

PHILIP G. ZIMBARDO ON HIS CAREER AND THE STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY

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We interviewed Philip G. Zimbardo on April 19, 2011, in anticipation of the 40th anniversary of the Stanford Prison Experiment in August 2011. While Zimbardo's name is mentioned often in tandem with the experiment, he has distinguished himself in many other areas within psychology before and after the experiment, beginning with an accomplished early career at New York University in which he took interest in social psychology research on deindividuation. We discussed the Stanford Prison Experiment in the greater context of his varied and illustrious career, including recent pioneering work on heroism, the establishment of The Shyness Clinic at Stanford University, and the iconic *Discovering Psychology* series. We also addressed his adroit and candid approach to the experiment itself over the years.

Keywords: Philip G. Zimbardo, Stanford Prison Experiment, heroism, shyness, *Discovering Psychology*

Scott Drury: The purpose of our project is to create an interview that is assuming a learned audience that already knows the particulars of the Stanford Prison Experiment, placing this in the context of your larger career, including your recent heroism research. When did the moniker “Stanford Prison Experiment” gain footing as a coined term? It appears as a coined term as early as 1973 in the *Cognition* article [(Zimbardo, 1973)]. Is that something that you coined yourself, or did it sort of just emerge?

Philip Zimbardo: No, I think I actively coined the term “Stanford Prison Experiment,” in part because I didn't want it to be the “Zimbardo Prison Experiment,” like the Milgram obedience experiment [(Milgram, 1963)], and in part, because it was in deference to the graduate students who worked with me: Craig Haney and Curt Banks. I felt that if it was the “Zimbardo Prison Experiment,” then they would not be given adequate credit. In fact in

the first articles we published, I made them senior authors [(Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973)], and it really wasn't until subsequently that I assumed the senior authorship, although I wrote most of the material.

Scott Drury: Was there a swell in notoriety for you that followed your 1973 *New York Times Magazine* article [on the experiment; (Zimbardo, Haney, Banks, & Jaffe, 1973)]? Did that represent the onset of the most media attention, or was it prior to that?

Philip Zimbardo: It's hard to break down the point at which that experiment went from being a little social psychology demonstration, which I always simply saw as the bookend to the Milgram study of the power of the situation. Milgram's work focused on one-on-one social power and the prison study focused on institutional power over individuals in groups.

What I say in my book, *The Lucifer Effect* [(Zimbardo, 2007)], is that really the study got to be what it is now, virtually an urban legend, because of serendipity. That is, we ended the study August 20, 1971, on a Friday, and on Saturday [August 21, 1971], there was an escape attempt and murder of George Jackson, a Black prisoner activist at San Quentin, half an hour from here. A reporter called me to ask for a comment about that event. I said, “It's reflective of the kinds of demonization that takes place in all prisons,” as in what we saw in our

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little prison. And then, they arranged for a local TV debate between me and the associate warden, Warden Park, in which, and this is like within a week of the study, I described our study and said ours was kind of a minimally adequate representation of what I knew was kind of the demonization that went on in prisons.

Now to prepare myself as background for the prison study, I actually taught a new course the prior summer, June and July, and the beginning of August, with an ex-convict, Carlo Prescott, who had just gotten out of prison after 17 years. Together, we brought in other former prisoners and prison guards and other people. So, I became acquainted with “prisoner psychology” for the first time on some of the topics that I taught myself. And since then, I have become a prison activist. And because of that local televised account, a correspondent for *Chronolog*, which was the forerunner of *60 Minutes*, got in touch with me, saying, “Hey I’d like to talk to you about doing a *Chronolog* piece on your study.” The reporter was [Larry] Goldstein. We worked together, and the next month *Chronolog* produced a very powerful documentary called [*Prisoner*] *819 Did a Bad Thing* [(Zimbardo & Goldstein, 1971)]. So, it was really that that got us out into the world.

Around the same time, the Attica uprising [in New York] was in response to what they said was the murder of George Jackson. So then, prisons became hot. And again I knew really nothing about prisons, but I was then invited to a Congressional judiciary hearing in San Francisco and one in Washington, D.C. [(Zimbardo, 1971, 1974)]. And so, suddenly, by serendipity, I became an expert on prisons. A cute little story where I used my psychology: I’m in these meetings with the superintendent of Attica, [Vincent] Mancusi, the warden at San Quentin, heads of correctional unions, heads of prisoners associations. And what do I have? I have nothing except a bunch of slides from the Stanford Prison Experiment. So I asked if I could go first. And I’d like to just give an idea, because people know a little bit about San Quentin and Attica. So, by going first, I set the tone, and everybody in the room now knew the visuals of the Stanford prison study. And from then on, the people on the panel would say, these congressmen would say, “as we saw in Zimbardo’s prison,” or “as we saw the demonization that took place

in Zimbardo’s jail.” Essentially, because of the shared visual material, it became a kind of touchstone for the rest of the conversation. And again, it’s a fake prison in a basement at Stanford, where at San Quentin here are these murders and at Attica here’s a dramatic demonstration. So, I think it was that combination of things, the two real prison riots and the *Chronolog* piece. So, the article I wrote in *The New York Times*, *The Pirandellian Prison* [(Zimbardo et al., 1973)], I think was the icing on the cake.

Scott Drury: You have been criticized for what went on in the experiment. Nevertheless, over the fullness of time, you have enjoyed tremendous status as an ambassador for psychology and as a bona fide authority on how people act in groups. Could it be said that your consistent candor and complete openness involving the experiment has engendered goodwill toward yourself and the experiment in general?

Philip Zimbardo: Thank you. I would hope so. From the beginning, the issue of ethics arose. In fact, we ended our study August 20, 1971, and I think a week later, there was the American Psychological Association [APA] convention that used to be at the end of August around Labor Day. And I was giving a talk on some other topic. At the end of the talk I said, “Look I am bursting with something I have to share with you.” I put up a few of these slides. “I just did this study a week ago and it is so exciting.” Here is what we found. It is kind of the recent bookend of the Milgram study [(1963)]. And Stanley Milgram was there in the audience. He came up afterward and hugged me and said, “Thank you, thank you for taking the heat off my back for having the most unethical study, because yours is even more unethical!”

The Milgram study is typical of all psychological studies. They go 50 minutes. It’s a class hour. We work our research in and around students’ schedules. In the Milgram study, people did get stressed, but in the end the learner came out and said, “Hey, you really didn’t shock me. I’m a confederate.” There was still the stress of believing you had shocked while you were going through the experience.

In the Stanford prison study, people were stressed, day and night, for 5 days, 24 hours a day. There’s no question that it was a high level of stress because five of the boys had emotional

breakdowns, the first within 36 hours. Other boys that didn't have emotional breakdowns were blindly obedient to corrupt authority by the guards and did terrible things to each other. And so it is no question that that was unethical. You can't do research where you allow people to suffer at that level. Again, I make clear in everything I have said, I should have ended the study after the second prisoner broke down. After the first one broke down, we didn't believe it. We thought he was faking. There was actually a rumor he was faking to get out. He was going to bring his friends in to liberate the prison. And/or we believed our screening procedure was inadequate, [we believed] that he had some mental defect that we did not pick up. But when the second prisoner broke down, we said point proved, here is the power of the situation. At that point, by the third day, when the second prisoner broke down, I had already slipped into or been transformed into the role of "Stanford Prison Superintendent." And in that role, I was no longer the principal investigator, worried about ethics. When a prisoner broke down, what was my job? It was to replace him with somebody on our standby list. And that's what I did. There was a weakness in the study in not separating those two roles. I should only have been the principal investigator, in charge of two graduate students and one undergraduate. So the whole study was just four people, working 24/7 around the clock, which, again, was a big problem. And there should have been a separate person who was going to be the superintendent of the prison. To make it realistic, I was the superintendent, undergraduate David Jaffe played the role of the warden, my two graduate students [Banks and Haney] played the role of prison lieutenants/consultants, and so forth, because we wanted to have a sense that there was prison staff, prison guards, and so forth. But I slipped into that role, as I described in *The Lucifer Effect* [(2007)], and began to think as if I were superintendent of the prison, in which the main issue is my concern for the integrity of my institution and the guards. Now again, most superintendents, if you don't maintain a full balance, are almost always more concerned about the institution and the permanent staff. Mental patients come and go, prisoners come and go, students come and go, and so forth. So, you really care more about doctors and nurses and guards and teachers than you do

about the people you were meant to serve. That is the effect that I experienced. I slipped into that. But at the end of the study, I apologized for the suffering that I allowed to go on too long, and documented what I have done since then to make amends.

Scott Drury: We have noted your work on behalf of Chip Frederick [Staff Sergeant Ivan "Chip" Frederick, sentenced to 8 years in 2004 for Abu Ghraib-related offenses], a person who has suffered from extreme loss, maybe at the hands of the "situation." Do you see yourself as an activist of sorts? You are not just an academic but a genuinely applied psychologist.

Philip Zimbardo: In a funny way, I am an apolitical person, meaning I have never had time for politics. I never knew who was in Congress. I never cared. I just worked so hard in establishing my career as an undergraduate, as a graduate, as a beginning professor at New York University. When I started at New York University, my formal teaching load was five normal teaching classes per term. That's 10 [per year]. My annual salary was \$6,000. To make another \$1,000, I taught summer school, two courses; that's 12 per year. Living in New York, I couldn't even afford it, so I taught a 13th course, I taught a course at Yale, in the evening, I taught psychology of learning. I moonlighted at Barnard College. I taught a social psychology course. So there were some years I taught 13 lecture courses per year. That's overwhelming. And I didn't like NYU. Back then it was not a very good school. Now it's a great school. And I knew I didn't want to end my career at NYU. The only way you can get out is that you had to publish or perish. I knew I had to publish a lot, but I am teaching 13 courses per year, so I am working full time. I have several big research projects going on and I am trying to publish and I am trying to give lectures all over the country to get known, and it worked. I went from being assistant professor without tenure at NYU to becoming a full professor at Stanford in one direct step [see Slavich (2009) for an interesting anecdote from Dr. Zimbardo on his transition to Stanford from NYU].

But in 1965, when the Vietnam War started escalating, my secretary Anne Zeidberg, who had been very active in Sane Nuclear Policy and Women against the War, started putting pressure on me, saying, "You have to use your status here at NYU to help stop the war." I said,

“I don’t have time. I had nothing to do with the war. The war is there, I’m here, I have to teach, I have to do research, I just had a child, I have to take care of my child.” She said, “I don’t care, you have to get involved.” I said, “All right, what do you want me to do?” She talked me into having one of the first anti-Vietnam teach-ins. This I think was in 1965. And I think it was the second one in the country. I don’t know if it was at Michigan [the teach-in was held at the University of Michigan, March 24–25, 1965], where a teach-in started at 10:00 at night and went throughout the night. The idea was to bring in people who had something to say about the war. We had a Buddhist monk, and we had some veterans and some people from religious ministries, so it was a wide range of people to educate the students. It went from 10:00 at night until 7:00 in the morning, so it didn’t interfere with students’ schedules. That made the press, and that was my first footprint into political activism. And once you do that, people come to you and say, “And what about this and what about this?”

Then the next year [1966], NYU was giving an honorary degree to Robert McNamara, which I thought was a disgrace. He was one of the main architects of the war. As he said later, in his memoirs, we knew the war was unwinnable, but we had no exit strategy. So I organized a walkout, a respectful walkout. When they mentioned his name, 200 faculty, students, and parents got up and walked out. And that actually made the front page of *The New York Times* the next day. So again, I kept getting sidetracked into more and more political activism.

My problem is that it is all a sidelight to what I am trying to do, which is research and teach and educate. But I now realize that I can’t be on the sideline. I have too much to say, and I now have a reputation that I can use for certain causes like being against war, being a peace activist, and now, trying to create everyday heroes.

Scott Hutchens: Did you envision the experiment to be an extension of your deindividuation research?

Philip Zimbardo: The deindividuation experiment which I did at NYU really came directly out of *Lord of the Flies* [(Golding, 1954)]. I was teaching a course, I guess it was social research, and I had my students read *Lord*

of the Flies. This was Golding’s Nobel Prize-winning novel. My students wanted to know: How valid was it that simply changing your external appearance was enough to change your morality? So kids who got naked and painted themselves were able to kill the pig that they were unable to before. And once they did that, it lowered the constraints against killing. Then they killed “Piggy,” the intellectual boy. At that moment, fascism takes over democracy and then, quote, “All hell breaks loose.” So, the study was done mostly to [test] the validity of that novelist’s conception. Is it enough to change how somebody looks in order to change how they will behave? Our general sense of human nature is that good and evil come from within us. Golding seemed to imply that good people can do bad things simply by making themselves anonymous in a situation that gives them permission to do so and where they can act on that.

So what we did is a study at NYU where I stacked the cards against me [see Zimbardo (1970) for early perspectives and descriptions on deindividuation]. I said let’s have women shocking another woman for some reason that we concoct. And let’s make half of them anonymous, give them hoods, take away their names, give them numbers, “you’re 1, you’re 2, you’re 4,” and we are going to compare them to women we make individuated who had to wear name tags with their names, and they would be called by their names. What we found, simply, is that the women who were made to feel anonymous, in a group setting, given permission to inflict pain on someone else, exerted twice as much pain—the measure was duration—as did the women who were identifiable. So here was proof of the reality of *Lord of the Flies* principle. At that point, there had only been two studies on deindividuation, one by Festinger [(Festinger, Pepitone, & Newcomb, 1952)] another one by Jerry Singer [(Singer, Brush, & Lublin, 1965)]. Their studies had no impact at all, in part because the Festinger study used as its dependent measure memory [and its correlation with subjective ratings]. They said that if you are in a high-intensity situation in which you are anonymous, it will reduce your memory for events that took place. The study was not picked up by cognitive psychologists and memory wasn’t a social dependent variable for social psychologists. So the Festinger deindividuation

theory went nowhere. Because our study used aggression as its dependent measure, it was immediately picked up, and it actually spawned a whole bunch of other research on deindividuation and aggression. So, it was not the pioneering study, but it was the study which triggered other related research. Ultimately, deindividuation is the basic process in prison-like environments, putting people in uniform, taking their name away, giving them a number. But it's also part of becoming a "GI," a Government Issue, taking away the identity of people that are going to become soldiers and making them Government Issue.

There was a very interesting study done right after the prison study by the anthropologist Watson [(1973)], and what he did is a very simple thing. He said, based on the prison study and based on my deindividuation study, it ought to follow that when warriors go to war, having changed their appearance before going to battle, they should behave much more violently against their prisoners than those that go to war without changing their appearance. I wrote him and I said, "Yeah, I agree" [Dr. Zimbardo's work is cited prominently as the impetus for the research]. He goes to cross-cultural files, all the information we know about every culture, gathered by anthropologists, psychologists, missionaries, and so forth, and he looked for two pieces of data. One involved the nations in which warriors change their appearance versus those that don't, and in what nations do they kill, torture, and mutilate their victims versus nations that don't. So that's the most extreme dependent variable you could imagine. That is real violence. What he found were 23 cultures where they had those two bits of data. The results were amazing. Where warriors go to battle and do not change their appearance, only 10% of the time do they kill, torture, and mutilate. When they change their appearance, meaning put on masks, hoods, paint themselves, put on uniforms, then 90% of the time they kill, torture, and mutilate. That's a dramatic demonstration, not at the level of individual students. This is at the level of nations. So it's a very profound impact of the external environment shaping our internal environment, if you will.

Scott Hutchens: When I was in graduate school at Texas Tech University, I heard you talk at a conference in Texas. You mentioned a

Halloween party where masked children were more aggressive.

Philip Zimbardo: Scott Fraser, who was one of my students at NYU when I did the deindividuation study, did a whole follow-up study with Ed Diener [(Diener, Fraser, Beaman, & Kelem, 1976)]. With kids at Halloween, the researchers either said, "Wow, you are really disguised and I cannot tell who you are," or "Lift up the mask, who is under the mask, what is your name?" In one condition they maintained anonymity and in another condition they undid it. They used a bowl of either candy or money and said, "Take one." What they showed was that the deindividuated kids violated the rule and took significantly more money, they took more candy. When they had been in a costume and had been exposed, they simply took one. Again, it's a very nice natural field demonstration.

Scott Hutchens: Martin Seligman has said that positive psychology is not merely humanism but a genuine research endeavor that was neglected for decades in favor of mental illness. Is it a goal of your heroism research to predict "heroes-in-waiting," as you describe them?

Philip Zimbardo: I gave a talk 2 years ago at an international meeting of the Positive Psychology Association, which attracted 1,700 people from 20 or 30 different countries. There is a book *Character Strength and Virtues* that Marty Seligman wrote with his coauthor, Chris Peterson [(Peterson & Seligman, 2004)]. In this book with all these strengths and virtues, there is something missing. It doesn't mention heroism in the whole book. There's altruism, compassion, empathy, you name it. So, when I gave my talk, I said, "I really feel awkward, I'm invited to give a talk on my journey from evil to heroism, but heroism doesn't seem to exist in the positive psychology movement. How could that be?" And the reason is that heroism is a behavior; it is not an internal virtue. So, heroism is really the transformation of compassion into social action. And so they simply have overlooked it. What that raises for me is: "How can you have a positive psychology that doesn't impact behavior?" Because that is what we psychologists are all about. The way psychology differs from philosophy is that we focus on the behavior. We believe that behavior is linked to attitudes and values and decision making, and

so forth, but if there is no behavioral outcome, for me it is really not psychology.

In fact, I am on the board of directors of the Stanford Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, which invited the Dalai Lama to give several lectures and engage in a public dialogue [March 2011]. I was privileged to be the first on a list of scientists to share this dialogue with the Dalai Lama. I began, "I apologize for a very provocative question, but in a world filled with evil, your Holiness, is compassion alone enough?" I said, "I'd like to suggest that it's not." Compassion makes people feel good. Compassion is perhaps the highest personal virtue, but unless compassion is socially engaged, it doesn't do anything except make the compassionate person feel like a better person. So, I am arguing that heroism is the highest civic virtue, which is the transformation of private virtues into action. And of course, in the end, he agreed. The Dalai Lama's orientation, really like Marty Seligman's, is that if everybody in the world is compassionate, evil would cease to exist. That's not going to happen operationally, we know that. There are perpetrators who are influential professionals, whose job it is to seduce people to the dark side. There are drug dealers; there are gang recruiters; there are cigarette ad agencies; there are sex traffickers; there are pornography makers. There's a huge list of influence professionals who have resources, who are organized, whose job it is to recruit. And on the other side of the bell curve of humanity are heroes. So villains and perpetrators of evil are outliers on one end of the bell curve of humanity and at the other end are heroes, who are unorganized, who are humble, who have no resources. So, in a way the battle is over the hearts and minds of the general population. And heroes can't win, because they are unorganized and modest and they are not professionals. The other guys and gals are professionals. So that's where the Heroic Imagination Project comes in. We are trying to create an active, organized, influential, resourceful program to fortify the general public against the lore of the dark side and inspire them to the bright side and will teach people how to be effective heroes. So, that's our big, big mission. A little overwhelming and daunting, but it is going to happen.

Scott Hutchens: How did the *Discovering Psychology* (Yourgrau, Friedman, & Brennan,

1990) series come to fruition? Were you selected on the strength of your personality? Over what time period was the filming accomplished?

Philip Zimbardo: Good question. [Among my] proudest achievements in psychology is the *Discovering Psychology* series, which is this year having its 20th anniversary. In fact I am speaking in Washington on December 2nd to the National Council of Social Science Teachers about that. Annenberg is actually sending me. So, it's 20 years since we did that. And I think it has been 5 years since I updated it and since we went from the old video to DVDs.

The idea came from WGBH in Boston. They are the ones who do the *NOVA* series. They said that they wanted a series on psychology which is not just on the brain and Freud, [but] preferably all of psychology. They were looking for people who were actively doing research, had some media experience, ideally had a textbook, and met a few other criteria. And then we auditioned. I had to go to Swarthmore and audition. Barry Schwartz had been a student of mine at NYU. I taught in his class. And people from WGBH came and did an evaluation. I think I was actually up against Marty Seligman and several other people. They chose me because they thought I had the best stage presence. And it was three of the most difficult years of my life. So, the first thing after they chose me, they said, "Okay, now write a grant to get us the money!" I had to write a grant to get a pilot program done. So, I wrote the grant and we got money for one program, and I said let's make it about social psychology, since I know that. And so the first program, which became "Program 19," was the "Power of the Situation." That program had to be evaluated by 100 teachers and students watching it and that program had to get a certain average interest rating, which it did. Then, they gave us money for three more or five more. Now, originally what they wanted was 12 one-hour programs like in the *NOVA* series. I said, "No this has to be for college students." Originally, their focus was on adult education. And my focus was on the classroom. I said it would be better to have 24 programs of a half hour each. It would be good for TV and teachers could fit it into their schedule. What it meant was that, in that format, it could not be in the big *NOVA* format. Their

format has to be an hour long. But I was willing to sacrifice that because I knew ultimately it was going to be a valuable classroom tool. And then they said, in order to give course credit, it has to be 26 programs. So we threw in two more.

It took 3 years to do. It was really, really, really intense, because nobody at WGBH knew anything about psychology. So I had to set up a task force of teachers from all levels, community colleges, 4-year colleges, 2-year colleges, people with an ethnic mix, a gender mix, all of the possible parameters, and for every program, I would prepare 25- to 50-page backgrounds, and say, here are the basic themes, here are the people we should include, here are the historical figures. And then I would block it out and say we could start here and so forth. And then our team would go over it and give us feedback. And then it would go over to a scriptwriter at WGBH, who would fashion it down to 18 pages. And I would perform. Essentially, I arranged for all the interviews and the demonstrations. And the idea is that each program would be broken into four to five separable modules. That was the conception. At the time, we didn't have a way to do it, which we do now with DVDs, so that teachers could just show a 5-minute piece. That is, you could cut it into a lecture instead of dumping the whole half hour. Again, with the DVDs, people are doing that. We can show 5 minutes from this segment and 5 minutes from another one to enrich lectures rather than replacing them with the movies.

At the time, the leading Annenberg Corporation programs were in Spanish, biology, and I think English, and, as far as I know now, *Discovering Psychology* is Annenberg's most popular series. I should mention I don't make a penny from it. I signed a contract; it was non-profit. I actually lost money on it. They gave me my Stanford salary for doing it, and because I was not publishing as much in those 3 years as I did normally, I did not get a raise when I came back. I would have people say, "You must be rich because you are selling all these videos," and I replied, "I don't make a penny off it." I actually lost money, but it is the best thing I ever did in my career as an educator.

I think hundreds of thousands of students have gotten introductory psychology credit just watching the series and having a standardized test, getting 3 or 4 units of introductory psychology credit. It started as a college resource,

now it is in most high school AP and regular psychology courses, and also is being shown in psychology classes around the world.

Duane Shuttlesworth: Among your visions as APA president, you cited the importance of psychology's appeal to the public. Do you consider yourself to be an ambassador of psychology of sorts?

Philip Zimbardo: Of all the courses kids take in college, they invariably say ours is the most relevant to their lives. *Ours* meaning psychology at all levels, child development, social psychology, and so forth.

So, essentially my focus has been: How do we package all the good stuff that we're doing that is relevant to people's lives, including their lives at all levels, changing their conceptions about what people are all about, changing their conceptions of themselves as change agents, changing their health status, making them less shy, making them be better parents, and so forth, and so forth? That has been an abiding mission.

[Psychologists may say], "Well, it's just not our job to build a bridge. We give you the formula; somebody else goes out to do it." I'm saying, "No, no, if it's our research, we should say at the end of every article, in the discussion section, here's how I think this could make an action-focused difference. How it could be applied in a school setting, in a setting for the elderly, in juvenile court, in conflict resolutions, and more."

So, I think I'm trying to be an ambassador of goodwill, in all the things that psychology can bring to the world. And Step 1 is we have to know what we're doing and we have to share in a way that's accessible. That's reasonable. We've got to go beyond publishing only what's in our journals, which are really for each other, to working hard to have OP-ED pieces, magazine pieces, newspaper pieces, and psychologists having more and more blogs. There are very few psychologists that really have meaningful blogs. And apparently, I didn't know what peoples' lives are like, but now too many people spend too much of their lives on the Internet. You check out some of these sites, and for example, you see that 1.9 million people have viewed my 10-minute YouTube video, "The Secret Powers of Time," an animated version of a full-length talk I gave in London's Royal Society of Arts recently. Essentially, I

think we all have to do more to take what we do effectively in the classroom and put it out in other formats, at the very least for the parents of our students. And also to the relatives of our kids and to the people in our community without kids, and that's what it means to be giving psychology away to the general public [see Slavich (2009)]. Passionate psychology teachers give psychology away every day to our students. However, we know that, at most, 5% of introductory psychology students are going to go on to graduate school. And maybe only a few percent are going to go on to be professional. But if we imbue them with the excitement that psychology is, we are affecting them as lawyers, as architects, as potential politicians, as negotiators, in all these ways. Again, I feel like giving psychology away to the general public should be the mission of every psychologist to figure out how best to do so in her or his domain of knowledge.

Carole White: If you had it to do over again, might you pursue clinical psychology? Your shyness research suggests a desire to develop life skills in others.

Philip Zimbardo: That's really a good question. I think every student that takes introductory psychology wants to be a clinician, wants to cure mental illness. In studying shyness, here's a normal process of people connecting with each other that gets broken, that gets distorted and people cannot make the human connection. So again, I saw shyness as a connection between a clinical and social problem. In fact, the first article I wrote in 1975 in *Psychology Today* [(Zimbardo, Pilkonis, & Norwood, 1975)] described "a social disease called shyness." And on the cover was a cocktail party with a guy standing in the middle—totally naked, but nobody's looking at him. So, I am saying, "Here's what shyness is." You imagine everybody's looking at you, but nobody notices you, in part, because you are anonymous. So, shy people make themselves anonymous and create this self-fulfilling prophecy that isolates them from the Human Condition. It is a self-inflicted surrender of personal freedoms of association and action.

So, we set up an experimental shyness clinic. Since I'm not a clinician, I couldn't do therapy alone, but since it's an "experiment," I could work with a clinician, which I did. Then once we could show with metrics that it made a

difference in prosocial behavioral outcomes, we moved it out as a formal clinic in the community, headed for 25 years by my colleague, Lynne Henderson. It is currently a shyness training and resource clinic at Palo Alto University.

Carole White: What meaning does the 40th anniversary [of the Stanford Prison Experiment] have to you and to Stanford?

Philip Zimbardo: Let me be honest. After we did it, it was simply a follow-up to the deindividuation study, a follow up of the Milgram study. The idea was that we'd write an article, get it published, and move on. There were other things that I was interested in. However, there was this sudden instant fame with the prison riots and the *Chronolog* documentary, and *The New York Times Magazine* article, and so forth. Then it really blew out of proportion. What's happening now 40 years later, is that this summer is its 40th anniversary. The American Psychological Association will feature a panel symposium about it with Craig Haney, head SPE [Stanford Prison Experiment] research assistant, now distinguished professor at UC Santa Cruz; Christina Maslach, SPE heroine, now professor at UC Berkeley; Scott Plous, of Wesleyan University, who created the SPE Web site; and me, for good measure. *Stanford Magazine* published a major issue about the Stanford prison study in its July/August 2011 issue. And they have actually hired a senior writer from *Time* magazine [Ramesh Ratnesar], whose interviews uncovered many of our former prisoners and guards (who are now old guys) and many other people associated with the study. What I am doing in connection with its publication is to combine that with a call to all of Zim's Stanford alumni to get involved in our new Heroic Imagination Project [<http://www.HeroicImagination.org>], to help contribute to its success. For 40 years that I taught at Stanford University, I had classes as large as 1,000 students at a time, so there's got to be a lot of them out there, some eager to give me some financial support [laughter]! Hopefully, after that we can put this study to bed.

The prison study was a demonstration of how good people can do bad things. The Heroic Imagination Project explores all the ways that ordinary people can be taught to be everyday wise and effective heroes in very precise ways, using cognitive psychology, awareness of bias,

awareness of inattentional blindness, awareness of illusions, and mostly social psychology, awareness of the bystander effect, diffusion of responsibility, authority, power, and more. And, again on our Web site, we are teaching through the use of video clips. We have about 60 of them, and we will add more, not only research clips, but some from *Candid Camera*, illustrating how ordinary people can be led to do silly things by mindlessly conforming and other principles. The key to our education program both in our in-school curriculum and online instruction is to first fortify youth and others against the powerful negative influences of those on the “dark side,” then inspire them to the “bright side of heroism,” and finally, have them become heroes-in-training to practice daily deeds of positive social actions. Heroism is learnable, coachable, and should be pervasive rather than rare.

Oh, and there’s one last thing. There’s been in the works, for years, a dramatic Hollywood movie about the Stanford Prison Experiment. We have a fine script by Christopher McQuarrie, who won the Oscar for *The Usual Suspects*, actually a great writer. He was going to be the director but cannot because of other commitments. We have funding for the movie. We have financiers who want to do it. We are going through a series of five top directors to head the project. Sadly, our number one was Sidney Lumet, who just died [April 9, 2011]. He did *12 Angry Men* and other fine movies that would have made him ideal for our SPE movie. And now we are in the process of finding the best available director to make the dream of a movie into a reality. As soon as one of them says “yes,” we go into production. That will be exciting. I’ll believe it when I see it. I am hoping Brad Pitt would play me [laughter]!

Scott Hutchens: When I had asked about *Discovering Psychology*, you mentioned that it was one of the foremost things you are proud of. What were the other ones?

Philip Zimbardo: I gave you the shyness research as an example, of taking a vague idea and developing a teaching [program] out of it, developing research out of that and developing an applied model of clinical treatment. For me, that is a more rounded, lasting contribution than the prison study. The prison study will be my legacy. It’s going to be what is on my gravestone. I would say *Discovering Psychology*, the

Shyness Institute, and the prison study have to be included, in making us aware of the subtle and pervasive impact of situations on our behavior. And lastly, I am hoping the Heroic Imagination Project can be successful in making us aware of how we can be the change we envision in making a more positive and better world we live in, starting with kids at the youngest level and really going across the age continuum with a new generation of social change agents around the world.

So, I would say those four: (a) *Discovering Psychology*, as giving psychology away to the public in a meaningful way as an education tool; (b) the Shyness Clinic and Institute, as the transformation of an idea into teaching and then into research, and finally into a viable clinical application; (c) the Stanford Prison Experiment, for a model of an intense behavioral study, from which emerged an altered conception of how human nature can be shaped by social circumstances; and finally (d) the Heroic Imagination Project, which says let’s flip that 180 degrees. Instead of focusing on how any good person can be led to do bad things, how can any ordinary person be led to do really good, even heroic things? I think those would be my big four. Maybe on my gravestone, it’ll read, “He did it all: A, B, C, D!”

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