Zimbardo’s theory of Deindividuation suggests that aggressive behaviour occurs in groups as a person’s normal constraints become weakened when they are part of a group. This is due to the individual taking the identity of the crowd and feel that when part of a group their own actions are no longer bad, making aggressive behaviour easier as they do not see it as themselves carrying out the aggressive behaviour but the group as a whole. This makes them feel as if they become faceless, just part of the group not an individual. Commonly members of violent or aggressive groups have a reduced private self-awareness as they have some kind of tie to the rest of the group that makes them become a faceless member of the crowd, examples of this are common items of clothing in gangs and at football matches as supporters wear the same clothing and are all sat together. This contributes to the idea of anonymity and how when people feel they cannot be singled out they act more aggressively due to distorted judgement of the consequences.

Deindividuation explains that people feel anonymous when part of a crowd and therefore lose sight of the consequences and accepted social norms. This combination of explains how people do become more aggressive in groups. It further states that the basic belief is that people are instinctively deep down aggressive and nasty and therefore when part of a group and unable to be objected they can let go of their social norms and act as they instinctively would—aggressively.

Deindividuation cannot be a fully completed theory that explains why people become more aggressive when in groups. This is due to the fact that the role of social arousal was added to the original theory stating that the theory is not final. This aspect talks about how well an individual knows himself, and states that it is situational and personal that impacts the effect of Deindividuation. Not everyone will become more aggressive in groups due to them being aware of themselves well and knowing their limits. There was also the addition by Prentice-Dunn and Rogers in 1982 of the distinction between public and private self-awareness. This talks about the impression we make on other people compared to that we make on ourselves.

Zimbardo formed this theory around his Stanford Prison experiment where when the guards were giving a common uniform they became much more aggressive in their behaviour towards the prisoners as they became “guards” so felt that as a guard behaviour they would normally not see as acceptable suddenly became the appropriate response to their own frustrations. However in contrast with this the prisoners were all deindividuated but apart from one small failed act of rebellion they did not become aggressive, in fact they became more obedient and passive, this suggests the Deindividuation of an individual as part of a group only leads to aggressive behaviour if aggression is what is expected of the group such as violence being the expected behaviour from teenage gangs.

Zimbardo did another study which contributes to support his theory. His study was done on female students. Two groups were made one of which the students were dressed in a white coat with a white hood being unidentified by name and the other were in their own clothes with big name tags. The results showed that those who were hooded were more violent and gave twice as much shock as the individual group. This occurred due to the individuals feeling that they couldn’t be identified individually as being part of the group due to the large size of the group and the large distance between themselves and the person so they felt no interpersonal link. They felt that they could later