**Interpersonal dynamics in a prison environment**

*Summary*

**Concept**

**Materials Needed**

**Instructions**

**Discussion**

**References**

Interpersonal dynamics in a prison environment are to be studied experimentally by designing a functional simulation of a prison in which subjects role-pay prisoners and guards for an extended period of time. To assess the power of the social forces on the emergent behavior in this situation, alternative explanations in terms of pre-existing dispositions are to be eliminated through subject selection. A homogeneous, “normal” sample is to be chosen after extensive interviewing and diagnostic testing of a large group of volunteer male college students. Half of the subjects are to be randomly assigned to role-play prison guards for eight hours each day, while the others role-play prisoners incarcerated for nearly one fill week. Neither group will receive any specific training in these roles. The primary investigator will role-play the prison warden, and consultants from the real prison population (both prisoners and prison officials) will be recruited to assist in the planning and implementation of the prison environment.

Continuous, direct observation of behavioral interactions will be supplemented by video-taped recording, questionnaires, self-report scales and interviews. All these data sources are likely to converge on the conclusion that this simulated prison will develop into a psychologically compelling prison environment.