New directions in research on well-being: psychological process in everyday contexts

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Deindividuation Theory
Based on Le Bon (1895)
Individuals are transformed when in a crowd.
On the following slides you will see a series of pictures. What connects them?
Social Psychological Approaches

What is the connection?
Gustav Le Bon (1885)

Crowd theory:
He recognised that when in an anonymous crowd a ‘group mentality’ can take over a person and they can easily lose their self-control, carried away by the contagious nature of the group.
He also suggested this was an animal like mind – like a pack!
Arguments

• When the common people gain control of government, civilization is moved in the direction of barbarism.

• The collective crowd mind is different than the sum of the individuals.

• This collective mind is unconscious and racially inherited
Arguments Cont.

- He believed that the group mind is more primitive and instinctual, causing crowds to regress in behavior.

- Individuals are rational. Crowds are irrational.

- Crowds mean heightened state of suggestibility and emotionality.
Arguments Cont.

- Heightened suggestibility is key in irrational process.

- Feelings of omnipotence.

"In a crowd every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest. This is an aptitude very contrary to his nature, and or which a man is scarcely capable, except when he (is) part of a crowd." (The Crowd, 1895).
Fascism

- Theories on fascist leadership heavily based on Le Bon
- Hitler, Mussolini
- Techniques in Mein Kampf
Deindividuation Theory
Deindividuation
Deindividuation
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Deindividuation

“Isolated, a man can be a cultured individual; in a crowd he is a barbarian”

(Le Bon, 1879)
Definition of Deindividuation:

The loss of personal identity and responsibility as a result of being in a crowd of people, wearing a uniform, being in darkness or in an altered state.
How does deindividuation lead to aggression?

1. The blocking of self-awareness leads to deindividuation
2. ... people lose their ability to self regulate
3. People think they are no longer accountable

...these things can often lead to aggression.
Deindividuation Theory

Zimbardo (1969) introduced the theory of deindividuation to explain why membership of a large anonymous group can lead to more antisocial behaviour than if individuals are on their own.

According to deindividuation theory when someone is part of an anonymous group (particularly if wearing a uniform) they lose their personal identity and their inhibitions about the way they behave, some people may even become violent.
The process...

- Being anonymous, your inner constraints (inhibitions) are reduced and your fear of consequences are reduced.
- People lose sense of personal values and normal social norms.
Deindividuation
Psychological State characterised by...

- Lowered self evaluation & reduced sense of guilt.
- Decrease in concern about evaluation from others.
- Increases behaviour that is normally inhibited by norms and by being identifiable.
Can this be explained?
Discussion

- Do you see examples of Le Bon's ideas on the crowd mentality in today's society?
Stadium violence

Yellow vests in France
• Is the Crowd a positive or a negative force today?
The sardines

The environmental movement
Deindividuation effects

- Group memberships are crucial to a social being’s life.
- Individuals in a group (in-group) setting...
- ...are likely to lose self-awareness or fail to acknowledge their individual reality.

✓ This theory is mostly used to understand the group effects on individuals by social-psychologists and psychologists.

✓ Applied to Computer Mediated Communication it suggests that individuals on the Internet lose their self-awareness, just like in any other group setting, and therefore lose their individual identity, and join the wider group. The anonymity of CMC has a major role to play.
Zimbardo (1969)

• **Individual behaviour**
  is rational & conforms to accepted social standards

• **Deindividuated behaviour**
  is based on primitive urges & does not conform to society’s norms.

**Why?**

• Anonymity - due to darkness, a uniform, having your face hidden, or knowing few people - reduces our fear of negative evaluations of others and our sense of guilt.

• So the greater the **anonymity** in a group, the greater the risk of deindividuation.
Public vs Private Self-Awareness & Deindividuation

**Public self awareness** - this is the individual’s sense of being visible to other people. It is related to anonymity/identifiability. This is the part of deindividuation that is acknowledged in Zimbardo’s original theory.

**Private self awareness** is resulted to be more important to deindividuation. According to this theory, it is a lowering of private self awareness that is associated with increased anti-social behaviour. A self-focused person acts according to internalised moral standards and attitudes. However, submerged in a group they lose this focus & so become less privately self aware and more focused on external cues.
THE LUCIFER EFFECT

PHILIP ZIMBARDO

THE LUCIFER EFFECT
HOW GOOD PEOPLE TURN EVIL

"An important book... all politicians and social commentators should read it" Sunday Times
• Lucifer was God’s favorite angel, but thanks to a spectacular fall from grace when he challenged God’s omnipotent authority, Lucifer was transformed into the ultimate figure of evil, Satan.

• Following on from the analogy of Lucifer’s cosmic transformation from good to evil, Zimbardo hypothesises that it is possible for external situations and systems to become catalysts for changes in behavior that override inner determinants of personality and character.

• He also discusses a phenomenon referred to as “administrative evil”, and in particular how the corrosive effect of power leads to the creation of a corrupt system.
Video

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jc_e9M8M-RU