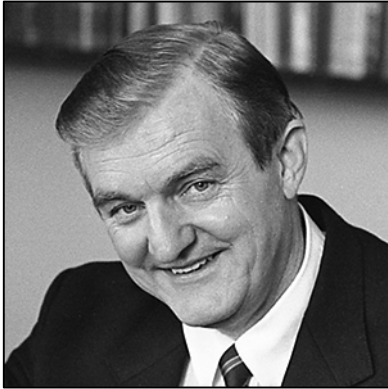


Statement by Gordon H. Bower, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus, Stanford University Psychology Department
Recipient, National Medal of Science



I write in support of my professional colleague, Dr. Phillip Zimbardo, one of whose controversial experiments (the Prison Experiment) has recently been questioned by critics. Many of these criticisms are not new, and Dr. Zimbardo has published rebuttals of them as they have appeared over the years. While I cannot vouch for every statement that Dr. Zimbardo has written or said about his experiment (see his rebuttals), I can vouch for the scientific honesty, soundness, and integrity of the man himself. I have known Zimbardo for 60 years

and have found him to be a straightforward, honest thinker. He has a flair for communicating in a dramatic fashion; that is part of his attraction for listeners and readers and partly why he is a marvelous teacher. But to my knowledge, he does not knowingly distort the truth of the basic message he is communicating.

The basic message of the Prison Experiment was that people's behavior is profoundly influenced by the immediate social environment suggesting how they should enact the roles they have adopted, and that there is a very fine line separating behavior of a "pretender" to a role versus a committed "enactor" of the role. I believe that basic fact—the "relative power of the social situation"—has been replicated many times in different experiments. Some of the current critiques also remind me of experiments indicating that people's recollection of their past actions and beliefs can be influenced by their desire to make them unwittingly consistent with their current evaluation of those past events. In any event, I remain committed to my belief in the scientific integrity and soundness of Dr. Zimbardo's career in social psychology, and I feel that these attacks upon him and his science are unwarranted.

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