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5. The Violence of ‘Otherness’: Scapegoating and Hegemonic Structures

We have now introduced protest crowds and given an account of how they have evolved historically to the point they are today. We have shown, through the use of human identity needs theory, that for some protesters, a significant part of their identity is tied up with the cause for which they demonstrate and the injustice against which they protest. In the course of major organized protests they encounter the police. This encounter means that protesters and police become part of a relational system. Each group has to deal with the other in a significant way. Sometimes the encounter lasts for only a single event that includes planning, assembling, crowd activity, dispersal and post event follow-up. In other cases a protest can last a long time—up to several months, years or decades. Other protest activities form action chains or even practices in which one protest crowd after another assembles temporarily over the same issue. This means that the police–protester relational system can be sustained over a long period of time.

Any relational system takes on unique characteristics. If the relational system is mutually hurtful and antagonistic, we can say it has taken on the character of a mimetic structure of violence. Mimetic means that the structure is imitative of both behaviour and intent and so both parties reciprocate ill-will toward one another. If the relationship is mutually beneficial, we say that the character is that of a mimetic structure of blessing. In chapter eight we will develop the concept of mimetic structures of blessing more fully. This chapter introduces mimetic structures of violence; and uses specific theoretical examples of violent relationships where the ‘Other’ side of the relationship is viewed and treated stereotypically.

Violence can take many forms. Overt physical violence is the most easy to identify. If people are hitting, pounding, throwing stones, shooting, using tear gas, throwing Molotov cocktails, setting fires, or breaking windows, it is easy to say that this looks and feels like violence. Violent actions can be camouflaged, indirect, emotional, or psychological. Threats, or even implied threats, can be forms of violence. Violence forces people to do what they do not wish to do; it hurts them; it diminishes their self-worth and dignity; it keeps them from taking meaningful action; it destroys or steals their property.

The long term effect of violence is that it establishes a rift in the relationship—a profound sense of ‘Otherness.’ This rift, as it grows in depth, results in dehumanization—the Other is not seen as a dignified human being. It can morph into demonization where the Other is blamed for all that is wrong, or threatens the life of oneself and one’s group.

Violence is itself a complex phenomenon with many different aspects to it. In this chapter we will examine in greater detail two dimensions of violence that can play a role in the protest crowd–police relational system; namely, scapegoating and hegemonic, or dominating, structures where stereotypical views of the ‘Other’ contribute to violence. In the section on scapegoating, the first dimension discussed, we will provide a theoretical base for understanding the violence phenomenon based on the work of French thinker René Girard. Girard makes the observation that scapegoating is a violence of differentiation in which the scapegoat victim becomes completely ‘Other.’

Any violence of differentiation can be sustained over time through the second dimension that we will discuss, namely, structures of domination, or hegemonic structures. Those who have the power to subdue others put these hegemonic structures into place. In time, those who are subjected internalize feelings of inferiority. In this way, hegemonic structures are sustained with a minimum of effort or even a minimum of awareness especially on the dominant side. In some instances, police are called upon to maintain hegemonic structures; on the other hand, some social movements are all about breaking free of these structures. In still other instances the protest crowd–police relational system can exemplify characteristics of a hegemonic structure with the police taking on the dominant role. As we look at the different aspects of hegemonic structures, the nature of these dynamics will become clearer. Before that, we will look at the process of scapegoating to clarify by example one way we dehumanize and differentiate ‘Others’ in our lives.

Scapegoating

Scapegoating involves a frustrated, chaotic community being united in blaming a victim for their troubles and taking out their resentments and violent sentiments on that victim. This phenomenon is often seen emerging within crowds (e.g. burning effigies, chanting against a personality or event), and can also be observed among police (e.g. arresting a token ‘trouble-maker’). In a situation where a crowd is angry about an injustice

they are facing and frustrated that their message is not getting through to the public, politicians or media (this is important because protest groups will escalate to get publicity), they could make scapegoats of security or even journalists. One example happened during the Oka/Kanehsatà:ke crisis of 1990, Mohawks had blocked the Mercier Bridge turning a 15 minute commute into Montreal into over an hour trip as commuters were forced to take the long way to the city. Protesting crowds in opposition to the blockade were angry about the inconvenience that they thought was unjust, upset with the Mohawks and frustrated with the Government for not resolving the crisis. The scapegoat impulse was like lightening looking for a place to strike. Sometimes members of the crowd turned on journalists or individuals who wore a Canadian flag. They burned in effigy both Premier Bourassa and a Mohawk warrior, examples of symbolic scapegoating. A second example was during the Quebec Summit of the Americas in April 2001, when a Global TV vehicle was trashed by demonstrators. During the Strategic Leaders' Seminar on Crowd Management and Conflict Resolution that May, participants reflected on the fence at Quebec City becoming the symbolic scapegoat for activists. They felt the fence was illegitimate. One participant commented that once scapegoating catches on it is very powerful and difficult to define. Another suggested that it was better to have a fence as a scapegoat than a political target.

The scapegoat is one who threatens the security of the group causing fear of losing their group identity. They become a threat to the sense of justice of the group resulting in anger and a threat to the connectedness creating a sense of sadness. The action is distorted, differences are not recognized, the group is seen as incoherent and the continuity is threatened. In other words, the human identity needs of the community are threatened. As a result, the community turns against those they can blame. In the case of the fence, the mere existence of the fence thwarted the needs of the protest community and this became very personal for those fenced-out.

It is also possible that security becomes the scapegoat for the crowd and perhaps for the target and the bystanders (Figure 5.1). Returning to the Oka/Kanehsatà:ke crisis of 1990, the crowd in Chateauguay, at one point, turned on the Quebec police who had to lock themselves in a detachment for their own protection. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police intervened to help protect the provincial police.

Figure 5.1 Security Orientation vis-à-vis Crowds

Knowledge of the dynamics of scapegoating will help police and protest leaders work strategically to prevent scapegoat victimization. Hence, we will look first at the characteristics of the scapegoat and the process of scapegoating itself. We will then look at some of the cultural permutations of scapegoating as it takes the form of sacrificial rituals and is embedded in community mythology.

Drawing on Girard's careful analysis, it becomes evident that scapegoats are different (Girard, 1989), but not too different; are powerful, but not too powerful (Girard, 2000); and are illegitimate. Historically scapegoats have been physically different. Sometimes the difference is based on class—either those at the bottom or those on top are singled out in a special way (Girard, 1989). The ideal scapegoat identifies with the community in some ways but is distinguished from it in other ways (Girard, 1988). Scapegoats are powerful enough to be responsible for the frustrations of the community yet they must be sufficiently vulnerable that the scapegoat action can work without backfiring. The sense of illegitimacy can be a result of real or perceived injustices, remembrance of past violence, suspicions of a potential threat to the well-being of the group, someone having broken the law or done something that violates established custom. The scapegoat may be an individual or group that shows up the defects of a community, causing it to lose face, thus bringing negative recognition to the group. In scapegoat action people are united in projecting their frustrations onto the scapegoat. Scapegoating as a phenomenon is always hidden to

the participants; that is, people are not conscious of the scapegoating dimensions of their actions.

Many crowds work in a scapegoating manner. The Seattle protesters who shut down the World Trade Organization talks were convinced that the participants in these talks were about to reach agreements that would have given more power to multi-national corporations, resulting in reduced rights of workers and a threat to the environment. The talks were illegitimate in their eyes. The world leaders taking part in the talks were clearly powerful enough to cause these perceived threats. They were different from the participants in that they were government representatives. A wide variety of groups with various identities and agendas were united in a common purpose and their resolve revealed a passionate commitment to achieve their goals. Indeed, they were powerful enough to unseat the representatives from their agendas and shut down the meeting.

Most crowds are not assembled with an intense sense of scapegoating present. As observers of crowds have noted, most people come in small groups of friends and they maintain a sense of their own individuality. Hence, 90 per cent of protests occur without incident. However, sometimes in the course of a protest, something may happen that galvanizes a group of protesters and there is a violent contagion as they pour out their frustration on a particular scapegoat victim. In a highly volatile crowd situation where frustration is rampant, the tendency to scapegoat can galvanize a subgroup within a crowd to destroy property belonging to the target or turn on someone who does something at the moment that triggers their anger. Identifying a scapegoat can also create the crowd in the first place. Someone takes a soapbox to a public space and starts to talk about the perceived wrongdoing of a potential target. The crowd forms, gets inflamed, and marches to wherever. The crowd might have been individual shoppers with no intention of joining a protest when they left home that day.

The process of scapegoating starts with the frustration of the community (Girard, 1988). This frustration may be caused by interpersonal jealousies and rivalries; it may be an external threat or reverses in the fortunes of the community as a whole or it may be a feeling of powerlessness in the face of perceived injustices. It can be a diversionary tactic to deflect examination from the wrong doings or deficiencies of some by focusing blame on others. The internal build-up of latent violence can bring a community to the edge of chaos where anything can happen.

The second step in the scapegoat process is the selection of a scapegoat or, as Girard would say, sacrificial victim. In some instances, where this happens with some regularity, the victim is clear. The same victim group might appear again and again. In other instances, a victim emerges spontaneously. A police dog may be accidentally let loose on a crowd and threaten innocent protesters. The police then are perceived to be unjustly violent toward the crowd; the crowd then turns on the police in a scapegoat action. On the other side of the divide, police may be frustrated at having to wear uncomfortable protective clothing for hours on end. One protester may be particularly provocative, hurling insults at the police. When this person hurls a Molotov cocktail and one police officer is burned, even slightly; it tips the balance and the police go after this protester, arrest and constrain the person sometimes with far more force than is necessary. The situation reaches a flashpoint.

Without drawing on scapegoat theory, Abby Peterson observes that in Denmark, the undercover police, whom protesters recognize, are viewed as the 'toughest and baddest', making them 'the scapegoats for activist discontent with Danish public order policing' (2006, 57).

A third step is the scapegoat action itself which is a combination of isolating and identifying the scapegoat and perpetrating some form of violence that has the effect of hurting, killing, banishing or otherwise disempowering the victim. In some cultures, particularly in former times, it could take the form of stoning someone or pushing the victim off a cliff. In more modern times, a scapegoat action also is often symbolic. A scapegoat may be removed from a situation or emotionally isolated or shunned. There is a rapid, almost simultaneous contagion as a number of people together are united in a violent action against the differentiated Other. The violent action includes the release of violent emotions that have nothing directly to do with the victim but are the result of an accumulation of frustrated desires, injustices and thwarted actions. Various over-aggressive baton charges of police can be understood in this way. The recipients of the baton blows can be completely innocent of any violent acts or gestures but they are vulnerable because they are at the front line, they are perceived as powerful because the crowd is powerful and they are illegitimate by association since members of the crowd may have been threatening the security of the police or of political targets whom the police are duty bound to protect. In one example, during a protest a bystander was walking in the vicinity and the police attacked him with batons; he fell down and the attack precipitated his death.

A fourth part of the process is that the scapegoating group is united in its action. Differences dissolve as they work together toward the same objective—stopping the ill effects of the scapegoat.

Throughout, the scapegoat dimension remains hidden to those caught up in the action. At a primal level they are caught up in the passions of addressing the injustices they perceive in the situation.

Finally, if the victim is killed or extracted from the community in some other way, the victim becomes a hero for having brought peace to the community (Girard, 1988). The mythology that evolves has the double action of concealing the illegitimacy of the victim and the scapegoat action and communicating some form of banishment or victimization. Eventually an initial scapegoat action can lead to sacrificial rituals in which the effects of group unity are achieved regularly through the sacrifice of someone or some animal from a victim group. In contemporary society, blood sacrifice has been replaced with symbolic acts, although some terrorist actions can be understood in sacrificial terms.

In classical scapegoating, where there are no accountability structures outside the community, scapegoating results in a new peace that is established among formerly antagonistic community members. In the context of the protest crowd–police relational system, a number of things might happen, exemplifying aspects of this phenomenon. One scapegoat action on one side may prompt a scapegoat phenomenon on the other side. Recognizing the potential for this, police overlook many actions that could be in and of themselves transgressions of the law with the realization that strict enforcement could cause ‘troubles’ which could be interpreted as scapegoat actions. Sometimes the zeal of a scapegoat action means that accountability structures will hold protagonists accountable. On one occasion one girl in a crowd was killed by a police projectile, the image of her in the coffin became a rallying point against the police as she became a hero for the crowd and the cause of additional protests. In 1833, there was a major protest in London. It was only a few years after Peel’s principles had been introduced along with a new Metropolitan Police Force, which was put to the test. At the end of the protest–police encounter, the only fatality was a police constable. The dead police officer consolidated public opinion in favour of the police and the crowd strategies they had employed; had the victim been from the crowd, things might have evolved very differently.

In recent years, there has been a significant emphasis in policing circles on maintaining a sense of legitimacy in the eyes of the public. This has found expression in negotiated management procedures, avoiding confrontation, keeping tactical troops hidden until they are absolutely necessary, and not enforcing the law strictly. We can see that in the light of scapegoat theory, this is a wise approach on the part of police, since one of the qualities of a scapegoat is that they are perceived as illegitimate. Not only does it reduce troubles (some of which could be scapegoat related), keep the public on side, and avoid violence, it also is good from the point of view of scapegoat prevention. In jurisdictions in which repressive policing is the norm, police avoid being scapegoated in the short term by being too powerful for the crowd; strategically, in other words, they avoid the quality that the scapegoat is vulnerable. Hence police have a choice: are they to avoid be scapegoated on the grounds of being perceived as legitimate or on the grounds of appearing too powerful for it to work?

Where police negotiators or liaison officers build relationships with protesters, scapegoat action against the police is reduced because it is harder for protesters to put police in the category of the differentiated Other who might become a scapegoat victim. The same holds true on the other side. As police see the human side of protesters and understand why they are doing what they are doing, it is less likely that police will resort to repressive measures that can take the form of scapegoating a protester.

We turn our attention now to a second structured way of expressing both otherness and power, that of hegemonic structures.

Hegemonic Structures

Hegemonic structures are patterns of social and political relationships whereby some groups are consistently dominated by others (Cummings, 1993; Gramsci, 1968; Linger, 1993; Redekop, 2002). One extreme form of a hegemonic structure was the institution of slavery in which the slaves' lives were totally controlled by the slave owners. They were treated as property and all of their skills and energies were harnessed in the service of the physical and economic benefits to their owners. More subtle forms of hegemonic structures involve societal racism and class distinction in which certain races or classes have system wide barriers to their advancement within society.

The dominant controllers may exert control *physically, politically* through curtailment of rights, *economically* by making rules that benefit their own interests, and *discursively* by thwarting full expression of what is key to the identity of those subjected, favouring a particular language, accent or affectation, and by designating identity groups with language that implies inferiority (Linger). Also there is a controlling kind of *energy* or spirit that keeps people in their place. They can also control the flow of *information* and access to education. These different aspects of dominating structures are depicted in Figure 5.2.

If hegemonic structures are accepted and interiorized, there is superficial social peace as was the case when slavery, fascism and communism, as controlling structures, were accepted by the populations they controlled. (Typically, these practices were not universally accepted so the 'social peace' was an illusion existing in some places some of the time.) When people become aware of these controlling structures and want to change them, there is conflict, passion and social unrest.

Hegemonic structures are a significant part of the protest crowd–police relational system for two reasons. First, police often are put into a position of having to protect political and business leaders and institutions that are in a dominant position within society. For example, preceding the Oka/Kanehsatà:ke Crisis, Mohawks were blocking a tiny road in order to prevent the development of a golf course on land they claimed to be rightfully theirs. The claims to the land were complex and John Ciaccia, the Quebec Minister of Native Affairs believed these should be settled before any trees were cut down. The interests in the golf course included both the golfing community and the Mayor and council of Oka who saw many economic advantages to the development. Ultimately, they had the power to set in motion a raid by the SQ, the Quebec Provincial Police. Police responded to requests for help from democratically elected community leaders enforcing the hegemony of the local political structure. In that case, the Mohawks feelings of subjugation were compounded by what they saw as unfair suppression of their right to protest in a situation in which they could make a case for historic rights to the land (Gabriel-Doxtater & Hende, 1995; Redekop, 2002). Second, within the police–protester relational system police play a dominant role. They have the resources of the state behind them and can procure powerful weapons of many types that can be used to force crowds to disperse, weapons that are illegal for ordinary citizens to carry.

Figure 5.2 Hegemonic Structures

Crowd anger is intensified if participants become conscious of being controlled and overpowered by dominating groups. Currently, many activists feel the force of dominating structures at two different levels. First, they believe the evidence that trends in corporate globalization are setting up grand controlling political structures that they object to but feel powerless to change. Second, when they protest they understand that the security actions are meant to control them. In crowd dynamics the demonstrators consider the police to be the dominators. They have the power. One activist said, ‘it isn’t realistic to talk about equal adversaries in this situation—the police have all the power and are using it against demonstrators in an abusive way’.

The position of police in relation to society wide hegemonic structures is not without its ironies and ambiguities. Lower ranking officers and some senior officers are part of police unions and, as such, have certain sympathies for labour unions who feel dominated by management. Furthermore, as thoughtful individuals they can understand the plight of people who are alarmed that concerns for the environment, social

justice, distributive justice and other issues that may not be addressed or considered by dominating institutions. However, the police as a body have a special responsibility to keep communities safe and peaceful, protect the lives of Internationally Protected People, protect public institutions, and create a context in which events like international summit gatherings, like the annual G-8, can take place without disruption. Police are in a position to sense the frustration of protesters for situations the police have no power to change. That is, police have no responsibilities with regard to the issues that are at the heart of the protest crowd–target relational system and consequently, must behave neutrally with regard to those issues notwithstanding their personal convictions. Similarly, governments in responsible democracies keep themselves at arm's length from the day to day functioning of the security forces. In instances where the injustices of government personalities and/or institutions are significant enough and sufficiently known, police may stand by as crowds effect a dramatic change in hegemonic structures. Examples of Milosevic and Ceausescu have already been given.

The concept of hegemonic structures helps us to understand how police can be effective in controlling crowds. In repressive styles of protest policing, it is the physical power of police that puts them in a dominant position. Police fire-power can easily be used to get crowds to disperse. However, dominance is established and evident in other aspects of policing. The use of soft tactics to get protesters to do what the police want is an example of discursive hegemonic structures. Many people within society have a tendency to do what police tell them to do, based on a combination of respect and fear. Police demonstrate that they know how to plan a demonstration better, which routes work best, etc. By smiling and using language that is both helpful and authoritative they can shape behaviours so the outcome is to their liking. We must qualify this by saying that some police negotiators forego the subtle forms of dominance that accrue to them and go out of their way to facilitate a situation so that the interests of protesters are addressed. Some police also have an authoritative dominating spirit making it difficult for less experienced protesters to stand up to them. Economically they have an advantage in that they can hire full time professionals to work on controlling a protest crowd. Politically they have an advantage in that they have lines of communication to political and bureaucratic leaders. Regarding information, they have the ability to collect information about

the protest whereas protesters cannot have similar information about the strategy of police. Often police have dedicated media experts that can work strategically to get television cameras positioned to highlight crowd violence and minimize coverage of any police violence.

In this chapter we have shown how both the protest crowd and the police contribute to relationships of violence that dehumanize the 'Other' by the process of scapegoating. The scapegoating process effectively expels the 'Other' from the relational structure or community. Those doing the scapegoating don't recognize the humanity of their victims and, typically, they don't want to know them. They may even go so far as to fear getting to know the 'Other' and will come up with many reasons for maintaining their distance.

The stereotype of the 'Other' is maintained by a perceived or real hegemonic structure maintained by both sides. Protesters sometimes feel they must overcome the power imbalance inherent in the hegemonic structure and, consequently, feel justified in resorting to violence in order to do so. This is the only power they feel they have; they are determined to use it. Police similarly, recognize the legitimacy of their own dominance and are willing to exercise this power if they feel they have to. The hegemony reinforces the feelings of conflict and, typically, perpetuates the spiral of reciprocating violence.

So far, the emphasis has been on the protest crowd–police relational system. The targets of protest have been standing in the shadows, we have been aware of their presence but they have not been formally introduced. In the next chapter we will rectify this as we talk about different types of targets and introduce various bystanders who impact and are impacted by the protest crowd. Through the media, the bystander population can grow to global proportions; often protest crowds assemble primarily for media coverage, hence the media will demand a formal introduction as well.