

Psychology A Level – Summer homework

To be handed in during the first week of term.

The Stanford Prison Experiment – Phillip Zimbardo

Please write at least **two sides** (600 words) and answer the following:

Discuss what happened in Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment and how it has been criticised.

Suggested plan:

1. Explain the procedures – what happened in the experiment, e.g. how the sample was selected, how participants were tested beforehand, what prisoners and guards had to wear.
2. Explain the findings – What happened? It had to be stopped after 6 days – why?
3. Explain what the results seem to suggest about human nature – how important the power of the situation is – anyone could become brutal in a particular situation?
4. Evaluation – what is the problem with the sample used? They volunteered... were they really 'ordinary guys'?
5. Evaluation – How many guards really became tyrannical? Is there really evidence that the prison situation caused everyone involved to behave brutally?
6. Evaluation – Did Zimbardo in fact design the study perhaps to encourage guards to behave in particular ways and thus confound the experiment?
7. Evaluation – what happened when they tried to reproduce the results more recently in the BBC study? What does this suggest about the validity of Zimbardo's findings?
8. Evaluation – any other points of discussion, e.g. ethics, did Zimbardo generally over-emphasise the role of the situation in behaviour? Can you relate this experiment to modern day equivalents such as 'Love Island'? See last ref. below.
9. Conclusion – brief conclusion – how valid and useful is the study?

Suggested reading and watching in order to answer this question:

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/zimbardo.html>

<https://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/the-real-lesson-of-the-stanford-prison-experiment>

<https://nypost.com/2015/07/12/this-experiment-proved-man-was-inherently-evil-but-was-it-a-sham/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=760lwYmpXbc>

<https://www.viewsbank.com/content/why-love-island-basically-stanford-prison-experiment>