Deindividuation Theory

Both sets of participants showed classic signs of deindividuation based on the research supporting the theory that it leads to a lowered sense of personal identity and a host of disinhibited antisocial behaviours.

Mann et al also used the concept of deindividuation to explain the strange collective behaviour known as ‘The Baiting Crowd’ this supports the view that the crowd is a deindividuated mob. Mann analysed 21 incidences of suicide jumps reported in the US newspapers in the 1960s and 1970s. He found that 10 of the 21 case were where a crowd had gathered urging the potential suicide to jump. These tended to occur more frequently at night when the crowd was large and some distance from the person being taunted and they were less identifiable themselves. All these factors were believed to have produced a state of deindividuation in crowd members supporting the theory.

We cannot be certain with correlation data the cause and effect and be sure that this greater violence was specifically down to deindividuation and other unknown confounding variables may also be contributing. Also the data collected is based on past evidence, newspaper reports and conclusions drawn from this; we again cannot test this to ascertain for greater mob sizes causes more violence due to Deindividuation making this evidence difficult to scientifically confirm which goes against the major features of science.

Zimbardo’s prison experiment raised serious ethical concerns as to the treatment of the student prisoners. They were subjected to psychological torture through verbal abuse as well as physical making the experiment morally and ethically wrong. Zimbardo however argued that conditions created however were necessary to prove how deindividuation worked and intervening would have made it impossible to effectively highlight how deindividuation worked.

Zimbardo’s prison experiment could be seen to be Gender Bias because it only used male participants. Research by Cannavale et al highlights the gender difference in deindividuation between male and females where he found that male and females behaved differently under deindividuation conditions with increases in aggression only most evident in male groups. Other research studies have confirmed similar findings, thus evidence indicates that males may be more prone to disinhibition for aggressive behaviour when deindividuated, than females suggesting gender differences exist and findings of studies cannot be generalised across both genders resulting in possible gender bias.
**Evolutionary Explanations for Aggression**

*Wilson et al* found evidence that suggests a link between sexual jealousy, mate retention and violence supporting evolutionary explanations. Wilson found that of 550 women who indicated their partners to be sexually jealous, 72% needed medical assistance after talking to other men, suggesting their partners used violence as a mate retention technique supporting this explanation.

However, there are serious ethical concerns and issues this research raises as those involved in violent relationships may inadvertently place themselves at risk by taking part in such a study. This is likely considering males are faced with questions that make them aware of what the study is about. Shackleford’s study could also be seen to suffer from methodological problems. The data was collected using survey techniques. The main problem with this is that sensitive topics are being discussed such as violence with current partners and answers may not be truthful due to social desirability bias with participants responding in such a way will allow them to be viewed more favourable by others invalidating results.

Most studies of infidelity have focused solely on the male’s mate retention strategies and men’s violence against women and therefore suffer from gender bias. Women have also been found to engage in aggression and mate retention tactics and also behave very violently toward their partners.

Research by *Archer* suggests women initiate and carry out physical assaults on their partners as often as men and family conflict studies have found equal rates of assault on their partners as often as men and family conflict studies have found equal rates of assault between males and females. This demonstrates there is a great deal of Gender Bias with such theories that seem to suggest that most of the violence is caused by men when evidence suggests otherwise.

Humans are not determined by animal instincts and to suggest we have such ancestral traits is deterministic and ignores the role of free will people have and ability for conscious thought unlike animas who are less self-aware of their actions and driven more by biological urges.