

The lucifer effect:
understanding how
good people turn bad
report essay sample



What makes good people do atrocious crimes? When you put on a uniform you are thirteen times more likely to commit heinous acts and the soldiers of the Abu Ghraib prison are only one of the many examples. The prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison were forced to partake in homosexual acts, suffered malnutrition, and had their sense of humanity taken away. These soldiers were taught to stick together and follow orders without question and if it wasn't for one soldier who went and "blew the whistle" on his squad they would have gotten away with it and because of this he was labeled as the deviant. One might wonder what made these boys who defend our country commit such crimes, the answer is the Lucifer Effect.

The Lucifer Effect can be explained by three key factors that cause a person to lose a sense of self. Founded by Phillip Zimbardo he explained that people turn bad by explaining that they are either a "bad apple", it is circumstantial, or systematic. These three elements are enough to turn any productive member of society and make them lose sight of any morals or ethics they once had. In turn, the factors might have a clear definition but the foundations on which they're laid upon are shaky at best. For one can be exposed to all three but still come out the hero like that soldier or they can conform or go against the right path and fall victim to their own sadism that the Lucifer Effect causes.

During August 14 to the 20 of 1971 a group of Psychology students took part in a study that would later become known as the infamous Stanford Prison Experiment. These students were divided in half while the first group was given the role of guard while the other half was given the role of prisoner and the guards were told to do whatever they have to do to keep the

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prisoners in line. What would follow is not much different or less than what took place at the Abu Ghraib prison. Even Zimbardo took up the role of warden and it took six days for him to come back to reality and call off the experiment. This is how the Lucifer Effect came to be discovered.

What is meant by being a “bad apple” theory is that the said person committing the atrocities was innately born that way. It might be due to an imbalance of the ego or could just be due to a lack of conscience, either way this point takes the stance that these people always have been and always will be evil. The second theory that these events arise from situational dilemmas is one of, if not the most, the most agreed upon idea. Humans are social beings and have a tendency of a desire to fit in, not to mention when you take away their individuality by teaching them the group is worth more than the individual these men and women just tend to go with the flow attitude and tend to not ask questions. It can be more than just group think, though it could be result of a desire for revenge or some other personal cause. Finally, the systematic cause states that the hierarchy is the problem and is what needs to be fixed. When you have policies as to not question your superior, the one in charge could be the one responsible for the downfall of morals.

In the end really each individuals’ reasons for turning varies from case study to case study. In order to be a true hero you need to be a deviant and sometimes question the acts of the group or maybe even of yourself. Society has social norms for a reason but when one starts to abandon those ideals they can find themselves falling prey to the power of the Lucifer Effect. It is an influential force that is not to be underestimated and only by fully <https://assignbuster.com/the-lucifer-effect-understanding-how-good-people-turn-bad-report-essay-sample/>

understanding it can we look through the veil and see the difference between what seems right and wrong to what actually is.