Stanford Prison Experiment

1. Describe the experimental procedure

2. What roles did people fall into or get assigned into?
   Prisoners
   Guards
   Prison superintendent (Zimbardo)
   Warden (undergrad)
   Priest (real priest, but seemed movie like)
   Parents

3. What steps do they take to dehumanize prisoners/guards?
   a. No name
   b. blindfolds
   c. Demeaning “dress” uniforms
   d. No underwear
   e. Called by numbers
   f. Chains around ankles
   g. Pointless counts even in middle of night
   h. Made to pee/defecate in buckets which weren’t emptied for a while
   i. Mirror sunglasses
   j. Military style guard uniforms

4. Who do they try to break up prisoner solidarity?
   Send to solitary
   Reward/privilege cell
   Send in new prisoners to create fear of informants
   Grant privileges to bad prisoners to sow distrust
   Punishment-pushups, solitary, chants

5. Steps to control prisoners
   Sprayed with fire extinguishers
   Stripped of all clothing
   Sleep deprivation
   Took away beds
   Took away blankets
   Push ups (sometimes stepping on prisoners backs, on sitting on backs)
   Solitary
   Denied parole
   Cleaning toilets with bare hands

6. Impact on prisoners
   Emotional breakdowns (5 prisoners had to be released)
   Rebellion
Hunger strike
Lost own identity
Sobbing uncontrollably

7. Impact on guards
   3 types:
   - Didn’t enforce rules
   - Enforced rules
     - Enforced rules sadistically, cruelly
   - Never late for or absent from shifts
   - No emotional breakdowns
   - Upset that study was ended early
   - Forced self-knowledge

8. Impact on experimenters
   - Lose sight of own role as psychologists
   - More concerned with prison breaks than variables, procedures
   - Loss of judgment on ethics-needed outsider to remind them of problems

9. Lessons:
   - People assume social roles based on circumstances and can lose morals/ethics
   - People have the potential to be sadistic/cruel to others
   - Prisons can be a dehumanizing environment for guards and prisoners (Abu Graib)
   - Environments must be structured to prevent dehumanizing others
   - People get resigned to fate and often cease resistance. (prisoners totally submissive)
     - Most resistant prisoner becomes outcast instead of hero.

10. Ethical questions:
    - Was this too harsh/unethical for an experiment?
    - Does the learning in this case outweigh the discomfort?
    - Prisoners did volunteer to participate, but was this more than they agreed to?
    - Were the experimenters right to end study after 6 days instead of 2 weeks?
    - What modifications could have kept the study more proper?