Phillip Zimbardo’s “The Pathology of Imprisonment”

This article makes some interesting points about the importance of “roles” in defining our action. It is also in illustration of re-socialization. Consider the following issues as you do your reading.

1. Describe how Zimbardo recruited participants to his prison study.

2. The experiment assigned participants to play “roles.” What were the 2 roles in this study? Describe the behaviors associated with them.

3. How did the design of the experiment create a context for participants to develop these roles?

4. Zimbardo states: “With regard to prisons, we can state that the mere act of assigning labels to people and putting them into a situation where those labels acquire validity and meaning is sufficient to elicit pathological behavior” (pg. 291).
   Consider a more general statement of socialization: As individuals become part of groups, they are assigned labels. Depending on the authority the group has over the individual, the boundaries of appropriate behavior are represented in the behavior of the individual.
   Think of a social group you are a part of. Talk about the roles that group endorses and how your behavior is defined by membership in that group.

5. How is this experiment an example of re-socialization?

6. Talk about the different types of guards (pgs 289-290). How did the behavior of each type establish status within the hierarchy of this pseudo-prison (false) community?