

Zimbardo and his iconic experiment

Psychology



Stanford Prison Experiment The hypothesis of Zimbardo's Stanford prison experiment was to prove that the innate personality attributes of prisoners and guards are the primary reasons surrounding abusive behavior between the two groups in prison. The research design that was used in Zimbardo's project was that of a field experiment, which involved observing subjects in specified conditions. The results of this experiment essentially proved Zimbardo's hypothesis, but the experiment had to be cut short as it became too real of an experience for the participants.

My initial reaction to Zimbardo's experiment was amazement, though that was quickly followed up by shock. My amazement came as a result of how easy it seemed for the participants to fall into their roles as either guards or prisoners. My shock was due to how far these participants managed to take the study. As a whole, I found the study intriguing and, despite the results, an experiment that was successful in its own way. It accomplished what it set out to do in an unforeseeable way.

Even though Zimbardo took the required precautions and had his experiment approved by the Institutional Review Board in regard to ethics, I do not believe that Zimbardo followed ethical guidelines when it came to his subjects. Many of the participants suffered severe emotional and cognitive trauma, and while Zimbardo was aware of what his participants were being subjected to, he did not step in. He allowed the experiment to continue even though many of his participants were being abused, and his inactivity in putting an end to the abuse resulted in further mental and emotional implications.

If I were to redesign the Stanford prison experiment, I would keep the main components of the experiment the same. Zimbardo was successful in

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obtaining his subjects, putting the experiment together, and implementing beneficial methods to acquire his data; as such, these components would remain. The one thing that I would definitely change is the overall attention and surveillance that the subjects would receive, which would guarantee mental and emotional safeguarding. By ensuring that the experiment cannot get out of hand, I feel the results of the experiment would be more complete and accurate.