Zimbardo Activities

**Activity 1**

**Aim: To develop students’ skills of critical thinking.**

Ask students to fill in the following evaluation table: -

Evaluation:

## Strengths Weaknesses

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** **What practical implications are there from these findings?**  **2. Validity**  The participants may have been role-playing at the start but they were soon taking their roles very seriously indeed- **they became real**. As both the environment and the behaviour of the prisoners and the guards were ‘realistic’ the findings can be applied to real prisons**.**  **3.** The experiment relates to various forms of social influence. These include both conformity and obedience**, thus it is useful**. It provides support for social psychological explanations of behaviour. | 1. **Think about validity**  *A demand characteristic is a feature of an experiment that in some way ‘invites’ a participant to behave in a particular way.*  **Were there any ‘demand characteristics’ in this experiment**?  *Internal (experimental) validity refers to the extent to which the experiment really measures what it set out to measure.*  **If people in this experiment were merely ‘acting’, how would this affect internal validity?**  *External (ecological) validity refers to the extent to which research findings can be generalised to real life.* **What do you think about this experiment?**  **3.** Zimbardo et al. should have stopped the experiment along before six days. Zimbardo admitted that he became too involved in his role as prison supervisor. An outsider had to remind him that he was also the psychologist in charge of the study! |
| Overall evaluation? Do the ends justify the means? Has Zimbardo found out anything important for psychologists? | |

# **Activity 2**

Aim: To explore follow up, contemporary research and develop students’ independent research and study skills

Zimbardo’s famous study was recreated by Steven Reicher and Alex Haslam for a TV programme called ‘The Experiment’. Their results were very different from Zimbardo’s. Using the Internet students can access this research.

Ask them to consider why the results were so different.

(N.B. Zimbardo has been very scathing of this study dismissing it as just a media stunt!).

### Activity 3

**Aim: To develop students’ skills of critical thinking, in particular to t consider the ethics and validity of a key study**

**Ethics**

Fill in the following table to summarise the ethical issues that arose in Zimbardo’s research. For each issue, explain the criticism and Zimbardo’s defence: -

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Criticism** | **Zimbardo’s Defence** |
| **Informed Consent** |  |  |
| **Deception** |  |  |
| **Right to withdraw** |  |  |
| **Protection from harm** |  |  |
| **Debrief** |  |  |

**Validity**

Fill in the following table to summarise the Validity of Zimbardo’s research.

**ECOLOGICAL VALIDITY**- being able to generalise the findings of a study beyond the particular laboratory setting in which they were collected. Are the findings true to life? Also called ‘mundane realism’.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Arguments for** | **Arguments Against** |
| **Ecological Validity**  **(External Validity)** |  |  |

**EXPERIMENTAL VALIDITY-** the belief of participants in an experiment that the experimental situation is real. E.G. did the participants begin to believe that they really were in prison? Also called experimental realism.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Arguments for** | **Arguments Against** |
| **Experimental Validity**  **(Internal Validity)** |  |  |