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The Theories of Deindividuation

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CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE

THE THEORIES OF DEINDIVIDUATION

SUBMITTED TO CRAIG BOWMAN

AND

DEAN GREGORY HESS

BY

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FOR

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Running Head: Theories of Deindividuation

Theories of Deindividuation

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"Avoid the crowd. Do your own thinking independently. Be the chess player, not the chess piece."

-- Ralph Charell

Abstract

Has it ever occurred to you to wonder why a soldier would sacrifice his life by jumping on a bomb to save the rest of his brigade? Or why an individual in a gang might display respectable behavior when alone but swear and vandalize when in the group? The phenomenon of people getting pulled into crowds and adopting the group's mentalities and behaviors has been recognized but not fully researched. However, it has been recorded in early literature and research that it is human nature to want to fit into a group, for example in Abraham Maslow's (1943) paper, *A Theory of Human Motivation*, in which he proposed that the hierarchy of human needs includes a stage that emphasized an individual's need to feel a sense of belonging.

The first part of this paper will discuss the theory of deindividuation. Deindividuation is a state an individual has attained whereby being in a group has increased the individual's reactivity to external cues. The theory was first introduced by Gustave Le Bon in his book, *The Crowd: A Study of Popular Mind*, which discussed how the collective mind takes possession of the individual. The main question he investigated was how and why crowds produce uncharacteristic behaviors in an individual. Le Bon's observations were eventually followed by Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb (1952), who conducted research on what individuals do in a group when they are treated as individuals. They were the first to postulate the idea of deindividuation.

The second part of this paper will discuss why anonymity and lack of responsibility is not equivalent to deindividuation. Studies on deindividuation and the occurrence of uninhibited behavior were non-existent until Singer, Brush and Lublin's study (1965) which examined uninhibited aggressive behavior in anonymous situations and found that people are more violent and aggressive when anonymous. It was not until the 1970's when the concept of deindividuation became popular, inspired by a spate of collective disorders during that

period. Cannavale extended Festinger's study of deindividuation in small groups and found a positive correlation between deindividuation and restraint reduction. In his follow-up studies to the Stanley Milgrim experiments, Phillip Zimbardo researched how deindividuation creates a state of altered consciousness that leads to the reduction of responsibility, increased arousal, and a sensory overload. A few more researchers studied deindividuation, all trying to look for the best-supported definition. Of the researchers, it was Ed Diener who conducted the most thorough investigation of the deindividuation effect. He devoted ten years to analyzing all of the other researchers' theories, and developed the all-encompassing definition that we use today. Prentice-Dunn and Rogers confirmed the defining feature of Diener's theory of deindividuation: a psychological process of reducing self-awareness.

A few psychologists later took deindividuation into different directions. Russell Spears and Martin Lee came up with the Social Identity model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE). Craig Bowman tapped into deindividuated helping and investigated whether deindividuated subjects would exhibit an increase or decrease in pro-social behavior. Over the past forty years, many psychologists have researched deindividuation and much of the research conducted has been sporadic but their results have been essential in giving the theory a sufficient sample size to provide confidence in the validity of the concept.

Deindividuation Introduced

The theory of deindividuation is complicated, and different researchers in the field have very diverse definitions of deindividuation. A few believed the deindividuated state is achieved when a person becomes anonymous and realizes that he or she will not suffer the consequences of his or her anti-social behavior. However, Diener and others believed that deindividuation is caused by the loss of self-awareness and self-regulation in an individual. It

will help to look back at the different theories and research studies to find how Diener and his associates settled on the current theory of the causes and consequences of deindividuation.

The articles reviewed in this paper will go through the timeline of different researchers' experiments and findings that contribute to the development of Diener's theory of deindividuation.

The Theory of the Crowd

Gustave Le Bon (1960) created the theory of how a collective mind can take possession of the individual. He observed how an individual in a crowd could lose self-control and become a mindless puppet. The individual, controlled by the crowd's leader, is capable of performing any act, whether it is heroic or destructive. Le Bon defined the psychological crowd as a group that "under given circumstances, and only under those circumstances, an agglomeration of men presents new characteristics very different from those of the individuals composing it" (Le Bon, 1960). In this crowd or group context, all the feelings of social responsibility and the fear of being addressed for doing proscribed acts are removed. Le Bon believed that the collective mind was reached when people lose their individual emotions, thoughts, and actions. During this state of mind, the individual thinks, feels and acts the same way as the crowd, adopting quite a different behavior to his or her ordinary self. The crowd, or mob, moves and proceeds in a uniform manner, an effect that Le Bon titled 'contagion'. He believed that the members of a collective group feel that they cannot be individually identified nor be seen in the crowd. He also believed that there were two processes of thinking in the group mind: (1) the loss of rational and intellectual parts which restrain an individual in the group from extreme behavior and (2) the uncontrollable spread of primitive and aggressive emotions. Le Bon concluded that the crowd satisfied its

most primitive instinctual urges, having characteristics similar to savages and the uncivilized. An example would be The Lord of the Flies by William Golding. This novel told a story of how normal school boys were transformed into savages through their group dynamics and what the group adopted as their new norm.

The weakness of Le Bon's work is the lack of supportive evidence and data as he only made statements and suggestions and did not test his theory. Nonetheless, Le Bon's analysis is still regarded as very important to social psychology, since he was one of the first to analyze the behavior of crowds and other collectives. In fact, many people argue that Le Bon popularized the theory of crowd psychology by claiming that many notorious crowd leaders, such as Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, have used his theory.

The Beginning of Deindividuation

Festinger, Pepitone, and Newcomb (1952) decided to try and test Le Bon's theory of the 'crowd' and in 1952 coined the term 'deindividuation' to describe Le Bon's concept. They hypothesized that when an individual goes into a state of deindividuation his or her normally inhibited behaviors are expressed, and that people gravitated toward groups that enable them to practice such behaviors. Festinger et al. created an experiment to try to confirm their theory on deindividuation. They had all the participants sit and discuss a fictitious study that was read to them by the experimenter. This fictitious study found that 100% of their wide-range of participants had aggressive and antagonistic feelings for one or both of their parents. The experimenters did manipulation checks by playing the recorded discussion and coding the participants' comments. Examples of how the real experiment was coded are shown below with negative and positive attitudes, respectively, "Frequently I get very angry at my mother and seemingly there's a good reason; but I don't get angry that way with others," and

“I respect my father because he’s got a head on his shoulders; he’s more of a leader and a man” (385). The validity of the study was evident based on the results, Festinger et al. found a positive correlation with their variables and concluded that deindividuation in a group, through the mock study where the group listened to the fake study which evoked negative feelings toward their parents, creates the reduction of inner restraints, which also leads to an increase in attraction towards the group and its members. Festinger and his associates believed group members lost the perception of being individuals and instead focused their attention on the group.

Anonymity in a Crowd

In Singer, Brush and Lublin’s (1965) study of *Some Aspects of Deindividuation: Identification and Conformity*, they refined Festinger et al.’s definition of deindividuation even further. They stated that a person is not deindividuated until he or she engages in an undesirable or anti-social act and his or her attraction to the group that caused their deindividuation increases. Singer et al. hypothesized that the more identifiable an individual feels, the more likely the individual would be to conform in the Asch situation. In 1951, researcher Solomon Asch explored social conformity restraints, creating an experiment to see how many confederates it took to have a subject conform. His results showed that with one confederate there was no influence, with two there was a slight influence, and with three confederates the tendency to conform was constant. Therefore, based on Asch’s findings, we can come to the conclusion that an individual would most likely conform to the group if the individual can identify with the group but is not identifiable from the group. In other words, if the individual has a lot in common with other group members and are assured that he or

she will not be linked to the deviation from the social norm and the consequences of the deviation, the individual will conform to the activities of the group.

Singer et al. decided their manipulation would involve the subject's clothing, in order to affect his or her feelings of identifiability without affecting their actual identifiability. Subjects were asked to dress differently for high and low identifiability, then confederates in the study tried to get the subjects to give the wrong answer and conform to the group's answers. These answers were obviously wrong, an example would be if a line was shorter than a line drawn next to it. Singer et al. concluded that dress and identifiability did contribute to a difference in behavior: if the subjects were less identifiable to the experimenters (wearing old clothes and lab coats) then they were more likely to conform than if they felt more identifiable (wearing formal clothes and name tags). Through association with a group, deindividuated individuals were found to be more impulsive, unrestrained and more likely to act more on anti-social urges.

Phillip Zimbardo's study on deindividuation led to his initial theory that anonymity has a large influential effect to creating the state of deindividuation which a lot of other researchers tried to develop. In one of Zimbardo's studies, the subjects in the experimental condition were made anonymous by using large lab coats and hoods to conceal their identity. Subjects in the controlled condition wore normal clothes and nametags. Each individual was brought into a room and were instructed to 'shock' a confederate in another room with different levels of electric shock intensities. Zimbardo's results found that participants who were anonymous administered 'shock' to the confederates for longer than those in the control group. This study led Zimbardo to extend his research on anonymity and aggression further with his renowned Stanford Prison Experiment; it also led a lot of other experimenters to research on anonymity and its effects on individuals.

Johnson and Downing (1979) studied whether situational cues induced the direction of behavior. Looking at Zimbardo's (1970) theory towards the influence of cues, Johnson and Downing decided to create a study on the differences between pro-social cues and anti-social cues when deindividuated. The manipulation of cues was through the different costumes they issued out to the subjects: the anti-social costume was a robe resembling those of the Ku Klux Klan, while the pro-social costume was a nurse's uniform. The costumes were presented to the subject with the experimenter's explanation, "I'm not much of a seamstress; this thing came out looking kind of Ku Klux Klanish," or "I was fortunate the hospital recovery room let me borrow these nurses' gowns to use in the study" (Johnson & Downing, 1979). The experiment found that when the subjects wore the Ku Klux Klan costume they were more likely to administer a higher level of shock compared to the subjects that wore the nurse's costume. Johnson and Downing's study supported their hypothesis that both pro-social and anti-social situational cues, in this case what they wear, does create stimulus to influence a deindividuated individual.

Nadler, Goldberg and Jaffe (1982) believed that deindividuating conditions were not only achieved through situational conditions proposed by Zimbardo but that there were other variables as well. Nadler et al. suggested that while the situation might cause certain individuals to submerge into a group, some may be relatively unaffected by others' behaviors and conducted an experiment to study the effects of anonymity and its impact on the feelings and behaviors of less self-differentiated individuals. Self-differentiation is a construct that reflects an individual's sense of being a separate entity in a social environment. The self-differentiated person relies more on internal cues compared to the undifferentiated person who is more socially dependent and refers to external situations as guides for behavior (Nadler et al., 1982). The researchers hypothesized that the undifferentiated individuals would be affected by the introduction of deindividuating circumstances (anonymity); they

expected these individuals to change their behavior and engage in non-restrained behaviors. In contrast, self-differentiated individuals were expected to display a consistency in behavior across the different conditions of anonymity and identifiability. Nadler et al. decided to test Zimbardo's claim that deindividuation should work on both aggressive behaviors and pro-social behaviors depending on the situational cues given to the subjects.

Nadler et al. tested forty teenage males (17-18 years old) split into self-differentiated and undifferentiated groups through the Portable Rod and Frame Test developed by Oltman (1968). The two groups of twenty were split into anonymous groups and identifiable groups. Each subject was then placed in a group of three, with two confederates for the study. Each was asked to complete a test with forty questions, thirty answerable and ten extra that had questions that were impossible to answer. It was made clear at the outset that the highest score would be rewarded with monetary reinforcements. The experimenter who administered the test excused himself from the room in the middle of the test, leaving the answer sheet on the desk. After the subject finished the answerable thirty questions, the confederate timed the subject for three minutes and went over to the desk, stole some candy and looked at the answer sheet. The second confederate then timed three minutes before he did the same. Then the experimenter returned five minutes after the second confederate finished cheating, handed out the answer sheets, instructed the subject and confederates to grade their own tests and left the room again. The confederates both implied that they would cheat to achieve the highest score. Afterwards, the experimenter came back and asked if they would donate some money to a well-known organization that helped with soldier's welfare. The subject was given a total of 13 minutes to deviate from the social norm and imitate what the confederates were doing. At the end of the experiment, the subjects took a survey to confirm whether they were exposed to the identifiability situation or the anonymous condition. In the former, the subjects were asked to write their name, school, and classes on the questionnaires; in the latter, the

subjects were instructed not to put their names or any personal data on the questionnaires and a dim lighting was used to create a feeling of anonymity.

Nadler et al.'s data supported their prediction that anonymous, undifferentiated individuals can conform to external cues given to them while there was little effect on the behavior of self-differentiated subjects. Therefore, undifferentiated individuals, while anonymous, followed the confederates and the behaviors that were cued by the confederates. Nadler et al. concluded that personality dispositions had an important factor in creating a state of deindividuation: only individuals who have an undifferentiated psychological system tend to become deindividuated, in contrast with self-differentiated individuals.

Reduced Self-awareness in a Crowd

After Nadler et al.'s study, Cannavale, Scarr and Pepitone (1970) decided to create an experiment that was an extension of Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb's (1952) experiment on deindividuation. Cannavale et al. replicated the earlier experiment but with small discussion groups. The three variables manipulated in their study were: (1) the ability to see who said what (anonymity), (2) the degree to which restraints were overcome, and (3) the post-testing of whether the subject was attracted to the group. Cannavale used the same methodology as Festinger et al.; he had a small group seated around a conference table to listen to a statement read by an experimenter which consisted of results from a fictitious study that found 100% of their subjects had hostile feelings towards one or both of their parents. The subjects were then told to discuss the topic for 40 minutes. The subjects' negative or positive statements about their own parents were the determinant for the degree to which restraints were overcome in the study. After the discussion, the experimenter would repeat 10 statements that he had recorded verbatim from the discussion and five standard

statements that had not been said. Each subject was then told to recall whether the statement was made during the discussion and identify who specifically said it. Finally, a questionnaire was administered to test whether they were attracted to the group and the validity of the study. Based on their results, Festinger et al. concluded that members did not pay attention to other individuals when deindividuated and the members did not feel singled out, but instead felt anonymous. Further, the results revealed a reduction of inner restraints on the subjects' behaviors and feelings towards their parents. However, attraction to the group was not found in the data in Cannavale et al.'s study. Therefore, it can be deduced that group attraction is not a consequence to deindividuated states.

To date, the most comprehensive research done on the model of deindividuation has been Diener's research in 1980. Ed Diener spent ten years reviewing past studies and conducting experiments to conclude that, to create the state of deindividuation, the input variables had to come internally, through changes to the self: the key variable was the prevention of self-awareness in the individual. Unlike Zimbardo's concept, which was based on the view that external input variables lessen self-awareness, Diener believed that self-awareness and self-regulation had to be directed away from the individual; the individual needed to focus all their attention on the group and not on themselves. He came to the conclusion that the deindividuation construct was a combination of situational, internal, and behavioral factors. Diener's defined deindividuation as follows:

A deindividuated person is prevented by situational factors present in a group from becoming self-aware. Deindividuated persons are blocked from awareness of themselves as separate individuals and from monitoring their own behavior.

Diener, 1980, 210

Although his definition was quite concrete, Diener also believed that an individual could be deindividuated on a continuum from extreme deindividuation (total prevention of self-

awareness) to excessive self-awareness. Diener had three premises to clarify his definition. First, self-awareness is removed from the individual, and the group becomes the focus of attention and is identified as a unit. He believed factors that could decrease self-awareness included physical activity in the group. Second, to be fully deindividuated there must be attentional changes within the individual. The individual does not pay attention to his or her behavior and does not see himself as a separate entity but as completely part of a group. Finally, an individual also lacks self-regulation, Diener believed this had to do with several factors: (a) a lack of self-monitoring, (b) a lack of self-reinforcement, and (c) a lack of different “types of linear sequential processing” (211) such as foresight and planning. Because of these three different features, a deindividuated individual has a tendency to be influenced by emotions and stimuli that cause unregulated behaviors.

In Diener’s research, he calls attention to the different studies on self-awareness. Duval and Wicklund (1972) found that when an individual has a heightened sense of self-awareness, he or she is more likely to see differences between his or her behavior and the norm. When a self-aware individual realizes that there is a discrepancy between his behavior and the standard or ideal behavior, that individual will experience a negative effect that will motivate the individual to return to the societal norms. Duval and Wicklund believed that “physical action and interesting events will use up conscious process capabilities, it [is] unlikely that one will attend to one’s standards or make decisions unless one can withdraw attention from the activity” (Diener, 1980, 226). Physical and verbal activities such as shouting, chanting or clapping can reduce self-attention and enhance the attraction felt toward the group. Diener emphasizes the importance of self-awareness research because most deindividuation studies do not examine the relationship between the two factors of self-awareness and the negative effect of seeing themselves deviating from social norms. Diener argues that self-awareness literature provides evidence that there is a causal link between the

two aspects that if there is a person in a deindividuating circumstance whose self-awareness is lowered, they also participate in anti-normative behavior. The findings also suggest that less attention directed toward the self indicates less observance of social standards even without a deviant group norm. This is a significant finding because past research on crowd behavior implied that the most rowdy crowd members are the most self-aware; however, evidence from this article points in the completely opposite direction.

The standards that Diener used to establish the existence of deindividuation are when an individual shows less attention to him or herself and other group members as individuals, they show less self-focus and self-monitoring. The more indirect measures were lowered observation of social norms and standards, and a lack of forethought and planning.

Diener (1976) conducted a study that found deindividuated persons in a group underwent internal changes accompanied by behavior that demonstrated a lack of restraint. In his study there were three conditions: (1) the self-aware group, (2) the non-self-aware group, and (3) the deindividuated group. Each group had eight subjects with six confederates who manipulated the groups in a predetermined way. The study consisted of a thirty-minute period where the group participated in activities that were designed to create the three levels of conditions. The participants were allowed to choose different activities, which consisted of 20 socially abnormal tasks and 20 socially acceptable tasks. Diener used these activities to measure the subjects' disinhibition. The manipulations created by the confederates during the thirty-minute period either made the subjects feel more self-aware, less self-aware or deindividuated. In the self-aware group, the six confederates acted nervously and spoke to each other quietly; they did not create any group unity and forced the individuals to think about themselves as individuals by asking a variety of questions about their backgrounds and interests. In the non-self-aware condition, the confederates were friendly to the subjects but did not try to form a unified group. This group worked on puzzles and other non-self-

individuating activities. In the deindividuated group, the confederates had the subjects perform group activities that produced cohesiveness such as singing together.

The results showed that the subjects in the deindividuated group felt more unity, similarity between group members, and liked the group more. Compared to the other conditions, they were also significantly less self-aware and acted more spontaneously. The analysis of the data found that the deindividuated group developed a “lack of self-consciousness, liking for the group, feelings of group unity, lessened concern for what others would think, and disinhibited behavior”, they also developed (though not as strong) a “liking for the group and a feeling of loss of personal identity” (216). These factors suggest that the deindividuated condition created a sense of group cohesiveness through a lack of self-awareness, disinhibition and altered internal experiences. The results of the non-self-aware group fell midway along Diener’s deindividuation continuum and found itself between the self-aware and the deindividuated group when being scored on most variables.

In another study, Diener and Kasprzyk (1978) used attitudes about sex as a discussion topic. This study had three confederates and one subject who discussed their attitudes about sex. They believed that the topic chosen had a wide variance in how the participants could discuss about it, either from a very inhibited to a very disinhibited way. The results from this study showed that, when the talk was interesting, the variable of reduced self-awareness created a strong decrease in the subject’s self-awareness. The findings also supported the theory of deindividuation, which states that if a subject’s attention is directed outwards, it lowers their self-awareness and leads to disinhibition. Diener and Kasprzyk concluded that the subjects did not become less self-aware when they complied with the group norms, but that it was the factors they manipulated that reduced the subjects’ self-awareness and created a sense of disregard for social norms.

These two aforementioned studies support the theory that both a sense of lowered self-awareness and a sense of internal deindividuated changes lead to a lack of restraint or disinhibited behavior. Although previously stated research has shown that factors such as anonymity and a lack of responsibility lead to a heightened sense of deindividuation, Diener's studies have indicated that this is not the case. External situational cues, although they led to aggressive behavior, do not automatically prevent self-awareness or produce lowered self-consciousness, which are two indicators of deindividuation.

Diener points out that most researchers in the field of deindividuation have used the terms 'deindividuation' and 'anonymity' interchangeably. However, he stresses that Zimbardo's (1969) article, which argues that a major dependence of deindividuation is anonymity, is incorrect. Diener gives the example of an experiment that Mathes and Guest (1976) implemented. Their subjects were asked to walk through a university cafeteria carrying a sign reading "Masturbation is fun". These participants were asked to do it with varying levels of anonymity, such as wearing a ski mask. In this case, subjects were highly anonymous but were probably very self-conscious and highly individuated. Although sometimes anonymity does increase anti-social behavior, past research has not found the relationship to be highly correlated. An explanation Diener offers as to why these two variables do not support each other is that the subjects believe the action they will be participating in is anti-social due to their forced anonymity. Anonymity has had a lack of consistent effects when experimenters use it to create a state of deindividuation. In contrast to trying to evoke anonymity, Diener's results show that there are a few components (situational, internal and behavioral) that contribute toward a person becoming deindividuated. These factors, if combined, will probably result in total prevention of self-awareness.

In summary, through many extensive studies, Diener integrated the concepts of self-awareness and self-regulation with earlier theories of deindividuation. His research supported his position that a state of reduced self-awareness and self-regulation must be attained in order for an individual to be deindividuated. For Diener, what sets deindividuation apart is that “in deindividuating circumstances people may not become self-aware and initiate self-regulation even though they are in a situation that has many cues that would normally instigate self-regulation” (1980, Diener, 225). Individuals would not pick up on these cues because of participation in behaviors and activities that keep the individuals’ attention focused anywhere but on themselves. This prevention of self-awareness in the deindividuated state disables self-regulation, meaning that the individual is unable to engage in different cognitive functions used to guide behavior such as accessing the concept of the self. In turn, this inability to self-regulate makes the individual more vulnerable to being influenced by external cues. Diener stressed that deindividuated individuals did not just participate in negative behaviors but extreme behaviors as well. He believed that although most research on this topic focused on anti-social behavior, the external cues could prompt positive behavior as well, this phenomenon will be introduced in more detail later with Bowman’s study.

Supporting Diener’s research, Prentice-Dunn and Rogers (1982) researched accountability cues, which are not the same as attentional cues. Accountability cues are cues that provide information indicating whether the person doing the act will be held accountable for the act or not. In other words, the individual behaving aggressively or anti-socially is aware of his or her actions and understands that he or she will not be held accountable due to anonymity and therefore will change in aggressive behavior. Attentional cues are part of Prentice-Dunn and Rogers’ “theory [that] proposes that a decrement in private self-awareness is the crucial mediator in the deindividuation process” (505). The experimental situation was manipulated to direct attention away from the subjects themselves and reduce their private

self-focus so that the subject would not be as aware of their thoughts, moods, feelings or other processes their body was going through at that point. This aimed to create a state of reduced awareness that would make it less likely for the subject to regulate behaviors as they would normally do.

Prentice-Dunn and Rogers stated in their report that “deindividuated aggression results from reduced cognitive mediation of behavior, whereas aggression due to lessened accountability is the product of the person’s conscious weighing of the benefits of disinhibited actions versus possible negative sanctions” (505). Their methodology was to take subjects and ask them to distract a video gamer by administering shocks to the gamer. Then the subjects were given a questionnaire to fill out. Within the 10-point Likert scale questionnaire were four questions to test for the subject’s private self-awareness and the subject’s public self-consciousness: (1) "Generally, I've been very aware of myself" and (2) "Rather than thinking about myself, my mind has been concentrated on what is going on around me", and (3) “I have been somewhat concerned about the way I've presented myself to the experimenter" and (4) “I have been concerned about what the memory subject might think of me". The questionnaire was based on Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss’s scales (1975) with (1) and (2) measuring Private Self-consciousness Scales and (3) and (4) measuring Public Self-consciousness Scales. The independent variable for the attentional cues to maximize private self-awareness (focusing attention away from themselves) was manipulations through verbal instructions. In the external attentional cues condition, the subjects were repeatedly instructed to focus their attention not on themselves but outward, the experimenter emphasized that the study was concerning group problem-solving processes. In contrast, for the internal attentional cues condition, the subjects were instructed that the experiment was watching the individual and his unique actions and reactions. They were told

to concentrate and pay attention to their own feelings and thoughts throughout the experiment.

For the accountability cues manipulation, the subject met with the other subject who was going to be shocked, made eye contact when they sat down, and was told that they would be seeing them to discuss the level of shocks they used afterwards. The subjects were also told that the shock level they administered would be recorded during the experiment. In the low accountability cues condition, the subjects who were to shock the video game player did not meet the gamer before or during the experiment and were told that they would not be meeting him after. They were also told that their shocks would not be recorded because it was not the primary interest of the experiment. Not surprisingly, their results revealed that, in the low accountability-cues conditions, the subjects displayed more aggression compared to the subjects who received high accountability cues. Moreover, subjects in the internal attentional-cues condition produced less aggression compared to the subjects in the external attentional-cues condition. Prentice-Dunn and Rogers found that both accountability and attentional antecedents influenced the level of aggression in their subjects independently. External attentional cues magnified aggression while internal cues decreased aggression; also high accountability cues reduced aggression while low accountability cues increased it. These studies imply that Diener's (Diener, 1977; Diener, 1976; Diener, 1979; Diener, 1980; Diener, Dineen, & Westford, 1974; Diener, Dineen, Westford, & Beaman, 1975) argument was correct; his experiment debunked the anonymity studies and found evidence that supported deindividuation is due to a loss in self-awareness and self-regulation.

Pro-social Behavior and Deindividuation

Previously, all the studies on the effects of deindividuation focused on subjects acting in anti-social ways. Early research done by social psychologists was exclusively on aggressive behaviors and negative thoughts. In 1986, Craig Bowman researched whether deindividuated subjects would perform pro-social behaviors. Like most other theorists, Bowman believed that when in a true psychological state of deindividuation, the individual is easily influenced by situational cues. Bowman's research reveals that, if the situation calls for it, an increase in pro-social behavior can result from deindividuation. He predicted that when a deindividuated person sees another in distress, the person in a state of deindividuation will more likely help the distressed other than a person who is not deindividuated; this is because the deindividuated person has a heightened reliance on the situational cue to help the person in distress.

Bowman believed that the clarity of the cue had a positive relation to the strength of the response of the deindividuated person. His experiment included two studies, the first to test whether the manipulation successfully created a state of deindividuation within the subject and the second to test his primary hypothesis. The subjects in the first study were 69 males who were randomly split into groups of three. The subjects were told that the study was trying to assess if there were any relationships between physical traits and psychological factors. The traits to be measured were strength, agility and certain personality characteristics. For measuring strength, the subjects were to pull on a rope attached to a measuring device; for the agility measure, they would be timed as they popped balloons that were scattered across the floor of several rooms; and for the measurement of their personality, the subjects would be tested in a pencil and paper test.

To promote a sense of being in a group in the deindividuated condition, the subjects were asked to “psych themselves up” and to pull on the rope during the strength test together, as a group. These groups were also given a name, ‘Wombats’, that they had to yell out before each test. The control groups were told to pull on the rope one at a time and were not given a group name. In the agility test, the deindividuated groups were told to pop the balloons by stepping on them. Each subject was given an assigned color out of the eight colors to pop. When they broke the proper balloon they were instructed to yell out their team name, while the control group was instructed to call out their own name.

After these two tests, the subjects individually took the personality tests which were aimed at measuring the dependent variables. These tests found that the state of deindividuation was created by the experimental manipulations. The results from the tests found that the independent variables were effective for the deindividuated group. It found that the subjects scored lower when compared to the control group on the self-awareness scale. The results also found that the subjects in the deindividuated condition showed an increase in group cohesiveness and external focus of attention, which Diener says are key input variables in creating the state of deindividuation. Due to the success of the manipulation check, Bowman continued with his second study.

Bowman’s second study examined whether a deindividuated individual is more willing to help someone in distress. The study employed male undergraduates from the University of Southern California. The students formed groups of three, with only one subject per group exposed to the helping cue. After the strength test, the subjects were led into rooms where the key subject turned on a monitor, which was “connected to a camera in the other room” but actually just played a video recording.

The recording showed the experimenter sitting at a table in the adjacent room. The experimenter commented on the poor image that was displayed on his monitor and told the

subject he would attempt to fix it. In the video, the experimenter pulled his rolling chair over to where the camera was mounted on the wall and stood on the chair to fix the camera. In the process, he lost his balance, fell off the chair and pulled the camera down with him. There were then two different conditions, in the first condition the cue was ambiguous and the video did not have a soundtrack but continued to show a blurred image of the feet and legs of the experimenter lying on the floor. In the second condition the video included the sounds of the experimenter moaning in pain.

The dependent measures were whether the subject would get up and try to help the experimenter within two minutes. If the subject did not attempt to help the experimenter within two minutes after the helping stimulus was administered, the experimenter would terminate the session and hold a debriefing session in the next room with all the subjects. The subjects were scored on the extent to which they helped (score of 0 – 6 with 0 being no response). The subjects were also measured on the time it took to get to a certain location in the lab.

The results of the study revealed a significant effect for the variables. Bowman found that subjects with clear cues in the deindividuated condition had a higher likelihood of helping (80%) compared to the subjects with clear cues in the non-deindividuated condition (40%). Subjects with the ambiguous cues in the deindividuated condition had a higher likelihood of helping (40%) compared to the subjects with ambiguous cues in the non-deindividuated condition (20%). The results supported the hypothesis that the clarity and strength of the stimulus combined with the psychological state of the individual was supported. In other words, the research found that the deindividuated subjects were more reactive to the strong distress cues compared to non-deindividuated subjects. Bowman also found that “relative to non-deindividuated subjects, deindividuated subjects were more likely to help, provided higher amounts of help, and tended to provide help more quickly” (1986,

Bowman, 34). However, the hypothesis that subjects with clear cues would help more than subjects with ambiguous cues regardless of what psychological condition they were put in, was not supported. This, Bowman declares, is due to the video giving a few cues of distress when it really should be giving no cues at all. He also stated that further studies should take this into account. Another investigation would be to hold the experiment with males and females and to test whether males or females are more likely to respond to situational cues when deindividuated. The first experiment's ability to create a state of deindividuation was assessed by the use of a manipulation check. Due to the absence of a manipulation check in the second experiment, it is unclear whether this procedure created a deindividuated state. However, the results of the study are consistent with the effects of deindividuation. Therefore, we can conclude that the anti-social behavior found in the aforementioned experiments was assumed to be due to the heightened reaction towards the presence of anti-social situational cues in their studies.

The Third Theory of Deindividuation

The Social Identity model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) is a theory developed by Reicher (1987). The SIDE model is another attempt to make sense of all the different definitions and theorized effects of deindividuation. According to this theory, there are three main factors that create deindividuation: (1) group immersion, (2) anonymity and (3) reduced identifiability (self-awareness and self-regulation). Reicher and colleagues believed that deindividuation was an individual's increased salience of a group identity due to the manipulation of these three factors. In Reicher's SIDE theory, he proposes that there are no overarching distinctions to anonymity, but can only be understood through the different interactions within the social context. He also believed that the process of losing awareness of

the self was inaccurate because individuals do not have a unitary sense of the self. Reicher's SIDE theory took deindividuation and applied it to computer-mediated communication and online environments. This model defines the anonymity variable differently, believing that it automatically influences the salience of social identities. It also affects the ability to express social and personal needs. Making an individual more identifiable can strengthen social categorization and make groups more accessible to other individuals. SIDE describes the cognitive process of an individual where the salience of the individual's social identity is affected by the presence of information about the individual. In addition to its cognitive side, SIDE also has a strategic aspect in its theory. Its strategic section elaborates on how anonymity affects an individual's and group's ability to express different personal and social identities. It proposes that the less-powerful group can use anonymity to express their identity. The SIDE theory has only been tested by a few researchers and is not supported empirically; the results and analysis of the studies create confusing arguments that others have a hard time applying.

Conclusion

The theory of deindividuation is still a young field with more research required, the different studies presented above all contribute towards creating a unified theory of deindividuation. Because group violence is such a prominent social problem, the study of deindividuation has sparked quite an interest in researchers. Le Bon's (1895) work on the processes of thinking undergone in the group mind and the motivations that lead to acts of extreme violence set the foundation for this field. Subsequent investigations of deindividuation that followed Le Bon's work have focused on the occurrences of the different thought processes, anti-social behaviors and their instigators. The more recent experiments

have targeted the cognitive aspects and the consequences associated with deindividuated subjects using different stimuli such as pro-social cues. Despite this need for more research to confirm the deindividuation hypothesis, from the studies listed, we can tentatively conclude that the state of deindividuation involves a degree of decreased self-regulation and self-awareness.

Below is a summary of the two different models of how to attain the state of deindividuation is attained and the researchers who built them:

(1) Singer, Brush and Lublin's model: Group presence with anonymity and diffusion of responsibility creates a state of deindividuation for an individual. Zimbardo later agreed that anonymity was one of the inputs that was necessary for deindividuation. This research was followed and supported by Singer, Nadler and Goldberg and Johnson and Downing.

(2) Diener's model: There were three components to Diener's definition: (a) It started with Situational inputs, such as a group setting, a physical activity, or a distraction. (b) Followed with reduced self-awareness and group involvement which both induce deindividuation. A decreased self-awareness makes the individual unaware of his or her own actions and unaware of the concept of self. Group involvement creates an internal state reached by the individual where he or she focuses on the group and fulfills their role in the group by following the group norms. (c) Finally, the consequences and output behavior where uninhibited behavior is practiced. Prentice-Dunn and Rogers followed up with Diener's definition of deindividuation and fortified it by finding more support in their data.

A meta-analysis of empirical research on deindividuation found that the psychological processes proposed by both of the two models are not empirically sound (Postmes & Spears, 1998). Anonymity leads to anti-social behavior because of the lack of consequences. However, a true state of deindividuation will find the individual totally immersed with the group and experience a loss of normal inhibition of behavior. Therefore, it is apparent that

further studies need to be made for more support, although Diener's points are arguably the most sound.

There are three different perspectives as to the consequences of an individual in a deindividuated state are:

(1) Individuals in a deindividuated state are more likely to perform harmful or socially disapproved actions. The person in a group no longer acts as an individual and so their thought processes, that would normally inhibit the actions in social settings and conform to the social norms, have been removed resulting in uninhibited behavior.

(2) Deindividuation heightens people's awareness and responsiveness to external situational cues, which may be positive or negative. For example, you are more willing to donate to an organization when you feel like you are a part of the group and the rest of the group donates. If you do not donate, you would feel that the group is judging you and you would feel less at ease.

(3) Deindividuated individuals adhere to norms that emerge within the group. New norms are set as a standard of the group, which could fluctuate a lot from overall social standards. This unique standard could push people to conform to the influence of the group and not think individually how it complies with social norms. A gang activity such as vandalism is against the law and social norms, but individuals in gangs do not think of societal norms, only the groups'. They do not think they are "damaging property" but "marking a gang's territory and creating artwork".

After 58 years of research, the field has produced only a minimal amount of evidence for deindividuation. The reason for this is that it has not received much empirical support due to the nature of the theory and to the difficulties experimenters experience in getting their experiments approved by the psychological boards, because of psychological 'scarring' that the subjects receive after experiments such as being deceived to 'fake' shock others. In

conclusion, further deindividuation research needs to be conducted to establish a cohesive theory of deindividuation. For the investigator willing to further pursue the theory of deindividuation, the most promising avenue of research will be based on the arousal and self-awareness interpretations that Diener, Prentice-Dunn and Rogers, and Bowman have studied.

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