

Research into Deindividuation

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Study	Aspect of Concept	Outline of Study
Zimbardo (1969) Field Experiment	Anonymity	Zimbardo reasoned that a big city is more anonymous than a small town. He chose the Bronx and Palo Alto (CA) and parked a similar car in a street next to a university campus in each location. He removed the number plates and left the bonnet up to make it appear abandoned. Research assistants photographed the car and filmed the passers by for the next week. In the Bronx, the battery and radiator were removed within 10 minutes. Within a day, just about everything that could be removed had been removed. Within 3 days, there was little left of the car and 23 incidents of "destructive contact" had been observed. The people who vandalised the car were well dressed, clean-cut white males. In Palo Alto, conversely, the car was left alone for the 7 days of the study. On one day that it rained, a passer-by lowered the car's bonnet in order to protect the engine.
Singer (1965) Laboratory Experiment	Loss of self consciousness	Singer found that lessened individuality within a group is associated with a greater liking for that group. Inhibitions were lowered when measured in terms of contributions to a discussion on pornography. A follow-up study showed that deindividuated participants liked their group more, but conformed to it less.
Zimbardo (1969) Laboratory Experiment	Anonymity	Female undergraduates were required to deliver electric shocks to another student to "aid learning". Half the participants wore bulky lab coats and hoods that hid their faces. They were spoken to in groups of 4 and never referred to by name. The other half wore their normal clothes, were given large name tags to wear and introduced to each other by name. They could also see each other (dimly) when seated at the shock machines. Both sets of participants could see the student being shocked. All participants were told something about the learner prior to each experiment: either "she is honest, sincere and warm" or "she is conceited and critical". Hooded participants delivered twice as many shocks, and the amount of shock didn't vary depending on the description of the learner. Name tag participants related the amount of shock to the description given.
Watson (1973) Correlation study	Anonymity	23 different cultures were investigated. Warriors who depersonalised themselves with face paints or masks were significantly more likely to kill, torture or mutilate captured enemies.
Diener (1976) Naturalistic Observation	Anonymity	1300 "trick or treat" US children were observed. When children were anonymous as a result of wearing costumes which prevented them from being recognised, and went from house to house in large groups, they were most likely to steal money or sweets.
Mann (1981) Content Analysis	Presence of others	An analysis of newspaper articles of 21 incidents of potential suicides threatening to jump from tall buildings found that in 10 of the cases, people were more likely to shout "Jump!" when they were part of a large crowd, it was dark, and the victim and the crowd were far apart. Baiting was also found to be linked to other behavioural cues such as high temperatures and the long duration of the episode.

- Brown commented that when Zimbardo did a re-run of his female undergraduate study using Belgian soldiers, he failed to find any meaningful results. Instead, when the soldiers put hoods on their heads, rather than becoming deindividuated they became more self conscious, suspicious and anxious. Brown pointed out that the so-called individuated soldiers who still wore their uniforms were in fact already deindividuated because they were wearing uniforms. This made this particular version of the study meaningless.
- With Watson's study, there is a cultural explanation for this rather than deindividuation – face paints/masks are part of ritualistic behaviour. However, it could be explaining private self awareness loss through these behaviours and this does support the theory.
- With Diener's study, it is high in ecological validity, clearly showing the link between a loss of public self awareness and anti-social behaviour.
- With Mann's study, there is cultural bias and it is subjective.

Diener says that anonymity does not necessarily increase aggression. He also says that findings from his own experimental works show that group presence was related to a significant decrease in aggression. Carver et al. said that lower self awareness leads to either an increase or decrease in aggression depending upon whether the experimenter created a norm favouring or opposing aggression. In other words, aggression is the result of emerging social norms and not, primarily, deindividuation. In order to illustrate how deindividuation may not necessarily produce anti social behaviour, Gergen (1973) created a situation which produced affiliative behaviours.

6 men and 6 women who had never met before were led one at a time into a pitch black room. The control group were placed in a normally lit room. Both groups were told that there was nothing in particular that the experimenter wanted them to do. In the pitch black room, the following observations were noted after the associated time period of being in the room:

- *0-15 minutes: People explored the room, chatting idly to one another*
- *15-45 minutes: Talk turned to predominantly serious matters*
- *45-60 minutes: Participants began to get physical; half hugged each other, some became intimate. 80% reported feeling sexual arousal.*