**Situation**: Consider the following passage from Malcolm Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point* taken from the end of chapter two (page 180-182):

Then there is the example of the religious group known as the Hutterites, who for hundreds of years have lived in self-sufficient agricultural colonies in Europe and, since the early twentieth century, in North America. The Hutterites (who came out of the same tradition as the Amish and the Mennonites) have a strict policy that every time a colony approaches 150, they split it in two and start a new one. “Keeping things under 150 just seems to be the best and most efficient way to manage a group of people,” Bill Gross, one of the leaders of the Hutterite colony outside Spokane told me. “When things get larger than that, people become strangers to one another.” The Hutterites, obviously, didn’t get this idea from contemporary evolutionary psychology. They’ve been following the 150 rule for centuries. But their rationale fits perfectly with Dunbar’s theories. At 150, the Hutterites believe, something happens - something indefinable but very real - that somehow changes the nature of community overnight. “In smaller groups people are a lot closer. They’re knit together, which is very important if you want to be effective and successful at community life,” Gross said. “If you get too large, you don’t have enough work in common. You don’t have enough things in common, and then you start to become strangers and that close-knit fellowship starts to get lost.” Gross spoke from experience. He had been in Hutterite colonies that had come near to that magic number and seen first hand how things had changed. “What happens when you get that big is that the group starts, just on its own, to form a sort of clan.” He made a gesture with his hands, as if to demonstrate division. “You get two or three groups within the larger group. That is something you really try to prevent, and when it happens it is a good time to branch out.”

3.

We have seen, in this book, how a number of relatively minor changes in our external environment can have a dramatic effect on how we behave and who we are. Clean up graffiti and all of a sudden people who would otherwise commit crimes suddenly don’t. Tell a seminarian that he has to hurry and all of a sudden he starts to ignore bystanders in obvious distress. The Rule of 150 suggests that the size of the group is another one of those subtle contextual factors that can make a big difference. In the case of the Hutterites, people who are willing to go along with the group, who can be easily infected with the community ethos below the level of 150, somehow, suddenly - with just the smallest change in the size of the community - become divided and alienated. Once that line, that Tipping Point, is crossed, they begin to behave differently.

If we want groups to serve as incubators ...we have to keeps groups below the 150 Tipping Point. Above that point, there begin to be structural impediments to the ability of the group to agree and act with one voice. If we want to, say, develop schools in disadvantaged communities that can successfully counteract the poisonous atmosphere of their surrounding neighborhoods, this tells us that we’re probably better off building lots of little schools than one or two big ones. The Rule of 150 says that congregants of a rapidly expanding church, or the members of a social club, or anyone on a group activity banking on the epidemic spread of shared ideals needs to be particularly cognizant of the perils of bigness. Crossing the 150 line is a small change that can make a big difference.