On the ethics of intervention in human psychological research:  
With special reference to the Stanford prison experiment

PHILIP G. ZIMBARDO

Stanford University

Research was conducted recently (August 14-21, 1971) in which subjects assumed the roles of 'prisoner' or 'guard' for an extended period of time within an experimentally devised mock prison setting on the Stanford University campus. The projected two-week study had to be prematurely terminated when it became apparent that many of the 'prisoners' were in serious distress and many of the 'guards' were behaving in ways which brutalized and degraded their fellow subjects. In addition, the emerging reality of this role-playing situation was sufficiently compelling to influence virtually all those who operated within it to behave in ways appropriate to its demand characteristics, but inappropriate to their usual life roles and values; this included the research staff, faculty observers, a priest, lawyer, ex-convict, and relatives and friends of the subjects who visited the prison on several occasions (for details see Zimbardo, Banks, Haney and Jaffe, 1973; Haney, Banks and Zimbardo, 1973).

This research represents one of the most extreme experimental demonstrations of the power of situational determinants in both shaping behaviour and predominating over personality, attitudes and individual values. As such it extends the conclusions from Stanley Milgram's research on obedience to authority (1974). But the ethical concerns voiced over Milgram's treatment of placing subject-teachers in a conflict situation where they believed (incorrectly) that they were hurting another person are even more pronounced in the present case. Volunteer prisoners suffered physical and psychological abuse hour after hour for days, while volunteer guards were exposed to the new self-knowledge that they enjoyed being powerful and had abused this power to make other human beings suffer. The intensity and duration of this suffering uniquely qualify the Stanford prison experiment for careful scrutiny of violations of the ethics of human experimentation.

The plan of this article is to: (a) Give a synopsis of the experiment to familiarize the reader with its basic features; (b) summarize one set of critical arguments levelled
against the experiment (which invited my reply in this particular journal); (c) analyze the sense in which the mock prison study can be considered to be unethical, and (d) present a body of information relevant to passing judgment on its ethicality from a legal, pragmatic, utilitarian or relativistic model of ethics.

My intention is less to assume a defensive stance in support of this particular study than to use it as a vehicle for delineating the enormous complexity of making ethically based decisions about interventions in human experimentation.

**Synopsis of mock prison study**

Interpersonal dynamics in a prison-like environment were studied experimentally by designing a functional (rather than literal) simulation of a prison. Environmental, structural, institutional and social variables were manipulated in an effort to create a 'psychology of imprisonment' in a group of subjects who role-played being guards (for eight hours a day over three shifts) and a group who acted as prisoners (for twenty-four hours a day).

To assess the strength of the social, situational forces on the behaviour of these volunteer subjects, alternative explanations in terms of pre-existing dispositions were eliminated through subject selection and random assignment to treatments. A homogeneous sample of about two dozen normal, average, healthy American college males was chosen after extensive interviewing and diagnostic testing of a large group of applicants recruited through newspaper advertisements. The subjects were from colleges throughout the United States and Canada who volunteered to be in 'a study of prison life' in return for receiving a daily wage of fifteen dollars for a projected two-week period.

Half of these pre-selected subjects were randomly assigned to role-play prison guards, the others to the mock-prisoner treatment. Neither group received any formal training in these roles – the cultural mass media had already provided the models they used to define their roles. The mock guards were impressed with the 'seriousness' of the experiment and by the demeanor of the research staff; the prospective prisoners began to take their roles seriously when they were subjected to an unexpected arrest by the city police. After being processed and temporarily detained at the police station, they were escorted to the experimental setting. Uniforms and differences in power further served to differentiate the two groups of subjects.

Continuous, direct observation of all behavioural interactions was supplemented by video- and audio-taped recordings, questionnaires, self-report scales and interviews. All of these data sources converge on the conclusion that this simulated environment was sufficiently realistic and forceful to elicit intense, personal and often
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pathological reactions from the majority of the participants. Many of the prisoner-subjects exhibited behaviors characteristic of the learned helplessness syndrome described by Seligman (1973) in his research on traumatic, avoidance conditioning. The guard-subjects displayed a behavioral profile which was marked by its verbal and physical aggressiveness, arbitrariness and dehumanization of the subjects in the prisoner condition. None of these (and other) group or individual behavior patterns was predictable from the medical, social or educational histories of the subjects, nor from a battery of personality test scores.

Summary of critique of the Stanford prison experiment

One critic of this research (Savin, 1973) begins his commentary by raising the fundamental question of 'under what conditions is research justifiable which subjects people to injury?'. Unfortunately, the promise of suggested guidelines for meaningfully dealing with this vital and difficult ethical issue is never realized, as his argument is first trivialized (by asserting that one would be justified to embarrass a few self-confident volunteers if this 'injury' resulted in a cure for schizophrenia), and then descends into a series of direct and implied ad hominem attacks. Some choice instances are: 'One cannot make a prison a more humane institution by appointing Mr. Zimbardo its superintendent'; 'professors in pursuit of their own academic interests and professional advancement' are subverting the teacher-student relationship; there are some psychologists who are 'as obnoxious as the law allows', who show 'a morally obtuse zeal' in the pursuit of their careers, and who can be likened to used-car salesmen; finally, 'on occasion there is a hell like Zimbardo's'.

The major substantive points raised in this commentary appear to be:

(a) 'The roles of prisoners and guards have been much discussed of late, and their characteristics are reasonably well known', therefore, no new worthwhile knowledge was derived from this study.

(b) A study which presents results that are not surprising to the scientific research community is not justified in subjecting volunteers to harm. If the outcome could have been predicted in advance by an already existing body of knowledge, there is no reason to conduct a study whose treatment of human subjects is questionable.

(c) Some researchers, blinded by their own ambition, are unable to identify with the noxious experiences to which they expose their research subjects.

(d) Researchers and academicians resist any objective evaluation and appraisal of the conduct of their research.

(e) Subjects would be better protected if there were more 'law and order'. If only
the police were not so 'apt to be somewhat lax in upholding the laws that might otherwise protect subjects', we can assume guilty psychological experimenters would be brought to justice [and imprisoned??].

Absolute ethical principles to guide research

Ethics embody individual and communal codes of conduct based upon adherence to a set of principles which may be explicit and codified or implicit and which may be abstract and impersonal or concrete and personal. For the sake of brevity, we may say that ethics can be dichotomized as 'absolute' and 'relative'. When behaviour is guided by absolute ethical standards, a higher-order moral principle can be postulated which is invariant with regard to the conditions of its applicability – across time, situations, persons and expediency. Such principled ethics allow no degrees of freedom for ends to justify means or for any positive consequences to qualify instances where the principle is suspended or applied in an altered, watered-down form. In the extreme, there are no extenuating circumstances to be considered or weighed as justifying an abrogation of the ethical standard.

To search for those conditions which justify experiments that induce human suffering is not an appropriate enterprise to anyone who believes in the absolute ethical principle that human life is sacred and must not in any way be knowingly demeaned physically or mentally by experimental interventions. From such a position, it is even reasonable to maintain that no research should be conducted in psychology or medicine which violates the biological or psychological integrity of any human being regardless of the benefits that might, or even would definitely, accrue to the society at large.

Many people feel that the world is already too polluted with human pain, alienation and the cynicism and mistrust of Watergates, known and suspected, to allow any further increments. This is so, even if they are in the name of science, for the sake of knowledge, 'national security' or any other high flying banner.

Within psychology, some of those identified with the humanist tradition have been most vocal in urging that these basic concerns for human dignity take precedence over the stated goals of the discipline, namely, to predict and control behaviour.

To the Christian Scientist, for example, the principle of the integrity of the human body and God's design in the ebb and flow of life does not allow therapeutic drugs and internal treatments for illnesses even though death may result in the absence of such interventions. On the basis of such an absolute ethic, the Stanford prison experiment must certainly be adjudged unethical because human beings did suffer considerable anguish, yet it was possible to terminate the experiment once that was apparent.
Relative ethical principles in human experimentation

When an ethical principle admits of any contingent applications, it is a relative standard to be judged by pragmatic criteria according to some weighted, utilitarian model of ethics. Obviously it is such a model which guided the research in question, as well as most other psychological experimentation. But what are the elements to be considered in this loss-gain equation? How are they to be proportionately weighted? Who is to judge whether the gains offset the losses? These are some of the starter questions which must be faced if a position of relative ethics is to be, nevertheless, still an ethical position.

Some of the solutions are resolved on the basis of conventional wisdom, the present state of relevant knowledge, precedents in similar cases, social consensus, the values and sensitivity of the individual researcher and the prevailing level of consciousness in the given society. Let us, however, be more specific than this in our analysis of the ethics of intervention.

Every act of intervention in the life of an individual, a group or an environment is a matter of ethics (R. D. Laing would say is a political decision). Therapists, behavior modifiers, industrial psychologists, counselors, experimentalists, educators, urban planners, architects, reformers, and, yes, even used-car salesmen, all have as one of their prime goals cure, modification, recommendation for action, alteration, manipulation, control, change, destruction, allocation, construction – in sum, intervention. Even the hard-headed cognitive psychologist studying reaction time as a function of contextual cues in information retrieval must be accountable to the ethics of intervention by virtue of taking an hour out of a person’s life to engage in a task typically boring to the subject, with little or no personal value to the student – and with no redeeming value to anyone if the experiment does not yield statistically significant results.

Our ethical sense is usually not disturbed when a person seeks help for a problem; some expert gives the help in return for a fee, and the problem abates. Everyone gains, and, as they say in the Bronx, ‘A fair exchange is no loss’. But suppose the person seeks help not from choice but by a court order (as might be the case of a pederast, homosexual, extremely assaultive individual, etc.)? And suppose the agent of change demands a pound of flesh for a fee? And suppose the hyper-aggressive person happens to be a member of the Black Panthers, or for democracy in Greece? And suppose the treatment is castration or lobotomy? Then, perhaps, some people gain a little more than others, while some lose more. In this case, the expert-helper gains personally, and society-at-large may gain by reducing the potential ‘danger’ posed by the person, but at the expense of that individual’s sense of self-determination, freedom and integrity.
Similarly, we take for granted the powerful socializing influence parents exert upon their children to shape them to their image and toward a socially imposed ideal. Consider, however, the following actual case of a father who wrote for advice to an advice-dispensing medical doctor in a nationally circulated magazine (McCall's). He wanted to know if sleep-learning was an effective technique to use in teaching his young son to be a patriotic American. Was it o.k. to give him a little 'pep talk' now and then while he was asleep, in order to instill a firm belief in him of the importance of being a good American? Is it ethical for dear old dad to indoctrinate his defenseless child in this way? Would it be ethically better if he did so when the child was awake, or if he used monetary reinforcers or social approval instead of the more ineffective technique? Is it his goal or his means that are ethically offensive? Is it preferable instead for this anxious father to rely upon the more subtle indoctrination devices disguised as 'education' in the classroom — in the form of national flags, pictures of national leaders, singing of national anthems, chauvinistic history, geography and civics' textbooks, and the like?

The point here is the necessity for increasing our collective sensitivity to the broad range of daily situations where interventions occur as a 'natural' process of social life and where the violation of ethics goes unnoticed because of its very prevalence.

These few examples begin to make apparent that the loss-gain equation involves more than just the 'agent of change' and the 'target of change'. We must add the sponsoring institution of the change agent, and the society which typically is alleged to be the ultimate repository of the positive consequences of that intervention.

Let us examine each in turn with reference to their loss-gain in the Stanford prison experiment. The gain to the principal investigator (P.G.B.) was primarily from four sources. There was the new knowledge of a social-psychological, academic nature; there was a consciousness raising regarding prison conditions and the need for prison reform; there were several publications (which, incidentally, have no effect upon my professional advancement); and there was a considerable amount of publicity in the mass media.

On the other hand, there were negative counterparts, or losses, to be added in. There was an unusual amount of personal stress experienced during this around-the-clock study because of the continual need to make immediate decisions of both a scientific nature (in my role as principal investigator), as well as of a custodial or administrative nature (in the role of superintendent of the prison). During this time, for instance, I lost ten pounds, had difficulty eating and sleeping and developed a chronic headache. Furthermore, in our psychology department, such 'flashy' research is rewarded with benign indifference by colleagues, which in some cases was rather embarrassing. Other mixed blessings include extensive, time-consuming (non-remunerated) activities related to prison reform, such as talks to Chamber of Com-
merce groups, prison groups, correctional personnel, high school students and others — not to mention personally answering several hundred letters from these and other sources. Such a sudden, unexpected demand has had a deleterious effect on meeting other prior professional and personal commitments.

What about the subjects? They did suffer in the ways described previously and that was a substantial loss which should not be minimized. There was physical pain, psychological humiliation, anxiety, perhaps a loss of innocence and extremely unpleasant memories. Did they gain anything? From intensive individual interviews and encounter group experiences with them, as well as from a series of follow-up surveys, I would conclude they did. The suffering appears to have been restricted to the situation, constrained by its novelty, artificiality and differentness from their prior or subsequent ‘real’ life. There were no reported persisting negative reactions during any time since the end of the study. Moreover, most of the subjects report that it was a valuable didactic experience for them. They learned many new and valuable lessons about themselves because the situation elicited reactions they believed to be ego-alien. These behaviors were never previously manifested because normally they could arrange their lives to avoid unfamiliar situations or ones where they could not predict how they would behave and also have considerable control over their behaviors and the consequences.

During our day-long debriefing sessions, the moral conflicts posed by this experiment were made explicit as part of our ‘moral reeducation’ training (according to Kohlberg, this is the primary or only way to raise an individual’s level of moral development). Some subjects have since volunteered their summer vacation time to work in local prisons and most have become advocates for penal reform. Other gains to be mentioned are the money paid the subjects, term papers and speeches they gave in subsequent college courses about their unique experience, as well as, for some who wanted it, the notoriety of a picture and their name in a Life magazine story about the experiment.

There were two sponsors of this research, Stanford University and the Office of Naval Research (ONR). The latter funded the research as part of a general contract to me for the investigation of conditions which facilitate antisocial behavior; the university provided the space and many other resources. The university gains financially from the conduct of this research through overhead paid by the granting agency, while ONR gains from having supported basic research which has gained much publicity and yields new information. In addition, this research and my direct efforts have stimulated the Group Effectiveness branch of ONR to begin to support research into military prisons, especially problems of racism in the military correctional system — from which they will derive additional benefits.

Since the university’s sponsorship involves legal responsibility for negligence of its staff, or injuries suffered by citizens on its premises, it assumes the potential of un-
favorable publicity (and negative alumni reaction) and costs of law suits (which have occurred as a consequence of other research, although not in the present case).

At the other end of the loss-gain function stands the ubiquitous 'society' which allegedly benefits from the sacrifices of some unfortunate research subjects. But because 'society' is rarely defined in any denotative sense, it is impossible to meaningfully assess what, if anything, it really gains from any one research endeavor. This is especially true of psychological research which does not produce a consumable product, a vaccine, or technological innovation, but only knowledge or new ways of conceptualizing the relationships between individuals and their environment.

But to be seriously concerned about the effects of research requires subsequent evaluation research. How many studies have evaluation procedures as part of their overall research design? How many researchers have the facilities and resources to begin to assess the long-term, pervasive impact of their research on even a small sub-group of society, let alone on "The Society"? We are just now being forced to acknowledge the unexpected, eventual negative consequences of environmental interventions which initially were hailed as beneficial to society. Consider DDT-pollution, the increased crime, vandalism and alienation produced by urban renewal projects or the debilitating, dehumanizing effects on workers of technologically efficient work procedures (see Sommer, 1969; Toffler, 1970; Craik, 1973).

It cannot be proven that the Stanford prison study has had a profound, positive, socially redeeming value on society. Indeed, some prison authorities, such as the Warden and Associate Warden at San Quentin, have publically derogated the study, believing it casts a bad light on corrections. On the other hand, they seem to be in a decided minority, since a great many prisoners, former inmates, legislators, criminal lawyers and parole officers have gone on record endorsing the findings and implications of our study.

One initial measure of the impact of any research is in the dissemination of its ideas to relevant interest groups. Another would be extensions of the ideas in subsequent research as well as implementation of its social recommendations with new procedures, policies and laws.

**Indirect impact evaluation of the Stanford prison study**

If this research were saying nothing new, and if its findings could all have been predicted in advance by everyone, then it would amount to nothing more than just another exercise in 'Bubba Psychology'. As such, it would have joined the legions of other studies instantly buried in the So-what-who-cares? Archives of Psychology.

Detailed records kept of the dispersion of information about this experiment over
the past two years reveal the following pattern:
(a) Phone calls to office requesting information about the study. 215
(b) Correspondence requesting written information, confirming findings, questioning implications (reports sent to each one)
Prisoners 202
Correctional personnel 70
Criminal justice organizations 30
Legislators and politicians 25
Social scientists 210
Students 90
General public 230
(c) Mass media coverage has included:
1. A 20-minute feature on NBC-TV Chronolog (to an estimated audience of 3 million).
3. 12-Minute feature on CBS-TV (Los Angeles).
4. A variety of local TV and radio programs.
5. Featured story in Life magazine (10/15/71).
6. One of the few reports of a single experiment ever published in The New York Times Magazine (4/8/73) and syndicated in 14 other newspapers throughout the USA and Canada.
7. Articles and editorials in over 100 other newspapers in the USA and throughout the world.
(d) Interest by the U.S. Congress in the form of an invitation to appear as a witness before a special sub-committee investigating prison reform (October 1971), with a statement published in the Congressional Record.
Invited and appeared as witness before Senate sub-committee studying problems of juvenile justice and juvenile detention procedures (September 1973). Presented audio-visual show of our research to the committee. The Chairman, Senator Birch Bayh, stated that the research and presentation had a significant impact on his thinking.
(e) Public speaking engagements by principal investigator and research associates (Haney, Banks, Jaffe, Prescott, White and Phillips) at national psychological and science conventions, to over two dozen colleges and high schools, to prisoner groups, Sheriff’s deputies, judges, parole officer’s units, several Chamber of Commerce meetings, law school faculty groups and others.
(f) A slide-sound, self-contained presentation of this experiment was prepared by the author and Greg White and has been distributed to colleges, high school and correctional groups. The feedback of its emotional impact and discussion-
generating appeal has been unequivocally and unanimously enthusiastic.

(g) The above material has been requested and submitted (along with an affidavit by me) as supporting evidence in a class action law suit currently being brought against the New York State Department of Corrections by a team of lawyers and social scientists (Wallace et al., vs. Kern et al., U.S. District Court, Eastern District of New York).

(h) The results of the study have been used by a citizen's group in a legal action to prevent the construction of a new, large, impersonal prison in Contra Costa County, California, in favor of more costly, smaller, more personal facilities and community-based facilities.

(i) The President of the Louisiana State Senate is developing a coordinated research-social-legal action program to reform the state's juvenile delinquency facilities, and to change attitudes of the public toward the need for prison reform in general. This program was in part stimulated by this author's research on attitude change and on the psychology of imprisonment. I shall serve as one of his senior consultants on this innovative project.

(j) Of the several experiments (and Ph.D. dissertations) which have been specifically designed to extend the ideas contained in our study, the most noteworthy is a mock-psychiatric ward study done at Elgin State Mental Hospital in Illinois (Orlando, 1973). Using 58 staff members in the roles as mock-patients and role-playing staff, this experiment substantiated many of our findings about the de-humanizing effects of institutionalized roles and rules. The participants in Orlando's study have since formed an action group to improve the social psychological treatment of patients at their hospital.

How can we account for the unprecedented amount of publicity and broad appeal this study has generated? We have been told by people who are using the results of this research in a variety of social-legal actions that it is one of the most convincing demonstrations of the pathological impact of a prison-like environment on human behaviour. Not that anyone ever doubted the horrors of prison, but rather, it had been assumed that it was the predispositions of the guards ('sadistic') and prisoners ('sociopathic') that made prisons such evil places. Our study holds constant and positive the dispositional alternative and reveals the power of social, institutional forces to make good men engage in evil deeds. In contrast to the observations of generations of criminologists, and first-person accounts of prison life, this study is unique in its appropriate utilization of intervention methodology: A diagnostic selection procedure, random assignment of subjects to treatments and a careful recording of the process and chronology of the psychology of becoming imprisoned.

In the words of a team of social psychologists recently reviewing the status of small group research (Helmreich, Bakeman and Scherwitz, 1973), the heuristic value of
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this research is similar to that of Milgram's. 'The upset generated by a Milgram or Zimbardo, both from the public and from their colleagues, in part stems from ethical concerns. But another part of their power lies precisely in their demonstration of how strong situational determinants are in shaping behavior. No resort to a correlation between "those" people who do "evil" things is allowed; the subjects were randomly assigned. It is the experimental method, not a fascination with the artificial, that convinces.

'Milgram’s and Zimbardo’s studies evoke public outcry in part because, through shaming dramatizations, they remind us just how fragile our ethical independence and integrity really are' (p. 343).

To be sure, we believe we have discovered other things of academic and scientific value (e.g., the function of explicit and implicit rules in behavior control, conditions which promote preferences for the use of punishment over reward by training agents, as well as clues to investigating subtle forms of psychological prisons, such as shyness). But the social value of this study is in demonstrating what a mock-prison environment could do to healthy, law-abiding, middle-class young men in less than a week. Moreover, we demonstrated it to those middle-class people who make the laws, enforce them and pay the bulk of the taxes which finance the operation of prison systems everywhere. It is these people who have hitherto been ignorant of, or actively unconcerned about, what prisons are or what they are doing to too many men, women and children subjected to their treatment procedures.

If the roles of prisoner and guard are well known and being considerably discussed of late, it is not unduly immodest to believe that our research has contributed to that increased concern and public discussion. The major recent prison riots in America occurred just after our study was completed and had been reported in the media. The murder of George Jackson, several guards and inmates at San Quentin took place August 21, 1971. Attica was less than one month later. These dramatic events forced prisons into the awareness of the public; our study had already made all of us who had spent a week in the Stanford prison aware of the hell of prison. In some small way we believe our analysis of the ingredients which create such hells may help to change them.

A note on precautions and postcautions

The final ethical point to be raised in this paper is the extensive precautions we took prior to putting the subjects in our prison, and the follow-up activities we have conducted to ensure that any possible chronic, negative after-effects were identified and adequately treated.
We did consider whether there was an alternative methodology to use which might avoid the possible distress to the subjects and still yield the information we sought. Since we were interested in the general psychology of imprisonment and not just in role-playing, or anonymity, or other specific variables and processes, there seemed to be no suitable alternative.

The legal counsel of Stanford University was consulted, drew up a formal ‘informed consent’ statement and told us of work, fire, safety and insurance requirements we had to satisfy (which we did). The ‘informed consent’ statement, signed by every participant, specified that there would be an invasion of privacy, loss of some civil rights and harassment. Neither they nor we, however, could have predicted in advance the intensity and extent of these aspects of the prison experience. We did not, however, inform them of the police arrests, in part, because we did not secure final approval from the police until minutes before they decided to participate and, in part, because we did want the mock arrests to come as a surprise. This was a breach, by omission, of the ethics of our informed consent contract. The staff of the university’s Student Health Department was alerted to our study and prior arrangements made for any medical care which might be required.

Approval was officially sought and received in writing from the sponsoring agency, ONR, the Psychology Department and the University Committee of Human Experimentation. The members of this committee, like the subjects themselves, did not predict the impact a mock prison could have on a group of carefully screened, healthy students. Since that time, however, armed with the hindsight from the knowledge of our results, they have ‘withheld approval’ for a subsequent study designed to investigate the positive effects of different types of prison guard training on the prisoner-guard interaction. Their reasoning is, if the training variable does not make a difference, the outcome may again be as negative as we have shown it to be previously. Similarly, our former subjects will think twice and demand more knowledge before they again sign away their ‘informed consent’, since they no longer underestimate situational control of behavior nor so overvalue dispositional dominance.

Following the study, we held group and individual debriefing sessions, had all subjects return post-experimental questionnaires several weeks later, several months later, and at yearly intervals. Many submitted retrospective diaries and personal analyses of the effects of their participation. We have met with most of the subjects since the termination of the study singly or in small groups, or where that was not possible, have discussed their reactions in telephone conversations. We are sufficiently convinced that the suffering we observed, and were responsible for, was stimulus-bound and did not extend beyond the confines of that basement prison.

In the future, we will insist that students, or representatives of the population being studied, be part of the University Committee to pass on the ethics of human experi-
mentation. We will encourage that committee to send an observer to, or secure recordings from, a pilot session of any 'potentially unethical' research. We will ourselves in the future incorporate a meta-experimenter in the role of unbiased monitor with 'detached concern'. His/her task will be to assess the impact of the treatment on the subjects as well as the impact of the progress of the experiment on the researchers. Such a person should also have the authority to intervene on behalf of the subjects if necessary.

Finally, I wish to contend that responsible and competent teachers and/or researchers welcome assessment and evaluation of their work by their peers and by those affected by their teaching and experimentation. The academic, scientific Ivory Tower is fast becoming a cliché as professors and social scientists become more directly involved in the life of their community and want meaningful feedback on the worth and impact of what they are professing and doing.

The need for an aware, enlightened consciousness among psychologists about the ethics of intervention is more critical than ever, since we are at a time when our research findings and techniques are being 'given away to the public' in the form of therapies, remedial practices, selection procedures and cures for a host of social and personal problems. It would be ironic to limit our concern to the ethics of what happens to volunteers in a mock prison experiment and not also to what is happening daily to untold numbers of people suffering in social-political prison 'experiments' being conducted in our own cities and nations. But at the very least psychologists should themselves be vigilant of, and willing to take public exception to, research and practices of their colleagues which appear to violate basic principles of human rights, dignity and ethics.

The proper initial course of action in such cases is to register a complaint with the American Psychological Association Ethics Committee, which has an investigatory body that thoroughly reviews such ethically questionable practices by its members. They have the power to bring considerable social pressure against offending members. Censure or ostracism from the APA carries serious professional penalties and personal shame.

I have been informed by the head of the APA Ethics Committee, Dr. Brenda Gurel, that as of July 24, 1973, only one inquiry had been directed to her committee to investigate the ethics of the Stanford prison experiment. Curiously, it was not from Professor Harris Savin (who may have been too involved with the professional activity of publishing several critiques of the ethics of this research). Rather it was my recommendation to review the ethics of this research that was acted upon about a year ago by the APA. A final decision by that committee awaits the last follow-up evaluation being undertaken at this time.
REFERENCES


