

Response 2

The Stanford Prison Experiment was an experiment of college students that was headed by psychology professor Philip Zimbardo. The students were compensated with \$15 per day for two weeks to act as prison guards or prisoners in the Stanford Prison. The study involved 24 students who volunteered and were selected from over 70 applicants. Half of them acted as guards; half as prisoners. At the start of the experiment, all of the students acting as prisoners were actually arrested and transported in the back of police units to the prison. Upon arrival, they acted as if the experience was nothing; as if it would be easy money to act this part and live in the prison. The students acting as guards treated their fellow student participants kindly at first, however as time went on, the students acting as guards took to the role far beyond Zimbardo's original expectations.

The students acting as guards began to enforce more authority and power over their "prisoner" counterparts. It seemed that those students in a position of authority quickly forgot that the students acting as prisoners were on the same level as them socially and psychologically. They began to treat their fellow students harshly, as if they were actual prisoners.

Even Zimbardo himself seemed to forget his role as a research psychologist and embraced his authority position as "prison warden." It is noted that after 36 hours, prisoner #8612 had to be released due to his entering a deep depression and displaying fits of screaming and crying. Within five more days, five more prisoners had quit the experiment due to the severely harsh treatment and cruelty they were receiving from the guards.

This experiment showed how no individual is immune from slipping into their own self of power and authority- of being harsh to those seemingly beneath him. The whole group of students given authority as guards blindly followed each others' behavior, which on a larger scale, could show how society operates against those who are "beneath" them. Perhaps society is a large-scale "prison experiment." Even in today's society we see groups of people with an elitist mentality displaying harshness toward others, such as different political parties, differing religions, or even different cultures. This outcome could have been different had simply one person taken a stand and maintained integrity and humanity.

Works Consulted

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