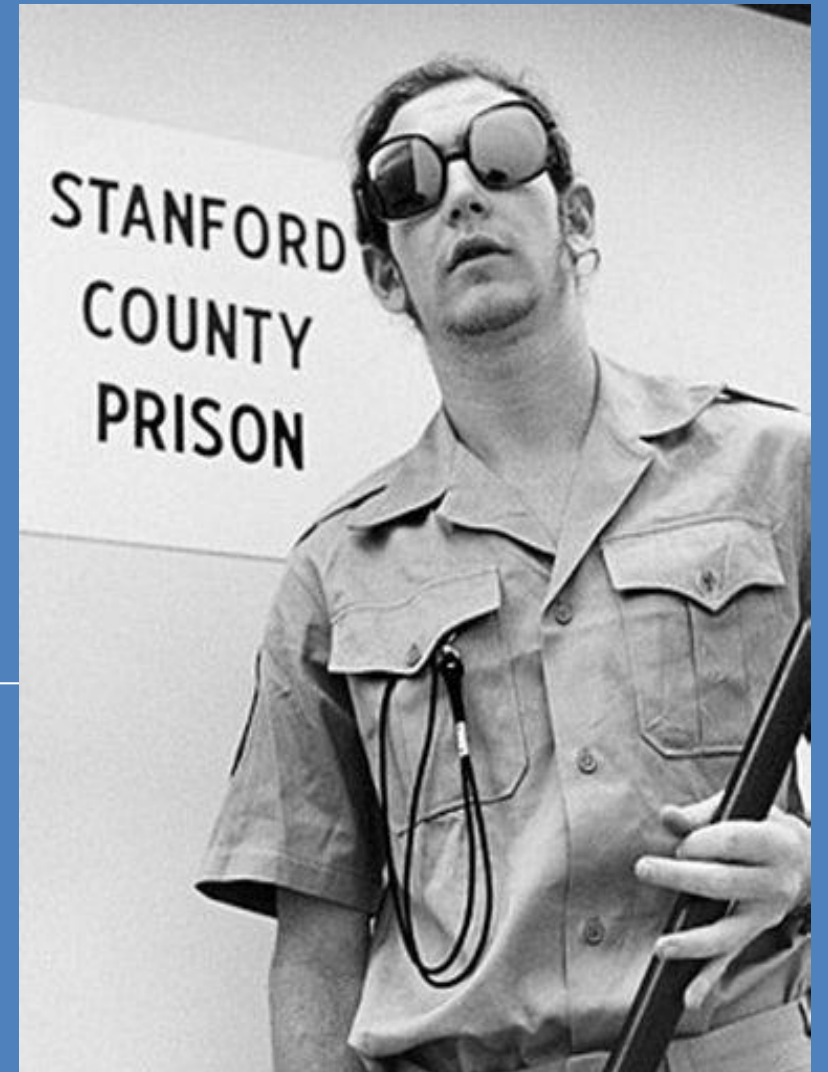


THE STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT

Dr Phillip Zimbardo and colleagues, 1971

Anti-social behaviour reported within prisons at the time led Zimbardo and colleagues to question whether people conform to social roles when they are placed in a prison environment, or if the behaviour reported was solely based on personality type. The experiment was funded by a government grant from the Office of Naval Research (Zimbardo et al, 1971).



By Connie Griffiths - 2004323

What was the procedure?

- 24 male students were selected for the experiment
- Half were chosen to play the role of prison guards and half were chosen to play the role of prisoners.
- The prisoners were arrested at their homes without warning.
- Prisoners were given a dress displaying their prison number on the front and back, a chain locked to their right ankle and a stocking to wear as a cap.
- The prisoners were referred to as their prison numbers for the rest of the duration spent in the mock prison.
- The prison guards were given a khaki prison guards uniform to wear, a whistle, a billy stick and sunglasses so that they could not make eye contact with the prisoners.

(Zimbardo et al, 1971).



What makes the experiment controversial?

- The guards started to become abusive.
- The prisoners experienced psychological harm and humiliation.
- The experiment ended after six days rather than two weeks due to how severely distressed the prisoners became.
- Students were not made fully aware of what they were consenting to.
- Ethical issues.

(Zimbardo et al, 1971)



Ethical issues

RESPECT	INTEGRITY	RESPONSIBILITY	MAXIMISING BENEFIT / MINIMISING HARM
Autonomy	Transparency	Common Good	Cost-Benefit Analysis
Privacy	Professionalism	Debriefing	Normalising unhelpful behaviours
Dignity	Collegiality	Competence	Creating self-doubt

The British Psychological society has four principles psychologists must consider when doing research. The Stanford Prison experiment could not take place in today's society (BPS ethics code for human research, 1999).

- Participants were not fully informed on what they were consenting to. For example; The students playing the role of prisoners were not told that they would be arrested at their homes (Bachman & Schutt, 2013).
- Zimbardo (1973) could not predict the events that occurred in the experiment. There is an element of deception in this sense (Gross, 2015).
- Participants were not protected against psychological distress; The BPA's current Code of Ethics and Conduct aims to protect participants against any form of harm, physical or psychological (BPS ethics code for human research, 1999).
- Zimbardo was actively playing a role in the experiment when he should have only been reviewing it for research purposes (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2018).

Can the experiment be justified?

- If more research was done around prisons, there could be more input from psychologists. For example, prison guards could be better educated in helping prisoners to rehabilitate rather than using their power to gain social control and use punishment (Zimbardo, 1998).
- As a result of the experiment, all studies should now undergo a review by either the institutional review board in the United States or the ethics committee in the United Kingdom before they take place (Zimbardo & Haney, 1998).
- Christenson (1988) argued that mild forms of deception can sometimes be justified because sometimes there are few acceptable alternatives.
- The participants did express that the psychological distress did not persist in their 'normal lives', this was also noted in the debriefing (Zimbardo, 2017).
- The experiment was one of the first of its nature to show evidence using psychologically normal males rather than real life offenders who have a history of crime and misconduct (Haney & Zimbardo, 1998).
- The experiment came at a time when prisons were particularly dehumanising, the experiment did a lot to improve on this within prisons (Haney & Zimbardo, 1998).

In conclusion...

- The experiment has great significance within psychology, it has demonstrated how people can act in a certain way when they are placed within different social roles.
- The experiment allowed the world of psychology to rethink ethics surrounding research.
- The work of Zimbardo and his colleagues fuelled the need for change within prison's around that time.

Script for Presentation- The Stanford Prison Experiment.

Slide 1

Introduction Anti-social behaviour reported within prisons at the time led Zimbardo and colleagues to question whether people conform to social roles when they are placed in a prison environment, or if the behaviour reported was solely based on personality type. The experiment was funded by a government grant from the Office of Naval Research (Zimbardo et al, 1971).

Slide 2 Procedure:

75 males volunteered and were examined beforehand. The 24 most mentally and physically stable males were selected for this experiment.

Half were chosen to play the role of prison guards and half were chosen to play the role of prisoners.

The students chosen to play the role of the prisoners were arrested at their own homes without a pre warning and blindfolded until they arrived at a mock prison created in a hallway at the psychology department of Stanford University.

Upon arrival to the mock prison the students were given a dress to wear with their prison number displayed on the front and back.

a chain was also attached to their right ankle and they were told to wear a ladies stocking on their head as a cap (Zimbardo et al. 1971).

Zimbardo and colleagues had learnt that real life prisoners felt humiliated and emasculated, which was the reasoning behind the degrading uniforms the prisoners were told to wear for the experiment.

The prisoners had all of their personal possessions removed and locked away and were referred to as their prison number instead of their names for the rest of the duration spent in the prison.

The students selected to play the prison guards were given a khaki uniform to wear, with a whistle placed around their neck, a billy stick and sunglasses so that they could not make eye contact with the prisoners.

(Zimbardo et al, 1971)

Slide 3 – What makes it controversial?

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- The prisoners experienced psychological harm and humiliation.
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- Students were not made fully aware of what they were consenting to.
- Ethical issues.

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Slide 4 – Ethical Issues

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