

## CHAPTER 9

# Shaping Identities and Obedience

### *A Murderous Dynamic*

*The belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary; men alone are quite capable of every wickedness.*

Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes*

There is horrifying evidence of the violence suffered by victims of security force repression in Brazil. Should we view the police who systematically carried out such atrocities as fundamentally abnormal? Or should we see them as, at least initially, just like anyone else? Perhaps atrocity perpetrators are shaped and molded, particularly as adults, into their violent roles and actions? Is atrocity, therefore, above all a product of certain kinds of ideological messages, organizational structures, and interpersonal interaction systems—all nurtured and legitimized by state action and inaction?

Although it is tempting to see those who tortured and murdered in Brazil as *pathologically* extraordinary personalities, much social-psychological research in other contexts points us away from such a conclusion. A compelling set of recent and older studies that highlight the ordinary nature of those who commit unthinkable acts of evil demonstrates that in many instances such perpetrators are induced or seduced into carrying out atrocities; they have been subjected to powerful situational forces that disengage their usual modes of moral functioning (Bandura 1999). Included in this body of evidence is the research by Browning

(1992) on German resistance squads; Chandler (1998) on the murderous S-21 Tuol Sleng prison; the recruitment of torturers in the Philippines; the testimonies of operatives in the Argentine Unit 731; Haritos-Farjat (1998) on the program that created German soldiers; the emergence of blind obedience in the civilian experimental studies of Milgram and Zimbardo (1973); and the use of a mock prison's institutionalization of students into neophyte soldiers. These studies have been further developed, and the evidence that atrocity is more than the result of individual conditions, atrocity can be understood in certain kinds of work and social systems that systematically shape behavior.

In the next two chapters, we will take this perspective and some of the data, beginning with the testimonies of those who became perpetrators, to show that the social and political conditions that are created and carried out are important in understanding and considering not only the individual but also the sanctioned atrocities and the role of the state, the makers and social structures, the guards, and even some of the victims, nurtured, and protected by the state. This perspective is derived from atrocity's direct and indirect causes, such violence. To the extent that the social organizational structure, including the auxiliary and the state, is from an atrocity equation, and (2) national factors, and perpetrators. By considering acts by autonomous individuals, information about the dynamics of Brazil. We learn from the research in Argentina how such

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(1992) on German reserves who were transformed into mobile killing squads; Chandler (1999), on the bureaucracy of terror in Pol Pot's infamous S-21 Tuol Sleng torture facility; Conroy (2000), on the development of torturers in several different countries; Gold (1996), on testimonies of operatives in the Imperial Japanese Army's infamous Medical Unit 731; Haritos-Fatouros (1998, 2002), on the special training program that created Greek military torturers; Milgram (1974), on the emergence of blind obedience to authority among a broad range of U.S. civilian experimental participants; and Zimbardo (1972), Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo (1973), and Haney and Zimbardo (1977), on the power of a mock prison's institutional structure and norms to turn normal students into neophyte torturers. This rich body of research, which has been further developed in this book's Conclusion, demonstrates that atrocity is more than the act of a few evil perpetrators. Under specifiable conditions, atrocity can be the product of ordinary people who are in certain kinds of work and organizational structures and processes that systematically shape their actions toward violent outcomes.

In the next two chapters we shall examine several versions of this perspective and some alternative explanations in light of our interview data, beginning with this chapter's primary focus on the prior training of those who became executioners. In general, however, we argue here that the social and political contexts in which atrocity work is prepared and carried out are important variables. This perspective directs us to consider not only the direct perpetrators who committed state-sanctioned atrocities but also the facilitators—the political decision makers and social control officials as well as the doctors, notaries, guards, and even some rank-and-file police—who indirectly promoted, nurtured, and protected the perpetrators and kept their evil deeds hidden. This perspective does not shift moral and political responsibility from atrocity's direct perpetrators or decrease their responsibility for such violence. To the contrary, our social-psychological and sociopolitical organizational approach expands responsibility for atrocity by including the auxiliary actors and the organizational entities often omitted from an atrocity equation, a formula that consists of (1) international and (2) national facilitators, (3) bystander communities, and (4) direct perpetrators. By considering systemic atrocity as more than a series of acts by autonomous, essentially evil actors, we will uncover new information about the dynamics of state-sponsored torture and murder in Brazil. We learn from Feitlowitz's analysis (1998) of atrocity facilitators in Argentina how such an understanding directs attention to the wider

question of how torture and murder by state agents should be judged and how these atrocities might be prevented in the future.

### Conceptualizing Atrocity

This chapter examines the testimonies of the fourteen atrocity perpetrators documented in this study as well as the nine interviewees for whom there is no direct evidence of their having tortured or murdered systematically for the state. While labeling these other nine police as "auxiliary facilitators," we nevertheless recognize that their testimony alone does not guarantee that they never tortured or murdered anyone. At the same time, we know that these facilitator police have maintained that they never directly carried out such violence; we recognize that such denials were initially common from the direct perpetrators as well. However, in the latter case, either the direct perpetrators themselves eventually disclosed that they had indeed committed atrocities, or their documented or lived pasts gave them away. Such information never surfaced in the case of the facilitator interviewees. At the same time, ample evidence exists that the facilitator police were (at least) tacit participants in atrocity—delivering victims to torturers, watching torture or murder, guarding captives, and remaining silent as atrocities were occurring.

In one dramatic example of an atrocity facilitator's role in violence, a militarized policeman explained that in the 1980s, he had worked with a young partner who had a "cruel character." This man would

pick up an individual on the street, take him to the civilian police post where they'd put a black bag over [his] head...and give [the man] a beating. They punched and beat the guy to a pulp. They hurt him so much that he defecated and urinated in his pants.

This interviewee explained that "the [policemen he worked with would] let him watch because [he] was new to the force." Although he thought that his partner who had carried out the beatings was "chicken-hearted" and that "human beings should not be treated that way," the policeman still remained with his violent partner for six months—at the very least, a silent participant in violence. In any case, this militarized policeman's silence was guaranteed by his partner's admonition that if he said anything, he'd die.

Whether, in fact, we can fully believe in each case that an atrocity facilitator did not himself directly commit atrocities, their involvement in such violence never surfaced to the extent that it did for the direct per-

petrators. For this reason, we argue that the facilitator police cover potential differences in work dynamics between

Our theoretical perspective is that causal factors develop in coming together at one point in time, being a simultaneous model. A sequential model postulates that events are shaped within dynamic systems. It follows that the nature of whether direct perpetrators are encouraging their violence to change over time. In the process, behavior at one point in time can lead to other point (see Becker 1967) for discovery of the emergent dynamics of atrocity.

For example, we may find that but these may not explain why a person becomes a member of an elite unit that has committed murder or murder or forced to do so. The nature of murder may respond to a variety of factors, whether a person is likely to be involved in unpredictable, whereas the probability of continuing to be a perpetrator may have been part of a murder system. The actor into its loyal servant. The actors who train and protect the kill. These atrocity facilitators are socially, economically, professionally, and ample, through promotions for the order wrongdoers. All of these factors are ent actors in different ways. For the perpetrators may not explain the fostered in various ways by the process. It points to the complexity of the attention on the role of the political control, its hierarchy, and its

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petrators. For this reason, we make the analytical research assumption that the facilitator police constitute a viable comparison group for discovering potential differences in life histories, training experiences, and work dynamics between the direct perpetrators and themselves.

Our theoretical perspective for carrying out such an analysis assumes that causal factors develop in orderly sequence over time rather than all coming together at one point to produce a particular result—the latter being a simultaneous model of causality. Social-psychologically, the sequential model postulates that atrocity perpetrators as well as facilitators are shaped within dynamic social interactional and organizational systems. It follows that the identities of people in an atrocity system, whether direct perpetrators or facilitators—as well as the motives encouraging their violence and their self-justifications for it—develop and change over time. In the process, what may have been a cause of violent behavior at one point in this shaping process may not be a cause at another point (see Becker 1967; Toch 1969). This sequential model allows for discovery of the emergent social-psychological and organizational dynamics of atrocity.

For example, we may find the reasons for a policeman's first murder, but these may not explain why he thereafter regularly committed murder as a member of an elite death squad. The policeman may have initially committed murder out of passion, by accident, or because ordered or forced to do so. Yet a policeman's regularly perpetrating murder may respond to a different dynamic. Toch (1996) reports that whether a person is likely to commit an initial act of violence is relatively unpredictable, whereas for the frequent perpetrator of violence the probability of continuing is very high. The serially violent police perpetrator may have been shaped, in the first place, by his merely being part of a murder system—the training or work process has shaped the actor into its loyal servant—and, in the second place, by auxiliary actors who train and protect murderers and punish those unwilling to kill. These atrocity facilitators may promote opportunities to benefit socially, economically, professionally, or politically from murder, for example, through promotions for those who effectively torture or murder wrongdoers. All of these factors will, of course, impact upon different actors in different ways. For example, what causes violence by direct perpetrators may not explain the facilitators' actions. Seeing atrocity as fostered in various ways by people in differentially situated social statuses points to the complexity of atrocity systems and focuses analytical attention on the role of the political climates that legitimize violent social control, its hierarchy, and its specialized units.

Yet there is very little research on atrocity as a *sequentially developing* social-psychological and politico-organizational system made up of facilitators and direct perpetrators. One interesting microstudy that hints at this mix of roles describes attitude and identity changes among prison guards in U.S. death houses. Although most of these men did not choose to work in the death house—having entered prison work to be ordinary guards—Johnson's *Death Work* (1997) demonstrates that once there, they were socialized into an execution culture and an associated vocabulary that shaped the guards into seemingly legal-rational agents of state-mandated murder.

Our organizational approach to atrocity investigates a range of possible relevant causes for systematic state-sponsored and executed violence in Brazil, including whenever possible the reinforcing roles of atrocity facilitators and perpetrators.

### Nature versus Nurture:

#### Being or Becoming an Atrocity Worker?

Having proposed that atrocity may be more than the violence of a few evil direct perpetrators, we must still consider whether they might have been social-psychologically (and abnormally) different from the facilitator interviewees before they began their careers as police. It could be argued that the direct perpetrators entered police work or were recruited into it because, as brutal sadists, they derived pleasure from violence. Starting from such a psychobiological premise, the researcher might compare direct perpetrators' biological and psychological makeup and family backgrounds with those of the less fully involved facilitators. Although our interviews were not designed to address the biological question, nevertheless they do provide some information on whether family background and early life experiences might have contributed to subsequent atrocity.

From interviewees' personal histories, we see that only one man among the fourteen direct perpetrators—Jorge—suffered the kind of consistent and severe childhood trauma and violence that could have led him to enter police service as a way of working through or playing out his own aggressive tendencies. As you recall, he had been separated from his parents during childhood when his father was arrested as a subversive French alien. Jorge and his siblings were subsequently taken from their mother, who suffered a stroke and mental collapse after her own

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rape by security forces and her husband's imprisonment and deportation. During Jorge's internment in a FEBEM orphanage, he endured years of violence. In his professional police life, Jorge manifested all of the symptoms of a combination of childhood separation trauma and the abuse he suffered in FEBEM. In short, he had learned to live with pain and manifested a desire for revenge. This might have led Jorge to join an organization where he could more easily carry out legitimized violence against others.

However, at the same time, three of the facilitator interviewees who had no apparent direct participation in systematic atrocities also reported moderate-to-severe levels of childhood and adolescent trauma and violence. One of these interviewees remembers his father being very authoritarian, strict, and punitive. Another recalls that his father—a military man and later a “tough” policeman—was violently murdered when the interviewee was in his early teens. This interviewee described his father's murder as a “tremendous shock.” The third comparison group policeman recollected that his father, a strict disciplinarian and an alcoholic, regularly beat him and his mother. Although our numbers are small, it still appears that more interviewees among the nonatrocities comparison group category than among the atrocities producers reported the kind of childhood trauma that might have resulted in their becoming police as a way of channeling or dealing with their own aggressive and authoritarian predispositions.

Realizing that both sets of interviewees might have been reluctant to talk about family violence or other traumatic events in their youth, we sought yet another way of determining whether a man might have been initially predisposed toward police work as a way of responding to his anger or other violent predispositions. We reasoned that even if an interviewee did not directly report being drawn to policing because of its association with violence, he might still suggest this motivation in more indirect ways. However, such motives were not communicated by either the facilitator or perpetrator interviewees. As for whether any policeman would ever admit to entering the police because he likes violence and seeks the power associated with that role, Glebbeek (2000) has found that a minority of new recruits to Guatemala's Policia Nacional Civil stated they had joined in order to have the power that being a policeman would give them. In one recruit's words, “I very much like to carry a gun.” Another asserted that policing appealed to him because police “have good weapons [and] nice uniforms.” A study (Botello and Rivera 2000) of recruits' reasons for entering a Mexico City police force

demonstrated their openness to communicate even possibly criminal reasons for joining their force. In Mexico City, police involvement in graft and bribery is common and police salaries low, and a majority of interviewees freely admitted to having joined the force to "make easy money" or to "accumulate capital to start a business." Only a minority of the interviewees manifested an interest in law enforcement, the most common message communicated by our Brazilian interviewees.

Indeed, among the fourteen atrocity perpetrators, the largest single group—six—said that they had entered the police because they liked that kind of work—without citing any particular violence-related reasons for joining: "[It is] a vocation; I joined because I like it"; "I thought that police [work] would fill the blanks in my life"; "I'd seen a movie... *Detective Story*, a film with Kirk Douglas.<sup>1</sup> I was fascinated by the agents, the police station"; "Having just left the army, I was still enthusiastic about military life, so I joined the Goiás State Militarized Police"; "Helping people has always attracted me since I was a child... so I joined the police." Among the nine auxiliary facilitators, three either remembered becoming policemen because they generally liked police work or gave no specific reason for joining.

Four of the fourteen atrocity perpetrators advanced the next most common reason for joining the police: because they had relatives in the force; two of the nine comparison police also gave this reason. The atrocity perpetrators' third most common reason (two) for becoming policemen was that they were unemployed and needed a job. One comparison group policeman said that he had entered the force to earn a regular paycheck.

The two sets of policemen's testimonies do not suggest that the direct perpetrators were more likely to advance violence as a motive for joining the police. Indeed, both the perpetrator and the facilitator police gave similar reasons for becoming policemen: the appeal of an interesting vocation, because family and friends were police, to get a regular paycheck, and so on. Even Jorge—a documented murderer whose abusive childhood could have predisposed him to become a policeman to play out his anger—apparently did not even himself make the choice to enter the

1. This is the only case where we were suspicious that an interviewee was giving some indirect evidence that he might have entered policing for the excitement of violence. In *Detective Story* (1951), Kirk Douglas portrays a police detective who engages in brutality. Interviewee Julius specifically mentioned admiring this film; however, he never directly mentioned the violence and in fact talked more about what he described as the fascinating "puzzles" that Kirk Douglas's character solved.

force. He had been in the army and he claims that his army experience made him a victim of a violent system. "I have an eye on you." Jorge's own experience with the hierarchy can shape an understanding of the chapter further demonstrates

Having shown that our interviewees had a range of reasons, not just violence-related tendencies, we continued to consider how preservice police training and ordinary Brazilian police

### Preservice Socialization

Research on Greek torture (Haritos-Fatouros (1988) shows how shape Greek Army Militarization. This research offers much to the study of violence. I am knowledgeable that the Greek police are primarily torturers; this is not civilian police. And among the interviewees, twenty-three Brazilian interviewees had gone through preservice training. Twenty-three documented Brazilian atrocity perpetrators or only a very limited amount of training. Interviewees had gone through

Yet in spite of these differences, it is reasonable to suggest that training in shaping some of the perpetrators. At the very least, the organization's mission and the requirements required of its members. The organization's ethos and communication may help prepare the perpetrators by his organization.

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force. He had been in the army prior to entering the Militarized Police, and he claims that his army superior told him, "Jorge, either we eliminate you because you have become a dangerous person [as the youthful victim of a violent] system [or] you join the police where we can keep an eye on you." Jorge's own career in atrocity hints at how organizational hierarchy can shape an atrocity perpetrator, as this and the following chapter further demonstrate.

Having shown that our twenty-three interviewees entered policing for a range of reasons, not including to play out their existing aggressive tendencies, we continued exploring their life histories. This led us to consider how preservice police training might have shaped relatively ordinary Brazilian police into atrocity perpetrators.

### Preservice Socialization

Research on Greek torturers by Haritos-Fatouros (2002) and Gibson and Haritos-Fatouros (1988) has shown that preservice training was used to shape Greek Army Military Police recruits into torturers. This important research offers much to the study of Brazilian atrocity, but it must be acknowledged that the Greek interviews were with men who had become primarily torturers; this study's interviewees were both torturers and executioners. Furthermore, the Greek interviewees were actual soldiers and not civilian police. And although all of Haritos-Fatouros's interviewees had gone through preservice training, only just slightly over half of the twenty-three Brazilian interviewees and, likewise, just over half of the documented Brazilian atrocity perpetrators had either no such training at all or only a very limited amount. However, nineteen of the twenty-three interviewees had gone through army training, which was often very hard.

Yet in spite of these differences between the Greek and Brazilian cases, it is reasonable to explore the possible influence of preservice training in shaping some Brazilian police into certain kinds of atrocity perpetrators. At the very least, preservice training communicates a police organization's mission and expectations and conveys the conduct models required of its members. By shaping new members into the police organization's ethos and communicating its behavioral expectations, training may help prepare the trainee for the violence most commonly perpetrated by his organization.

It can be confidently assumed that different kinds of atrocity require different attitudes, skills, and preparation. For example, the psychologi-



cal, physical, and emotional techniques required for engaging in long-lasting torture sessions are very likely different from those required for murder. Torturers need to be socialized into small, functionally organized teams that operate indoors in secrecy. Torturers must develop a consciously manipulative emotional relationship with their victims, treating them as individuals without feeling empathy for them. And torturers need to master techniques for securing information quickly and skillfully without killing the victim. They must see each torture subject as part of an incomplete process in which the victim at best provides only some of the information needed to achieve the stated goal.

Within an atrocity dynamic, the torturer's work is relatively slow and methodical, whereas the murderer's is often quick and spontaneous. A torturer's work is never done, but the killer's is provisionally accomplished each time someone is murdered. Killers must learn to see potential victims as aggregated dangerous and faceless 'others' to be eliminated reflexively—nothing personal, just business. Victims are seen as having nothing more to offer the social control system: Killing them is the necessary terminus and appropriate outcome of the murderer's work. Pointing to the partial and always incomplete nature of the torturer's task, one Brazilian torturer—not among our interviewees—asserted that he is “not like the killer who puts a notch on his gun each time he kills someone” (Porão iluminado 1998: 42).

With an eye to the possibility that different kinds of training might be associated with different atrocity outcomes, we began by distinguishing among the interviewees who had been torturers and those who had been murderers. This was not difficult because our subsample of atrocity perpetrators was fairly neatly divided between torturers and murders—with, at most, two police known to have carried out both types of violence. Looking at the organizational affiliations of the two types of atrocity perpetrators, we found that most of the torturers had been civil policemen and most of the murderers had been militarized police. This division of violent labor in fact corresponds to what researchers on Brazilian police have found generally: the Militarized Police—who conduct street policing and arrest suspects—are more likely to commit murder, whereas the Civil Police—who process cases, interrogate, and investigate crimes—are most often associated with physical and psychological torture (see Caldeira 2001; Huggins 1998; Mingardi 1991).

Yet among the nine Civil Police in the twenty-three-interviewee sample—with eight of these being documented atrocity perpetrators—most had no or very little formal preservice training, so their subsequent vio-

lence could not be confidently attributed to their training. Militarized Police—fourteen in all—had more extensive training, including documented atrocity training during months of preservice training. This training, including turning them into violence workers, was one of the key components of preservice training. It was also one of the key facilitators from the six direct components of training in shaping men into the most frequently committed

### Militarized Police Training Routinizing Obedience

A primary objective of Brazilian police training is to inculcate blind obedience to authority. In the period such action was legitimized by a security ideology that was dominant among trainees. Indeed, even among those who reject this ideology, it is far from uncommon to commit atrocities. But to the extent that they justify their actions, then it is not surprising that they run. For this reason, this is not a simple or the complicated causal relationship between training and atrocity.

For example, among our interviewees, fourteen had been trained in the Militarized Police ideology was becoming a dominant part of the police training curriculum. Among these thirteen were more, among such atrocities, and some recalled spurning the ideology that it may have been a key factor in turning these trainees into atrocity workers in validating and legitimizing the ideology. They had been prepared to carry out the violence.

As for the factors associated with the more directly created a foundation for the atrocity and murder in particular, the trainee's obedience to military

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different kinds of training might be used, we began by distinguishing between torturers and those who had been torturers and those who were not because our subsample was divided between torturers and those who had carried out both types of work. The professional affiliations of the two groups were most of the torturers had been murderers had been militarized. This fact corresponds to what researchers generally find: the Militarized Police—who process cases, interrogate suspects—are more likely to be associated with physical torture (Huggins 1998; Min-

twenty-three-interviewee sample of atrocity perpetrators—most of them were trained, so their subsequent vio-

lence could not be confidently ascribed to it. At the same time, all of the Militarized Police—fourteen in the twenty-three-person sample, six being documented atrocity perpetrators—had gone through four to six months of preservice training, so we examined its possible role in molding them into violence workers; in particular we sought to discover the components of preservice training that might differentiate the eight facilitators from the six direct perpetrators. We examined the role of such training in shaping men to carry out beatings and murder, the atrocities most frequently committed by Militarized Police.

### Militarized Police Training: Routinizing Obedience and Aggregating Victims

A primary objective of Brazilian Militarized Police training was to create blind obedience to authority among police who had to use violence automatically against a faceless enemy. However, during the military period such action was legitimated by a culturally pervasive national security ideology that was not necessarily embraced automatically by all trainees. Indeed, even among those who accepted the national security ideology, it is far from certain that this was what caused them to commit atrocities. But to the extent that this ideology helped them to justify their actions, then it contributed to fostering atrocity in the long run. For this reason, this and the following chapter will try to sort out the complicated causal relationship between national security ideology and atrocity.

For example, among our Militarized Police sample, thirteen of the fourteen interviewees had joined the force when the national security ideology was becoming academically entrenched in the Militarized Police training curriculum (see Huggins 1998). At the same time, only five among these thirteen were documented atrocity perpetrators. Furthermore, among such atrocity perpetrators, some remembered accepting and some recalled spurning national security teachings, which suggests that it may have been a necessary but not entirely sufficient factor for turning these trainees into atrocity perpetrators. It very likely had a role in validating and legitimizing the atrocities that the interviewees had been prepared to carry out and were learning to practice.

As for the factors associated with preservice training that may have more directly created a foundation for committing atrocity in general and murder in particular, central among them was the shaping of a trainee's obedience to militarized authority. This seems to have involved

a number of deindividuation strategies to degrade and strip away a trainee's previous identity and then reshape it as part of a new Militarized Police-controlled group identity (see Zimbardo 1970). Most important among such factors was hazing, which played a pivotal role in creating obedience, modeling violence as a viable instrument of control, and disengaging violence perpetrators from moral responsibility for their acts.

The process of reshaping the trainee's identity was begun before many of them had even arrived at the Militarized Police Academy. Their degradation of status was very likely first publicly demonstrated when they were unceremoniously transported to the academy on the back of a flatbed truck—like cattle being taken to slaughter. Several Militarized Police interviewees remembered waiting on a corner on the day that they were to be picked up for training: the transport truck pulled up briefly at a street corner, giving them only a few seconds to jump on board. With no railings for hanging on, the fifty to seventy-five strangers on their way to the academy were packed together like livestock. For an hour or more, they bounced along uncomfortably in the back of the overcrowded truck, arriving at the academy dirty, dishevelled, and tired. Their first "greeting" was abusive harangues from a training officer who ordered them to form a line as they piled off the truck, tripping over one another to obey his command.

After the training officer's short welcoming speech, which included a vigorous lambasting of the trainees' disorderly appearance and their lack of military discipline, the trainees marched to a nearby building where they were given a quick shave and military-issue haircut. Next, the drill lines of trainees moved to their assigned barracks, where each man was issued a training uniform and an identification number. One Militarized Police atrocity facilitator remembered that on his first full day at the academy, he got in line and stayed there. He was given a number, as though he were a prisoner of war, and this caused him to comment to the interviewer, "Right off you get a number that's like a kind of a password and you stop existing as a person and become a number." Besides this arbitrary number, which linked the trainee's identity to the homogenized identities of other trainees, the new trainee also got a "war name," which could be a shortened version of the trainee's own name or something completely different. In any case, this new name was chosen by the Militarized Police organization, not by him or his colleagues. Militarized Policeman Roberto, a former death squad leader, remembered that "we all called each other by our military [war] names. It was rare to call somebody by another name." Symbolically, the war name

designated the kind of training kind of policing that he would be against an aggregated enemy.

No longer the man that he was and a number, the trainee's status and was therefore not the same.

### Military Exercises and

Everything about Militarized Police col. The trainees' first full day out of bed as early as 4:30 a.m. "Fall in." An atrocity facilitator that "at sun up, the officers were sleeping and start agitating—throw water on people, make noise of dawn." Having only minutes dressed into the morning, they fell clumsily into formation. A group recalled that on his first minutes to get up, get dressed, experience at all in getting ready span. Two minutes to get all ready ing!" Militarized Police trainees more like boot camp than anything then, Brazil's military government.

Once in line, the trainees were marching orders, but as one trainee civilian; I didn't know how to march group was sort of awkward. A trainee recalls that the superior military

He... [had] a mean, scowling face—out by saying that he is better than me authority, showing that he has the power whatever he wants to us without regard everyone feels belittled.

After being assigned to a platoon, cal drills and exercises—both physical

to degrade and strip away a  
 as part of a new Militarized  
 (Ricardo 1970). Most important  
 played a pivotal role in creating  
 instrument of control, and dis-  
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designated the kind of training a man would receive—for war—and the kind of policing that he would carry out—violent generalized repression against an aggregated enemy.

No longer the man that he had been and known only by a war name and a number, the trainee's real identity had been detached from its civil status and was therefore ripe for reshaping into a fully militarized persona.

### Military Exercises and Classes

Everything about Militarized Police training smacked of military protocol. The trainees' first full day at the academy began with being roused out of bed as early as 4:30 A.M. to "screams of Hurry, get into shape. Fall in." An atrocity facilitator from this group of interviewees recalled that "at sun up, the officers would arrive at the barracks where we were sleeping and start agitating—they'd wake everyone up, throw tear gas, throw water on people, make us line up completely soaked at the crack of dawn." Having only minutes to prepare, trainees had to run half-dressed into the morning dark, putting on their socks and shoes as they fell clumsily into formation. Another policeman from the comparison group recalled that on his first full day at the academy, they "gave us two minutes to get up, get dressed, and get in line. We had not yet had any experience at all in getting totally outfitted, booted up, totally spick-and-span. Two minutes to get all this information and be in line for training!" Militarized Police trainees were embarking on an experience much more like boot camp than preparation for peacetime civil policing. But then, Brazil's military government was at war with subversion.

Once in line, the trainees were expected to respond professionally to marching orders, but as one atrocity perpetrator remembered, "I was a civilian; I didn't know how to march. We couldn't stay in step. Our group was sort of awkward." A policeman from the comparison group recalls that the superior officer's "provocations" began right away:

He...[had] a mean, scowling face—very macho, very much the man. He starts out by saying that he is better than everyone else, demonstrating that he has authority, showing that he has the power and that we must submit to it...to do whatever he wants to us within legal limits. After that, everyone's ego is hurt; everyone feels belittled.

After being assigned to a platoon, the trainees began rigorous physical drills and exercises—before or after a thirty-minute breakfast. The

trainee's normal physical exercise routine involved a mix of close-order drills, calisthenics, countless sprints and chin-ups, carrying others piggy-back, and charging a barbed-wire fence. The training cycle was broken at midday by a thirty- to ninety-minute lunch. The workday usually ended at five or six, followed by dinner at seven—fourteen or more hours after the trainee's day had begun.

As for the academic side of their training, classes were cycled throughout the day in between physical and operational training. The rank-and-file trainees studied Portuguese, criminal sciences, the Brazilian penal code, personal defense, hygiene, public relations, and theories of crowd control and population management. Those training to be officers took courses in criminal legal procedure, criminal law, and "sociology, public human relations, [other] subjects in the social area." They had tactical training as well. Recalling his academy training, a Militarized Police officer who later committed atrocities observed that his program had been primarily "oriented toward [a combination of] training, discipline, and hierarchy." Another Militarized Police atrocity perpetrator recalls that his training involved the normal "close-order drills [and] field maneuvers [and also] training for confrontations in war [and] guerrilla and counter guerrilla warfare." This interviewee maintains that Militarized Police training became "very militarized" after the coup, reaching a peak in 1967—the year that he entered the force. An atrocity facilitator from the comparison group agrees that Militarized Police Academy preservice training had been "much more military than real professional police training." Recalling a training experience of his own that was similar to a police operation against subversives, another comparison group policeman disclosed that a trainee was "made to roll in the weeds on top of thorns, wood, rocks, like he was a pig.... [If he] hurt himself.... the instructor thought it was funny. He was training the policeman to go to war, not to protect the public.... [Tear] gas bombs were thrown in the classroom for people to get used to the gas."

### Hazing and Obedience

Although the overt operational objective of academy training was to teach prospective Militarized Police how to operate in warlike combat conditions, what gave this training its distinctly military quality was its underlying operational objective—to shape obedience. This was carried

out through physical and pronounced and reinforced the the Militarized Police organization members of an organization to initiate prospective members erating culture. Its most specific unthinking support for organization Militarized Police training. legitimizing violence. The trainee—an outcome that punishing any behavior that is nationally controlled group

Most hazing in Brazilian Militarized Police training is "status degradation" (Becker) transition from normal and replacing a trainee's given mechanisms for accomplishing calling, physically exhausting demands, and divide-and-rule physically violent hazing. Militarized Police training degrades the trainee's individuality and is promoted and legitimized general and hazing in particular violence for achieving desired tive legal, social, or moral degradation rituals are common United States when they first

Abusive name-calling, a Militarized Police training, frequently new trainee as the "beast" of an atrocity perpetrator who calls members "beast" being the "name" ning [his training]—You're to help and to harass." Female were in the mess hall and [trainees] sitting there.... When trainees' meat was taken by as well. So we had to eat [the training] were a massacre." time when his platoon had

involved a mix of close-order drills, carrying others piggy-back. The training cycle was broken at the end of the workday usually ended at fourteen or more hours after

training, classes were cycled through tactical and operational training. The curriculum included criminal sciences, the Brazilian public relations, and theoretical management. Those training to be police officers studied procedure, criminal law, and social subjects in the social area."

During his academy training, a trainee who observed atrocities reported that the Militarized Police atrocity was the normal "close-order training for confrontations in warfare." This interviewee became "very militarized" after the year that he entered the comparison group agrees that the training had been "much more militarized." Recalling a training exercise in a police operation against subversives, he disclosed that a trainee was told to use wood, rocks, like he was in the classroom for people

of academy training was to operate in warlike combat. The military quality was its obedience. This was carried

out through physical and psychological hazing, a process that announced and reinforced the trainee's position as a subordinate within the Militarized Police organization. Hazing most generally involves the members of an organization employing physical or psychological pain to initiate prospective members into the group's consciousness and operating culture. Its most specific objective is to create obedience to and unthinking support for organizational authority, which, in the case of Militarized Police training, meant obeying an authority promoting and legitimizing violence. The hazing was aimed at deindividuating the trainee—an outcome that separates the person from him- or herself by punishing any behavior that is not derived from or related to an organizationally controlled group identity.

Most hazing in Brazilian Militarized Police training took the form of "status degradation" (Becker 1967), rituals that announced a trainee's transition from normal and unsoiled to debased and dirty. In addition to replacing a trainee's given name with a number and war name, other mechanisms for accomplishing this included the use of abusive name-calling, physically exhausting drills and punishments, inconsistent commands, and divide-and-rule orders. Through this psychologically or physically violent hazing, Militarized Police trainers extinguished a trainee's individuality and subordinated him to a hierarchy that arbitrarily promoted and legitimized violence. In the process, the training in general and hazing in particular provided lessons in the acceptability of violence for achieving desired ends and disengaged violence from negative legal, social, or moral appraisals. It is interesting to note that such degradation rituals are commonly practiced against prisoners in the United States when they first enter a correctional facility.

Abusive name-calling, a common hazing strategy in Brazilian Militarized Police training, frequently involved the technique of designating a new trainee as the "beast" of an older militarized policeman. Fernando, an atrocity perpetrator who looked favorably on this practice, remembers "beast" being the "name they use[d] for the person who is beginning [his training]—You're my 'beast'.... Each veteran chooses his beast to help and to harass." Fernando recalled a training incident where "we were in the mess hall and there were two veterans and two beast [trainees] sitting there.... When it was time to serve the meat, the trainees' meat was taken by the veterans. The trainee's dessert was theirs as well. So we had to eat what was left over.... The first two months [of training] were a massacre." Another atrocity perpetrator remembered a time when his platoon had to "crawl on the ground like snakes; they

step on you, call you names like 'animal' and a lot of things that do not have anything to do with human beings. They teach you how to be mean."

Pointing to the social control function of such derogatory labeling, another former atrocity perpetrator explained that the "older students were hierarchically superior to the newer students, and all of us were hierarchically inferior to the school's officers." The label "beast" left no confusion about the new recruit's lowly position within Militarized Police organizational hierarchy. Resurrecting his painful memories of pre-service name-calling, one policeman from the comparison group described his academy training as totally degrading: officers would yell, "Hey, you're a faggot"; "You're a monster"; "You're an idiot." When the trainee answered the officer—and he had to answer him—he had to repeat that he is a monster."

Physically punishing drills and exercises were also used to degrade trainees. The standard exercises were tough, but trainees who were unable to live up to the demands of a hazer would be ordered to perform even more—and more demanding—exercises. A militarized policeman from the comparison group remembered "being punished by [having to] do exercises. Everything [was] based on exercises or, sometimes, giving you night duty, detaining you overnight. Sometimes we were even detained for not running well in the streets." Another policeman from that group recalled that "sometimes an individual would fall down exhausted during maneuvers because he couldn't run that much.... [This man and] those who [came in] last [on exercises] already knew that they'd be staying on the base over the weekend. This happened constantly." Another militarized policeman from the comparison group asserted positively that "exercises prepare[d] us physically. [They were] a form of discipline, never a form of punishment."

Nevertheless, one militarized policeman from a death squad, critically recalling the antithetical nature of his training, explained that officers would "tell you to sit down, then almost immediately they have you stand up; you're standing up and they order you to sit down again. This sit-down/stand-up session, which is a form of torture, physically exhausts a person." It is also a means to create adjustment to a totally arbitrary universe, an Orwellian environment where authority's irrational actions define rationality and where only mindless discipline makes sense. Furthermore, as one documented murderer explained, "Generally, [if we failed to adhere to a command or rule, we were given] fifty push-ups. If you repeated the offence, you'd be restricted to base during the weekend." The only way that a trainee could get a weekend pass was

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to consistently demonstrate obedience to the Militarized Police organi-  
zation. As a result, the organization and its officers used withdrawal of  
the weekend pass to control a trainee's conduct. Bernardo remembers  
that "everyone tried to maintain very proper conduct so they could see  
their girlfriend, visit their parents, on the weekend." The ultimate pun-  
ishment for failing to live up to academy expectations was being sent to  
the academy's lockup or dismissed from the program, a threat that  
loomed strong for those who could not be shaped into the Militarized  
Police organization's culture.

A trainee's life at the academy might not have been so difficult if he  
had only to adhere to an *attainable* and *consistent* set of organizational  
demands and rules. He would have been able to figure out what to do  
and not do to stay out of trouble. However, one of the biggest hurdles  
for trainees was apparently the contradictory nature of most academy  
hazing. In fact, the very essence of hazing was its inconsistency: a trainee  
could not succeed at one command or expectation without breaking  
others. Therefore, no matter what a trainee did, he would deviate from  
some rule. One result was that trainees constantly faced punishment.  
Because officers' expectations were usually far higher than what a new  
recruit could successfully or realistically achieve, it was not even neces-  
sary for a trainee to actually break a rule to be punished; he had only to  
fail to measure up to impossible standards.

By establishing problems that trainees could not possibly surmount  
or by giving an order that required breaking another one to carry it out,  
Militarized Police trainers were creating "learned helplessness" (Selig-  
man 1974). This promoted a trainee's obedience to authority by making  
him totally dependent on those who judged his performance and re-  
warded him for being a "good little boy." In the process, learned help-  
lessness engendered trainees' dependence on the organization whose  
agents were doing the hazing. The trainee who failed to become suffi-  
ciently helpless by resisting being stripped of his individualism was a  
threat to organizational integrity. One militarized policeman from the  
comparison group remembered a trainee who had been ordered to do  
difficult physical exercises:

[He got] totally outraged [at the difficulty of the tasks and] told the sergeant  
that he wouldn't do any more because he was totally dead from training. . . . [The  
sergeant] pulled him off the line and took him to the lockup and decided to  
throw him out [of the training program]. They decided he wasn't a good police-  
man—that he didn't obey orders—because a good policeman has to obey or-  
ders, has to do whatever he is told to do unhesitatingly.



A trainee who was unable to perform a particular hazing task had to be left alone to wallow in his failure.

Most important among the hazing mechanisms for accomplishing deindividuation were divide-and-rule strategies that punished trainees for helping one another. Several interviewees remembered not being allowed to assist another trainee who had fallen down during a group exercise—under penalty of their being punished for doing so—a tactic that pitted trainees against each another. Roberto, a militarized policeman who spent years in a Rio death squad, acknowledged that in his training program “they pitted one friend against another.” He maintains that training officers “punish everybody if [you] make a mistake, so that everyone will be against [you].” A militarized policeman from the comparison group observed that “we were encouraged, through the system of hierarchy, to be divided.” He now believes that “whoever invented this form of exploitation knew what he was doing.” He seems to recognize that discouraging trainees from helping one another and therefore from bonding against the organization itself reinforced hierarchical authority and decreased the development of extraorganizational solidarity among trainees—that is, from developing what Manning (in Crank 1998) might label an “individualist” police culture.

### Running the Gauntlet

Perhaps the most important lesson that hazing imparted in Militarized Police preservice training was its modeling the acceptability of violence. One atrocity perpetrator dismissed as “unimportant” the violence that he had seen in hazing: “Some people yanked on the freshman [trainees] ears, slapped them on the head, but nothing very traumatic [happened] beyond the limits of a rude joke.” This police official maintained uncritically that there was “nothing exaggerated” about hazing trainees by beating them “without leaving marks” as they ran through a gauntlet of other police trainees.

Painfully recalling his own preservice experience with the gauntlet, one militarized policeman from the comparison group described this hazing:

[There are] two lines of policemen, one on one side and one on the other side, and the policeman [trainee] has to run down [the corridor between them]. If he... doesn't [get hit], he's saved. But rarely does the guy run down the middle

without being hit. I recall  
punched or kicked. I just

In contrast, a Militarized  
and other such training

[It makes you] lose your  
thing... I saw what happens  
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In fact, the gauntlet was as  
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By using violent hazing  
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### Effects of Atrocity Training

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without being hit. I recall getting punched in the stomach—don't know if I was punched or kicked. I just fainted on the floor.

In contrast, a Militarized Policeman from a death squad justified this and other such training violence:

[It makes you] lose your fear because you become accustomed to just about anything... I saw what happens—the humiliation, the head clubbing, the pushing, the face slapping... to create that... inner hate, the anger so that [the policeman] will be ready for everything.

In fact, the gauntlet was also regularly employed by Brazilian police and military during the military period against captured political subversives themselves.

By using violent hazing against and between trainees, ostensibly for preparing militarized police to fight a just war, the academy curriculum “morally disengaged” (Bandura 1999) police violence from its negative political and moral implications and consequences. It was common—particularly for murderers—to claim that because they had carried out their violence in a group, no single group member needed to feel any direct responsibility for the outcome. With every policeman in the group shooting, no one person had direct responsibility for the killing. In fact, under such circumstances of complete diffusion of responsibility, no one even knew who had shot the bullet that killed a suspect. Most firing squads use a similar diffusion strategy by having many blanks and a few live bullets.

### Effects of Atrocity Training

Having identified the components of Militarized Police preservice training that could have engendered atrocity, the question still remains as to whether it actually did. One step toward answering this question is to examine whether atrocity perpetrators and facilitators accepted hazing any differently. Although our interviewees had all made it through preservice training without being dismissed for trainee insubordination or weakness—one sign that the hazing was working on them—we still need to explore both sets of trainees' attitudes about preservice training, including hazing. If approval of hazing is better preparation for atrocity work than nonapproval, then we should find that those militarized police who did not commit atrocities should be less accepting of preservice training over all.

Indeed, we found that among our Militarized Police interviewees, the atrocity-facilitating comparison group was less likely to be openly supportive and most likely to be explicitly critical of the deindividualizing and dehumanizing aspects of preservice training. For example, one policeman from this group observed that his training had been "for the exclusive and sole purpose of torturing, degrading people. There was no teaching going on.... [The trainees] had no guns, no helmets, no equipment at all." Another Militarized Police atrocity facilitator explained critically that his academy training had focused on teaching men how to "fight the people" and not criminals. In his words, the objective of Militarized Police preservice training was not "to make strong men [but] to have men go out into the streets and do the [government's] bidding. They raise irate policemen... [who] leave the base feeling bitter."

In contrast, the six documented Militarized Police atrocity perpetrators had very few explicit criticisms of their preservice training and much praise for it. Bernardo, a Militarized Police murderer who as a Civil Police official later oversaw torture, describes quite favorably the use of physical exercises for implanting authority: It created "discipline... [and the] military abilities [that] were highly demanded [by the Militarized Police]." Through punishing exercises "we [would] really acquire that professional disciplinary awareness." Another atrocity perpetrator, Roberto—a former death squad leader and a murderer himself—believes that "discipline has to be rigorously enforced" in Militarized Police training because it builds a disciplined policeman. Militarized Police officer Fernando, another murderer, attributes his men's strength under fire to their tough training at the Militarized Police Academy: They learned "humility, and you must be humble." Fernando remembers humility as being inculcated primarily through hazing: "You're going to polish my boots, do what we order. You have to know how to obey." Fernando sees hazing as "a type of value-building [activity]. It creates respect."

A good deal of research supports Fernando and the other atrocity perpetrators who championed hazing for its role in reshaping trainees' identities and engendering their obedience to Militarized Police authority. Van Gennep (1960) illustrates how preindustrial societies' hazing-like rites of passage serve much the same purpose. Haritos-Fatouros (forthcoming) has shown how preservice training transformed Greek Military Police recruits into torturers and how similar training shapes U.S. Marines into elite fighting units. Yet what precisely is the role of hazing in reshaping identities? It is well known that U.S. college fraternities have long used "hell week" and a final "hell night" as an integral

part of their admission among those fraternity organization's degrading people like best those most to join (Aronson and

### Moving into Society

As Militarized Police riot, they faced the Week, a violent climate skill-imparting phase of test of a man's courage miliated, and hit; their push-ups; and they could think of as an from the comparison through a 'washing'.

I wouldn't say it was troop rolls around in the suffering so that on the uniforms—washed, starched and

Hell Week often a training officer at a trainees were required to ing blood, urine, or from the trainer's ceremony the euphemism for a ture, involving a strong mouth or genitals by a given hazing tasks that lessness: with their nude from the elements, they trench:

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Militarized Police atrocity perpetrators  
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attitude, Roberto—a former  
perpetrator—believes that "discipline has  
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part of their admission screening and for creating a sense of uniqueness  
among those fraternity initiates who succeed in surmounting the orga-  
nization's degrading rituals. As research on cognitive dissonance shows,  
people like best those things and those groups that they have to suffer  
most to join (Aronson and Mills 1959).

### Moving into Society

As Militarized Police trainees neared the end of their preparation pe-  
riod, they faced the most intense and gruelling hazing of all: Hell  
Week, a violent climax to training that made no pretense at being a  
skill-imparting phase of police preparation. It was quite simply a final  
test of a man's courage and will to fight. The trainees were cursed, hu-  
miliated, and hit; their faces were pushed into dirt as they did endless  
push-ups; and they were subjected to anything else that the officers  
could think of as an appropriate test of their resolve. As one policeman  
from the comparison group remembered Hell Week, "Everyone went  
through a 'washing':"

I wouldn't say it was brainwashing, but it was a physical washing.... The whole  
troop rolls around in the grass and then goes through that oil trench. All that  
suffering so that on the day of the [graduation] ceremony they can put on their  
uniforms—washed, starched and ironed—as if nothing had happened.

Hell Week often culminated with a baptism-like ritual performed by  
a training officer at a makeshift altar. During one part of this ceremony,  
trainees were required to "receive the Eucharist," which involved drink-  
ing blood, urine, or some other equally dangerous and noxious liquid  
from the trainer's ceremonial cup. ("Receiving the Eucharist" was also  
the euphemism for a notoriously violent form of military and police tor-  
ture, involving a strong electric shock being administered to a victim's  
mouth or genitals by a live wire.) Trainees were dressed in a manner and  
given hazing tasks that further punctuated their degradation and power-  
lessness: with their nude bodies wrapped by a shroud and unprotected  
from the elements, they were ordered to fall to the ground and roll in a  
trench:

There's this trench where cars get oil changes. It's completely full of oil... that  
dirty car oil. In training we had to crawl through it on our bellies in order to get  
to the other side. You were a piece of sludge by the time [you finished].



ular and other preservice training in general—especially that which promoted unthinking obedience to commands—could have laid a seedbed especially for aggressive beatings and quick-fire shootings. At the very least, by hazing's sending a message that violence is normal, instrumentally effective, and organizationally acceptable, the Militarized Police gave trainees a violent formula they could take into the field; among the eight militarized police who openly admitted to having been hazed during academy preservice training, five were among the six documented atrocity perpetrators. Even the one atrocity perpetrator who did not claim to have gone through hazing during preservice training—Jorge—had been subjected to a great deal of brutal hazing during his many years in a state-run orphanage. In contrast, among the facilitator militarized police, only three of eight admitted to having been hazed in their preservice training. This would seem to suggest that the hazing experience might have contributed, at the very least, to creating a potential for perpetrating atrocity.

However, the relationship of hazing to atrocity is not as clear as it might seem. First, among the militarized police who did not mention being hazed either prior to (Jorge) or during preservice training—or who flatly denied having gone through it—there is good reason to suspect that most of them had in fact been hazed. But what is the evidence that the comparison group police had in fact been hazed? Everything that we have derived from the militarized police interviewees about preservice training, whether these interviewees were officers or rank-and-filers, or from journalist exposes of this training, suggests that during both Brazil's military and redemocratization periods, hazing was an integral part of Militarized Police training. Therefore, we propose that some interviewees' silence on this matter indicates that they were very likely withholding this information. The reasons for their secrecy lie in expected punishment for discussing hazing, the threats to group solidarity from disclosing it, and our own linguistic difficulties in soliciting information about it.

Indeed, perhaps the most compelling reason for interviewees keeping their academy hazing a secret is that during our interview period there was a great deal of negative publicity in Brazil about the Militarized Police organization's brutal, dangerous, and racist hazing. The organization responded across Brazil by prohibiting its members from talking about any aspect of preservice training, including in particular Militarized Police hazing. Officials warned that such disclosures would result in fines at the very least and imprisonment or dismissal from the force at

through a sewage ditch and  
as with swaddled their bodies,  
interpersonal test of suitability for  
determination and courage un-  
fading from gas and desperate  
the number of hazing challenges.  
the test were deemed unsuitable  
and sometimes deaths were,

the test were eligible to become  
Militarized Police Academy's formal  
an entire day and included  
and national songs; and speeches  
officers. At a sumptuous luncheon,  
and a series of toasts for distin-  
and their families as well as the  
the new militarized policemen,  
impressed by the strength of their  
hardness of their training, by all  
and energized, and ready to  
through training that demonstrated  
their place among other

an atrocity perpetrator argued  
this [his] fear because you be-  
... You have the feeling that  
of any proportion—even  
from the comparison group  
on graduation day that he  
... I felt like a superhero...  
... authority is not... to be

## Violence

a complex set of feelings  
predisposed some of them  
... By shaping Militarized  
subversion, hazing in partic-



... across Brazil still leaked in-  
... to the Brazilian press,  
... documentaries of violent  
... in Brasilia and Minas  
... has been and remains  
... preservice training.

... the only thing keeping some  
... more compelling mo-  
... that secrecy about hazing  
... organization and pro-  
... outsiders. As Simmel  
... is disclosed, the group  
... Militarized Police Academy haz-  
... entity whose very  
... about violence.

... enforced secrecy about  
... new questions that would  
... we learned very quickly that  
... either silence or an ar-  
... Militarized Police atrocity  
... training "wasn't hazing  
... had to "shine thirty-two  
... was different from "hazing,  
... around the barracks for  
... was not hazing be-  
... in humility... Before giv-  
... Nevertheless, he was  
... occurrence.

... interviewees to our questions  
... we could not assume that  
... of hazing and on the  
... what interviewees gave as  
... and used these re-  
... to capture most of the  
... to find any single Por-  
... manifestations, we  
... Militarized Police train-  
... of "physical training" a  
... been used as a punish-  
... "discipline-building ac-

activities" had a trainee gone through? This line of questioning helped un-  
cover information about activities that would normally be labeled "haz-  
ing." Yet, even with this more indirect approach, some militarized police  
who were very likely to have been hazed still did not disclose informa-  
tion about it in their preservice training experience.

However, if we assume from this theoretical and empirical argument  
that hazing was and is ubiquitous in the Militarized Police training cur-  
riculum, this complicates the presumption of a relationship between  
hazing and atrocity: The facilitators were also hazed but apparently did  
not carry out systematic atrocities. We therefore face a thorny theoretical  
problem: if the comparison group police were hazed yet did not commit  
systematic atrocities, then what is the relationship of Militarized Police  
preservice hazing to atrocity? Because we cannot assert that hazing ac-  
tively creates atrocity perpetrators, we propose that by fostering un-  
thinking, group-minded obedience to authority, it established one im-  
portant institutional girder for *certain kinds* of atrocity. Hazing shapes  
Militarized Police trainees into atrocity *teams* by modeling violence, cre-  
ating blind obedience to authority, bringing about group bonding for  
reflexively meting out violence, and nurturing the moral disengagement  
that disguises and justifies such violence. The uniformed militarized po-  
lice, many of whom carried out beatings and murders collectively in  
public view, had to present themselves and be seen by outsiders as acting  
legitimately *in concert* against a social and political enemy. Hazing is one  
mechanism for institutionalizing the team solidarity, group action, and  
hierarchical control for convincingly demonstrating such operational le-  
gitimacy. As one militarized policeman from the comparison group ex-  
plains,

We had to be physically strong. We had to prove ourselves as men through phys-  
ical strength.... We had to stand, put up with all types of exercises and an absurd  
number of repetitions, like 100 push-ups.... Then after a lot of exercise, you run  
outside. We're going to show the people out there that we are united,  
happy.... We demonstrate [through exercise] that we are a group of... strong  
valiant men.... It's part of the brainwashing that you get.

If Militarized Police are to carry out "politically legitimate" street  
beatings and shoot into crowds and murder faceless suspected (not  
legally adjudged) wrongdoers, then their violence must appear as disci-  
plined, professional teamwork. The *quality* of group action itself (e.g.,  
organization, preparedness, uniformity) in part confers legitimacy on  
the group's violence. Under such conditions, no single member of a



team can deviate from the group's militarized script; its violence must appear an unvarying group product. By inculcating obedience to Militarized Police authority and to its social control and political goals, preservice training in general and hazing in particular help mold trainees into more predictable and controllable agents of the state. The former trainees may not have all been made into institutional functionaries, but in their public performances they had to at least appear like them.

Summing up the obedience-shaping process, Roberto—the man who claimed to have “lost his control” when he stepped outside group discipline and gunned down four people as a militarized policeman in a death squad—explained that Militarized Police officials “consider[ed] discipline essential: The policeman at school is trained to stand everything; he's humiliated and suffers psychological pressure that... tests his level of police training.” Of course, as Roberto's case suggests, the outcome of such violent discipline may be summary executions, on or off duty, contributing in his case to his status as a blended masculinity policeman.

However, because preservice training was carried out at the beginning of a militarized policeman's career, which may have been several years and a few promotions before he began *systematically* committing *serial* beatings and executions, we must examine other possible subsequent factors that led some militarized police to perpetrate these atrocities. Moreover, because most Civil Police atrocity perpetrators did not receive preservice training and because they tended most often to engage in torture, not murder, we need to look into the factors that may have shaped their later careers. Finally, we need to seek commonalities in the careers of the Militarized and Civil Police atrocity perpetrators that bridge these organizations and explain serial atrocity more generally.

In the next chapter, we extend our analyses of how violence workers are shaped by demonstrating that Brazilian police atrocities were commonly the outcome of certain kinds of organizational affiliations that defined atrocity perpetrators' careers—whether in the Civil or Militarized Police. Within this finding we uncovered new layers of information about how work structures and processes shaped the organizational and interpersonal dynamics of the policemen who became serial atrocity perpetrators. Thus, although this chapter has focused on what could be labeled the explicitly abnormal and “evil” experiences that influenced some Brazilian police, the next chapter looks at the banal structures and activities that more informally fostered and reinforced serial atrocities, whether torture or murder.

## CHAPTER 10

Secret and  
Torturers

*Cruelty has a language  
And jealousy a language  
Terror the language of  
And secrecy the language*

*Whoever chooses  
not become a*

This chapter looks at the relatively ordinary Brazilian police who begin this exploration with entry into specialized police units, entry into specialized police units, entry into specialized police units. Clearly, these men began their transformation into killers. Seeking the actual process of membership in one of these systematic atrocity, we explore the associated informal social dynamic that included three

We discovered that serial atrocity dynamic that included three