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2. Introducing Protest Crowds

Protest crowds reflect a conjunction of acts of protest, not all of which involve crowds, and crowd dynamics, not all of which involve protest. As such, their activities are complex actions drawing on two converging histories of meaning-making activities, or drawing on the concepts of Bernard Lonergan, two social recurrence schemes. Since the primary focus of protest crowds is to protest, we will first present an analysis of why people protest; then we will examine crowd activity and how it has been understood. After looking at the phenomenon of protest crowds in general we will provide frameworks to analyze the moral consciousness of crowds, types of protest crowds, constituent sub-groups in crowds, and organizational factors involved in protest crowd behaviour. We will end this chapter with an overview of how crowds have been designated or identified concluding that they comprise complex systems which function at the edge of chaos.

Protest

The word ‘protest’ is derived from the Latin words *pro*—forth or before and *testis*—witness (Barnhart, 1971). A protest is a bold statement of what one has come to know; through time it has taken on the connotation that the bold statement is an objection to the status quo. An appropriate synonymous phrase would be ‘expression of dissent.’ The word ‘dissent’ has Latin roots, *dis* and *sentire*, that translate into ‘thinking or feeling differently’ (Barnhart, 1971); adding it to the verbal field of protest emphasizes that one role of protesters is to bring new thoughts and feelings to public discourse.

There are many forms of protest and dissent that do not involve crowds (Sunstein, 2003). Some of these are written (letters and e-mails), some take the form of a phone call or a private and discrete conversation, some are individual and public like a letter to the editor or an opinion expressed over the radio or by an individual at a public gathering (Sopow, 2003). Dissent may take the form of taking a position at variance with the dominant view. Protest may also take the form of a symbolic action like chaining oneself to a tree.

A protesting or dissenting crowd involves a collective bold statement that it objects to the policy or action of an individual or group that is the object or target of the protest. This protest takes place in a given context

and the context includes a number of relational systems (Redekop, 2002). A relational system can be thought of as something that brings individuals or groups into contact with one another such that their interests are mutually affected. In the instance of a protesting crowd the following relational systems are part of the context:

protest crowd–target;

protest crowd–bystanders;

protest crowd–media;

protest crowd–protest crowd (where two crowds are on separate sides of an issue);

protest crowd–society; and

protest crowd–police.

If we take seriously Cass Sunstein's case that dissent enhances the quality and effectiveness of organizations and nations (2003), it becomes clear that within the broader context of the *protest crowd–society* relational system, the protesting crowd, by offering a dissident voice is enhancing the quality of life for the wider community. In this sense protest is in and of itself a good thing. Where this may not hold, is when the dissenting voice is deliberately misleading, false or inducing hatred against a segment of the population or if the very actions of the protesting crowd are violent and destructive, causing serious injury, death and significant damage.

The way in which protest or dissent adds to the quality of a relational system is not straightforward; sometimes the dissenting ideas point clearly to a better way; sometimes they point out dangers that have been overlooked; sometimes they unmask injustices, but in other instances their role is to get other parties to think creatively about how to address points raised by the protest.

Some scholars suggest that one of the conditions needed for people to engage in protest is that there is reason to believe that they will be effective

in changing a given situation (Rucht, 1999; Sopow, 2003). While not denying that this is a significant factor, we would argue that there are three over-riding reasons that would motivate a protester even if the prospects for change would be dim.⁴ First, the very act of protest gives voice to an inner sense that things are not right. It allows for the speaking of protesters' perception of the truth—their beliefs and knowledge shaped by their values. This gives the protester a sense of agency; it is one way to start taking action to change what is problematic. Jonathan Grix uses Albert Hirschman's framework of *conditional loyalty*, *exit*, and *voice* to analyze how protest crowds contributed to the breaking down of the Berlin Wall and the eventual dissolution of the German Democratic Republic (Grix, 2000). When people have a sense that all is not right and that the dominant public truth does not correspond to the table truth that they share within the niches of their friends, family or special communities, they may continue living without dissenting in a situation of *conditional loyalty*, meaning that they are loyal to the system within certain tolerable bounds. If the situation becomes intolerable they can either *exit* the society or they can give *voice* to the truth they perceive; in either case, they gain a sense of agency—in other words they find satisfiers for the identity need for action (Redekop, 2002). State repression of dissent during the era of the GDR meant that it took considerable courage to give voice to the truth and the consequences were severe; hence there was a high level of tolerance among the population for what was thought to be not right. Through an extraordinary coming together of events, conditional loyalties evaporated and protest crowds grew so quickly that the status quo was rapidly, completely and unalterably changed. In this case, a massive number of protesters built on the efforts of those who had chosen to give voice to the truth of what was wrong even when the prospects for change appeared remote.

Second, besides a need for agency, protesters take action in the face of insurmountable odds because of an overwhelming sense of injustice. Intolerable conditions dictate that *someone* has to *do something* about it (Sopow, 2003). The need for meaning is so strongly threatened (Redekop, 2002) that regardless of potential threats to personal security, people protest (Barlow, 2001).

4 This resonates with new social movement theory, which emphasizes that participants gain a sense of identity and belonging through their involvement in protest movements (Sopow, 2003).

Third, it may be that people have given up on prescribed ways of having political input and even though there are no guarantees of success, protest actions are seen as a more likely way of having an impact than through traditional means. Abby Peterson points out that

[y]oung people are pushed to the margins of power within society—prohibited from speaking as moral and political agents. They are restricted from speaking in those spheres where public deliberation shapes social policy and refused the power to make knowledge consequential with respect to their own individual and collective needs. (Peterson, 2001)

Peterson goes on to show how this feeling of marginalization contributes to militant protests. Peter Joyce frames protest crowd activity as one aspect of extra-parliamentary political action. He puts this into the context of extremely low voter turnout reflecting a sense that voting will make little difference in the situation (Joyce, 2002).

These three conditions—need for agency, intolerable injustice, and the futility of other means of having a voice—point to motivations derived from the interior dynamics of protesters at the individual and collective levels. These complement the exterior side of the reality expressed in the desire to make a difference, that is, a difference that can be observed.⁵ Having looked at the protest crowd through the lens of protest, let us now look at it from the perspective of crowds.

Crowds

There are numerous categories of crowds, or to use the preferred designation of Clark McPhail, temporary gatherings (McPhail, 1991). These include sports crowds, crowds gathered for cultural events, crowds watching a spectacle, crowds gathered for recreation, and the list goes on. We are referring in this book to temporary gatherings for the sake of protest. More particularly we are referring to protest crowds that are large and significant enough to involve a police presence and where there is a potential for a violent confrontation. That means that over 90% of crowd activity is outside the purview of this book.

5 The interior–exterior distinction is based on integral approach of Ken Wilber (2001).

When it comes to large, significant protest crowds, there are two different paradigms that emerge. The paradigms can be examined by way of three mutually reinforcing axes:

Collectivity	Individuals
Emotional	Deliberate
Riff-Raff	Responsible

Gustaf LeBon was the most popular of crowd theorists from 1895 until the 1920s, with his influence continuing well beyond that time (McPhail, 1991). He argued, using concepts from the left end of these axes, that when people joined a crowd, they lose their individuality as they are transformed into anonymous parts of a larger collective (Le Bon, [1986]1930). Given the anonymity of the crowd, people do things that they would never do individually or in a situation where they might be recognized. This collective, made up primarily of the riff raff of society, he argued, is emotional; he likened it to an hysterical woman, with all that that meant in Freudian Europe. There is no real rationality. The crowd, he said, wants a strong leader in the same way as an hysterical woman wants a strong man. There is evidence that Hitler and Mussolini were strongly influence by LeBon and patterned their leadership of crowds after his writings (Hayes, 1992; King, 1990; Rogers, 1998). The crowd, in this paradigm is subject to a contagion whereby everyone acts together to do the same thing. They work together in a way such that various functional activities—unfurling banners, chanting, charging a police line, lying down and ‘playing dead’—contribute to the same end. LeBon-inspired discourse about crowds introduced the concept of ‘mob’ for which the concept of mindless action was even stronger. Politically the designation of protest crowds as mobs made up of thoughtless people at the bottom of society was used to discredit the actions of protest crowds (Hayes, 1992).

Since the early 1960s this paradigm of crowds and crowd action has been systematically attacked by historians and sociologists using empirical methodologies. George Rudé in his classic work, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730–1848*, shows, using prison records of the eighteenth century, that participants in

protest crowds of that era who were arrested were not the irresponsible riff-raff that theoreticians had suggested but rather they were working people and artisans—people with a stake in society (Rudé, 1999). Clark McPhail, in his *Myth of the Madding Crowd* systematically dismantles the LeBon perspective and the permutations of that paradigm propagated by Robert Park and Herman Blumer (McPhail, 1991). After observing hundreds of protest crowds in the 1970s and 1980s he argues that people do not join protest crowds as anonymous individuals, rather they go to the crowd gatherings with family and friends, they talk with one another in the process and they preserve their sub-groupings throughout the process. Likewise he shows that they are deliberate about joining the crowd and that they continue to make thoughtful choices about what they do during process. Nor are their motivations to protest all the same.

Using a quantitative methodology, Eli Sopow goes further than McPhail in differentiating the various types of crowd participants. He distinguishes among passive protesters who support a cause by signing petitions, using the Internet and writing letters; active protesters, who attend peaceful protests; and volatile protesters who support illegal action and are ‘inclined to engage in violent action such as destruction of public property, attacks on police, and the use of ideologically-laden, pejorative language such as calling police “pigs.”’ (Sopow, 2003) This latter group forms a tiny minority of protest crowd members; however, in some circumstances their actions may be imitated by others. Similarly Bert Klandermans describes a funnel effect with a logical flow chart showing how only some of the sympathizers of a movement are targeted by mobilization attempts; only some of these are motivated to participate; and only some of these actually participate (Klandermans, 1997).

The two paradigms need not be mutually exclusive. It may be true that people decide to join a protest crowd in the deliberate manner described by McPhail, Klandermans and Sopow. It may also be the case that in the course of a large and major protest event there may be sub-dynamics whereby clusters of participants get carried away in collective action and do things they might not otherwise do. Ken Wilber argues for an integral approach to understanding phenomena (Wilber, 2001). He describes two intersecting axes forming four quadrants. The horizontal axis is between individual (above the axis) and collective (below); the vertical divides interior(left of the axis) aspects of phenomena from exterior aspects (to the right). For him,

an integral approach includes looking at things from the perspective of all four quadrants. Crowd analysis, from the perspective of *exterior*-individual, would include the perspective of empiricists like McPhail and Rudé. The *exterior* collective perspective would include Le Bon and Canelli both of whom also try to grasp the collective *interior* using a methodology akin to psychoanalysis. Individual and collective *interior* perspectives come from Maude Barlow and Tony Clark who write from within the protest movement and theorists like James Jasper and Eli Sopow who explore the inner emotional and ethical factors that motivate members of protest crowds. From Wilber's (and many others') perspective, the individual and collective interior 'spaces' will give rise to multiple meanings and interpretations with respect to the crowd members' understandings of the protest issues. That is, different individuals in the crowd will have different reasons for being there and those observing the crowd will have different views of what they perceive are the primary issues driving the crowd action. Given the complex assortment of motivating ideas, a given crowd is vulnerable to manipulation by more sophisticated meaning makers, who have their own agendas and may be able to use symbols with broad appeal within the crowd to intensify emotions.

In addition, even though people may choose to join a large protest crowd deliberately, in the course of the temporary gathering there may be extraordinary circumstances that prompt a limited group of crowd members to get carried away in collective action. René Girard has developed a theory of scapegoating whereby, when things are chaotic, violence is in the air, and there is the potential for reciprocal violence, a community or crowd can decide on a scapegoat and vent all their pent up frustration on the scapegoat (Girard, 1989). This he describes as violence of differentiation (more on this in chapter five). Various crowd theorists show how protests can become focused on particular individuals about whom the crowd becomes united; they become scapegoats responsible for the ills of their community (Gonzales, 2001). Hence, without embracing fully the perspectives of Le Bon, we can envisage sub-groups within a crowd getting involved in violent collective action. One example is when a group within a volatile crowd comes across an empty police car and gets carried away in its destruction. This perspective complements the observations of Deborah Sword who argues that protest crowds exist at the edge of chaos (Sword, 2003). When crowds are at the edge of chaos, there

may be a number of ways in which that chaos produces a new alternative. One of those may be through shared violence, another may be through the positive response of the target, another may be through factors that contribute to disassembling. The chaos itself creates many options over which there is little real control by any of the players. Small responses may have large consequences.

Protest crowds assemble because members are convinced that there is either something wrong with the status quo or there is a potential change in the works that they find untenable—in either case there is *something* to protest. They may not agree about what exactly that ‘something’ is but they are in sufficient agreement to be at the same place at the same time. Frequently, this *something that is wrong* is framed as an injustice (Klandermans, 1997; Sopow, 2003) invoking values derived from moral consciousness (Jasper, 1997). We turn now to an examination of the types of moral consciousness that might motivate people to temporarily gather to protest.

Moral Consciousness

Within the literature on protest crowds, moral consciousness is approached in a variety of ways. James Jasper argues that through history various types or levels of moral consciousness have been present. After examining Jasper’s categorization and taking a brief look at oppositional consciousness, we will make the connection between types of moral consciousness, stages of development and levels of consciousness as developed by scholars such as Kegan, Wilber, Piaget, Kohlberg, Gilligan and others. At this point we are concerned with moral consciousness as a motivator for protesters; we will return to the concept of levels of moral consciousness in subsequent chapters as we relate the concept to conflict between protesters and police.

James Jasper distinguishes three types of moral consciousness that motivate protest: deprivation of immediate needs, a demand for citizenship rights, and a desire for justice for third parties. These have evolved, from Jasper’s perspective, chronologically. From the mid 1700s on there were widespread protests over the price of basic foods in England and France, often referred to as the Flour Wars (Bouton, 1993). In this case people were directly affected by the policy that they protested against. Not only that, they were affected at the level of physical survival, they were not able to get enough to eat. They felt that not only were the prices not fair, but

they had a right to get enough food at affordable prices. What started back then was a concept of moral economy—economic life⁶ was starting to be held accountable to a moral standard, a concept that continued to evolve (Randall, 2000). With the industrial revolution came the realization that working people collectively were not getting fair treatment; Jasper's second type of moral consciousness emerged around citizens' rights. Out of this realization came the labour movement and the use of collective action to get rights for working people. There was also a demand for increasingly inclusive suffrage. In England throughout the nineteenth century more and more people got to vote as a result of changes prompted by effective protest (P.A.J. Waddington, 1991). As there was a realization that groups of people had rights that were not recognized, members of these groups used public protest to affect change. An example of Jasper's citizenship protest was the civil rights movement in the United States during the 1960s. His third type of moral protest involves such things as anti-nuclear protest, environmental protest, animal rights protest, and disarmament protest. In each of these cases it is not so much that the particular needs or interests of protesters themselves are threatened but that the rights and interests of wider populations and even the ecosphere are threatened.

Corroborating Jasper's thesis, Mansbridge and Morris develop the concept of oppositional consciousness (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). They describe the dynamics by which an oppressed group becomes aware of the sources and forms of their oppression. Out of this consciousness comes a desire to work for change and this frequently results in protest crowd activity. This theoretical structure they apply to people with disabilities and sexual minorities. The concept could be extended to show that those who develop an oppositional consciousness, which is characterized by a capacity for critical thinking, will find themselves in solidarity with those oppressed for another reason (Cummings, 1993). Examples are the WTO and G8⁷ protests that include a wide range of causes from 'save the whales' to 'gay rights'.

6 Economic life is the outcome of moral growth—moral growth is influenced by economic life—it is a dialectical process. It is, also, a developmental process.

7 The Group of Eight G8, and formerly the G6/7 or Group of Six/Seven, is a forum, created by France in 1975, for governments of eight nations of the northern hemisphere to deal with major economic and political issues facing their domestic societies and the international community as a whole: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States; in addition, the European Union is represented within the G8, but cannot host or chair. 'G8' can refer to the member states or to the annual summit meeting of the G8 heads of government.

Building on Jasper's concept of a third type of moral consciousness, we would suggest that the idea of protesting for the interest of some Other could be further differentiated between third party concern for victimized groups, animal species or a specific endangered forest or waterway, on the one hand, and systemic consciousness, on the other. Just as protesters in the 1980s saw the potential of global destruction in the event of a nuclear war, protesters in the 1990s and beyond have seen the potential of widespread injustice and destruction through what is loosely referred to as globalization. Their moral imperative to turn things around comes from an awareness of systems dynamics and the realization that what happens in one part of the world can have dramatic consequences in another area of the world (Barlow, 2001). What drives many of these protesters is a passion to care for the earth and all its people and living species. Among the protesters may be a range of types of moral consciousness in that both their awareness of what is happening and the interconnections may be structured differently.

Interestingly, when we look back in history from the perspective of types of moral consciousness it becomes clear that Jasper's third type of moral consciousness was already evident in 1787 when a group of 12 men assembled in London to organize a protest movement against slavery and the slave trade. They had a third party empathetic interest in others and they had a concept of systemic injustice that led them to organize their protest strategically, in many geographical locations. The passion of their convictions was so strong and infectious that they sustained their protest efforts for several decades until the British slave trade was brought to an end (Hochschild, 2005). With these examples in mind, we can see how the discourse around Jasper's types of moral consciousness can be understood within the broader context of developmental levels of consciousness.

Levels of Consciousness

The concept of levels of consciousness emerged from developmental psychology. Initial studies of children's cognitive and moral development led to insights that adults have a capacity to think at different levels. We move from a pre-occupation with our own survival, to a concern for those who are part of our group (ethnic, religious, national), to toleration for plurality, to a sense of being connected to everyone and everything, to a profound grasp of transcendence in which reality is seen as a unified whole. As we develop capacity at ever new levels of consciousness, we still plug into all of the other levels at the same time.

At each level of consciousness we can experience the same event differently because we create different meanings for what is happening (McGuigan, 2006). We notice different patterns, see different linkages, and include different perspectives in how we explain and integrate what is happening.

Levels of consciousness can be used with regard to individuals and groups. In this case, a protest crowd might have people functioning at different levels of consciousness. They may be united in protesting a given action but their reasons for protesting, their understanding of the issues, and their sense of where the protest fits into an overall strategy might vary considerably. Likewise, police and others implicated in crowd dynamics could function individually at varying levels of consciousness.

This conceptualization builds on theoretical work by Kegan, Wilber, Piaget, Kohlberg, Gilligan, and a host of other scholars. More recently, Richard McGuigan has contributed to our sense of the relevance of levels of consciousness thinking to the domain of community-based conflict of which the protester–police relational system is just one example. Through careful research he demonstrated that when confronted with complex conflict, those with a well-developed level of consciousness can handle the situation creatively. Those who do not have this capacity are overwhelmed and actually revert to a lower level of thinking (McGuigan, 2006). The dynamics between protesters, their targets, police, media and bystanders can be very complex. There is the temptation for many of the players to revert to an angry tribalism in which they think only in terms of the rightness of their own groups. This suggests that the moral reasoning behind the impetus for a protest crowd to assemble may be at any of a number of levels of moral consciousness and that the level of consciousness of members in the crowd may also be at any of a number of levels of development. This further suggests that there may be many types of crowds and, indeed, our experiences support characterizing crowds according to several dynamics.

Types of Crowds

The following analytical spectra provide a starting point for looking at the dynamics of any particular crowd. The different sides of the polarity need not be mutually exclusive. For example, a well planned, orderly protest march may become chaotic and violent when the way is blocked or when those with another agenda within the crowd assert themselves. Or there may be a crowd with characteristics in the middle of each axis.

Types of Crowds

Analytical Spectra

Orderly		Chaotic
Peaceful	Non Violent Direct Action	Violent
Planned		Spontaneous
Cohesive		Fractured

These spectra help to analyze a particular crowd at a particular time. The same crowd might be at different ends of the spectrum regarding the different polarities. For example, it may be orderly, yet violent, gathered for protest in a well-planned manner and very cohesive. Another crowd could be the opposite—chaotic, yet peaceful; spontaneous, yet cohesive. Additionally, the crowd can change dramatically over time, notwithstanding that the same individuals or some of the same individuals may be present. How this happens and what influences both the behaviours and changes in behaviour requires an understanding of underlying emotions and needs, concepts we cover in chapter five. Furthermore, the impact of needs and emotions on behaviour is determined in part by the level of consciousness of those involved.

Some crowds demonstrate a sense of order and peaceful presence. For example the crowds holding vigils in several Eastern European countries in the twilight period of the Soviet Empire were massive, yet highly self-disciplined with scarcely a trace of violence. People gathered to show by their presence that they wanted change. Other crowds are boisterous and chaotic in which everything seems out of control; one example is the crowd in Belgrade in 1997 that brought down Milosevic as it stormed into government offices, doing considerable damage. Some crowds gather spontaneously and some are planned months in advance with buses taking demonstrators to the crowd site. Sometimes crowds are cohesive and sometimes they contain sub-groups very much at odds with one another. Peaceful protesters usually try to distance themselves from those who believe that violence is necessary to make their point or who participate purely for the violence itself. There is also a stream within the protest crowd movement that draws on Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. to advocate non-violent direct action. Direct action involves a combination of a dedication to truth and justice, the discipline

to take provocative action without being drawn into violence, and the creativity to know what kind of action might have strategic value. People in the same crowd may be protesting for completely different reasons and may be committed to different tactics. Those with the same reasons may differ on tactics and those using the same tactics may be doing so for different reasons. The many permutations make for a complex situation.

Certain types of crowds recur and a crowd culture develops with similar actions becoming anticipated for that crowd. Crowd cultures have developed around summit gatherings as the same organizers prepare for each subsequent event. This does not mean each event is the same; rather, similar types of actions tend to recur. This similarity may or may not be deliberate; however, routines and values evolve with lessons learned and networks of communication used to pass on the elements that comprise a particular crowd culture. For example, those who have experienced 'routine' demonstrations in repressive regimes report that there is often an expectation that the demonstration will become violent, this violence is anticipated by everyone involved and the scene plays out as if there was a script. In some countries, the use of horses, water cannon, and even ammunition can become the norm and an expected part of participating in a demonstration. Some demonstrators are willing to risk dying for their cause. On one occasion, pro-Palestinian demonstrators in The Hague, Netherlands were seen laughing at being chased by police on horseback. Bystanders at the same scene ranged from being disinterested to being downright afraid. Many protesters went to the Summit of the Americas in Quebec (April, 2001) fully prepared for pepper spray. Others who had experienced only peaceful protest were overwhelmed when tear gas and water cannon were used as a means of crowd control.

Protest crowds assemble because there is a passion, mild or wild, driving people to make a statement that all is not right with the status quo or that proposed changes are not desirable. In other words, there is a difference of opinion about what should be done for the public good. Where there has been sustained commitment to a cause, protest crowds have played a major role in initiating social change. Protest groups like the Chartists⁸ of nineteenth century

8 The Chartists represented working class English who petitioned and demonstrated for electoral reform. Their Charter failed to gain the support of the Parliament—it posed a threat to the self-interests of those in power—and failed to get the support of the middle classes who were content with the status quo. Nonetheless, it was a powerful force that resulted in an increased awareness of social

Figure 2.1 Sub-groups within Protest Crowds

England, while they did not succeed in the short run, over subsequent decades succeeded in getting all but one of their proposed reforms enacted. Changes such as those of the Chartists have moved society in the direction of social justice, increased suffrage, and new levels of democratic fairness. In contrast, protest crowds like those organized by National Socialists⁹ in the 1920s and 1930s paved the way to a repressive regime. Since the 1980s, protest crowds have played a significant role in regime change (e.g. former Warsaw Pact countries, Philippines). In still other venues, professional crowd organizers have managed to put environmental concerns on the global agenda.

Protest Crowd Sub-Groups

Protest crowds are not homogeneous. The following diagram indicates three different sub-groups within a protest crowd. Each of these, in turn have sub-groups within them.

At the centre in the diagram above (Figure 2.1) are those concentrating on protesting against what they believe to be injustices—they tend to be the mainstream activist groups. They are the reason why there is a crowd there in the first place. Some people on the periphery in the diagram concentrate on violence and others are simply there for moral support. However, it is not that simple. Among the active demonstrators are those who are full-time staff people working for organizations focused on environmental, human

issues and created a framework for future working-class organisations. The People's Charter contained the following objectives:

- Universal suffrage for all men over the age of 21
- Equal-sized electoral districts
- Voting by secret ballot
- An end to the need for a property qualification for Parliament (so that constituencies could return the man of their choice, rich or poor)
- Pay for members of Parliament
- Annual election of Parliament

9 Refers primarily to the ideology of the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (*National Socialist German Workers Party*, or NSDAP) under Adolf Hitler.

rights or other social justice issues. There are people working on logistics, organization, protest methods, and communications. Labour unions, religious organizations, community cooks and volunteer community medical teams may be part of the protesting group. Many volunteers become part of the networks supporting activist organizations. Another group within the crowd consists of individuals, not formally members of any organization, but with passionate feelings about the issue. There may also be visitors from other countries who fall into the same groups—professional organizers, members of networks, and independently concerned citizens—and who may join the demonstration.

Most, but not all, crowd participants are peaceful. Among those demonstrators with violent intent there are generally four types. There are activists who at one time were committed to non-violence but who found non-violent means ineffective at communicating to either their targets or through the media to the general population. These people feel that the causes for which they are fighting are so significant that drastic means are necessary to produce results. There are also people who call themselves anarchists, a word derived from the Greek word for ‘no rulers.’ Anarchists range from those who believe in a Utopia, with no laws or rulers, to those who wish to violently overthrow the existing order. One grandmother activist attending one of our sessions described herself as an anarchist and distinguished her brand of anarchism from some of the others. She told us about having talked with some of the youth Black Bloc¹⁰ anarchists and saw them as marginalized young people who feel isolated and want to be part of a tight family of activists. The following quotes from this group provide some sense of their perspective:

‘Black bloc’ is not an organization but a tactic that is historically rooted in the militant anti-fascist movements of Europe ...

The wearing of black clothes and facemasks is a major strategy in black bloc tactics. The aesthetic is a rejection of materialism and the lure of consumer glorification. In tactical terms, wearing black as a group or

10 A **black bloc** is an affinity group that comes together during some sort of demonstration, or other event involving class struggle or anti-globalization. Members wear all black. Black clothing and masks are used to make the bloc appear to be one large mass, promote solidarity, create a clear revolutionary presence (usually associated with anarchism), and also to avoid being identified by authorities. Black blocs are differentiated from other anti-globalist groups by their routine use of vandalism and property destruction to bring attention to their opposition to multi-national corporations and the support perceived to be enjoyed by these companies from Western governments.

a block means that we all look the same, making it harder for police to target individuals. It also provides us with some personal safety in the face of potentially violent police troops ...

People who criticize politically motivated property destruction as violent must think broken windows can feel pain and scream like people do when they are shot with rubber bullets ... As anarchists, we do not advocate mindless destruction, and we simply ask that the movement be open to a diversity of tactics. (Warcry, 2001)

A third group of people comprises those who are fascinated by violence for its own sake. A fourth element is made up of those who like the rush of being a part of a violent mob—the opportunistic violent. They think of it more as an excuse for a big party or a big riot. Whatever the motivation for violence, those who use it believe that their actions are legitimate in the circumstances.

Sometimes *agents provocateurs*, who feel it is in their interests for a crowd to be violent—either to make a point or to discredit a crowd—stir up violence within a crowd; those predisposed toward violence are susceptible to this. This phenomenon is particularly acute in a corrupt democracy where any means needed are used to keep a certain group in power. Where there are protests against the corruption, if they can prompt a crowd to become violent, it becomes illegitimate and police action against the crowd is justified. In this situation, for a crowd to be effective it needs training in non violence, internal security to surround and contain the *agents provocateurs*, and effective witnesses.

Among the peacefully intentioned, the moral supporters may have some relationship with the activist protesters or they may feel that generally the activists deserve support. Some just come out of curiosity. They may be friends and relatives of protesters or people who heard about the crowd action on the news and feel that they should be there to support the cause. There may be grandparents coming with their young grandchildren.

The dynamics of the demonstration can result in people shifting from one group to another in response to their experiences. Repressive security measures may prompt some activists, committed to non-violence, into a violent frame of mind. What moral supporters see and hear might make

activists of them. Bystanders may even get caught up in the experience and become violent. On the other hand, violence on the part of fellow protesters might also discourage some activists from being part of the crowd, not wanting to be identified with particular tactics.

The mimetic theory of René Girard helps to understand these dynamic shifts. As he demonstrates through countless examples, people have a tendency to imitate the desires of others. In the case of those who join in the violence, we can understand it as mimetic contagion. People want to belong, they want the same sense of justice to be done and they want to join in the excitement. There may also be mimetic rivalries that develop between sub-groups within crowds. (Chapter seven provides a succinct overview of mimetic theory in the context of crowd dynamics.)

In addition to the activist demonstrators, violent protesters and moral supporters described above, there is another potential group involved in protest crowds, namely, outside instigators. In some instances, the State may encourage violent crowd action against a targeted group. For example, *Kristallnacht* or The Night of Broken Glass, was a massive, coordinated attack on Jews, organized by the Nazis, throughout the German Reich in 1938. On November 9, mob violence broke out as the regular German police stood by and crowds of spectators watched that night and all the next day as Jewish homes and businesses had their windows broken and goods stolen. Other examples are repressive regimes that use crowds to target minorities and political opponents.

The various groups may come together spontaneously but in instances of major protest crowds they are generally well organized.

Organization

Organization is essential to mounting a significant public protest. If we think of protest as ‘boldly speaking out a truth, belief or ideal to which one is a witness,’ for there to be a large protest crowd a shared truth must come from somewhere. A communication system enables participants to first share and refine a protest message and then share the knowledge that at a given time and place there will be a temporary gathering.

To borrow terms from Grix, protest crowds may be single niche or multiple niche (Grix, 2000). People from a given niche who decide to engage in protest activity become an affinity group. Unions or identity groups (e.g. based on ethnonationalism, a disease or disability) often

find themselves as single niche protest groups. People basically know one another; there is a shared history and shared understandings about the reality they are addressing (e.g. farmers driving their tractors to Parliament Hill or truckers massing their trucks on a given highway). On broad issues like globalization or a protest against a war, there may be multiple niche communities involved. Trade unionists, pacifists, development Non-Governmental Organizations, environmentalists, 'Third World' solidarity groups, and anarchists may all join in a single protest (Barlow, 2001). Each of these has its own web-sites and e-mail distribution lists. Each is connected to an international web of similar groups. There may be an intersecting of relationships, since there are shared values between different groups. Just as a word of mouth rumour about a protest spread from household to household in the 1700s, e-mail messages, facebook entries and twitter quickly spread from one group to another with great speed (Deibert, 2002).

In the case of a major protest planned around a specific event involving thousands of people, logistics are extremely important. Organizations with paid staff assign professional crowd organizers to deal with many aspects of protest events. Unions and other groups have marshals whose job it is to keep order within a protest. Food, medical support, transportation and contingency planning are all important. Non violent training sessions may be organized in advance.

In a composite protest, a unique form of organization has evolved that introduces the institution of the spokescouncil. Protesters are organized according to affinity groups, which may be clustered together or may have within them clusters (Barlow, 2001; Epstein, 1993). Each affinity group has what they refer to as a 'spokes,' a person designated to speak for the group. Decisions to be made about a large crowd protest are made by a spokescouncil which is comprised of 'spokes' from the different affinity groups. Decisions are made by consensus. Some affinity groups constantly rotate their 'spokes' in the interest of keeping the organization non-hierarchical. However, social movements that provide continuity for on-going protest efforts will nurture the development of, and connection to high-profile leaders who can give credibility to their effort.

Eli Sopow shows the importance of organizational factors in generating an effective protest movement. The seven organizational factors Sopow identified are 1) news media exposure, 2) group unity, 3) protest experience,

4) high-profile spokesperson, 5) flexibility and willingness to compromise, 6) good funding, and 7) effective use of e-mail and web (Sopow, 2003). These factors represent a current reality in which large scale protests are organizationally sophisticated. Given the organizational sophistication of many protest crowd organizations, it is clear that much of the true management of crowds is done by the organizers. No matter how they are organized and managed, they are perceived in ways that calls up certain designations which, in turn, impact on the relations with those that they interact.

Designation of Protest Crowds

When it comes to the protest crowd–police relational system, many of the dynamics revolve around the question of the legitimacy of the protest crowd. This in turn depends on the language that is used to designate temporary gatherings of those voicing dissent. Language is important in shaping paradigms, establishing stereotypes, and influencing attitudes and emotions. It is also instructive that the designation of protest crowds has its own history, as does the analysis of such designations. For all these reasons, we think it necessary to present the following analysis. (Note that we have recalled details from previous sections to illustrate the power and significance of the rhetorical devices involved.)

How are protest crowds enframed; that is, how do we determine who is included within a temporary gathering? What language is used to describe what constitutes mass protest activity? And how are the actions interpreted? The latter half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century saw the beginning of theoretical work being done on crowds, generating ideas that were to impact the thought and action of such people as Hitler and Mussolini. The scholarship on crowds and protest has grown significantly in recent decades. Throughout history, language used for groups of protesters has included the following: mob, crowd, unorganized aggregation, public, masses, protesters, the people, dissidents, extra-parliamentary political actors, political militants, or those giving expression to an oppositional consciousness.

Peter Hayes argues that crowd designations have been ideologically driven with people from different polarities of the political spectrum using value-driven language to either deprecate dissenting demonstrators or

give legitimacy to the ‘voice of the people.’ The tendency to use value laden language goes back at least to the 1700s when

the mob was typically depicted not as a wicked, unproductive minority but rather as the majority of the population. This depiction drew on the classical picture of the mob as the *mobile vulgus*, the unstable common people. (Hayes, 1992)

Rudé, in the same vein distinguishes between two stereotypes: the actors are the ‘people’ in the discourse of liberals, the ‘mob’ or ‘rabble’ in the rhetoric of conservatives. Both ‘present the crowd as a disembodied abstraction and not as an aggregate of men and women of flesh and blood.’ (Rudé, 1999)

The contrast between the ‘wicked unproductive minority’ in the mob and the ‘virtue and productivity of the majority’ throughout most of the nineteenth century, argues Hayes, even though the identification of the actors is largely false, shows the ideological importance of the designation. (Hayes 16–17) It was in this context that Gustaf Le Bon did his psychological analyses on crowd action, taking up the assumptions of the conservative side of the ideological split.

Le Bon argued that crowds diminished the rational capacity of its members making each a primitive, emotional being.

Among the special characteristics of crowds there are several—such as impulsiveness, irrationality, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgement and of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of the sentiments ... —which are almost always in beings belonging to inferior forms of evolution—in women ... for instance (Le Bon, [1986]1930).

The perspectives of Le Bon, expressed in a context of preserving an establishment against those pushing for change, were appropriated by Hitler and used to rally the masses—first against the Weimar Republic and then in support of the Third Reich. Hayes, who reveals Hitler’s dependence on Le Bon, gives the following example:

The masses, Hitler argued, were like women: ‘so feminine by nature and attitude that sober reasoning determined their thoughts and

actions far less than emotion and feeling.’ ... Hitler added that just as a woman ‘would rather bow to a strong man than dominate a weakling, ... the masses would love a commander more than a petitioner and feel inwardly more satisfied by a doctrine, tolerating no other beside itself, than by the granting of liberalistic freedom.’ (Hayes, 1992)

In this case the crowd is designated as ‘the masses’ and the root metaphor of ‘woman’ is attached to it. In that era in which Freudian stereotypes abounded, the use of ‘woman’ in relation to a crowd as collective, made it something to be controlled and manipulated—not in the contemporary sense of crowd control from the outside but rather controlled through emotional language of solidarity. Hitler deliberately presented himself as a strong figure who would woo the crowds with his authoritative rhetoric.

Continuing in the German context, a half century later, crowds played a crucial role in bringing down the Communist regime of East Germany. Here again, the discursive structures around crowd designation played a key role. As the government responded with force against the demonstrators the confrontations

were described by the communists as the confrontation between the mob and the people. Thus, the state press agency said of the demonstrations of October 7–8, 1989: ‘The violence caused by hooligans who were provoked by the international media was stopped by the People’s Police and order was restored ...’

The response of the protesters was to reject their designation as the mob by affirming the opposite. Thus, the protestors in East Germany chanted, ‘We are the people! We are the people!’ at the police. Similarly in Romania, where Ceausescu had branded the protesters as ‘hooligans,’ they sang: ‘We’re the people. Down with the dictator.’ (Hayes, 137–8)

In this case, the designation of the crowd became the fulcrum on which rested the legitimacy of protesters or police, particularly in a context in which ‘people’ as a root metaphor carried a positive, legitimating, moral valence.

Peter Joyce locates protesters within a broader field of extra-parliamentary political activity that includes action by individuals or groups who ‘feel

that reliance on conventional activity will not secure for them the changes they seek.' (Joyce, 1) Extra parliamentary protest activity includes demonstrations, direct action—economic sanctions, civil disobedience, physical obstruction—and counter-cultural forms of protest, including occupation of what is perceived to be common land. (Joyce, 16–21) Related is Jane Mansbridge's placement of protest activities in the field of oppositional consciousness (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001).

What becomes clear is that the designation of 'crowd' phenomena is not only a psychological and political issue, it is very much a matter of identity. For example, Abby Peterson's research on political militancy shows that for certain groups of young people in Europe—on both left and right ends of the political spectrum—militant action-resistance becomes the centre of their identity and focal point of everyday existence (Peterson, 2001). One unifying theme is that emotion and rationality are woven together within individual participants in protest actions and at the collective level of group dynamics. Given the developmental nature of identity, within one crowd the relationship between crowd participation and the identity of each person can vary considerably.

Much of the theorizing on crowds was based on a stereotypic notion of who might be involved. Hippolyte Taine used the following words to describe those in the mob of the French Revolution: 'idlers, libertines, professional gamblers, parasites, veterans of vice and crime, the rabble of the town.' (Hayes, 1992, 4, quoting Taine, 125–26) Karl Marx described the same mob as

decayed roués with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, ... ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, ... vagabonds, discharged *souiers*, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, rogues, mountebanks, *lazzaroni*, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, maquereaus, brothel keepers, porters, literati, organ-grinders, rag pickers, knifegrinders, tinkers, beggars. (Hayes, 1992, 5, quoting Marx, 149)

Similar uncomplimentary descriptions can be found of crowds in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain. Rudé, as was pointed out above, based his research on the occupations of those arrested and those who ended up in the hospital, resulting in a profile of those in the crowd substantially different than the generally accepted stereotypes. They tended to be

craftspeople, workers, and small business owners—those with a stake in society (1964).

A contemporary comparison of the language used to talk about large protest groups comes from Naomi Klein:

But what are reported as menacing confrontations are often joyous events, as much experiments in alternative ways of organizing societies as criticisms of existing models ... These protests—which are actually week-long marathons of intense education on global politics, late-night strategy sessions in six-way simultaneous translation, festivals of music and street theatre—are like stepping into a parallel universe. Overnight, the site is transformed into a kind of alternative global city where urgency replaces resignation, corporate logos need armed guards, people usurp cars, art is everywhere, strangers talk to each other, and the prospect of a radical change in political course does not seem like an odd and anachronistic idea but the most logical thought in the world. (2002, xxiv–xxv)

Klein's description is in contrast to the coverage of the broken window at McDonald's that was central to television coverage. The 'riff-raff' versus 'respectable citizen' contrast in how protest is framed continues on.

Regardless of who is in a protest crowd, how it has been organized and what it is called, by its very nature and the unpredictability of its dynamics, it is a complex system, which contains within itself the potential for chaos, the final aspect of crowds to be considered.

Protest Crowds as Complex Systems

Deborah Sword has done pioneer work linking complexity science with protest crowds (Sword, 2003). Here is how she introduces the concept:

Complexity science, which is the study of nonlinear, complex and dynamic systems, includes group interactions, such as public policy protests. Nonlinear systems are identifiable by their complex characteristics. Nonlinearity means that a cause and an effect are not necessarily traceable in a direct line. For example, small inputs into a complex system can amplify, causing the system to move in

surprising and unexpected directions. The ways complex systems develop over time, called the property of emergence, depend on earlier events, called initial conditions. Complex systems also accept positive and negative feedback from which they adapt and learn. (Sword, 2003)

Within systems thinking, she argues, it is interdependencies that work together to bring about a particular event. There is not a single cause, *per se* but there are cascades ‘where, once one thing happens, more things are likely to happen.’ (Sword, 2003) As she applies systems theory to protest crowds in public policy situations, she distinguishes between agents who inhabit the dominant system—including politicians, bureaucrats, most news media and police/security forces—and protesters who inhabit the shadow system. Sword did an analysis of three public protest scenarios in Toronto. Her research demonstrated that protest crowds are complex systems following the simple rules of complexity science.

There are a number of key concepts coming out of complexity theory that are important in the understanding of the dynamics of protest crowds, according to Sword. These include edge of chaos, adaptation, uncertainty, phase transition, bifurcation, and amplification. Let us examine each of these.

Edge of chaos is a point between rigidity and stability that applies to complex adaptive systems (Kauffman, 1995). If the system descends into chaos or closes into rigid positions, the result is death. However, if the agents within the complex systems adapt, the result can be new creative orders of being (Sword, 2003). *Adaptation*, a feature of which is resilience, involves learning and the development of a new level of consciousness (McGuigan, 2006). It is an evolutionary dynamic that provides a capacity for sustained existence.

At the edge of chaos within complex systems, there is always *uncertainty* about the consequences of any particular action. There are tipping points (Gladwell, 2000) that enable the possibility of creative changes from old to new; however, what constitutes the new cannot be pre-determined, but can involve changes in norms, knowledge or behaviour. The change, which can appear suddenly when it occurs, is called a *phase transition*. As Sword explains, ‘Phase transitions occur at the edge of chaos, when almost any future is possible and what the future will be is unpredictable.’ (Sword, 2003, 22; see also Gell-Mann, 1994; Holland, 1995;)

Bifurcation points are defined by the irreversibility of the results of a choice. They involve a qualitative change in a place of ‘maximum instability and maximum possibilities for the future.’ (Sword, 2003) In the case of crowd dynamics, the new possibilities could involve an escalation in the intensity and breadth of activity, a lateral shift to a new direction, or a de-escalation of intensity.

Finally, Sword argues that the dynamics of *amplification* are important in an understanding of crowds:

Nonlinear systems have amplification that creates disproportionate changes, thus cause and effect may not be directly traceable. How a nonlinear system unfolds depends upon how it began and what inputs it experienced. Complex systems have sensitive dependence on initial conditions. Two identical communities might, for example, react very differently to the same policy because their unique community contexts had different initial conditions for receiving inputs. (Sword, 2003)

Besides depending on the context, amplification can be seen as having cascading effects in which a given incident will prompt a number of different actions and events. The particular cascade effects of a given action will depend on the timing, including what has happened just before, what is happening concurrently and what happens immediately after. The effects are surprising because there are unlimited possibilities.

An input into a nonlinear system, whether it is the initial announcement of a new policy or the protesters’ objections, may have surprising, often unforeseeable consequences, with larger effects than one might have predicted. The two concepts of sensitive dependence on initial conditions and amplification came to be known as the ‘Butterfly Effect’ (Lorenz, 1993). The analogy Lorenz used to explain sensitive dependence on initial conditions and amplification, is a butterfly flapping its wings in Mexico that can cause a tidal wave in Japan, or a storm in Chicago. The Butterfly Effect means that where a nonlinear system ends up depends on where it started and what happened to it along the way. Small perturbations unbalance a complex system from where it looked like it was going, and what

its potential future might have predicted when it was first observed. Inputs into a nonlinear system, whether intentional or otherwise, can increase throughout the system. (Sword, 2003)

If we look at the protest crowd through the lens of complexity science, it becomes clear that prior attitudes and stereotypes of police, politicians, public and media to the protesters are an important part of the context and, as such, will play a role, however unpredictable, in how events unfold. It follows that the designation of the protest crowd and the paradigm used to interpret the protest crowd–police relational system will be factors in determining cascading effects. As well, they could be the locus of learning and the emergence of new possibilities leading to the sustainability and survival of the stakeholders involved.

This look at protest crowds from the perspectives of protest, crowd dynamics, language used to designate protest crowds and their participants, individual and collective dynamics, and complexity science has shown multiple aspects of this phenomenon. What should be clear, as a sub-text, is that emotions play a significant role in motivating people to participate in protest crowd activity as well as in what happens in the course of a protest. In the next chapter we will examine the nature and role of emotions in greater detail, anticipating that they are also an important factor for police, politicians, bystanders and the media.