

Human Behavior

Comprehensive Project

Project Objective:

Discuss the complexity of human behavior by looking at its biological and environmental influences

Introduction

Most people know right from wrong and when we are witnesses to acts of violence or bizarre behavior most of us would say something like, “How could a person be so horrible. I could never do such a thing.” However human behavior is very complex and shaped by so many factors that really we don’t know exactly what we would do until the moment came upon us. That’s what happened to some young men who volunteered for a study in Palo Alto, California in 1971 in the infamous [Stanford Prison Study](#). In his simulated prison on Stanford’s campus, Philip Zimbardo embarked on a study of the dark side of human nature. Sure good people do good things, but do good people do bad things also? This project explores this complexity of behavior.

Students will learn about the Stanford Prison Study, the BBC’s Prison Study, and the scandal at Abu Ghraib, reflect on many of the theories from Modules C and D, and then discuss their conclusions in their group discussion area. First students should...

- A. Review the Slide Show at the Stanford Prison Study Website: <http://www.prisonexp.org/>
- B. Read this article comparing the Stanford Prison Study to the Abu Ghraib scandal: <http://www.slate.com/id/2100419/>
- C. Review the BBC’s version of the Prison Study: <http://www.bbcprisonstudy.org/bbc-prison-study.php>. Learn about their study and its conclusions as it relates to behavior.

In addition students can review any of these optional resources to better understand behavior:

- Watch Philip Zimbardo at the TED conference: http://blog.ted.com/2008/09/23/how_ordinary_pe/
- Read “Celebrating Heroism” by Zeno Franco and Philip Zimbardo: <http://www.lucifereffect.com/heroism.htm>
- Read “Resisting Influence” by Philip Zimbardo and Cindy X. Wang: <http://www.lucifereffect.com/guide.htm>

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Format: Group Discussion only

Part 1 Due Date: by 11:59pm Friday in Week 10

Once students have drawn some conclusions about factors that influence behavior, students should then compose an original message in their group discussion forum and answer the following questions:

Personal Reflections

1. What are your initial reactions to the Stanford Prison Study? Were you surprised at the behaviors displayed by the guards or prisoners? Why or why not?
2. How do you think that you might have reacted if you were a guard or prisoner in this Study?

Behavior Analysis

3. What factors played a significant role in shaping the behavior of the prisoners and the guards in the Stanford Prison Study and the BBC's Prison Study?
4. How do these studies help to explain some of the behaviors that took place in the scandal at Abu Ghraib?
5. How can personality, temperament, learning, or other social psychological concepts help to explain how good people can do bad things? Or how good people can do good things?

Part 2 Due Date: by 11:59m Sunday in Week 10

Students should discuss the complexities of human behavior in their group discussion forum with each other. Respond to the posts of at least one of your classmates and react to their analysis. Do you agree or disagree? What have you learned about behavior that might support or contrast to this student's analysis? Be sure to demonstrate what you've learned rather than just respond with "I think" or "I agree" statements. Students will be scored on their demonstrated knowledge and engagement. The more involved and analytical you are, the higher your score!

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Grading Rubric

This project is worth up to 50 points and students earn points based on their individual contributions to the discussions. Each student will be evaluated using the questions below.

- Did the student post their initial thoughts and meet the Friday deadline? (Part 1)
- Did the student demonstrate understanding about human behavior based on the Stanford Prison Study, the BBC Prison Study, and research on Abu Ghraib? (Part 1)
- Did the student's analysis incorporate ideas or theories that have been learned this semester? (Part 1)
- Was the student actively engaged with their peers in the discussion? (Part 2)
- Did the student contribute positively to the learning experience? (Part 2)

Each of these questions will be scored using a 10-point Likert scale:

0.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
0
Not at all Minimal Average Good Very Good