
The Similarities Of Nazi And Everyday People In Stanford Prison Experiment

The Holocaust was the mass murder of six million Jews, carried out by the Nazi regime during World War II. Today we use this event to analyze how humans launched and participated in one of the most tragic and inhumane occurrence documented. As we look back at this haunting segment of our history, nearly everyone without hesitation will declare that they would have contributed to rendering assistance to the Jews, regardless of the fact that if caught aiding they would be punished by death. However, recent social experiment has provided extensive proof that today's humans are just as monstrous, naive, and easily persuadable as those who took part in the cruel killing of women, children, and men.

Social experiments play a significant contribution in allowing us to test human responses to common situations. One of the elements we have learned about human nature is that when given an excessive degree of power it can corrupt our morals and allow cruel judgments to influence ones behavior. For instance, the Stanford social experiment was led by psychologist Philip Zimbardo, who wanted to understand how participants would react when placed in a prison environment. The study paid \$15 a day to 24 volunteer male college students in compensation for their corporation. Zimbardo put together a mock prison in the basement of Stanford University's psychology building. The participants were randomly chosen to be either inmates or guards. Those who were chosen to be prisoners were arrested by police and taken to the prison where they would spend 24 hours a day. The guards were told to do "whatever they thought was necessary to maintain law and order in the prison and to command the respect of the prisoners." It did not take long for the experiment to take a turn for the worst, the guards began enforcing rules aggressively, along with verbally and physically abuse among the inmates. As a result the prisoners showed signs of phycological suffering. One of the most shocking aspects of this experiment was when the priest visited the jail the prisoners addressed themselves to the priest as their number instead of their name, which demonstrated that they had completely lost a sense of their identity, even though they were not real prisoners. The experiment was scheduled to last 14 days, but was stopped after only six days. When the experiment was over, the guards were interviewed, and many were shocked by how differently they behaved from their usual selves. The experiment showed that when ordinary people were given powerful roles, they acted in ways that they had never seen before. However, the experiment did not show how well they could act, it revealed the evil that lied deep within themselves, grasping at the opportunity to be in control.

In addition, social experiments reveal that people easily give into peer pressure when having different opinions among other people, allowing groups of individuals to persuade ones decisions, resulting to one conforming even when they do not agree. For example, in the Asch conformity experiment there were a number of subjects seated at a table. However, only one participant was a real subject, and the remaining were actors who were instructed to select certain answers. Each participant was shown a line, then asked to select the corresponding line from an assembly of lines of different lengths. The experiment proved that in order to avoid discomfort of standing out from the group, a majority of the subjects would change their answer. However, when a subject saw an individual share a different opinion from the group, it allowed the subject to also be comfortable in having a different answer then the other participants. This

demonstrated that when an individual did not feel alone, it created a difference in how the person responded to the questions.

Last, but certainly not least, the social experiment indicated that people are hesitant to question authority, therefore focusing obedient towards authority instead of listening to their consciousness. The experiment included the volunteer being paired with another person, who was actually an actor. They drew sticks to determine who would be the teacher and who would be the learner. However, in the experiment the volunteer would always be the teacher, and the fake participant would always be the learner. First the participants were taken to the room where the learner would be hooked up electrodes, so that the teacher would believe the experiment was real. Next, the teacher was taken to a room with an electric shock generator with volts that ranged from 15 all the way to 450 volts. The learner would be given a list of words that had pairs, the teacher was to test the individual, if the learner got the pair wrong he would be electrically shocked, and each time the electric shock would increase. The learner always answered with the wrong answer on purpose, when given the electric shock an audio of a scream would be played. When the teacher would question the experiment to the scientists, he would simply tell them that they must continue. As a result, a majority of the participants followed the experimenters orders when told to do so, even when the learner was shocked to up to 450 volts, leaving the learner unresponsive, which in reality could lead to possible death. This experiment demonstrated that when people are given orders by authority figures who have a higher position legally, those people are seen “morally” right.

In conclusion, it is truly difficult to distinguish the Nazis from everyday people. It is not until our morals are put to the test to see who we truly are as individuals. Although experiments are merely test, they bring to light the true colors of human nature, which shows that a majority of people are simply evil in one way or another.