

What Zimbardo's Experiment taught me About People and Conformity?

Zimbardo's experiment was a classic experiment in social Psychology in the 1973. It is also a Key Study for the Conformity area of this unit. The whole experiment taught me that good people will soon rebel and would be difficult to handle in a complex situation.

When the prisoners arrived to their jail they were blind folded and in a state of mud shock over their surprise arrest by the city police. They were put into a car and driven to the "Stanford County Jail". After arriving at the jail the prisoners where searched and stripped naked and then sprayed to get rid of any unwanted germs or lice. However the psychological consequences of stripping, delousing, and shaving the heads of prisoners or members of the military, can cause series of mental emotions to form. This can destroy the independence of the person and make them seem as though they are a number and nothing else. To further promote the prisoners anonymity, the guards wore mirror like sunglasses prevented anyone from seeing their eyes or reading their emotions. This slowly formed a huge impact on the prisoners and cause distress to them as well.

The rebellion began into the morning of the second day in the jail and soon after conformity took its place. An example of conformity which took place in this experiment, was when one of the prisoners decided to take action against the abuse of the guards, and removed his stocking caps, ripped off his number and barricaded himself inside the cell by putting his bed against the door. Presently the troop of prisoners began to follow that jailbird's actions and caused the guards to become angered and frustrated because the prisoners began to taunt and curse them.

During the time in jail the prisoners became very vulnerable, distressed, terrified and rebellious; the way they were treated by the guards. The guards were on the other hand aggressive, powerful, sexually abusive and cruel. However the guard's sexually abuse is what lead the whole experiment to come to an end. Parents asked to contact a lawyer in order to get their son out of prison. So when the lawyer came and spoke to the prisoners independently, he came to a conclusion that the situation in which the prisoners were withdrawing and behaving in pathological ways, was due to the guards behaving sadistically.

Conformity also took place in the guards. The guards didn't have proper rules to follow and so they took advantage of this. One of the guards started off using conniving tactics to make the prisons life like hell, and so this led to most of the other guards joined in. However by the end of the experiment, people began to form their own experiment on each

other. They wanted to see how far they could push either the guards or prisoners.

My overall opinion against the conformity in the "Stanford Prison Experiment" taught me, when people are in a tough or difficult situation they tend to follow a stronger and braver role model. This may be because they have more commonsense, brainpower or maybe the age difference can have an influence on this decision. Also when people are in a bigger group, they sometimes believe they can push the boundaries because they are together as one. This was shown in the guards.