Stanford Prison Experiment

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“Male college students needed for psychological study of prison life. $15 per day for 1-2 weeks beginning Aug. 14.”
The Set Up

• In the local newspaper, male college students were sought out to volunteer for this psychological study.
• 70 plus applicants; however, the number of participants soon dropped down to 24.
• Coin flip determined 9 prisoners and 9 guards, and each side having 3 alternatives on call.
• Used Stanford’s Psychology Department building to create a makeshift prison.
“Stanford County Jail”

- One morning, these men were visited at their homes by real cops and cop cars.
- The inmates were stripped naked by guards and sprayed down to remove germs or lice.
- Their uniforms consisted of short dresses and a stocking over their head to simulate shaved heads.
What was the Purpose?

• Zimbardo wanted a better understanding of the psychological impact of imprisonment.

• “How do men adapt to the novel and alien situation in which those called “prisoners” lose their liberty, civil rights, and privacy, while those guards gain power and societal status?” (Zimbardo para. 3)

• “What is responsible for alleged brutality and violence in American prisons...” (Zimbardo para. 3)
Controversy

• Claimed to be unethical.
• Inmate #8612 was “suffering from acute emotional disturbance, disorganized thinking, uncontrollable crying, screaming and rage”.
• Zimbardo started playing a role in the experiment.
• Many of the guards had developed sadistic tendencies and the prisoners became emotionally traumatized.
Its Contribution to Psychology

• Human behavior is influenced significantly by social roles, norms, and scripts, as demonstrated by the Stanford Prison Experiment.

• However, how the experiment was performed at the variables were criticized.

• Were the behaviors pressured to be acted on?
Faulty Experiment?

- Aggressive possibly people attracted to the advertisement.
- Playing into roles.
- Participants knew the hypothesis.
- Researchers were heavily involved and tampered in the experiment.
Conclusion

• Uncertain if this same result would’ve come back the same if the experiment was performed differently.

• The controversy of the experiment doesn’t only come from the abuse these college boys went through, but also the accuracy of the experiment.

• The experiment should’ve never happened in the first place.
Thank You!