filing bottles, and breaking store windows near Red Square. Mob violence of this sort is hardly limited to European soccer fans: Following the 1992 verdict in the Rodney King case, in which four police officers were acquitted of using excessive violence, hundreds of citizens took to the streets of Los Angeles setting bonfires, looting stores, and physically assaulting fellow citizens.

A French social scientist, Gustave Le Bon, provided one of the first attempts to understand acts of mob violence in his influential book *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (Le Bon, 1895/1995). According to Le Bon, individuals lose their sense of individuality when they become immersed in a group, and this lack of self-awareness leads them to act in aggressive, antisocial ways. One need only think of the images of hooded and cloaked Ku Klux Klan lynch mobs in the United States to appreciate Le Bon’s argument. Stripped of their individuality, people can become swept up in a contagion of antisocial behavior, leading to a frenzy of violence.

Festinger, Pepitone, and Newcomb (1952) coined the term *deindividuation* to refer to the psychological state that arises when individuals lose self-awareness as a consequence of being submerged in a group. Over the years, the causes of deindividuation have been expanded to include other factors that reduce individuality and self-awareness, such as anonymity and the absence of accountability (Postmes & Spears, 1998; Zimbardo, 1969).

Deindividuation can lead to aggression in two ways. First, the energy and emotion of a group situation increases arousal, feeling anger and impairing people’s ability to formulate nonaggressive solutions to provocation. Second, anonymity and a lack of accountability lead people to believe they can aggress with impunity, thereby relaxing normal inhibitions against aggression. This situation often occurs when looters storm storefronts during a blackout or riot.

4. Social Roles

The images out of the Abu Ghraib prison stunned America and the world. Taken during the Iraqi War and released in the spring of 2004, the photographs showed American soldiers mistreating and humiliating captured Iraqi soldiers and civilians.