

Crowd behaviour and collective action

Next lecture:
The psychology of war and peace

1

Last week: Prejudice: the target's perspective

- What's it all about, anyways?
- Self-fulfilling prophecies
- Stereotype threat
- Prejudice and self-esteem
- Reporting prejudice

2

Overview

In this lecture we will discuss:

- Crowd behaviour
 - de-individuation
 - emergent norm theory
 - social identity theory

- Why people do / don't engage in collective action
 - system justification theory
 - normative pressure
 - subgroup differences
 - cost-benefit analyses
 - efficacy considerations
 - identity considerations

3

Crowd behaviour

“... by the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilisation. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd he is a barbarian – a creature acting by instinct.” *Le Bon, 1908*

“(the crowd is) excessively emotional, impulsive, violent, fickle, inconsistent, irresolute and extreme in action, displaying only the coarser emotions and the less refined sentiments; extremely suggestible, careless in deliberation, hasty in judgment, incapable of any but the simpler and imperfect forms of reasoning, easily swayed and led, lacking in self-consciousness, devoid of self-respect and of a sense of responsibility, and apt to be carried away by the consciousness of its own force, so that it tends to produce all the manifestations we have learnt to expect of any irresponsible and absolute power” *McDougall, 1920*

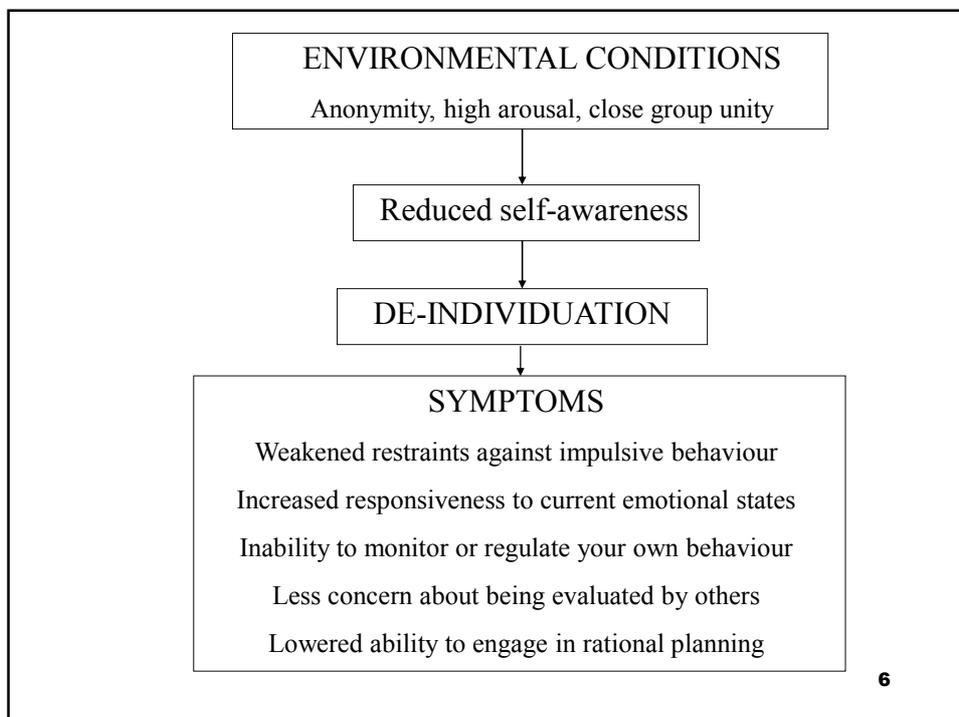
4

Crowd behaviour cont ...

Themes ...

- (1) the anonymity implied by the crowd means people lose responsibility for their actions
- (2) unconscious antisocial motives are released
- (3) ideas and behaviours spread rapidly and unpredictably through the crowd ("contagion")

5



6

Evidence for de-individuation hypothesis

Festinger et al. (1952) had participants engage in a group discussion about their parents.

In some conditions, the group discussion took place in a dimly lit room and with participants wearing lab coats.

In this de-individuation condition people made more negative comments about their parents than in a control condition.

7

Evidence for de-individuation hypothesis

Jaffe & Yinon (1979) compared the mean electric shock administered in the lab by individuals compared to groups of three.

Participants in groups gave consistently more intense shocks than did participants on their own.

8

Evidence for de-individuation hypothesis

Zimbardo (1970) had people give strangers electric shocks in the laboratory.

Some participants were made to wear cloaks and hoods and other participants wore their ordinary clothes.

Deindividuated participants gave up to twice the duration of electric shock as did control participants.

9

Evidence for de-individuation hypothesis

Siegel et al. (1986) recorded exchanges between groups of people engaging in group discussion either face-to-face or over computer.

Computer-mediated communication was characterized by higher incidences of swearing, name-calling and insults (“flaming”).

10

Evidence for de-individuation hypothesis

Diener et al. (1976) observed the behaviour of 1352 children trick-or-treating in the US.

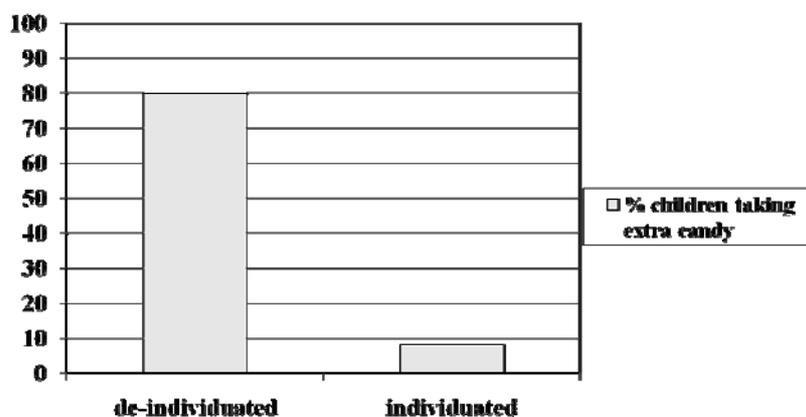
Experimenters in 27 homes invited children in to “take *one* of the lollies on the table”.

Children were either alone or in groups.

Half the children were first asked their names and where they lived, to reduce de-individuation.

11

Diener et al., 1976



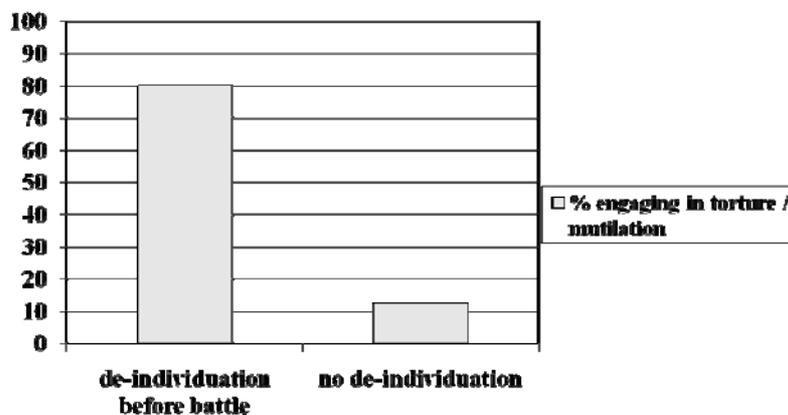
12

Evidence for de-individuation hypothesis

Watson (1973) studied archival records and found that cultures in which people change their appearance before battle (e.g., body painting, masks) engage in more aggressive warfare.

13

Watson (1973)



14

Evidence for de-individuation hypothesis

Mullen (1986) examined archival records of lynchings in the US.

The larger the size of the crowd, the more gruesome the assault.

A similar correlation between crowd size and anti-social behaviour has been found in archival records of people threatening to throw themselves off buildings.

15

Limitations of de-individuation hypothesis

Although there is strong evidence for the notion that crowds behave badly – and that de-individuation might have something to do with it – there are limitations to the notion of crowd behaviour as irrational and pathological.

First, the evidence for the notion of de-individuation is often circumstantial, and when tested directly, the evidence is mixed.

Second, crowds frequently behave in calm and even pro-social ways. How can we explain why sometimes crowds behave in negative and volatile ways and sometimes they do not?

16

Limitations of de-individuation hypothesis

Postmes & Spears (1998) performed a meta-analysis of de-individuation studies (i.e., statistical analysis of all studies on de-individuation).

IVs

Manipulations of situational context
o *group size, anonymity, cohesiveness*
(Manipulations inducing the state of de-individuation)

DVs

Anti-normative behaviour
o *electric shock, stealing, cheating*

17

Postmes & Spears (1998) meta-analysis

Findings ...

- o IVs not reliably related to antisocial behaviour.
- o Little support that the experience of de-individuation *per se* accounts for whatever effects are found.
- o Strong effect for situational (group) norms
- o Postmes and colleagues argue that anonymity and de-individuation assist people to take on whatever role is implied by the situation (can be both antisocial *and* prosocial).

18

De-individuation and roles

Johnson & Downing (1979) got people into the lab to administer electric shocks to strangers as part of a “learning” experiment.

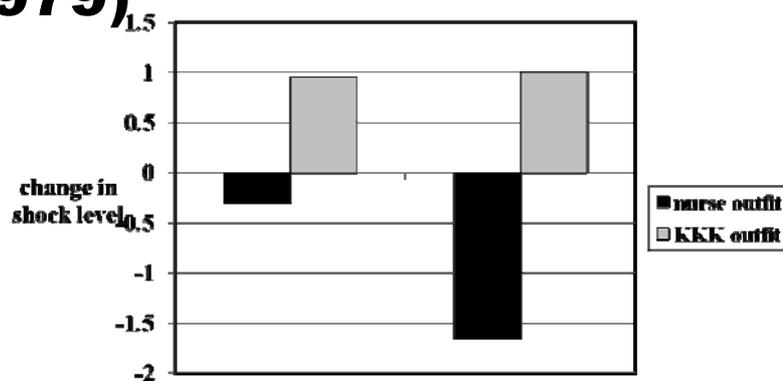
They then were asked to wear a white robe – one that resembled a KKK outfit and one that they were told was a nurse’s robe.

Half were then individuated by being asked to wear a name badge; half were left de-individuated.

They then participated in a second learning experiment and asked to administer electric shocks. To what extent did the amount of electric shock change after the manipulation?

19

Johnson & Downing (1979)



Those dressed in a nurse’s uniform gave weaker electric shocks ... *particularly* when they were de-individuated!

20

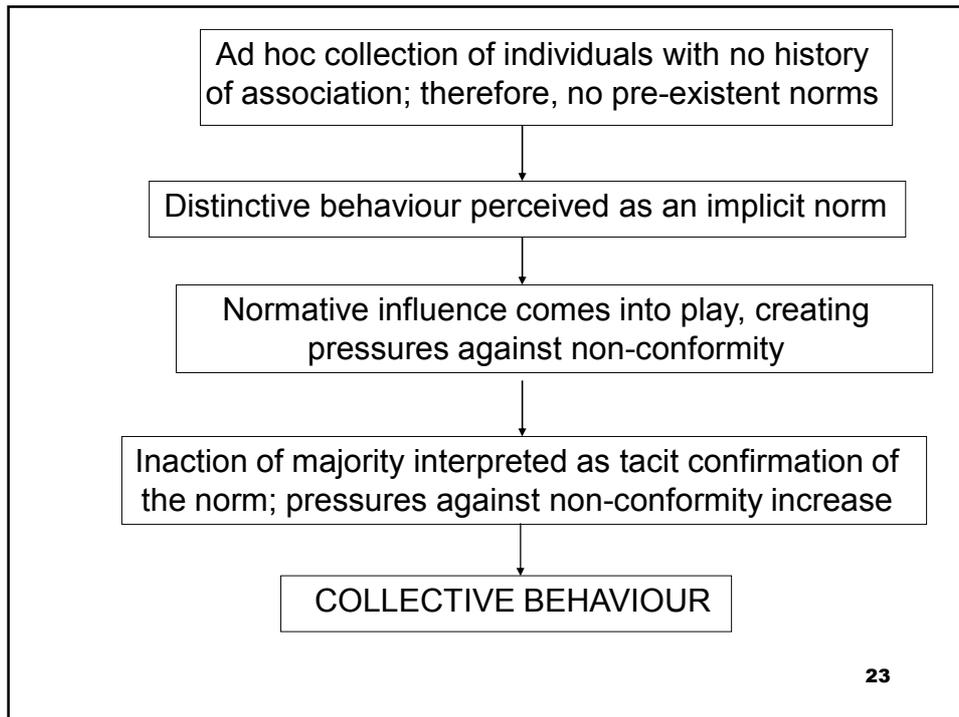
Emergent norm theory

According to emergent norm theory, crowd behaviour – like all group behaviour – is governed by norms, or rules of appropriate behaviour.

When crowds meet, people are uncertain as to what the appropriate norms are.

Their attention is attracted by the behavior of distinctive individuals, implying a norm is emerging.

Inaction on the part of the majority is interpreted as confirmation of the norm, amplifying pressure to behave in a similar way.



Limitations of emergent norm theory

- More often than not, crowds gather for a specific purpose and bring with them a clear set of shared norms
- Crowd violence often has an intergroup component
- Crowds often behave logically, even when they're violent.

24

St Paul's riot

Reicher (1984) analyzed a riot in Bristol, examining newspaper reports and interviewing rioters.

He found:

- (1) violence, burning and looting was “orderly” and directed at symbolic targets
- (2) The crowd remained within the confines of its community
- (3) During and after the riot, participants felt a strong sense of *social* identity; in other words people felt a positive identity as members of the St Paul's community.

25

Social identity theory of crowd behaviour

Individuals come together as members of a specific social group with a specific purpose



Social identity provides norms for behaviour. When uncertain, crowd members look to core members for guidance



Conformity to group norms



COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR

26

Collective action

Although collective action is typically thought of as the most powerful to achieve social change, people are typically quite reluctant to engage in collective action.

A 1983 Gallup poll revealed that approximately 40% of people in the US believed it was likely that there would be nuclear war by 1998, and 70% believed that they would not survive a nuclear war. Despite this, surveys in the 1980s showed that only a very small minority of people engaged in collective action to try to prevent the proliferation of nuclear missiles.

Mobilizing for a peace rally in the Netherlands, 1980s

Klandermans & Oegema (1994)

- Did not agree with goals (26%)
- Agreed with goals (74%)
 - Not aware of rally (15%)
 - Aware of rally (59%)

couch potato problem

- Did not intend to go (49%)
- Intended to go (10%)
 - Did not go (6%)
 - Attended rally (4%)

Collective action

Taylor et al. (1987) had participants perform a decision-making task. They were told that because they were beginners at the task they would start at the bottom of the ladder; that is, as a member of the “unsophisticated decision making group”. If they performed well at the task, they were told that they could then be promoted to a better group.

Participants were then told that they had failed the test – but were led to believe that this decision was based on an unfair procedure.

Participants then had to indicate how they would respond to this. Options were (a) acceptance, (b) re-test, (c) individual protest, (d) collective protest.

30

Taylor et al. (1987)

They found that people tended to prefer acceptance and requests for remark to individual and collective protest.

BUT, attraction to collective protest increased when

- (a) The injustice of the outcome was very obvious
- (b) Participants were close to the cut-off for acceptance

31

Collective action

Using a similar method to Taylor et al. (1987), Lalonde & Silverman (1994) led participants to believe they'd been denied access to a higher status group.

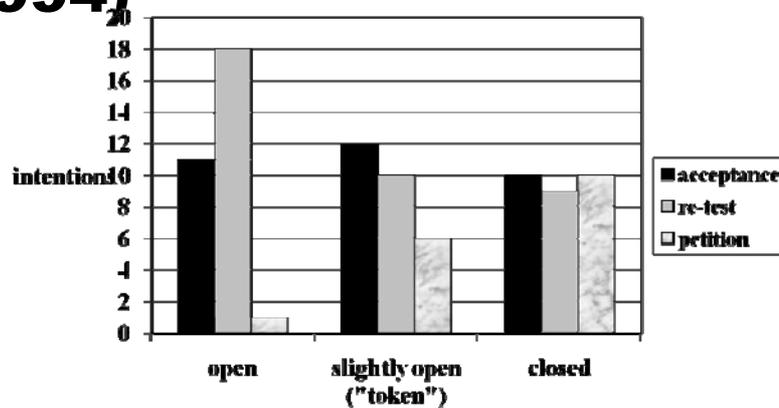
They were further led to believe that the boundaries between the high and low status group were either

- (a) Open (they'd been denied entry because their test scores weren't good enough)
- (b) Slightly open (they'd achieved better than the pass mark but had been denied entry because the high status group had decided to let only 2% of the low status group in)
- (c) Closed (they'd achieved better than the pass mark but had been denied entry because the high status group had decided to let none of the low status group in)

Participants then had to nominate how they'd respond to the situation: acceptance, asking for a re-mark, or organizing a petition.

32

Lalonde & Silverman (1994)



Lack of collective action in the “slightly open” condition suggests that tokenism can be used by dominant groups to keep minority groups quiet.

33

Other strategies powerful groups can use to suppress collective action

- Fear (of death / imprisonment / social stigma)
- Control of information / media
- Antagonising differences within the group
- Promoting a culture of individualism and advocating just-world beliefs

34

How do you motivate collective action?

- individual instrumental incentives and social rewards (e.g., Klandermans, 1997);
- social identities, or one's sense of oneself as part of a group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; also, Deaux, Reid, Martin, & Bikmen, 2006; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren et al., 2004);
- collective effectiveness, or success in achieving group goals (e.g., Klandermans, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987);
- collective emotions such as anger (e.g., Iyer, Shmader, & Lickel, 2007; van Zomeren et al., 2004).

Why do / don't people engage in collective action?

Possible explanations:

- (1) System justification
- (2) Normative pressure
- (3) Subgroup differences
- (4) Cost-benefit analyses
- (5) Efficacy considerations
- (6) Identity considerations

36

System justification

According to Jost & Banaji (1994) members of disadvantaged groups are motivated to rationalize away injustice ... they convince themselves that the system is fair & that they can move up the ranks if they work hard enough.

Instead of directing anger at the system, anger is directed at other disadvantaged groups.

37

Evidence for system justification

Jost et al. (2003) found circumstantial evidence for this notion ...

- Low-income respondents and African Americans were more likely than other participants to support limitations on the rights of individuals and media to criticize the government
- Low-income respondents and African Americans were more likely than other participants to endorse the belief that economic inequality is legitimate and necessary
- Low-income Latinos more likely than high-income Latinos to trust US government officials
- Low-income people more likely than high-income people to believe that large differences in pay are necessary to foster motivation and effort
- The notion of the meritocracy endorsed more by poor and Southern African Americans than by more affluent and Northern African Americans

38

Normative pressure

Just like most behaviour, people are influenced by whether they will win approval from people they care about.

According to the normative approach, people will be more likely to engage in collective action the more they feel such behaviour will be endorsed by important people in their life.

On the balance of things, normative pressure typically works against collective action due to:

- (a) fear of being labeled a trouble-maker
- (b) negative societal stereotypes of activists

39

Intragroup differences

During collective action there's pressure to unite behind a single front ... but this pressure for uniformity might antagonize real differences that exist within the protesting group in terms of

- (a) Attitudes
- (b) Goals
- (c) Strategies

40

Differences in strategies

41

The activist's dilemma

- Routine forms of claim-making are unlikely to attain wide media coverage
- Novel, disruptive and violent actions often involve sustained conflict with police
- Strong media coverage that results can be negative and counter-productive

42

Cost-benefit analyses

Klandermans argued that the decision of whether to engage in collective action is based on a rational weighing up of costs and benefits to the individual.

People will only engage in collective action if the rewards will exceed the costs (in terms of time, effort, money etc).

Collective action is not very attractive because costs to the individual are high and rewards are shared by all. So even if people do not participate in collective action they can benefit from whatever concessions are won (the “free rider” effect).

Cost-benefit approach criticized for being too mechanistic and individualistic.

43

Efficacy considerations

In line with Klandermans’ notion of cost-benefit analyses, it has been argued that a major disincentive for people getting involved in collective action is the belief that the action will make no difference.

Consistent with this, perceptions of potential effectiveness are positively correlated with willingness to engage in collective action among unionists, African Americans, anti-nuclear activists, and environmental activists.

44

Efficacy considerations

BUT ... perceptions of effectiveness not everything.

Schofield & Pavelchak (1989) examined people's attitudes toward nuclear war before and after watching a movie depicting nuclear holocaust. After watching the movie, participants reported a decreased sense that they had the ability to prevent nuclear war, and at the same time an *increased* intention to engage in anti-nuclear activism.

45

Efficacy considerations

Klandermans & Oegema (1987) interviewed 114 Dutch participants shortly before a major rally protesting against NATO's decision to deploy cruise missiles in Europe.

They found that "None of the respondents was very optimistic about the effectiveness of the demonstration; those who intended to demonstrate were no exception. *None of them believed that the deployment of the cruise missiles could be stopped*"

46

Efficacy considerations

Why do people engage in collective action even when they don't think the ultimate goals of the protest are likely to be achieved?

One possibility is that they are using more flexible criteria for what they regard to be effective collective action.

47

Efficacy considerations

Hornsey et al. (2006) asked people at a rally in Brisbane whether they were likely to attend future rallies on the same theme.

Future intentions were not related to the perceived effectiveness of the rally in influencing heads of government or policy makers ... but it was related to the perceived effectiveness of the rally in terms of:

- influencing the general public
- expressing their personal values
- building an oppositional movement.

48

Identity issues

Another possible reason that people participate in collective action even when the hopes for success are forlorn is that they have internalized being an activist into their self-concept.

Simon and colleagues have shown across a range of domains that “activist identity” is extremely predictive of whether or not people engage in collective action ... over and above the “rational” weighing up of costs and benefits.

49

Different motivations for collective action in the advantaged group

DISADVANTAGED

- Identification / solidarity
- Group norms
- Cost-benefit analyses for self and group
- Relative deprivation
- Emotions such as moral outrage, anger

ADVANTAGED

- Group norms
- Moral values / injunctive norms
- “Relative deprivation on behalf of others” – perspective-taking, empathy
- Emotions such as moral outrage, sympathy, pity, collective guilt
- Positioning with respect to intra-group dynamics or other intergroup conflicts

50

Supporters and opponents of One Nation

(Louis, Duck, Terry, & Lalonde, 2010)

	Opponents	Supporters
Age *	40	46
Gender *	57% F	47% F
Education *	4.06	3.19
Threat to White Aus *	2.35	5.03
Support for Asian immigration *	+1.21	-0.99
For multiculturalism *	+1.60	-0.37
For Aboriginal benefits *	+0.80	-1.66
Predictors of political action	Higher Education Strength of opinion	Lower Education Strength of opinion when perceived normative support and threat

51

- Next lecture:
The psychology of war and peace
- In the Tutes this week:
 - Assignment 2 – Overview and discussion of study

52