

Dr. Phil Zimbardo's responses to questions submitted by the Reddit community:

1) As Milgram's and your own experiments are now "classics," are there any recent papers, books, or researchers that you believe should be "required reading" for the psychology student? For the public?

[First you might find it a curious coincidence that Stanley Milgram and Phil Zimbardo were classmates in senior year at James Monroe HS in the Bronx. Q: What was in their backgrounds that led them both to be ardent "situationists?"]

Yes, on Milgram:

- Tom Blass' biography, "The Man Who Shocked the World" (Basic Books, 2004).
- Tom Blass' edited book, "Obedience to Authority: Current Perspectives on the Milgram Paradigm," Erlbaum, 2000).
- Milgram's own classic work, recently updated with new introduction by Phil Zimbardo: "Obedience to Authority: The Experiment That Challenged Human Nature" (Harper Perennial, 2009).
- Visit the web site: www.stanleymilgram.com

On Zimbardo:

- "The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil" (Random House, 2008).
- Visit the websites:
- www.zimbardo.com
 - www.lucifereffect.com
 - Purchase The Lucifer Effect here <http://www.amazon.com/Lucifer-Effect-Understanding-Good-People/dp/0812974441/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1298167713&sr=1-1>
 - Phil Zimbardo's TED talk on how people can become monsters or heroes: http://www.ted.com/talks/philip_zimbardo_on_the_psychology_of_evil.html
 - Stanford Prison Experiment: www.prisonexp.org
 - Power of the situation: <http://thesituationist.wordpress.com/>

On heroism:

- The Heroic Imagination Project (HIP): www.heroicimagination.org
- Twitter: www.Twitter.com/hiporg
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Heroic-Imagination-Project/322165964228>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/HeroicImaginationTV#p/u>
- How you can become a hero here: <http://heroicimagination.org/take-action/>
- Phil Zimbardo's TED talk on heroes: <http://blog.ted.com/2011/02/03/phil-zimbardo-and-the-heroic-imagination-project-ted-blog-exclusive-video/>

On time:

- The Time Paradox: www.thetimeparadox.com
- Phil Zimbardo's TED talk on time perspective:
- http://www.ted.com/talks/philip_zimbardo_prescribes_a_healthy_take_on_time.html

- Phil Zimbardo's RSA animated talk on the secret powers of time: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3oliH7BLmg>
- Purchase The Time Paradox here <http://www.amazon.com/Time-Paradox-Psychology-That-Change/dp/1416541993/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1298167764&sr=1-1>
- Cross-cultural time orientation research forum: <http://timeorientation.com/>

On shyness:

- Shyness Institute: www.shyness.com
- Purchase Shyness: What it is, What to do about it here <http://www.amazon.com/Shyness-What-Do-About/dp/0201550180/ref=sr_1_8?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1298167807&sr=1-8>

Textbooks:

- Phil Zimbardo's Amazon page: http://www.amazon.com/Philip-G.-Zimbardo/e/B000AQ1X5U/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_1?qid=1298168007&sr=8-1

General:

- Phil Zimbardo's personal website: www.zimbardo.com. Many of his papers can be found on his personal website, if you cannot find one of his works, please inquire at Stanford University Library: <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/>
- Phil Zimbardo's Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/philzimbardo#>
- Phil Zimbardo's profile on TED: http://www.ted.com/speakers/philip_zimbardo.html
- Phil Zimbardo's profile on Psychology Today: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/bloggers/philip-zimbardo-phd>
- Phil Zimbardo's Wikipedia page: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Zimbardo
- View the Discovering Psychology series online: <http://www.learner.org/resources/series138.html>
- Phil Zimbardo's writings regarding cult in Jonestown: http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/Articles/articles_zimbardo.htm
- More on Jonestown: <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/>
- Center for Interdisciplinary Policy, Education, and Research on Terrorism (CIPERT): www.cipert.org

2) What roles do you believe psychoactive drugs should play in society? Do you support chemical restraints or punishments? (Chemical enhancement of productivity, compassion, or intelligence? Could drugs be used to go beyond treating illness and into treating "evil"?)

I really do not have a considered view on this issue. But, I believe that the source of motivation for personal fulfillment should NOT be drug induced, but rather from inner resources, from cultivating a mindful openness to all new experiences, from taking risks, from seeking novelty, from celebrating diversity, from daring to be different, and from starting on a personal hero journey.

Drugs should not be used as punishments or rewards, at most for resetting brain malfunctions in certain mental conditions. I assume drugs one day will be used to enhance memory and perhaps enable us to use our innate intelligence more effectively, as they are used now to enhance sexual arousal for ED problems. In general, I would say that I am basically an anti-drug person,

especially any that have addictive potential.

3. Do you hypothesize that these seemingly-primal forces driving human behavior in specific situations are, in any way, related to dominance hierarchies observable in other species'?

I do not make these cross species links in my thinking. There are of course, dominance hierarchies among humans, but they are not based on same attributes as they are in a baboon or gorilla group. Among people, the issue is always power, and the resources controlled by the power brokers. But that power can be found in being super bright and creative, like Bill Gates or Apple's Steve Jobs. It can be in having charismatic qualities, like Martin Luther King, Jr., or Oprah Winfrey, or in being extremely beautiful or handsome or talented in other domains. Power itself can be an "aphrodisiac," as President Nixon's Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, said when reporters inquired about his appeal to so many attractive women (he was a quite un-handsome man.)

4. What did you think you were going to find in the Stanford Prison Experiment? Did you have a hypothesis?

The SPE is the other book end to Milgram's demonstration of one on one power of authority figures over individuals. In SPE we see the power of systems, of institutions to shape behavior of individuals but also groups.

I started with less of a formal hypothesis, and more of a classic Greek Tragedy : What happens when Good People are put into a Bad Place? Who or what wins? Does the goodness of people come to transform the badness of the situation, or does the power of the situation dominate, and corrupt even good people?

Sadly, for those who believe in free will and goodness prevailing over evil, evil won and goodness scored zero (in that situational context).

So the message from Milgram and Zimbardo is: Never underestimate the power of situations to influence, and even control and dominate individuals, regardless of their personalities or personal attributes.

5. Being one of the most important researchers in human nature, and perhaps controversial, do you think that psychology experiments are being restrained by ethic concerns these days?

The Milgram Paradigm study and the SPE type study are in ethical time capsules, not to be done again in academic settings because of the distress they caused to the participants. In one sense, rightly so. No one should have the power to create experiments that cause human suffering, regardless of the justification. The extreme version of this is the Nazi doctor "experiments" on Jews in concentration camps – they are abhorrent to any standard of human dignity. Human Subjects Review Boards must weigh the power of the researcher against that of the participants in each instance, and side with the less power participant-respondent-subject to balance that uneven equation.

However, as I argue in *The Lucifer Effect*, it seems that the conservative pendulum has swung too far to the right. Most of the IRB's (Institutional Review Boards) adopt a notion of student participants as frail and easily stressed even by *thinking* about unpleasant situations, tasks, roles,

or identities that they might assume in a study -- let alone by actually being a behaving "subject" in them. Thus, they reject much research without even allowing a small pilot testing of the effects of being a participant.

I ask you: Is it good that the Milgram and Zimbardo studies were done, or wrong? Should they be allowed to be replicated with interesting variations (such as female guards and prisoners) if institutional guidelines are imposed and followed? Or is it better for society not to know about the nature of the "dark side" of human nature?

Your turn!

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For more information and access to the links, go to:

bit.ly/zimbardoquestions