocent Jewish civilians is given heroic status in Palestine and demonic status in Israel. Similarly, aggressors may be construed as heroic freedom fighters or as cowardly agents of terrorism, depending on who is conferring the attribution.[26]

This means that definitions of heroism are always culture-bound and time-bound. To this day. puppeteers enact the legend of Alexander the Great before children in remote villages of Turkey. In the towns where his command posts were set up and his soldiers intermarried with villagers, Alexander is a great hero, but in towns that were simply conquered on his relentless quest to rule the known world, Alexander is portrayed as a great villain, more than a thousand years after his death.[27]

What is more, to become part of any culture's history a hero's acts must be recorded and preserved by those who are literate and who have the power to write history or to pass it on in an oral tradition. Poor, indigenous, colonized, illiterate people have few widely acknowledged heroes because there is no record of their acts.

Defining Heroes and Heroism

Heroism has never been systematically investigated in the behavioral sciences.[28] Heroes and heroism seem to be best explored by literature, art, myth, and cinema. Multiple data sources document the ills of human existence: homicides and suicides, crime rates, prison populations, poverty levels, and the base rate of schizophrenia in a given population. Similar quantitative data for positive human activities are not easy to come by. We don't keep records of how many acts of charity, kindness, or compassion occur in a community in the course of a year. Only occasionally do we learn of a heroic act. Such apparently low base rates lead us to believe that heroism is rare and that heroes are the truly exceptional. Nevertheless, renewed interest in the importance of addressing the good in human nature has arisen from the new research and empirical rigor of the Positive Psychology movement. Spearheaded by Martin Seligman and his colleagues, this movement has created a paradigm shift toward accentuating the positive in human nature and minimizing psychology's long-held focus on the negative.[29]

Currently accepted conceptions of heroism emphasize primarily its physical risk without adequately addressing other components of heroic acts, such as nobility of purpose and nonviolent acts of personal sacrifice. Emanating from the analyses of human virtues by positive psychologists is a set of six major categories of virtuous behavior that enjoy almost universal recognition across cultures. The classification includes: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, tern-

perance, and transcendence. Of these, courage, justice, and transcendence are the central characteristics of heroism. Transcendence includes beliefs and actions that go beyond the limits of self.

Heroism focuses us on what is right with human nature. We care about heroic stories because they serve as powerful reminders that people are capable of resisting evil, of not giving in to temptations, of rising above mediocrity, and of heeding the call to action and to service when others fail to act.

Many modern dictionaries describe heroism as "gallantry" or "bravery," and these in turn are described as courage, and courage returns us, once again, to heroics. However, older dictionaries were at pains to break down the concept, offering subtle distinctions among words used to describe heroic acts. For example, the *1913 Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary* associates heroism with courage, bravery, fortitude, intrepidity, gallantry, and valor.[30] As part of the entry for each of these words, the dictionary's editor tried to ensure that the reader understood how they differed.

Courage is that firmness of spirit and swell of soul, that meets danger without fear. Bravery is daring and impetuous courage, like that of one who has the reward continually in view and displays his courage in daring acts. Fortitude has often been styled "passive courage" and consists in the habit of encountering danger and enduring pain with a steadfast and unbroken spirit. Valor is courage exhibited in war (against living opponents) and cannot be applied to single combat; it is never used figuratively. Intrepidity is firm, unshaken courage. Gallantry is adventurous courage, which courts danger with a high and cheerful spirit.

The dictionary goes on to elaborate, in footnote examples, that a man may show courage, fortitude, or intrepidity in the common pursuits of life, as well as in war. Valor, bravery, and gallantry are displayed in the contest of arms. Valor belongs only to battle; bravery may be shown in single combat; gallantry may be manifested either in attack or defense; but in the latter case, the defense is usually turned into an attack. Heroism may call into exercise all these modifications of courage. It is a contempt of danger, not from ignorance or inconsiderate levity but from a noble devotion to some great cause and a just confidence of being able to meet danger in the spirit of such a cause.[31]

Military Heroes

Historically, most examples of heroism have emphasized acts of courage that involved bravery, gallantry, and risk of serious physical injury or death. According to the psychologists Alice Eagly and Selwyn Becker, the combination of courage and nobility of purpose is more likely to result in someone being considered a hero than just courage alone.[32] The idea of nobility in heroism is often tacit and elusive. Generally the risk of life and limb or of personal sacrifice is much more conspicuous. The heroic ideal of the war hero has served as a theme from ancient epics to modern journalism.

Achilles, commander of Greek forces in the Trojan War, is often held up as an

archetypal war hero.[33] Achilles' engagement in combat was based on his commitment to a military code that defined his actions as gallant. Yet, while his acts were heroic, his overriding motivation was the pursuit of glory and renown that would make him immortal in the minds of men after his death.

The historian Lucy Hughes-Hallett argued that "A hero may sacrifice himself so that others might live, or so that he himself may live forever in other's memories.... Achilles will give anything, including life itself, to assert his own uniqueness, to endow his particular life with significance, and to escape oblivion."[34] The desire to risk one's physical being in exchange for lasting recognition across generations may seem a relic from another era, yet it still warrants serious consideration in our evaluation of modern heroic behavior.

This historical view of the hero also suggests that there is something innately special about heroes. Hughes-Hallett wrote, "There are men, wrote Aristotle, so godlike, so exceptional, that they naturally, by right of their extraordinary gifts, transcend all moral judgment or constitutional control: 'There is no law which embraces men of that caliber: they are themselves law.' " One definition of heroism arises from this Aristotelian conception: "It is the expression of a superb spirit. It is associated with courage and integrity and a disdain for the cramping compromises by means of which the unheroic majority manage their lives— attributes that are widely considered noble.... [Heroes are] capable of something momentous—the defeat of an enemy, the salvation of a race, the preservation of a political system, the completion of a voyage—which *no one else* [italics added] could have accomplished."[35]

This concept of conspicuous service that distinguishes a warrior from his peers persists to this day in our military services. The U.S. Department of Defense recognizes heroism by awarding a number of medals for acts considered to be above and beyond the call of duty. The highest of these is the Medal of Honor, which has been awarded to about 3,400 soldiers.[36] Rules governing the Medal of Honor emphasize the role of gallantry and intrepidity, the willingness to enter into the heart of a battle without flinching that clearly distinguishes the individual's performance from that of his fellow soldiers.[37] Similarly, the British military awards the Victoria Cross as its highest medal for heroism, defined as valorous conduct in the face of an enemy.[38]

The ideal of the military hero is clearly echoed in other contexts, and it includes those who routinely risk their health and lives in the line of duty, such as police officers, firefighters, and paramedics. The insignia worn by firefighters is a version of the Maltese Cross, a symbolic acknowledgment of the creed of heroic service that Knights of Malta were sworn to live by in the Middle Ages. The Maltese Cross in its original form remains a symbol of gallantry for the military in the British Victoria Cross, and from 1919 to 1942 in the U.S. Navy's version of the Medal of Honor, the Tiffany Cross.

Civilian Heroes

If Achilles is the archetypal war hero, Socrates holds the same rank as a civic hero. His teaching was so threatening to the authorities of Athens that he became the target of government censure and was eventually tried and sentenced to death for refusing to renounce his views. When we equate the military heroism of Achilles with the civil heroism of Socrates, it becomes clear that while heroic acts are usually made in service to others or the fundamental moral principles of a society, the hero often works at the nexus of constructive and destructive forces. Hughes-Hallett suggests that "the wings of opportunity are fledged with the feathers of death." She proposes that heroes expose themselves to mortal danger in pursuit of immortality. Both Achilles and Socrates, powerful exemplars of heroism, go to their deaths in service of the divergent codes of conduct by which they chose to live.

Socrates' choice to die for his ideals serves as an eternal normative reminder of the power of civil heroism. We are told that at the hour of Socrates' sentencing, he invoked the image of Achilles in defending his decision to die rather than to submit to an arbitrary law that would silence his opposition to the system he opposed. His example brings to mind the similar heroism of the U.S. Revolutionary War patriot Nathan Hale, whose defiant dying stand will later be used to illustrate one type of heroic action.

Consider the daring deed of the "unknown rebel" who confronted a line of seventeen oncoming tanks that were aimed at smashing the freedom rally of the Chinese Democracy Movement at Tiananmen Square, Peking, on June 5, 1989.

This young man stopped the deadly advance of a column of tanks for thirty minutes and then climbed atop the lead tank, reportedly demanding of its driver, "Why are you here? My city is in chaos because of you. Go back, turn around and stop killing my people." The anonymous "Tank Man" became an instant international symbol of resistance; he faced the ultimate test of personal courage with honor and delineated forever the proud image of an individual standing in defiance against a military juggernaut. The image of that confrontation was broadcast around the world and made him a universal hero. There are conflicting stories about what happened to him as a consequence of his act, some reporting his imprisonment, others his execution, others his anonymous escape. Regardless of what became of him, his status as a civil hero was acknowledged when the Tank Man was included in the list of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people of the twentieth century (April 1998).

The physical risk demanded of civilians who act heroically differs from a soldier's or first responder's heroic acts, because professionals are bound by duty and a code of conduct and because they are trained. Thus, the standard for duty-bound and non-duty-bound physical-risk heroism may differ, but the style of engagement and potential sacrifice the action demands is very similar.

Civilian heroes who perform acts that involve immediate physical risk are recognized in awards, such as the Carnegie Hero Award in the United States and the George Cross in Britain.[39] British and Australian authorities also recognize heroic actions that involve groups.[40] For example, Australia recognized "a group of students who tackled and restrained an armed offender after a crossbow attack on a fellow student at Tomaree High School, Salamander, New South Wales" in 2005 by awarding a group bravery citation. The citation is, "For a collective act of bravery, by a group of persons in extraordinary circumstances, that is considered worthy of recognition." Once again, a seemingly simple concept is broadened from the behavior of a solitary hero to that of a collective hero, which we will consider shortly.

Physical-Risk Heroes Versus Social-Risk Heroes

One definition offered by psychologists cites physical risk as the defining feature of heroes. For Becker and Eagly, heroes are "individuals who choose to take risks on behalf of one or more other people, despite the possibility of dying or suffering serious physical consequences from these actions."[41] Other motives for heroism, such as principle-driven heroism, are acknowledged but not elaborated on. It seems curious that psychologists would promote so narrow a prototype of heroism and exclude other forms of personal risk that might qualify as heroic acts, such as risks to one's career, the possibility of imprisonment, or the loss of status. A challenge to their definition came from the psychologist Peter Martens, who noted that it singled out only heroes who stood for an idea or principle—the nobility component of heroism that betokens the Aristotelian hero among the proletariat.[42]

Senator John McCain, himself a hero who resisted giving any military information in spite of being subjected to extreme torture, believes that the concept of heroism might be broadened beyond physical risk and suffering. McCain contends that "the standard of courage remains, as I think it should, acts that risk life or limb or other very serious personal injuries for the sake of others or to uphold a virtue—a standard often upheld by battlefield heroics but one that is certainly not limited to martial valor."[43] Each of these descriptions of heroic behavior equates the characteristics found in physical and civil heroism while pointing out critical differences between them.

The various conceptions of heroism also roughly map onto ideas of courage, justice, and transcendence that Seligman and his colleagues developed as part of their classification system for virtues and strengths. For example, the virtue of courage is erected on four character strengths that include authenticity, bravery (roughly similar to intrepidity), persistence (similar to fortitude), and zest. Justice is noted as another virtue. Fairness, leadership, and teamwork are subsumed within this virtue. In practice, the concept of service to a noble cause or ideal is often ultimately a matter of justice, for example, the abolition of slavery. Finally, transcendence is another of the virtues that touches on heroism insofar as it is the strength that forces connection to the larger universe and gives meaning to our actions and existence. While not articulated in the literature on heroism, transcendence may be related to Webster's 1913 conception of fortitude in heroic behavior. Transcendence may allow an individual involved in a heroic act to remain detached from the negative consequences, anticipated or revealed, that are associated with his or her behavior. In order to be heroic, one must rise above the immediate risks and perils that heroism necessarily entails, either by reframing the nature of the risks or by altering their significance relevant to "higher-order" values.

A New Taxonomy of Heroism

Stimulated by thinking about the heroic behaviors associated with the Stanford Prison Experiment, I began a fuller exploration of this intriguing topic in dialogues with my psychology colleague Zeno Franco. We first broadened the conception of heroic risk, then proposed an enhanced definition of heroism, and finally generated a new taxonomy of heroism. It seemed apparent that risk or sacrifice should not be limited to an immediate threat to physical integrity or death. The risk component in heroism can be any serious threat to the quality of life. For example, heroism might include persistent behavior in the face of known long-term threats to health or serious financial consequences; to the loss of social or economic status; or to ostracism. Because this broadens the definition of heroism considerably, it also seemed necessary to rule out some forms of apparent heroism that might, in fact, not be heroic but "pseudoheroic."

In his book *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America,* Daniel Boorstin deflates the modern confluence of heroism with celebrity. "Two centuries ago

when a great man appeared, people looked for God's purpose in him; today we look for his press agent____Among the ironic frustrations of our age, none is more tantalizing than these efforts of ours to satisfy our extravagant expectations of human greatness. Vainly do we make scores of artificial celebrities grow where nature planted only a single hero."[44]

Another example of what heroism is *not* can be seen in a children's book on American heroes that offers fifty examples.[45] Its stories of heroism actually point to a group of activities or roles that are necessary but insufficient to warrant true heroic status. All of the examples are role models upheld as worthy of emulation, but only a fraction meet the definitional requirements of hero status. Not all mavericks, warriors, or saints are heroes. The hero must embody a combination of deliberate nobility and potential sacrifice. Sometimes individuals are accorded hero status when not deserved by their actions, but they become so for some purpose of an agency or government. These "pseudoheroes" are media creations promoted by powerful systemic forces.[46]

Heroes are rewarded in various ways for their heroic deeds, but if they anticipate secondary gain at the time of their act they must necessarily be disqualified from heroic status. However, if secondary gains are accrued subsequent to their act without prior anticipation of or motivation to attain them, the act still qualifies as heroic. The point is that a heroic act is *sociocentric* and not egocentric.

Heroism can be defined as having four key features: (a) it must be engaged in voluntarily; (b) it must involve a risk or potential sacrifice, such as the threat of death, an immediate threat to physical integrity, a long-term threat to health, or the potential for serious degradation of one's quality of life; (c) it must be conducted in service to one or more other people or the community as a whole; and (d) it must be without secondary, extrinsic gain anticipated at the time of the act.

Heroism in service of a noble idea is usually not as dramatic as physical-risk heroism. However, physical-risk heroism is often the result of a snap decision, a moment of action. Further, physical-risk heroism usually involves a probability, not the certainty, of serious injury or death. The individual performing the act is generally removed from the situation after a short period of time. On the other hand, it might be argued that some forms of civil heroism are more heroic than physical risk forms of heroism. People such as Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dr. Albert Schweitzer willingly and knowingly submitted to the trials of heroic civil activity day after day for much of their adult lives. In this sense, the risk associated with physical-risk heroism is better termed *peril,* while the risk involved in civil heroism is considered *sacrifice.*

Sacrifice entails costs that are not time-limited. Typically, civil heroes have the opportunity to carefully review their actions and to weigh the consequences of their decisions. Each might have chosen to retreat from the cause he championed because the cost of his or her actions had become too burdensome, yet they did not. Each of these individuals risked their quality of life on many levels. Their

activities had serious consequences: arrest, imprisonment, torture, and risk to family members, and even assassination.

Returning to Webster's 1913 definition of heroism, we may say that upholding the highest civil ideas in the face of danger is the core concept of heroism. Taking physical risk is only one means of meeting the dangers that can be encountered in performing heroic acts. We are reminded that heroism "is a contempt of danger, not from ignorance or inconsiderate levity, but from a *noble devotion to some great cause* [italics added], and a just confidence of being able to meet danger in the spirit of such a cause." The danger may be immediately life threatening, or it may be insidious. Consider one of Nelson Mandela's statements at the beginning of his twenty-seven-year-long imprisonment for opposing the tyranny of apartheid:

> During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.[47]

Based on this more flexible definition of heroism, Zeno Franco and I created a working taxonomy that includes twelve subcategories of heroism, distinguishing two subcategories within the military, physical-risk heroic type and ten subcategories with the civilian, social-risk type. In addition, the taxonomy identifies discriminating characteristics of each of the dozen hero types, as well as the form of risk they encounter, and gives a few examples drawn from historical and contemporary sources.

The taxonomy was developed a priori, based on reasoning and literature reviews. It is neither empirically grounded nor fixed but is rather a working model that is open to modification by new research findings and readers' qualifications and additions. It will be obvious that the subcategories, definitions, risks, and exemplars offered are all deeply culturally and temporally bound. They reflect a largely European-American, middle-class, adult, postmodern perspective. Incorporating other perspectives will surely expand and enrich it.

	Subtype	Definition	Risk/ Sacrifice	Exemplars
Military Heroism— *Courage, Intrepidity*	**1. Military and Other Duty-bound Physical-Risk Heroes**	**Individuals involved in military or emergency response careers that involve repeated exposure to high-risk situations; heroic acts must exceed the call of duty**	**Serious Injury Death**	**Achilles** **Medal of Honor recipients** **Hugh Thompson** **Adm. James Stockdale**
Civil Heroism	**2. Civil Heroes— Non-duty-bound Physical-Risk Heroes**	**Civilians who attempt to save others from physical harm or death while knowingly putting their own life at risk**	**Serious Injury Death**	**Carnegie heroes**
Social Heroism—Fortitude,	**3. Religious figures**	**Dedicated, life-long religious service embodying highest principles or breaks new religious/ spiritual ground. Often serves as a teacher or public exemplar of service**	**Sacrifice of self in ascetic path** **Upsetting religious orthodoxy**	**Buddha** **Mohammed** **St. Francis of Assisi** **Mother Teresa**

Social Heroism—Fortitude, Courage, Intrepidity

Subtype	Definition	Risk/ Sacrifice	Exemplars
4. Politico-Religious figures	Religious leaders who have turned to politics to affect wider change, or politicians who have a deep spiritual belief system that informs political practice	Assassination Imprisonment	Mohandas Gandhi Martin Luther King. Jr. Nelson Mandela Rev. Desmond Tutu
5. Martyrs	Religious or political figures who knowingly (sometimes deliberately) put their lives in jeopardy in the service of a cause	Certain or near certain death in the service of a cause or ideal	Jesus Socrates Joan of Arc José Martí Steve Biko
6. Political or Military leaders	Typically lead a nation or group during a time of difficulty; serve to unify nation, provide shared vision, and may embody qualities that are seen as necessary for the group's survival	Assassination Opposition Being voted out of office Smear campaigns Imprisonment	Abraham Lincoln Robert E. Lee Franklin Roosevelt Winston Churchill Vaclav Havel

Social Heroism—Fortitude, Courage, Intrepidity

Subtype	Definition	Risk/ Sacrifice	Exemplars
7. Adventurer/ Explorer/ Discoverer	Individual who explores unknown geographical area or uses novel and unproven transportation methods	Physical health Serious injury Death Opportunity costs (length of journey)	Odysseus Alexander the Great Amelia Earhart Yuri Gagarin
8. Scientific (Discovery) heroes	Individual who explores unknown area of science, uses novel and unproven research methods, or discovers new scientific information seen as valuable to humanity	Inability to convince others of the importance of findings Professional ostracism Financial losses	Galileo Edison Madam Curie Einstein
9. Good Samaritan	Individuals who step in to help others in need: situation involves considerable disincentives for altruism; may not involve immediate physical risk	Punitive sanctions from authorities Arrest Torture Death Opportunity costs Ostracism	Holocaust rescuers Harriet Tubman Albert Schweitzer Richard Clark Richard Rescorla

Social Heroism—Fortitude, Courage, Intrepidity

Subtype	Definition	Risk/ Sacrifice	Exemplars
10. Odds beater/ Underdog	Individuals who overcome handicap or adverse conditions and succeed in spite of circumstances and provide model for others	Failure Rejection Scorn Envy	Horatio Alger Helen Keller Eleanor Roosevelt Rosa Parks
11. Bureau-cracy heroes	Employees in large organizations in controversial arguments within or between agencies; typically involves standing Arm on principle despite intense pressures	Jeopardize carefully groomed career Professional ostracism Loss of social status Financial losses Loss of credibility Risk to health	Louis Pasteur Edward Tolman Barry Marshall
12. Whistle-blowers	Individuals who are aware of illegal or unethical activities in an organization who report the activity without expectation of reward	Jeopardize carefully groomed career Professional ostracism Loss of social status Financial losses Loss of credibility Physical reprisal	Ron Ridenhour Cynthia Cooper Coleen Rowley Deborah Layton Christina Maslach Joe Darby Sherron Watkins

A Sampling of Hero Profiles

Putting some flesh on the bare bones of heroism both humanizes the conception and illustrates its many forms. I will profile a dozen individuals that are particularly interesting or that I know personally. Having argued that situations make heroes, we can use some major situational markers to cluster some of them, such as apartheid, McCarthyism, Vietnam and Iraq wars, and the Jonestown mass suicides/murders.

Apartheid   Heroes

At the vanguard of efforts to promote freedom and human dignity are special kinds of heroes who are willing to engage in lifelong battles against systemic oppression. In recent times, Mohandas Gandhi and Nelson Mandela took heroic paths that led to their engaging and dismantling two systems of apartheid. In 1919, Gandhi began passive resistance to Britain's authority over India. He was imprisoned for two years. Over the next twenty years, he struggled for the liberation of India, for equal treatment of members of the Hindu class system, and for religious tolerance. World War II delayed the advent of India's self-determination, but in 1948 the country finally celebrated its independence from Great Britain. Gandhi was assassinated shortly thereafter, but he became the exemplar of enduring nonviolent resistance to oppression.[48]

South Africa developed a formalized, legalized apartheid structure in 1948 that prevailed until 1994 and that virtually enslaved the native black population. Nelson Mandela was tried for inciting strikes and protest meetings and on other charges in 1962. He spent the next twenty-seven years incarcerated in the notorious Robben Island prison. During the time he was imprisoned, Mandela and his fellow political prisoners used the prison system itself to create both a real and symbolic resistance situation that served to galvanize the people of South Africa and the world to end the system of apartheid. He was able to transform the self-generated identities of several generations of prisoners by leading them to understand that they were political prisoners acting with dignity to support a just cause. But in the process of doing so, he helped to transform the attitudes and beliefs of many of the guards, and to challenge the entire prison system as well.[49]

Anti-McCarthyism   Heroes

The menace of global communism was from the 1950s until the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall what the fear of global terrorism is now: it dictated national policy, it fomented wars, and it entailed an enormous waste of resources and lives. It is important to remember McCarthyism because it was a form of repressive, authoritarian quasi-government control that occurred in a mature democracy. Those who defused the anti-Communist hysteria propelled by Senator Joe McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee in the United States never received the enduring, universal recognition that Gandhi or Mandela

enjoyed. Nevertheless, their opposition to injustice meets our definitional criteria.

At the height of the McCarthy era, the University of California initiated a "loyalty oath" that all faculty members were required to sign. A psychology professor, Edward Tolman, refused to sign the oath and led a small group of professors who opposed the policy. On July 18, 1950, Tolman submitted a letter of protest to the president of the University of California, Robert Sproul. In August of that year, the Regents of the University of California fired thirty-one professors, including Tolman, for their refusal to sign the loyalty oath. Later that month, the professors filed suit for reinstatement under *Tolman vs. Underhill.* In 1952, the State Supreme Court found in favor of these nonsigners. During the loyalty oath dispute, Tolman encouraged other young faculty members to sign the oath and leave the fight against it to him and others who could (financially) afford to continue the struggle. Tolman, a soft-spoken academician with no prior history of political involvement, became deeply respected for his courageous stance by many professors and staff in the University of California system.[50]

Other heroes of the McCarthy era included investigative journalists such as George Seldes and I. F. Stone and the cartoonists Herb Block and Daniel Fitzpatrick. During this period, I. F. Stone's name was listed on a Senate Internal Security Subcommittee list of eighty-two "most active and typical sponsors of Communist-front organizations." As a consequence of being blacklisted, Stone was forced to sue in order to get his press card.[51]

Moving from the imaginary Communist menace that faced the United States to the palpable daily menace and cruelty of national domination by a Communist regime, we meet Vaclav Havel. Havel is extraordinary in the sense that the Dalai Lama is, and is ordinary in the sense that a former stagehand and writer is. However, he was the architect of the "Velvet Revolution" that toppled the Czech Communist regime in 1989. Before finally convincing the government that its totalitarian brand of communism was destructive of all that Czechoslovakia stood for, Havel was imprisoned repeatedly for nearly five years. He was a leading figure in drafting the Charter 77 manifesto and organizing the Czechoslovak human rights movement of intellectuals, students, and workers. As a passionate supporter of nonviolent resistance, Havel is famous for having articulated the concept of "post-totalitarianism," which challenged his countrymen to believe they had the power to change a repressive regime that they inadvertently upheld by passively submitting to its authority. In letters he wrote from prison to his wife and in speeches, Havel made it evident that the first step in overthrowing an unacceptable social and political order is for citizens to realize that they are comfortably living within a lie. This unpretentious, shy man was made president by the Federal Assembly, and when the Communist government finally yielded to the power of the people, Vaclav Havel was democratically elected the first president of the new Czech Republic. He continues now. as a famous private citizen, to oppose political injustice and to support efforts for global peace.[52]

Vietnam   War   Heroes

Two very different kinds of military heroism under conditions of extreme duress appear in the actions of James Stockdale and Hugh Thompson. Stockdale, a former Stanford colleague at the Hoover Institute (and guest lecturer in my course on mind control), rose to the rank of vice admiral before his death at eighty-one in July 2005. He is considered by many to be one of the clearest examples of military heroism in the twentieth century for having endured extreme torture sessions repeatedly over seven years of imprisonment and never giving in to his Viet Cong captors. His key to survival was relying on his earlier training in philosophy, which enabled him to call to mind the teaching of the Stoic philosophers, notably Epictetus and Seneca. Stockdale's focus enabled him to distance himself psychologically from the torture and pain that he could not control and galvanize his thinking around those things he could control in his prison surroundings. He created a self-willed code of conduct for himself and others imprisoned with him. Survival under conditions of extreme trauma requires that one's will never be broken by the enemy, as when Epictetus was tortured by Roman rulers thousands of years earlier.[53]

Hugh Thompson is distinguished for his extreme courage in a nearly lethal battle—against his own soldiers! One of the most terrible events in the history of the U.S. military was the My Lai massacre, which took place on March 16, 1968, during the Vietnam War. An estimated 504 Vietnamese civilians were rounded up and killed in Son My village (My Lai 4 and My Khe 4) by American soldiers and their Charlie Company officers, Captain Ernest Medina and Lieutenant William Calley, Jr.[54] In response to military losses from ambushes and booby traps, the military command issued an order for the destruction of "Pinkville," a code name for a Communist Viet Cong village. Finding no enemy warriors there, the soldiers gathered up all the inhabitants of the village—elderly men, woman, children, and babies—and machine-gunned them to death (some they burned alive, raped, and scalped).

While this massacre was unfolding, a helicopter, piloted by Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, Jr., which was flying overhead to provide air cover, set down to help a group of Vietnamese civilians who appeared to still be alive. As Thompson and his two-man crew returned to their helicopter after having set smoke signal markers, they saw Captain Medina and other soldiers running over to shoot the wounded. Thompson flew his helicopter back over My Lai village, where soldiers were about to blow up a hut full of wounded Vietnamese. He ordered the massacre to stop and threatened to open fire with the helicopter's heavy machine guns on any American soldier or officer who refused his order.

Although the commissioned lieutenants outranked Thompson, he did not let rank get in the way of morality. When he ordered that civilians be taken out of the bunker, a lieutenant countered that they would be taken out with grenades. Refusing to back down, Thompson replied, "I can do better than that. Keep your peo-

ple in place. My guns are on you." He then ordered two other helicopters to fly in for medical evacuation of the eleven wounded Vietnamese. His plane returned to rescue a baby he had spotted still clinging to her dead mother. Only after Thompson reported the massacre to his superiors were cease-fire orders given.[55]

For his dramatic intervention and the media coverage it received, Thompson became persona non grata in the military and for punishment was required to fly the most dangerous helicopter missions again and again. He was shot down five times, breaking his backbone and suffering lasting psychological scars from his nightmare experience. It took thirty years before the military recognized his heroic deeds and those of his companions, Glenn Andreotta and Lawrence Colburn, with the Soldier's Medal for Heroism, the Army's highest award for bravery not involving direct contact with the enemy. Hugh Thompson died in January 2006. (Paradoxically, Lieutenant Calley was treated as a hero in some quarters, even with a song in his honor that cracked *Billboard's* Top 40 in 1971.[56])

Whistle-Blowers in the Vietnam and Iraq Wars and Women on the Home Front

Less dramatic forms of heroism occur when an individual verbally confronts a system with news it does not want to hear, in this case of the complicity of officers and enlisted men in the abuse and murder of civilians. Two such soldiers are Ron Ridenhour, who exposed the My Lai massacre, and Joe Darby, the Army Reservist whose heroic action exposed the Abu Ghraib abuses and tortures.

Although the officers involved in the My Lai episode sought to cover up the atrocity, Ron Ridenhour, a twenty-two-year-old private newly sent to Vietnam, did all he could to uncover it. He had heard about the event from five eyewitness accounts of soldiers who had been at the bloody scene, had independently investigated it in Vietnam, and had continued to do so after returning home. Ridenhour sent a letter to President Nixon, members of Congress, and officials within the Department of Defense and the Department of the Army arguing that a public investigation of the My Lai massacre was needed. In his letter, Ridenhour made it clear that "as a conscientious citizen I have no desire to besmirch the image of American servicemen in the eyes of the world." However, he insisted that an investigation was essential (a year after the incident). He was largely ignored, but persisted until his righteous cause was recognized. Ridenhour demonstrates the principled heroic stance in his letters to these officials: "I remain irrevocably persuaded that if you and I do truly believe in the principles of justice and equality for every man, however humble, before the law, that form the very backbone that this country is founded on, then we must press forward a widespread and public investigation of this matter with all our combined efforts."[57]

Following the exposé by a young investigative reporter, Seymour Hersh. who got valuable material from Ridenhour, a major investigation was ordered and its findings fill four volumes of the Peers Report, released on March 14, 1970. Although up to twenty officers and enlisted men were identified as in various ways being involved in this massacre, only Lieutenant William Calley. Jr., was convicted

and sentenced for the crimes. Although given a life sentence, his punishment was limited to a light term of three and a half years under house arrest, and he was later pardoned by the Secretary of the Army.[58] Incidentally, Ridenhour went on to a career as a journalist, but he told me in conversation that he always felt distrusted by many people in Washington, D.C. for having exposed the My Lai massacre.

By now we know too well the events surrounding the abuses heaped upon prisoners at Abu Ghraib's hard site, Tier 1 A, by MPs and others involved in intelligence gathering. This scandalous behavior was brought to a sudden halt when dramatic images of the torture, humiliation, and violence were forced upon the attention of military commanders. It was a most ordinary young man who did an extraordinary thing that caused the halt to the horror. What he did took great personal fortitude, in the opinion of my military contacts, because he was a lowly Army Reserve specialist who put a superior officer on notice that something horrendous was happening on his watch.

When Darby first looked at the pictures on a CD that buddy Charles Graner had given him, he thought they were pretty funny. "To me, that pyramid of naked Iraqis, when you first see it, is hilarious____When it came up out of nowhere like that, I just laughed," Darby recalled in a recent interivew{sic}.[59] However, as he viewed more of them—the sexually explicit ones, the ones showing the beatings, and the others—his affect shifted. "It just didn't sit right with me. I couldn't stop thinking about it. After about three days, I made a decision to turn the pictures in." It was a tough decision for Darby, because he realized fully the moral conflict facing him. "You have to understand: I'm not the kind of guy to rat somebody out____But this crossed the line to me. I had the choice between what I knew was morally right and my loyalty to other soldiers. I couldn't have it both ways."[60]

Darby was afraid of retaliation against him by soldiers in his company unless he remained anonymous in this action.[61] He burned another CD copy of the pictures, typed an anonymous letter about them, put them in a plain manila envelope, and handed it to an agent at the Criminal Investigation Division (CID), remarking simply that they were left in his office. Shortly after, Special Agent Tyler Pieron grilled him and got Darby to admit: "I'm the one who put them in there," and then he gave a sworn statement. He was able to maintain his anonymity until Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld unexpectedly "outted" Darby during the 2004 congressional hearings on these abuses—while Darby was having dinner with hundreds of soldiers in the mess hall. He was whisked away, and eventually concealed in military protective custody for the next several years. "But I don't regret any of it," Darby said recently. "I made my peace with the decision before I turned the pictures in. I knew that if people found out that it was me, I wouldn't be liked."

The revelations led to a host of formal investigations into abuses in that prison and at all other military facilities where detainees were being held. Darby's

actions stopped much of the torture and abuse and led to significant changes in the way the Abu Ghraib Prison was run.[62]

But not everyone thinks that what Darby did was the right thing to do. For many, even in his hometown in the Allegheny Mountains, Darby's calling attention to the abuses was unpatriotic, un-American, and even faintly treasonous. "Hero a Two-Timing Rat," ran a headline in the *New York Post*. Even those who are not angry at his whistle-blowing are surprised that he could be a hero because he was such an ordinary kid from a poor family, an average student and even bullied in school. Darby's high school history teacher and football coach, Robert Ewing, a Vietnam veteran, eloquently summed up the mixed reactions:

> Some people are upset with what he did—ratting them out—and also because of what happened to those contractors, the beheading. They might say what the guards did pales in comparison. But... if we as a country, as a culture, believe certain values then you can't excuse that behavior. If I ever do see him again, I'll tell him I'm very proud. And as time goes on, most Americans are going to realize that, too.[63]

I helped arrange for Darby to receive a Presidential Citation from the American Psychological Association in 2004. He was unable to accept this honor personally because he, his wife, and his mother had to remain in military protective custody for several years in the wake of the many retaliation threats they received. Darby was finally recognized as a hero nationally when he received the 2005 John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award. In bestowing the award, Caroline Kennedy, president of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation, said, "Individuals who are willing to take personal risk to further the national interest and uphold the values of American democracy should be recognized and encouraged in all parts of government. Our nation is indebted to U.S. Army Specialist Joseph Darby for standing up for the rule of law that we embrace as a nation."

Challenges to authority systems are not gender-bound; women are as likely to blow the whistle against crimes and injustice as men are. *Time* magazine honored three such women in choosing its "Persons of the Year" (2002) for their bold confrontation of major corporate fraud and FBI incompetence. Cynthia Cooper, an internal auditor at WorldCom, was responsible for revealing fraudulent accounting practices that kept $3.8 billion of losses off the company's books. After months of intensive investigation, often conducted during the night to avoid detection, Cooper and her team of auditors exposed the deceptive practices, which resulted in the firing and indictment of senior company officers.[64]

Sherron Watkins, a vice president at the high-flying Enron Corporation, also blew the whistle on the extensive corporate corruption taking place there, which involved "cooking the books" to give the appearance of great success to cover up failure. The formerly reputable Arthur Andersen accounting firm was also implicated in the huge scandal.[65] An FBI staff attorney, Colleen Rowley, blew the whis-

tle on the FBI **for** its failure to follow up on pleas from her office that they check out a person whom it identified as a potential terrorist and who turned out to be one of the co-conspirators in the September 11, 2001, terror attacks. These "three woman of ordinary demeanor but extraordinary guts and sense" risked a great deal in challenging their established power base.[66]

Jonestown   Heroes

Debbie Layton and Richard Clark were two survivors among the 913 American citizens who died in the mass suicides and murders that took place in Jonestown, Guyana, on November 18, 1978. Debbie came from a relatively affluent, educated white family in Oakland, California, while Richard came to San Francisco from humble African-American origins in Mississippi. They both became my personal friends when they arrived in the Bay area after having escaped the horrors of the Jonestown nightmare. Both qualify as heroes in different ways, Debbie as a whistle-blower and Richard as a Good Samaritan.

Debbie joined Reverend Jim Jones's Peoples Temple congregation as an eighteen-year-old. She was a loyal follower for many years and eventually became the Temple's finance secretary. As such, she was entrusted with moving millions of dollars out of Jonestown to deposits in secret Swiss bank accounts. Her mother and brother, Larry, were also Temple members. But over time she realized that Jonestown was more like a concentration camp than the promised **Utopia** where racial harmony and a sustainable lifestyle would prevail. Nearly a thousand faithful members were subjected to hard labor, semistarvation, and physical and sexual abuse. Armed guards surrounded them, and spies infiltrated their lives. Jones even forced them to practice regular suicide drills, called "White Nights," that frightened Debbie into understanding that he was actually preparing them for a mass suicide.

At great personal peril, she decided to flee Jonestown and take the message of its potential destructive power to concerned relatives and to the government. She could not even alert her sick mother to her escape plan for fear that her emotional reaction that might tip off Jones. After executing a complex set of maneuvers, Debbie did escape and immediately did all she could to alert authorities to the abusive conditions at Jonestown and to warn them of what she believed was an imminent tragedy.

In June 1978, she issued an affidavit to the U.S. government warning of a potential mass suicide. Its thirty-seven detailed points began: "RE. The Threat And Possibility Of Mass Suicide By Members Of The People's Temple. I, Deborah Layton Blakey, declare the following under penalty of perjury: The purpose of this affidavit is to call to the attention of the United States government the existence of a situation which threatens the lives of United States citizens living in Jonestown, Guyana."

Six months later, her Cassandra-like prediction was eerily validated. Sadly, her pleas for aid were met by the skepticism of government officials who refused to

accept that such a bizarre tale could be true. However, some concerned relatives did believe her and encouraged California Congressman Leo Ryan to investigate. Reporters, a cameraman, and some relatives accompanied Ryan on his visit. As he was about to return home with a positive evaluation of what he had been duped into believing were ideal living conditions, several families who decided to defect under his protection joined Ryan. But it was too late. Jones, by now very paranoid, believed the defectors would reveal the truth about Jonestown to the outside world. He had the congressman and some of his entourage murdered and then arranged for cyanide-laced Kool-Aid to be given to his weary followers. His infamous last-hour speech was outlined in Chapter 12; a full version is available online at the Jonestown website.[67]

Debbie Layton has written an eloquent account of how she and so many others were trapped by the persuasive lures of this diabolical preacher man. Jim Jones's Lucifer-like transformation from benevolent religious minister to angel of death unfolds chillingly in her book, *Seductive Poison*.[68] I have argued elsewhere that there are remarkable parallels between the mind control tactics used by Jones and those depicted in George Orwell's classic novel *1984* that might make the Jonestown phenomenon a field experiment of the most extreme mind control imaginable—and perhaps even sponsored by the CIA.[69]

I helped counsel Richard Clark and his girlfriend, Diane Louie, after they returned to San Francisco, having escaped the mass suicide. Richard was a simple, pragmatic man. a slow-speaking but sensitive observer of people and places. He said that the moment he got to Jonestown he could detect that something was seriously wrong. No one in the Promised Land was smiling. Everyone in the supposed land of plenty was hungry. People whispered and never laughed. Work not only came before play but also never left time for play. Jones's voice boomed out over the compound day and night, in person or on tape. The sexes were segregated into different barracks, and sex, even among married couples, was forbidden without Jones's approval. No one could leave because no one could figure out where they were in the midst of a jungle in a foreign land thousands of miles from home.

Richard Clark hatched a plan. He volunteered for a job that no one wanted in the "piggery," which was in an isolated smelly part of the sprawling compound. The place was ideal for Richard to escape Jones's mind-numbing rhetoric and to seek out a path through the jungle to freedom. Once he had slowly and carefully laid out his escape, he told Diane about it and said that when the time was ripe, they would flee together. In defiance of Jones's extensive spy system, Richard made the decidedly risky decision to tell the members of a few families about the planned escape. On the morning of Sunday, November 18, Jones ordered everyone to have a holiday in celebration of Congressman Ryan's return to America with the message about the good works being accomplished in this agricultural socialist **Utopia.** That was Richard's exit cue. He assembled his party of eight and, pretending they were off on a picnic, led them through the jungle to safety. By the

time they reached the capital at Georgetown, every one of their friends and other family members was dead.

Richard Clark died recently of natural causes, knowing that he made the right decision to trust his intuition, his street smarts, and his "discrepancy detectors." But most of all, he was pleased that he had saved the lives of those who followed him, an ordinary hero, out of the heart of darkness.[70]

A Four-Dimensional Model of Heroism

Based on the concepts of courage and examples of heroic behavior presented here, an elementary model of heroism can be generated. Within the overall motivational framework of a particular person, heroism can be described on three continua: Risk Type/Sacrifice: Engagement Style or Approach; and Quest. The axis of Risk Type/Sacrifice is anchored at one end by physical risk and at the other by social risk. Similarly, Engagement Style or Approach is anchored at one end by active (gallant) and, at the other end, passive (with fortitude) approaches. On the third dimension, the Quest is described as being in service of the preservation of life or in the preservation of an ideal. Although they are synonymous in some ways—the preservation of life is also a noble idea—the distinction is important within this context. The first three dimensions of this model are depicted in this illustration. We will add a fourth later.

Let's position three different types of heroes in this model space, Nathan Hale, Mother Teresa, and Richard Rescorla. The American Revolutionary War hero Nathan Hale had been operating as a spy in the British ranks for some time,

RISK   TYPE / SACRIFICE
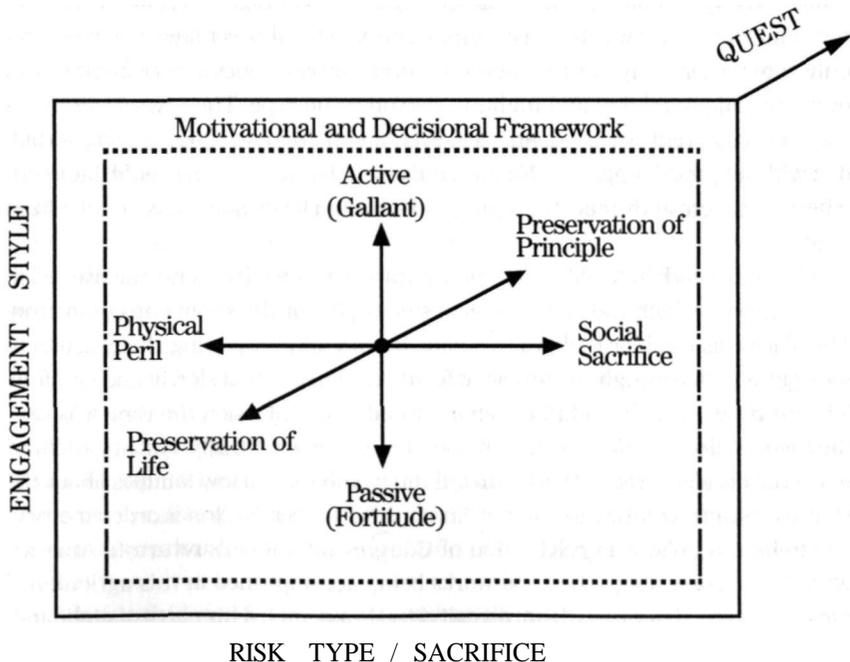
before he was caught. While his activities were patriotic, they were not in themselves heroic. Had his clandestine activities gone unnoticed, he would never have become an American hero. It was in the moment of his execution at the hands of the British, a death he accepted with dignity, that he became a heroic figure. "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country" was his classic farewell. In that moment, Hale showed great fortitude, sacrificing his life in the service of a principle.

A very different kind of heroism is found in the life and work of Mother Teresa. Her activities cannot be not summed up in a single act, as was Nathan Hale's defiance at his execution. Rather, her heroic acts span the course of decades. Her dedication to enable the dying poor to die in a state of grace, Catholic grace, was based on service to a principle (compassion), in which she was actively and perpetually involved, and the sacrifices she made took the ascetic path to glory: her poverty, her chastity, and her denial of herself for the sake of others.
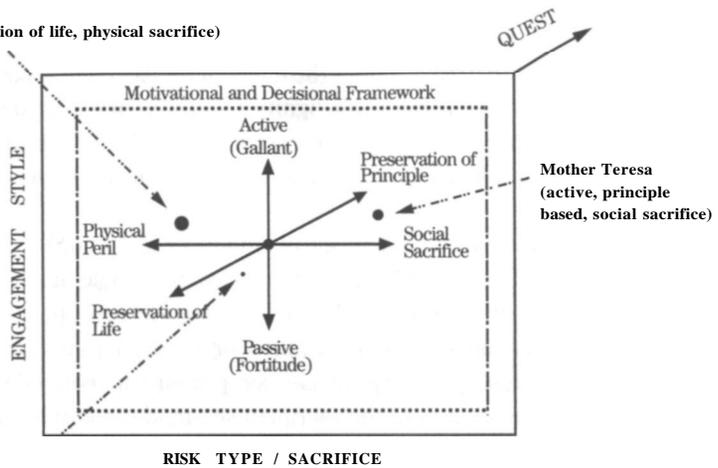
Our third hero to be placed in our multidimensional hero grid is Richard Rescorla. He was the director of security in Morgan Stanley's World Trade Center (WTC) offices in New York City at the time of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. A decorated Vietnam veteran (Silver Star, Purple Heart, and Bronze Stars for Valor and Meritorious Service), Rescorla is credited with saving the lives of thousands of Morgan Stanley employees by his decisive actions. Rescorla defied WTC authorities in ordering the employees in his offices to evacuate rather than to follow the order to remain at their desks. During the evacuation of the forty-fourth to seventy-fourth floors of WTC Tower 2, reports indicate, Rescorla verbally calmed the employees over a bullhorn and told them to stop talking on cell phones and to keep moving down the stairs. Rescorla, two security guards whom he had trained, and three other Morgan Stanley employees died when the building imploded. Rescorla and his team are credited with saving the lives of an estimated 2,800 employees who exited WTC-2 before it collapsed.[71] In contrast to the heroism of a figure like Nathan Hale, Rescorla's act was active and was performed directly in the service of preserving life, yet his glory too demanded the ultimate physical sacrifice.

Nathan Hale, Richard Rescorla, and Mother Teresa represent different aspects of the heroic ideal. The distinctions among their actions illuminate the diversity of acts that meet the enigmatic standard of heroic. Their actions are mapped on to our model of heroism.

A fourth dimension to be added to this model is that of Chronicity. Heroes can be made in instantaneous actions, or their heroism can accrue over time. Acute heroism, the heroism shown in a single act, is described in the martial context as bravery—an act of courage in a single combat. In contrast, chronic military heroism, courage that is displayed time and again in battle, is called valor. There are not yet comparable terms to denote duration in civil heroism, perhaps because the dramatic quality of heroism that is demonstrated in perilous situations is not as easily evident in the civic sphere. Among civic heroes we might con-

Richard Rescorla
(active, preservation of life, physical sacrifice)

Richard Rescorla
(active, preservation of life, physical sacrifice)

QUEST

Motivational and Decisional Framework

Active
(Gallant)

Preservation of
Principle

Mother Teresa
(active, principle
based, social sacrifice)

Physical
Peril

Social
Sacrifice

ENGAGEMENT STYLE

Preservation of
Life

Passive
(Fortitude)

RISK   TYPE / SACRIFICE

Nathan Hale (at the moment of execution)
(passive, principle based, physical sacrifice)

trast a time-limited, situationally specific heroism of the moment, like that of
whistle-blowers, with the chronic heroism demonstrated by an enduring engage-
ment in service to society, like that of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Collective Heroism as a Matter of Degree

The solitary heroic figure, like the brave marshal in a western movie who faces
down a band of renegades, is supported, more often than not, by groups of people
working in unison in emergencies, disasters, and situations that demand con-
certed action. The Underground Railroad, which took southern slaves to freedom
in northern towns, could function only with the coordinated efforts of many peo-
ple who worked in peril of their lives. Similarly, first responders to disasters are
typically citizen volunteers working in loosely organized teams. As the "Tank
Man" was, many individuals working in collective harmony are anonymous.
They brave danger without expectation of personal notoriety but for the sake of
answering a call to community service.

     A special instance of this kind of collective heroism occurred on United Air-
lines flight 93, which was hijacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001. At first,
passengers, believing the plane was returning to the airport, followed the norm
by staying in their seats. But when some passengers were alerted by cell phone
calls about the crash of other planes into the World Trade Center and the Penta-
gon, a new norm emerged. A small group of them gathered in the back of the
plane and planned to get control of the cockpit. One of them was on the phone
with a GTE operator, who heard him say, "Let's roll!" before he was disconnected.
Their concerted action prevented the plane from reaching its intended target,
either the White House or the Capitol. That field now stands as a memorial to col-
lective heroism of the highest order.[72]

HEROIC CONTRASTS: THE EXTRAORDINARY VERSUS THE BANAL

Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil.

—John Milton

To the traditionally accepted notion that heroes are exceptional people, we can now add an opposing perspective—that some heroes are ordinary people who have done something extraordinary. The first image is the more romantic and is favored in ancient myth and modern media. It suggests that the hero has done something that ordinary people in the same position would not or could not have done. These superstars must have been born with a hero gene. They are the exception to the rule.

A second perspective, which we might call "the rule is the exception," directs us to examine the interaction between situation and person, the dynamic that impelled an individual to act heroically at a particular time and place. A situation may act either as a catalyst, encouraging action, or it may reduce barriers to action, such as the formation of a collective social support network. It is remarkable that in most instances people who have engaged in heroic action repeatedly reject the name of hero, as we saw was the case with Christina Maslach.

Such doers of heroic deeds typically argue that they were simply taking an action that seemed necessary at the time. They are convinced that anybody would have acted similarly, or else they find it difficult to understand why others did not. Nelson Mandela has said, "I was not a messiah, but an ordinary man who had become a leader because of extraordinary circumstances."[73] Phrases like this are used by people at all levels of society who have acted heroically: "It was nothing special"; "I did what had to be done." These are the refrains of the "ordinary" or everyday warrior, our "banal hero." Let's contrast such positive banality with what Hannah Arendt has taught us to call "the banality of evil."

On the Banality of Evil

This concept emerged from Arendt's observations at the trial of Adolf Eichmann, indicted for crimes against humanity because he helped to orchestrate the genocide of European Jews. In *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil,* Arendt formulates the idea that such individuals should not be viewed as exceptions, as monsters, or as perverted sadists. She argues that such dispositional attributes, typically applied to perpetrators of evil deeds, serves to set them apart from the rest of the human community. Instead, Eichmann and others like him, Arendt says, should be exposed in their very ordinariness. When we realize this, we become more aware that such people are a pervasive, hidden danger in all societies. Eichmann's defense was that he was simply following orders. Of this mass murderer's motives and conscience, Arendt notes:

As for his base motives, he was perfectly sure that he was not what he called an *innerer Schweinehund,* a dirty bastard in the depths of his heart; and as for his conscience, he remembered perfectly well that he would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he had been ordered to do—to ship millions of men, women, and children to their death with great zeal and the most meticulous care.

What is most striking in Arendt's account of Eichmann is all the ways in which he seemed absolutely normal and totally ordinary:

Half a dozen psychiatrists had certified him as "normal"—"More normal, at any rate, than I am after having examined him," one of them was said to have exclaimed, while another had found that his whole psychological outlook, his attitude toward his wife and children, mother and father, brothers, sisters, and friends was "not only normal but most desirable."[74]

Arendt's now-classic conclusion:

The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and our moral standards of judgment, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together, for it implied . . . that this new type of criminal, who is in actual fact *hostis generis humani,* commits his crimes under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or feel that he is doing wrong.[75]

Then came her punch line, describing Eichmann's dignified march to the gallows:

It was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us—the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying banality of evil.[76]

The notion that "ordinary men" can commit atrocities has been more fully developed by the historian Christopher Browning, as we noted earlier. He uncovered the systematic and personal annihilation of Jews in remote Polish villages that were committed by hundreds of men in Reserve Police Battalion 101, sent to Poland from Hamburg, Germany. These middle-aged, family men of working-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds shot thousands of unarmed Jews—men, women, the elderly, and children—and arranged for the deportation to death camps of thousands more. Yet Browning contends in his book that they were all "ordinary men." He believes that the mass-murder policies of the Nazi regime "were not aberrational or exceptional events that scarcely ruffle the surface of everyday life. As the story of Reserve Battalion 10 demonstrates, mass murder and routine had become one. Normality itself had become exceedingly abnormal."[77]

The psychologist Ervin Staub holds a similar view. His extensive research led him to the conclusion that "Evil that arises out of ordinary thinking and is committed by ordinary people is the norm, not the exception."[78] Cruelty should be attributed to its social origins more than to its "characterological" determinants or "faulty personalities," according to Zygmunt Bauman's analysis of the horrors of the Holocaust. Bauman believes further that the exception to this norm is the rare individual who has the capacity to assert moral autonomy in resisting the demands of destructive authorities. Such a person is rarely aware that he or she possesses this hidden strength until put to the test.[79]

Another quality of the banality of evil ushers us into the torturers' den to consider whether such people, whose mission is to use all means necessary to break the will, resistance, and dignity of their victims, are anything other than pathological villains. The consensus among those who have studied torturers is that in general they were not distinguishable from the general population in their backgrounds or dispositions prior to taking on their sordid job. John Conroy, who studied men involved in torture in three different venues in Ireland, Israel, and Chicago, concluded that in all cases "unspeakable acts" were committed by "ordinary people." He maintains that torturers act out the will of the community they represent in suppressing its foes.[80]

From her in-depth analysis of soldiers trained by the Greek military junta to be state-sanctioned torturers (1967-1974), my colleague the Greek psychologist Mika Haritos-Fatouros concluded that torturers are not born but made by their training. "Anybody's son will do" is her answer to the question "Who will make an effective torturer?" In a matter of a few months, ordinary young men from rural villages became "weaponized" by their training in cruelty to act like brute beasts capable of inflicting the most horrendous acts of humiliation, pain, and suffering on anyone labeled "the enemy," who, of course, were all citizens of their own country.[81] Such conclusions are not limited to one nation, but are common in many totalitarian regimes. We studied "violence workers" in Brazil, policemen who tortured and murdered other Brazilian citizens for the ruling military junta. They too were "ordinary men," based on all the evidence we could amass.[82]

On the Banality of Heroism[83]

We may now entertain the notion that most people who become perpetrators of evil deeds are directly comparable to those who become perpetrators of heroic deeds, alike in being just ordinary, average people. The banality of evil shares much with the banality of heroism. Neither attribute is the direct consequence of unique dispositional tendencies; there are no special inner attributes of either pathology or goodness residing within the human psyche or the human genome. Both conditions emerge in particular situations at particular times when situational forces play a compelling role in moving particular individuals across a decisional line from inaction to action. There is a decisive decisional moment when a person is caught up in a vector of forces that emanate from a behavioral con-

text. Those forces combine to increase the probability of one's acting to harm oth-
ers or acting to help others. Their decision may or may not be consciously planned
or mindfully taken. Rather, strong situational forces most often impulsively drive
the person to action. Among the situational action vectors are: group pressures
and group identity, the diffusion of responsibility for the action, a temporal focus
on the immediate moment without concern for consequences stemming from the
act in the future, presence of social models, and commitment to an ideology.

A common theme in the accounts of European Christians who helped the
Jews during the Holocaust could be summed up as the "banality of goodness."
What is striking over and over again is the number of these rescuers who did the
right thing without considering themselves heroic, who acted merely out of a
sense of common decency. The ordinariness of their goodness is especially strik-
ing in the context of the incredible evil of the systematic genocide by Nazis on a
scale the world had never before experienced.[84]

I have tried to show throughout our journey that the military police guards
who abused prisoners at Abu Ghraib and the prison guards in my Stanford Prison
Experiment who abused their prisoners illustrate a *Lord of the Flies*-type tempo-
rary transition of ordinary individuals into perpetrators of evil. We must set them
alongside those whose evil behavior is enduring and extensive, tyrants such as Idi
Amin, Stalin, Hitler, and Saddam Hussein. Heroes of the moment also stand in
contrast to lifetime heroes.

The heroic action of Rosa Parks's refusal to sit in the "colored" section in the
back of an Alabama bus. of Joe Darby's exposing the Abu Ghraib tortures, or of
the first responders' rush to the World Trade Center disaster are acts of bravery
that occur at particular times and places. In contrast, the heroism of Mohandas
Gandhi or Mother Teresa consists of valorous acts repeated over a lifetime.
Chronic heroism is to acute heroism as valor is to bravery.

This perception implies that any of us could as easily become heroes as per-
petrators of evil depending on how we are influenced by situational forces. The
imperative becomes discovering how to limit, constrain, and prevent the situa-
tional and systemic forces that propel some of us toward social pathology. But
equally important is the injunction for every society to foster a "heroic imagina-
tion" in its citizenry. It is achieved by conveying the message that every person is
a hero in waiting who will be counted upon to do the right thing when the mo-
ment of decision comes. The decisive question for each of us is whether to act in
help of others, to prevent harm to others, or not to act at all. We should be prepar-
ing many laurel wreaths for all those who will discover their reservoir of hidden
strengths and virtues enabling them to come forth to act against injustice and
cruelty and to stand up for their principled values.

The large body of research on situational determinants of antisocial behav-
ior that we reviewed here, bookended by Milgram's investigations of authority
power and the SPE's institutional power, reveals the extent to which normal, ordi-
nary people can be led to engage in cruel acts against innocent others.[85] However,

in those studies and many others, while the majority obeyed, conformed, complied, were persuaded, and were seduced, there was always a minority who resisted, dissented, and disobeyed. In one sense, heroism lies in the ability to resist powerful situational forces that so readily entrap most people.

Are the personalities of the resisters different from those of the blindly obedient?[86] Are they like Clark Kent, whose normal appearance conceals Superman's extraordinary powers? Not at all. Rather, our banality of heroism conception maintains that doers of heroic deeds of the moment are not essentially different from those who comprise the base rate of the easily seduced. There is not much empirical research on which to base such assertions. Because heroism is not a simple phenomenon that can be studied systematically, it defies clean definitions and on-the-spot data collection. Heroic acts are ephemeral and unpredictable, and appreciation of them is decidedly retrospective. Because heroes are usually interviewed months or years after their heroic behavior has occurred, there are no prospective studies of what the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson might call the "decisive moment" of heroic action.[87] Generally we do not know what the decision matrix for heroes is at the time they elect to engage in risk-laden activities.

What seems evident is that heroic behavior is rare enough not to be readily predictable by any psychological assessments of personality. They measure individual differences between people in their usual, standard behavioral settings, not in the atypical settings that often elicit heroic deeds.

Lieutenant Alexander (Sandy) Nininger is a case example of a heroic soldier who engaged in extraordinarily fearless and ferocious fighting during World War II's infamous Battle of Bataan. This twenty-three-year-old West Point graduate volunteered to go hunting for Japanese snipers where the fighting was most intense. With grenades, a rifle, submachine gun, and bayonet, Nininger killed many Japanese soldiers single-handedly in intense close combat, and kept fighting although repeatedly wounded. Only after he had destroyed an enemy bunker did he collapse and die. His heroism earned him the Medal of Honor, posthumously, the first given in that war.

What makes this hero an object of our concern is that nothing from his past would have predicted that he would engage in such killing. This quiet, sensitive, intellectual young man had gone on record as saying that he could never kill anyone out of hatred. Yet, he had done so repeatedly without regard for his own safety. Had he been given all available personality tests, would they have helped predict this unexpectedly violent behavior? In his review of personality testing, the author Malcolm Gladwell surmises that Nininger's file might be as thick as a phone book, but "his file will tell us little about the one thing we're most interested in. For that, we have to join him in the jungles of Bataan." In short, we have to understand the Person in the Situation.[88]

HEROISM VALIDATES THE HUMAN CONNECTION

For reasons we do not yet fully understand, thousands of ordinary people in every country around the world, when they are placed in special circumstances, make the decision to act heroically. On the face of it, the perspective we take here seems to deflate the myth of the hero and to make something special into something banal. This is not so, however, because our position still recognizes that the act of heroism is indeed special and rare. Heroism supports the ideals of a community and serves as an extraordinary guide, and it provides an exemplary role model for prosocial behavior. The banality of heroism means that we are all heroes in waiting. It is a choice that we may all be called upon to make at some point in time. I believe that by making heroism an egalitarian attribute of human nature rather than a rare feature of the elect few, we can better foster heroic acts in every community. According to journalist Carol Depino "Everyone has the capability of becoming a hero in one degree or another. Sometimes you might not realize it. To someone it could be as small as holding a door open and saying 'hello' to them. We are all heroes to someone."[89]

This new theme of the universality of ordinary heroes encourages us to rethink about the common heroes among us, those whose daily sacrifices enrich our lives. Daniel Boorstin's earlier noted cynical view of media-crafted celebrities as heroes gives way before his deep appreciation of the everyday unsung heroes living and working among us:

> In this life of illusion and quasi-illusion, the person with solid virtues who can be admired for something more substantial than his well-knownness often proves to be the unsung hero: the teacher, the nurse, the mother, the honest cop, the hard worker at lonely, under-paid, unglamorous, unpublicized jobs. Topsy-turvily, these can remain heroes precisely because they remain unsung.[90]

And so, the parting message that we might derive from our long journey into the heart of darkness and back again is that heroic acts and the people who engage in them should be celebrated. They form essential links among us; they forge our Human Connection. The evil that persists in our midst must be countered, and eventually overcome, by the greater good in the collective hearts and personal heroic resolve of Everyman and Everywoman. It is not an abstract concept, but, as we are reminded by the Russian poet and former prisoner in Stalin's Gulag Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: "The line between good and evil is in the center of every human heart."[91]

Thanks for sharing this journey with me.

Ciao, Phil Zimbardo