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by B J

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The Stanford Prison Experiment

Schutz's Theory of interpersonal needs was more important during the Stanford prison experiment because it clearly explains the basics of what and why some individuals act towards others. The first need discussed under Schutz's Theory is control, which entails maintaining a good relationship with individuals concerning influence and power (Frey and Fulginiti 367). In this experiment, control of the twenty-four willing volunteers was divided into convicts and correctional officers. Corrections officers were encouraged to use their power and authority to manage the convicts, while the prisoners were stripped of their individuality and given numbers as their new identity. The environment was set up to make the detainees feel disoriented and powerless while allowing the guards nearly unrestricted authority and control over the inmates.

Similarly, we see the guards exercising control when the inmates who had initially banded together and attempted to revolt had swiftly disintegrated and became utterly obedient to the guards. Furthermore, the amount and severity of both psychological and physical punishment meted out by the guards had rapidly increased. Additionally, control is also evident in the experiment when Philip Zimbardo assumes the role of a prison superintendent and begins the experiment by briefing the guards (Crachiolo-Garcia). He suggests that they must maintain law and order, which means having control over the inmates. Therefore, all these factors depicted in

the experiment meet the needs for this Theory and are essential because they play a significant role in shedding light on the Theory itself.

The second need discussed by Schutz in his Theory is inclusion creating a sense of belonging (Frey and Fulginiti 369). Prison administration in this experiment created a sense of inclusion by taking away the prisoners identity and not allowing them to use their real names and instead assigning them penitentiary numbers, as well as forcing them to wear nightdresses in an ironical gesture to improve their worthlessness and femininity, had led them to believe that they were less of a human being and that they were not worth the fundamental human rights, simply since they were starting to lose their identity. Furthermore, this gesture made some over social prisoners lash out at guards hence craving the spotlight and getting the most attention from the correctional officers. Similarly, under social, prisoners felt the complete opposite and avoided the guards' attention because they wanted to be left alone. This phenomenon meets this theory's needs and is essential in outlining how individuals act towards other people.

The final need of Schultz's Theory of interpersonal needs is affection, which expresses the need for recognition and appreciation (Frey and Fulginiti 371). The Stanford prison experiment expresses this need in a negative way. It is pretty ironic to see the corrections officers, who had passed multiple psychological tests and were declared mentally healthy, were able to subject the inmates to such psychological torture merely because they were given the right to do so. The guards were given clothes and mirror sunglasses to keep them anonymous by preventing eye contact. Despite knowing that the entire experiment was being videotaped, they were ingenious in devising physical and psychological punishments and inducing fear and horror in the captives. All these interactions made under personal prisoners shy away from interactions whereas over personal inmates showed a strong need for the interactions; thus, they were not

liked by the correctional officers, thus meeting this theory's component. However, the most startling fact was that no one sought to prevent them from abusing the detainees, neither the fellow guards nor the other inmates, even though they all knew it was all part of an experiment. No one dared to call their authority into question. Both the prisoners and the guards felt it was usual for individuals in positions of authority to treat others as inferiors without regard for other human beings. I believe there must be something wrong with that.

Works Cited

Frey, Laura M., and Anthony Fulginiti. "Talking about suicide may not be enough: Family reaction as a mediator between disclosure and interpersonal needs." *Journal of Mental Health* 26.4 (2017): 366-372.

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