

## The Stanford Prison Study – *Demonstrating the power of actions on attitudes*

1. According to Zimbardo, what was the phenomenon that he and his team were most interested in studying?  
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2. In the scene from the Milgram experiment, a man in a white shirt (the participant,) looks over his shoulder and speaks to someone when it appears to him that the person he is shocking is uncomfortable. In your opinion, why is he looking over his shoulder and speaking to a man off camera?  
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3. Based on the exchange between the participant and the man off-camera, why do you feel the participant continued to deliver “shocks,” even when he expressed concern? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. On day 2, Prisoner 8612 began to resist. In explaining his feeling about what the guards were doing, what was his belief about why beds and clothes should not be taken from the prisoners based upon?  
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5. According to Zimbardo, why were the prisoners rebelling on day 2? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. According to Zimbardo, what initially incited the guards to become more aggressive? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. *Based on dissonance theory*, why did one of the “best guards” elect to leave the prison whenever possible, preventing himself from seeing what “John Wayne” was doing with the prisoners? (You will be able to answer this by the second day of Social Psychology in the classroom.) \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. What emotion in the guards does the narrator state was elicited by Prisoner 416 on Day 5, leading to the prisoner’s placement in “the hole?” \_\_\_\_\_
9. This study is often associated with demonstrating the power of actions on attitudes. It could be said that Zimbardo’s statement that he began to think about “how to keep my prison going, not the experiment going,” illustrates this concept. Explain how this quotation supports the idea that actions can easily affect attitudes.  
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Answer the following questions in the “my thoughts” section. In class you will briefly pair up and discuss with a partner.

10. Was it ethical to do this study? Was it right to trade the suffering experienced by participants for the knowledge gained by the research? **Explain.**

My thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

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My partner’s thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

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11. In the modern interviews with the participants, the “bad” guard states that he was playing a role and acting out a script. The prisoner says that everyone was playing a script, but when you “start contributing to the script, that’s you. And thus, it is something that you should take responsibility for.” Do you feel that this study demonstrates conclusively that actions affect attitudes? **Explain.**

My thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

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My partner’s thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Knowing what this research says about the power of prison situations to have a corrosive effect on human nature, what recommendations would you make about changing the correctional system in your country? **Explain.**

My thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

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My partner’s thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

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