

Stanford Prison Experiment: Reflection

Reflect on any 5 of the following questions on your computer or a separate sheet of paper.

1. If you were a guard in Dr. Zimbardo's Prison Study, what type of guard would you have become? How sure are you? What types of factors might make you do things that you would regret later?
2. What prevented "good guards" from objecting or going against the orders from tough or bad guards?
3. If you were a prisoner, would you have been able to endure the experience? What would you have done differently than those subjects did? If you were imprisoned in a "real" prison for five years or more, could you take it? What types of survival/coping strategies would you try to employ?
4. Do you think that kids from an urban working class environment would have broken down emotionally in the same way as did our middle-class prisoners? Why? What about women?
5. After the study, how do you think the prisoners and guards felt when they saw each other in the same civilian clothes again and saw their prison reconverted to a basement laboratory hallway? What lingering effects might there be after the study?
6. Moving beyond physical prisons built of steel and concrete, what psychological prisons do we create for ourselves and others? If prisons are seen as forms of control which limit individual freedom, how do they differ from the prisons we create through racism, sexism, ageism, poverty, and other social institutions?
7. Was it ethical to do this study? Was it right to trade the suffering experienced by participants for the knowledge gained by the research? Could the study be done in a more ethical way? What impact would those changes have on the end results?
8. How do the ethical dilemmas in this research compare with the ethical issues raised by Stanley Milgram's obedience experiments? Would it be better if these studies had never been done?

9. If you were the experimenter in charge, would you have done this study? Would you have terminated it earlier or done anything differently? Would you have conducted a follow-up study? What might you do to further study the issue?