

[Adolf Eichmann trial in Jerusalem]. (1961). Retrieved May 17h, 2023 from [https://www.zeit.de/wissen/geschichte/2011-04/eichmann-prozess-israel-dokumente?utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F](https://www.zeit.de/wissen/geschichte/2011-04/eichmann-prozess-israel-dokumente?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F)




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[Learner strapped in electric shock conductor]. (1963). Retrieved May 17th, 2023 from [https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/12/archival\\_objects/2009214](https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/12/archival_objects/2009214)



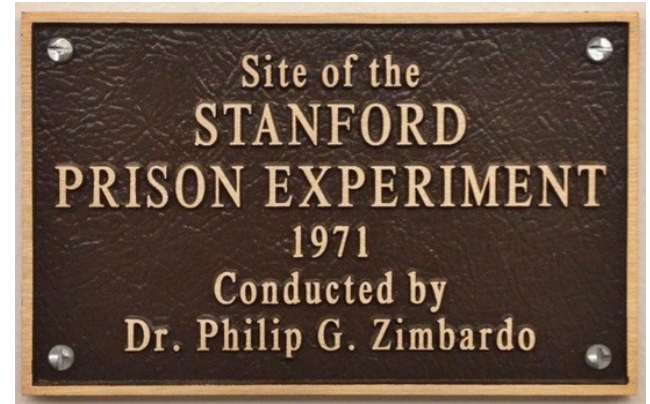


*Tyranny: Revisiting the Stanford Prison  
Experiment*  
Zimbardo (1973)

*SMITH & HASLAM (2017)*  
*\*\*\* CHAPTER 8 \*\*\**

# Overview

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. The study
4. Debate & controversy
5. New developments
6. Conclusion



[Sign at the Stanford University]. (1971). Retrieved May 13th, 2023 from <https://www.prisonexp.org/setting-up>

# Learning Goals

1. Understand what Zimbardo's intention was with his study
2. The core message of the findings of the study
3. The importance of the research
4. Why his study is so controversial
5. The difference between the replication and his study

# Background

**\*\*\* Philip Zimbardo \*\*\***

**\*\*\* Stanford Prison  
Experiment \*\*\***

# Background

## *Philip Zimbardo*

- 1933 Birth in South Bronx, New York
- James Monroe High School
- Brooklyn College: BA triple major
- MA and PhD in psychology at Yale University
- Taught at Yale, Columbia and Stanford University



# Background

## *Philip Zimbardo*

- Married to Christina Maslach
- Research on cult behaviour, hypnosis, time perspective
- Founded the Stanford Shyness Clinic
- Founder of the Heroic Imagination Project
- Important role in the Abu Ghraib trial

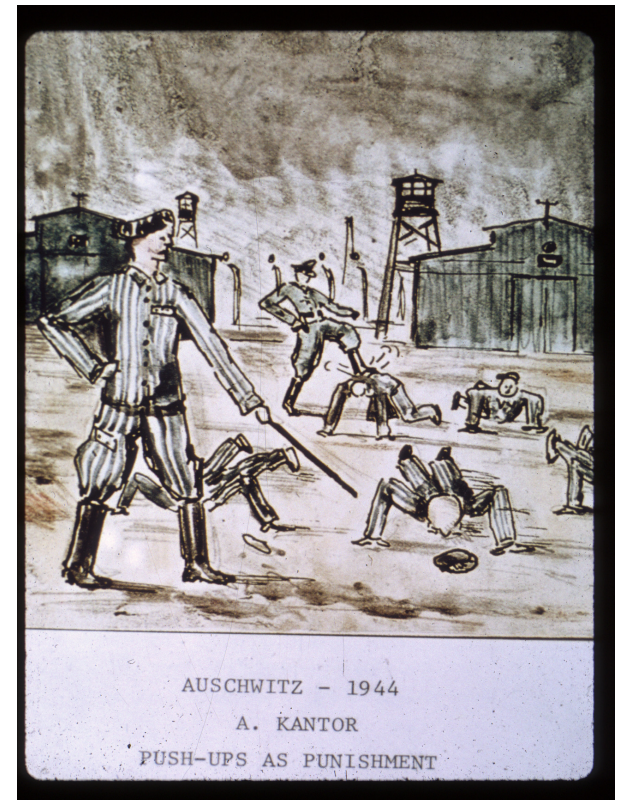




# Background

## *Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE)*

- After Second World War
- During the Vietnam War



Forced push-ups in Auschwitz. (1971). Retrieved May 15th, 2023 from <https://www.prisonexp.org/gallery>

# Background

## *Deaths and Riots*

- Death of George Jackson (21.August 1971)
- Controversial circumstances of his death
- 5 day riot in New York State's Attica Correctional Facility

Death of 33 inmates and 10 guards

# Background

## *Torture at Abu Ghraib Prison*



[A hooded and wired Iraqi prisoner at Abu Ghraib prison]. (2004). Retrieved May 15th, 2023 from <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna5761936>

# The study

**\*\*\* Stanford Prison  
Experiment \*\*\***

# Method

## *Finding participants and assigning groups*

- Newspaper advert to find male college students willing to participate
- Selection based on interviews and questionnaires
- Random assignment to guards or prisoners
  - $N_P = 10$
  - $N_G = 11$



[Newspaper advert to find participants for the SPE]. (1971). Retrieved May 14th, 2023 from <https://www.prisonexp.org/setting-up>



# Method

## *The contract*

- 15\$ per day for 1-2 weeks
- Prisoners were guaranteed minimal rights
  - Basic civil rights could be revoked
  - Otherwise no information on what to expect
- Guards devised prison rules with Warden ahead of the experiment

# Discussion

*Which aspects of the SPE's briefing can be seen as beneficial and which aspects might be questionable?*

# Method

## *Experimental setting*

- Zimbardo and colleagues took on roles as prison staff
- Prisoners arrested at home and put through general proceedings
  - Fingerprinted
  - Detained
  - Blindfolded



[Arrest of the participant in the group of prisoners]. (1971). Retrieved May 14th, 2023 from <https://www.prisonexp.org/the-story>

# Method

## *Experimental setting - Outfitting*

### *Prisoners*

- Wore chains on ankles and smocks without underwear
- Referred to by identification number
  - Goal: Deindividuation, Humiliation & Emasculation



[Guards and prisoner in their respective clothing]. (1971). Retrieved May 14th, 2023 from <https://www.prisonexp.org/arrival>

# Method

## *Experimental setting - Outfitting*

### *Guards*

- Khaki shirts and trousers
- Had whistles, nightsticks and reflective sunglasses
  - Goal: Display power and control



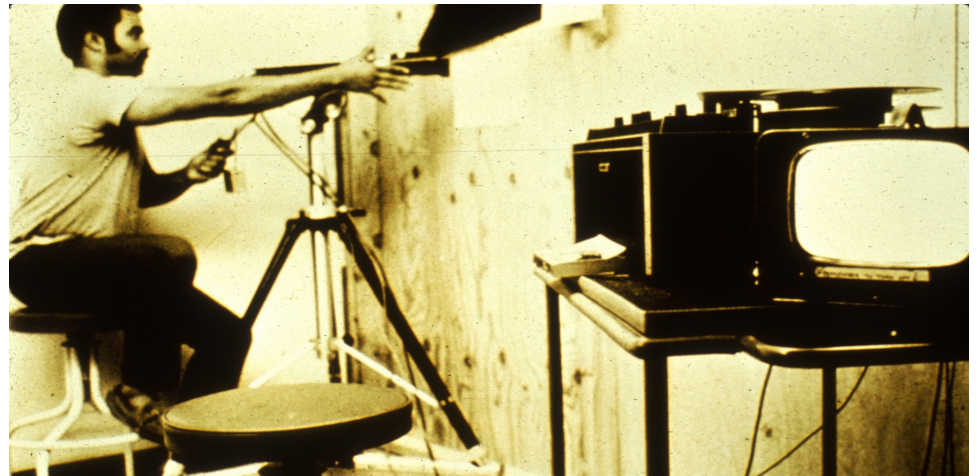
[Guard in uniform]. (1971). Retrieved May 14th, 2023 from <https://www.prisonexp.org/guards>



# Method

## *Data collection and dependent measures*

- Surveying as many behaviours as possible
- Dependent measures are transactions within and between groups
- Data collection through
  - Audio and visual data
  - Rating scales
  - Personal observations



[Technical equipment for data collection]. (1971). Retrieved May 14th, 2023 from <https://www.prisonexp.org/the-story>

# Phases of the experiment

## *Settling in*

- Groups need time to get accustomed
  - Prisoners: not subordinate
  - Guards: unsure how to establish authority
- Night shift guards more comfortable than others
  - Punish and humiliate prisoners
- Creation of collective identity among prisoners

# Phases of the experiment

## *Rebellion*

- Prisoners are angry about treatment
  - Refuse to comply with orders
  - Barricade themselves in cells
  - Feel empowered
- Counterreaction of guards leads into next phase

# Phases of the experiment

## *Tyranny*

- Guards harass prisoners and try to break solidarity
- Zimbardo gets involved
  - Recruits prisoner as snitch
- Guards grow more oppressive and brutal
  - Single out prisoners for taunts and humiliation
- Five prisoners released early due to

“[...] extreme emotional depression, crying, rage and acute anxiety.” (Haney et al., 1973, p. 81)

- Early termination after six days

# Conclusion

- Prison had great impact on affective states
- Although free to choose, mainly hostile and dehumanising interactions occurred
- Variety of different behaviours

“Overall, it is apparent that initial personality-attitude dispositions account for an extremely small part of the variation in reactions to this mock prison experience.” (Haney et al., 1973, p. 81)



# Conclusion

- Comrey Personality Inventory
  - No statistically significant difference in personality
- Similar results for other measures
- Researchers conclude: Not differences in personality but pathological situation distorted behaviour of normal individuals

Table 1. Mean scores for prisoners and guards on eight Comrey subscales

Scale	Prisoners	Guards
Trustworthiness—high score indicates belief in the basic honesty and good intentions of others	$\bar{X} = 92.56$	$\bar{X} = 89.64$
Orderliness—extent to which person is meticulous and concerned with neatness and orderliness	$\bar{X} = 75.67$	$\bar{X} = 73.82$
Conformity—indicates belief in law enforcement, acceptance of society as it is, resentment of nonconformity in others	$\bar{X} = 65.67$	$\bar{X} = 63.18$
Activity—liking for physical activity, hard work, and exercise	$\bar{X} = 89.78$	$\bar{X} = 91.73$
Stability—high score indicates calm, optimistic, stable, confident individual	$\bar{X} = 98.33$	$\bar{X} = 101.45$
Extroversion—suggests outgoing, easy to meet person	$\bar{X} = 83.22$	$\bar{X} = 81.91$
Masculinity—“people who are not bothered by crawling creatures, the sight of blood, vulgarity, who do not cry easily and are not interested in love stories”	$\bar{X} = 88.44$	$\bar{X} = 87.00$
Empathy—high score indicates individuals who are sympathetic, helpful, generous and interested in devoting their lives to the service of others	$\bar{X} = 91.78$	$\bar{X} = 95.36$

Note. From “Interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison”, by C. Haney, C. Banks and P. Zimbardo, 1973, *International Journal of Criminology and Penology*, 1(1), p. 82.

# Reflection

- Not only participants but also experimenters got caught up in their roles

“I began to talk, walk, and act like a rigid institutional authority figure more concerned about the security of ‘my prison’ than the needs of the young men entrusted to my care as a psychological researcher. In a sense, I consider the extent to which I was transformed to be the most profound measure of the power of the situation.” (Zimbardo, 2004, p. 40)

# Reflection

*Post-experimental interviews*



# Debate & Controversy

***\*\*\*CRITICISM AND DISCUSSION\*\*\****

# Debate & Controversy

*What critical points/aspects can you think of in this study?*

# Debate & Controversy

## *Criticism*

- Limited amount of the study's findings exposed
  - What about the others?
- Ethical aspects--> new APA guidelines
- Intervention from experimenters
- Is the behaviour really dependent only of the situation?



# Debate & Controversy

## *Question of naturality*

“You can create in the prisoners ... a sense of fear to some degree, you can create a notion of arbitrariness that their life is totally controlled by us.... They’ll have no freedom of action, they can do nothing, say nothing that we don’t permit.... We’re going to take away their individuality in various ways.” (Smith & Haslam, 2017

citing Zimbardo, 1971)

# Debate & Controversy

## *Criticism*

- Limited amount of the study's findings exposed
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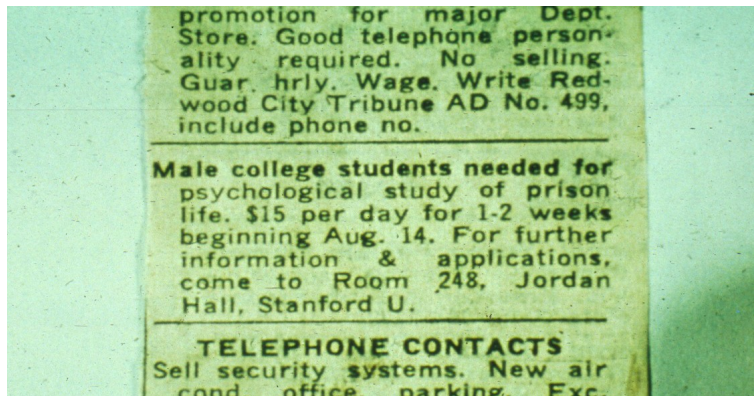
# Debate & Controversy

## *Situational factors*

"Impossible to resist the situational forces? Clearly the situation a person faces plays a significant role in his actions, but to say that bad action becomes inevitable negates the responsibility, free will, conscience and character of the person." (Graveline, 2010 cited by Smith & Haslam, 2017)

# Other critical points

- Participants and ad on the newspaper
- Self selection
- All male college students



[Newspaper advert to find participants for the SPE and application process]. (1971). Retrieved May 17th, 2023 from <https://www.prisonexp.org/setting-up>

# Beyond the SPE

**\*\*\* THE BBC PRISON  
EXPERIMENT \*\*\***

# The BBC Prison Experiment

*By Reicher and Haslam*

- Collaboration with the BBC
- BBC broadcasted findings in a four part documentation
- October 2001

Represent institutions in which one group has more power than the other



# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *The Set-up*

- Ad social science experiment with warning
- 332 responses
- Psychometric screening and full clinical interview
- Criteria: non-violent or vulnerable
- 15 men
- Division into 5 groups of 3
- Random selection: 2 of each group as prisoners and 1 guard

# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *The Set-up*

- Set-up like a prison
- TV screens for guards to monitor prisoners
- Guards with high status and power
- Work-out area with limited access for prisoners
- Possibility of punishment (isolation cell, withdrawing "privilege hour")
- Monitored by unobtrusive cameras

# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *Differences*

- Haslam & Reicher didn't assume a role in the experiment
- Independent ethic committee
- On-site clinical psychologists
- Daily psychological tests
- Well-being-check
- Up to guards to work out rules (with limitations)

# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *Manipulation of social hierarchy*

- Allowing promotions from prisoner to guard
- **Expectation:** Independent effort to improve individual position
- **Reality:** According to prediction

# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *Manipulation of social hierarchy*

- Eliminating possibility of promotion on day 3
- **Expectation:** shared identity among prisoners and collective resistance to guard's authority
- **Reality:** Group-identification led to improved organisation, effectiveness and mental well-being

# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *Problems*

- Guards hesitant to exercise control
- Disagreements within group of guards
  - lack of shared identity
  - Increasingly ineffective, burned-out, despondent



# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *Formation of the commune*

- On day 6 Prisoners challenge the guards
  - Organized breakout and collapse of prisoner-guard structure
  - Spontaneous establishment of a more equal system:

"a self-governing, self-disciplining commune" (Haslam & Reichert, 2005, p. 49)

# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *The fall of the commune*

- Again: Problem using power or disciplining individuals
  - Supporters of the commune lost faith in the system
  - Disarray of the commune members

Proposition of coup of the number of former guards and prisoners

# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *Introduction of a tyrannical system*

- Black berets and sunglasses as symbol of new authoritarian management
- Reinstallation of old system, but ensuring force will be used when necessary
- **Expectation:** Supporters of the commune will defend the democratic system
- **Reality:** lack of individual and collective will to defy new regime

# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *Premature close of study*

- Coup never occurred
- Premature close for ethical reasons



# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *Results*

- Similar result to the SPE, but different reason:
  - **Tyranny not a product of group assigned to**
  - **Tyranny as failure of the group**
    - For the guards: inability to develop cohesive system of discipline and shared identity
    - For the commune: breakdown in the attempt to turn collective beliefs into reality

# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *Results*

- Irony:

**Neglect of reasonable exercise of power for fear of tyranny**

- Prepared the way for set-up of conditions that enabled tyranny



# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *Results*

### **Agree with Zimbardo:**

- Tyranny as product of group processes, not individual pathology

### **Disagree with Zimbardo:**

- Not automatic abuse of collective power
- People only identify with group when it makes sense
- When they identify with group: active attempt to implement collective value

Way in which power is exercised depends on collective values

# The BBC Prison Experiment

## *Lessons for Society*

- Groups are about collective self-realization
  - Use of social power to actualize believes
  - Failure of producing working order results in:

People willing to accept other social structures, even if they violate their existing way of life

# Discussion

*What would you criticize about the replication by Haslam and Reicher?*

# Debate between BPS and SPE

- "Fails to reproduce conditions in any existing prison"
- "Evangelical world view" – theory driven research
- "Reality tv"- 'the scientific legitimacy of research generated by television programming interests'
- "Dishonesty and fraud"

**Consensus Statement**  
**on the Stanford Prison Experiment and BBC Prison Study**  
**Professors Craig Haney, Alex Haslam, Stephen Reicher, and Philip Zimbardo**



We, the undersigned researchers who conducted the Stanford Prison Experiment (Philip Zimbardo and Craig Haney) and BBC Prison Study (Alex Haslam and Stephen Reicher), recognize that our studies, results, and public statements have engendered strong debate and, at times, misunderstanding within and beyond psychology. In an effort to promote constructive scientific dialogue, we are therefore releasing this consensus statement to highlight common ground and clarify our views on the research in question.

First, we jointly believe that it is critically important to develop a scientific understanding of toxic human behavior, including brutality and the abuse of authority and power.

Second, we regard the Stanford Prison Experiment and BBC Prison Study as valid studies and valuable resources for advancing such understanding. At the same time, we recognize that both investigations have methodological limitations and are best viewed as one-trial demonstration studies rather than traditional experiments.

Third, the BBC Prison Study differs from the Stanford Prison Experiment in essential ways and is not a direct replication of the earlier study. We do, however, see value in comparing the different outcomes of the two studies (and others) as a means of advancing conceptual understanding.

Fourth, the behaviors observed in the Stanford Prison Experiment and BBC Prison Study were a function of many factors, including roles, norms, leadership, social identification, group pressure, and individual differences, not all of which are necessarily mutually exclusive. It is only natural that explanations of social behavior will be complex and multifactorial.

Fifth, we believe in open science and welcome the public release of information that aids in the interpretation of these and other studies.

Sixth, we encourage others to investigate, discuss, and teach about the roots of toxic behavior and effective ways to prevent it.

# The Abu Ghraib Torture Scandal

## *Zimbardos role in the trial*

- Shock of recognition
- Military response: isolated incidents of a few "rogue soldiers"
- Zimbardo presented himself as expert witness in trial of Ivan Frederick

"chip of the best block", who was unwillingly perverted by the "bad barrel" in which he found himself (Smith & Haslam, 2017, p.138)

# Conclusion

**\*\*\* TAKE HOME MESSAGE \*\*\***

# Conclusion

## *Take home message*

- Approaches for tyranny
  - Dispositional approach
  - Zimbardo: Situational approach
  - BBC study: Failure of the group to implement their values



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Q&A

