Film Analysis Paper

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**Question 1**

I believe that when the study was originally planned and designed, it was ethical. Rules were put in place to prevent harm to the prisoners and follow the rules that any psychological study must follow when using human participants. However, the way the study was conducted was not ethical. The contract guidelines were not followed and as a result, the prisoners of the study were abused and mistreated by the guards. Although this was an awful experiment, social psychology still learned from this experience. The experiment showed how an institution affects and individual’s behavior. The difference between the guards and the prisoners of the experiment was a flip of a coin. It could be theorized that the prisoners would have acted the same way as guards if the roles had been reversed. The gained knowledge of the study does not justify the suffering that the prisoners experienced during the experiment. This experiment could have been completed in a way that was ethical and justified, but Zimbardo let his experiment get out of hand. The prisoners could have easily been spared the emotional trauma they experienced. The prison consultant of this experiment was also from San Quentin, one of the worst prisons in history. The mock prison was therefore based off of one of the worst prisons ever.

**Question 2**

I believe that Phillip Zimbardo had pure intentions when designing and planning this experiment. He wanted to run this simulation for scientific purposes, but what that purpose is remains unclear to me. Once the experiment began, Zimbardo seemed to become so focused on his experiment that he failed to recognize the harm that was being done. He even neglected his own contract that he had the participants sign. He seemed to not care about the prisoner’s emotions, did not intervene when abuse was obvious, and even encouraged the ruthless behavior of the guards. When other professors called out the flaws of his experiment, Zimbardo became very defensive and even paranoid. He was afraid that someone would stop his work. I believe that Zimbardo’s initial motivation was the pursuit of knowledge, but his motivation seemed to change within the six days of the experiment. I believe that his new motivation was the desire to prove that he was right and that he did not fail in designing his own experiment. He was too stubborn and proud to admit that he had made a mistake. His faults ended up causing real people and students to get hurt.

**Question 3**

The guards in the experiment were very rude to the prisoners. They mistreated the prisoners and viewed them only as numbers, not people. I believe that if I were assigned to be a guard, I would have been rude like the guards, but not as extreme as the movie guards were. I myself try not to be mean to others, even if they are convicted criminals. But I believe that I still would be rude towards the prisoners. I do not believe I would be aggressive like the movie guards. The experiment guards were very physical and aggressive when it came to maintaining order in the mock prison. They would beat and shove the prisoners in order to show their authority. I would only get physical with a prisoner as a last resort or if I was being threatened. In the movie, I did notice that a few of the guards were not aggressive or rude at all. Some of the guards avoided the prisoners all together and looked the other way when prisoners were abused. In this situation, I would not have stood by and say nothing, but I would not approach the other guards. I would have gone to Zimbardo or one of his assistants and voiced my concerns.