**Comparison of the Milgram and Zimbardo experiments**

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The experimenter bias was present in Stanford Prison Experiment by Zimbardo (“I was thinking like a prison superintendent rather than a research psychologist” (http://www.prisonexp.org/psychology/27). “It is hard to ignore the role of Zimbardo’s *leadership* in establishing and policing those norms”, whose emergence he then proclaimed to be the result of the distribution of roles between the participants [Haslam, Reicher, 2012, p. 156]. From the experimental psychological point of view, the experimenter, whose psychological traits were unknown, was actively involved in the experiment and commanded the participants. If one assumes for the sake of argument that the experimenter was a psychopath with a talent for leadership who could influence people, the experiment shows what ordinary people are capable of if they fall under such a person’s influence, rather than what a simple assignment of roles does to them. But that makes Zimbardo’s experiment a carbon copy of Milgram’s experiment.

In Milgram’s experiment the experimenter’s confederate was not in fact tortured. In Zimbardo’s experiment the “prisoners” were treated in such a way that some of them had seizures. Can it be justified by the value of the results obtained through the experiment? Let us ask an existential question: would it be right, in order to extract detailed and scientifically invaluable data on people’s behavior in a concentration camp, to reproduce live everything that was happening there? The answer is obviously no. But Zimbardo made a step in that direction. It is often argued that in Milgram’s experiment the participants who thought they were administering electrical shocks to another person were suffering themselves. But this was suffering over the decisions they had taken themselves. In Zimbardo’s experiment the “prisoners” were third parties with regard to whom decisions were made in spite of their will by the “guards” and Zimbardo himself.

Behaviorist commitment to the situational paradigm exonerates Zimbardo in his own eyes and in the eyes of the researchers who espouse that paradigm. If man is the function of a situation, Zimbardo’s own behavior is the result of a faithful performance of the role of a scientist who assumed the role of a ruthless prison warden.

The analysis of this and other studies shows that experimental diagnosing the ability to do damage is always loaded with the researcher’s value-related and ethical ideas of what is proper, allowable or not allowable, and of the price that can be paid for the result.

Haney, C., Banks, W.C., & Zimbardo, P.G. (1973.) Interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison. *International Journal of Criminology and Penology*, *1,* 69–97.

Haslam, S.A., & Reicher, S.D. (2012.) When prisoners take over the prison: a social psychology of resistance. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *16*, 154–179.