

Foreword

This volume presents the proceedings of a small meeting in Amsterdam, June 1999, where a group of researchers met to discuss their work on recent developments in de-individuation. It has turned out to be a collection of papers which speak to the diversity and unity in this field, but above all a volume which documents the rapid advancements in this domain.

The idea to organize a small meeting about this issue, in particular in charting developments spawned by the Social Identity model of Deindividuation Effects, originated in the aftermath of one of the editors' thesis defense. We considered conference locations all round the globe, and our initial efforts aimed at providing three meetings in top locations: Manchester, St. Andrews, and Amsterdam. Eventually Amsterdam surfaced as ideally situated, and most popular. In particular, the generous support of the KNAW has been instrumental in organizing the meeting. Without it, it is unlikely we would have had the privilege of welcoming so many distinguished speakers and participants from all over the world, or the hard evidence of a fruitful present meeting in this volume.

As it turned out, the meeting could hardly have been more stimulating. The beautiful surroundings of the Trippenhuis provided an ideal setting, while Amsterdam's other delights stimulated informal explorations of a wide range of side issues. In this excellent atmosphere, social identity and de-individuation played a major role. The presentations and debate during the conference emphasized the dynamic and evolving character of SIDE. This debate was shaped by a rapidly accumulating body of research, part of which is presented in this volume.

The growth of interest in SIDE issues is encouraging. It has been accompanied by an increasing diversity of empirical contributions, but this diversity also reflects the theoretical state of SIDE. This state might appear to some to be one of perpetual flux and redefinition. In this regard, SIDE differs from many social psychological theories, which tend to be less open to change. Some might say that this is a weakness, but we would strongly disagree with that opinion. To us, part of SIDE's strength lies in its ability to reinvent itself if necessary. The diversity of viewpoints embraced by SIDE, reflected at the conference and in this volume, ensures at least two things. First, that we are not tricked by false securities our theories often provide: simple theories risk doing injustice to the complexities of their objects (as illustrated by studies examining classical de-individuation theory). Second, this diversity ensures that there is a

wealth of innovative ideas in this volume, which should make future developments in this field worthwhile and interesting.

However, irrespective of the diversity within the SIDE approach, one should not underestimate its unity. Contributions to this volume are fueled by similar viewpoints and concerns, and pay tribute to the fact that the SIDE approach is emerging as a distinctive and strong perspective in social psychology. Our theoretical concerns with strategic behavior may inform us when to focus on one or the other of SIDE's strengths as apparent from this volume: diversity and unity.

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