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3. Emotions: The Fuel of Violence

In their book, *Dealing with an Angry Public*, authors Larry Susskind and Patrick Field point out that often groups who gather for angry protest do so for very good reasons (Susskind & Field, 1996). Through stories such as the oil spill of the Exxon Valdez off the coast of Alaska, the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant crisis, the breast implant class action lawsuits and the Hydro Quebec clash with the Cree, Susskind and Field show that people and the environment have been deeply hurt through various actions of government and business. In each case there was a very angry public reaction. In this chapter we hope to provide a framework to understand better how deep emotions are generated within the various stakeholder groups.

In recent years the role of emotions in determining behaviour has come to the fore with the growth of literature that highlights the physiological effect of emotional part of the brain on the mind–body as well as the importance of emotional intelligence in contributing to good communication and healthy relationships. We will outline some recent discoveries of how emotions work physiologically and then show the various ways in which emotions play a role in protest crowds. We will link emotions first, to deep-rooted conflict via human identity needs; second, to levels of moral consciousness; and third, to mimetic (imitation) theory. We will conclude the chapter with a comparative analysis of Sopot's emotional factors in crowd action with human identity needs, and, finally, provide a link to emotional intelligence.

What is experienced as an emotion can be seen in the body as the release of large numbers of particular neurotransmitters that send messages to various cells (Pert, 1997). One of the messages is for glands to release certain hormones which in turn have the effect of shutting down the work of some organs and pumping up the activity in others. In the event of a profound emotional stimulation, like a severe threat to one's survival, the release of neurotransmitters and the subsequent effects are extreme. Blood pressure rises, the digestive system shuts down, hands turn clammy, one's throat become dry, etc. Concomitantly, the body registers memories of all of the activities associated with the fear stimulus—like a computer software program saved on a hard drive that can be activated by a code. That way, if there is another event that stirs up a similar fear, the body is prepared to replicate the physiological reaction. Though the emotional memories are

stored in many parts of the body, the amygdala, a small part of the brain, plays a particularly strong role in storing and activating such memories (Niehoff, 1999). When it receives a stimulus that resembles the initial emotion, it can, without any conscious thought, immediately send messages throughout the mind and body to re-activate all of the physical effects in a manner similar to the original experience. There is no time consciousness to the emotional part of the brain so emotional memories of say twenty years ago are experienced as though they are present realities.

This general and simplified neurobiological description maps on to phenomena described by social psychologists. They speak of reservoirs of recollection—emotional memories—that can be triggered by smells, words, objects or symbols associated with what caused the emotional reaction in the first place (Volkan, 1990). They also distinguish between public truth and table truth; the former what one speaks in public among those one does not know and the latter being truth shared with close intimates. Table truth often is linked with reservoirs of recollection. Where an identity group such as one of the distinct groups associated with a protest crowd has gone through similar experiences there may be similar reservoirs of recollection and similar table truths. A crowd of people who share emotionally laden table truths can be aroused emotionally by a leader who uses words and symbols that recall those ‘truths.’ Those with a capacity to reflect on their experience, to observe themselves, or in psychological terms to develop a distal self, can consciously make the connection between the stimulus and their emotional response. This capacity increases emotional intelligence.

A third aspect of emotions has to do with the interplay between emotion and cognition. What occurs within a deep-rooted conflict is that the emotion associated with a threat to one’s identity needs can commandeer the mind. The mind then works in a way that is very logical and deliberate but at a deeper level is propelled by emotion. Examples of this are well-organized lynchings or meticulously planned terrorist attacks. In both cases, there is a strong cognitive component to the activity as indicated by the preparations involved and there are strong passions motivating the commitment to kill. These emotions are linked to a perception of injustice, another way that the cognitive-emotional link is manifest.

On the positive side of emotions, Michael Polanyi has argued persuasively that scientists are guided by what he calls intellectual passions (Polanyi, 1964). They have emotional drives to pursue certain research questions and

as they develop theoretical positions they are emotionally driven to maintain and strengthen their paradigms, hence the strong rivalries within scientific communities. Similarly anti-globalization protesters are passionately devoted to doing research on the environment, on practices of multi-national corporations, on government policies and a host of other topics to find evidence to support their positions. As they do this, their passions for activism increase and they enter a public protest highly motivated. Likewise, the police develop strong passions around crowd management—more on this later.

Human Identity Needs

Inspired by the writings of Abraham Maslow, a generation of needs theorists emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. Among them they identified well over twenty needs closely tied to human identity. John W. Burton, a primary theorist in conflict studies, identified human needs as the key to understanding the passions evoked in deep-rooted conflict. Primary emotions can be mapped on to human identity needs (Sites, 1990). Hence when need satisfiers are threatened the emotion can be very strong. The following diagram (Figure 3.1) shows how needs and emotions can be linked together.¹¹

Figure 3.1 Human Identity Needs and Emotions

¹¹ The concept of human identity needs is more fully developed in Vern Neufeld Redekop, *From Violence to Blessing—How an Understanding of Deep-Rooted Conflict Can Open Paths to Reconciliation* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2002).

The need categories are universal but the satisfiers are unique to cultures, to individuals, to historical circumstances and to personal experiences. Each need category gets at an essential aspect of life. The need for *meaning* is around making sense of the world as we experience it. For some, this need is met through a particular philosophical or religious system; for others, it is through family life; and increasingly, people look to work for meaning. The need for *meaning* includes a sense of justice and firmly held values about what is right and wrong. When the satisfiers to the need for meaning are threatened, the emotional reaction is one of anger. Next, the need for *connectedness* includes a need to belong to a community, to be with people who talk the same language, who share the same experiences. When this is threatened through death or conflict one feels a profound sense of sadness at the loss of friend or family. The need for *action*, third, is the need to be an agent of action, someone who can make things happen. A threat to this involves depression. Fourth, the need for *security* includes welfare needs of food, shelter and clothing as well as security of the person from injury or assault and emotional security. A threat to security invokes fear. *Recognition*, the fifth need, is an acknowledgement of the other need satisfier as well as recognition of the being, or presence of the person as a significant entity. Its threat stirs up a sense of self-doubt and even shame.

For many activists, their identity needs are satisfied through the issues over which they are active. For example, an environmentalist gets *meaning* out of care for the environment and justice is defined in terms of care or destruction of the environment. *Connectedness* includes being connected to the natural world as well as to others who share a passion for preserving the natural order. Significant *action* is that which prevents destruction of the environment and enhances its well being. *Security* of the person is tied to keeping the environment free of significant toxins. *Recognition* includes a validation of environmental concerns and support for actions taken. For some environmentalists the whole self is oriented toward environmental concerns. In terms of developmental psychology, they are 'subject to' their environmental concerns and may have many identity needs met, whereas if they take their environmental concerns as an object, they will be less inclined to have their identity needs met this way. However, most people tend not to be so single-minded; the illustration is used to show that for some people issue areas become very

central to their identity and to perpetrate an injustice in their area of interest amounts to an attack on their identity.

Targets of crowd protests, security personnel and bystanders likewise have need satisfiers that give definition to their identities. Police, for instance, have a mandate to maintain public order. When they take *action* to effect *security* of the public at large, their identity need for *meaning* is fulfilled. They may have a heightened need for *security* of themselves by virtue of the fact that they are more aware than many of the threats to public order that exist in society. They get *recognition* when public order is maintained—they also get negative *recognition* when the public doesn't agree with or understand the reasons for their actions or if they experience 'troubles.' If they fail in their task, the negative recognition is great. Their need for *connectedness* is reflected in their close affinity for others like themselves who understand the pressures of their work. With their colleagues they can speak of the many things they know and cannot take action on or share with the public. In these times, the police community fulfills their need for *connectedness*. When we witness huge demonstrations by police in support of their fallen comrades, we see how deeply they are moved when one of their own is killed in active duty.

Politicians and government officials are frustrated when their ability to take *action* and even their personal *security* is thwarted by protesters. There is *meaning* in the election process that gives them a mandate to take *action* on behalf of society. Their work and the power vested in them as individuals supports their need for *recognition*.

Bystanders feel that their need for *security* is compromised when windows are broken and goods looted. When they join in a demonstration (they are no longer bystanders), they feel satisfied in their needs for *action* and *connectedness* by virtue of their contribution to the protest and their association with likeminded people. When they remain bystanders their need for meaning can be met vicariously through the action of others, if they are sympathetic to the cause. If not, they may cheer the actions of police. Sometimes a complex system arises in which bystanders protest the way in which their lives are disrupted by protest activities. This was the case during the Oka/Kanehsata:ke Crisis of 1990 in Canada, during which the Mercier Bridge was blocked by a Mohawk protest. People from Chateauguay and Montreal formed protest crowds in response.

Here are some other examples from seminars on crowd dynamics that illustrated how the affirmation of or threat to need categories affects crowd dynamics:

- One protester from the Quebec City demonstration said that the recognition that Prime Minister Chrétien gave to the protesters was constructive and had the effect of calming angry feelings.
- For another participant, *connectedness* is the most significant of the needs in the protest context. What remains most important for people who demonstrated in the 1960's is the human connections and not the issues.
- Some people who formed crowds were there for *meaning*, that is, political purpose. There was something wrong with the world and they wanted to fix it.
- For street youth, the crowd can be seen as their family—*connectedness* and *security* are important.
- For another participant, the need for *action* was important. Bad things come when access to a venue is cut off. They (activists) protest to be active about an issue and not to stay on the sidelines.

Likewise, security personnel may get very angry with protesters whom they see to be acting violently and threatening public order and their own security. When they see the same person throwing rocks or Molotov cocktails or perhaps bullying other non-violent protesters, they can have strong feelings around the injustice. And when a huge angry crowd comes charging at them, their job, linked with their identity, is to protect those behind them; they may feel afraid and also have a heightened sense of determination to stop the crowd at all costs. On the other hand as they think about their children and others they are connected with being part of the crowd they may have conflicting emotions. Security personnel, activists and media all have significant emotional memories—especially fear remembered from ‘the big ones.’

When one incident threatens a number of need categories concurrently, there can be powerful compound emotions. In *Dealing with an Angry Public*, the authors associate anger with hurt, risk, belief, weakness and lies (Susskind & Field, 1996). Using the above diagram to look at multiple threats, we can see that if there is an injustice (meaning) producing anger and if it involves a loss of life (connectedness), the anger is compounded and intensified by the sorrow. If there is a perceived injustice accompanied by impediments to action, the frustration intensifies the anger. A threat to

security with injustice produces another type of anger. If a crowd gathers to protest, it may be driven by a sense of injustice or a need for recognition of their cause. If the response of security forces to their protest is considered unjust, their anger intensifies. If there is a threat to their personal security or well being, the emotions soar.

There are also identity needs related to the temporal dimension of life. Related to the past we have needs for memories, stories and a sense of coherence. Projecting into the future are needs for imagination, stimulation and continuity (Redekop, 2002). The importance of the temporal dimension means that protest crowd members carry forward memories of past encounters. The more these are coloured by violence, the harder it is to trust and the better the chance that violence will be introduced on future occasions. When looking at the time series of the protest crowd from a complexity science view, some of their actions come at bifurcation points—what they do sets off a series of events the effects of which are much greater than could be predicted. The actions may be based on strategies decided on the basis of their memories of other actions that were effective or ineffective to achieve their goals or on emotional memories of past violence.

Police like individual protesters are motivated in their work with a passion to do their job well. In addition, they may have strong feelings about the issues involved. Like protesters they too have emotional memories based on past experiences. In this case, memories may include having eggs, feces or bricks thrown at them, being called deprecating names by protesters, being insulted, having a fear that the thin line of police might not hold against a massive unruly crowd wanting to get to a foreign visitor. They too may take actions that function as bifurcation points, unleashing new levels of violence. On the other hand, they may have memories of positive exchanges with activists just as some protesters have good memories of helpful exchanges with police. These positive experiences could influence decisions and actions in the direction of tension reduction.

Emotions and Moral Consciousness

We are now in a position to make some links between emotional phenomena and the moral consciousness that motivates protest crowds. In Jasper's first level of moral consciousness, described in the previous chapter, people are driven to protest by an immediate threat to their basic needs. There is an

immediate threat to a need for meaning (justice) and to security and these prompt emotions of anger and fear. In the case of higher levels, there is an awareness of injustice that prompts an anger that suggests that something has to change. As one moves through different stages of consciousness, the sense of justice becomes more complex and highly nuanced but the emotions attached to a threat to this sense of justice remain the same. Someone who really sees the systemic implications of a given policy, for instance, can become quite passionate about trying to make a change in that policy.

For some people, their stage of consciousness development means that their identities will be completely oriented toward seeking some combination of distributive justice, situational justice or systemic change. This passion may be expressed in militancy (Peterson, 2001), volatility (Sopow, 2003) or determination to organize protest as strategically effectively as possible (Barlow, 2001).

Knowledge of emotional dynamics may help to explain various dynamics operative within a crowd and integrate some of the different paradigmatic observations. Certainly some people will be motivated to join a protest crowd out of a feeling of connectedness with other protesters and solidarity with those ‘oppressed.’ McPhail develops the idea that conviviality is an important emotional dimension of crowds (McPhail, 1991). Once a protest crowd has formed, there is a symbiotic relationship between a crowd leader and the crowd itself. Each feeds off of the other’s emotion.

Expression of Emotions

McPhail proposes a useful taxonomy of action words to describe what exactly people in crowds do. These include

collective orientation (gazing, facing, vigiling), vocalization (booing, yeahing, ohing), verbalization (chanting, singing), vertical locomotion (sitting, standing), horizontal locomotion (surging, marching, clustering), gesticulation (Roman salute, *Digitus obscenus*, peace sign) and manipulation (applauding, synchro clapping). (McPhail, 1991, 164)

The various actions—gesticulations and locutions—McPhail has in his taxonomy can all be seen as means for emotional expression. In the course of a demonstration various actions could potentially clearly indicate anger,

indignation, support, determination, hate, satisfaction, solidarity, alienation, sorrow or joy.

If a crowd leader is effective in naming shared table truths, releasing reservoirs of recollection, and skilled in accessing the collective consciousness of the crowd, crowd passions can be ignited that can lead to determination to persevere or to take dramatic action. This occurred in East Germany as the New Forum gathered people in churches to consider what was happening. People in their niche groups had developed a table truth that acknowledged the corruption and deficiencies of the system (Grix, 2000). As they came together this became a shared and public truth; the passion associated with the table truths could be channelled by leaders into change. The use of churches and the commitment to non violence meant that the action taken was often limited to lighting candles. The power, truth and passion of the protest crowds were so strong that increasingly members of the ruling communist party renounced their party membership and joined the crowds.

In the course of a temporary gathering of protesters, something may happen that either is a threat to their need for justice or is a trigger to reservoirs of recollection, releasing powerful and immediate emotions. It may be what is perceived as the unjust arrest of a fellow protester, police action that is deemed violent or unjustified, destructive action on the part of fringe protesters or the brandishing of a provocative symbol. When this happens there may be an incident which, viewed from a camera could be deemed out of control. One such example occurred at Oka/Kanehsata:ke on July 11, 1990. A protest crowd had been occupying a small road to prevent development of a golf course. The police arrived and after a standoff for a few hours there was an exchange of gunfire, a police officer was killed, and the police left in a hurry. At this point there was an emotional reaction, which protest organizers were unable to subdue. Immediately groups of protesters destroyed police cruisers and started piles of tires on fire. Some of the protest leaders tried unsuccessfully to stop them since they wanted to obtain the radios and other items of value from cruisers (Redekop, 2002).

Emotions and Imitation

Emotions are subject to mimesis or imitation. 'Mimesis' is the Greek word for imitation; the concept of mimesis as it is used in this book has been developed by René Girard, whose thought will be explored further in chapter

seven. Back in the 1700s Adam Smith observed that when one person displays an emotion, another is stimulated to experience similar emotions. In recent years it has become clear that our faces are neurologically connected to our emotional physiology (Dalai Lama; Goleman, 2004). From infancy we learn how to 'read' the emotions of others based on their facial features. Emotional clues are also given through body language and vocal tones. As we perceive emotions of those around us they mimetically arouse similar emotions within us. This process is not straightforward; the degree of this phenomenon varies and increases as we identify with the mimetic models. (This observation is an adaptation of René Girard's development of mimetic desire.) Emotional mimesis helps to explain the concept of emotional contagion whereby a group of people quickly adopts a similar emotional state.

Let us turn now to the question of what motivates activists to place their physical wellbeing in jeopardy as they participate in a passionate protest. We will use the framework of Eli Sopow. This question will, of course, raise the issue of what are the identity and emotional dynamics present among other stakeholder groups present at the crowd event. As one police officer put it, the actions of security personnel are motivated by strong emotions. They share a fear of being hurt in an uncontrolled and violent crowd.

Sopow's Analysis of Emotional Factors

Combining fifteen years experience within protest movements with work as an RCMP protest policing strategist, Eli Sopow reviewed the literature on emotional motivators to protest and synthesized five key factors which he then tested in a quantitative research project in New York City. The two strongest factors emerging from his research are 'fairness and the perception that an issue has a negative impact on a person or their family ... [These] can create strong emotions of anger, fear, and moral outrage.' (Sopow, 2003, 141) The other three factors were that an issue creates uncertainty about the future, the issue is of interest to friends or family, and the issue affects rights as a citizen. Of these, the role of friends and families emerged as significant but least among the five factors. His conclusions resonate with Jasper's assertion that

'Moral shocks' are often the first step toward recruitment into social movements: when an unexpected event or piece of information raises

such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined toward political action, with or without the network of personal contacts emphasized in mobilization and process theories (Jasper, 1997, 106).

Sopow's list of emotional factors can be seen in terms of a threat to identity needs of people.

Sopow's Emotional Factors	Redekop's Identity Needs	Emotion
Fairness	Meaning (sense of justice)	Anger
Impacts you or your family	Security, connectedness	Fear, sadness
Uncertainty about the future	Continuity, action, security	Depression, fear
Friends or family interested.	Connectedness, stimulation	Excitement, intensified other emotions
Affects rights as citizen	Recognition, security, possibly story and coherence if one has come from a history of human rights abuse.	Shame, pride, entitlement, fear

These factors certainly have links to emotions as understood in terms of human identity needs. *Fairness* appeals to the sense of justice embedded within one's meaning system. *Personal impact* could take the form of a threat to security need satisfiers be they physical, financial or emotional. If there is a threat to the wellbeing of people whom we know, it would affect the need for connectedness. *Uncertainty* can be mapped onto a need for security but also a need for continuity into the future. Personal rights affect one's security, meaning (sense of justice) and ability to take action. *Influence of friends* is related to the need for connectedness. James Jasper, likewise attaches great importance to the role of a range of emotions in motivating protest actions.

Invoking these emotional factors involves 'framing' issues in such a way that they will spark emotional reactions. Referring to the literature on the subject, Sopow shows that effective framing provides 'a sense of collective

identity to individuals and a sense of shared values and injustice' (Sopow, 2003, 141). Framing is the task of people organizing protest movements and events; thus the organization of protest becomes significant. Whether conscious or not, 'framing' always resonates with some stage of consciousness more than others—i.e. if one is aware of what the consciousness of the crowd is, then they can strategically frame the issues to strongly resonate with the crowd. As previously mentioned this can be a highly manipulative process, as the crowd, then, can be strategically orientated toward peace or violence.

Emotional Intelligence

In recent years, the concept of emotional intelligence has been developed to indicate one's awareness of one's own emotions, awareness of the emotional dynamics that others might experience, and what might be effective strategies for thought and behaviour in light of this awareness. Having high emotional intelligence allows a person to harness emotional energy to work at optimum performance, flowing with the demands of a given situation (Goleman, 1997). Low emotional intelligence means that one is driven or inhibited by emotions that take control of mind and body.

When emotional intelligence is combined with crowd mobilization, the results can be dramatically different from what happens in angry protests. Sharon Welsh describes a situation in which a group of Buddhist monks were present at a protest. Instead of the angry demeanor of most of the protesters, they exemplified in their personal bearing the kind of peace the others were advocating:

Among the hundreds of demonstrators angrily shouting, fiercely denouncing the design of first strike nuclear weapons at Draper Labs in Cambridge, Massachusetts was small group of robed Buddhist monks, smiling, chanting, beating their drums in the graceful, calming cadences of the human heart. As I participated in demonstrations in Boston and New England in the mid-1980s, I was captivated by the energy of the monks. Their very presence was a gift of healing and beauty, a sharp contrast to the voices of rage and despair. Many of my students and colleagues were equally moved, and we tried to find ways of being present in demonstrations that were both denunciations of what we saw as military and economic aggression, and, at the same time, actions that

in themselves were also expressions of beauty, joy, wonder and peace. We were rarely successful.

In fact, it was not until writing this essay, twenty years after demonstrations in Boston and Cambridge, that I realized that the Buddhist monks were as much an evocative, albeit non-judgmental, 'protest' against us, as they were a protest of the making of nuclear weapons and the support of military action throughout the world. The presence of those gracious, calm, joyous monks was as much a challenge and gift to us angry peace demonstrators as they were to those who created and supported the creation of nuclear weapons. The Buddhist monks could easily have been as focused on demonstrating a different way of being to us, the demonstrators, as they were on showing another way of being to those who supported war. It is surprising that it has taken me so long to recognize this challenge, and this gift. The power of righteous indignation is a remarkable thing. (Welch, 2004)

This example raises the questions, what would happen to protest crowd-police relational systems if there was an increase in emotional intelligence all around? How would it change the nature of protest? What would be the impact on society? We will return to these when we introduce the paradigm of mutual respect; but first it is important to introduce the police as primary agents in the dynamics of public protest, then to look at the structures that systematically increase the rift between police and protesters and then introduce the other stakeholders.