

Unit Title: Power, Corruption, and Motivation through the Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism

Purpose of Instruction: Through a variety of texts teach elements of persuasion, tactics which are used to persuade, and when power can manipulate and corrupt a society.

Learning Activities:

*This Unit can be paired with a complete reading of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible," but functions without it as well.

1) Consider the validity of the quote below. Write one paragraph refuting, supporting, or qualifying this argument. Use appropriate evidence to support your claim. Be prepared to share your argument with the class.

"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men."

- John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton, 1887

2) Define witch-hunt. Then answer, what type of person believes they can conduct a witch-hunt? Who has enough power (or thinks they have enough power) to accuse others based on little or no evidence?

3) Read and annotate (review annotation skills as necessary) The Overture of *The Crucible* (approximately the first eight pages) and discuss the text above as it relates to the actual world.

Do you as young citizens and future taxpayers feel repressed by an authority; a coach, a teacher, a parent?

4) Read, "Enemies of the State" and the letter to the President by Senator Joseph McCarthy. Identify his rhetorical strategies in both the speech and the letter. Identify moves McCarthy makes to persuade his audience.

5.a) Watch film excerpt "Goodnight and Good Luck"

Scenes: The Wershba's work conversation, Murrow and Friendly's discussion with the staff, and Murrow's conference speech.

Discuss the purpose of Murrow's speech and how fear guides the decisions of his staff.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCaBCdJWOyM>

5.b) Read *The Crucible*, Act III. Note the tactics of persuasion used by the court and the afflicted.

6) Read Governor Phips' Letter to the King and Image, the Salem Witch Trials.

Compare and contrast the points of Phips letter with the visual representation of the Salem witch trial.

7) Read “Have You No Sense of Decency” from the Army - McCarthy hearings. Compare and contrast the text with the McCarthy political cartoon. Examine the tone of Mr. Welch against Senator McCarthy and how the cartoon reinforces McCarthy’s communist investigations.

8) *Culminating Assignment*

Carefully read the excerpt from *Everything’s an Argument*, “Scare Tactics” and then, the two essays: “Power and Corruption May Be Good for Society” and “How Power Corrupts Leaders.” Write an evaluative paper that synthesizes the information from all three sources and analyzes the relationship between motivation, power, and corruption. Your argument must be central and you should draw evidence from additional sources used in this unit to state your claim. Please be sure to cite your sources appropriately.

RESOURCES:

- ***Learning Activity 3 - The Crucible, Arthur Miller (Overture excerpt)***

The Salem tragedy, which is about to be developed from a paradox. It is a paradox in whose grip we still live, and there is no prospect yet that we will discover its resolution. Simply, it was this: for good even high purposes, the people of Salem developed a theocracy, a combine of state and religious power whose function was to keep the community together, and to prevent any kind of disunity that might open it to destruction by material or ideological enemies. It was forged for a necessary purpose and accomplished that purpose. But all organization is and must be grounded on the idea of exclusion and prohibition, just as two objects cannot occupy the same space. Evidently the time came in New England when the repressions of order were heavier than seemed warranted by the dangers against which the order was organized. The witch-hunt was a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among all classes when the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom.

When one rises above the individual villainy displayed, one can only pity them all, just as we shall be pitied someday. It is still impossible for man to organize his social life without repressions, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom. The witch-hunt was not, however, a mere repression. It was also, and as importantly, a long overdue opportunity for every-one so inclined to express publicly his guilt and sins, under the cover of accusations against the victims. It suddenly became possible - and patriotic and holy - for a man to say that Martha Corey had come into his bedroom at night, and that, while his wife was sleeping at his side, Martha laid herself down on his chest and “nearly suffocated him.” Of course it was her spirit only, but his satisfaction at confessing himself was no lighter than if it had been Martha herself.

One could not ordinarily speak such things in public.

Long-held hatreds of neighbors could now be openly expressed, and vengeance taken, despite the Bible's charitable injunctions. Land-lust, which had been expressed before by constant bickering over boundaries and deeds, could now be elevated to the arena of morality; one could cry witch against one's neighbor and feel perfectly justified in the bargain. Old scores could be settled on a plane of heavenly combat between Lucifer and the Lord; suspicions and the envy of the miserable toward the happy could and did burst out in the general revenge.

- ***Learning Activity 4 - "Enemies from Within" Senator Joseph McCarthy and McCarthy's letter to the President***

Wisconsin Republican Joseph R. McCarthy first won election to the Senate in 1946 during a campaign marked by much anticommunist Red-baiting. Partially in response to Republican Party victories, President Harry S. Truman tried to demonstrate his own concern about the threat of Communism by setting up a loyalty program for federal employees. He also asked the Justice Department to compile an official list of 78 subversive organizations. As the midterm election year got underway, former State Department official Alger Hiss, suspected of espionage, was convicted of perjury. McCarthy, in a speech at Wheeling, West Virginia, mounted an attack on Truman's foreign policy agenda by charging that the State Department and its Secretary, Dean Acheson, harbored "traitorous" Communists. There is some dispute about the number of Communists McCarthy claimed to have known about. Though advance copies of this speech distributed to the press record the number as 205, McCarthy quickly revised this claim. Both in a letter he wrote to President Truman the next day and in an "official" transcript of the speech that McCarthy submitted to the Congressional Record ten days later he uses the number 57. Although McCarthy displayed this list of names both in Wheeling and then later on the Senate floor, he never made the list public.

Speech of Joseph McCarthy, Wheeling, West Virginia, February 9, 1950

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight as we celebrate the one hundred forty-first birthday of one of the greatest men in American history, I would like to be able to talk about what a glorious day today is in the history of the world. As we celebrate the birth of this man who with his whole heart and soul hated war, I would like to be able to speak of peace in our time—of war being outlawed—and of world-wide disarmament. These would be truly appropriate things to be able to mention as we celebrate the birthday of Abraham Lincoln.

Five years after a world war has been won, men's hearts should anticipate a long peace—and men's minds should be free from the heavy weight that comes with war. But this is not such a period—for this is not a period of peace. This is a time of "the cold war." This is a time when all the world is split into two vast, increasingly hostile armed camps—a time of a great armament race.

Today we can almost physically hear the mutterings and rumblings of an invigorated god of war. You can see it, feel it, and hear it all the way from the Indochina hills, from the shores of Formosa, right over into the very heart of Europe itself. The one

encouraging thing is that the “mad moment” has not yet arrived for the firing of the gun or the exploding of the bomb which will set civilization about the final task of destroying itself. There is still a hope for peace if we finally decide that no longer can we safely blind our eyes and close our ears to those facts which are shaping up more and more clearly . . . and that is that we are now engaged in a show-down fight . . . not the usual war between nations for land areas or other material gains, but a war between two diametrically opposed ideologies.

The great difference between our western Christian world and the atheistic Communist world is not political, gentlemen, it is moral. For instance, the Marxian idea of confiscating the land and factories and running the entire economy as a single enterprise is momentous. Likewise, Lenin’s invention of the one-party police state as a way to make Marx’s idea work is hardly less momentous.

Stalin’s resolute putting across of these two ideas, of course, did much to divide the world. With only these differences, however, the east and the west could most certainly still live in peace. The real, basic difference, however, lies in the religion of immorality . . . invented by Marx, preached feverishly by Lenin, and carried to unimaginable extremes by Stalin. This religion of immorality, if the Red half of the world triumphs—and well it may, gentlemen—this religion of immorality will more deeply wound and damage mankind than any conceivable economic or political system. Karl Marx dismissed God as a hoax, and Lenin and Stalin have added in clear-cut, unmistakable language their resolve that no nation, no people who believe in a god, can exist side by side with their communistic state.

Karl Marx, for example, expelled people from his Communist Party for mentioning such things as love, justice, humanity or morality. He called this “soulful ravings” and “sloppy sentimentality.” . . .

Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of communism have selected this as the time, and ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down—they are truly down. Lest there be any doubt that the time has been chosen, let us go directly to the leader of communism today—Joseph Stalin. Here is what he said—not back in 1928, not before the war, not during the war—but 2 years after the last war was ended: “To think that the Communist revolution can be carried out peacefully, within the framework of a Christian democracy, means one has either gone out of one’s mind and lost all normal understanding, or has grossly and openly repudiated the Communist revolution.” . . .

Ladies and gentlemen, can there be anyone tonight who is so blind as to say that the war is not on? Can there be anyone who fails to realize that the Communist world has said the time is now? . . . that this is the time for the show-down between the democratic Christian world and the communistic atheistic world? Unless we face this fact, we shall pay the price that must be paid by those who wait too long. Six years ago, . . . there was within the Soviet orbit, 180,000,000 people. Lined up on the antitotalitarian side there were in the world at that time, roughly 1,625,000,000 people. Today, only six years later, there are 800,000,000 people under the absolute domination of Soviet Russia—an increase of over 400 percent. On our side, the figure has shrunk to around 500,000,000.

In other words, in less than six years, the odds have changed from 9 to 1 in our favor to 8 to 5 against us. This indicates the swiftness of the tempo of Communist victories and American defeats in the cold war. As one of our outstanding historical figures once said, "When a great democracy is destroyed, it will not be from enemies from without, but rather because of enemies from within." . . .

The reason why we find ourselves in a position of impotency is not because our only powerful potential enemy has sent men to invade our shores . . . but rather because of the traitorous actions of those who have been treated so well by this Nation. It has not been the less fortunate, or members of minority groups who have been traitorous to this Nation, but rather those who have had all the benefits that the wealthiest Nation on earth has had to offer . . . the finest homes, the finest college education and the finest jobs in government we can give. This is glaringly true in the State Department. There the bright young men who are born with silver spoons in their mouths are the ones who have been most traitorous. . . .

I have here in my hand a list of 205 . . . a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department. . . . As you know, very recently the Secretary of State proclaimed his loyalty to a man guilty of what has always been considered as the most abominable of all crimes—being a traitor to the people who gave him a position of great trust—high treason. . . . He has lighted the spark which is resulting in a moral uprising and will end only when the whole sorry mess of twisted, warped thinkers are swept from the national scene so that we may have a new birth of honesty and decency in government.

Joseph McCarthy to President Harry Truman, February 11, 1950

In the Lincoln Day speech at Wheeling Thursday night I stated that the State Department harbors a nest of Communists and Communist sympathizers who are helping to shape our foreign policy. I further stated that I have in my possession the names of 57 Communists who are in the State Department at present. A State Department spokesman promptly denied this, claiming that there is not a single Communist in the Department. You can convince yourself of the falsity of the State Department claim very easily. You will recall that you personally appointed a board to screen State Department employees for the purpose of weeding out fellow travelers—men whom the board considered dangerous to the security of this Nation. Your board did a painstaking job, and named hundreds which had been listed as dangerous to the security of the Nation, because of communistic connections.

While the records are not available to me, I know absolutely of one group of approximately 300 certified to the Secretary for discharge because of communism. He actually only discharged approximately 80. I understand that this was done after lengthy consultation with the now-convicted traitor, Alger Hiss. I would suggest, therefore, Mr. President, that you simply pick up your phone and ask Mr. Acheson how many of those whom your board had labeled as dangerous Communists he failed to discharge. The day the House Un-American Activities Committee exposed Alger Hiss as an important link in

an international Communist spy ring you signed an order forbidding the State Department's giving any information in regard to the disloyalty or the communistic connections of anyone in that Department to the Congress.

Despite this State Department black-out, we have been able to compile a list of 57 Communists in the State Department. This list is available to you but you can get a much longer list by ordering Secretary Acheson to give you a list of those whom your own board listed as being disloyal and who are still working in the State Department. I believe the following is the minimum which can be expected of you in this case.

1. That you demand that Acheson give you and the proper congressional committee the names and a complete report on all of those who were placed in the Department by Alger Hiss, and all of those still working in the State Department who were listed by your board as bad security risks because of their communistic connections.
2. That you promptly revoke the order in which you provided under no circumstances could a congressional committee obtain any information or help in exposing Communists.

Failure on your part will label the Democratic Party of being the bedfellow of international communism. Certainly this label is not deserved by the hundreds of thousands of loyal American Democrats throughout the Nation, and by the sizable number of able loyal Democrats in both the Senate and the House.

Source: U.S. Senate, State Department Loyalty Investigation Committee on Foreign Relations, 81st Congress; Joseph McCarthy to President Harry Truman February 11, 1950, Congressional Record, 81st Congress

- ***Learning Activity 6 - Text: Phips Letter***

Governor Phips had a close relationship with Cotton Mather for his entire life. Mather wrote Memorable Providences which is noted to have influence in Salem prior to the witch trials. On a visit to Salem, Governor Phips decided to assign Lieutenant Governor William Stoughton to oversee the trials. Stoughton quickly found the innocent guilty with the use of spectral evidence. On a return visit Phips discovered the courts of Salem persecuting the innocent. Although Phips righted his wrongs his decisions were based heavily on political influences, such as Cotton Mather, at the time. Read the letter below from Governor Phips to the King regarding the situation in Salem. Then analyze the image. How does the image confirm or contradict Phips' claims. (Dignan, University of Virginia, 2001)

Governor Phips letter to the King

When I first arrived I found this Province miserably harrassed with a most Horrible witchcraft or Possession of Devils which had broke in upon severall Townes,

some scores of poor people were taken with preternaturall torments some scalded with brimstone some had pins stuck in their flesh others hurried into the fire and water and some dragged out of their houses and carried over the tops of trees and hills for many Miles together; it hath been represented to mee much like that of Sweden about thirty years agoe, and there were many committed to prison upon suspicion of Witchcraft before my arrivall. The loud cries and clamours of the friends of the afflicted people with the advice of the Deputy Governor and many others prevailed with mee to give a Commission of Oyer and Terminer for discovering what witchcraft might be at the bottome or whether it were not a possession.

The chief Judge in this Commission was the Deputy Governour and the rest were persons of the best prudence and figure that could then be pitched upon. When the Court came to sitt at Salem in the County of Essex they convicted more than twenty persons of being guilty of witchcraft, some of the convicted were such as confessed their Guilt, the Court as I understand began their proceedings with the accusations of the afflicted and then went upon other humane evidences to strengthen that. I was almost the whole time of the proceeding abroad in the service of Their Majesties in the Eastern part of the County and depended upon the Judgment of the Court as to a right method of proceeding in cases of Witchcraft but when I came home I found many persons in a strange ferment of dissatisfaction which was increased by some hott Spiritts that blew up the flame, but on enquiring into the matter I found that the Devill had taken upon him the name and shape of severall persons who were doubtless inocent and to my certain knowledge of good reputation for which cause I have now forbidden the committing of any more that shall be accused without unavoydable necessity, and those that have been committed I would shelter from any Proceedings against them wherein there may be the least suspition of any wrong to be done unto the Innocent.

I would also wait for any particular directions or commands if their Majesties please to give mee any for the fuller ordering this perplexed affair. I have also put a stop to the printing of any discourses one way or other, that may increase the needless disputes of people upon this occasion, because I saw a likelyhood of kindling an inextinguishable flame if I should admitt any publique and open Contests and I have grieved to see that some who should have done their Majesties and this Province better service have so far taken Councill of Passion as to desire the precipitancy of these matters, these things have been improved by some to give me many interuptions in their Majesties service and in truth none of my vexations have been greater than this, than that their majesties service has been hereby unhappily clogged, and the Persons who have made soe ill improvement of these matters here are seeking to turne it all upon mee, but I hereby declare that as soon as I came from fighting against their Majesties Enemyes and understood what danger some of their innocent subjects might be exposed to, if the evidence of the afflicted persons only did prevaile either to the committing or trying any of them, I did before any application was made unto me about it put a stop to the proceedings of the Court and they are now stopt till their Majesties pleasure be known. Sir I beg pardon for giving you all this trouble, the reason is because I know my enemies are seeking to turn it all upon me and I take this liberty because I depend upon your friendship, and desire you

will please to give a true understanding of the matter if any thing of this kind be urged or made use of against mee. Because the justnesse of my proceeding herein will bee a sufficient defence. Sir

I am with all imaginable respect Your most humble Servt

*William Phips.

Dated at Boston the 12'th of october 1692.

IMAGE: <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SALEM.HTM>

Learning Activity 7 - Text: McCarthy Hearings

Anticommunist crusader Senator Joseph R. McCarthy stepped into national prominence on February 9, 1950, when he mounted an attack on President Truman's foreign policy agenda. McCarthy charged that the State Department and its Secretary, Dean Acheson, harbored "traitorous" Communists. McCarthy's apocalyptic rhetoric made critics hesitate before challenging him. Those accused by McCarthy faced loss of employment, damaged careers, and in many cases, broken lives. After the 1952 election, in which the Republican Party won control of Congress, McCarthy became chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operations and its Subcommittee on Investigations. McCarthy then extended his targets to include numerous government agencies, in addition to the broadcasting and defense industries, universities, and the United Nations. After Secretary of the Army, Robert T. Stevens, refused to intercede to halt an overseas assignment for McCarthy's chief consultant, G. David Schine, who had been drafted, McCarthy's committee began a two-month investigation of the Army. Viewers saw the following dramatic encounters televised live as they occurred between McCarthy, Special Counsel for the Army Joseph N. Welch, Counselor for the Army John G. Adams, and the subcommittee's chief counsel, Roy Cohn. Although McCarthy's power declined sharply following the hearings and the Senate voted to condemn him a few months later, scholars disagree on whether McCarthy's appearance before a mass television audience caused his fall. Historians do, however, credit ABC-TV's decision to broadcast the hearings live, the only one to do so, with the network's rise to prominence.

Televised Hearings for the Subcommittee on Investigations (excerpt)

Senator MCCARTHY: Jim, will you get the news story to the effect that this man belonged to this Communist-front organization? Will you get the citations showing that this was the legal arm of the Communist Party, and the length of time that he belonged, and the fact that he was recommended by Mr. Welch? I think that should be in the record.

Mr. WELCH: You won't need anything in the record when I have finished telling you this. Until this moment, Senator, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness. Fred Fisher is a young man who went to the Harvard Law School and came into my firm and is starting what looks to be a brilliant career with us. When I decided to work for this committee I asked Jim St. Clair, who sits on my right, to be my first assistant. I said to Jim, "Pick somebody in the firm who works under you that you would

like.” He chose Fred Fisher and they came down on an afternoon plane. That night, when he had taken a little stab at trying to see what the case was about, Fred Fisher and Jim St. Clair and I went to dinner together. I then said to these two young men, “Boys, I don’t know anything about you except I have always liked you, but if there is anything funny in the life of either one of you that would hurt anybody in this case you speak up quick.”

Fred Fisher said, “Mr. Welch, when I was in law school and for a period of months after, I belonged to the Lawyers Guild,” as you have suggested, Senator. He went on to say, “I am secretary of the Young Republicans League in Newton with the son of Massachusetts’ Governor, and I have the respect and admiration of the 25 lawyers or so in Hale & Dorr.”

I said, “Fred, I just don’t think I am going to ask you to work on the case. If I do, one of these days that will come out and go over national television and it will just hurt like the dickens.” So, Senator, I asked him to go back to Boston.

Little did I dream you could be so reckless and cruel as to do an injury to that lad. It is true he is still with Hale & Dorr. It is true that he will continue to be with Hale & Dorr. It is, I regret to say, equally true that I fear he shall always bear a scar needlessly inflicted by you. If it were in my power to forgive you for your reckless cruelty, I will do so. I like to think I am a gentleman, but your forgiveness will have to come from someone other than me.

Senator MCCARTHY: Mr. Chairman.

Senator MUNDT: Senator McCarthy?

Senator MCCARTHY: May I say that Mr. Welch talks about this being cruel and reckless. He was just baiting; he has been baiting Mr. Cohn here for hours, requesting that Mr. Cohn, before sundown, get out of any department of Government anyone who is serving the Communist cause. I just give this man’s record, and I want to say, Mr. Welch, that it has been labeled long before he became a member, as early as 1944—

Mr. WELCH: Senator, may we not drop this? We know he belonged to the Lawyers Guild, and Mr. Cohn nods his head at me. I did you, I think, no personal injury, Mr. Cohn.

Mr. COHN: No, sir.

Mr. WELCH: I meant to do you no personal injury, and if I did, beg your pardon. Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You have done enough. Have you no sense of decency sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?

Senator MCCARTHY: I know this hurts you, Mr. Welch. But I may say, Mr. Chairman, on a point of personal privilege, and I would like to finish it—

Mr. WELCH: Senator, I think it hurts you, too, sir.

Senator MCCARTHY: I would like to finish this.

Mr. Welch has been filibustering this hearing, he has been talking day after day about how he wants to get anyone tainted with communism out before sundown. I know Mr. Cohn would rather not have me go into this. I intend to, however, Mr. Welch talks about any sense of decency. If I say anything which is not the truth, then I would like to know about it. The foremost legal bulwark of the Communist Party, its front organizations, and controlled unions, and which, since its inception, has never failed to rally to the legal defense of the Communist Party, and individual members thereof, including known espionage agents. Now, that is not the language of Senator McCarthy. That is the language of the Un-American Activities Committee. And I can go on with many more citations. It seems that Mr. Welch is pained so deeply he thinks it is improper for me to give the record, the Communist front record, of the man whom he wanted to foist upon this committee. But it doesn't pain him at all—there is no pain in his chest about the unfounded charges against Mr. Frank Carr; there is no pain there about the attempt to destroy the reputation and take the jobs away from the young men who were working in my committee. And, Mr. Welch, if I have said anything here which is untrue, then tell me. I have heard you and every one else talk so much about laying the truth upon the table that when I hear—and it is completely phony, Mr. Welch, I have listened to you for a long time—when you say “Now, before sundown, you must get these people out of Government,” I want to have it very clear, very clear that you were not so serious about that when you tried to recommend this man for this committee. And may I say, Mr. Welch, in fairness to you, I have reason to believe that you did not know about his Communist-front record at the time you recommended him. I don't think you would have recommended him to the committee, if you knew that. I think it is entirely possible you learned that after you recommended him.

Senator MUNDT: The Chair would like to say again that he does not believe that Mr. Welch recommended Mr. Fisher as counsel for this committee, because he has through his office all the recommendations that were made. He does not recall any that came from Mr. Welch, and that would include Mr. Fisher.

Senator MCCARTHY: Let me ask Mr. Welch. You brought him down, did you not, to act as your assistant?

Mr. WELCH: Mr. McCarthy, I will not discuss this with you further. You have sat within 6 feet of me, and could have asked me about Fred Fisher. You have brought it out. If there is a God in heaven, it will do neither you nor your cause any good. I will not discuss it further. I will not ask Mr. Cohn any more questions. You, Mr. Chairman, may, if you will, call the next witness.

Senator MUNDT: Are there any questions?

Mr. JENKINS: No further questions, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. JENKINS: Senator McCarthy, how do you regard the communistic threat to our Government as compared with other threats with which it is confronted?

Senator MCCARTHY: Mr. Jenkins, the thing that I think we must remember is that this is a war which a brutalitarian force has won to a greater extent than any brutalitarian force has won a war in the history of the world before.

For example, Christianity, which has been in existence for 2,000 years, has not converted, convinced nearly as many people as this Communist brutalitarianism has enslaved in 106 years, and they are not going to stop. I know that many of my good friends seem to feel that this is a sort of a game you can play, that you can talk about communism as though it is something 10,000 miles away. Mr. Jenkins, in answer to your question, let me say it is right here with us now. Unless we make sure that there is no infiltration of our Government, then just as certain as you sit there, in the period of our lives you will see a red world. There is no question about that, Mr. Jenkins. . . .

Source: "The Army-McCarthy Hearings, 1954," in Robert D. Marcus and Anthony Marcus, eds., *On Trial: American History Through Court Proceedings and Hearings*, vol. II, (St. James, New York: Brandywine Press, 1998), 136–51.

Culminating Learning Activity 8

“Scare Tactics,” *Everything’s an Argument* (2010)

Scare tactics are common in everything ranging from ads for life insurance to threats of audits by the Internal Revenue Service. Politicians, advertisers, and public figures sometimes peddle their ideas by scaring people and exaggerating possible dangers well beyond their statistical likelihood. Such ploys work because it’s usually easier to imagine something terrible happening than to appreciate its statistical rarity. Why do many people fear flying more than they fear driving? More people die from auto accidents every year, but such accidents don’t fire up our imaginations as spectacularly as air disasters do.

Scare tactics can also be used to stampede legitimate fears into panic or prejudice. People who genuinely fear losing their jobs can be persuaded to fear that immigrants might work for less money. People who are living on fixed incomes can be convinced that minor modifications of entitlement programs represent dire threats to their standard of living. Such tactics have the effect of closing off thinking because people who are scared often act irrationally. Even well-intended fear campaigns - like those directed against the use of illegal drugs, smoking, or unprotected sex - can misfire if their warning prove too shrill. People just stop listening.

Power and Corruption May Be Good for Society

ScienceDaily (Dec. 14, 2010) — They are familiar scenes: politicians bemoaning the death of family values only for extramarital affairs to be unveiled or politicians preaching financial sacrifice while their expense accounts fatten up. Moral corruption and power

asymmetries are pervasive in human societies, but as it turns out, that may not be such a bad thing.

Francisco Úbeda, an evolutionary biology professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and Edgar Duéñez of Harvard University found that power and corruption may play a role in maintaining overall societal cooperation. A report of their research is published in the journal *Evolution*. Using game theory, Úbeda and Duéñez looked at what causes individuals in society to cooperate even though those in charge display some level of corruption. They developed a model that allows individuals who are responsible for punishing noncooperators (e.g., law enforcers and government officials) to fail to cooperate themselves by acting in a corrupt manner. They also considered the possibility that these law enforcers, by virtue of their positions, are able to sidestep punishment when they are caught failing to cooperate.

What they found is that the bulk of society cooperates because there are law enforcers forcing them to stay in line. People tend to cooperate because they do not want to get punished. Even if the law enforcers consider themselves above the law and behave in a corrupt way, overall societal cooperation is maintained -- as long as there is a small amount of power and corruption. However, if the law enforcers have too much power and corruption runs rampant, overall societal cooperation breaks down.

Úbeda explained how it works: "Law enforcers often enjoy privileges that allow them to avoid the full force of the law when they breach it. Law enforcing results in the general public abiding by the law. Thus law enforcers enjoy the benefits of a lawful society and are compensated for their law enforcing by being able to dodge the law," he said.

The researchers concluded that power and corruption benefit society; without law enforcers, individuals have less incentive to cooperate and without power and corruption, law enforcers have less incentive to do their job. The researchers' findings have far-reaching implications. In biology, they may help explain corrupt behaviors in social insects. In economics, the findings may aid in formulating policies by providing insights on how to harness corruption to benefit society. In the field of psychology, the findings provide a justification to the correlation between power and corruption observed in humans.

University of Tennessee at Knoxville. "Power and corruption may be good for society." *ScienceDaily*, 14 Dec. 2010. Web. 12 Jul. 2012.

How Power Corrupts Leaders

Why and how does power corrupt leaders?

Published on August 8, 2009 by Ronald E. Riggio, Ph.D. in Cutting-Edge Leadership

Most people have heard the line "Power corrupts." (or the longer version, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely."). The question I'm often asked is "why and how

does power corrupt leaders?"

The answer is complex, but fairly clear. Leadership is at its core all about power and influence. Leaders use their power to get things done. A simple distinction is between two forms of power. Socialized power is power used to benefit others. We hope that our elected officials have this sort of power in mind and are primarily concerned with the best interests of their constituents.

The other form of power is called personalized power, and it is using power for personal gain. Importantly, these two forms of power are not mutually exclusive. A leader can use his or her power to benefit others, but can also gain personally (there are no poor former U.S. Presidents!). The obvious problem is when personalized power dominates and the leader gains, often at the followers' expense.

Yet, leaders can delude themselves that they are working for the greater good (using socialized power), but engage in behavior that is morally wrong. A sense of power can cause a leader to engage in what leadership ethicist, Terry Price, calls "exception making" - believing that the rules that govern what is right and what is wrong does not apply to the powerful leader "for other people, this would be wrong, but because I have the best interests of my followers at heart, it's ok for me to...." During Watergate, the argument was made that President Nixon could not have acted illegally because "the President is above the law."

Leaders can also become "intoxicated" by power - engaging in wrong behavior simply because they can and they can get away with it (and followers are willing to collude and make such exceptions "It's ok because he/she is the leader"). Some have suggested that President Clinton's engaged in a sexual dalliance with intern Monica Lewinsky simply because "he could."

Power has advantages and disadvantages for leaders.

On the positive side, power makes leaders more assertive and confident and certain of their decisions. This enables them to move forward on chosen courses of action. Leaders must use power to "get the job done."

On the negative side, the more people possess power, the more they focus on their own egocentric desires and the less able they are to see others' perspectives. And then there are individual differences. Some people are simply power hungry and prone to use their power to subjugate others - they are "leaders from hell" ...but that is another post.