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8

Crowd Behaviour as Social Action

(Stephen Reicher)

Introduction

The study of the crowd is rooted in a contradiction. On the one hand, crowd phenomena are a challenge to social psychology. Studies of crowd events have revealed complex behavioural characteristics. Not only is the behaviour spontaneous and apparently without overt leadership, but it also displays clear patterns and limits. Moreover, these patterns have social meaning: they are intelligible as the application of ideological systems of understanding to particular circumstances in the real world. The challenge, then, is to explain how large numbers of people are able to act together, to act in ways that are socially meaningful, but to do so without any planning or formal co-ordination. It is, in a phrase, to explain the 'spontaneous sociality' of crowd action.

The challenge is especially significant in that in order to account for the manner in which the behaviour of the crowd member displays ideological form, one needs to specify the manner in which human cognition can be socially structured. In other words, the nature of crowd action demonstrates the need for a social psychology which places the individual in society and which relates conduct to context. Herein lies the contradiction. For the actual history of crowd psychology is one of distortion of the relationship between individual and society.

The early theories of the crowd abstracted the individual from society and behaviour from its social context. They took actions that were the product of particular forms of social conflict and represented them as generic aspects of the crowd. Thus, through a process of reification, crowd behaviour was changed from being an outcome of social process into an unchanging entity. What disagreement there was lay in deciding where to locate this entity: whether as the product of individual nature or as the manifestation of a disembodied collective

mind. Either the social disappeared into the individual or the individual disappeared from the social. These tendencies are still pervasive in social psychology.

A large part of the motivation for the development of the self-categorization theory of the group and the social identity perspective in general has been dissatisfaction with the shortcomings of reified explanation. The aim has been to overcome the separation that has been wrought between the individual and society, and to find a way of relating psychological processes to the historical, cultural, political and economic determinants of behaviour. It is central to the concept of social identity that it is viewed as being at the same time a social construct and an individual cognitive construct. Hence, social identity processes are attempts to deal with the construction of a 'socially structured field within the individual' (Asch, cited in Brown and Turner, 1981).

It is because the self-categorization theory resocializes the concept of the individual that it can provide the basis for an explanation of crowd behaviour. This is not to say that the theory provides as yet a fully satisfactory explanation of the crowd, but it is to say that it is unique in social psychology in being able to set one off in the right direction. Other approaches are unable to account for the social form of crowd action precisely because they misconceptualize the individual/social relationship. The task therefore is to build upon self-categorization theory to develop a psychology of crowd action.

The purpose of this chapter is, first, to analyse the distortions of existing crowd theory and to explain how they came about, secondly, to show how this body of theory fails to address the complexities of crowd phenomena and to lay down the criteria for an adequate crowd psychology, and, thirdly, to propose such a psychology, based on the self-categorization theory, and to examine its adequacy through the use of experimental and field research.

The politics of crowd theory

The context of crowd psychology

Crowd psychology is a product of nineteenth-century thought. It was in a sense the systematized expression of the dominant fear of the propertied classes, the fear of the 'mob'. This sentiment is well expressed by the French statesman Thiers, who in a speech delivered on 24 May 1850 spoke of 'the name, one of the worst stigmatized in history, mark you, of mob. The vile mob which brought every republic down in ruin'

(Chevalier, 1973, p. 364). The fear of the mob represented a generalized concern about social order resulting from a fundamental transformation in social relations.

The process of industrialization had disrupted the ties of rural society. Authority had been personal and traditional, based on face-to-face contacts between parson, squire and labourer, but as the nineteenth-century progressed there was the formation of a mass urban proletariat and a physical separation between worker and owner. Working class life became unknown to the ruling classes. A genuine crisis of social control developed and bourgeois fears were exacerbated by ignorance. To the extent that the significance of any form of dissent was obscured, even the most minor act could be read as a prelude to catastrophe. In a state of permanent panic of revolutionary overthrow, all the fears of the ruling classes of Europe became condensed into one terrifying symbol: the crowd. These fears were particulary acute in France during the last quarter of the century.

In this context the nature of the crowd became a matter of acute public concern. It was not a matter to be left to academics but was debated in newspapers and society journals. Thus two biases came to pervade the debate: a political bias of overt hostility to crowd action, the aim being not to understand but to discredit the crowd and eliminate it as a threat, and a bias of perspective, the commentators never being participants, never being of the crowd but viewing it from outside, without an understanding of the beliefs and experience of those involved in protest. In consequence, their's was an attitude of genuine dismay; they could not see reasons for crowd action, it all seemed genuinely senseless.

These biases were built into early crowd psychologies, for the theorists were gentlemen scholars who shared the prejudices and perspectives of their class. They never studied crowds at first hand, since they assumed *a priori* that they were undesirable, destructive and senseless. They then used the tools of an emerging positivistic social science to 'explain' these alleged characteristics. Thus crowd psychology was born as a looking-glass science. Rather than theory being used to account for empirical phenomena, the enterprise started from ideological prejudices and used theory to give these substance. In this way political bias was woven into the fabric of crowd psychology and came to determine the basic assumptions of the science.

Gustave LeBon and the birth of crowd psychology

Of all the early crowd psychologists only one is still remembered today,

Gustave LeBon. That he is remembered is due in part to his work as a popularizer. Equally important in explaining his influence was his explicit ambition to use crowd psychology as a political tool. He was above all concerned to employ his ideas in combating working class activism, and confessed himself proudest of his anti-socialist writings. LeBon's success is measured in the appreciation of Goebbels and Mussolini who declared that LeBon's ideas had been instrumental in the construction of an Italian fascist state.

LeBon's major work was *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, first published in 1895. Gordon Allport has described it as the most widely read psychology book of all time. LeBon's basic characterization of the crowd is as follows. When people assemble in a mass they become anonymous, which leads to a loss of the sense of self and of personal responsibility. Instead, behaviour comes to be dominated by a collective racial unconscious. Since this unconscious represents a primitive state of evolution in which intellect is absent and atavistic emotions predominate, so behaviour lacks the attributes of 'civilization'. LeBon sums up the characteristics of such behaviour in a single flourish: 'Several of the special characteristics of crowds such as impulsivity, irritability, incapacity to reason, absence of judgement or critical spirit, exaggeration of emotions and more besides are also observed amidst lower forms of evolution such as the savage and the child' (1895, p. 23).

While the operation of the racial unconscious was at its clearest in the crowd, LeBon did not believe this to be the only time it was in evidence. Indeed, he asserted that all forms of mass assembly from juries to parliamentary assemblies exhibited its operation to some extent. Thus a distinction was drawn between the rationality of the social isolate and the idiocy of social being. It is a sentiment taken to extremes by Tarde who asserted that 'Society is imitation and imitation is a form of somnambulism' (1901, p. 95).

LeBon's crowd psychology may be read as a sustained attack upon collective protest. First, it systematically excludes the role of authority in crowd events. This is true both of the general social background which provokes protest as well as the more immediate role of army or police during specific events. In fact, historical research from the nineteenth century, as well as the twentieth, shows nearly all confrontation to be generated by the intervention of official forces (Feagin and Hahn, 1973; Tilly, Tilly and Tilly, 1975). Moreover, statistical evidence indicates that the great majority of acts of violence are perpetrated by such forces. Feagin and Hahn (1973) in their analysis of the American urban protests of the 1960s show that 89 per cent of those who died were civilians. However, in all the pages of crowd psychology

authority, the outgroup, disappears. All that appears is the crowd, like some psychopathic jack-in-the-box. It suddenly and mysteriously emerges, goes through its automatic and uniformly vicious motions and then equally mysteriously disappears.

This leads on to the second point. For, by occluding the context of crowd action, this action is inevitably pathologized. If the outgroup is ignored, violence cannot be understood as arising from a process of intergroup conflict. Instead it is attributed to the crowd itself. Thus the forms of nineteenth-century class struggle are translated into generic characteristics of the crowd: the crowd is violent, it is destructive, it is pathological. The ideological consequences of this are that, on the one hand, it sanctions a refusal to heed the demands articulated through protest and, on the other, it legitimates the repression of protest. In the words of Lewis Carroll, 'if there is no meaning in it, that saves a world of trouble you know, as we needn't try to find any'.

Thirdly, LeBon does not limit his assertion of mental inferiority to the popular masses in protest but extends it to the popular masses in general. All collective life displays some level of pathology. Thus a general distinction is drawn between the individuality of an isolated person, which alone can lead to rational or planned behaviour, and its antithesis, which is social being.

This separation of the individual and the social lies at the core of LeBon's theory. It is the inevitable result of attempting to deny the social rationale of crowd behaviour and it leads to distortions at both a theoretical and empirical level. Theoretically, the consequence is a reified psychology, for if crowd action cannot be seen as intelligent adaptation to a particular context, it must be treated as the reflection of a predetermined psychic structure. Empirically, one is led to assert that crowd behaviour is always the same, irrespective of situation. Thus LeBon sees the crowd as reflecting the 'racial unconscious', a reified entity located outside the individual, resulting in behaviour which is 'only powerful for destruction'.

It is important to distinguish between the particular form taken by LeBon's crowd psychology and the basic errors underlying it. Many attacks have been made upon the specifics by critics who have then gone on to elaborate new forms of desocialized and reified theory. Perhaps the best example of this comes from the work of Floyd Allport.

Allport was fiercely critical of the notion of a 'racial unconscious' or 'group mind' and denounced it as a purely metaphysical notion. Thought, he argued, cannot be separated from the individual thinker and 'there is no psychology of groups which is not essentially and entirely a psychology of individuals' (Allport, 1924, p. 4). From this

critique Allport went on to argue that similarities of crowd behaviour reflect not a collective consciousness but the similarities in mental constitution of crowd members. Rather than obscuring individuality the crowd context accentuates it. These ideas are summed up in a famous aphorism: 'the individual in the crowd behaves just as he would alone only more so' (1924, p. 295).

There are two possible interpretations of these words. Modern social psychology has derived the notion that the company of others leads to the accentuation of idiosyncratic individual response profiles, i.e., the concept of 'social facilitation'. However, Allport also believed that the level of inter-stimulation in the crowd leads to the eclipse of all learnt responses and reveals a biological universal, the reflex of struggle. This is the urge to destroy anything that stops one satisfying one's basic needs, for food, for sex, for family love. Normally this urge is socialized so as to discourage the harming of others; yet as learnt socialization is overcome, the basic unsocialized drive comes to the fore and the 'drive to kill or destroy now spends itself in unimpeded fury' (Allport, 1924, p. 312).

It is evident from this that Allport shares the same basic premises as LeBon. Both refuse the possibility that individual cognition may be subject to social determination in the crowd; both see crowd behaviour as the manifestation of an atavistic universal; both see this behaviour as inevitably negative and destructive. The only difference is that, whereas LeBon sees this universal as in contradiction to and located outside the individual, Allport sees it as the underlying essence of individuality and as located firmly within individual nature. Despite this disagreement, both approaches share similar problems. These become clear when one examines Allport's treatment of a 'typical case'.

Allport writes of an incident in which striking miners stormed their pit, which was being kept open by non-union labour. These 'scabs' were captured and forced to march towards the local town. Suddenly they were told to run and, as they fled, they were shot down by the strikers. This, Allport argues, displays the asocial excess which results from the expression of an unmodified struggle reflex. Because the strike-breakers stood in the way of union victory and hence money for food and family, they were automatically slaughtered as excitement escalated to a certain pitch.

A fuller account of the event reveals a different story. The strike occurred in Williamson County, Illinois, in 1922. It demanded the improvement of conditions officially described as 'worse than the slaves before the civil war'. After eight weeks the company imported labour to reopen the pit. When strikers tried to talk to these men, pit

guards shot and killed five of them. Shortly afterwards another striker was shot while half a mile away from the pit. At this point the men organized a march on the mine. They proceeded in skirmish lines under the discipline of war veterans. A plane circled overhead dropping dynamite on the pit. As they advanced, they came under concerted machine-gun fire from pit guards but nevertheless the mine was taken and only afterwards did the massacre occur. Local juries later refused to convict anyone for what had occurred.

As opposed to the massacre being a reflex action it is only explicable as the end result of a history of conflict between management and union. Williamson County was part of a strike wave that had been almost continuous since 1919. For over two years strikers had rejected armed violence. Only after arms had been used against them, including the use of tanks and an airborne squadron, did strikers accept the legitimacy of responding with arms – a conception reflected in the behaviour of the local jurors. Thus crowd behaviour changed over time, developing as a function of new conceptions that arose out of the conflict itself. Far from being typical, the massacre was only possible at the end of this process. It was, in fact, a unique event.

This analysis of the Williamson strike reveals a crucial aspect of the crowd. Not only is behaviour part of a developing intergroup process but also at any one time it expresses the collective understanding which crowd members have of what is proper and what is possible in their social world. A series of detailed studies of crowd events shows that they are not random but possess a clear pattern (e.g., Davis, 1978; Reddy, 1977; Thompson, 1971). Indeed, even an author of the official analysis of the American urban unrest of the 1960s concluded later that 'restraint and selectivity were among the most crucial features of the riots' (Fogelson, 1971). These patterns, which to the outsider may seem senseless, gain meaning when seen in the light of the ideological understandings of the participants. This is well illustrated by Smith's (1980) account of the Cambrian Combine coal strike of 1910–11 in Wales.

The success of this dispute depended, as before, on stopping the use of strike-breaking labour. This was achieved in all but one pit, the Glamorgan colliery near Tonypandy. The police defended this pit in force against local pickets. Glamorgan had been chosen as the 'citadel of the coal owners' assertion . . . of the rights of property ownership'. On the evening of 7 November 1910 a large crowd of pickets gathered outside the pit. The police chose to charge and disperse them, after which the troops were called in. Shortly afterwards there was a 'riot' in Tonypandy: the returning picketers proceeded in mass through the streets and a number of shops were attacked and ransacked.

Contemporary press reports described the events as the senseless acts of a frustrated mob on the rampage. Yet a close investigation shows that shops were not attacked haphazardly. Although the event was spontaneous and unorganized, only those traders who were seen to collude with the mine owners in oppressing the workforce and in undermining the strike had their premises attacked.

The link between the picket and the riot can be understood in terms of a conflict between two definitions of community. For the owners it meant an order based on deference to authority and respect for property rights. For the miners it meant a level of communal care and welfare. Where the ownership of property was used against such basic rights, where coal owners locked the men out and traders refused credit so as jointly to starve the strikers into submission, so strikers expressed in their actions a rejection of the right to property.

The importance of such analyses lies in the question they set for psychological explanation, i.e., how can ideological understanding come spontaneously to be expressed in the behaviour of crowd members? The point about this question is that it demands an understanding of how social beliefs influence the operation of individual minds. Yet this is precisely what the reified psychologies of LeBon and Allport exclude. Both divide individuals from their social context. Crowd behaviour is seen as either the expression of a disembodied group mind or an asocial individual nature. Therefore both are forced to deny that crowd action is a meaningful reaction to specific contexts. An entirely new approach to the crowd is needed, one which starts from a fully socialized concept of the individual.

Between the 1920s and 1980s there have of course been many developments in crowd theory. However, the fundamental premises of the earlier work have not only been left largely unchallenged, but also form the basis for these developments. What has occurred is more a shift of scope than of perspective. Modern researchers have eschewed general theory and instead subjected particular hypotheses, derived from classical writings, to experimental test. The most direct example of this is found in de-individuation research. As Cannavale, one of the original de-individuation theorists, admits, the notion is a direct translation of the LeBonian concept of 'submergence': that, as people become anonymous, personal control is lost and behaviour becomes atavistic (Cannavale, Scarr and Pepitone, 1970).

Derived from Allport's work (amongst others) is a body of research on the relationship between frustration and aggression, the original strict formulation that frustration is necessary and sufficient for aggression being progressively relaxed in the face of repeated empirical

disconfirmations. There are other approaches in the individualistic tradition such as social facilitation research and the rational choice model championed by Brown (1965). But for all their refinements and qualifications, they retain the disjunction between social and individual levels of explanation and are therefore incapable of explaining the social form of crowd action.

The only attempt at a genuinely new model of the crowd is to be found in the 'emergent norm theory' of R. H. Turner and Killian (1972). They propose that crowd behaviour is guided by social norms which are constructed during a period of 'milling' which precedes action. Norms are derived from the behaviour of prominent individuals in a process that is termed 'keynoting'. In one sense this model is a qualitative advance on previous work. Turner and Killian and other advocates of the theory stress the way in which crowd events have a pattern which reflects normative structure and that they are not generically mindless nor destructive. However, the model of norm construction they employ is inadequate for their aim of explaining the social form of action.

The model is an adaptation of mainstream small group theory; group norms emerge from interpersonal interactions. But if norms are subsequent to interpersonal events, then they can only be limited by the nature of the individuals involved. The social, therefore, is seen ultimately as arising from individuality (see chapters 2 and 4) and thus there is no basis for explaining the ideological coherence of group norms. Turner and Killian have established the need to account for the sociality of crowd action, yet the lack of a fully socialized psychology as part of that account remains as acute as ever.

Applying the self-categorization theory to crowd behaviour

The problems arising from the division of individual and social were not limited to the domain of crowd psychology, but came to dominate the entire field of social psychology. In fact it is possible to trace a causal link, for early social psychology was dominated by discussion of the crowd, both in Europe and the United States. However, while the group mind tradition still has some influence on contemporary thought, particularly within de-individuation research (see Reicher, 1984b), it has been the individualistic approach deriving from Allport that has come to dominate the mainstream of social psychology.

The essence of psychological individualism consists in analysing behaviour as the interaction between distinct individuals and in terms

of their respective and unique individuality. In this way the contextual and cultural specificity of behaviour is ignored and the patterns of a particular society tend to become the basis for general models of behaviour. What has become known as the European school of social psychology (Tajfel, 1984) originated in a critique of such a desocialized view of the individual (e.g., Moscovici, 1972; Tajfel, 1972b). In this sense, the European school and the earlier interactionist perspective in social psychology (see chapter 1) are heirs to a long tradition which includes amongst others the views of Marxists, Durkheimians and Symbolic Interactionists. For all their critical power, however, none of the latter are at a level where they can specify the actual processes through which the social individual emerges, nor can they ever predict the outcome of such processes. What Charles Morris says in his introduction to *Mind, Self and Society* is as true of Symbolic Interactionism as of the others: 'The magic hat of the social, out of which mind and the self were to be drawn, was in part loaded in advance: and for the rest there was merely a pious announcement that the trick could be done, while the performance itself never took place' (Mead, 1934, p. xiv).

In contrast to this, the social identity theory of the group, while based upon a critical theoretical tradition, aims to specify the precise manner in which human cognition is socially structured. The very concept of social identity encapsulates this aspiration (see Turner and Oakes, 1986), for while such an identity is part of an individual's cognitive apparatus, it is at one and the same time defined in a manner that is social and independent of the individual. To define oneself as a 'socialist', for example, is to say something fundamental about what one is as an individual; yet the meaning of 'socialism' is a social product that is irreducible to any one given person. Thus the concept avoids either defining a social mind independent of the individual or an individuality independent of society: it is capable of addressing the problem of social individuality.

In some ways social identity research has become more social as it has developed. The early work concentrated on general processes of intergroup differentiation and conflict (Tajfel, 1974, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Turner, 1975). It was concerned to show that defining oneself in terms of membership of a social category had certain inevitable consequences for one's relations with members of other groups. But while showing that group processes are irreducible to attributes of individuality, the research focused on generic consequences of social identification and did not examine the nature of social identity as a form of self-perception, as the basis of shared group membership and the mechanism of producing its higher order properties, nor how the

specific ideological content of a particular identity can come to influence behaviour. It is in raising and proposing solutions to the latter issues that the self-categorization theory makes its distinctive contribution.

The self-categorization theory proposes that self-stereotyping in terms of a social category gives rise to a process of social influence, which has been termed 'referent informational influence' (chapter 4). This process is especially relevant to the problem of how the ideological content of an identity is translated into collective behaviour. One way of conceptualizing the process is as follows (Turner, 1982): (1) the individual defines him- of herself as member of a distinct social category, (2) the individual learns or forms the stereotypical norms of the category (in the language of chapter 4, they become aware of social and behavioural dimensions stereotypically correlated with their ingroup self-category, of the prototypical and hence normative actions and attributes within the specific social context), (3) under conditions, therefore, where that ingroup category becomes salient and the individual perceives him- or herself as interchangeable in relevant respects with other ingroup members, they will tend to assign these norms to themselves, employing the attributes of their social identity to define appropriate conduct for them in the context. Thus, as a category membership becomes salient, so the individual conforms to those attributes which define the category. The consequence is that the content of group members' behaviour is dictated by the definition of a social category, which itself is a social and ideological product. In this way referent informational influence represents a specific process through which the behaviour of individuals in a collective context acquires ideologically significant forms: in other words, it meets the fundamental criterion for a theory of crowd behaviour.

Nevertheless, the crowd cannot be simply equated with other groups. A major reason for concern with the crowd has been because it seemed to differ from other social groups. Crowd events do not unfold as part of a routine. They are characteristically marked by a high degree of novelty and ambiguity. Therefore, where the self-categorization theory suggests that group members conform to the stereotypical norms associated with their category, the problem in the crowd is that it is often unclear which norms are relevant or whether indeed there are identity-based norms for the specific situation.

The difficulties are compounded by the absence of formal decision-making processes. In the middle of a crowd event there is not opportunity to discuss and democratically decide on norms of action. Nor is there evidence of an alternative hierarchical structure in which orders are given by predetermined leaders. While it is frequently asserted that

crowds are manipulated by conscious agitators, historical research has been singularly unsuccessful in unearthing these shadowy figures. Even where clear attempts at direction have been made, the 'leaders' have often ended up being forced to follow rather than determine collective decisions (cf. Trotsky, 1977). The problem, then, is: if social identity is the basis for group behaviour, what does one do in unprecedented situations for which there are apparently no norms available and no obvious means of creating new norms? It is this question of identity construction, it can be argued, which lies at the heart of crowd psychology.

The answer provided by self-categorization theory is in terms of the 'inductive aspect of categorization' (Turner, 1982). Tajfel (1972a) defines the deductive aspect of categorization as the assignment of attributes of the category as a whole to individuals on the basis of their membership in the category (as in stereotyping) and the inductive aspect as the identification of the individual as a member of the category. For Turner (1982), however, induction is the process of inferring the characteristics of the category as a whole from the attributes of individual members. As we have seen (chapters 3, 4, 6 and 7), the basic hypothesis is that features of individual members which correlate with a given ingroup-outgroup categorization (i.e., features in terms of which social comparisons tend to maximize the meta-contrast between intragroup and intergroup differences) in a direction consistent with the social meaning of the category tend to be perceived as stereotypical of and hence normative for the ingroup. To the degree that any individual is perceived as being a group member, therefore, his or her behaviour provides information relevant to defining the prototypical/normative attributes of group membership. Moreover, to the degree that any individual is perceived as being especially exemplary or representative of the group (e.g., having been designated leader, carrying a banner or some other symbol of membership, being in any way socially prominent), then his or her actions are likely to play a disproportionate role in defining what is appropriate behaviour. In sense, what is proposed is a kind of self-fulfilling process in the formation of identity: since being a group member implies behaviour stereotypical of the group, the stereotype will tend to be inferred and created from that behaviour.

Although this process is meant as a general characteristic of groups, there are two reasons why it is of special significance in the crowd. First, since there are often no pre-established situation-specific norms of relevance and no institutionalized means of deliberation, induction will often be the sole means of determining normative behaviour – crowd norms thus tend to be almost wholly 'emergent' or 'spontaneous'.

Secondly, due to the absence of group structure in the crowd, the notion of an 'exemplary member' will not be restricted to a few chosen representatives, but will indeed refer to anyone who can be unambiguously defined as a group member.

As an illustration of how induction works, consider the following case. A group of individuals is involved in an anti-fascist demonstration which suddenly comes upon a facist rally. The problem that confronts them is 'what does one do, as an anti-fascist, in this situation?'. Suppose, then, that a person who is seen to be an ingroup member – perhaps by a badge that is worn, or a slogan shouted – picks up a stone and throws it toward the rally. That act, or rather the idea of breaking up the rally which it represents, may become a criterial attribute of the crowd. Hence a hail of stones, bricks and slogans may now descend on the fascist gathering.

This example makes the further important point that identity construction in the crowd does not occur in a void. Individuals are not involved in creating a completely new identity but rather in determining the situational significance of an existing category. Consequently there will be limits to the process of norm creation, the constraints being determined by the historical and ideological continuity that the category represents. For example, the physical disruption of an anti-fascist rally may become a stereotypical attribute for a crowd of anti-fascists, but racist provocation could not. The entire process of identity construction can be summarized as follows: there is an immediate identification with a superordinate category which defines a field of possible identities; crowd members must then construct a specific situational identity which determines appropriate behavioural norms and the means by which they do this is the inductive aspect of self-categorization.

This analysis makes two basic assumptions. The first is that crowd members act in terms of a common social identity. Given that the categorization and influence processes described above depend upon social identification, accounting for the ideological coherence of crowd action through these processes requires that all participants share the same identity and that it be highly salient. This assumption is in direct opposition to one of the classic propositions of crowd psychology that the conditions prevailing in the crowd lead to a loss of identity. It will be recalled that LeBon argued that gathering in a crowd leads to anonymity, lack of identifiability and an occlusion of any sense of self. In contrast, what is being argued here is that the 'physical' aspects of the crowd – in which the boundary between ingroup and outgroup and

hence the individual's group location is made very clear – act so as to make membership of social categories obvious. Therefore it is not that identity is destroyed in the crowd but rather that it is refocused upon a common category membership.

The second assumption is that the content of crowd behaviour will be limited by the nature of the relevant social category. Social influence will only occur for communications which are consonant with the attributes which define that category. Once again, this contradicts classical notions of the crowd. In the past it has been assumed that crowd action is generically destructive and that there are no limits to that destruction. Here it is proposed not only that crowds may be both destructive and creative, but that the possible forms that either may take will be circumscribed by social identity.

Empirical studies of the crowd

The methodological approach

There is a double problem to be faced in validating the model of the previous section. The first consists in establishing the plausibility of the basic identity processes, the second in showing that these processes actually apply in the crowd context. These two problems raise different methodological questions. On the one hand crowd events are almost impervious to controlled analysis. They are by nature spontaneous and unpredictable and therefore inherently unsuitable for examining theoretical processes. Indeed Milgram and Toch (1969) identify these difficulties as one of the major factors accounting for the decline of crowd psychology after the 1920s. In contrast, the ability to impose controlled manipulation of variables makes of the laboratory an ideal context within which to examine the validity of specific detailed processes.

On the other hand, for all that one may be able to examine the operation of particular processes in the laboratory, this gives no indication as to whether these processes actually operate in the crowd. For instance, one may establish that under conditions where identity is salient, only those messages consonant with the attributes defining that identity are influential, but such experiments cannot say whether real crowd members act in terms of social identifications nor whether the form of crowd behaviour can be explained in terms of the nature of such identifications.

As a consequence, neither laboratory experimentation nor field research alone are capable of producing an adequate psychology of the

crowd. Instead of counterposing the two methods and attempting to establish the superiority of one over the other, they should be seen as complementary (see Turner, 1981a). Each is appropriate to a different phase of a total research process. Three such phases may be identified. The first consists of an examination of the crowd in history in order to determine the nature of the behavioural phenomena which require explanation. The second consists of an experimental elaboration of the identity processes which form the basis for an explanation of crowd phenomena. The third phase involves a detailed examination of an actual crowd event in order to determine whether the social identity model is able to explain the nature of events. These three phases are not meant to be exhaustive; further elaborations of the present model will require renewed movement between the laboratory and the field.

The experimental studies

The effects of identifiability. The first aim of the experimental work was to examine the effects of those conditions associated with the crowd context upon behaviour. This question has been one of the principal concerns of crowd psychology ever since its inception. Indeed LeBon's work is based upon assumptions as to the psychological consequences of physical involvement with a mass of others. He was interested in the effects of immersion in a group and in particular the consequences that arise once individual crowd members are no longer distinguishable. These concerns are directly reflected in the recent experimental research on de-individuation (Diener, 1980; Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb, 1952; Zimbardo, 1969). The classic and the modern work share in common two main assumptions.

The first assumption is that, as attention is drawn away from the self due to group immersion and anonymity, so the standards that normally control behaviour are removed. This contention is based on the second assumption: an individualistic model of the self. The self is seen as a unique property of the individual and, therefore, if attention is removed from self-as-individual, the only alternative is no self and thus no basis for behavioural standards.

The concept of social identity produces a radical break with the de-individuation tradition. It introduces the possibility that conditions which remove attention from personal aspects of the self refocus it upon social aspects of the self and hence render salient social bases of behavioural control. It therefore becomes imperative to examine more closely the way in which 'de-individuating' conditions manipulate the salience of different identities.

The theoretical blindness of de-individuation research to social dimensions of identity is reflected on a methodological level in an insensitivity to the social context in which identifiability is manipulated. This has led to two distinct ways of operationalizing de-individuation. In some cases it has meant merging the individual into a group such that individual and group are indistinguishable. In others it has meant visual anonymity produced through clothing or low lighting. However, 'de-individuation as immersion' and 'de-individuation as anonymity' may be expected to have fundamentally different effects on the salience of social identity.

The effects of immersion should be straightforward. As individuals are made part of a group and their behaviour becomes significant only as part of a collective response, so the salience of the relevant social identification and hence conformity to group norms will increase. The predicted effects of anonymity are more complex and dependent on context. Anonymity in an intergroup situation will decrease visual intragroup differences and increase visual intergroup differences. The consequence is an accentuation of the group boundary and therefore increased salience of group identity and identity-based behaviours. Conversely, where individuals are not in groups but intermingled, to make them anonymous would be to destroy any possibility of distinguishing ingroup and outgroup members. In this case the consequence would be to destroy any vestigial group boundary, to decrease salience of group identity and adherence to group norms.

A first experiment (Reicher, 1984b) was designed to test these predictions. Students from Science and Social Science faculties were initially shown a film. This presented arguments for and against vivisection and then showed the results of a supposed survey on the positions of various groups towards this topic. Social scientists were represented as being strongly anti-vivisection and scientists as being strongly pro-vivisection. The students were then referred to and identified either as group members or as individuals. In both group and individual conditions participants were either left visually identifiable in their own dress or else made anonymous. This was done by dressing them in baggy overalls and a cloth mask covering the whole head. All the participants completed three dependent measures. The first was an 'attitudes to vivisection' scale, the second presented four behavioural dilemmas in which one had to indicate willingness to help or hinder vivisectionists or anti-vivisectionists respectively. Finally there was a 'behaviour projection' scale which required one to divide resources between projects either involving or not involving vivisection. When the measures were completed everyone was brought together and debriefed.

Based upon the general hypotheses the predicted results were as follows: given a pro-vivisection norm for scientists and an anti-vivisection norm for social scientists, then, under group conditions, pro-vivisection behaviour will increase for scientists and decrease for social scientists. For scientists, anonymity will further increase pro-vivisection behaviour in group conditions, while in individual conditions it will further decrease pro-vivisection behaviour. For social scientists, the opposite will occur: anonymity in groups will decrease pro-vivisection responses and anonymity in individual conditions will increase pro-vivisection responses.

For the group manipulation the results on all three measures gave strong support for the predictions: as individual response was merged into group response, so individuals came to act in terms of the group norm. Scientists became considerably more pro-vivisection and social scientists increased their opposition to vivisection. The results of anonymity were much less straightforward. There was only one weak effect of anonymity, which was on the attitude measure. Moreover, while this was in the expected direction, it only applied to the scientists. This absence of anonymity effects is principally attributable to the strength of the group effects: group conditions were so effective in enhancing and individual conditions in attenuating the salience of social identity that the extra contribution of anonymity was negligible. Nevertheless, the consequences of anonymity give no support to the traditional de-individuation position and, where apparent, are explicable only in terms of the social identity theory.

Overall, then, the results indicate that conditions associated with the crowd predispose the expression of social identity-based behaviours. In particular it is clear that 'de-individuation as immersion' does not deregulate behaviour but rather brings into play strong social determinants of behaviour. However, there is a problem in extrapolating from these results to actual crowd behaviour. If, as has been argued, crowd events typically involve intergroup confrontations, then behaviour will be affected by the power of sanctions which the outgroup has over the ingroup. Such power relations are absent from the first study but where they operate one might expect anonymity to acquire a renewed significance. To be specific, ingroup members will be more likely to do things likely to invoke the sanction of the outgroup when they cannot be identified by the outgroup.

This argument may seem a return to LeBon's account of anonymity leading to an indiscriminate release of destructive behaviour, but there is a crucial difference. Behaviour will also be limited by ingroup norms. The argument depends on a distinction between antecedent processes

and usable power to translate these processes into action, i.e., the crowd context may predispose individuals to act in terms of social identity but they will only actually do so where fear of sanctions is overcome. The important point is that the immunity conferred by anonymity will only facilitate the expression of behaviours that are consonant with the ingroup's social identity.

It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the intra- and the intergroup consequences of immersion and anonymity. The first study showed that within the group both factors work through manipulating the salience of social identity, although anonymity is of limited importance. On the intergroup level, where power relations are involved, both factors will be of importance in neutralizing outgroup sanctions. In particular, anonymity will make it impossible for the outgroup to identify individuals participating in the action. As a consequence immersion and anonymity will facilitate the expression of social identity-based behaviours proscribed by the outgroup. A second study was designed to test these predictions.

Participants were divided into groups of supporters and antagonists of the 'Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament' (CND). They were then shown a videotaped debate on the motion 'Britain should unilaterally discard all its nuclear weapons', which had two proposers and two opposers. At seven intervals during the debate participants were asked to evaluate how powerfully the arguments were expressed by either side. This was done by dividing points between the pro- and anti-CND positions. At the end of the debate a final overall evaluation was made, after which everybody completed an eight-item 'attitudes to nuclear disarmament' scale.

Both the pro- and anti-CND groups were divided into 'ingroup visible' and 'outgroup visible' conditions. In the former, each group sat around a separate table with a screen dividing them. They were told that at the end of the study members would read their evaluation points scores (the numbers of points awarded to pro- and anti-CND at each of the seven intervals while watching the debate) to an ingroup member who would collate them and hand to the outgroup the totalled scores for pro- and anti-CND for each of the seven choices. The outgroup would then decide how to partition these points totals for the ingroup amongst the ingroup members. Thus they were told that only ingroup members would know how individuals had responded and that when the outgroup came to distribute points amongst them it would have no means of penalizing those who showed extreme ingroup bias.

In the outgroup visible conditions each group sat in a 'V' formation, the two 'V's facing each other so that each group could see the other.

They were told that at the end of the study group members would read their evaluation points scores to a member of the outgroup, who would collate them; the outgroup would then decide how to partition the points totals for the ingroup amongst ingroup members. Thus they were led to believe that outgroup members would be able to scrutinize the reponses of each individual and would have the means of discriminating against those who were highly biased in favour of the ingroup. In fact the experiment was terminated and a debriefing session took place as soon as the attitude scale had been completed.

The predictions were that, for the evaluation of the debate, members would show ingroup bias by allocating more points to their own group than the other, but less bias would be shown when participants believed their responses would be visible to the outgroup. For the attitude scale, supporters of CND would be more favourable to unilateral disarmament than antagonists, but, assuming that attitudes are neither proscribed by nor discriminate against the outgroup, there should be no effects of visibility.

The overall results gave strong support to these predictions. Interestingly, however, there was a visibility effect for the one attitude item which at the time of the study (autumn 1982) addressed actions considered illegitimate by both sides. Direct action tactics were considered illegal by opponents of CND, whilst the measures used against such tactics were considered illegitimate by CND supporters. Consequently, this unexpected result further supports the contention that lack of visibility in an intergroup context only facilitates behaviours that are prescribed by ingroup identity and proscribed by the outgroup.

In conclusion, the two studies together suggest that the effects upon identifiability which are associated with being part of a crowd act so as to overdetermine the expression of social identity. Not only is such identity made salient but also the neutralization of outgroup power allows the expression of identity-based behaviours in a way that may be impossible in everyday life. This implies, in complete contradiction to the traditional image of the anarchic mob, that crowd action represents one of the clearest contexts in which to discover the social bases of behaviour.

The limits of social influence. Having demonstrated the relationship between crowd conditions and social identification, the second aim of the experimental research was to examine the consequences of social identification for the process of social influence. The self-categorization theory gives rise to two hypotheses: first, that processes of collective influence depend upon the salience of group identity and,

secondly, that, given that the consequence of salience is conformity to the ingroup stereotype, only messages which define or make available norms which are consonant with that stereotype will be influential. The third study tested these hypotheses.

The experiment involved social science students who initially watched a videotape which purported to show the results of a survey into attitudes to the punishment of sexual offenders. As well as presenting arguments for and against heavy punishment the tape showed the positions of various groups. Social scientists were shown as having a strong norm towards high punishment. Participants then either had their social identity made salient by referring to and identifying them only in terms of their group membership or else social identity was made non-salient by referring to them as individuals and identifying them through a unique individual code.

There were two dependent measures. The first presented a set of eight dilemmas based upon vignettes of sexual harrassment or assault in which participants were asked to indicate what sort of punishment the offender should receive. However, before responding to each dilemma they were presented with a tape-recorded message which was purportedly that of a previous respondent. There were two conditions. In one, all the messages argued for leniency, while in the other the messages all stressed the need for punishment. After completing their responses the participants filled in an 'attitudes to punishment of sexual offenders' scale. Finally they were brought together and debriefed.

It was predicted that participants would give more punitive responses when their social science identity was made salient, but that the effects of the message manipulation would depend upon salience. When social science identity is not salient, responses will be influenced by message content. Participants will be more punitive when the message is punitive than when it is lenient. It can be presumed here that the effect of messege content is mediated by its appeal to existing higher order norms. When social science identity is salient, there will be no message effect, since the messages that are not congruent with that identity will have no effect upon responses and those that are will merely duplicate the effect of the salient ingroup norm.

Results on both the dilemmas and the attitude scale bear out these predictions. The number of jail sentences as opposed to lesser measures indicated as the appropriate punishment undergoes an overall increase where identity as a social scientist is made salient. The messages only affect the number of sentences when identity is not salient. Exactly the same pattern applies for the attitude scale. This indicates that the nature of the influence process is a function of the state of identification.

Where a specific identity is not salient, responses may be influenced against its norms. However, when that identity is salient, not only does behaviour conform to the ingroup stereotype but also the sole source of influence is likely to be in messages which clarify the content of that stereotype.

Two things should be noted about this argument. First, it suggests that far from being more liable to casual influence, collective behaviour introduces very strict limits upon the influence process. Secondly, it implies that the nature of those limits and therefore the range of possible collective actions will be determined by the content of the salient social identification.

The experimental studies in combination provide support for the self-categorization theory of crowd behaviour. They show that the conditions associated with crowds make social identity salient and that under these conditions behaviour both conforms to and is limited by the ingroup stereotype. It remains to show that these processes apply to actual crowd events and that the behaviour in such an event can be understood in terms of the social identity of the participants.

The field study

The field research (Reicher, 1984a) consists of an analysis of the disturbances which occurred in the St Pauls area of Bristol, England, on 2 April 1980. This analysis is based on a series of resources. First, a collection was made of all media sources; secondly, various official and semi-official reports were collected; thirdly, a series of photographs was amassed; finally, a number of interviews were conducted. Interviewees included several 'elite individuals' such as local councillors, police chiefs, clergy and 'community leaders' as well as about 30 individuals who participated in the events.

The account that follows was constructed out of these various sources; where events were corroborated by independent sources, they are not given. Only when unique information is supplied is the source identified. Interviewees are identified using the following code: race (W = white, B = black), sex (M = Male, F = Female) and approximate age. Thus WM25 indicates a 25-year-old white male.

The events of 2 April fall into two distinct phases. The first started with the police raid on the Black and White café and ended when the police left the St Pauls area. The second covers the period in which uniformed police were absent from the area, before re-entering with reinforcements. There are major differences between the two phases and they will be analysed separately.

The first phase of the 'St Pauls riot'. What became known as the St Pauls riot was in fact a complex series of events following a drugs and illegal drinking raid on the Black and White café in Grosvenor Road. There were three separate bouts of violence. The first occurred as the police were taking away Bertram Wilkes, owner of the café, who had been arrested. They were stoned by a large crowd gathered opposite the café. There was then a period of calm as the police loaded crates of drink, found in the café, into a van. The second bout of violence began as the van drove away and was so intense that police were forced to flee and regroup with reinforcements, before marching back to relieve some of their colleagues beleaguered inside the café. Only after prolonged conflict during which several police cars were burnt out were the police able to regain control.

The final and most violent phase began when a pick-up van came to take away the gutted cars and the police drew up in formation, intending to march down Grosvenor Road and clear the streets. As they started to do so the stoning began and the police were broken up into two groups. For half an hour between 6.45 and 7.15 p.m. two lots of 200 to 300 youths faced a total of some 60 police, one lot on City Road, the other on the green opposite Lloyds Bank. Finally all the police were forced back on to City Road, where they tried to regroup with riot shields. But they were still outnumbered and surrounded and were slowly forced down the road and out of St Pauls. By 7.30 p.m. they were back in Trinity Road police station.

Out of the officers involved 49 suffered some form of injury. Twenty-one police vehicles were damaged, eight by fire, of which six were gutted. Yet apart from photographers, of whom it was feared with some justification that their pictures might facilitate police identification, the police were the only target of collective attack. The crowd assaulted no private individuals nor attacked any private property. Indeed the event occurred against a backdrop of remarkable normality; cars drove through the area, people shopped, families watched and chatted.

This is not a claim that only the police were hurt. Several people were hit and windows broken by stray bricks. More importantly, one must distinguish between individual and collective actions. There is an important difference between isolated acts and those which become generalized and serve as the basis for collective norms. One person may throw a stone at a target but, unless others join in, it cannot be considered as collective behaviour. In determining the difference between acts which generalize and those which do not one can derive the boundaries of normative action. Thus the stoning of the police was

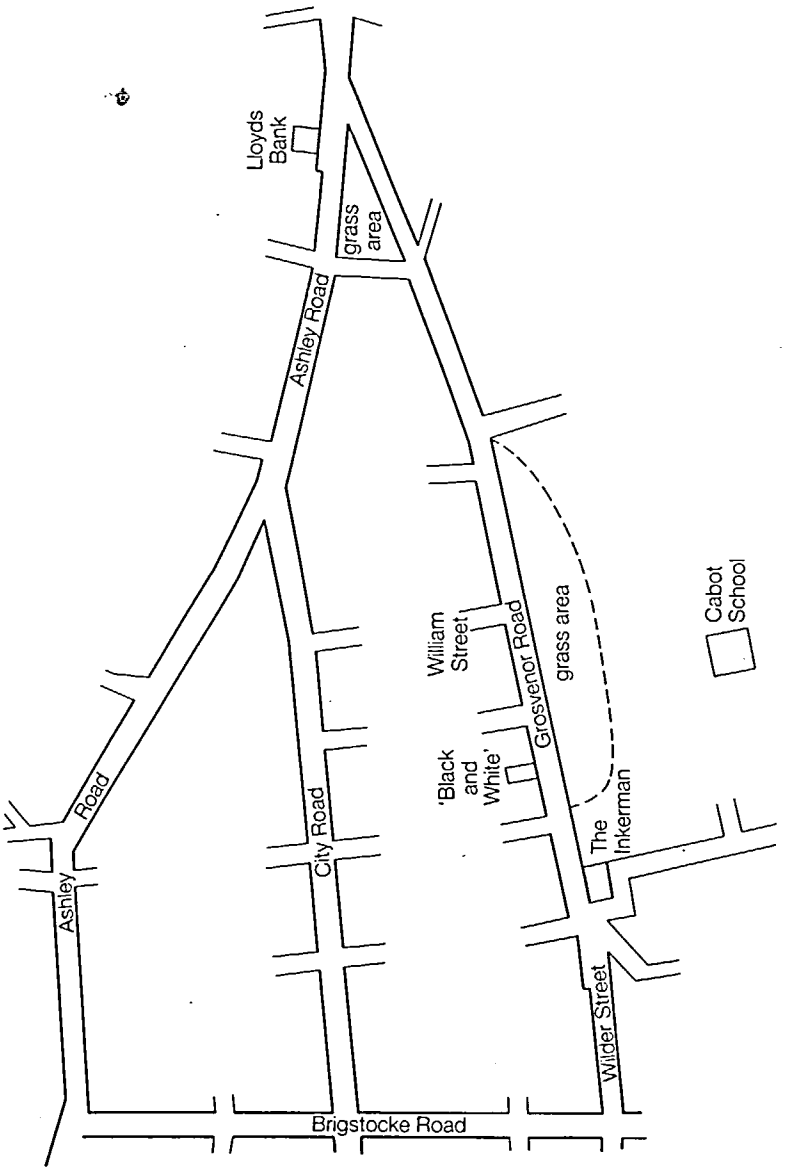

Figure 8.1 Plan of St Pauls (from Reicher, S.D. (1984) The St Pauls Riot: An explanation of the limits of crowd action in terms of a social identity model. European Journal of Social Psychology, *14, 1–21. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.)*

described as follows: 'all hell was let loose after the first brick went in' (WM30), or else 'a few bricks went in and then people closed in the road and everybody started doing it' (WM17). However, the response to other targets was very different: 'a bus . . . got one window smashed . . . everyone went "ugh", "idiots"' (WF25). In some cases there seems to have been a prosocial norm. When the fire service came to put out a burning police car people helped unroll the hoses.

Apart from definite limits to the targets for attack there were also geographical limits to the events. Only the police in St Pauls came under attack and when they left the area they were not pursued. Asked why, one participant replied: 'it was just an assumption by everyone in the crowd – get [the police] out' (WM17). This quotation shows two things. First of all, within what was described as 'riot fury' (*The Sun* newspaper, 3 April 1980), there was a clear pattern to the events with strict limits to what was deemed legitimate behaviour. Secondly, that pattern was the result of neither preplanning nor overt leadership. Participants consistently describe their behaviour as spontaneous and when asked who initiated particular episodes would make responses such as 'anyone, everybody down there' (WF25). The possibility remains that there were conscious agitators of whom people were unaware, but this still begs the question of why particular acts became normative while others did not. It remains necessary to explain how the events displayed clear social form without the benefit of any consensual direction.

Despite the lack of leadership many participants expressed a sense of purpose. The specific purpose was 'getting [the police] out of St Pauls' (WM17); more generally it was resistance to outside control, of which the police were a symbol. When Desmond Pierre of the St Pauls Defence Committee was asked about its purpose, he replied: 'We are defending ourselves on a lot of issues, but the main one is just the right to lead a free life.' From this perspective the events are immediately comprehensible.

There are two important points about this sense of purpose. It is *collective*. Participants talk of themselves not as individuals but as part of a social group. This collective sense of self is apparent throughout participants' accounts. It pervades the way they talked of who was involved: 'it was St Pauls, you know . . . this was just St Pauls'. It affects the way they talked about the consequences: 'we feel great, we feel confident it was a victory' (BM age unknown); the social self-definition also affected how people related to each other. While the police suffered ferocious attack, and outsiders experienced intense fear (one woman declaring 'I thought I was going to be killed'), the relationship to those

seen as part of the ingroup was entirely different. According to one participant 'it was really joyful, that's what they all leave out, the joy' (WM30). Once again the nature of the ingroup is precisely specified: 'you were grinning at everybody because everyone was from St Pauls' (WM17). The participants regarded themselves, their actions and the events as a whole in terms of their membership of the St Pauls community.

Secondly, the sense of purpose reveals something of the meaning of the St Pauls identity. Apart from the obvious geographical element, the central themes are those of a desire for control constantly thwarted by the domination and oppression of external agents, with specific reference to the police. Several respondents likened being from St Pauls to suffering racial oppression – as one resident observed of the crowd, 'politically they were all black' (WF28). This is not to say that the 'St Pauls community' or the participants were all black, but rather that their identity is defined in terms of black experience.

In light of this identification and bearing in mind the significance of the Black and White café itself, the events of the first phase become explicable. The Black and White café was the only public establishment owned and run by a local resident. It therefore not only had symbolic value but was a crucial resource for the self-organization of the community. In raiding the café and being seen to threaten its closure, the police were seen as making an open attack on the community's right to exist. The point is important for it undermines the notion that almost any 'spark' may initiate a riot. Far from this being so, each of the events that precipitated violence – arresting Wilkes, removing the stock, attempting to clear the streets – was a highly significant act from the perspective of group identity. They each validated the notion of the police as an agency undermining the autonomy of the community and, in so far as this identity provided a means of making sense of the actions (see chapter 6), they made it highly salient.

What is more, the content of events was entirely consonant with the principal dimensions of the St Pauls identity. Behaviour was limited to removing what was seen as an alien and illegitimate police presence. Thus violence directed against the police became normative while action against other targets did not. Similarly, violence was only acceptable within the St Pauls area, not a stone was thrown outside its geographical boundaries.

The close relationship between the content of the St Pauls identity and the events of the first phase provides strong support for the notion that social identity processes underly crowd behaviour. Also, the account of the manner in which particular actions became normative is

consistent with the explanation of norm formation in the crowd in terms of the inductive aspect of categorization. At periods of uncertainty any action as long as it was performed by a group member and translated group identity into action was liable to become normative. Finally, the level of violence directed at the police was only possible because being outnumbered they had no way of arresting their assailants. Yet once again it should be stressed that however unprecedented or extreme the behaviours facilitated by this immunity, the power of the crowd did not lead to wanton destruction. It only facilitated actions that fell within the limits prescribed by the relevant social identity.

The second phase of the 'St Pauls riot'. As soon as the police had left the St Pauls area, members of the crowd began to take charge of traffic control. The only vehicles that were denied entry were police cars or those suspected of carrying plainclothes police. Otherwise the only impediment to traffic was a small and largely symbolic barricade built and set alight on City Road at the boundary of St Pauls.

Over the next four hours a series of attacks on property was made. It is difficult to establish exact timings or a clear sequence to events. It seems that the first attacks, situated around the junction of Grosvenor Road and Wilder Street, began at around 7.45 p.m. and that by 11.15 p.m. when the police had surrounded the area they had largely finished. Before discussing the events it is necessary to point to a difficulty in the analysis. Given that many attacks were occurring simultaneously and mostly under cover of nightfall it is frequently impossible to tell whether they were collective or individual acts. The damage record alone is an unreliable guide to collective intentions, for some of the damage may have been done by outsiders and, if witnessed, might have incurred collective disapproval. In fact, several local shops were broken into but were then defended collectively and further attacks were stopped.

Despite these difficulties, some patterns can be discerned. All the attacks were limited to the St Pauls area and there was no damage to private homes. Despite the fact that homes and shops are interspersed throughout St Pauls, it was impossible to spot even one broken window. Also there was a difference between shops owned by local residents and those owned by outsiders. The majority of the former were either left alone or actively defended. In some cases this defence was organized, as in the case of a group of Rastafarians (a black sect) outside the Roots record shop or the local priest who ensured that the local chemist was not looted. In other cases it was spontaneous: 'one white

lad threw a bottle at the Kashmir. He was stopped by several people and told he was not to do it' (WM35).

In fact out of 16 locally owned shops (excluding service establishments) only four suffered any damage and for three of these there were special circumstances. One was collectively defended after individuals were seen inside it, another caught fire through being next to the bank and its owner came out to berate the crowd, and in the third case there seems to have been the settling of an old score. In contrast, all eight shops owned by outsiders were damaged, seven of them being extensively looted. Moreover, the looting seems to have been collective. In the case of Overbury's, a bicycle shop, 'they were forming a chain and passing out bikes and things . . . there were all sorts of people there, black and white. There were young and old' (WM25).

Of the shops which were attacked, four, all owned by outsiders, had stock vandalized as well as looted. These were Frank Voisey, a car showroom, Fowlers, a motorcycle shop, Barrowcrofts, an electrical goods shop, and Overbury's. In the last case bicycles were initially taken from the shop and laid in the road for cars to run over before the looting began. It is noticeable that in each case the shops took advantage of low costs in the area in order to run large showrooms selling expensive goods. Due to local poverty (one index shows 60 per cent of St Pauls children being eligible for free school meals, as against a county average of 21 per cent), these goods were mostly out of reach of the population and the shops were only used by outsiders.

Finally, a series of buildings was directly attacked rather than the damage being a side effect of looting. If one excludes those properties which suffered fire damage due to flames spreading from adjacent premises, there were four of these. They are the Department of Health and Social Services in Wilder Street, which was badly stoned, Washbrooks Stationers opposite the Inkerman pub, which suffered £65,000 fire damage, Lloyds Bank, which was destroyed by fire, and the Post Office near Lloyds, which was also severely damaged by fire. Washbrooks was the first to be set on fire and the flames threatened to spread to nearby homes. However, the fire service was initially denied access to St Pauls. When fire engines later tried to put out the blaze at Lloyds, they were fiercely stoned and as fire officers went into the burning bank their air supply was interfered with – a potentially lethal act.

Each of the attacks on buildings was carried out collectively. This is clearest in the case of Lloyds Bank: 'somebody suddenly shouted out "bank" and, once one went in, there was a shower of large stones, bricks . . . it was quite a spontaneous reaction' (WM35). The reason why these targets were chosen was made equally clear: 'we got the

bank; that's where the moneymen live. That's Margaret Thatcher's government' (BM23). In fact all four buildings represent major financial institutions for local residents. Apart from the bank, the DHSS is where all forms of welfare benefit are claimed, (estimates of unemployment alone account for 30–70 per cent of adult residents), the Post Office is where 'giro' cheques (a form of government and other payment) can be redeemed and Washbrooks was housed in the same building as a local rent office.

These institutions have a dual significance: they symbolize the exclusion of an impoverished community from spheres of capital and state and they are the practical means through which the latter exert control over the community. The process of applying for benefit, claiming benefit and even cashing giro cheques, for example, subjects the individual to constant humiliation and investigation as well as publicly marking their poverty and wagelessness. It also operates a double bind, for as well as stressing exclusion the process demands at least overtly a conventional orientation to waged society. One must be seen to be available for and willing to work in order to claim. Thus, simultaneously, one is denied the benefits of a materialistic society and denied the possibility of elaborating an alternative. Poverty and domination are inextricably intertwined: the fusion of 'the moneymen' and 'Margaret Thatcher's government' is not fanciful but a central experience of St Pauls people. Any attempt to overcome material or cultural subordination must confront these institutions.

Therefore, far from being random, the targets and the nature of the attack upon them are highly meaningful. This is not to deny that a prominant motive in what happened was simple material gain: as one participant observed, 'kids want bicycles, things like sweets and groceries. People had never had it so good' (WM25). Yet this is not a sufficient explanation, for it tells nothing about the pattern of events.

In contrast to some opinions, the community did not attack itself; participants were quite clear about this: 'little corner shops did not get done because they are struggling like most of the people in St Pauls' (WM17), or more graphically: 'you don't shit on your own doorstep' (BM age unknown). The attacks that were made express a social understanding of the relationship between target and community. Where outsiders' shops were seen simply as profiting from locals, they were looted. The principle was 'I paid for this yesterday, it is mine now' (BF quoted by WM35). Where shops took advantage of St Pauls to sell goods beyond the range of residents, the goods themselves, symbols of a consumer society and a permanent mockery to indigenous poverty, were attacked. Where institutions were seen as imposing control over

the community, the attempt was made to destroy the institution as a whole.

Despite the great subtlety of these events, participants stressed that 'there was no obvious leadership in the sense that "this is next on the list, we'll break into here" (WM30). As in the first phase, what happened seems to have been neither planned nor directed and, again, people's accounts and their behaviour point to their participation as members of the 'St Pauls community'. Once more there is a clear relationship between the content of this identification and the nature of events. Apart from the geographical element, the dimension of control is central, for the events can be seen as reactions against a set of institutions which bind the community into a position of powerlessness and poverty.

Being able 'to lead a free life' means as much an assault on the economic and political basis of domination as upon the police. So, in the same way as attacking the police, the looting, damage and arson were attacks on outside agencies of social control. The differences in the nature of the attack reflect differences in the understanding of the manner in which the different targets exerted control over the community. The reason why no direction was needed was that the legitimacy and therefore the generalizability of particular behaviours was determined by their relationship to this understanding, which itself was a common social conception of the way the St Pauls community related to other social agents.

The final point relates to the importance of power. The events of the second stage could not have occurred without the absence of the police and the cover of darkness. Participants candidly admit that there was a feeling of 'wait until it gets dark'. Yet the inability to be apprehended or identified was only used in order to manifest a socially defined and shared set of grievances. What was unprecedented was not so much the feeling of antagonism as an ability to express this antagonism in unmitigated form. The evidence indicates that crowd events are uniquely social; they allow a glimpse of people's social understanding of themselves and their social world that is hidden amongst the concerns of everyday life.

Conclusion

The empirical evidence demonstrates that the self-categorization theory is of use in explaining crowd behaviour. The experimental studies illustrate the explanatory viability and significance of social

identity processes for social influence, and the field study shows that the theory is capable of accounting for the characteristics of an actual crowd event. In particular and in contrast to foregoing crowd psychologies, it is capable of explaining the central paradox of the crowd: how behaviour manages to be a complex and meaningful reaction to unprecedented circumstances without overt direction. Moreover, the ability of social identity processes to account for the spontaneous sociality of the crowd is made possible by the irreducible sociality of the concept itself. The concept acknowledges the social form of collective behaviour without seeing it as a construct out of purely intra- or inter-individual events because the social dimension is made neither separate from nor secondary to individual aspects of human cognition.

It is claimed, therefore, that the social identity theory of the group provides an adequate basis for developing a social psychological explanation of crowd behaviour. It is not suggested, however, that the explanation presented has yet been proved, nor that the processes of referent informational influence and in particular norm formation through the inductive aspect of categorization explain the specific content and the concrete historical development of crowd action.

One of the crucial aspects of the St Pauls 'riot' was the change that occurred as it developed. While it is true that it is possible to explain both phases using a broad notion of 'control' and that on the general level there is a definite continuity between them, there are also important differences. On a mundane level there is the difference in reaction to the fire service. At first they are welcomed and helped; later on they are barred and their lives put under threat, and this is a reflection of an underlying change. What started as a defensive reaction to a particular event develops into an offensive attempt to redefine the relationship between the community and a whole series of agents. Where the first phase was a matter of getting rid of the police, the second was a matter of taking control of the streets and determining who and what could take place upon them. Nobody, not even the fire service, had the right to come in uninvited. Moreover, it is clear that the participants felt that their relationships to outside agents had been changed as a result of the events. As one black youth said of the police: 'they will never again treat us with contempt . . . they will respect us now'.

As argued in the introduction, one aim of social identity research has been to counter the traditional tendency of psychology to reify behaviour. An aspect of this is the stress on the interaction between the social and psychological determinants of behaviour. There is a second and equally important aspect. By abstracting behaviours from their social context and universalizing the products of a given moment in

history, crowd psychology has tended to exclude the possibility of social change. Social identity research, on the other hand, began with a clear commitment to produce a social psychology of social change. Tajfel (1974), for example, stated that 'social identity is understood here as an intervening causal mechanism in situations of social change'. The current explanation of the crowd, however, remains relatively static. It allows for change and development in that identity-based behaviours do not represent the imposition of a set of of predetermined attributes, but follow from the construction of a relatively autonomous 'situational identity' – within the limits of the relevant superordinate identity the latter may assume myriad forms and change rapidly. Indeed, salient self-categories at whatever level of abstraction, and the defining norms which accompany them, are not static or constant phenomena, but relative and fluid, varying with the specific social context that provides the frame of reference and the social relations perceived between people. But there is little systematic attempt to exploit this side of the theory; for example, extra-psychological factors in the induction of norms or changes of superordinate identity to do with political and economic realities and their ideological interpretation are treated almost as random events.

The key issue is raised of how one can combine in one theory the fact that social identity determines the form of social behaviour and is at the same time changed through that behaviour. This is an aspect of the question of how the individual (or psychology) can be at one and the same time the cause and the consequence of society. To understand the contribution of the self-categorization theory to this question, the role of social identity in social psychological interaction must be understood (see chapter 9): that social identity refers both to the attributes of a given self and is also by the very nature of its construction a model of social relations and that identity and social relations exist as reciprocally determining preconditions. This is illustrated in the way the concept was used to account for the events of St Pauls.

The St Pauls identity principally denoted a collective conception of the place of the community in its social world. This breaks down into two elements. First, a model of the nature of various social agencies. Secondly, the implications of this for the behaviour of the community: both how agencies impinge on community and how community can act upon these agencies. It is hardly surprising that there is an intimate connection between one's concept of self and one's understanding of the social world. On the one hand, a concept of one's place in the world will depend on how the world is organized (in a world structured by class it will be one's class that is of relevance; in a world structured by

nation, nationality comes to the fore). On the other hand, one's behaviours will be constrained by the nature of the social relations in which one is enmeshed. Thus many of the stereotypical characteristics of subordinated groups – slyness, dishonesty, expressivity – represent inevitable strategies in dealing with a powerful adversary whom it is impossible to confront directly. Moreover, to take the case of the black movement in America, the change in these supposed attributes was integrally connected to a reconceptualization of the power relation between black and white stemming in part from liberation in Africa.

It is important, therefore, to have a dynamic view of identity, to see it not only as a determinant and reflection of what is but also as a model of what is possible within a particular set of social relations, in other words, as a theory of action in the social world. Changes in the nature of social relations will alter the ability of subjects to act and changes in subjects' actions will alter social relations. Social identity relates behaviour to its social context and explains its social form, but it does not imply the endless reproduction of society as it is; this would be to lapse into a new form of reification. It also provides a social psychological starting point in the analysis of social change.