Mind the Masses

"By the mere fact that he forms part of an organised crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd he is a barbarian - that is, a creature acting by instinct."

Gustave Le Bon
The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind 1895

"In recent years many political theorists have examined the dilemmas that popular constituent power poses for democratic theory and democratic politics. New research into crowds and crowd theory extends this work in promising new directions."

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A Hobart and William Smith Student Collaboration
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Biographical Note

Seniors and juniors in Professor of Political Science Jodi Dean’s seminar entitled Crowds and Power published this book in May of 2013 to benefit the collective. The republication of this work is encouraged.
Dedicated to

Professor of Political Science Jodi Dean for all of her guidance during the creation of this collection
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INTRODUCTION

The wave at a baseball game is characterized as a group event. As you sit in your seat looking at the wave start on the other side of the stadium, you watch in anticipation of your turn to stand up and throw your hands in the air as if your flailing arms were made of spaghetti. While this occurs you may watch another fan try to start a chant. He turns around and shouts at the crowd “Let’s go (fill in the blank)”. When no one responds maybe he looks down and sits down or he persists in his effort. As the game progresses the home team begins to make a miraculous comeback. The atmosphere of the stadium completely changes. The people are on the edge of their seat, “owing” and “ahing”, sweating, yelling, and jumping. The women who has tattoos covering her arms and has been chewing dip all game, all of sudden is hugging and slapping hands with the man in the suit in tie who brought his kids to the game. One begins to wonder why does one’s behavior and feeling change so much at a baseball game? What guides the crowd to join in on the wave or the chant? What makes two people who seem to be so different all of a sudden rejoice with each other and enjoy each other’s company? Is it the idea of baseball or the team that makes these people cohesive? Are the fans led by a super-fan or by the players? How is it that one can feel a change in the atmosphere?

It may seem that this phenomenon is trivial, but what if I were to say aspects of this event persisted in all parts of life? At the workplace, in the riot, the religious event, on the Internet, at a wedding, while on a date, walking around a city, watching tv, etc. If this were so, understanding the questions existing around the behavior of fans at a baseball game might not seem trivial. Throughout this book, the authors argue the baseball game could be correlated to these other things. Accordingly, the foundational elements of the baseball game and these different events can be understood through crowd theory.

The plethora of information and interpretations of crowds leads to a number of different debates. Why “Mind the Masses”? There are two reasons, which are closely related. First, one should mind the masses because the crowd is a force with the great power and ability to exert its will. How does this force
work? What are its potentials? What do past crowds tell us about the force of a crowd? What forms the will of the crowd? Additionally how the crowd works and forms cannot be understood without understanding how the crowd influences the brain. Consequently, our second reason to mind the masses is because the book explores the mind of members in a crowd and/or the crowd’s mind. The mind of a crowd and its members is mysterious. How do members of crowds think? How does a crowd’s mind work? What happens to the individual? Does the crowd have a single mind? What influences the crowd’s mind? Does a crowd need a leader? If so, what is the dynamic between the leader and it’s members? Or does a crowd follow an idea? Does a crowd have to be physical? Is it purely psychological? Social?

This book illuminates the debates around these questions by giving conflicting accounts of the crowd. The contributors to this book help one understand the implications of the crowd and it’s affect on political and social life.

Patrick O’Brien and Brooke Lyon start off this collection of essays by questioning the effects of the crowd on the mind. The mind of the masses is surrounded by a complex array of casual events, but through an account of the crowd’s collective genius one can attempt to determine the factors and motivations behind a crowd’s collective actions. O’Brien’s account of recent crowd theories explore the unconscious actions of a crowd and whether or not there is an existence of a collective consciousness within the mind of the crowd. Using accounts such as Gustave Le Bon and Sigmund Freud, he explores past discussions of suggestion, contagion and a state of hypnotism within crowd theory. Afterwards, he relates these concepts and theories to Tarde’s account of society. Furthermore, O’Brien argues imitation underlies both Tarde’s theory and Le Bon and Freud’s theories. Modern crowd psychologists have formed a new field of study in affect theory, which rivals that of Tarde’s imitation theory and creates a modern debate over the reasons behind the mind of the crowd. Brooke Lyon’s comparisons between modern affect theorists and classical crowd theory add a modern, scientific approach to the way we can think about the crowd. Affect theory brings together psychology, neurology, and
behavioral theories, which combine to produce a unique lens to examine the crowd from. Lyon’s explanation of Freud and Le Bon’s crowd theories along with correlations to affect produce a thought provoking addition to this book.

After, having a brief background on the debate around the mind of the crowd, one may begin to wonder, “what are the political implications of a crowd mind?” In the next section, “Crowd Potential”, Marta Piotrowicz and Nathan Berger explore the political possibilities of the crowd. Piotrowicz views the crowd as a universal and creative force. While others have labeled novel, political moments as paradoxical, Piotrowicz uses the universality of the crowd to rid beginnings of their paradox. While, Piotrowicz uses the crowd to universalize the will of the people, Berger says crowds form for justice. Berger indicates the crowd striving for justice needs look no further than at its own egalitarian form to guide its goal. He argues political society should take on the equalizing form of a crowd to achieve justice.

While, both Berger and Piotrowicz argue the will of the people or general will is expressed in the crowd, they do not (deeply) interrogate what leads this will. Is it necessary to have an individual leader, as Le Bon and Freud have argued, or is the power of an idea strong enough to unify and inspire a crowd as Alain Badiou and Elias Canetti have argued? Emily Shelden discusses and analyzes the current example of Occupy Wall Street to show that a leading idea can actually be more powerful and more useful to a crowd than an individual person. She argues that the power of the idea comes in the collective formation and dedication to the idea. Mac Swenson brings us back in time to discuss the very powerful and influential role that Mao Zedong had in mid-20th century China. While Shelden argues that a powerful, collective idea can replace the need for an individual person to lead a crowd, Swenson argues that an idea, like the Cultural Revolution in China, needs to be articulated by a charismatic leader in order to unify and lead a crowd.

After exploring the debate around whether ideas or leaders are integral to the crowd, the section Where is the Crowd? focuses on the issues of the physicality of crowds, crowd proximity and the psychological crowd. Eleanor McDavis’s work uses Paris as a base to investigate how physicality influences the
crowd. The city of Paris is able to provide a unique insight into how important physicality is for the crowd because it was completely renovated during the second half of the nineteenth century by Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann. McDavis’s work goes on to examine how failing to limit the corporal crowd can be explained by the existence and power of the psychological crowd. Tardelli, on the other hand, argues that the crowd does not truly form until the members of the crowd are in close physical relation to one another. Consequently, the strong psychological effects experienced in a crowd do not come to fruition unless closeness is present.

In the last section, Modern Crowds Peter M. Parente Jr. and Nathaniel Burgess explore crowd networks and contagion. Parente examines crowd behavior as the cause of stock market bubbles. He assesses the explanations set forth by behavioral economists and explains the relation of these phenomena to elements of Freud and Le Bon’s classical crowd theories. Parente asserts that an explanation of stock market bubbles is best understood through crowd theorists’ ideas of contagion, suggestibility, and imitation. Such an analysis is an important part of the debate currently taking place between behavioral and rational economists. Burgess similarly uses crowd theory to examine the revolutions in the Middle East. The recent discourse around the “Arab Spring” has questioned what the role of technological mediums in prompting political dissention and acting as an organizing platform among activists has played. These technological tools foster what theorist Gustave Le Bon coined as “contagion”. The Internet’s ease of access, disseminating qualities, and inclusive and anonymous character makes it a perfect tool for contagion regardless of geopolitical boundaries. More specifically, Burgess explores the connection between Le Bon’s theory and how it applies to the Egyptian Revolution of 2011.

So, without further ado, “Let’s play ball”.

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SECTION 1

CROWD THEORY
The crowd is interpreted by a majority of political scientists as the unconsciousness actions of group think, an aggregation of persons that unconsciously act without the ability to reason as a collective whole. Gustave LeBon is one of the first noted crowd psychologists. He studied the nature of the psychological crowd and the transformation that takes place when a crowd or group enters an organized group setting. Once organized the crowd manifests a consciousness of its own in the form of a group mind. Sigmund Freud also gives insight to the psychological crowd by providing a valuable discussion on the genius of the individual inventor within a group as opposed to the genius of the group to imitate the individual. Freud builds on LeBon’s account of the crowd by critiquing the unconsciousness aspect of the group within an analysis of crowd psychology as a psychology of the individual. The natural crowd’s transformation into Freud and LeBon’s psychological crowd manifests as a collective consciousness. Gabriel Tarde argues that transformation from the unconsciousness to the consciousness crowd results from a newfound diversity of suggestions and imitations. In this paper I demonstrate that imitation is the key to collective consciousness. What Freud and LeBon mask as somnambulism, Tarde demonstrates to result from genius in imitation.
LeBon and Freud: The Psychological Group

In order to utilize both LeBon and Freud’s accounts of the crowd to prove a collective consciousness through Tarde’s explanation of imitation, an explanation of the psychological crowd is needed to form an argument of the manifestation of a collective consciousness. LeBon informs us that the psychological crowd forms due to psychology’s law of mental unity of crowds and that a random agglomeration of persons, or a natural forming crowd does not create a crowd in the psychological sense.\(^1\) The transformation into the psychological crowd takes on a new set of characteristics that the individual would not obtain being isolated. These characteristics are stated as: a sense of invincibility through an increase in numbers, contagion or the act of imitation is increased to such a degree that overall interest is held above personal, and the formation of a suggestor or a hypnotizer.\(^2\) One can see these characteristics in most occurrences of crowd formation, from a riot to a simple formation of a group of people. Numbers do increase and the contagion of emotions and suggestions start to play a roll through an increase in numbers, but there is not always proof of a suggestor or hypnotizer. All three of LeBon’s characteristics of entering an organized and psychological crowd demonstrate a vanishing of the individual consciousness to a point in which the consciousness completely disappears. “Having entirely lost his consciousness personality, he obeys all suggestions of the operator who has deprived him of it, and commits acts in utter contradictions with his character and habits.”\(^3\) The loss of consciousness is the loss of all intellectual genius of the individual. Therefore, the transition into the psychological group is the transition from a consciousness individual to an unconsciousness actor who is but a subject to the hypnotizer or suggestor within a crowd.

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\(^2\) LeBon, 8.
\(^3\) LeBon, 8.
Transformation is seen as the organization of new characteristics, which by their very nature of suggestion and imitation create a collective mind through the subconscious, but not a collective consciousness for there is no ability to reason. LeBon doubted the reasoning power of the crowd for he saw group reasoning as a form of imitation through a connection of images. “Collective observations are as erroneous as possible, and most often only represent the illusion of an individual who, by a process of contagion, has suggest his followers.”⁴ The collective observations of the psychological crowd are not truth but contagion that is found within the imitation of the crowd’s response to a suggestor’s observation. For example, if LeBon’s suggestor eats a cube of ice it is suggested that the ice was translucent and hard but can be eaten; therefore, the imitation of the crowd would then reason that because glass is translucent and hard it could also be eaten. The glass example challenges the ability of LeBon’s psychological crowd to reason. Will every individual eat the glass if the collective observation or reasoning is that it must be ice? Or will one suggestor learn through his invention or discovery and in turn suggest through education of the others that the glass is in fact not ice, forming a collective consciousness through imitation of suggestion and not destroying it? LeBon states that the crowd does have the ability for intellectual capacity contrary to the disappearance of the consciousness; situations such as the submission to authority and response to kindness by a crowd does not reveal a collective consciousness but the evidence of a group mind working through imitation and suggestion.⁵ When certain actions are considered to be consciousness decisions of a collective group, the lack of reasoning power and intelligence along with a lack of personal self-interest leads LeBon to believe in the workings of a group mind rather than collective consciousness.

Freud’s account of the psychological crowd in terms of individual psychology helps illuminate the consciousness genius behind both the collective observation of the imitators and the

⁴ LeBon, 19.
⁵ LeBon, 19.
individual suggestor. Freud notes the transition into the psychological crowd differently than LeBon by demonstrating a new libidinal motivation and its connection with a response to contagion through suggestion. The psychological crowd or the organized group transforms from the natural, unorganized crowd through a common libidinal motivation. This is evident within the aggregation of a common emotion bond between individuals and not by creating characteristics when entering the group as LeBon has stated. Instead forming characteristics that an individual looses when entering the psychological group. The five principle conditions when entering into an organized crowd includes; hierarchy of positions, individual awareness of a collective emotional drive or goal, interaction between groups, customs and traditions, and organization. Freud believed that these five conditions that are destroyed by the group, when created have the ability to avoid a lowering of collective intellect through reserving individual tasks for individuals and not the group itself. The psychological crowd is now seen as a formation due to a collective emotion that allows individuals to consciously enter into an organized group. This transformation into an influence of suggestions due to the nature of a situation or the original suggestion of the crowds’ desire, can be seen as a form of collective consciousness in terms of an original emotional goal.

Freud relates the suggestibility of the crowd to the hypnosis of love being equal to the hypnosis of a collective libidinal tie. A moment when the individual’s subconscious becomes that of another’s due to sexual desires that cannot be met. When sexual desires cannot be met the collective goal or emotional tie becomes the object of “love,” and thus the reason to transform from the unorganized crowd into a psychological crowd which is in turn not created by the collective emotion of

7 Freud, 21.
8 Freud, 24.
9 Freud, 58.
reproductive love but substituted by an emotional common ground or collective consciousness. The suggestor or the hypnotizer takes the place of the individual’s ego ideal, or the object one’s subconscious forms his characteristics around, thus creating a state of sleepwalking for the imitator is “love blind” to other suggestions. It can now be determined that both Freud and LeBon agree on the need for an existence of the hypnotizer or a state of hypnotism in which the psychological crowd requires through suggestion.

Man is innately a social animal. The natural instinct for man is to join into the group in order to imitate what he unconsciously wants from others who share similar emotional ties. “The individual feels incomplete if alone.” Similar to man being a social animal, imitation and suggestion are a primitive phenomenon and fundamental fact of life. Freud sees imitation as a product of suggestion. Individuals in a group often imitate signs of emotions in others unconsciously. “Why give way to this contagion while in a group? What compels us to obey this tendency is imitation, and what induces the emotion in us is the groups suggestive influence.” Therefore, the reason a crowd gives way to the contagion of an emotion is due to the imitation by the crowd and the emotion of the group is created by suggestion. The individual gives up his distinctiveness in the group and in turn lets others influence through suggestion. Created through a common emotional bond or what can be conceived as a form of collective consciousness. We can now see a turn from an unconsciously acting crowd in LeBon, to a transformation due to the nature of the social beast and libidinal ties. This transformation creates new characteristics that through imitation and suggestion allow for the creation of a collective consciousness, a form of subconscious collectivity through the suggestions of the group as a whole.

10 Freud, 58.
11 Freud, 64.
12 Freud, 27.
13 Freud, 27.
The imitation of a collective consciousness forming from the emotional contagion of suggestion that transformed the group into a psychological crowd is seen as the imitation of a suggestor and the formation of group genius.\(^{14}\) Freud debates the genius of this imitation, as it is not clear to him where the genius can be located. “It remains an open question, moreover, how much the individual thinker or writer owes to the stimulation of the group in which he lives, or whether he does more than perfect a mental work in which the others have had a simultaneous share.”\(^{15}\) Is the individual inventor the genius by discovering and therefore suggesting, or is the genius in the subconscious imitation evident within the stimuli or suggestion of the group? If a monkey in a group of like monkeys ignores previous imitation of how to eat fruit by washing it off and the other monkeys imitate the inventor’s suggestion. Is the genius in the first monkey who washed the fruit off, or is it in the genius of the crowd’s imitation for the actions of the inventor are merely the suggestions of a collective consciousness? Creating the psychological group as one that replaces the individual characteristics lost when forming the crowd, the suggestor becomes part of the group and is subject to the suggestions of a collective emotion or collective will of the crowd. It is within Freud’s concept of group genius that the possibility of a collective consciousness emerges through a newfound diversity of suggestions and imitations, created when entering into an organized crowd.

**Society as Imitation: Sleepwalking**

I can now combine Freud and LeBon’s explanations of their transition into the psychological group and the characteristics of that transformation as a format to prove the existence of a collective consciousness through imitation that is hidden in the form of somnambulism, or sleepwalking. To understand the transition from an unconsciousness crowd into a collective consciousness, a discussion of Tarde’s “Laws of

\(^{14}\) Freud, 20.  
\(^{15}\) Freud, 20.
Imitation” and the effects of imitation and suggestion are needed. The psychology of the crowd can be perceived through either imitation or invention, for imitation is due to the suggestion of an inventor and the discharge resulting thereafter. Through the explanation of the social being purely imitative, Tarde provides insight to the unconsciousness and consciousness inventions and imitations of both the imitator and suggestor within the crowd.

Due to the historical fact in which things that repeat themselves remain united such as the cells multiplying within a growing child\(^{16}\), and due to the production of repeated like members of a group or crowd, repetition exists for the sake of variation. All repetition then must stem or originate from some form of innovation whether the “repetition be social, vital or physical, i. e., imitative, hereditary, or vibratory”.\(^{17}\) This can be seen in the social sense of repetition as the suggestor or hypnotizer in the case of Freud and LeBon. For Tarde, the general answer is stated as a group of distinct individuals who render one another mutual services, an economic notion of society which promoting mutual economic and social helpfulness for the same in return. “Society is far more a system of mutuality determined engagements and agreements, of rights and duties, than a system of mutual services.”\(^{18}\) Peasants are needed just as the small fish is needed to clean the mouth of the shark; therefore, it is necessary to assimilate those through the contagion of imitation with the members of a higher grade of society in the form of education, the tool in which imitation spreads through use of a common language.\(^{19}\) Tarde defines society, as a group of beings that are apt to imitate one another, or who, without actual imitation, are alike in their possessions of common traits, which in theory are ancient imitations of a hereditary suggestor or inventor.\(^{20}\) The social type should not be confused with the


\(^{17}\) Tarde, 6.

\(^{18}\) Tarde, 61.

\(^{19}\) Tarde, 62.

\(^{20}\) Tarde, 68.
social group however, defined as a certain number of wants and ideas which have been created by thousands of time accumulated inventions and discoveries. Tarde creates a small hint of a collective consciousness in which the suggestion of the emotion that brought the group together is the contagion of imitation evident within the desires and suggestions of that group.

Imitation can be seen as condition foresight, for when given existing imitations the sociologist is in a position to foretell the social conditions of ten or twenty years hence\textsuperscript{21}, provided no reform or political revolution. However, does a break in imitation’s conditional foresight reveal a possible reformed collective consciousness of that specific social group? Or could the break in imitation provide proof in the emergence of a newly formed collective consciousness through a group genius. Tarde’s account of somnambulism, or sleepwalking which I will address shortly, illuminates the masked existence of a collective consciousness through an account of organization and hierarchy. All homogeneous or democratic societies form hierarchical structures as a means to continue its existence just as the body forms a hierarchy of organs in an attempt to adapt and survive.\textsuperscript{22} Tarde is stating that the very formation of an organized group creates hierarchy through the influence of prestige or a form of unconsciousness fascination. The formation of a hierarchy is the natural reaction by a collective of like beings to ensure future existence just as the human body forms a hierarchy of organs as an attempt to imitate the origin goal of repeating uniform copies of itself. “But propagation and not self organization is the prime demand of social as well as of the vital thing. Organization is but a means to propagation, of which imitative repetition is the end.”\textsuperscript{23} Organization is created as the means in which the group survives just as organization provides the individual human body with the means to exist, hierarchy being the result of organization and imitation as the end. Due to society forming organization

\textsuperscript{21} Tarde, 19.
\textsuperscript{22} Tarde, 73.
\textsuperscript{23} Tarde, 74.
through hierarchy it creates social groups as an imitation of prestige and the education of imitators in light of prestige.

Tarde demonstrates that the social is observed as imitative for inventions in which new imitation is started forms the origins of that group’s imitation.\textsuperscript{24} The invention of language started a new imitation in the origins of the invention of language, forming the origin of the group’s imitations within the actual suggestion of language. The jump can then be made to state that all resemblances are due to repetition of a suggestion. Thus all resemblances within the social origin or society are direct or indirect forms of imitation for, “every advance in knowledge tends to strengthen the conviction that all resemblance is due to repetition.”\textsuperscript{25} Tarde states three propositions of repetition as forms of imitation: resemblances observed within the chemical or physical world are for the most part vibratory imitations; all resemblances of origin from hereditary transmission and are imitations of prestige; and most importantly, all resemblances in society are the direct or indirect forms of imitation seen within examples of custom-imitation, fashion-imitation, sympathy imitation, obedience-imitation, precept-imitation, education-imitation, deliberate imitation, and so on.\textsuperscript{26} These mentioned imitations demonstrate the evident necessity for imitation and repetition in the social. If quantity signifies resemblance and resemblance is followed by repetition, and if every repetition were a natural vibration, a phenomenon of repetition or an act of imitation, without repetition and imitation it follows that, there would be no such thing as quantity in the universe.\textsuperscript{27} Due to the repetition of the traditions within a religion such as Christianity and the imitations within a large quantity of followers, the customs of Christianity have existed for centuries. Repetitions are seen in the form of social origins or society, as a form of self-spreading contagions\textsuperscript{28}. It can be observed that every social

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Tarde, 11.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Tarde, 14.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Tarde, 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Tarde, 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Tarde, 15.
\end{itemize}
invention tends to expand in a social environment through contagion between like things, a common emotional bond such as one’s religion. For example, if a rock falls into a bowl it will cause a ripple, but only until it reaches the confines of the bowl. At that moment the ripple cannot pass the edge of its bowl, the imitations of an invention are halted just as the imitations of a religious group and their customs tend not to ripple outside of the organized collective boarders.

Therefore, language for Tarde is the ultimate form of imitation and the greatest form of invention; it is the vehicle of all imitations. Language carried man over the threshold from animal into the social world. Observed as one of the first inventions of human history, it in theory made the individual inventors the first group to find a collective consciousness through shared imitations. “This original act of imagination and its spread through imitation was the true cause, the sine qua non of progress. The immediate acts of imitation, which it prompted, were not its sole results. It suggested other acts of imagination which in turn suggested new acts and so on without end.” The invention of language is as stated, hands down the most influential and naturally collective invention of human existence. I will attempt to prove later in this argument that the existence of a collective consciousness evident within the very creation of language, as a form of collective human genius that is in fact the first transition into Freud and LeBon’s psychological group and the creation of a collective consciousness. A moment in which could possibly be described as the first organized crowd in which all inventions and imitations have stemmed from in being imitations of the original human genius of suggestion.

Somnambulism or “sleepwalking” is Tarde’s answer to the concealing of a crowd’s collective consciousness due to the evidence presented that society is a form of imitation. “Both the somnambulist and the social man are possessed by the illusion that their ideas, all of which have been suggested to them, are

29 Tarde, 15.
30 Tarde, 43.
31 Tarde, 42.
The idea cannot be based upon the present for we cannot take ourselves into consideration, as one will then escape the blindness Tarde is trying to demonstrate. One can consider the ancient democracy of Greece in which members of a republic believe they were autonomous (for each citizen was allowed his own vote and own personal opinion,) the origin of democracy’s illusion of freedom. Although this was true, “did not that people think, like us, that they were autonomous, although, in reality, they were but the unconsciousness puppets whose strings were pulled by their ancestors or political leaders or prophets, when they were not being pulled by their own contemporaries?”

Therefore, the very reason for castes and social classes is created through somnambulism.

Castes are formed under the fact that the father is and always will be master of the family, the basis for social imitations in the family and original suggestor. The hypnotizer rules through prestige, or an unconsciousness obedience of the magnetized subject, in the families case the father. However, in the creation of the social group, the magnetizer must be the individual who through a great display of prestige creates the original suggestion of the group. “We have prestige in the eyes of anyone in so far as we answer his need of affirming or of willing some given thing. Nor is it necessary for the magnetizer to speak in order to be believed and obeyed. He need only act.” If the creation of language is taken into account, the few individuals who first created a form of language are seen as the father of the collective group, imitated due to the prestige of their invention.

The reason to why magnetized subjects always imitate the suggestor and never does the suggestor imitate the hypnotized is equivalent to why hierarchy stems from organization; for obedience through an unconsciousness fascination is prestige. “Is not this exact effect of obedience and imitation through fascination? Is not fascination a genuine neurosis, a kind of

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32 Tarde, 77.
33 Tarde, 77.
34 Tarde, 77.
35 Tarde, 78.
unconsciousness polarization of love and faith?"\(^{36}\) A love found in the libidinal tie and faith in the suggestor, Freud’s object of love, makes the example of a young child the most perfect form of a somnambulist. The child enters his or her first organized group consisting of; a hierarchy within the father, mother, and child, a state in which all members value the overall well being greater than personal interest, and all share the common emotional tie of love for one another through heredity. “The older the child grows the more complex its dream becomes.”\(^{37}\)

When the child eventually leaves the organized family group to find individuality he is exposed to increasing suggestions which become more numerous and diversified. For man as stated before is a social animal, the observed break from his or her recent suggestions is followed by a state of freedom in which he or she becomes consciousness of choices according to their own character. Take for example a teenager enrolling into freshman year of college. The individual looses previous suggestions instilled through an old existence, in turn “inevitably yielding themselves to the magical charm of their new environment.”\(^{38}\) The prestige of a newfound magister or suggestor causes magnetism towards the emotional tie of the groups’ original suggestion. Now immersed in a continually diverse and organized group of new hierarchies, suggestions and imitations, the individual falls under the state of somnambulism. Therefore, Tarde proves through the creation of society, a formation of hierarchy from organization. In turn, creating a prestige that then manifests a state of somnambulism through an inevitability of imitation and suggestion in society.

**The Origin of Collective Genius: An Awakening**

Now that the state of somnambulism has been created through the formation of an organized social group, one can fully understand Tarde’s demonstration for the emergence of a

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36 Tarde, 80.
37 Tarde, 82.
38 Tarde, 84.
collective consciousness through imitation, suggestion and education of the magnetized in respect to the effect of prestige. It must be first understood that the brain and its processes is considered the repeating organ for it is made up of thousands of nerves and elements in which repeat themselves. When multiplying repetition is confined to the nervous system, we have memory; when it spreads out into the muscular system we have habit. Memory, so to speak is a purely nervous habit; habit is both a nervous and muscular memory.39 “Thus every act of perception, in as much as it involves an act of memory, which it always does, implies a kind of habit, an unconsciousness imitation of self by self.”40 The unconsciousness imitation is not a social act due to the fact that it is the imitation of one’s self by self, a “pre-social” self-imitation in which the suggestor is the individual’s unconsciousness. “But if the remembered idea or image was originally lodged in the mind through conversation or reading, if the habitual act originated in the view or knowledge of a similar act on the part of others, these imitations of memory and habit are social as well as psychological facts... Here we have memory and habit which are not individual, but collective.”42 Tarde effectively proves the existence of a collective consciousness that emerges from a state of somnambulism through suggestion and the imitation of suggestion, evident within subconscious habits and memories that are acquired through the education of the magnetized. Therefore, if another is educated by an individual’s escape from his social surroundings through a new invention or discovery, and if suggested and imitated by the crowd, the act of imitation is in fact the occurrence of a collective consciousness that is masked through society being formed as a kind of somnambulism.

Now that I have provided an explanation to the manifestation of a collective consciousness within the social group, certain accounts of Freud and LeBon’s consciousness and

39 Tarde, 75.
40 Tarde, 75.
41 Tarde, 75.
42 Tarde, 75.
unconsciousness of the psychological group must be discussed in order to imply a collective consciousness in the terms of an organized crowd. The mere imitation or education of memory and habit does not provide the answer. To prove the emergence of a collective consciousness and not merely an individual consciousness a state of somnambulism must exist. When one invents or discovers, he or she is escaping from the somnambulism of society in the influence of imitation and suggestion by providing a break from the unconsciousness imitations of the group. The ability to enter into Freud and LeBon’s psychological crowd is necessary within the very transition, organization, and a collective goal or emotional tie both authors present to be needed for a transformation from the unconsciousness herd into the psychological or organized group.

The transformation into the psychological crowd according to both Freud and LeBon is the key to my discussion on the creation of a collective consciousness. LeBon states that the transformation into the psychological group puts the members into a possession of a collective mind due to psychology’s mental law of unity. The individual is then transformed from a personal and self-interested acting consciousness into an unconscious, but unified collective in the form of unconsciousness groupthink through organization.\(^{43}\) Freud would agree that the transformation is a turn towards a collective direction of feelings and thought but that it is in fact more than that, a contagion of emotion that brings the psychological group together through an influence of suggestion and forming a common love or object of love.\(^{44}\) The transition is accomplished through an organization of the group by creating characteristics lost in an attempt to negate the loss of collective intellect that LeBon has observed. Therefore, it can be said that the transition into the psychological group forms new characteristics that provide the individual with those that he or she has lost by creating an organized group. By providing characteristics that allows the psychological crowd to retain a collective intelligence, the existence of a complete

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\(^{43}\) LeBon, 4.

\(^{44}\) Freud, 31.
unconsciously acting crowd can be dismissed. Tarde’s explanation of society as imitation and imitation as a means to the end of organization through hierarchy can now be applied to the formation of the psychological group. The existence of organization can then be stated as the existence of a state of somnambulism within Freud and LeBon’s psychological crowd, as organization is need for a transformation to occur.

LeBon brushes the surface when discussing the hypnotic state, believing that the state of somnambulism is evident due to suggestions of a hypnotizer and the suggestibility of the unconsciousness crowd, as it does not have the ability to reason by committing acts the individual consciousness would not approve. Freud disagrees, as the suggestibility of the crowd is due to the suggestion of the groups’ object of love, or the original emotional tie that brought the individuals together. Freud promotes a form of prestige in the suggestions of a common libidinal tie, or the origin of a groups’ imitation. Therefore, one can assume that both Freud and LeBon acknowledge a state of somnambulism but do not give a reason to its existence aside from the evidence of suggestion and imitation. Tarde’s demonstration of the origins of somnambulism grounded in the existence of class through hierarchy, hierarchy through organization, and prestige through an unconsciousness fascination with a common emotion bond. This provides an explanation for existence of somnambulism, namely, imitation in the social group. “Society is imitation and imitation is a form of somnambulism.” It can be concluded that Tarde’s state of somnambulism is present in Freud and LeBon’s psychological group in organization and imitation. The transition into a psychological group is in fact the creation of the hypnotic state, the state of Tarde’s social group.

Man is a social animal and the formation of like men in respect to a common emotional bond results from the very nature of the beast. Language was the first and greatest account of man

45 Tarde, 74.
46 LeBon, 27.
47 Tarde, 87.
entering into the psychological group and an answer to Tarde’s emergence of a collective consciousness. Due to the contagion of emotion\textsuperscript{48} suggested social inventions are expanded through imitation, and hold a prestige due to somnambulism and imitations of suggestion. Before language men had gathered together to form unorganized groups that at times could form organization but no hierarchy in terms of an emotion bond to propagate, but considered natural formations as they can be conceived as in a state of nature. They reacted consciously as individuals but when grouped together with no form of communication, man acted as the unconsciousness crowd, imitating actions but held no true ability to suggest through prestige. Imitations before language were merely “pre-social” imitations of the self by self for no form of somnambulism existed and actions within a group resembled LeBon’s unconsciousness natural crowd. Therefore, the creation of language was the most notable transition into the psychological group for it revealed the origins of group genius and the formation of a collective consciousness by providing a platform of language and education through invention and suggestion, that has encompassed the entire population under one original and broad psychological crowd.

The original inventors of language found a common emotional bond in the desire to interact with one another through the invention of the first language. To do this the group of individuals formed the psychological group as an attempt to remove the disadvantages of the group as Freud states. By removing the disadvantages of the newly formed group, the collective intelligence of the group remained intact, and the unconsciously acting collective in which LeBon observes is destroyed. Through the transformation into a psychological group, the inventors also created the original state of somnambulism. Through their suggestion of language, the transformation becomes the origin of the suggestion of language, the object of love in Freud’s case, or the common emotional tie

\textsuperscript{48} Freud, 31.
that gives prestige to suggestions of language that have stemmed from thereafter.

These suggestors who found a collective consciousness in the form of language, created the origins of collective group genius and the emergence of a collective consciousness. The act of coming together to form habits and memories in an organized group, combined with a state of somnambulism within the suggestor’s imitators. Language allowed for the first aggregation of collective habit and memory through the very imitation of the suggestors. Freud believes group genius to be in the individual who invented or discovered through unconsciousness responses to suggestion deep within the group’s emotional bond. If society is imitation, then all inventions that are made within the social group, which now can be stated as the psychological group, are due to the stimuli of the suggestions that created the organized group. “To innovate to discover, to awake for an instant…the individual must escape, for the time being, from his social surroundings.”49 The inventors of language stepped out from their social surroundings, the pre-social form of somnambulism or a state of nature, and by doing that formed the first psychological group through the creation of language. These pivotal humans in history in fact made the very leap from animal to social man through the manifestation of a collective consciousness. As man is a social beast, the emotional tie to interact with one another was a magnetizing force that only needed to be suggested to receive a sense of prestige. Therefore, because the original suggestors could be said to emerge from a state of nature into Tarde’s social group, or psychological group, they suggested through the education of an escape from their social surroundings, a new form of habit and memory that was created by the collective genius evident in the formation of language.

I conclude by stating that from the explanation of Freud and LeBon’s psychological group, it can be determined that the requirements of organization and characteristics evident in the

49 Tarde, 88.
transformation are comparable to the characteristics of society in light of imitation as an end to organization. It can also be concluded that society is a form of somnambulism; therefore, the psychological group through the nature of society as imitation and imitation as somnambulism, effectively masks the collective consciousness evident in the genius of a group’s original suggestor. The creation of language aids in revealing the existence of a collective consciousness through the original escape from the imitations of a state of nature and the education of the memory and habits associated with language as the collective consciousness of interaction. Therefore, imitation by its very nature in society traps the magnetized in a state of inescapable somnambulism. The inventors created the origins of group genius by truly inventing a collective consciousness through the imitation of every human to follow in existence, one that all other inventions unconsciously imitate due to the existence of somnambulism in society. The individual to this day believes that most actions are spontaneous and a consciousness choice. In reality they are but imitations derived from many suggestions originating from thousands of years of human genius and collective consciousness, masked by somnambulism, describe as group unconscious and only revealed through an escape of one’s social surroundings and the education of others through suggestion and imitation. To escape from the social surroundings of a psychological group is not an easy task. Therefore, the collective genius of groups and the formation of a collective consciousness can only be created and revealed when the effects of somnambulism are removed, and only then can a collective consciousness of the psychological group be revealed to the individual. Only then can a spontaneous invention be an act of group genius just as language was the origin of group genius and the emergence of a collective consciousness.
Chapter 2

From Crowd to Affect

Brooke Lyon

Introduction

Classical crowd theorists Freud and LeBon famously outline theories of crowd formation and the group mind using elements such as contagion, suggestibility, and the necessity of a relationship between the crowd and the leader. These are all phenomena easily observable during their lives and now within crowds. However what both Freud and LeBon fail to answer are how exactly these mechanisms transfer between members of the crowd. Affect theory can serve to answer this question. Affect theory is based on the notion that individuals transfer emotion with one another which results in the formation of the combination of individual affects into group affect. For example, if you have ever experienced the “atmosphere” in a room you are experiencing the transmission of affects which result in the atmosphere that you experience. Though this sounds theoretical, affect theorists have been able to support their claims by examining physiological functions measurable because of scientific technologies. Though there is some debate on the mechanisms in which affects are transmitted, each mechanism has its own substantiating evidence, making it possible for affect to be transmitted in several different ways. This paper will prove that not only does affect theory support the early crowd theorists, Freud and LeBon, but also provides answers with substantiating evidence to expand upon classical crowd theory and ultimately create a new modern and technologically savvy lens to look at crowd theory.

I will examine three different affect theorists research. We will start with Teresa Brennan’s work on transmission of affect
because not only does it serve for a great introduction to the study of affect but also directly references and acknowledges aspects of her research which originated from LeBon and Freud. Next we will examine Brian Massumi and his examination of the effectiveness of leaders through the way that affect of images transfers to citizens. We will then follow a similar line of thought to explore John Protevi’s theory of the progression of body politics in regards to the progression that groups transitioning from individuals to crowds and progressing to political crowds. Each of these approaches to affect will provide the evidence necessary for proving that affect is a continuation of crowd theory. In order to understand these new affect theories we must first examine our base, the classical crowd theories of Gustave LeBon and Sigmund Freud.

Affect and the Emotional Being

LeBon and Freud’s theories on the group mind and crowd theory are the classic standard on how crowd formation occurs and the mechanisms that allow the occurrence. LeBon provides an explanation through the means of invincible power, contagion, and characteristics only found inside groups and not individuals. Freud’s theory hinges on the concept of suggestion, which builds upon LeBon’s theories of prestige and mutual suggestion in the form of contagion. Both theorize that there is a transference of emotion from one member of a crowd to the next which they both call contagion. Affect theorist Teresa Brennan builds upon crowd theory, specifically the element of contagion and its relationship to current affect theory. In order to understand contagion better we must examine LeBon’s original theory of how crowds are formed, as well as Freud’s critiques and addition to this theory.

LeBon suggests crowds are formed using the three elements of invincible power, contagion and special characteristics that only manifest when crowds are formed. LeBon describes invincible power by stating: “The first individual forming part of a crowd acquires, solely from numerical considerations, a sentiment of invincible power which allows him to yield to instincts which, had he been alone, he would perforce have kept under restraint. He will be the less
disposed to check himself from the consideration that, a crowd being anonymous, and in consequence irresponsible, the sentiment of responsibility which always controls individuals disappears entirely.”

In short, the individual takes on a sense of invincible power due to the confidence he finds via the number of individuals within the crowd. LeBon explains:

“The second cause, which is contagion, also intervenes to determine the manifestation of crowds of their special characteristics, and at the same time the trend they are to take. Contagion is a phenomenon of which it is easy to establish the presence, but that it is not easy to explain. It must be classed among those phenomena of a hypnotic order, which we shall shortly study. A crowd in every sentiment and act is contagious and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest.”

LeBon acknowledges that contagion is very easily observed however its origins are inexplicable. As well are the “special characteristics which are quite contrary at the time to those presented by the isolated individual. I allude to that suggestibility of which, moreover, the contagion mentioned is neither more not less than an effect.” These abilities, which are transmitted by contagion, also lack origin though can be observed within crowds.

Freud make it clear that he does not disagree with LeBon on these points however, he “wishes only to emphasize the fact that the two last causes of an individual becoming altered in a group (the contagion and the heightened suggestibility) are evidently not on a par, since the contagion seems actually to be a manifestation of the suggestibility. Moreover the effects of the two factors do not seem to be sharply differentiated in the test of LeBon’s remarks.” Freud does have an excellent point in this

2LeBon, 4.
3LeBon, 4.
4Sigmund Freud. “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego.”
observation however it is not actually clear that LeBon himself meant to have the two completely separate in causation and mechanism. I believe that this is a debate open for interpretation. Freud then states, “We may perhaps best interpret his statement if we connect the contagion with the effects of the individual members of the group upon one another, while we point to another source for those manifestations of suggestion in the group which are put on a level with the phenomena of hypnotic influence. But to what source?”

This question that Freud asks is one that Teresa Brennan’s research on affect and group psychology can answer for us using modern scientific technologies along with a strong theoretical argument.

One of the first things that Brennan acknowledges is psychoanalytic differentiate her own work as something different. She says

My theory is an alternative to psychoanalytic theory or metaphysiology in that it postulates an origin for affects that is independent of the individual experiencing them. These affects come from the other, but we deny them. Or they come from us, but we pretend (habitually) that they come from the other. Envy, anger aggressive behavior-these are the problems of the other. Overtolerance, overgenerosity-these are our problems.

Immediately, Brennan makes it clear that she is studying something new and different from psychoanalytic theory. She is studying the transference of qualities from one individual to the next. Brennan acknowledges that, the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century work in France on the “group mind” (âme collective) takes the transmission of affect for granted, although it does not specify its mechanisms. Part of the reason why this literature is so problematic is that it takes a group mind as a given, much as pantheism might be invoked, with no argument but powerful “intuitive” appeal. The most excellent part of

(United States of America: Copy Right, 2001.)

Freud, 7.

Brennan’s theory is that she acknowledges the importance of initial crowd theory as a mechanism for her to answer questions about affect. She does not take for granted, nor does she dismiss crowd theory, rather she addresses its relevance and explains it further. This not only helps answer our initial question of mechanisms in regards to contagion and crowd formation, but also strengthens her own theory of transmission of affect.

Brennan continues discussing nineteenth-century crowd theorist legitimacy by commenting, “In one respect the nineteenth-century studies of the group mind do make a bid for scientific status: they designate the group as pathological precisely because it is affectively imbued, and because the distinctiveness of individuals is swamped by the affects of the group.”

Though I agree with her thought process I must comment upon the harsh nature of this criticism. In the mid to late nineteenth-century, the work that Freud and LeBon did was scientific, or as scientific as available to them, considering the lack of technology and scientific discoveries. In this regard they did not make a “bid” they physically attempted scientific research by the scientific standards of their own time period. The transmission of affect is the contagion that LeBon and Freud (suggestibility’s manifestation) observed in their research because it is an observable phenomena. It must be understood that Brennan does not agree with psychoanalysis nor does she like the idea of psychiatry. It is understandable, as she makes the observation that, “it seems that the stress on the cognitive is a turn away from affect, and so, necessarily, away from questions of the affects transmission. So invisible became the idea of transmission that it had to be rediscovered in the psychoanalytic clinic, dredged up from the unconscious.”

I believe that Brennan is making reference to the interdisciplinary distrust between the branches of theory, namely psychoanalytic, neurology and of course affect. That often times the fields attempt to discredit each other upon the belief that one is more “scientific than the other.”

7Brennan, 17.
8Brennan, 18.
9Brennan, 18.
Brennan attempts, not to discredit any of these fields but to make this critique, while balancing her own theoretical research upon them paying head to assumptions. For example she says, “Psychiatry and psychoanalysis make the assumption that the healthy person is a self-contained person.”\textsuperscript{10}

Her hypothesis challenges these assumptions in that she believes “that the psyche’s sense of its self-containment is indeed structured, but that therefore the state of experiencing both at the “living attention” and the affects of others is both the origin and in some way the natural state: the transmission of energy and affects is the norm rather than an aberration at the beginning of psychical life.”\textsuperscript{11} Humans naturally have the ability to transmit affects to one another as natural communicative. It is not a trait limited to the psychologically abnormal portion of the population.

Although the western psyche is structured in such a way as to give a person the sense that their affects and feelings are their own, and that they are energetically and emotionally contained in the most literal sense, in actuality when one is containing their own emotions, they are experiencing themselves, only themselves and therefore must be alone.\textsuperscript{12} But we must ask ourselves, when are we truly alone? Therefore when you are not transmitting affect or accepting affect from another you are simply experiencing your own affect. This is not a controllable transmission. Brennan talks about her research analysts work with patients, specifically borderline patients. Borderline patients transmit his or her affect more freely. If the borderline client lacks boundaries, such a person should be more susceptible to the impact of the other, susceptible as well as liable to “leakage.” While the borderline patient, the patient without clear “boundaries” is most often held responsible for projecting “into” the analyst this is a contradiction, that shows that a more open person can transmit and receive more efficiently, and is not in fact limited just to reception. Analysts are meant to have their

\textsuperscript{10}Brennan, 24.
\textsuperscript{11}Brennan, 24.
\textsuperscript{12}Brennan, 25.
boundaries in place, and yet, she says, yet they feel the other’s affects. Understanding affect as a pathological event was formally complicated by the recognition that clinicians too could experience it as well. One clinician who discarded the clinic in favor of a study of neurology did so precisely because he was too susceptible to transmitted affects. He stated, “During my psychiatric residency, I noted that certain patients aroused extremely uncomfortable sensations within me. These sensations often persisted for hours and sometimes even several days after my last contact with the patient.” In more plain terms, he didn’t like how the patients were making him feel. By using the term “making” that acknowledges the uncontrollable transmission of affect from patient to clinician.

Brennan produces rationalizations on this process by speaking of projections. “By common consent, but no clear definition, the affects received by countertransference are termed projective identifications, as distinct from projections. A projection is what I disown in myself and see in you; a projective identification is what I succeed in having you experience in yourself, although it comes from me in the first place.” This serves to explain why the observers felt so negatively affected for an extended time. It is easy to blame others but much more difficult to acknowledge that the problem may come from inside of our own being. “For example I may see you as unimaginative, to avoid feeling that way myself, although somewhere I probably do. With my projective identification you actually feel unimaginative, while I do not.” This is a concept that Brennan calls dumping.

13 Brennan, 26
14 Brennan, 27
16 Brennan, 29.
17 Brennan, 29, 30.
18 Brennan, 30.
If a person is inside of a crowd, in proximity to others, dumping can easily take place, which creates a false sense of confidence or power inside of the individual because they have been able to project their identity outward. Similar to the observer being affected by the patient, mentioned above, no longer can one just feel their own affect, but they are forced to take others, and this combination allows them to lose themselves completely. This is an argument based in affect but comes directly from LeBon’s conceptual mechanisms of invincible power. Perhaps it is just a form of false confidence due to ease in projection. Brennan also believes in the contagion of affect from one person to the next, in which the means whereby one person’s affects can be linked to another. Though seen throughout biochemical and neurological literatures, Brennan states that, they have not been, to her own knowledge and mine as well, been linked to the study of the transmission of affect. She believes that this is an omission that reflects prejudices concerning the biological and the social sciences and she allows and encourages the reader to use these sciences to look at affect and theories.\(^\text{19}\)

However she believes thoroughly that humans are not self contained. The theory of the transmission of affect is always and already, given this definition, a theory of the group. But it is also a theory of the group based on what is produced by the “group,” as well as the individuals within it: the emotion of two are not the same as the emotions of one plus one. They create a new composition.\(^\text{20}\) This concept of “one plus one” to create a new composition speaks to LeBon and Freud’s notions that the individual self is lost when an individual enters a crowd. Though affect illustrates that it is not actually lost but combined with other members to produce something new, still proves that something other than a direct collection of individuals forms the group. Rather it is the combination of individual minds that compose the group mind. Brennan believes that “crowd” or “group” psychology came close to affect theory, since it came “close” and before, that would mean it is the basis for affect

\(^{19}\)Brennan, 49.

\(^{20}\)Brennan, 51.
theory. However they didn’t find satisfactory explanation for the mechanism of “transmission.”\footnote{Brennan, 51.} LeBon’s first critics credit the individual rather than the crowd with the madness that the crowds are meant to show. Subsequent contributors argue that the “group mind” theorists tend to pathologize and neglect the rational motivations of groups. However these sensible criticisms do not apply to all the phenomena of crowds and to even the most intelligent groups, within which difficult idea can spread as if it were indeed contagious, as LeBon contended.\footnote{Brennan, 52.} Her research serves to focus on the phenomena this literature records but does not explain.

To better illustrate her point Brennan cites Bion, another known theorist of the group. She introduce his relevance to the present discussion by stressing that while he believed that group phenomena do not by definition require that a group has gathered, these phenomena are easier to observe when the groups is meeting. In other words, what ties the group together, what makes an individual a member of a group, holds regardless of whether the group is gathered together in one place. This illustrates the importance of proximity for transmission or contagion to occur. Still, what all of these thinkers demand in different ways is a mechanism or mechanisms for the transmission of affect.\footnote{Brennan, 53.} It is understood by crowd theorist that contagion occurs, that proximity is helpful but unnecessary for transmission or contagion to occur.

Brennan quotes LeBon fully:

“The most striking peculiarity presented by a psychological crowd is the following: Whoever be the individuals that compose it, however like or unlike be their mode of life, their occupations, their character, or their intelligence, the fact that they have been transformed into a crowd puts them in possession of a sort of collective mind which makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual of them would feel, think, and act were he in a state of isolation. There
are certain ideas and feelings which do not come into being or do not transform themselves into acts except in the case of individuals forming a crowd. The psychological crowd is a provisional being formed of heterogeneous elements, which for a moment are combined, exactly and the cells which constitute a living body form by their reunion a new being which displays characteristics very different from those possessed by each of the cells singly.”

LeBon’s explanation relies on the phenomena of hypnosis, suggestion, and a kind of social contagion. Brennan points out that LeBon’s weakness was his use of the term hypnosis. She says that hypnosis was a popular explanation for just about any inexplicable action which is true because LeBon doesn’t elaborate upon the concept further than mentioning or explaining besides the brief mention in his first section. Contagion, unlike the blanket term of hypnosis, is anchored, theoretically, as a medical term. Brennan again cites LeBon stating that the “Ideas, sentiments, immersions, and beliefs posses in crowds a contagious power as intense as that of microbes.”

LeBon is likening the passing of ideas to the spread of a Spanish flu epidemic. Having lived through a Spanish flu epidemic as an early teen, LeBon may even have been recalling the observable phenomena and applying it directly to the idea of contagion of thought within groups. However Brennan points out that contagion, for Le Bon, was only an effect of hypnosis. He wrote that:

“To understand this phenomenon it is necessary to bear in mind certain recent physiological discoveries. We know today that by various processes an individual may be brought into such conditions that, having entirely lost his conscious personality, he obeys all suggestions of the operator who has deprived him of it, and commits acts in utter contradiction with his character and habits.”

24LeBon, 3.
25LeBon, 126.
26Brennan, 54.
27LeBon, 4.
“Freud notes that one of the problems with LeBon’s explanation is that he does not mention who the hypnotist is in the case of the group, while, at the same time, he clearly distinguishes between the influence of hypnosis, or “fascination,” on the one hand, and its contagious effect on the other. This is fair, but not fair enough.”28 Brennan emphasizes Freud’s stress upon LeBon’s circular explanations.29 In the words of Freud, “This circularity was evident in “the magic word ‘suggestion,’ which explains nothing”30 Circularity was not the only basis for Freud’s criticisms. Freud also says that, “There is no doubt that something exists in us which, when we become aware of signs of emotion in someone else, tends to make us fall into the same emotions; but how often do we not successfully oppose it, resist the emotion; but how often do we not successfully oppose it, resist the emotion, and react in quite an opposite way? Why, therefore, do we invariably give way to this contagion when we are in a group?”31

Brennan believes that affect transmission can explain why humans do give way to contagion. She says, “Given the proximity of my argument on affect with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theories of emotional intensity and a common mind, I state that my intention is not to claim for the transmission of affect a monocausal explanation for group psychology, or to discount the complexity of empirical, real crowds and the intelligence and conscious motivations of persons within them.”32 However her intention is to claim that affect is one of the mechanisms by which contagion and crowd behavior can be explained. She says that, “The early crowd theorists effectively made the one who feels the other’s affect pathological, whereas the clinicians tend to see the patient who projects affect freely as the problem. Such patients

28 Brennan, 54.
29 Brennan, 57.
30 Freud, 89.
31 Freud, 89.
32 Brennan, 61.
are often “borderline,” meaning that they lack self containment, or boundaries, and are thus on the border between neurosis and psychosis. And the implication here is that self-containment is not only a delusion but also an achievement, it is an implication I am willing to entertain. However it would be a mistake to see either the tendency to project or the inability to resist projection as the mark of pathology.”

Even though this may be true, it’s not necessarily useless but rather an example into the minds of the more suggestible. It does not disenfranchise the idea that normal psychological beings can transmit affect to each other.

But still Brennan asks, “If contagion exists (and the study of crowds says it does), how is it effected?” Images and mimesis explain some of it (as we have seen), but olfactory and auditory entrainment offer more comprehensive explanations.”

She explains that research on chemical communication and entrainment suggests answers centered on chemical communication and entrainment suggests answers centered on the analysis of pheromones, substances that are not released into the blood but are emitted externally. Pheromones have been proven to exist in animals, and researchers think they have confirmed their presence in humans.

Brennan cites pheromone experts Michael and Kervene who explain that:

“Unlike hormones, which are secreted into the blood stream, ectohormones or pheromones are substances secreted by an animal externally with specific effects on the behavior or physiology of another individual of the same species. These substances may be secreted rather generally by the skin or by specialized glands and, similarly, their detection by the recipient individual may be simply by ingestion or by specialized chemoreceptors.”

33 Brennan, 63.
34 Brennan, 68.
35 Brennan, 68.
Pheromones are detected by touch or smell, with smell being the most common. To smell pheromones is also in a sense to consume them. However most important this point illustrates that no direct physical contact is necessary for a transmission to take place. Pheromones are literally in the air. Because they are air born they also have a communicative function. There is a distinction is made between pheromones that affect the endocrine system (which produces sex hormones), pheromones facilitate physiological changes of various kinds (primer pheromones) and pheromones that directly provoke a certain behavior in the observer (releaser pheromones). Pheromones relate to hormones in that a pheromone in one person could cause another person secrete a hormone in the blood. It is a direct physiological reaction possible purely through the unconscious transfer of smell.

Smell is not the only type of nervous system based entrainment that can explain these phenomenon. They may also depend upon body movements and gestures, particularly through the imitations of rhythms. Rhythm is a too in the expression of agency, just as words are. It can literally convey the tone of an utterance, and in this sense, it does unite word and affect. Rhythm also has a unifying, regulating role in affective exchanges between two or more people. Just as rhythms have their own types of movements, sounds and exchanges, these characteristics can also be seen in images. Brennan explains this by saying:

“First let us note that the process of registering an image is also an anatomical process, rooted firmly in brain physiology. Second, the registration of the image in the mind’s eye is only one side of things. The image is also, necessarily, transmitted. It is transmitted as surely as the words whose sound waves or valence register physical effects in the air around the ears of those who hear. In last analysis, words and images are matters of vibration, vibration at different frequencies, but vibration. The significance of this is easily underestimated in that we have failed to consider

37 Brennan, 69.
38 Vroon, Smell, 126.
39 Brennan, 70.
how the transmission through physical vibration of the image is simultaneously the transmission of a social thing; the social and physical transmission of the image are one and the same process, but (once more), if we have to make a distinction pro forma, the social, not the physical, is causative.”

Brennan claims that crowd violence is attributed to the action of images because the image will clearly trigger an increase or decrease in certain hormone levels. However it is also clear that the transmission of violence does not take place by visual observation alone, although the shift effected by the (socially constructed) image is very significant and helps us reconcile many different claims currently under scrutiny. This idea of the image transmitting characteristics of affect relating to crowds will be expanded upon in the next section in reference on Massumi’s theory of movement and affect and it’s relationship between images of leaders affects and crowd theories ideas of the relationship between leader and crowd.

**Affect And The Leader**

The leader is an essential characteristic of a crowd for both Freud and LeBon. For LeBon the leader is a figure that the crowd places themselves instinctually, and is a “servile flock that is incapable of ever doing without a master.” Sigmund Freud likens the relationships between leaders and their followers to that of the relationship to father and son, a type of libidinal tie without, the crowd would erupt in panic and dissociate. Although both create slightly differing theoretical points about crowds, both agree that the leader is necessary in any form of crowd, a belief held by many who study crowds, regardless of discipline. The weaknesses of their explanation of the leader are due to vague detail, and unexplained observable phenomena. This is where Brian Massumi’s theory on movement and affect,

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40 Brennan, 71.
41 Brennan, 73.
42 LeBon, 43.
43 Freud, 25.
precisely his ideas of image effects and intensity between both the visual and auditorial senses can serve to further the basic understanding of the leader according to both Freud and LeBon. However before explaining Massumi’s argument we must divulge further into both LeBon and Freud’s elements of leaders.

I will begin with LeBon due to not only chronological order, but also because Freud borrows and critiques LeBon in his own works. LeBon begins his section on the leaders of crowds with this sentence, “As soon as a certain number of living beings are gathered together, whether they be animals or men they place themselves instinctively under the authority of a chief.” Immediately LeBon makes it clear that he believes groups of any sort take on a leader and that it is an internal, instinctual necessity. This implies his beliefs that the crowd is ignorant, and individuals have lost their collective thoughts which is central to his theory of the crowd as a whole. LeBon goes on to describe the leader in detail:

“The leaders we speak of are more frequently men of action than thinkers. They are not gifted with keen foresight, nor could they be, as this quality generally conduces to doubt and inactivity. They are especially recruited from the ranks of those morbidly nervous, excitable, half-deranged persons who are bordering on madness. However absurd may be the idea they uphold or the goal they pursue, their convictions are so strong that all reasoning is lost upon them. Contempt and persecution do not affect them, or only serve to excite them the more. they sacrifice their personal interest, their family, everything. The very instinct of self-preservation is entirely obliterated in them, and so much so that often the only recompense they solicit is that of martyrdom. The intensity of their faith gives great power of suggestion to their words.”

This quote illustrates a man, of no significant intelligence (often of little intelligence), whose acts border on madness in order to

45LeBon, 43.
46LeBon, 43.
uphold their own convictions. They are unaffected by consequence, law or otherwise. This man presumes such an intensity within his own beliefs that his rhetoric holds great suggestible power with followers. This picture is a frightening and almost unbelievable account of a leader, however we will see it proven to be an accurate. LeBon makes it clear that “still though the energy of a leaders is a force to be reckoned with, it is transitory, and scarcely outlast the exciting cause that has brought it into play.”

Meaning the leader gains it’s power from the crowd’s ideals, however what we are more interesting in is why this comes about and why do the members of the crowd accept this madman as their leader.

LeBon answers this question by creating a characteristic he calls prestige. He states, “Great power is given to ideas propagated by affirmation, repetition, and contagion by the circumstance that they acquire in time that mysterious force known as prestige.”

LeBon makes it clear that though his elements (priorly outlined above) of contagion, affirmation, and repetition are necessary for prestige to occur, prestige is truly a mysterious autonomous force. He describes further by saying, “Prestige in reality is a sort of domination exercised on our mind by an individual, a work, or an idea. This domination entirely paralyses our critical faculty, and fills our soul with astonishment and respect. The sentiment provoked is inexplicable, like all sentiments, but it would appear to be the same kinds as the fascination to which a magnetized person is subjected.”

This actually does satisfy our question of why the leader is accepted by the crowd however it creates a new question of how. More precisely by which mechanisms does the concept of prestige evoke and how are the members of the crowd affected by this mysterious concept? It is truly a question that LeBon fails to answer in his explanation, a critique brought to light by Freud in his own analysis of the leader of the crowd.

47 LeBon, 45.
48 LeBon, 48.
49 LeBon, 48.
50 LeBon, 49.
Freud critiques LeBon’s idea of prestige does not enable us to make out an underlying principle of the leader clearly.⁵¹ He states that “we cannot feel that LeBon has brought the function of the leader and the importance of prestige completely into harmony with his brilliantly executed picture of the group mind.”⁵² Though Freud does level this critique of LeBon he does not show entire disagreement, rather a need for a more detailed conciliation between term prestige with the idea of the leader itself. Freud too is asking how this mechanism is effectively used upon the crowd. Unfortunately Freud’s own insights leave us asking nearly the same question.

This is because Freud uses the church and the army to illustrate his example of leadership within the crowd. “In a church (and we may with advantage take the Catholic Church as a type) as well as in an army, however different the two may be in other respects, the same illusion holds good of there being a head--in the Catholic Church Christ, in an army its Commander-in-Chief--who loves all individual sin the group with an equal love.”⁵³ In other words, Freud’s theory of the leader hinges on the the crowd’s assumption that the leader, in this example, God and a General, love each of the members equally. Freud elaborates saying that everything depends upon this illusion and if it were to be dropped, then both groups would dissolve, so far as the external force.⁵⁴ The reliance upon the personal relationship that crowd members have with their leader is interesting precisely because it is personal.

Freud uses the phenomenon of panic as evidence for his claim of the libidinal tie. “A panic arises if a group of that kind becomes disintegrate. It’s characteristics are that none of the orders given by superiors are any longer listened to, and that each individual is only solicitous on hi own account, and without any consideration for the rest.”⁵⁵ However he does acknowledge that

⁵¹Freud, 10.
⁵²Freud, 11.
⁵³Freud, 23.
⁵⁴Freud, 24.
⁵⁵Freud, 25.
there have been claims made for the opposite, specifically by Mcdougall, that the intensification of emotion by contagion is in fact causation for a structural break down of the crowd. Though Freud makes it clear that he does not agree with Mcdougall’s claims, his defense is that these panic moments can break out not only in situations of danger, but in trivial times as well. I believe this is a weak and semi dismissive argument.

In fact I believe that Mcdougall is correct in his analysis that there is an intense overwhelming sense or feeling of dread that overpowers the intense hold that the leader had once had upon the crowd and ultimately resulting in the destruction of the crowd itself. This argument is in line with LeBon’s idea of prestige as well because prestige is, though indefinite and mysterious, an intense observable hold over the members of the crowd. The members are enamored with this element of prestige, which Freud details as “love” or a libidinal tie. Therefore Freud’s idea of the libidinal tie is actually just an attempt to further explain the relationship between crowd and leader, which results in a controversial manifestation in his examples of the church and the army.

The problem with both Freud and LeBon is that they don’t give any indication of how their qualities manifest themselves between the crowd and it’s leader. We want to know how prestige is manifested within members of the crowd and how the illusion of libidinal ties are formed between the leader and the crowd. Brian Massumi, in his book, Parables for the Virtual, explains and elaborates on the effects of images, intensity of movements. Both of these elements, along with examples will serve to answer our question about Freud and LeBon’s leadership qualities.

In Massumi’s first page he states, “The project of this book is to explore the implications for cultural theory of this simple conceptual displacement: body-(movement/sensation)-change.” At first assumption it appears that his book will not use crowd theory but rather concern itself with only movement

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56 Freud, 25.
57 Massumi, 1.
and sensation for means of cultural study. However his book is actually asking the questions of how movement and sensation affect culture. And culture is actually a reference to groups of people. Although his conscious answer is by way of cognition he actually provides very useful information about how this effects crowds.

This begins with his brief anecdotal example of the snowman and the children. “A man builds a snowman on his roof garden. It starts to melt in the afternoon sun. He watches. After a time, he takes the snowman to the cool of the mountains where it stops melting. He bids it good-bye and leaves.”

This ad appeared between cartoons on German television, without any words, until mass complaints that the ad was frightening children. A study was formed to access this strange reaction under the direction of Hertha Sturm. They developed three versions of the film: the original wordless version and two versions with voice-overs added. The first voice-over was dubbed “factual.” It added a simple step-by-step account of the action as it happened. A second version was called “emotional.” It was largely the same as the factual version but included, at crucial turning points, words expressing the emotional tenor of the scene.

Groups of nine year old children were assembled for testing. They were assessed upon which version of the clip they liked best. They were also assessed upon which scenes of the clip they found the most pleasant as well. Researchers found that children liked the wordless version one best, the emotional version second, and factual version of the clip least. The children interestingly also rated the sad scenes as the most pleasant, the sadder the better. The children were also wired to assess physiological changes during the clip. Researchers found that the factual version elicited the highest level of arousal, even though it was the most unpleasant and made the least long lasting impression. The children, it turns out, were physiologically split: factuality made their hears beat faster and deepened their breathing, but it also made their skin

58 Massumi, 23.
59 Massumi, 23.
60 Massumi, 24.
resistance fail. (Galvanic skin response measures autonomic reactions.)

Massumi uses this study to introduce the concept of primacy of the affective in image reception. He explains this concept by stating “the context of image is its indexing to conventional meanings in an inter subjective context, its sociolinguistic qualifications. This indexing fixes the determinate qualities of the image; the strength or duration of the image effect could be called its intensity.” He qualifies this by saying that the study “shows us that the event of image reception is multilevel, or at least bi-level. There is an immediate bifurcation in response in two systems. The level of intensity is characterized by a crossing of semantic wires.”

What this study details, that Massumi does not account for, is the group mind of the children. They experience the same psychological and physiological qualities at the same time from the same experience. The children are being affected by the clip itself and are drawn to it’s intensity on a multilevel systemic response. This idea of intensity set forth by Massumi refers to the energy transferred from image onto the subject, in this case the children. Massumi describes the term as follows, “Intensity is beside that loop, a nonconcious, never-to-be-conscious autonomic remainder. It is outside expectation and adaptation, as disconnected from meaningful sequencing, from narration, as it is from vital function. It is narratively delocalized, spreading over the general body surface like a lateral backwash from the function-meaning interlopes that travel the vertical path between head and heart.”

This connection between image intensity and viewer is actually comparable to LeBon’s idea of prestige. The image is what is inspiring the intensity that is effecting the individual just as the leader is inspiring the manifestation of prestige within an

61Massumi, 24.
62Massumi, 24.
63Massumi, 24.
64Massumi, 24.
65Massumi, 25.
individual of a crowd. The best part about this comparison is that it is physiologically proven by the measurements taken during the study. Therefore there is an actual physiological manifestation caused by the leading arousal mechanism (either leader or image).

And the leader and image cannot only be interchangeable but one and the same because Massumi leads us into his next example of image effects with Ronald Reagan. He states, in a rather sassy manner, “Now all of this might come as news to those who think of Reagan and other postmodern political stars on the model of charismatic leadership, in which the fluency of a public figure’s gestural and tonal repertoire mesmerize the masses, lulling them into bleary-eyed belief in the content of the mellifluous words. On the contrary, it is astonishing that Reagan wasn’t laughed and jeered off the campaign podium, and was swept into office not once but twice. It wasn’t that people didn’t hear his verbal fumbling or recognize the incoherence of his thoughts. They were the butt of constant jokes and news stories. And it wasn’t that what he lacked on the level of verbal coherence was glossed over by the seductive fluency of his body image. Reagan was more famous for his polyps than his poise, and there was a collective fascination with his faltering health and regular shedding of bits and pieces of himself.”

I believe this quote is important to include because of it’s imagery of Ronald Reagan, especially for those who had yet to exist at the time these events were taking place. Massumi makes the conclusion that Reagan was an effective leader not in spite of but because of his double dysfunction in both speech and body language. He was able to produce ideological effects by non ideological means, a global shift in the political direction of the United States by falling apart. His means were affective.

Massumi argues that in this production, Reagan was able to politicize the power of the mime. “A mime decomposes movement, cuts its continuity into a potentially infinite series of

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66 Massumi, 40.
67 Massumi, 40.
submovements punctuated by jerks. At each jerk, at each cut into the movement, the potential is there for the movement to veer off in another direction, to become a different movement.”68 To feasibly understand this argument just think of the image being evoked by this mime like behavior and the reactions to this image by the American public. Massumi claims that Reagan was a “communicative jerk.” The two levels of interruption, those of linear movement and conventional progressions of meaning, were held together by the one Reagan feature that did hold positive appeal was the timbre of his voice.69 Massumi is saying because of lack of fluid motion translating into meaning that Reagan’s entire broadcasts would force the public to be distracted by his body language and smooth voice. Therefore Reagan was able to produce an image that effectively distracted Americans from his policies enough to be a successful leader. This was Reagan’s “prestige.” Massumi states that it is his incipience that was prolonged by technologies of image transmission and then relayed by apparatuses such as the family or the church or the school or the chamber of commerce, which in conjunction with the media acted as part of the nervous system of a new and frighteningly reactive body politic.70 This is just further proof of the continuation of crowd theory within Massumi’s work as this relaying of transmission through the crowds of the church, school, chamber of commerce is exactly like LeBon’s idea of prestige being transferred by contagion though out the crowd as well. According to Massumi, each person (watching Reagan) was able to selected one line of movement, one progression of meaning, to actualize and implant locally, within themselves and the groups they belong. He could be so many different things to so many different people.71 He was able to form a personal connection with people, just as Freud detailed in his theory of a libidinal tie between leader and members of the crowd. Reagan did this by means of movement within imagery.

68 Massumi, 40.
69 Massumi, 41.
70 Massumi, 41.
71 Massumi, 42.
Imagery is able to evoke a measurable physiological response within the bodies of crowds. In fact, when measured, according to Hertha Strum’s research, images can produce nearly identical physiological responses in humans. When Freud and LeBon were studying crowd formation, specifically crowd/leader relationships they did not have access to any sort of devices that would measure physiological responses, nor did they have any form of devices that would transmit images as we do today. Therefore their phenomena were observable explanations based of situational encounters instead of images. Massumi’s new theoretical developments into understanding the effects that images of leaders have on the population are critical to understanding crowd theory.

Affect and the Body Politic

The understanding of Massumi’s affects of leaders upon their crowd can draw us to another unique use of affect to understand crowd through the political. John Protevi outlines his book as a mechanism for investigating the imbrications of the social and the somatic: how our bodies, minds, and social settings are intricately and intimately linked.72 This is similar to correlations drawn earlier between LeBon’s contagion and Brennan’s theory of transmission however Protevi’s explanation provides theory rooted in the “body politic.”

Protevi explains that the individual is a first-order body politic, at once social and somatic, embedded and embodied, connected and individuated, in both physiological and psychological dimensions.73 This means that the individual is able to be both the physical and psychological, however this is

73 Protevi, 600, 601.
only the most basic level of body politic. Protevi details that a first-order body politic is a dynamic physiological system that regulates its material and energetic flows as they enter, circulate within, and leave the socially embedded yet individuated body to take part in the economy of higher-order bodies politic at the group and civic scales.⁷⁴

In order to understand complex group and civic scale of body politic, Protevi makes it clear that one must understand the relationship that the individual has between somatic and social within themselves. The somatic refers to the body, physiologically. Protevi explains that the psychological is the first-order or personal body politic engages in affective cognition, making sense of the situations in which its somatic life is lived in sociopolitical embeddedness.⁷⁵ Because this concept is difficult to comprehend it is better to quote Protevi’s explanation, “This making sense is profoundly embodied; the body subject opens a sphere of competence within which things show up as affordances, as opportunities for engagement, and other people show up as occasions for social interaction, as invitations, repulsions, or a neutral live and let live.”⁷⁶ What Protevi means is that our pension for interactions stems from a sociopolitical somatic life which is embedded deep inside our unique human characteristics.

Protevi’s second-order body politic is composed of individuals who themselves are first-order bodies politic. Here we find the interaction of the personal with the group compositional scale, where encounters can be one-off occurrences or can be patterned and customary or even institutionalized (and thus operate at the border of group and civic). A second-order body politic is at minimum a couple, but it can be larger; a second-order body politic has itself somatic and social aspects in both physiological and psychological dimensions.⁷⁷ This body politic has its own physiology that

⁷⁴Protevi, 602, 603.
⁷⁵Protevi, 608, 609.
⁷⁶Protevi, 609, 610.
⁷⁷Protevi, 615, 616, 617, 618.
regulates material flows between its members and itself. The example that Protevi uses to explain is that of the regulation, production, distribution, and consumption of food and drink. Like the way a family kitchen is a distribution node for affectively charged material flows. This regulation of group system dynamics can be seen as construction of a virtual repertoire, modeled as the production of an attractor layout and affectively experienced as the background affect or mood of the group.\textsuperscript{78}

The second-order body politic can also be studied psychologically. This is because it regulates the intersomatic affective cognition and the emotional and meaningful interchanges among its members and between their collective affective cognition and that of other bodies politic, at either personal, group, or civic compositional scales. In other words, groups have characteristic ways-a limited virtual repertoire-of making sense of what happens, on the basis of which decisions take place as actualizations or selections from that repertoire.\textsuperscript{79}

This is essentially saying what Brennan had said in her book, that affect is transmitted psychologically and we know this due to biological markers that are measurable during interactions such as hormone levels or even just heart rate variances. Therefore, though Protevi is using more complicated wording he still just agrees with LeBon, Freud, and Brennan.

Protevi then walks the reader through the connection between the first body politic and the second body politic using the term, “synchronic emergence.” Meaning that a second order body politic, because it is a social group is composed of not only the individual’s body but the collection of bodies within the social group. However the first order bodies politic is the personal body politic. Behavior capacity within a first order body politic shows the potentials for connections that provide the physiological and psychological dimensions exactly the same s behaviors that have been patterned by the social group to which they belong. This pattern of first order connections allows for the successful function of the social group. The social group in turn

\textsuperscript{78}Protevi, 619, 622.
\textsuperscript{79}Protevi, 622, 624.
is made up of the physiology and psychology of the second-order body. Second body politic then changes when it become institutionalized or restricted. What is seen is a shift from the group to the more complex civic bodies politic. The manifestation of a short-term event might be as dramatic as a revolution or as mundane as the encounter of a government agent with a first- or second order body politic.\textsuperscript{80}

This transformation from one group to the next, Protevi makes clear, is not necessarily a linear transition from the first to second to third. This is significant to the debate on crowds because ultimately Protevi is arguing that we can go from the first body politic to the civic body politic. This is because within our own individual minds we already possess the group mind. I believe that this is what Protevi means when he talks about the sociopolitical somatic life that individuals lead. He means that every individual action taken because of need to commit social interactions. We as being want to feel interactions, further it is our goal to take part in these interactions. This relates back to Brennan’s theory of affect transmission and how when we come together in groups our affects combine to form a new group affect, just like LeBon’s original theory of the contagion of ideas phenomena. Protevi explains that we want to trade affects, especially in political situations and this is because we are social by nature.

**Conclusions**

Brennan, Massumi, and Protevi each acknowledge the existence and usage of groups within the field of affect. While being rooted in crowd theories from LeBon and Freud, they also allow new perspectives to arise. I believe this is mainly because of the new technologies and scientific break thoughts to which any researcher has access today. The new scientific break throughs, especially in physiological studies, have strengthened their arguments by providing tangible evidence of the theories each lays down. Consequently, because affect is rooted in the

\textsuperscript{80}Protevi, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633.
idea that one individual's mind effects another and in turn they effect each others to create a new affect, which is the group dynamic or mind. Understanding and evaluating this concept is useful because of the acknowledgement the researcher makes in admitting that they themselves are part of something larger than just their individual self. Understanding this reality is crucial when negotiating group settings. An awareness of these principles can allow one to further understand group mentality, devices, and overall maneuverability one is able to experience when inside of the crowd, or attempting to lead the crowd. As seen in the “Affect and the Body Politic” section, affect is important to consider in many occasions including within the political mind structure. It offers insights into not only crowd dynamics, but also neurological, psychological and theoretical based questions of human interactions ranging from simplistic conversation to advertising to the complexities of the political sphere. Understanding and recognizing the way affect is transferred in these interactions allows for greater understanding of the human being, and human mind, that are unparalleled.
SECTION 2

CROWD POTENTIAL
Chapter 3

Escaping Paradoxical Beginnings
Through The Universal Crowd

Marta Piotrowicz

Introduction

The world watched as hundreds of thousands joined together in squares and streets, from Egypt to Libya, Yemen and beyond. A revolutionary fervor swept across the region, soon gaining this explosion of collective action the name of the Arab Spring. A common phrase when describing revolutions, “spring” exemplifies the unique factor of revolutions: new beginnings. Unlike other political moments, revolutions require us to tackle the issue of beginnings.¹ Are beginnings contingent on previous conditions, or is an absolute beginning possible? In the former, politics continues on in a predictable trajectory, attempting to bring about what was not before but remaining dependent on conditions of the past.² In the later, a new political space is created, opening up the conditions of possibility rather than relying on an adherence to the conditions of the past. These moments have been associated with popular political movements, in which “the slumbering popular sovereign wakes up to reaffirm its supreme power” outside of “the formal borders of institutionalized politics”.³ This creating power of the common

people has been labeled as paradoxical; “the people are at once a constituted and a constituent power”\(^4\). It is assumed that the creation of something new is dependent and must be legitimized by an external force. In this case, a paradox is created with the authorizing external force the same as the internal, creating force. However, this paradox need not exist. Only in ordinary politics is it necessary to “confront the paradox of who constitutes the people in the first place”\(^5\). An absolute break with ordinary politics would render concepts like authority and legitimacy obsolete. The inability to escape conditions of the past is best exemplified by Hannah Arendt. She is trapped by the past condition of authority. Her requirement of authority to legitimize new beginnings stems from her conception of the crowd. She views man as an enclosed being, rather than realizing that man “treats himself as a universal”, a species-being\(^6\). When the crowd is not universal, it creates that which is “alien to him” and he “confronts the other man”\(^7\). This confrontation causes a fear of the crowd, and a fear of mob rule. To prevent beginnings from succumbing to the rule of the mob, she requires an external force to provide direction and equality within her creative beginning. By relying on an external force, rather than an internal source, she is confronted with the issue of authority. This limits her ability to develop her theory of “immanent principles” and leaves her searching for legitimate authority when none is necessary\(^8\).

By conceiving of the crowd as a universal, there is no longer “a being other than [it]self”\(^9\). An examination of Alain Badiou’s *The Rebirth of History* enables us to understand a new beginning without paradox, due to the crowd as an innate part of the


\(^{5}\text{Frank, Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Postrevolutionary America. 397.}

\(^{6}\text{Marx, Karl. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. Marxist.org, 2000. 31. [PDF]}

\(^{7}\text{Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. 32.}

\(^{8}\text{Arendt, On Revolution. 212.}

\(^{9}\text{Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, 32.}
individual, a universal. Hannah Arendt and Alain Badiou share some theoretical similarities, such as the use of the generic, however these similarities are ultimately superficial. By comparing both Badiou’s historical riot and Arendt’s extraordinary politics to the primal crowd origins of Canetti’s Pack, it becomes clear there is an irreconcilable difference between the two. Badiou is able to escape paradoxical beginnings by rendering representation obsolete through the creation of an absolute collective power. In Badiou’s interpretation of the crowd, equality and direction are internally present. However, for Arendt, she sets herself up to be trapped within a paradox surrounding authority. By viewing individuals enclosed beings, rather than a universal, there must always be a legitimating authority of representation. Her search for authority also causes her to only be able to understand politics as defined by conditions of the past, which limits the creative ability of politics to form something novel. It is only through conceiving the crowd as a universal that the paradox of new beginnings can be moved past.

The Authority of Beginning

In extraordinary beginnings, the people authorize the authority of the people. For many theorists, this has been conceived of as a paradox. The source of authorization cannot be the same as what is being authorized. This paradox is most clearly demonstrated in the moment of drafting a new constitution. The act of crafting a new constitution first assumes the authority of citizens to create the constitution in the first place. However, prior to the creation of the constitution the drafters “have no authority to do what they have set out to achieve”. This authority is only granted retroactively. Hannah Arendt refers to this as the “vicious circle in legislating” that is present in extraordinary politics.

10 Arendt, On Revolution. 212.
11 Arendt, On Revolution. 2999.
12 Kalyvas, Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary, 2230.
13 Arendt, On Revolution. 3000.
A common way theorists have attempted to solve this paradox is by removing the beginning from the creative power of extraordinary politics. Rather than an absolute beginning, it is relative. Instead of a political space created outside of defined conditions of the past, it “emerges out of the traces of [the] past” to “become an independent reality of its own”. In order to solve the paradox of extraordinary politics, it is returned to the ordinary. Creation becomes evolution; political spaces are rearranged not formed. The desire to return the extraordinary to the ordinary represents an inability to conceive of conditions outside of those existing in the past. The idea that “extraordinary politics is confronted with the problem of authority” assumes authority is a condition that must be fulfilled. However, there is no reason to presuppose the conditions of possibility must be the same in this new political space. Hannah Arendt’s attempt to solve this paradox demonstrates she is limiting the condition of possibility to the past. Arendt’s necessity of authority stems from her distrust of the sovereign will. Authority demands obedience. It is at always at odds with persuasion and coercion through force; for any “use of external means” implies “authority itself has failed”. Authority is necessary because it gives “the world permanence and durability which human beings need”. When durability is gone, tyranny reins. A government, one that is most likely to easily and rapidly change, is tyrannical. Unlike other theorists who understood democratic politics to mean the rule of popular sovereignty, Arendt believed that “in the realm of human affairs sovereignty and tyranny are the same”. Sovereignty replaces “freedom with hierarchical control and rulership, substitute[s] the plurality of the

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public sphere with homogeneity and sameness, and supplant[s] horizontal cooperation among equals with the vertically structured command-obedience relationship”. Arendt saw the sovereign popular will as the reason for the failure of the French Revolution, and the greatest threat to extraordinary politics. Arendt claims her rejection of the sovereign will is due to a fear of totalitarian rule, however it instead appears to be a fear of mob rule. The will of the popular sovereign does not represent the emergence of a totalitarian government; instead it brings about a “multiheaded monster, a mass that moves as one body and acts as though possessed by one will”. It was the French revolutionaries “appeal to the absolute of the popular constituent power” as the authorizing source of their new, creative moment that caused the failure of their revolution. This appeal to the absolute brought about the appearance of le peuple, the tyrannical personification of the misery and suffering of the poor that forced the revolution to “submit to necessity” and “lead them astray from reason”. For Arendt, this was the downfall of the French revolution. Ultimately, le peuple made it impossible for any revolutionary laws or decrees to be enforced. Arendt claims the multitude was removed from the location of legal fiction and instead was used as the foundation of a new political order in France. The failure of this new political order was due to the will of the multitude being “ever-changing by definition...[resulting in her to state] that a structure built on it as its foundation is built on quicksand”. This rapidly changing will enabled it to be “manipulated and imposed upon whenever someone was willing” and able to convince the people of representation. The constituent assemblies were incapable of “command[ing] enough authority to lay down the law of the land” because they “lacked

22 Kalyvas, Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary. 2385.
24 Frank, Constituent Moments. 637.
26 Arendt, On Revolution. 2649.
27 Arendt, On Revolution. 2650.
the power to constitute by definition”.28 Power and law had the same origin (the people), a combination creating such a constantly shifting and tyrannical force that it could not endure. On the other hand, the creation of the American constitution did not “derive law and power from the same origin”.29 In this case, the power came from the people but the law came from the constitution; this prevented the law from being the victim of a “subjective state of mind, like the will”.30 In order to avoid the vicious circle of authority authorizing itself, Arendt states “the authority of the republic will be safe and intact as long as the act itself, the beginning as such, is remembered”.31 This remembrance, similar to founding myths, augments the consensual act of the beginning.32 It is in the ability of the constitution to be augmented that its authority resides.33 Arendt places an importance on the “act of foundation…[that] legalized an already existing body politic rather than make it anew”.34 The founders of the American Revolution did not have to create a new order, but instead was able to derive its strength from the Roman tradition.35 In her attempt to remove authority from the vicious circle, Arendt removes the Revolution from the politics of the extraordinary.

The Sovereign Will and Immanent Principles

As previously mentioned, Arendt’s distrust of the popular sovereign will dictates her need for authority. The sovereign will inevitably degrades into tyranny because it is “ever-changing by definition” preventing a durability of a political order.36 The will

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33 Frank, *Constituent Moments*. 717.
34 Frank, *Constituent Moments*. 642.
of the people is unable to provide the seat of authority, requiring Arendt to rely on the act of beginning itself for the source of authority. In an attempt to clarify how this authority emerges, Arendt introduces the concept of the “immanent principle”. This principle has to be “distilled from within the constituting action itself at the very moment of its performance”. This principle relies on the “combined power of the many” through the “interconnected principle of mutual promise and common deliberation”. It is able to “inspire the deeds that are to follow and [it] remains apparent as long as the action lasts”. However, the concept of the “immanent principle” of beginning introduces a tension into Arendt’s work.

Arendt rejects the possibility of the people as the source of authority, because their ever-changing direction would make them incapable of establishing a lasting political order, as seen in the French revolution. However, the immanent principle is only the authority “as long as [it] dwells among men, as long as [it] inspires their deeds”. If the immanent principle ceased to fulfill these requirements among men, would authority still be drawn from it? Most likely the immanent principle would cease to be the non-paradoxical source of authority in this creative moment. The authority of the immanent principle only exists if the people believe in its authority. The beginning must be “remembered” by the people. Though Arendt does not want to provide the people with the source of law (attributed instead to the constitution), she still ends up placing the authorizing source of the law within the people. Arendt attempts to separate authority from the will of the people, however she ends up relying on their acceptance to do so.

Though this tension exists within Arendt’s work, it may be solvable. Through an examination of popular sovereignty and

38 Frank, *Constituent Moments*. 780.
immanent principles, the difference that emerges is one based around exclusion. Popular sovereignty is equated with a majority rule. The concept of “the will of the majority” assumes that there must also be a minority, and thus a group that is excluded from the point of authority. From this, it is easy to understand Arendt’s aversion to the authority through popular sovereignty; for her, it ultimately ends in mob rule. An authority grounded in popular sovereignty ultimately leaves people on the outside for Arendt. However, her discussion of immanent principles is grounded in something more inclusive. It appears that her issue with sovereign will as authority may have less to do with its inability for stable direction, and more to do with its exclusive, and therefore tyrannical, implication.

This tension is only able to be resolved if immanent principles appear to be inclusive of all in nature. The moment of foundation is essential in understanding the inclusiveness of immanent principles. During foundation, “the supreme act in which the ‘We’ is constituted as an identifiable entity” is the moment that creates this principle. For Arendt, the ability for foundation is freedom. This is a movement “away from freedom defined as an individual faculty [and] toward freedom as a collective, creative capacity”. Although Arendt previously tried to ignore the paradox of absolute beginnings by describing it instead as an emergence from the past, her discussion of freedom demonstrates a possibility for an absolute, creative moment.

Though the debate around paradoxical beginnings commonly ends with rejecting absolute beginnings for relative ones, it is not always the case. There are examples of powerful creating moments in theory that are not wrapped up in the paradox of trying to explain itself. One example of this is Alain Badiou’s concept of the historical riot. Conceptualized as an event that brings about a rebirth of history through the recognition of the Idea, a historical riot occurs “when its localization ceases to be limited, but grounds in the occupied

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44 Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary*. 2289
space the promise of a new, long-term temporality; when its composition stops being uniform, but gradually outlines a unified representation in mosaic form of all the people; when finally, the negative growling of pure rebellion is succeeded by the assertion of a shared demand”.  

The concept of a representational mosaic within the historical riot in the Arendt’s concept of ‘We’ as an “identifiable entity” appears to be a conceptualization of the power of the generic. This shift allows for an exploration to determine if the immanent principle in foundation can be conceived of as inclusive, through the use of Badiou’s work describing the creative power of historical riots. The power of the generic is an important aspect of Badiou’s conception of historical riots. Through the use of a generic name, whether proletariat or the conception of ‘we’, the identitarian fiction over some particular point in people’s existence” is able to be demolished.  

The similarities between Badiou and Arendt continue.  

Arendt’s concept of the immanent principle in foundation bears a resemblance to Badiou’s concept of the Idea or political truth. The power of the immanent principle comes from the fact that it is carried within the moment of foundation. However, Arendt’s idea is weakened because she does not explain why that is so powerful. To try to determine why this idea holds power, it may be better to first determine why Badiou’s concept of the political truth proves to be so powerful. For both Badiou and Arendt, their immanent idea is based within the creation of the event itself. Arendt sources the authority for a new political order from this idea, whereas Badiou uses it to propel his creative moment forward. While the two moments appear to have similarities, these similarities are ultimately superficial. However, the differences between the two end up being more useful than the similarities. The difference allows us to explain how Arendt remains trapped by her paradox of beginning but Alain Badiou is

able to leave it behind, and conceive of an absolute, creative break with the previous order.

The Crowd As the Universal

Despite initial similarities between Hannah Arendt and Alain Badiou, contrasting conceptions of the crowd render their theories incompatible. In bringing about his creative change, Badiou relies on the political truth. This is the “organized product of an event – an historical riot – which preserves intensification, contraction and localization to the extent that it can replace an identitarian object and separating names with a real presentation of generic power such as its significant has been disclosed to us by the event”.

It is here that Badiou’s creating moment takes an extra step compared to Arendt and thus that ultimately results in the paradox being resolved before it can form. This step is the bringing about of the formation of the inexistent into an active part of history.

Prior to the event, the state is “capable of manufacturing the inexistent by imposing a figure of identitarian normality” on the people. This is accomplished through the use of separating names. The state is able to “generate the existence of an imaginary object that is supposed to embody an identitarian ‘average’”, resulting in a notion of the accepted. Through doing this, the state is able to divide the people into a powerless entity. Through the use of “propaganda [it] select[s] the features they deem appropriate to…the measures they wish to take” and the separating names are used to both subdue and point the people in the direction most beneficial to the state. The separating names can be based around characteristics such as race, nationality, gender, income level, and many more. These separating names operate by creating a fear of the unknown through placing some

48 Badiou, The Rebirth of History, 71.
49 Badiou, The Rebirth of History, 75.
50 Badiou, The Rebirth of History, 75.
51 Badiou, The Rebirth of History, 76.
people on the outside of what is considered normal and allowed, and fashioning them as “an alien power”.\textsuperscript{52}

It is through this fear of the unknown that the innateness of the crowd begins to evolve. The fear of the unknown touch is what drives our primal desire to be part of the crowd. As “soon as a man has surrendered himself to the crowd, he ceases to fear its touch”.\textsuperscript{53} Through the employ of separating names, the state sets up the ability for itself to be removed from the seat of power. The political truth does just that. Rather than throw off one external power for the other, the political truth removes the ability of an external to have authority. This event “affirm[s] the generic, universal and never identitarian character of any political truth”.\textsuperscript{54} What Badiou is able to do through his political truth, and what Arendt is lacking, is the recognition of complete equality through bringing about the existence of the inexistent.

Badiou does this not through creating equality but by recognizing the existence of the equality that was always there. The state was the one who created the inexistent; people are not naturally in this form without the state’s separating names. For Badiou, the “world always ascribes \textit{intensities of existence} to all the beings inhabiting that world. From the standpoint of their \textit{being}, the people to whom this world as it is ascribes a weak, even negligible, quantity of existence are in principle in a situation of equality with others”.\textsuperscript{55} These quantities of existence are dependent on the presence of a hierarchy; in a historical riot a moment is created in which there is “an increase in equal-being”.\textsuperscript{56} Once that hierarchy is removed from the way of things, beings may return to the complete equality that was distorted by the state, but always present.

This discussion of equality can again return us to the concepts of the crowd introduced by Elias Canetti in his book

\begin{enumerate}
\item Marx, \textit{Economic and Philosphic Manuscripts}, 32.
\item Badiou, \textit{The Rebirth of History}, 77.
\item Badiou, \textit{The Rebirth of History}, 67.
\item Badiou, \textit{The Rebirth of History}, 68.
\end{enumerate}
Crowds and Power. A crowd has four essential characteristics: a desire to grow, equality, density, and the need of a direction.\(^{57}\) These characteristics are present in different proportions depending on the type of crowd. A common conception of the crowd is that it is made of individuals coming together, creating its formation. Canetti is different. Instead of individuals creating the crowd, the desire for the crowd seems to exist within individuals already. The crowd rids the individual of the primal fear of the unknown touch. This is further suggested through Canetti’s discussion of the pack and its importance as the original desire of the crowd within individuals. The pack is the source of the crowd’s need to grow. It is made up of “a group of men in a state of excitement whose fiercest wish is to be more”.\(^{58}\) The pack’s primitive desire of more men in the pack, and thus more hunters, drives the desire of the modern crowd today. Growth “is only acted” within the pack, beginning with the development of the insatiable need for growth in modern crowds.\(^{59}\) The two characteristics that are most strongly present within the pack are equality and direction. The pack contains an “unswerving direction; equality is expressed in the fact that all are obsessed by the same goal”.\(^{60}\) While the characteristics of growth and density are only an illusion in the pack, the intensity of direction and equality within the pack are the reality.

Not only does Badiou’s historical riot contain equality, but also there is “unswerving direction”.\(^{61}\) As in the discussion of Canetti’s pack, the presence of direction and equality are intertwined. In the pack, equality is “expressed...[when] all are obsessed by the same goal”.\(^{62}\) In the historical riot, “the generic does not survive beyond the time of the riot; that in the absence of an active Idea, nothing can preserve it”.\(^{63}\) In order for equality

\(^{57}\) Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 29.

\(^{58}\) Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 93.

\(^{59}\) Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 93.

\(^{60}\) Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 93.

\(^{61}\) Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 93.

\(^{62}\) Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 93.

\(^{63}\) Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, 79.
to be preserved, the direction of the political truth must be present. The “truths are reality itself” realized by the people, a “collective presentation of humanity”. Political truths cannot be debated; they are true, and the direction is clear and essential toward the truth. The oppression of the state that imposed inequality tried to force the idea of opinions, rather than political truths, to prevent individuals from recognizing the historical riot, and thus their own innate equality, as a possibility. Arendt’s lacks a conception of the crowd that comes prior to the individual. Ultimately, this results in her becoming focused on attempting to find a source of authority to solve her paradox rather than accepting the conditions of possibility that reveal themselves in the moment of a novel, creative political event. Arendt condemns the “men of the French Revolution [for] ha[ving] no conception of the persona, and no respect for the legal personality which is given and guaranteed by the body politic”. Her criticism states that the French Revolution became obsessed by the idea of “true liberation and true equality” which led them astray from “equality in the sense that everybody should be equally entitled to his legal personality”. Those in the French Revolution did become equal, but only because the resulting tyranny “left all inhabitants equally without the protecting mass of a legal personality”. Arendt relegates the concept of equality to an “attribute of the polis and not of men”. Through doing this, equality becomes an entity that is created rather than awaiting its realization. In addition to obscuring the universality of the crowd, this distorts Arendt’s concept of direction. As mentioned before, equality and direction are closely intertwined with one another. Equality can be achieved through the presence of the same direction within the pack, and the direction of the political truth is necessary for the equality of the generic to continue to exist. For Arendt, equality is not innate

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64 Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, 87.
with our existence as a species, but must be granted by a power. This enables equality to be granted to some and not others. Without a concept of true equality, her idea of direction takes on the characteristics of the sovereign will. The closest relationship found between equality and direction in Arendt’s work states that

Liberation in the revolutionary sense came to mean that those who not only at present but throughout history, not only as individuals but as members of the vast majority of mankind, the low and the poor, all those who had always lived in darkness and subjection to whatever powers there were, should rise and become the supreme sovereigns of the land. If for clarity’s sake we think of such an event in terms of ancient conditions, it is as though not the people of Rome or Athens, the populus or the demos, the lower orders of the citizenry, but the slaves and residents aliens, who formed the majority of the population without ever belonging to the people, had risen and demanded an equality of rights.  

Though this initially appears to resemble Badiou’s concept of the inexistent, the realization of power is not the same due to the conception of the internal crowd. Arendt can still only understand a revolutionary change through the idea of power shifting from one location to another. Those who are without power suddenly “become the supreme sovereigns of the land”. If Arendt were to want this to happen, she would first have to locate the authorizing power that gave rise to the lowest of mankind to this high point of power. She still wants someone (be it an individual or a representational entity) to be in power, which ultimately requires her to determine where the authority of that power originates. Arendt is only capable of conceiving of a power that actively rules rather than passively exists. She remains trapped in the conditions of the past. Her attempt to conceive of democratic movements as creative, novel beginnings ends up as paradoxical.

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because in reality those movements do not offer a change. Democratic movements may be a change governing towards one trying to be representational of the people, however the basis of governing still exists.

Had Badiou read the same passage written above, he would have no difficulty understanding this as a novel, creative political moment without paradox. His concept of equality would not require anything to authorize giving the “slaves and resident aliens” equal rights, because there would be nothing to give. Rather, the slaves and resident aliens were always equal to the rest of the population; it was the use of the words “slaves and resident aliens” that prevented this equality from becoming realized. This innate equality does not require Badiou to find a source of authority.

Conclusion

The strong presence of equality and direction in the historical riot demonstrates that Badiou considers the individual as an enclosure of the crowd. This innate equality, and the possibility of a direction that sustains it, enables Badiou to step around the founding paradox many other theorists fumble over when attempting to conceive of a novel, creating political moment. As Badiou discusses the Arab Spring, he delineates an important difference seen between his approach and Hannah Arendt’s. For Badiou,

the revolts in the Arab countries are opening a sequence, by leaving their own context undecided. They are stirring up and altering historical possibilities, to the extent that the meaning which their initial victories will retrospectively assume will in large part determine the meaning of our future71

Through leaving the context of these revolutions undecided, the condition of possibility is expanded beyond the

71 Badiou, The Rebirth of History, 38.
conditions set out in the past. Rather than requiring the meaning of these revolutions to be defined by conditions found “close at hand”, the “whole cloth” is available in the creation of history.\textsuperscript{72} This is the most important distinction made by Badiou. It allows for the novel, creating political moment to appear free of paradox. Arendt’s attempts in “bringing about what never was before” results in her “conjur[ing] up into [her] service the spirits of the past”.\textsuperscript{73} Arendt’s mistake is trying to conceptualize a new political order by legitimizing it through the structures in the old. Her paradox of a creative politics exists not because it is inherent to beginnings, but because judging the new by the old is nonsensical. The old structures demands an authorizing force that no longer exists once a new political space is created. The true founding moment is when these conditions cease to define the order of things, and the condition of possibility opens to include what did not exist before. However, because Arendt is incapable on understanding the universality of man, and continues to search for the source of authority when it is not necessary. When the crowd is universal, no external ruling force is possible. Arendt’s fear of mob rule will not occur because nothing exists outside the universal. Arendt’s misunderstanding of the individual as part of a crowd, rather than the other way around, causes her to try to locate the source of authority within the moment of foundation. Badiou’s ability place an intertwining notion equality and direction in the emergence of a new political moment rids the need for him to find authority. Through the universality of the crowd, authority and other preconceived notions of accepted power become irrelevant.

The insignificance of prior embodiments of power represents a different way to view the Arab Spring outside of the commonly presented Western view. The Arab Spring should not be presented as “a desire for the West”.\textsuperscript{74} The common factor of a revolution within history does not equate the two moments, and a change does not imply a movement in the direction towards what

\textsuperscript{72} Marx, \textit{The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte}, 46.
\textsuperscript{73} Marx, \textit{The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte}, 47.
\textsuperscript{74} Badiou, \textit{The Rebirth of History}, 48.
the West views as progress. Rather, Badiou’s conception of the Arab Spring places all the importance on the fact that it has happened at all. It does not have to be authorized; it just is.
Introduction

Two questions are at stake in this essay: 1) Do economic crises influence the formation of political crowds? and 2) Are all political crowds striving for justice? The answer to the first question is yes, economic crises influence crowd formations. Karl Polanyi in *The Great Transformation* describes reactionary impulses that occur when groups of people suffer through economic crises. After WWI and during the Great Depression, deeply conservative movements and leftist movements appeared. Still, I argue it is not solely economic crises but also issues of justice more generally that lead to the formation political crowds.

By examining economic crises’ effect on different political crowds, we see what helps to trigger the political crowd’s development. After we must look how perceived senses of injustice, in general, impact the formation of the political crowd as well. In particular, the LA rebellion crowds and the crowds that formed during the lynching of southern blacks post-reconstruction demonstrate that economic crises influence on the formation of the crowd. Also, perceived racial injustice proves that it is more than just economic crises that form political crowds.

Next, I answer: Do all political crowds aim for justice? No, simply, because justice exists as an objective ideal and is visible within the egalitarian nature of the crowd. Justice is equality. For justice to be achieved humanity must become part of the same crowd. Furthermore, I assert that conservative tendencies in the crowd do not push for equality, and therefore,
the crowds adopting this character are doomed to not strive for justice.

Overall, I argue economic crises influence political crowd formations and that political crowds that form to main order and hierarchy, fall short of justice because they do not break down barriers between groups of people to create equality. Hence, all political crowds are not striving for justice; even the one’s that claim that they are.

To answer whether economic crises influence the rise of political crowds we must first have a concise definition of what a political crowd is. Most generally, after exploring Elias Canetti and Alain Badiou’s characterization of crowds, one understands the political crowd as a crowd or group of people who are united by a particular agenda of affecting society for the crowd’s collective interest. Next, we look at Polanyi’s double movement- self-regulating markets expanding, which causes social protections to be fought for- is examined in relation to political crowd formation and economic crises. More specifically, the expansion of self-regulating markets leads to economic crises and consequently influences the formation of political crowds aiming for social protections. I connect and compare this idea to Badiou’s argument about capitalism’s destructiveness and Canetti’s ideas on distribution to Polanyi’s double movement. Ultimately, they are all synthesized together by saying that during economic crises, caused by capitalism’s booms and busts, there are inequalities in distribution that influence political crowd formations.

At this point, we look at the historical context of lynches in the post-reconstructionist south, and the LA riots of 1992. Both suggest that economic crises influence political crowd formations. Although there cannot be proven an exact cause associated with lynches and the rebellions, the data and evidence shows that during times of economic hardships political crowds form. Still, these crowds formed not only because of economic crises and hardships, but also, as the people who are in these crowds express, racial justice.

After, showing a correlation between economic crises and crowd formations, I move on to the second question: Do all political crowds strive for justice? They might claim that they
form for justice, but I argue this is not true. I begin by examining Rousseau’s conception of modern society and the remedies for freedom and equality. Rousseau notes that everyone sacrificing himself or herself for the collective interest leads to justice and equality among all people. Moreover, I argue Rousseau’s ideal polity, and the people’s dedication to the collective interest, relates to the ideal political crowd striving for justice.

Using Corey Robin’s *The Reactionary Mind* I argue that conservative tendencies in a crowd cause the crowd to never strive for justice because at conservative ideology’s core is hierarchy and order, not equality. By examining Jeannet Kirkpatrick’s *Uncivil Disobedience: Studies of Violence and Democratic Politics* I prove that the lynch mob is a conservative group that does not strive for justice. What is important about lynching mobs is that they are a deeply populist group of people. Robin describes that populism’s roots as deeply racist, and consequently its politics are not about equality. The LA riot crowds are about justice for the most part, but like Badiou would say they lack a general will, and hence, still are not completely about equality. This is manifested in the fact that they attack people who are symbols of enemies to the general will (whites and Koreans), but do not truly threaten the general will. Also, some of the actions cannot be said to be about equality or what Badiou would call the “idea”—communism or communist ideals (e.g. equality). These immediate riots lacked the concept of the idea or general will, which is why it is not completely about justice.
The Composition Of Crowds And Their Origin

Before understanding what gives rise to political crowds, the features of crowds, the political crowd must be explained. Elias Canetti in *Crowds and Power* finds four features present in all crowds: 1) The hunger to grow, 2) equality existing between individuals in a crowd, 3) The longing for density and physical closeness, and 4) The desire for direction.¹ All these characteristics exist within the political crowd and will be seen throughout lynching crowds and the LA uprising crowds. The fourth characteristic- a desire for direction - is of particular importance to us because a political crowd’s goal distinguishes it from other crowds. All political crowds are fighting for a particular agenda, which most times is for justice or a perceived justice. As I have already stated, not all political crowds understand what justice (i.e. equality) is, but these same crowds tend to claim their actions are for justice.

The second function of the crowd is also a very important. Equality existing between its members is created by a discharge. Canetti argues the discharge is the exact moment when the crowd is formed and “when all who belong to the crowd get rid of their differences and feel equal”.² Here we get a glimpse of why crowds are a model for justice- because they create justice between its members. This will be explored later on when examining justice.

Canetti distinguishes between the open crowds (“the true crowd”), which, is characterized by a longing for growth, and the closed crowd, which wants to maintain its size through ceremonies and limits.³ Also there are stagnant crowds- based on density and emotional buildup- and rhythmic crowds- based on equality- and slow and fast crowds. ⁴ There are five types of emotional crowds: the baiting crowd, which wants to kill and must be very dense so there are no consequences to killing; the

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² Canetti, 17-18.
³ Canetti, 20-22.
⁴ Canetti, 41.
flight crowd where everyone flees and their goal is safety; the
prohibition crowd, which collectively refuses to do what they
have done before individually (e.g. the strike); the reversal
crowd, which reverses stratifications in society (e.g. Revolutions);
lastly, there is the feast crowd, which strives for
universal enjoyment (e.g. Thanksgiving).\(^5\)

Political crowds appear in times of riot. In Alain Badiou’s
The Rebirth of History: Times of Riot and Uprisings, Badiou
examines three different kinds of riots. The immediate riot is
characterized by destruction and looting. The youth usually
protest because of state oppression (e.g. Tunisia). Additionally,
Badiou agrees with Gustave Le Bon and Sigmund Freud’s
conception of contagion or imitation where the members of a
crowd or riot copy each other.\(^6\) The immediate riot has “limited
extension” and “weak localization”. The second riot Badiou
describes is the latent riot. The latent riot is characterized by class
solidarity and a diverse group of people. There are small-scale
goals and a tactic attached to the latent riot (e.g. strike).\(^7\) The
most powerful riot is the historical riot.\(^8\) The historical riot is
characterized by having a slogan, large extension, a strong
localization, and a diversity of tactics. The historical riot is not
strong enough to be an emancipatory crowd though, because it
does not have the “Idea”- i.e. communistic values- within its
demands and message.

Badiou introduces the political organization and the
‘popular dictatorship’ to push forward the voice of the
“inexistent”\(^9\)- those not recognized or heard in representative
democracy\(^10\). Much like a crowd crystal described by Canetti, the
dictatorship involves those who remain faithful to the crowd and
its cause. They will for the people, and force the general will onto
the structures of society.\(^11\) Not everyone has the time or is in the

\(^5\) Canetti, 49-63.
\(^7\) Badiou, 30.
\(^8\) Badiou, 45.
\(^9\) Badiou, 67.
\(^10\) Badiou, 59-60.
position to push their will (e.g. mothers, fathers, workers with long hours, etc.) so others do for them. This dictatorship is not a small number of elites, but as stated before, does not include everyone. Badiou does not see one leader as necessary for the crowd, but a vanguard of people who force the Idea onto society, which represents the general will of all. Furthermore, Badiou recognizes the political crowd as people who are generic and equal among each other and the political crowd as willing justice.

The LA riot crowds of 1992 and Post reconstruction lynch mobs are exemplary political crowds. Both of these crowds are open crowds. The LA riots were a mixture of baiting, flight, and reversal crowds. In videos one can see looters involved in the LA riot demonstrating a baiting crowd, entering stores together and running away together.12 People interviewed who participated in The LA riot crowds said that this is not just about police violence, “But it goes way beyond that. The way the whole entire system is structured, the rich get richer, the poor get poorer. It provides almost no hope for most folks, especially black folks." Another said, “I don’t condone what’s happening, but… they haven’t listened to us in courts or on the ballots”.13 Two things are demonstrated by these quotes. First, inequality is at least part of the issue for the crowd. Second the crowd in the LA riot represents the voice of the “inexistents” who are not heard by their democratic regime. In this way, the LA riot crowd is also a reversal crowd. Also, this crowd is an immediate crowd with no real goal except to express rage. They have weak localization where the riots spread to other places, but the riots did not become a movement. Also they did not have a slogan or tactic that helped the crowd persist.

Post reconstruction lynch mobs take on the characteristics of a baiting crowd because large amounts of people are part of the crowd, which takes away the consequences of killing someone. I argue though they are also reversal crowds. Or maybe

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11 Badiou, 60.
12 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P43WZd611WA
they are counter-reversal crowds. They perceive a threat to the order, where blacks are out of their subordinate place. Lynch mobs also acted against the law and pushed their moral beliefs like that of the LA riots. Hence, the LA riots were emancipatory, trying to create equality and the lynch mob was a counter-revolutionary crowd attempting to keep blacks down.

Now that the idea of a crowd and political crowd has been sketched we can examine what influences the political crowd to come into existence. Karl Polanyi’s double movement argues as “self-regulating markets” expand there is a push back for social protections. After the collapse of the gold standard, and after WWI, during times of economic crisis, there were major regime changes. This undoubtedly involved discontent political crowds who were affected by these crises. In fact, the political crowds are the ones who push for social protections. Furthermore, I argue wherever self-regulating markets exist, economic crises are bound to happen, and issues of justice arise.

Canetti suggests that issues of distribution are the origins of the idea of justice. Self-regulating markets lead to political crowds being formed over the inequality in distribution. Badiou argues that capitalism and “Capital’s executives”- the bureaucrats of the state- cause “global popular uprisings”. Polanyi understands the state as saving the people from economic crises and Badiou understands the state as oppressing the people. For example, Polanyi discusses the enactment of the Speenhamland law to protect the people. Speenhamland was a policy enacted by the government in England in the 1700s that gave all workers a living allowance. Nonetheless both Badiou and Canetti have Marxist understandings of the economic deprivation that is caused by capitalism. Also, Canetti’s idea that political crowds

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16 Canetti, 190.
17 Badiou, 5.
18 Polanyi, 72.
form to gain just distribution relates to Badiou and Polanyi in the sense that some people are not given enough for what they produce, while others take from others production.

When talking about the pack (the original group) Canetti states, “Justice requires that everyone should have enough to eat. But it also requires that everyone should contribute to the production of food.”¹⁹ In this way justice is intertwined with the economic system of the time, which is capitalism. George Rude in *Crowds of the French Revolution* describes bread riots and the burning of cities that occurred when there were issues of distribution related with economic crises.²⁰ Rude argued, food riots during the late 1700s in France were “a massive protest against the new-angled principle of allowing food-prices to find their natural or market level, instead of being regulated by considerations of social justice.”²¹ In other words, distribution was critical for issues dealing with economic justice and French crowds in the late 1700s.

Overall, one notices that economic crises influence crowd formation. “The Anatomy of a Rebellion: A Political-Economic Analysis” by Melvin L. Oliver et al. demonstrates how the LA uprising was born out of dire economic situation for black Americans and Latinos where unemployment, joblessness (50% for black males) low wages, and inequality were on the rise.²² This situation was born out of an expanding of markets where globalization, capital flight, deunionization of jobs, and privatization were on the rise during the Reagan years. From 1978-1982, 700,000 high wage-manufacturing jobs were lost and 200 factories were relocated to south of the border.²³ At the same time, the social safety net was being cut. While, the government

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¹⁹Canetti, 191.
²¹Rude, 24.
²³Oliver et al., 125.
was a proponent of expanding markets, the people were involved in immediate riots where there was a cry for social protectionism and just distribution. Crips and Bloods were calling it a "slave rebellion". In an interview, Mike Davis calls the riots “a major postmodern bread riot- an uprising of not just poor people but particularly of those strata of poor in southern California who’ve been most savagely affected by the recession”. To make matters more complicated the violence was done towards a black man Rodney King that supposedly triggered the riots. But Latinos were just as involved with the looting and rioting as blacks. 52% of the population arrested during the riots were Latinos. Davis suggests that this is evidence that riots had to do with the economic conditions.

Not only did the LA riots prove that Polanyi’s double movement exists, and consequently, political crowds form during times of economic crises, but so does “The Killing Fields Of The Deep South: The Market For Cotton And The Lynching of Blacks, 1882-1930”. In this article, Beck and Tolnay demonstrate that mob violence against southern blacks was a response to economic conditions affecting southern whites economic prosperity. During times of cotton inflation and wages decreasing for all workers, lynches (with blacks victims) increased. The authors argue that white workers blamed their plight on black competition causing violence against blacks. Fascinatingly, white elites advocated for the violence and took part in it because it "prevented a coalition between black and white laborers." Tolnay and Beck say, "Violence was used by marginal whites to force black tenant farmers off desirable land or to drive away successful black businessmen or landowners".

25Cover Action, 143.
26Cover Action, 145-146.
lynching was a tool used to reinforce that blacks were inferior to whites, which also prevented solidarity between the workers. 29

Justice as Equality

In times of economic crises political crowds form. I admit my analysis is lacking because economic deprivation during economic crises is not the only influence on political crowds developing. Both the lynch mobs and the LA uprisings demonstrate that the establishment of political crowds occurs because of perceptions of racial injustice. The question becomes: are these crowds actions and desires are for justice? Before judging whether these crowds acted justly or unjustly and strove for justice, a description of why justice is equality must be given. John Rawls conception of justice as fairness is a well recognized and a respected definition of justice among political philosophers. I do not disagree with his definition of justice being fairness. I ask though, what is fairness? My assertion is that justice is equality because equality leads to maximal freedom and fairness for all.

Jean Jacques Rousseau in On Social Contract argues justice can never be the strength of one’s will or “that might does not make right”, rather he argues the general will is justice.30 In Discourse On The Origins and Foundations of Inequality Among Men Jean-Jacques Rousseau describes man’s evolution and rise into modern society. As man advances into modern society equality, justice, and freedom are all lost. Rousseau argues men have two natural abilities: 1) perfectibility 31 and 2) identification.32

28Beck and Tolnay, 534.
29Beck and Tolnay, 537.
Rousseau’s basic argument is that reason/reflection pulls man away from his natural ability to identify with others. When one is able to reflect on himself, he is able to see the differences between him and other people. Furthermore, when man no longer identifies with others and begins to see differences he begins to become conscious of how he looks in the eyes of others.\textsuperscript{33} He begins to want develop these differences and becomes competitive with others over these differences. Once we reach this state Rousseau argues we all become enslaved to our need to “appear” a certain way (40-42).\textsuperscript{34} Rousseau says we become dependent on others opinions and also reflection overcomes identification, leading to people to ignore the suffering of others, be disgusted by their inferiority, and to even cause that suffering through slavery.\textsuperscript{35} In this sense, everyone loses his or her freedom when they join modern society because some get physically enslaved, and all are enslaved to their insecurities and need to appear a certain way. Hence Rousseau states:

But from the moment any one man needed help from another, and as soon as they perceived that it was useful for one man to have provisions for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, work became necessary, and vast forests were changed into pleasant fields, which had to be watered with human sweat and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to spring up and grow with crops.\textsuperscript{36}

Here Rousseau explains the origin of inequality. This is the world inflicted upon us today. There is massive inequality, lack of compassion, and lack of freedom, and consequently, injustice is rampant. Rousseau’s \textit{On Social}
ECONOMIC CRISES AND JUSTICE

*Contract* challenges the issues of modern society by exploring a utopian polity. One could argue that his polity is made up of a massive crowd. In fact, Canetti gives examples of nations and polities in relation to their symbols. The national symbols represent the crowd. Also, Badiou argues that crowds in historical riots and revolutionary “dictatorships” should direct their efforts at the same concept Rousseau says the people of a polity should- the general will. The general will is the common interest and common good for all of society. The general will does not change and involves no private interests. So, if the general will is what is best for society, what does it advocate? The general will “tends by nature… towards equality”. Moreover, equality and freedom is achieved by the people having a duty for the collective interest, which is defined by the general will. Hence, Rousseau argues, once people are united in a political crowd by having a duty to act in concordance with the general will, people help each other not get dominated by one another, and no one is dependent upon one another, rather everyone is dependent upon the “city” and the goal of the state- i.e. to fulfill the general will for maximal equality and freedom.

Badiou recognizes the necessity of the people being “generic” to each other. He argues the Idea- communistic values-compels group “genericity”- equal identity. Badiou explains that historical riots and emancipatory revolutionary politics are always threatened by the prospect of becoming identitarian politics. Badiou argues the state always employs identity as a means of oppressing certain groups of people. Although, he does not agree with Rousseau that a state is a necessary

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38 Rousseau, 98.
39 Rousseau, 93.
40 Rousseau, 117.
41 Badiou, 66.
42 Badiou, 71-73.
institution, he would say Rousseau is on the right track by envisioning a state with equal citizens with equal identities. As stated before by Badiou an emancipatory crowd gives themselves to the ideas of communism- collective freedom and equality. Interestingly, Canetti understood that crowds have an emancipatory power as well. He says, that “rank, status, and property” are distances and distinctions imposed on people, which divide them. Further, he say that the “only together can men free themselves from their burden of distance, and this, precisely, is what happens in a crowd.”

From this quote it seems that Canetti would endorse a polity that was one big crowd. According to Canetti, men become equal and free in a crowd. Additionally, Canetti, I argue, believes in an idea forming crowds. Canetti has a conception of a sting, which exists after someone takes a command. It is its residual effect. Emily Shelden in her essay *The Evolution of the Theory of Crowds through the Analysis of Leaders*, points to a passage in Canetti that says,

> It is intended to make a crowd of them and, in as far as it succeeds in this, it does not arouse fear. The slogan of a demagogue, impelling people in a certain direction, has exactly the same function; it can be regarded as a command addressed to large numbers. From the point of view of the crowd, which wants to come into existence quickly and to maintain itself as a unit, such slogans are useful and indeed indispensable. The art of a speaker consists in compressing all his aims into slogans. By hammering them home he engenders a crowd and helps to keep it in existence. He creates the crowd and keeps it alive by a comprehensive command from above. Once he has achieved this it scarcely matters what he demands. A speaker can insult and threaten an assemblage of people in the most terrible way and they will still love him if, by doing so, he succeeds in forming them into a crowd.

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43 Canetti, 18.
44 Canetti, 306.
The passage Emily finds emphasizes the slogan that directs the people. The idea is common to all its members and all are subservient to act to its completion. Also, what is interesting about this passage is that people do not love the “speaker” because of the idea or slogan, but because “he succeeds in forming them into a crowd”. In this way, it seems that crowd members do not desire a leader or an idea, but rather its desire is to be part of a crowd. Remember, Canetti argues crowds make members equal. In this way, if the crowd desires to be part of a crowd, I infer the crowd desires equality and hence the collective’s interest.

Moreover, the political crowd aiming for justice always fights for equality by following the general will and examining its on equality amongst itself as a model for how the rest of society should function. The conservative political crowds, consisting of lynch mobs, are unjust political crowds because they do not strive for equality. Corey Robin In the Reactionary Mind describes conservative crowds as using the language of the left and reacting to the left. At the core of conservativism is the belief in hierarchy and order. Moreover, historically violence has been used to enforce these orders and hierarchies.46 “While, Conservatives are hostile to the goals of the left, particularly the empowerment of society’s lower castes and classes, they often are the left’s best students.”47 The conservative movement began during the French Revolution with the rise of Edmund Burke. They had essay contests like the left did and they changed their language to colorblindness in the 1960s.48

What is most important to us in Robin’s text is that conservatives are reactionary against events where there is “subordination to the superior race” as Barry Goldwater said about the Civil rights movement.49 Jeannet Kirkpatrick, as we

45 Canetti, 311.
47 Robin, 43.
48 Robin, 50.
shall see, paints a picture where lynch mob crowds were interested in maintaining racial hierarchy when whites felt that events were threatening that. Kirkpatrick describes lynch mobs as populist movements, which some argue are about upheaving hierarchy, mainly the state. Robin argues that right-wing populism was used as a way “to appeal to the mass without disrupting the power of elites”.  

He discussed how the elite allowed for poorer white men to rule over slaves so that their was a perceived equality but this was a way of dividing and dominating the working class. Moreover the ruling class “offered up racial domination as a way of harnessing the energy of the white masses”.

In “Uncivil Disobedience: Studies in Violence and Democratic”, Jennet Kirkpatrick argues that lynch mobs are acting in defiance to law because it does not match perfect morality. Lynch mobs are open crowds that formed most times for hierarchical issues. Kirkpatrick gives the example of a black man killing his boss with an ax when his boss shot at him with his rifle. The crowd, like many other crowds, took over the law. Using Badiou’s idea of the “inexistent”, the crowd, took justice into its own hands, by overtaking the jail. Many times, sheriffs were beaten up so the people could lynch the prisoner. Other times, jails were set on fire to force black prisoners outside. Kirkpatrick says Lynch mobs have a procedural critique about the laws being made by the elites. In other words, it was a populist movement. Also, lynch mobs have a honor critique of the law (e.g. raping someone takes away the rapists honor). “In either case, a procedural or honor critique tended to place ultimate power over the law in the hands of the people.”

In other words, the people voiced the opinion of the inexistent. Also, Kirkpatrick gives an example of a newspaper that lied

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49 Robin, 55.
50 Robin, 56.
51 Robin, 57.
52 Kirkpatrick, 75
53 Robin, 59.
54 Kirkpatrick, 74-76.
about a black man who killed his boss, claiming he also raped his wife, which was later found out to be false. In “The Soul’s of Black Folk: A Hundred Years Later” the author Shawn Smith reviews Du Bois conception of double-consciousness. Blacks have to negotiate the image of themselves created by a white dominated culture and their own ideas of themselves. Smith describes how this double consciousness was a means of social control. He says, “A Harper’s correspondent concurred: ‘in slavery Negroes learned how to obey, and obedience means self-control.’ Lamenting the demise of ‘discipline’ under slavery, the same writer proposed that ‘a substitute must be found’ to ensure the ‘mental and moral discipline’ of the African American.”

Lynch mobs were the new form of “mental and moral discipline”. This correlates with Robin’s idea of conservatism being reactionary to situations where the social order is being challenged. This is not just because it is not about equality.

The LA rebellion was much closer to striving for justice. The LA uprising broke down barriers between Latinos and blacks. Also, Bloods and Crips came together. There was a demand for equal treatment. Badiou discusses how Mao said that we must include everyone who is friends of the revolution. In this way, The LA uprising was about inequality. The issue is that the actions of all the members against some people were divisive. It did not recognize a duty to everyone- e.g. whites and Koreans. White truck drivers were beaten up, Koreans and Korean stores were targeted. The violence towards those that were not necessarily enemies of the revolution was critical in the crowds not being completely just. Although some Asian Americans, in particular, Korean Americans were petite bourgeois store owners, they were not the power elite. A divide between Asian Americans and other minority groups grew because of racism and perceived advantages given to Asian Americans. These divisive

56Smith, 195.
57Cover Action, 142.
parts of the riots created hierarchy, and consequently had conservative tendencies.

I argue Karl Polanyi’s analysis of political crowds, which formed during the wake of economic crisis after WWI demonstrates the same dimensions that lynch mobs and the LA riots show. Polanyi says, “If there was a political movement that responded to the needs of an objective situation and was not a result of fortuitous causes, it was fascism.”[59] Fascism like the conservative lynch mob responds to the problem of economic crises incorrectly by dividing the people and continuing the subordination of certain groups by racist policies or free market ideology.[60] The LA riots on the other hand, involved crowds that were fighting for equality like the socialist and liberal movements that Polanyi discusses. The future of these types of movement lies in the need to keep fighting for equality and the collective interest.

Conclusion

It has been demonstrated that crowds form in times of economic hardship. Food riots and lynchings are examples of this. The LA uprising was born in the wake of a recession and declining economic prospects for working class folk, while lynch mobs come together more often when declining wages and cotton inflation hurt whites’ economic prospects. Both of these political crowds are not limited to economic justice but are concerned about racial and overall justice in general. The LA crowds formed in the wake of violence and discrimination, and the lynch mobs are concerned about blacks breaking out of their subordinate position and being equal with their white counter parts.

[59]Polanyi, 245.
[60]Polanyi, 248.
Are these crowds striving for justice? The lynch mobs are definitely not striving for justice because they are not acting in accordance with the general will. The LA riots were less concerned with identitarian politics. Equality was the issue. If the LA uprising escaped the immediate riot phase and gained the power of the idea-communism- than they would have been completely striving for justice, and consequently, the collective interest. Rousseau describes the man dedicated to the collective interest and bounded by duty as having being an incredible realization about life. Rousseau says,

This passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces a most remarkable change in man, by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and giving his actions the morality they previously lacked. Only when the voice of duty succeeds physical impulse and right succeeds appetite does man, who had until then considered only himself, find himself compelled to act on different principles… Although in this state he denies himself several of the advantages he owes to nature, he gains others so great- his faculties are exercised and developed, his ideas are extended, his feelings are ennobled, his whole soul is so uplifted- tat if the abuses of this new condition did not often degrade him beneath the condition from which he emerged, he would constantly have to bless the happy moment that tore him away from it forever, and made a stupid and shortsighted animal into an intelligent being and a man.61

In this way, man gains an enlightened state from his duty to the collective. For this reason, I argue that a political society shaped with the egalitarian form of a crowd demonstrates utilitarian justice.

61Rousseau, 95.
WHAT LEADS THE CROWD?
Chapter 5

The Power of the Leading Idea in Crowd Theory:
An Analysis of Occupy Wall Street
“You cannot evict an Idea”¹

Emily A. Shelden

Introduction

Crowd formation has always been present in human history, what has evolved, however, is the theoretical analysis of crowds. From mindless hypnosis to political activism, theorists have argued varying perspectives on the effectiveness of crowds in achieving a goal. Crowds today reflect the power of the masses and the non-essential role of a leader for an effective crowd. Specifically, Occupy Wall Street is an excellent example of this type of crowd. Occupy Wall Street does not have a physical leader or individual person one can point to as the head of the crowd. Instead, the movement is led by ideas, or ideals of a better future. Fundamental to this phenomenon is the act of rejecting unjust hegemonic power structures.

Preliminary crowd theory, such as accounts by Freud and Le Bon, are insufficient to explain the efficiency and power of these current examples of crowds without the presence of a physical individual or leader. The incredible power of an idea to unite and unify a crowd has yet to be fully understood; Elias Canetti, author of *Crowds and Power*, explores the dynamics of this power.² Through an analysis of current perspectives of

Occupy Wall Street in the context of Elias Canetti’s theoretical framework, a clearer and more nuanced understanding of power can be found, as well as the necessity of crowds to evoke change in hegemonic power structures.

The Evolution of Crowd Theory

Gustave Le Bon is one of the most prominent initial theorists of crowds. In 1895, he wrote *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* which explores the changes which occur in the mentality of an individual in isolation when they become an individual within a crowd.³ “The fact that they have been transformed into a crowd puts them in possession of a sort of collective mind which makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from this in which each individual of them would feel, think and act were he in a state of isolation.”⁴ Characteristics of a crowd, as outlined by Le Bon, are that they are quick to act, powerful, destructive, impulsive, incapable of reason, and that they exaggerate emotion. Le Bon’s understanding of the crowd is rooted in his understanding of human nature. He argues that individuals in this state of crowd mentality revert to their unconscious, in a state of hypnosis. Within this state of nature into which crowds enter, a leader emerges. “As soon as a certain number of living beings are gathered together, whether they be animals or men, they place themselves instinctively under the authority of a chief.”⁵ Le Bon argues that a crowd is merely a representation of the illusions or suggestions of an individual, the leader of the crowd.⁶ Not only is the leader natural, it is necessary in order for the crowd to exist, for Le Bon. “A crowd is a servile flock that is incapable of ever doing without a master.”⁷

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⁴Le Bon, 4.
⁵Le Bon, 72.
⁶Le Bon, 19.
perspective for the study of crowds, one which will be cited, critiqued and examined for over a century.

Sigmund Freud echoes many of Le Bon’s sentiments in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* yet pushes the idea and reason for a leader in groups further. Freud employs the word ‘group’ which is essentially the same as ‘crowd’ as used by Le Bon. Freud quite clearly agrees with Le Bon in his characterization of crowds: lack of independence and initiative in their members, the similarity in the reactions of all of them, the weakness of intellectual ability, the lack of emotional restraint, the incapacity for moderation of delay, the inclination to exceed every limit in the expression of emotion. At the crux of Freud’s argument is the idea that the crowd is not merely a collection of people, but a psychological connection and the formation of libidinal ties between people. These emotional bonds allow individuals to identify with each other by means of a similar love for the same object. “A primary group of this kind is a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego.” These libidinal ties are formed between group members on the basis of mutual identification with the same object. Individuals in a group give up their ego ideal and substitute for it the group ideal as embodied by the leader. This leader is the object that solidifies the group and keeps the members of the group connected. Freud provides a much more rigorous argument for the necessity of a leader for a group than Le Bon. Freud’s understanding of the role of leaders is also grounded in his understanding of human nature. What is unclear, however, is why the object that replaces the ego ideal

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7Le Bon, 19.
9Freud, 3.
10Freud, 62.
11Freud, 61.
12Freud, 69-70.
needs to be an individual, a person. This leads to my exploration of the ego ideal as a leading idea, instead of a person.

Another interesting aspect of leaders that Freud brings to the discussion of crowds is the position of the leader outside the crowd. Individuals in a group need the illusion of love from the leader in order to substitute the leader for their ego ideal. The leader, however, does not need these libidinal ties.

The members of the group were subject to ties just as we see them to-day, but the father of the primal horde was free. His intellectual acts were strong and independent even in isolation, and his will needed no reinforcement from others. Consistency leads us to assume that his ego had few libidinal ties; he loved no one but himself, or other people only in so far as they served his needs. To objects his ego gave away no more than was barely necessary.¹³

Le Bon’s metaphor of crowds in a state of hypnosis can be connected to this. Freud describes the leader as the hypnotist in terms of the love received from one’s mother and the fear of one’s father. When a hypnotist gives the command to sleep, he is putting himself in the soothing and coaxing place of the individual’s mother, but the power he possesses to rob the individual of his will is the threatening power derived from one’s father.¹⁴ This leads to the discussion of suggestibility, which Freud defines as a conviction that is not based upon perception and reasoning but upon an erotic tie¹⁵ which is grounded in Freud’s understanding of human nature and the totemic family structure. This fits with Le Bon’s understanding of suggestion and the group’s extreme passion for authority and thirst for obedience. Just as a child cannot survive without his or her parents, a group cannot function without a leader.

¹³Freud, 71.
¹⁴Freud, 73-5.
¹⁵Freud, 77.
Interestingly, however, Le Bon states that a leader has most often started as one of the led. “He has himself been hypnotized by the idea, whose apostle he has since become.” Consequently, the question arises, from where does the initial leader come? Freud argues that the leader is outside the crowd, devoid of libidinal ties that are a necessary characteristic of crowds, whereas Le Bon argues that a leader arises from within a crowd. This contradiction is present partly due to the fact that both Le Bon and Freud are not directly interested in crowd formation but more so the psychological attributes of a crowd in a present state. Quite apparent is the lack of an individual leader of Occupy Wall Street. How, then, can the efficiency and power of these leaderless crowds be explained?

Elias Canetti provides a provocative analysis of the crowd in his book titled *Crowds and Power*. The style of his writing is interesting to note because he writes as though he is above or outside, observing humankind, giving himself power to appear omniscient and impartial. Originally published in 1960, Canetti’s account of the role of the leader in a crowd reflects a different understanding of human nature, the psychological effect of crowds and the manner in which power is obtained. The power of a leader comes from his ability to create a crowd. A crowd forms naturally, according to Canetti, as individuals seek security and the diffusion of stings. Canetti has a lengthy discussion of stings which, on the most basic level, are the “secret power” of a command. Always from the outside, commands are a symbol of power and something recognized as stronger than ourselves. The sting forms during the carrying out of the command. “However deep it may lie hidden, however incapsulated, it always remains a burden.” The only way to dissolve stings is to form a crowd. The crowd forms to reverse the stings, by targeting the one (or group) who gave the commands. An interesting connection to Freud’s foundation of family structure,

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16 Le Bon, 72.
17 Canetti, 303-6.
18 Canetti, 327.
19 Canetti, 328.
Canetti describes the command as “part of our general social structure and also of all the more intimate human relationships.”

The command addressed to a large number of people is distinct from this domestication of commands. Canetti describes them; commands to a large group have a very special character:

It is intended to make a crowd of them and, in as far as it succeeds in this, it does not arouse fear. The slogan of a demagogue, impelling people in a certain direction, has exactly the same function; it can be regarded as a command addressed to large numbers. From the point of view of the crowd, which wants to come into existence quickly and to maintain itself as a unit, such slogans are useful and indeed indispensable. The art of a speaker consists in compressing all his aims into slogans. By hammering them home he engenders a crowd and helps to keep it in existence. He creates the crowd and keeps it alive by a comprehensive command from above.

This text is immensely important in separating Canetti from previous theorists whom I have discussed. In this account, Canetti is arguing the importance and power of the command, and less so the leader. It is the slogan of the demagogue that impels individuals in a certain direction, not the leader per se. The leader, for Canetti, is not necessary, but a common idea or slogan is. The leader may symbolize the slogan or command, but to inject Canetti into Freud’s logic, it is the slogan that replaces the ego ideal, not necessarily the leader. The slogan, or command, or leading idea is what shapes the crowd, maintains its bonds and directs the crowd. “Within a crowd all are equal; no one has a right to give commands to anyone else; or, one might say, everyone gives commands to everyone.”

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20 Canetti, 307.
21 Canetti, 311.
22 Canetti, 324.
person chooses to obey a command. Within a crowd, an individual gives commands to everyone, thereby diffusing stings and identifying with others in the crowd. In other words, crowds create equality and break down hegemonic power which is the sting of a command. This is done through the connection between individuals and commands, not with the connection to the leader. This will be discussed further at a latter point in this essay in relation to Occupy Wall Street.

Crowd formation has always been present in human history, what has evolved; however, is the discussion regarding crowds. From mindless hypnosis to political activism, theorists have argued varying perspectives on the effectiveness of crowds to achieve a goal. From Le Bon and Freud, the understanding of a leader as an individual person is evident, but Elias Canetti argues that an idea can lead a crowd as effectively as a person. Occupy Wall Street is a strong example of not only the political importance of being a leaderless crowd, but also the effectiveness of the procedures and processes that result from the leaderlessness nature of the crowd. Occupy Wall Street illustrates the power of a leading idea and the behavior of a crowd resulting from a shared idea.

**Crowd Representation**

In this section I will discuss current understandings of the representation of crowds, specifically Occupy Wall Street. Although there is tension in this area of scholarly work, both sides of the argument regarding whether Occupy Wall Street is non-representational or post-representational support my hypothesis of the power of a leading idea.

Elias Canetti argues that individuals often see themselves as connected to the nation to which they belong. The idea of the national identity is powerful enough to create a sense of crowd mentality, especially during times of war. “Every member of a nation always sees himself, or his picture of himself, in a fixed relationship to the particular symbol which has become the most important for his nation.” For example, for the English, the
common representation of the nation is the sea. Canetti argues that an Englishman sees himself as a captain on board a ship, commanding and ruling the sea. Other examples Canetti provides is for Germans: the marching army, French: the Revolution, and for Spaniards: a matador. The importance of these crowd symbols is not only what they represent, but the manner in which they unify the people of the nation. This representation is what gives the nation a crowd-like feeling. Each citizen of a nation is united by the idea of nationalism as evoked in these national symbols. Similarly, individuals in a crowd are united by a common idea. Other crowd symbols Canetti discusses, not specifically tied to nations, are the Swastika, money, as well as natural crowd symbols, such as fire, rivers, and forests. All of these symbols either point to attributes of a crowd that is not made up of men, but are representative of crowd behavior and the unification of individuals within a crowd.

Some scholars argue that Occupy Wall Street cannot be represented by a single, unifying image, but can be represented by a collective action inspired by a leading idea. This collective idea can be the symbol of the crowd. One such scholar is W.J.T. Mitchell in his article, “Image, Space, Revolution: The Arts of Occupation”. In this article, Mitchell reflects on the possibility of a unifying image of the Occupy Wall Street and asks if connections can be made between Occupy and the revolutions of the Arab Spring. He specifically asking the question, “Is there any single image that captures, and perhaps even motivated the widely noted, synergy and infectious mimicry between Tahrir Square and Zuccotti Park?” Although he notes the dramatically different nature of Occupy and the revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East, it is the clear and decisive act of occupying a space that unites these mass movements. He argues there is not

23Canetti, 170-1.
24Canetti, 171.
26Mitchell, 2.

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one single image, but the act of self-defining ones’ space which redefines and characterizes these movements.

Mitchell points to the negative space, or ground, on which the figures of the 2011 revolutions appear. This is characterized by the refusal of Occupy Wall Street to make any specific demands; they are making a statement simply by their presence. “This strategic refusal is displayed in a number of familiar tactics: the silent vigil performed, for instance, by Buddhist contingents that sometimes accompany Occupy; the wearing of gags or tape over the mouth to visibly perform the suppression of free speech and assembly; the mic check tactic, which both amplifies speech and exposes its curtailment by police forces that prohibit the use of amplification.27 Besides being a result of the leaderless nature of the movement, these procedures contribute to the enforced equality of the movement. For example, the individuals in the bottom 99% are seen as all the same in their shared separation from the top 1%. The members that stand as the 99%, could be from any class or socio-economic background, however, as long as they are not part of the top 1%. In the collective idea that “they” are different than “us”, the 99% identity is created. Additionally, in the act of occupying a space that was not necessarily theirs to occupy (the financial district of NYC), the sense of collectivity is found in unified action within a common space. Although the image to the right may be used to symbolize Occupy Wall Street, it represents the action, not an individual protestor or leader, per se.

The actions of spatial invasion have been argued as representational of Occupy Wall Street. “The word occupation took on a new meaning: the reclaiming of public space by masses of disenfranchised people, the peaceful, nonviolent seizure of places in an effort to provide a new beginning, a foundational space for justice, democracy, and equality.”28 The “movements” of 2011, were actually the refusal to move, the rejection of current social and political hierarchy and the act of standing up. The individuals that gathered in Zuccotti Park declared their

27 Mitchell, 5.
28 Mitchell, 6.
social and political existence by simply interrupting normal New York City life. By being present, the 99% declared their presence. Characterized by Canetti: “When someone gets up from a sitting or lying position his standing is the result of a specific effort by which he makes himself as tall as he possibly can… The contrast between lying and standing is so great that there is always a temptation to startle others by switching suddenly from the one position to the other.”

The refusal to accept hegemonic power structures is what motivated, or led, the people of the movements to stand up and assert their being. An individual may encourage, motivate, or persuade another to stand up, but it must be their choice to stand.

Representation of the crowd inherently has political consequences. Jodi Dean and Jason Jones argue that Occupy Wall Street is creating a new political framework in which to operate by denying hegemonic systems and inventing a new space for the common. In their article, “Occupy Wall Street and the Politics of Representation,” they discuss the motives, process, and meaning of Occupy Wall Street and the creation of a new form of political representation. Although discussing a different type of representation (political representation of the people instead of representation of the crowd itself) the political consequences remain the same. Dean and Jones dispel the argument that Occupy is post- or anti-representation by asserting that Occupy represents the unjust division between the top 1% and the bottom 99% of society. Occupy is not dispelling institutions, practices or divisions, it is reinventing them and offering a new political framework in which to operate. Dean and Jones argue this through examples of methods and tactics of Occupy. “In Occupy, political representation isn’t that of persons aggregated according to boundaries and procedures inscribed by the state. It is that of wills mobilized in terms of the antagonism between the people and those who would exploit and control

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29 Canetti, 388-91.
them.”31 The authority of the movement comes from the choice of the people, not as a result of an individual leader.

The Occupy movement is explicitly incompatible with a single leader. Instead, the idea of creating a new form of political discourse is what motivates and leads the mass. Slavoj Zizek identifies these two insights that Occupy Wall Street offers: “1.) The contemporary popular discontent is with capitalism as a system – the problem is the system as such, not any particular corrupt form of it; 2.) The contemporary form of representative multi-party democracy is incapable of dealing with capitalist excesses; in other words, that democracy has to be reinvented.”32 Occupy Wall Street offers the possibility, maybe the obligation, to imagine a change in unjust hegemonic structures.

The tactics of Occupy Wall Street direct the movement as much as the movement directs the tactics. The choice to refuse to make any specific demands or take scripted action, the method of speaking through the people, and the conscious decision to be leaderless combine to show that Occupy formally rejects the political framework in which the mass is forced to operate. “In the psychoanalytic sense, the protestors are indeed hysterical actors, provoking the master, undermining his authority; and the question with which they were constantly bombarded, “But what do you want?” aims precisely at precluding the true answer – its point is: “Say it in my terms or shut up!”33 Occupy is the rejection of political and economic hierarchies which misrepresent the bottom 99% of the people. By being explicitly leaderless, Occupy Wall Street is creating a new discourse and a reinvented representation of the people from the ground up. “To present the disagreements simultaneously constituting and rupturing Occupy as fundamentally concerned with representation is already to politicize them, to direct them in one way rather than another, for the question of representation has been distorted to the point of becoming virtually impossible to

31 Dean and Jones.
33 Zizek, 83-4.
ask.”  

34 Occupy Wall Street is creating a new political discourse in which to operate. Problematic, however, is that the group of protestors in Zuccotti Park can never fully represent the 99%. If the goal is for every individual to speak for themselves and only for themselves, the political atmosphere, institutions, practices would have to be radically different. “How can we institutionalize collective decision-making beyond the framework of the democratic multi-party system?”  

35 As will be discussed latter in this essay, perhaps a historical riot, in Alain Badiou’s terms, is necessary.

Another article, “Occupy: The Name in Common”, by Not An Alternative, echoes this argument of recreating space and political discourse.  

36 The author of this article points out that the purpose of the indefinability of Occupy Wall Street or the extreme commitment to their procedures and leaderlessness, misses the point. The author states, “It’s rather that Occupy is defined in the fight over its meaning.”  

37 It is the action of the crowd, not an object or individual, which characterizes, represents and leads the crowd. “More than any other aspect of the movement, Occupy’s name lives on. People all over the world speak, write and organize in the name of Occupy Wall Street”.

38 The global nature of Occupy highlights the power of the idea. It is not about the individuals, the motive, the location, the trigger, etc. The power of the idea of redefining and reclaiming one’s political space is an infectious idea which creates something of a global crowd. Additionally, it is not only the global power of Occupy, but also the life of the movement that continues, even after the individuals gathered in Zuccotti Park were evicted.

Occupy became more than its process as soon as the idea of “occupy” was co-opted in other spaces and spread to other parts of the world. Occupy is the name in common for our common struggle. “We are alive not because we agree but

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34 Dean and Jones.  
35 Zizek, 89.  
36 Not an Alternative.  
37 Not an Alternative.  
38 Not an Alternative.
because we struggle over our common name.”

Occupy is not about the process or the indefinability; “Occupy is defined in the fight over its meaning.” It has nothing to do with an individual person; if there was a leader, he or she could articulate the purpose of the movement, removing all power of defining the movement as a collective. It is the act of standing and saying we are fighting in a unified struggle which gives Occupy its meaning and power. These ideas spread throughout the world because of the ability to translate the act and idea of standing up against injustice and redefining one’s political representation for oneself on a global scale. An idea may be more powerful in connecting individuals than a specific leader because all can identify with an idea, it is more easily spread, shaped and applied across cultural boundaries. Although it may be regrettable, an individuals’ culture, dress, skin color, eye shape, language, historical background can all be dividing factors in today’s global context. An idea is much less likely to have cultural discriminating possibilities. An idea can be shaped to any context, for one’s own political purposes. Occupy Wall Street is as meaningful and unifying in New York City as it is in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and other places throughout the world.

Whether Occupy Wall Street can be represented by a single image, a unifying idea/action or is creating a new political framework which is post-representational, the power of an idea is evident. Both the politics of representation of the individual and the representation of the crowd have political consequences. It is clear that Occupy cannot be led by an individual for ideological and political purposes. The argument regarding the idea that can lead the crowd will be explored further in the following section.

The Power of a Leading Idea

For an individual, whom Canetti calls survivor, the most unquestioned and therefore the most dangerous thing he does is to give commands. Canetti asserts that the command a
“suspended death sentence”.\textsuperscript{42} Strict and effective systems of commands permeate every person and every interaction between people. The only way to master power, according to Canetti, is to deprive the command of its sting, through the formation of a crowd.\textsuperscript{43} Alain Badiou, author of \textit{The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings}\textsuperscript{44} would agree with Canetti in his argument that political truths are uncovered during times of riots. Badiou characterizes crowds into immediate, latent, and historical riots, focusing his study on the latter. Historical riots, according to Badiou, have three requirements: a transition from limited localization to central universal location, extension by imitation or desire to qualitative extension and a unified site, and thirdly, the goal must be decided as a slogan.\textsuperscript{45} All three of these attributes of crowds can be seen in Occupy Wall Street. Le Bon and Freud characterize the crowd as dangerous, destructive, and violent, and Badiou would agree. Badiou also argues, however, that a crowd has the ability to become more than a riot, it can become a historical political movement to change the existing order, marking a rebirth of history.

Canetti’s account of dissolving the stings of commands and breaking down hegemonic power structures through crowd formation can provide a more comprehensive understanding of Badiou’s historical riot. Even though Badiou does not provide specific theoretical claims about attributes of a crowd, it is evident that a leader is not as necessary as a leading idea or goal. As long as there is a unifying objective with which all members of the riot can identify, the bonds of the crowd are formed. “The only possible reawakening is the popular initiative in which the power of an Idea will take root”.\textsuperscript{46} This Idea is an “ideological proposal…a pivotal hypothesis” that can spark a mass movement

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\textsuperscript{41}Canetti, 469.
\textsuperscript{42}Canetti, 469.
\textsuperscript{43}Canetti, 470.
\textsuperscript{44}Alain Badiou. \textit{The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings}. (New York: Verso, 2012).
\textsuperscript{45}Badiou, 33-5.
\textsuperscript{46}Badiou, 15.
\end{flushright}
for a change in political organization. A unifying notion of a political change in hegemonic power structures is an example of an Idea. This Idea is what unifies and leads the crowd. The core of Badiou’s argument is the power of the Idea, the political truth that only emerges at the edge of a historical riot. “A political truth is a series of consequences, organized on the condition of an Idea, a massive popular event, in which intensification, contradiction and localization replace an identitarian object, and the separating names bound up with it, with a real presentation of the generic power of the multiple.”

This generic power of the multiple is the dissolution of the sting of commands as argued by Canetti as he calls it in a reversal crowd. “The individuals who form the rebellious crowd have for long years been kept at a distance, forcing their way into the palace which was formerly forbidden them.” This notion is paralleled in Badiou’s description of the inexistent becoming existent, the power of the crowd, for Canetti, is the rejection of the secret power of the command, and the hegemonic structures, such as addressing the economic division of power between the top 1% and the bottom 99%.

Canetti briefly addresses political riots in his discussion of commands. “The individuals who form the rebellious crowd have for long years been kept at a distance by threats and their obedience enforced by sanctions. Now, by a kind of unwinding process, they obliterate this distance, forcing their way into the palace which was formerly forbidden them.” In this process of unwinding, the stings are dissolved, and the political truth emerges. If this fails, however, and the riot is not successful, people do not get rid of their stings. “They none the less remember the time they were a crowd. For that period at any rate they were free of stings and so will always look back to it with

47Badiou, 42.
48Badiou, 85.
49Canetti, 328.
50Canetti, 329.
51Badiou, 56.
52Canetti, 329.
nostalgia. The success of Occupy Wall Street in bringing actual change in hegemonic structures and breaking down the stings of the commands from unjust dictatorships or economic systems requires further study and the passage of time.

Ariella Azouley presents an interesting argument that provides a better foundation for understanding Canetti’s discussion of the act of giving commands and the dissolution of stings. In her article, “The Language of Revolution - Tidings from the East,” she argues that a revolution is a civil language that is separate and different from the sovereign power. She argues that a civil language should be able to thoroughly change the hegemonic political discourse and undermine the opposition that organizes it. Although her article specifically discusses the Arab Spring, connections can easily be made in the importance of language in Occupy Wall Street. The occupation of Zuccotti Park by the “99%” is a message to the “1%” that they will refuse to be forgotten and undermined. It is a refusal of the current hegemonic power structures that are so clearly intertwined with finance and the politics of Wall Street. This can be directly related to Canetti’s discussion of the Sting and the Command, resulting in the necessity of crowd members to rid themselves of stings and break down the hegemonic power which is giving them commands.

For Azouley, a revolution is a communication between people and the power which is controlling them, whether it is an unjust dictator or an unjust institution that is keeping the people in poverty and without power. “The inherent exclusion of certain populations from the political space in democratic regimes is related to constructing the revolution as a limited event, a temporary matter, an interim phase, a transition on the way to establishing a new regime.” Similarly, Badiou’s thesis

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53 Canetti, 329.
55 Azoulay.
concluded in the transition from a historical riot to the uncovering of political truths and the breaking down of current hegemonic power structures. What is interesting to note is that a riot is not a single event, devoid of contextual background. It is simply part of a dialog during a historical transition to reach the unifying idea which is leading the crowd. Whether or not Occupy Wall Street has been successful in this dialog between the collective and those in power, marking a historical political movement to change the existing order, a rebirth of history, requires further study as well as time.

A Return to Freud

As discussed previously, Sigmund Freud advanced crowd theory by introducing and analyzing the psychology of crowds. A key point in Freud’s argument is that the crowd is not merely a collection of people, but a psychological connection and the formation of libidinal ties between people. These emotional bonds allow individuals to identify with each other by means of a similar love or identification for the same object. Individuals in a group give up their ego ideal and substitute for it the group ideal as embodied by the leader. This leader is the object that solidifies the group and keeps the members of the group connected. What is unclear, however, is why the object that replaces the ego ideal needs to be an individual, a person.

As expressed throughout this essay, a powerful idea can unify a group of individuals possibly closer than an individual leader can. Ideas can cross international borders, can be spread more quickly with the use of social media, and are malleable to appeal to a greater audience. The hope of a better future is an incredibly powerful idea, as Zizek expresses, “all we can be certain of is that the existing system cannot reproduce itself indefinitely.”

Subtle connections can be found between Canetti’s discussion of the power of stings and Freud’s concept of prestige,  

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56 Freud, 69-70.  
57 Zizek, 134.
highlighting the underlying and understated power of an idea. “Prestige is a sort of domination exercised over us by an individual, a work or an idea.”\textsuperscript{58} Freud describes this domination as a feeling of fascination in hypnosis, or the operation of some magnetic magic.\textsuperscript{59} Although an idea, the hope of a better future or the disruption hegemonic structures, must be consciously sought after, the immeasurable power it has to unite a crowd on a psychological level is irrefutable. Freud argues the idea has domination over the individual. I argue, however, that a powerful idea unifies and leads a crowd in seeking to break down unjust dominant political structures. The resulting conclusion is that an individual person is not an essential requirement to unify and lead a crowd as Freud and others have argued.

Freud comments on the lack of attention paid to the subject of leaderless groups and those with leaders.\textsuperscript{60} He discusses the church and the army as artificial groups because they both have an external force which keeps them together. Both of these groups have a head (in the Catholic Church, Christ, and in the army, the Commander-in-Chief).\textsuperscript{61} This external force, the leader, is what keeps these groups together; it is also what makes these groups artificial. The lack of libidinal ties in an army, just the act of command and obey between the army official and soldier, seems to be not merely a theoretical omission, Freud argues, but a practical danger.\textsuperscript{62} Freud uses the “unpsychological nature” of the Prussian military in the First World War to support his claim that the army is an artificial crowd. A libidinal tie and a collective replacement of the ego ideal is a necessary characteristic of a crowd that is not artificial. I would extend Freud’s argument to include the ability to form a libidinal tie to an idea. I see it possible and likely that an individual could replace their ego ideal with an idea, and not necessarily a person as Freud argues. By multiple individuals

\textsuperscript{58}Freud, 18.
\textsuperscript{59}Freud, 18.
\textsuperscript{60}Freud, 32.
\textsuperscript{61}Freud, 33.
\textsuperscript{62}Freud, 34.
replacing their ego ideal with the same idea, a crowd is formed, united, and directed.

Freud argues that the individual gives up his ego ideal and substitutes for it the group ideal as embodied in the leader.\textsuperscript{63} I argue, however, that the group ideal can be embodied in a collective idea. In this connection with the collective idea, the individuals can identify with each other to form a crowd. In Occupy Wall Street individuals acted in such a way that they would not have if they had not been within the crowd. This formation of the crowd was based on a collective rejection of hegemonic power structures, whether economic or political, or both. Occupy Wall Street was explicitly and consciously leaderless; maintaining and propelling these crowds was the power of the collective idea.

Crowd theory has evolved considerably since Le Bon’s publication of The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind in 1895. Although this essay has only explored the aspect of the leader in relation to the crowd, Elias Canetti’s thorough theoretical framework can smoothly be employed to further our understanding of contemporary conflicts. This essay has examined, contrasted and discussed current scholarly work on Occupy Wall Street. Although there are tensions and disagreements, as there should be, what is evident throughout is the leaderless nature of this movement and the effectiveness and power resulting from the structure of the crowd. Yet to be determined, however, is the success of this movement. Although time will tell, Zizek argues that these are signs of the future of the Communist Idea,\textsuperscript{64} although the future is, of course, unknown. We must wait and see if the stings, as characterized by Canetti, were dissolved or if the people will remember the time when they were a crowd with nostalgia, for during that period, they were free of stings.\textsuperscript{65} All is not lost, however, with the miscarriage of a revolt. There is scarcely any place where commands do not reach and none of us they do not mark.\textsuperscript{66} “If we would master

\textsuperscript{63}Freud, 79.
\textsuperscript{64}Zizek, 128.
\textsuperscript{65}Canetti, 329.
power we must face command openly and boldly, and search for means to deprive it of its sting.”

The command is always present; the only way to heal the wounds of the command is to be ever vigilant in the act to dissolve the sting, by forming emotional bonds with our fellow man.

66 Canetti, 470.
67 Canetti, 470.
Chapter 6

Mao’s Leadership &
The Cultural Revolution

William M. Swenson Jr.

Introduction

China’s population has been described as ‘a mere plurality without individuality, a passive reservoir of labor power awaiting orders from an imperial throne.’¹ In Crowds, Huan Saussy considers crowds to be an essential part of Chinese society, dating back well into antiquity. The twentieth century proved to be no different after the ascent to power by Mao Zedong and the CCP in 1949. Mao’s leadership and commitment to his ideals endeared him to the people of China. Mao’s popularity grew as he convinced people that they all shared the same revolutionary ideals as explained by Alain Badiou in The Communist Hypothesis. The “struggle against revisionism” that took place during the Cultural Revolution was incited by Mao with the intent to create a new sort of politics that did not correspond with the structure of the party-state relationship that had developed in the years after the Great Leap Forward.²

The goal of my research is to use Alain Badiou’s contributions to crowd theory to explain the effectiveness of Mao as a leader during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. After the catastrophe that was the Great Leap Forward, Mao needed to

reestablish himself as a credible leader and he needed a way to purify the CCP to return it to its Marxist ideological roots. This purification can be seen both practically and philosophically. Mao aimed to keep China and the CCP true to their communist ideology by using a combination of rhetoric and policy to empower those groups that were ignored or slighted under the revisionist policies. Perhaps most significant amongst these new policies was the Sixteen Points. Chiefly important in the Sixteen Points was the impunity which was given to the revolutionary youth.³ The Cultural Revolution’s goal of remaining true to their origins can be explained by Badiou’s concept of an ‘Idea.’ The idea in this paradigm is the Idea of communism.

Before going any further, it should be noted that Badiou often does not use the term ‘crowd’ in his work. Nevertheless, much of what he writes about is relevant to understanding crowds. For example, what Badiou labels a ‘riot’ in The Rebirth of History, is seemingly synonymous with what is described by a crowd; he just has a different set of terms. What I want to highlight here is that the relevant crowd in my research is the revolutionary Chinese population, and then more specifically, groups like the Red Guards that were under the influence of Mao during the Cultural Revolution. This research focuses on the revolutionary crowds during the Cultural Revolution and how they are influenced and affected by their leaders, namely Mao Zedong. The Cultural Revolution highlights the effectiveness of an Idea in the success of a leader implementing political change.

**Badiou’s Concept of an ‘Idea’**

The basis for my research rests on Alain Badiou’s concepts of an ‘Idea’ and the ‘historical riot.’ Badiou, in The Idea of Communism, defines an idea as “the subjektivation of an interplay between the singularity of a truth procedure and a representation of history.”⁴ Badiou’s argument rests on the belief

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³ Badiou, The Communist Hypothesis. 122.
that history is a socially constructed concept, and contains a biased viewpoint that aims to keep a hierarchy. The ‘truth procedure’ that Badiou speaks of refers to how the political truth, in this case communism, is embodied in the population or in the crowd. Badiou explains, “every truth procedure prescribes a Subject of this truth, a Subject who—even empirically—cannot be reduced to an individual.”

To put it in more simple terms, a truth procedure is what synthesizes the individual into a crowd, not necessarily physical in nature, but a crowd that shares the same idea.

An idea is important to a political movement for many reasons, but it is mainly the fact that the idea is the bond that brings individuals together to form a larger entity that is most important. The idea is subjectivized, or embodied, in the individual when that person has the will to move past their individualistic nature and be part of the political truth that is the idea. Badiou explains this concept succinctly when he says:

This is the moment when an individual declared that he or she can go beyond the bounds (of selfishness, competition, finitude…) set by individualism (or animality—they’re one and the same thing). He or she can do so to the extent that, while remaining the individual that he or she is, he or she can also become, through incorporation, and active part of a new Subject. I call this decision, this will, a subjectivation. More generally speaking, a subjectivation is always the process whereby an individual determines the place of a truth with respect to his or her own vital existence and to the world in which this existence is lived out.”

Of particular importance in that passage, it should be noted, is the last sentence. In this sentence, Badiou highlights the point at

which we can recognize the Idea becoming embodied in the individual so steadfastly that they represent the Idea to a point where the Idea, as Badiou says, “cannot be reduced to an individual.” We will see repeated examples of this in the crowds that publicly humiliated officials deemed to be complicit with the revisionists. On one hand, the crowd carrying out the public humiliation, in the name of the Idea, undertakes these actions in a public display of the rejection of the inequality created by, or wrongdoing committed by the official in question. On the other hand, as acknowledged by Mao, many of those CCP officials persecuted for their actions were capable of recommitting themselves to the Idea and to a new form of egalitarian politics.

Badiou and his concept of an Idea are relevant in many different scenarios, however my research focuses on applying it to China and the Cultural Revolution, led by Mao, which took place between 1966 and 1976. My contention is that by maintaining an Idea—that is to say, making the Chinese people believe Mao and his policies were in the best interest for all because of their egalitarian nature—Mao and the CCP were able to remain effective in their control of the Chinese people.

The Context of The Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution is important because it presents a paradigm for explaining and understanding Badiou’s concept of an Idea and furthermore, its importance for Mao to maintain his credibility as leader. Before moving on to the specifics of the Cultural Revolution, it is important to understand the context from which it came. After the CCP’s victory over the Kuomintang in the Chinese Civil War, and the first five-year plan, Mao continued to encourage grassroots socialism by implementing it in The Great Leap Forward.

Simply put, The Great Leap Forward was a black-eye for Mao. While Mao had reorganized the Chinese economy to follow his vision of an egalitarian society, it failed to take into

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account many factors, especially the strain that economic reorganization and urbanization would put on the agricultural system in China. The result was a famine in the countryside resulting in millions of deaths. The most widely demonized policies were the ‘backyard furnaces’ and the relocation of a large portion of the Chinese youth to the interior, more agriculturally centered, areas of the country.\(^9\) Mao was heavily criticized from within the CCP and was blamed for the famine and economic chaos that accompanied the Great Leap Forward. Subsequently, Mao was forced to resign as State Chairman that was accompanied by a strong hit to his reputation.

In the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward, the CCP began moving away from some of the more strict socialist policies.\(^10\) These changes, implemented by the group Mao would label ‘revisionists,’ attempted to fix the shortcomings of Mao’s policies. In particular, the revisionists wanted to continue the industrialization of China, but where they split with Mao was over how to organize it. Mao aimed to create an egalitarian society where all citizens would benefit equally from the output of the entire country. In the years between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, with Mao taking a backseat to the revisionists, China moved further and further from Mao’s vision. The disparity between the elites in China and the commoners had grown increasingly larger. The industrialization of China also made the coastal areas of China substantially wealthier than those areas located further inland. To Mao, communism was beginning to be replaced by favoritism. Schools had become places where communist teachings and policies were questioned and disregarded. For Mao, this was unacceptable, and the Cultural Revolution would have its beginnings in academic institutions which became especially noticeable by 1968 when hundreds of thousands of workers flooded the University of Beijing.\(^11\)


\(^10\) Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, 105-106.

The Cultural Revolution came about in response to Mao’s feeling that the spirit communism that championed by the success of the CCP in the Chinese Civil War had begun to diminish. Mao believed that the revolution was intended to be continuous and should involve constantly reassessing the party’s adherence to the ideals implemented by Mao and the CCP. These ideals, as a whole, can be understood to be the ‘idea,’ as articulated by Badiou. Mao’s desire to remain true to this idea of communism is what ultimately led to the Cultural Revolution.

The Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution refers to a period between 1966 and 1976, however, as many scholars have noted, the effectiveness of the Cultural Revolution after 1970 began to diminish. Most of the violence and purges took place in these early years, from about May of 1966, until late 1969 or early 1970. After 1970, Mao remained in power, but between 1970 and Mao’s death in 1976, most of Mao’s opposition figured it would be better to keep quiet and bide their time instead of rock the boat and risk reprisals from Mao or his followers. Alain Badiou has a similar view on the time frame of the Cultural Revolution, but is willing to narrow the dates further when he says, “the Cultural Revolution, in this conception, forms a sequence that runs from November 1965 to July 1968.” Furthermore, Badiou continues, “I can even accept (this is a matter of political technique) a drastic reduction, which would situate the revolutionary moment properly speaking between May 1966 and September 1967.”

After the failure of The Great Leap Forward, Mao, in order to regain his status as guardian of the revolution and its

14 Xiuyuan, 533-540.
Mao’s leadership and the Cultural revolution

communist idea, needed to make the Chinese people believe that the values they had fought for in their civil war were being eroded away by revisionist policies and deviations from Marxist doctrine. Mao was growing increasingly wary of the Soviet Union and their commitment to Marxist doctrine in the late 1950’s. After Stalin had died, Nikita Khrushchëv began implementing a number of economic reforms. Mao found these changes in policy to be unacceptable and was worried that the same sentiments were beginning to take hold in the CCP as well. Mao feared that any deviation from the Marxist foundations of The Revolution would undermine the legitimacy of China’s claim of aspiring to be an egalitarian society.

Under the auspices of transparency and free speech, Mao welcomed criticism of himself and the CCP during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution.15 As Badiou Writes in The Communist Hypothesis:

Within this movement an absolutely amazing freedom reigns; groups openly confront each other, the journals, tracts, banners and never-ending mural posters reproduce revelations of all kinds along with the political declarations. Fierce caricatures spare almost no one (in August of 1967, the questioning of Zhou Enlai in one of the great mural posters put up overnight will be one of the reasons for the fall of the so-called 'ultra-leftist' tendency). Processions with gongs, drums and loud proclamations take place until late at night.

However, his true intentions were much less transparent. Mao disregarded much of the criticism and instead used it as a way to identify his enemies. The Cultural Revolution began with the purge of thousands of officials, many of whom were forced out by a proxy of Mao, like a friendly journalist or someone with access to large media outlets. One of the most notable instances

15 Badiou, The Communist Hypothesis, 128.
of mass media playing a role in ousting an official is the However, the Red Guards, which encompassed a number of youth organizations that shared similar revolutionary ideals, were the true grassroots implementation of the policies of the Cultural Revolution.\textsuperscript{16}

Acknowledging the need for support, Mao tapped into what has historically been the most revolutionary demographic: the youth.\textsuperscript{17} In May of 1966, Mao indefinitely canceled all classes at schools in Beijing and then in June of 1966 expanded the decision and closed all schools countrywide. The Chinese youth responded to Mao’s accusations that a faction within the CCP wanted to alter the direction of the country’s policies to try and fix some of the social and economic problems that ailed China. To some, these revisionists might be considered pragmatic since they were using their learned experience to shape new policies. However, Mao did not view them kindly. He believed that the revisionists in the CCP were ideologically misleading China and did not want to follow in the footsteps of the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin.

To counter these revisionists, Mao continued to purge party members if they were suspected of disloyalty or right-wing leanings. Indicative of this policy was Mao’s purge of academics or CCP officials who he believed had not been faithful to Marxist ideals. Not only would Mao go after those who had already shown disloyalty, but also some argue that he tended to target the people who he feared might betray him in the future, even if they hadn’t done so already. One of the most notable cases of this preemptive action was the death of Lin Biao, one of Mao’s closes allies on remaining true to the ideological foundations of The Revolution.\textsuperscript{18}

No longer occupied by their studies the youth of China became enchanted by Mao’s call to action. They formed ‘Red Guards’ with the goal of ridding China of any subversion to


\textsuperscript{17} Badiou, \textit{The Communist Hypothesis}, 129-131.

\textsuperscript{18} Qiu, Ch. 4.
communism. The Red Guards, because of their shared commitment to the same ideology, were easily influenced by Mao and would consequently attack his opponents with techniques ranging from public humiliation to murder. Soon after, Mao encouraged the working class as well as the peasants of China to form their own Red Guards and travel around the country to revitalize the idea of the revolution. Supported with trucks and other equipment provided by the CCP, the Red Guards attacked anyone perceived as subversive to Mao, or anyone who did not adhere to the Marxist ideals that the CCP had established after the Chinese Civil War. Mao’s control over his supporters, not just limited to the Red Guards, had begun to grow, and he exercised it in a way that weeded out any competition he may have had.

**Applying Badiou to The Cultural Revolution**

Over the course of the 1950’s, in reaction to the Great Leap Forward, the CCP had slipped into “an increasingly bureaucratized, modernizing society in which the gap between values and practice widens, idealistic pronouncements become empty rhetoric, commitments to societal goals are weak, and power is used to pursue narrowly defined interests.” Mao was watching the Revolutionary Idea slip away as he saw the CCP stray from its foundations under the guidance of revisionists like Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi. In order to remain true to his idea of communism, Mao saw the need to rid political life in China of the overarching party-hierarchy. This hierarchy, which enabled the elites in Chinese society to impose the minority’s will on that of the proletarian-majority, was seen by Mao as explicitly against his egalitarian ideals.

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19 MacFarquhar and Schoenhals.
20 Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, 127-128
Using Badiou to understand the Cultural Revolution and its effect on the Chinese masses is an attempt to understand how a leader like Mao can incite his followers to implement change in their society. Badiou’s concept of an idea can be traced throughout the course of the Cultural Revolution. We can consistently see Mao implicating ‘The Revolution’ as justification for his policies. However, Badiou’s stance on communism should be explained further before continuing to compare it to Mao’s policies during the Cultural Revolution. For Badiou, communism is not what we think of in western society after the Cold War. Badiou argues:

It is essential today to understand that ‘communist’ can no longer be the adjective qualifying a politics. An entire century of experiences both epic in scope ad appalling was required to understand that certain phrases produced by this short-circuiting between the real and the Idea were misconceived, phrases such as ‘communist party’ or ‘communist state’—an oxymoron that the phrase ‘socialist state’ attempted to get around.22

This is important to keep in mind while discussing Mao and the Cultural Revolution because their implementation of communism as a political system is likely not ideal for Badiou. The difference between different governments’ implementations of communism as a political system is not what is important. Rather, it is Mao’s use of what Badiou would consider the ‘Idea of communism’ being embodied in the masses and the ability to control those masses that is relevant. In the case of the Red Guards—they are certainly the most significant crowd in China during the Cultural Revolution—Mao infused them with the Idea.

We can also see another connection here with Badiou when he says, “[W]e will say that an Idea is the possibility for an individual to understand that his or her participation in a singular

political process (his or her entry into a body-of-truth) is also, in a certain way, a *historical* decision.” This helps us understand the appeal of joining the Red Guards for the young Chinese men and women. They sought to be at the forefront of what they were being told was right by Mao, or what Badiou would consider a ‘truth.’ Furthermore, Badiou explains, “Thanks to the Idea, the individual, as an element of the new Subject, realizes his or her belonging to the movement of History. For about two centuries (from Babeuf’s ‘community of equals’ to the 1980’s) the word ‘communism’ was the most important name of an Idea located in the field of emancipatory or revolutionary politics. To be a communist was of course to be a militant of a Communist Party in a given country.” Again, Badiou helps us understand the influences being exerted by Mao. In the *Communist Hypothesis*, Badiou further explains the connection between the Idea and revolutionary actions:

> The general slogan speaks of a revolutionary struggle against old ideas and old customs (that is what gives content to the adjective 'cultural', which in Chinese means rather 'civilizational' and, in old Marxist jargon, 'superstructural'. Many groups gave this slogan a destructive and violent, even persecutory, interpretation. The hunting-down of women wearing braids, of formally educated intellectuals, of hesitant professors, of all the 'cadres' who do not use the same phraseology as such-and-such a splinter group, the raiding of libraries or museums, the unbearable arrogance of small revolutionary chiefs with regard to the mass of the undecided.

One of Mao’s most important policies was to destroy monuments that championed the feudal past in China. Essentially, Mao wanted to start China’s history over from scratch, and by depicting the imminent danger that a particular individual or institution to ‘The Revolution,’ he could effectively

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mobilize masses of his supporters to squash anyone or anything that threatened him.

Another specific example that we can trace Mao’s use of The Revolution back to Badiou’s concept of an idea is the incident in Beijing that sparked the closing of schools in May of 1966. In late May of 1959, Nie Yuanzi, a professor as Peking University, published a cartoon that was critical of the school’s administration. Nie, via his poster, implied that the school was a safe-haven for revisionism and was harmful to the ideals upon which the CCP was founded. Although the university rebuffed these accusations, Mao saw the poster as the ideal medium for communicating the message to the entire Chinese population. The poster was reproduced in the nationally distributed People’s Daily, and even led to Mao publicly acknowledging the poster later in the same publication. 27

Tang Tsao, in his book The Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Reforms: A Historical Perspective, acknowledges the stagnation of the Idea and its revolutionary ideals in the years between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution when he writes:

It is my belief that the Chinese political system prior to the Cultural Revolution is one of the purest forms found in human experience of a type of association in which there is a clear-cut separation between the elites and the masses. If one follows Ralf Dahrendorf in asserting that in every social organization there is a differential distribution of power and authority, a division involving domination and subjection, the Chinese political system can be taken as one of the polar examples of all social organizations, showing clearly their possibilities and limitations, their problems and dilemmas. From this perspective, the Maoist vision as it has revealed itself in its extreme form during the early phases of the

27 Tsou, Chapters 1, 2, and 4.
Cultural Revolution can be considered a critique of this type of political organization. It represents an attempt to minimize the consequences arising from the division between domination and subjection by changing the pattern of participation of the dominated in the process within every single organization, by redefining the role of those in positions of authority, and by changing their attitudes and values so that the line between domination and subjection is blurred and a new type of relationship between the two groups will be obtained.28

Mao’s recognition of what ailed the revolutionary spirit—namely the disparity between the elites and commoners, the educated and the uneducated—allowed him to bring the Idea back to the forefront of China’s political realm. In this sense, it is not so much the Idea that is important; it is the danger confronting the Idea that connects Mao and the Red Guards and allows Mao to exert control over them.

Another interesting connection between Mao and Badiou can be seen in Badiou’s essay, The Idea of Communism. Mao is known for having a larger-than-life personality; one that seemed to transcend the country and unite the Chinese population. The ‘cult’ of Mao’s personality was something that each individual Chinese citizen could relate to. Badiou refers to “the cult of personality” and notes it’s unique strength in bonding a group to its leader:

The simplest reason is that ordinary history, the history of individual lives, is confined within the state. The history of a life, with neither decision nor choice, is in itself a part of the history of the State, whose conventional mediations are the family, work, the homeland, property, religion customs and so forth. The heroic, but individual,

28 Tsou, 67.
projection of an exception to all the above—as a truth procedure—also aims at being shared with everyone else; it aims to show itself to be not only an exception but also a possibility that everyone can share from now on. And that is one if the Idea’s functions: to project the exception into the ordinary life of individuals, to fill what merely exists with a certain measure of the extraordinary. To convince my own immediate circle—husband or wife, neighbours, friends, colleagues—that the fantastic exception of truths in the making also exists, that we are not doomed to lives programmed by the constraints of the State29

Here, Badiou does not specifically reference Mao and the cult of his personality, but his words very accurately describe the logic behind the adoration shown for Mao. However, Badiou does address the everyday utility that Chinese citizens placed on Mao’s words and teachings:

There were not only the giant statues, the Little Red Book, the constant invocation, in any circumstances, of the Chairman, the hymns for the 'Great Helmsman', but there was also a widespread and unprecedented one-sidedness to the references, as though Mao's writings and speeches could suffice for all occasions, even when it is a question of growing tomatoes or deciding on the use (or not) of the piano in symphonic orchestras.9 It is striking to see that the most violent rebel groups, those who break most decisively with the bureaucratic order, are also those who push this aspect of the situation the furthest. In particular, they are the ones who launched the formula of 'the absolute authority of Mao-Zedong Thought', and who declare the need to submit oneself to this


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thought even 'without understanding it. 

This adoration, which continues to this day, is symbolic of everything that makes up The Revolution. Mao has shown his followers that it is possible to do away with the unfair and discriminatory institutions of the State, and by rallying behind the image of Mao and his personality, the citizens have the opportunity to be apart of this idea and its perpetuation.

Conclusion and Afterthoughts

My research has turned up many examples of the dominance of a leader in Mao and his use of an ‘Idea’ in Chinese politics during the Cultural Revolution. While the Cultural Revolution was largely over by 1970—at least in its most ferocious and violent forms—it still lived on until Mao’s death in 1976. While Mao’s intentions may have been clear for some time now, it is still difficult to understand how he planned on sustaining the idea of communism in China.

Originally, Mao, after being replaced following the Great Leap Forward, had to defeat the revisionists who wanted to implement changes they thought would better the country even though it ran counter to their commitment to communism. After the Cultural Revolution and Mao’s death, it is again the same revisionists, most notably Deng Xiaoping, that would ascend to power in the CCP and begin to liberalize foreign trade and open up to foreign direct investment. It it’s present state, the CCP is only nominally a communist regime. Communism, as it exists in China today, is a far cry from the egalitarian ideals advocated for by Mao and Badiou. I believe that without a leader as committed as Mao, the CCP and China would inevitably begin to liberalize foreign trade and begin to adopt other capitalistic practices.

Many of the advocates for these capitalistic, or revisionist policies, like Deng, are the ones who began to take power before the Cultural Revolution and then forced out by Mao as part of the Cultural Revolution. After the Cultural Revolution, these same

30 Badiou, The Communist Hypothesis, 149-150.
people—the ones labeled ‘revisionists’ by Mao—came back into power and have been in power ever since. Mao attempted to remain idealistic, however his failure to heed advice appears to be one of his biggest problems. In the sense of Badiou’s ‘Idea,’ Mao exemplifies it, but perhaps such strict adherence to an Idea proved not to be the ideal way to organized a country. Badiou acknowledges that Mao brought China to the brink of a civil war during the Cultural Revolution, and his suggestion that “it will take the cold-bloodedness of the central power, as well as the firm declarations coming from numerous army units in all the provinces, to change the course of the events” hints at the paradox of the Cultural Revolution. On the one hand, the Cultural Revolution was supposed to empower the masses, but on the other hand, it began to spiral out of control so quickly that mass politics would not suffice in place of a hierarchical power structure.

I have come to the conclusion that Badiou’s concept of an Idea highlights the importance of what Mao had in mind while he was undertaking policies to purify the CCP and even the balance of power between the rulers and the subjects. It allowed him to gain control of his citizens and guide them towards a common goal. Mao achieved an unmatched control over the population and for a good reason. Mao did more than just spew empty rhetoric; he inspired his followers to better their country and situation through the Idea. Badiou and Mao both believe in constantly refreshing their commitment to their ‘Idea.’ In the case of Mao and China, Mao believed that the revolution should be continuous in order to keep it from growing tired and ineffective, hence suggesting to his followers that they should not be too comfortable with old practices and customs. The Red Guards of the Cultural Revolution are a perfect example of grassroots political action, which both Mao and Badiou would agree is essential to keeping an Idea alive.

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There are several questions that arise over the course of this research, but the most important one seems to be how Badiou and Mao can come to grips with the realities of the economics involved in running a country. Mao clearly failed to see the importance of this in many scenarios, the most memorable being the backyard furnaces that produced useless substandard steel during the Great Leap Forward. The decision to industrialize China without regard to the strain it would put on a society that was based mostly on subsistence agriculture is just one of many examples of Mao not understanding the implications and negative consequences of his actions. In a vacuum, Mao’s commitment to his ideologies is captivating. In reality, though, it is hard for me to agree that a strict adherence to doctrine makes sense if there is logic behind the need to adapt. Mao and revisionists like Deng both shared the goal of industrializing and modernizing China, the crucial difference is that Deng did so with more capitalistic approach that ignored the disparity between the elites and commoners. Mao’s ultimate goal was to create an egalitarian utopia, but his disregard for the realities of operating an industrialized country are ultimately his downfall.

The cult around Mao’s personality is another connection between Mao and Badiou that reinforces my belief that an effective leader has to be representative of all the values that they advocate for. In the case of Mao, his goal was to constantly be evaluating how true he and his fellow party members had remained to the ideals on which the country was founded. By idealizing this type of behavior in his own personality, Mao was able to persuade the masses of Chinese citizens to actively uphold those values in their daily lives and interactions. Mao wanted his followers to be active guardians of the Revolution and its idea rather than having to rely on the state to accomplish the same task. It would interesting to more thoroughly study the intricacies of Mao’s personality and what made him so captivating and effective as a leader before he had even defeated the Kuomintang in the Chinese Civil War.
WHERE IS THE CROWD?
Introduction

Throughout history cities all over the world have seen the creation and dispersion of crowds but one city above all became known for its riots and barricades; this city was Paris. The first barricades appeared in 1588 and after that barricades became a tactic frequently used by the Parisian crowd. One reason that Paris is so interesting to look at in terms of crowd development is that the city was completely redesigned in the second half of the nineteenth century to try to limit crowd formations. Paris is unique and looking at its redesign allows us to discover how important the physical layout of a city can be to crowd formations. If, as I believe, crowds cannot be stopped by limiting their physical connections then this indicates that the psychological connection is a more powerful influence than the physical environment.

This paper will discuss a number of issues. First it will take a look at Paris before and after its redesign by the architect Haussmann in the nineteenth century. This will allow me to then explore which aspects of the crowd were limited or removed. Discovering which features of the Parisian crowd were limited will allow me to understand what it was that authorities feared about the crowd and what they thought was the best way to keep them under control. After this I focus on how and why Haussmann’s redesign was not completely effective in stopping crowd development in Paris at which point the events in Paris in May 1968 will be looked at. To conclude the paper I will discuss how the psychological crowd interacts to the physical crowd and how this is seen in the Parisian context. My conclusion will
show that for crowds to be effective there needs to be a psychological crowd which allows the crowd to spread beyond corporeal boundaries and it fortifies the physical crowd.

**Paris Before 1850**

Paris today is very different from pre 1851 Paris. Sixty per cent of the street and buildings of present day Paris were built in Haussmann’s time.¹ The Paris of the middle ages was very different from the industrial Paris of the 1840s; it had been very prosperous due to being a city of scholars, kings and religion. The University of Paris was founded in the early thirteenth century during the reign of Philippe Augustus which brought a great deal of money to the city. Before this, during the twelfth century, the King’s palace had settled on the Ile with his law courts and in close proximity was the palace of the Bishop of Paris. Having two extremely wealthy and powerful men based in the city helped to create a wealthy city.² At this point Paris was a city which showed the power, strength and wealth of the individual.

Between the end of the Middle Ages and the start of the industrial age Paris had had numerous additions and changes made to its topography but for the majority of the time these embellishments were placed on top of or within the cramped medieval city. The image of this crowded city was caught perfectly by the French novelist Restif de la Bretonne in the eighteenth century when he wrote “oh, what a lot of people! So many that nobody knows anyone else, not even in the same neighbourhood, not even in the same house…”³ Paris was a city of the masses, where people lived on top of each other. By 1840 the boundaries of Paris had been reached and the influx of the newcomers to the city meant that many of the nearby towns had

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³Jordan, 14.
been taken over by a mass of lower working class people. Paris in the mid nineteenth century was being over taken by the poor who lived in crowded and dirty conditions with wretched smells and rampant epidemics because this was better than the poor, rural farming lives that they had come from. What this meant that was that in Paris the urban middle class were being pushed out because there was only really housing for the poor, which were horribly overcrowded, or for the rich.

The growing number of cramped, twisted and mangled streets and houses created a perfect basis for the creation of barricades. The first barricade occurred in 1588 and was used by Parisians in response to soldiers being placed in the streets of Paris. By the end of the Middle Ages the barricades’ main use was to restrict military movement. From this point onward the Parisian crowd used barricading as an extremely effective revolutionary tactic. However there were long periods where barricades were not being used. Barricades in Paris were primarily used by the people against the figures of authority and members of elite regimes, particularly against soldiers and members of the militarily. Initially barricading was used by the crowd to try and gain leverage over political leaders. Eventually barricades became part of the methods to try to overthrow the state. Barricades, in the later part of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century became one of the iconic images of crowds and revolutions. In all likelihood this was probably down to the fact that between 1795 and 1871 there were twenty-one recorded instances of barricading in Paris.

By the revolution of 1848 the methods and effectiveness of barricades were at their peak but there was still much variation that occurred from barricade to barricade. Military reconnaissance reports in 1848 describe some of the barricades as being “mounds up to five metres wide and of widely varying

4Saalaman, 46.
6Douglas, 32.
Other descriptions show the two-storey barricade of the Faubourg de Temple which appear to be of military quality.

Although it is clear that the physical presence of the barricades was very important to pre-Haussmann Parisian revolutionaries the importance of the theoretical barricade must be considered. Douglas’ dissection of the Parisian barricades shows that much of the power that the barricades held was in part due to the image that the public and authorities had of barricades. If the soldiers believed that the barricades were being run by the people, rather than rebels or the “scum of society,” their mentality would change and the barricades would have more power. This said, one of the reasons that Haussmann’s design tore down a huge amount of the medieval city was because Paris was difficult to control. As Douglas writes, “Under the regime of the barricades, divisions into tenancies and properties were no longer respected….barricaders converted the city into a continuous field of urban matter, to be traversed or tunnelled through.” Being able to get rid of these passageways, tunnels, houses and in general the mazes which had been spreading throughout Paris for hundreds and hundreds of years would mean that the balance of power would switch from the people back to ruling elite.

The Paris that Haussmann was dealing with in 1850 was cramped and crowded which had been caused by it more than doubling in size since the thirteenth century. This, combined with the fact that the majority of the population of Paris was made up of lower class migrants meant that housing was poorly built, encouraging disease. A large number of epidemics spread through the city on a regular basis, partly because there was no sewage or water systems in the city. In addition to this Paris was hard to police and frequently saw volatile crowds and uprisings develop. One reason was because barricades could easily be erected in the narrow twisting streets; another was because crowds had the upper hand as they were able to travel through routes which were unfamiliar to the military. Haussmann had an

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7 Douglas, 37.
8 Douglas, 36.
enormous and complicated project on his hands when the Second Empire began and, although work was still incomplete by the time that the Paris Commune was in control in 1871, his plans continued to be put into action until the project was completed at the end of nineteenth century.

**Haussmann’s Redesign**

In this paper the redesign of Paris has previously referred to as being Haussmann’s design but it is important to make clear that this project was not run by him alone. Haussmann is given credit for coming up with the design of the “city of modernity” but Napoleon III was just as involved in creating the new look. However, he was written out after the fall of Second Republic. By removing Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte’s name from the legacy of the design it allowed the rebuilding to continue throughout the various different regime changes that occurred in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This indicates is that the reasons behind the redesign must have been based on common fears that members of the ruling elite felt about crowds.

One of the easiest ways to visualise Haussmann’s redesign it to think of Paris as a body and its streets as the vascular system; by 1850 the cities veins and arteries were clogged up and the capillaries were taking over. Maxime du Camp described Paris as “suffocating in the tiny, narrow, putrid and tangled street… everything suffered: hygiene, security, speed of communications and public morality.” The first change that Haussmann’s design did was open up the city by creating a number of major crossroads; these were often referred to as the grande croissee. The Rue de Rivoli created an essential link from the east to the west of the city. It began at the Arc de Triomphe and ran all the way past the Place de la Bastille and out of the city. This not only created a very large, imposing thoroughfare but also meant that thousands of homes and a huge number of

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10 Jones, 349.
tiny streets were demolished. The removal of the small, twisting streets meant that it became very difficult for barricades to be erected. However, at the same time as Paris was being redesigned improvements in military tactics and technology meant that barricades could be more easily overcome by the French army by the start of the 1870s.  

As the nineteenth century continued the demolition of houses and streets was unrelenting and Haussmann developed the Boulevards Sebastopol, de Strasbourg and Saint-Michel which intersected the Rue de Rivoli. Figure 1 shows the new boulevards and streets that divided up the city in to several different and distinct sections.

![Figure 1](image_url)

It was not just enormous streets that helped to open Paris up, the development of the trains systems and railway stations were crucial too. Part of the reason that Haussmann looked at developing the railway systems was because it was better fitted to the lives of the emergent upper middle class. During this period it was the middle classes who were increasingly restless about their lifestyle in Paris. This discontent trickled down the class structure and increased the discontent felt by the working classes.  

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11Douglas, 41
12Jordan, 72.
Railways stations that already existed on the then outskirts of the city were given new buildings, which helped in reinforcing them as a focal point of the city. The new boulevards, described above, were also used to link the railway stations to the centre of the city and other areas of government operations. Previously many people had discouraged from using the railways networks into Paris because it would have meant walking through the old city which was squalid and very impoverish. Re-establishing the railways systems also allowed industries and factories to move production of goods outside of the Paris but the retail aspect of businesses could remain in the city.

As has been previously discussed Haussmann’s remodelling of Paris saw the creation and development of many very long and wide boulevards, which lead to the destruction of a large number of houses. By 1870 the central section of Paris, now known as the Ile de la Cite, had almost all of private residences removed. Much of the flattened area was left empty and was used as a way to bring light and air into the city. However, many of the new buildings that were erected became places for the government’s administrative work rather than private residence. This destruction not only reduced the number of buildings but it also reduced the population from 15,000 to a mere 5,000. The same actions were taken in the areas around Notre-Dame and the Palais de Justice.14

The combination of the new boulevards, the improved railways systems and the reduction of private residences meant the focal point of Paris had changed. The centre of the city was no longer a mass tiny streets and cramped houses that belonged to lower working classes. Haussmann created a city whose centre was based around government and business. His new boulevards and wider streets connected many governmental hubs such as administration buildings, police, fire department, riot police, and ambulance services.15 The increased ease in traveling between the railways stations and the centre meant that troops could be

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13Saalaman, 12.
14Jones, 356.
15Saalaman, 14.
deployed more quickly and effectively if ‘trouble’ should breakout. The new boulevards and streets also connected businesses and entertainment districts and made the centre of Paris much friendlier towards the middle and upper middle classes. By 1870, despite the redesign not being complete, it was clear that the city was no longer focused on the impoverished masses; instead it had become a place for the middle classes. In Haussmann’s and Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte’s eyes the improvement of life of the upper middle classes in Paris was one of the most important aspects of the remodelling because middle class power was sustainable. What is meant by this is that the middle classes would support Napoleon III’s rule whereas the working classes were more likely to give their support to revolutionaries. In addition to this the improvements make to the quality of life of the middle classes would filter down through the class system and give the poorer, lower classes just enough to keep them satisfied.\textsuperscript{16}

Haussmann’s rebuilding did a lot more than just develop the surface layout of Paris as a large part of his plans involved sorting out sewage and water systems with in the cities limits. The development of Paris’ sewage system was key to reducing the levels of diseases and bringing an end to the epidemics of cholera. In the first part of the nineteenth century alone there were two devastating cholera epidemics. They occurred in 1832 and 1849, the first killing 20,000 people when the population of Paris was only 861,400. Figure 2 is an illustration of the sewage systems from January 1837 and it clearly shows that all of the basic sewage systems in the city were flowing into the Seine within the city limits.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2}
\caption{Illustration of the sewage systems in 1837.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{16}Saalaman, 16.
Compare this to figure 3 and it is possible to see the collectors’ sewer that Haussmann designed, with the help of Eugene Belgrand, which carried all the sewage from the north of the city down to the Seine at Asnieres. Asnieres that was outside and downstream of the city.

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17Saalaman, 66.
This meant that the part of the Seine that passes through Paris was no longer being contaminated with the waste of over a million people. In addition to the wastage systems Haussmann also put into place an incredible water system that brought water in to Paris from as far away as Yonne. Figure 4. shows the piping technique that carried this water more than one hundred miles. It was a very impressive piece of engineering.

Figure 4.

It is clear that changing the physical layout of the city and the improving the population’s quality of life was crucial to deterring crowd formation. However, Haussmann’s design would also have impacted on the psyche of the people who lived in Paris. The new network of streets that he put into Paris connected important monuments to and building to each other. Many of these buildings and monuments were used as a representation of the power and wealth of the government. The overall look that Paris was given was one of rigidity and uniformity. As a result Paris would have adopted an atmosphere that reflected its control

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18 Salaaman, 67.
19 Salaaman, 65.
and sense of authority, which can still be felt today. In addition to this Haussmann removed a huge number of streets and building that were historically important and were symbolic of the masses.

Although Haussmann’s designs were focused on the classical Greco-Roman look and being aesthetically pleasing was significant to him, what has been shown is that there was an emphasis on crowd submission. By looking at Haussmann’s design it is possible to understand the nature or at least the perceived nature of crowds.

Decoding Paris’ Haussmannization

In the article “Cities and Insurrection” Hobsbawm points out that crowds, riots, demonstrations and insurrection are almost entirely an urban phenomenon.²⁰ It is unsurprising that capital cities, such as Paris, have seen so many uprising and crowds in their histories because they the political and social heart of a country. Haussmann’s redesign of Paris was a huge undertaking both in terms of the scale of the project and length of time it took but his creation was much more than just facelift for an old city.

The most obvious part of Paris transformation was the creation of the imposing boulevards, which was all part of his plan to work “simultaneously against plague and revolutions.”²¹ What makes Haussmann’s boulevards different from previous urban planners was the increase in their width, the way they intersected with each other and their length because now they frequently extended across the whole of the city. A predecessor to Haussmann, Rambuteau, had tried to create boulevards and although they were made thirteen meters in width it meant that barricades could not be created. However, these boulevards were still not really wide enough of military actions to effective. In comparison Haussmann’s boulevards were thirty meters in width. This allowed an increased number of foot soldiers to be deployed in the case of uprisings. In addition to this his creation of the

²⁰Hobsbawm, Eric J. Cities and Insurrections. (Global Urban Development. Volume 1, Issue 1, May 2005). 1
²¹Jones, 366.
grand' croisée and the other intersecting streets made it possible for troops to reach all parts of the city at a much faster pace. Haussmann’s plan also meant that cavalry could be used by the military within the city limits. When facing badly armed rebels the use of horses allowed the army to cut through crowds more easily and gain control faster. This could only be done after Haussmann increased the width of the streets. This indicates that crowds represented an enduring threat to whoever was in power and that they needed to be limited at all costs. Although the representation of crowds is often as an irrational mob, the fear that the French authority held for the masses indicates that crowds are much more than a crazed mass. The extent to which the Second Republic and subsequent French government when to control Parisian crowds confirms that crowds have the ability to hold a huge amount of political power. Haussmann’s designs indicate that if a government can stop crowds, or at least heavily control them, then they should be able to maintain power. Thus, it can be concluded that crowds indicate a loss of power by the ruling forces.

The demolition of thousands of homes and the relocation of the inhabitancies was not merely a consequence of Haussmann’s plan, it was part of them. The designs for the city seem to have followed the divide and conquer attitude, which meant that 350,000 Parisian were displaced by Haussmannization.²² Many people whose families had lived in the old city for centuries were relocated to other parts of the city during the 1850s. After 1861 when the city boundaries were extended many peasants were spilt up and placed on the outskirts. While living in the city centre and the surrounding areas, the homogenous labouring poor of Paris had the ability to create a crowd and cause havoc. Relocating meant that they no longer had one single focus point for their demonstrations. As the theorist Alain Badiou has shown in his work on more modern riots in most cases of riots the crowds form suddenly. The impulsive, immediate crowd only focus their attentions on their own area of living rather than moving to other areas of cities.²³ After

²²Jones, 365.

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Haussmann’s redesign of the city there were many smaller areas which the working class inhabited. This meant that they could not come together and any riots could be put down swiftly. By the start of the twentieth century the new areas in which the working class came to reside were often referred to as the “red belt” and were seen as being “politically significant, but has no discernible insurrection important.”

Therefore, it is possible to see that Haussmann’s Parisian designs reveal that crowds frequently need to have the support of a homogenous group, who are often members of the lower classes.

Urban reform and improving the standards of living was another important and successful part of Haussmann’s creation. As was previously discussed epidemics were extremely common in Paris during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and unsurprising fear for one’s life can create a sense of rebellion in a city. The fear of epidemics was not only seen among the poor but it also affected the members of the higher classes as well. By sorting out the wastage system and bring in large amounts of fresh water into Paris the threat of disease was lessened. Due to Haussmann’s design Paris has not experienced a Cholera epidemic since 1849 despite it being an issue in other European cities well into the final decades of the nineteenth century. What this shows is that crowds are more likely to form if there is a lower standard of living for the majority of the people. By giving the working class just enough to keep them satisfied during a period of economic prosperity it reduces the need for crowds to form.

Although most of Haussmann’s changes to city show that he and Napoleon III were trying to stop the physical presence of the crowds, there are aspects of the designs which indicate that there may have been an attempt to change the Parisian psyche. First of all the removal of streets and buildings that were historically significant meant that there were no longer places which celebrated the success of the masses over the elite. Then

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24Hobsbawn, 2.
there is the issue of the new streets to connect moments and buildings that were meant to be a representation of the power and the wealth of the upper middles classes. In addition to this Paris’ new wide streets, shops and luscious green parks were designed to showcase the individuals. All of these aspects together created an unconscious psychological statement to the people of Paris. This message was that there was no place for the crowd in Paris any longer; the individual was what was important now. This fits with Haussmann’s belief that “only cultured individuals counted as citizens of Paris” and that “the masses could not articulate their democratic voice correctly, they were a burden on Paris, fouling up the democratic process.”

In a similar way the inability to create barricades easily not only reduced the power of the crowd physically but it also changed the mental perception of them and the mental perception of crowds. By 1870 the importance of the barricades for crowds was as much symbolic as it was physically useful. The theorist Friedrich Engels believed that part of the reason that barricades stopped being a symbol of the Paris crowd was because the “spell of the barricade was broken.” If soldiers believed that there were fighting a group or rebels or just a set of individuals then they would have less fears about destroying the barricades and those who fought to defend it. The spell of the barricades demonstrates that crowds are often seen as being a manifestation of ‘the people’ and this is why they are able to wield so much political influence. If this theory is true it would indicate that Haussmann may have known about theories of the psychological crowd and was trying to stop crowds by using both methods. If Haussmann was unaware of the psychological crowd theories then this would also reveal something. It could show that Haussmann’s own unconscious knew that a person could be engulfed into the collective mind of the masses and this unconscious knowledge appeared in his designs for Paris.

25 Douglas, 39.
26 Douglas, 36.
Haussmann’s failure to stop crowds

As has been shown Haussmann’s method of regeneration was time consuming and extensive but overall the reconstruction was fairly effective. With the exception of the Paris Commune, which happened while the building work was still in progress, there was a huge reduction in appearance of crowds in Paris. This is until the spring of 1968, which saw France on the edge of a political revolution. If crowds are to be understood fully then it is important to understand why Haussmann’s extraordinary designs failed to prevent Paris coming to a complete stand still in the wake of a crowd.

The events of May 1968 began as protests by students of the University of Paris at Nanterre that had occurred because of various issues with the university’s administrators. The protests started calmly enough but, as the journalist Harriss discovered while covering the events, there appeared to be a switch that turned the groups of students into a crowd. Harriss recalls how he had left the protests because of the composed atmosphere and lack of events but when returning to the same scene only hours later the 30,000 students had begun creating barricades out of cobblestones, felled trees, billboards and cars that were on fire. It would appear that the students had become the crowd that Haussmann had tried to wipe out in his redesign of Paris. The barricades that the Parisian students build were the first that the city had seen in nearly one hundred years, as the last time they had been used was as part of the Paris Commune in 1871. As a result of the events Paris and France were brought to a standstill: the metro closed in Paris, millions of workers went on strike and French production ground to a halt.

There are two possible ways to explain this sudden and surprising return to crowd dominance and barricading. The first is

29 Harriss, 3.
that although Haussmann’s design was effective in limiting crowds and deterring their creation, he was only able to makes changes for society of the nineteenth century. By the mid-point of the twentieth century Parisian society was a very different from that with which Haussmann had been dealing. The issue of barricading, which Haussmann has all but solved, was once again possible because of the influx of cars into a city that was designed for walking. In addition to this the image of the barricade was once again a popular representation of the people, partly because of its descriptions in many famous and popular books such as Les Miserables.\(^{30}\)

The second reason for the return to crowd dominance can be tied to the growing discontent of the standard of living once again. The labouring poor of the nineteenth century had been satisfied by their living conditions because life in the city was much better than life in rural France. Also once Haussmann had redesigned the water and wastage systems there was a much lower threat of death from cholera epidemics and other sewage related diseases. However, by May 1968 Parisians had become accustomed to this standard of living and there was a desire for more. Haussmann’s Paris had tried to reduce working classes’ homogeneity by splitting them up in different parts of the city but in the intervening years the continued influx of migrants had re-homogenised many areas. The increase in homogenised groups would have helped to aid the creation of the crowds in 1968. However, the events of the spring in France did not stem out of one singular issue from one single group. Rather the crowds were created by the students’ sparked anger in other areas of the population who were discontent with French life and this led them to join the revolution. Ultimately, the only reason the crowds stopped growing and people went back to work was because the French government increased wages for workers, which went up by fourteen per cent, as well as reducing the length of the working week.\(^{31}\) The repercussions of these deals caused economic damage in the following decades which proves

\(^{30}\) Douglas, 37.
\(^{31}\) Harriss, 4.
just how far a government will go to maintain power over crowds.

Although Haussmann’s Paris failed to stop the rise of crowds in May 1968 there is an agreement that suggests that the redesign helped to stop a full blown revolution. Hobsbawm, whose work focuses on global urban development, believes that Paris’ structure still allowed crowds and riots to occur but that it did not allow the city to be taken by revolutionaries.\(^{32}\)

In addition to these physical factors, the failure to stop the development of crowds in Paris in May 1968 and the subsequent expansion of revolutionary sentiment that spread across France indicates that there might have been more to the May Revolt than meets the eye. An unseen aspect would explain why Haussmann’s design would never have been truly able to stop the development of crowds in Paris. This aspect is known as the psychological crowd.

The psychological crowd

As previously discussed, the development of crowds in Paris could not be stopped by the physical changes to the city or even positive changes in standards of living in the city. This means that there must be something more, something that is unseen by the human eye that is bubbling under the surface of the Parisian crowd. So here we turn to the theories Le Bon and Freud whose studies of crowds concentrate on the psychological crowd; Le Bon’s focus being on the crowd as a whole and Freud’s being directed towards the individual’s mind as part of a collective consciousness. Le Bon was writing during the final period of Paris’ Haussmannization, which means that the Paris of riots and barricades would have impacted upon his opinions of crowds. It is for this reason that much of his writing discusses the crowd in a negative way. This said his theories in “The Crowd”, written in 1895, provide a very strong argument for existence of a psychological crowd, especially when put together with the example of the Parisian masses.\(^{33}\)

\(^{32}\)Hobsbawm, 8.
Le Bon writes in “The Crowd” that a group of people in a common location is not crowd. If a collection of people are to become a crowd there needs to be some collective consciousness. If one looks at Harriss’ description of the events in 1968 it is clear that there was something that turned the group of individual students into a crowd who barricades the streets. There must have been a reason that a group of people would appear to lose their sense of individuality and become a collective group. Although it is possible to see the crowds of 1968 as being intelligent and part of popular political movement many of their actions fit with Le Bon’s idea of the psychological crowd. He saw crowds was being incapable of reason, impulsive, destructive and being full of exaggerated emotions. 34

The Nanterre students becoming a collective force with a collective mentality is only a small example of the creation of a collective consciousness. As mentioned before, in a matter a days in May 1968 Paris came to a standstill and people from all walks of life across France had become part of this revolutionary movement. How can this be accounted for? The most convincing argument is that a psychological connection was at work and it was being spread by contagion. Le Bon believed that every act and sentiment of the crowd was contagious and it was what allowed the crowd mind to spread and take over the minds of the individuals. 35 If there was no psychological mind then it is unlikely that so many different types of people, from a variety of geographical areas would have become involved in this revolutionary movement. Part of Le Bon’s theory about the psychological crowd was that when a person became part of the collective consciousness it makes them “feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from this in which each individual of them

33Despite the fact that Le Bon plagiaries many of the ideas discussed in The Crowd from earlier theorist I will be referring to all of the theories in the book as being solely Le Bon for the sake of clarity and continuity.
35Le Bon, 18.
would feel, think and act were he in a state of isolation.”

This would explain why crowds could not be stopped by physical methods or even by convincing the population that the individual was more important than the masses.

Freud’s ideas about the psychological crowd, which are heavily based on Le Bon’s theories, supports the belief that the reason Paris has not been able to completely get rid of crowds is because of the existence of the psychological crowd. Freud believes that an individual unconscious mind “feels the need of being in harmony rather than in opposition to them [the crowd].”

This unconscious feeling is one explanation for why so many people, who would not would not be expected to join in a riot, became part of the crows in Paris, May 1968. In Harriss article he describes how it was surprising that that while the crowd in the street where marching they were being cheered on by “bourgeois spectators leaning from apartment windows and crowds lining the sidewalks, the very people who they should have most to fear.”

This reaction by the bourgeois shows that their unconscious was driving them to be in harmony with crowd even if they were not full part of it at the point in time.

When thinking about the psychological crowd it is also important to look at the issue of intense and exaggerated emotions.. The acts committed by a crowd are not thought through in the same way as acts committed by the individual because “the intellectual capacity of a group is always far below that of an individual”

What must also be considered is that part of the reason that crowds continue to form in Paris despite the changes that have been made to it is because crowds are a natural phenomenon and are connected to primitive instincts. Freud’s work develops the theory that crowds are groups who are held together by libido

36 Le Bon, 15.
37 Freud, Sigm. Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego.
(Translated by James Strachey. Germany. The international Psycho-Analytucal Press. 1922) 31
38 Harriss, 3.
39 Freud, 15.
(or love) and for the most part he appears to believe that groups and crowds work on unconscious primitive herd instinct\textsuperscript{40}. Similarly, in Le Bon’s eyes it is natural and necessary for crowds to have leaders; it is what happens in nature with animals and following these primitive instincts crowds put themselves underneath a leader\textsuperscript{41}. In his work Le Bon makes frequent reference to the acts of man in a crowd being animal like, for instance he writes that “Man, like animals, has a natural tendency to imitation”\textsuperscript{42}. He also states that when it comes to crowds their “acts are far more under the influence of the spinal cord than of the brain. In this respect a crowd is closely akin to quite primitive beings.”\textsuperscript{43} All of these animal aspects connect together a indicate that while it is possible to limit the creation of crowds, by altering the environment, influencing the psyche of the people and reducing the need to revolt, crowds can never truly be wiped of existence because they are part of a larger, natural phenomenon.

When all the evidence is put together it becomes clear that the existence of the psychological crowds and the collective mind that it creates is crucial to the development and effectiveness of crowds. Therefore, Haussmann could never have stopped corporeal crowds developing within Paris no matter how many physical and social changes he made to the city.

**Final Considerations**

All the evidence that I have collected has shown that Haussmann detested the masses that lived within Paris. He had no time for them and he felt that they would never have any political or intellectual value until they distinguished themselves as individuals. In addition to this he believed that it was the middle classes’ quality of life that should be focused on, and that eventually the working class would benefit. However, this

\textsuperscript{40}Freud, 83.
\textsuperscript{41}Le Bon, 72.
\textsuperscript{42}Le Bon., 73.
\textsuperscript{43}Le Bon, 18.
detestation can be seen as developing out of the fear of crowds. As the architect in charge of redesigning Paris and a member of Napoleon III’s government he understood that there was a need to control the crowd. Historical crowds had been able to overthrow governments and had the capability to exert huge amounts of political pressure. It was for this reason that Haussmann created the wide boulevards, major intersecting streets, domineering monuments and buildings and improved connections between the railways and the centre of the city. The need to control crowds also caused him to try and improve the standard of living for Parisians to try and reduced the need for crowds to form. However, what has been shown is that these physical methods failed and in May 1968 France ground to a halt as a result of crowds in Paris. The re-emergence of crowds in 1968 can be put down to three factors. The first being that crowds and barricades had regained their ‘spell’ and they were once again viewed as being a representation of ‘the people’. The second reason that the socio-economic climate in 1968 was conducive for crowd development. This was due to people of Paris were once again demanding a greater standard for living. The final reason is that crowds always have a psychological element. The psychological element is the most important of the three factors because it was through the collective mind of the crowd that the riots spread throughout France. The vast number of people who were absorbed into the crowds’ collective mind were from a wide variety of geographical locations in France, as well as being from different classes. It is clear now that crowds need to have a physical presence. However, the psychological element of crowds is vital because it allows crowds to transcend bodily boundaries and keep the sentiment of a crowd alive when the physical crowd cannot.
Chapter 8

Essential Physical Proximity of Crowds

Peter Tardelli

Introduction

There is no theoretical consensus on the definition of the term “crowd”. Depending on who you consult the term “crowd” can have an array of different meanings. The sole attributes of a crowd are even more difficult to come to an agreement. This is because of the extreme diversity that the crowd has taken over the course of human history. The crowd has been an essential crux for political and social change. I believe that a crowd is not a crowd until isolated individuals form a physical crowd in which all the members are able to touch each other physically and feel the growing intensification of the emotions of those around them. I will argue that close physical proximity is essential for the true crowd, and more importantly for the collective crowd consciousness to come to fruition and meet its overarching goal. I will not argue that the psychological crowd only exists when in close physical proximity, rather that it is not recognized or harnessed until the people under the psychological crowd into close physical relation with one another. For evidence I will examine such real life examples of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. To understand why the individuals need to be physically close to one each other the crowd must have a common set of attributes.

The first thing that must be understood are the variety of working definitions of the crowd. For Arthur Christensen, author of Politics and Crowd-morality; a Study in the Philosophy of Politics, a crowd is:
…a group of individuals which, in a given moment, it is filled with a common idea or common desire, and is conscious of this community of thought, will or action. Not every chance collection of men constitutes a “crowd” in the sociological sense of the word. The multitude which hurries hither and thither in a frequented street is no crowd, because no common bonds binds and unites them together. If, however the pedestrians throng together because of some unusual occurrence, an accident, or an arrest or in order to listen to a street preacher, then the contact is established between the individuals, a moment of common consciousness binds them together, the chance multitude then becomes a crowd.¹

The crowd, in effect of being gathered together has a type of common mind. This common mind is gathered above them, and they are not necessarily conscious of it, nor can they have complete control over it. Gustave Le Bon, author of The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind, states that once an individual enters a crowd, “the disappearance of the conscious personality, the predominance of the unconscious personality, the turning of feelings and ideas in an identical direction by means of suggestion and contagion, the tendency to immediately transform the suggested ideas into acts”.² The individual enters into the crowd and takes on a collective consciousness. This collective consciousness can also be referred to as the psychological crowd. A contagion that is felt by those in the crowd is spread. Contagion according to Le Bon is:

...In parallel cases the starting-point of the suggestion is always the illusion produced in an individual by more or less vague reminiscences, contagion following as the result of affirmation of this initial illusion. If the first observer be very impressionable, it will often be sufficient that the corpse he believes he recognizes should present—apart from all the resemblance—some peculiarity, a scar, or some detail of toilet which may evoke the idea of another person. The idea evoked may then become the nucleus of a sort of crystallization which invades the understanding and paralyses all critical faculty. What the observer then sees is no longer the object itself, but the image evoked in his mind.\(^3\)

Once the crowd has formed contagion spreads through them like wild fire. Their mind is taken over by the intensity manifested by the close physical proximity of the crowd perpetuated through the collective consciousness. A homogeneity of emotion takes hold of each person physically in the crowd. This emotion can only be felt while in the same environment. In a sense each participant loses their individuality and any form of distinction. William McDougall’s theory is very similar in this respect.

William McDougall positions his attributes of the crowd along similar lines in his book *The Group Mind*. McDougall’s view of the consciousness of the crowd is as follows:

Such exaltation or intensification of emotion is the most striking result of the formation of a crowd, and is one of the principal sources of the attractiveness of the crowd. By participation in the mental life of a crowd, ones emotions are stirred to a pitch that the seldom or never

\(^3\) Le Bon, 18.
attain under other conditions. This is for most men and intensely pleasurable experience; they are, as they say, carried out of themselves, they feel themselves caught up in a great wave of emotion, and cease to be aware of their individuality and all its limitations; that isolation of the individual, which oppresses every one of us, though it may not be explicitly formulated in his consciousness, is for the time being abolished.

Like Christensen and Le Bon, McDougall believes that as the crowd comes together each individual enters into a collectively conscious state. They become part of something bigger, something that they may not even understand they are taking part in. There is an intensification or great wave of emotion that that each individual is caught up in. I argue that this “something bigger” and “participation in the mental life of the crowd” is only attainable when the individuals are in close physical proximity to one another. That is to say, it can only happen when they are rubbing elbows with one another. What I am not saying is that a crowd is not a random group of people rubbing elbows together with no collective conscious to bind them to one another. They are close enough to reach out and touch one another, but the must include a common goal or be part of the psychological mind. They are close enough to be affected by the same environmental stimuli. They are able to view the same events and their collective conscious forms homogeneity due to their close physical relation.

Physical Evidence

It is evident from their writing and language that each author I have talked about believes that a crowd must be physically together. When individuals are brought physically

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together under a common goal, whether they know what that goal is or not, they form a crowd. This goal can only manifest into the collective mind if the crowd shares a common intensification and densification made possible only by close physical proximity, the physical proximity allows the individuals to share the same visual and physical stimuli.

Canetti believes that the individuals of a crowd must be physically together, but these individuals that are brought closely together are not a crowd unless they have a common goal. A group of a million people without a common goal or interest is not a crowd. Canetti does not believe a crowd can start out of spontaneity. While he says a random spontaneous act or event can cause a crowd to form, they do not form a physical agglomeration out of spontaneity. He argues “a crowd is not as spontaneous as it appears, but, except for these 5, 10, and 12 people with whom it actually originates, it is everywhere spontaneous”\(^5\). If the crowd were to start of complete spontaneity it would lack the common goal. It would be hard to argue that this is even a crowd at all. It is instead a random conglomeration of people. It would not have a collective conscious. A difficult example to grapple with is the a group of people on a subway station heading for the same destination. Is this a crowd? My answer is no. The reason I contend that it is not a crowd under the attributes listed before is there is no intensification that builds up to the homogeneity of the collective mind. The people may have the same destination, but this goal did not spread through the subway car as a contagion of the collective mind. There is no build up or discharge. The most important occurrence within the crowd is the discharge.\(^6\) Before this the crowd does not actually exist; it is discharge, which creates it.\(^7\) This is the moment when all who belong to the crowd get rid of their differences and feel equal.\(^8\)

\(^6\) Canetti, 16.
\(^7\) Canetti, 17.
McDougall also believes that a psychological crowd must come together to be in close physical proximity. They must share the same environment, and be subject to the same circumstances and stimuli. McDougall states, “the attention of all is directed to the same object; all experience in some degree the same emotion, and state of mind of each person is in some degree affected by the mental processes of all those about him”\(^9\). Their attention is directly affecting their consciousness, it is telling them what to think and how to decipher the events going on around them. This is very similar to the aforementioned account of contagion by Le Bon. There cannot be consensus stimuli without being in direct contact with, “the mental process of those about him”. He is stating that the psychological mind is affected when the participant is directly exposed to the mental process of those in close physical relation.

A counter example is the stimuli of watching an event on TV. Let us suppose you are watching the super bowl. Your favorite team is in the big game and there are thousands of fans all over the nation watching them. Many of them may feel the euphoria of the win or the devastation of a lose. These people will feel the same emotions about it and may form a collective mind, but they are not able to act on it because they have no physical proximity. It is difficult for them to understand the emotions of others that are not in the room. They have formed in a sense psychological crowd, but they have yet to truly become a crowd. A psychological crowd that is separated from one another cannot truly understand the collective mind that is inherent of that same crowd moved into the middle of a town square. This is why a crowd needs to have close physical proximity, so that each individual next to one another can feel the emotions of the person next to them. If the individuals are all in separate rooms they cannot know that the person in the room next to them is feeling the same emotions, but if those same people watching the event on the television pour onto the street they can begin to form the

\(^8\) Canetti, 17.
\(^9\) McDougall, 23.
collective conscious. They begin to feel one another’s emotions and the intensity spreads through them causing them to become a crowd. Contagion takes hold as the move towards discharge.

Canetti indicates that the crowd must be within physical proximity with one another in his four attributes of the crowd. The third attribute is that the crowd loves density. Canetti argues, “it (the crowd) can never feel too dense. Nothing must stand between its parts or divide them; everything must be the crowd itself. The feeling of density is strongest at the moment of discharge”\(^\text{10}\). The density carries the crowd. It allows for isolated individuals to feed off of one another’s intensity. It propels the crowd forward as the density causes friction between the bodies that produces the energy the crowds need. This density can exist in different forms of the crowds.

Why does Canetti believe that people must be in close proximity? Canetti believes crowds must be in close physical proximity because he believes that the crowd always wants to grow. It needs a constant supply of new people. The only way for the crowd to grow is for people to unite and for new people to keep joining the group. The crowd engulfs isolated individuals that are close enough to be influenced by the crowd. The crowd engulfs them as it grows from the small group into a larger organism. This is also similar to McDougall’s view on the crowd. McDougall believes, “the essential conditions of the collective mental action are, then, a common object of mental activity, a common mode of feeling in regard to it, and some degree reciprocal influence between the members of the group”.\(^\text{11}\) How can this reciprocal influence be reached if the members are separated geographically? There would need for strong enough stimuli or big enough event to become a common object of mental activity. This activity then needs imbed itself into separate individuals and become common feeling. These two are possible

\(^{10}\) Canetti, 29.

\(^{11}\) McDougall, 23.
over a long distance, but it is not possible for people to influence one another over that distance.

Physical Examples

Canetti discusses the nature of the physical proximity that can determine the type of crowd the individual is participating in. He uses the “open crowd” and believes that the “open crowd” is the natural crowd. For Canetti the open crowd only exists as long as it grows. Canetti states that the open crowd must grow. “As soon as it exists at all, it wants to consist of more people: the urge to grow is the first and supreme attribute of the crowd”. The urge to grow is demonstrated by the crowd trying to engulf more and more people into the physical crowd. The crowd moves through the street like a drop of water pulling in all the smaller drops of water around it. The emotion of the crowd is spreading to those individuals that have yet to enter the crowd, but once the crowd is physically there, the individual is engulfed and overtaken by the intense emotion of the crowd. The psychological mind of the physical crowd is powerful enough to pull those by standers around it in.

Canetti also examines what he has labeled a “closed crowd”. The closed crowd is different from the “open crowd” in that it “renounces growth and puts stress on permanence… and that it has a boundary”. Canetti states that the important thing about the closed crowd is, “it’s always the dense crowd in the closed room”. Essentially it is the “open crowd” with boundaries, but it still functions off of its density. Its individuals are fenced in by the boundary determined by the crowd. Nonetheless the “closed crowd” is still a conglomeration of individuals that have close physical relation.

12 Canetti, 16.
13 Canetti, 17.
14 Canetti, 17.
Canetti then gives examples of different types of crowds that function in different physical spacing. The first example is “crowd crystals”, which are “small, rigid groups of men, strictly delimitated and of great constancy. Their unity is more important than their size”. The crowd crystal, unlike the open crowd, “is constant and never changes its size”. The individuals of the crowd crystal do not exist until the crowd is formed. There must be a physical movement toward the forming of the crowd for the crowd crystals to manifest. The crowd crystal does not add bodies, but rather it is a set unit of people physically close to one another as the crowd forms. Closed crowds, “differ from the crystal not only by being larger, but because its sense of itself is more spontaneous and does not permit any real allocation of functions. All it has in common with the crystal is defined limits and repetition”.

There is now an “open crowd” that never stops growing, a “closed crowd” that is limited, and “crowd crystals” that are always constant. These different crowds take up different amounts of space and require different amounts of physical presence. One factor that remains true for all three is that the people within are essential for their existence, and they are always in close physical proximity with one another. The reason that they must have close physical proximity is Canetti’s third attribute of a crowd, which is density.

In relation to the spatial requirements of the physical beings of crowds Gustave Le Bon, like Canetti, theorizes that they must be in an agglomeration and must be within at farthest visibly physical distance from one another. For Le Bon a crowd has a “collective conscious”, or the “collective conscious” of all the heterogeneous individuals within the crowd. This is very similar to Canetti’s idea that the crowd has a goal before they even understand what the goal is. For Le Bon, a crowd has to be a

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15 Canetti, 73.
16 Canetti, 73.
17 Canetti, 74.
“psychological crowd”. Every individual becomes a part of the psychological crowd through their unconscious substratum. This means, “It forms a single being, and is subjected to the law of the mental unity of crowds”.\footnote{Le Bon, 2.}

Pamela Oliver gives a perfect real life example of mental unity of the crowd:

…the movement raised the pride and consciousness of the mass of nonactivist blacks in important and enduring ways. Not only did the majority of blacks feel proud of the movement, their collective sense of culture and group pride rose. This shift in consciousness began with the period of black protests during World War II and continued with the postwar anticolonial struggles in Africa, but was accelerated by the movement activities of the 1950s and 1960s. Rising consciousness.\footnote{Oliver, Pamela. "Bringing the Crowd Back In: The Nonorganizational Elements of Social Movements." Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change, 11 (1989): n. pag. Web.,2.}

Oliver is speaking directly to the mental unity that Le Bon comments on in his concept of the overarching goal. Canetti as well as McDougal proposes this goal. He writes: “There must, then, be some degree of similarity of mental constitution, of interest and sentiment, among the persons who form a crowd, a certain degree of mental homogeneity”\footnote{McDougall, 23.}. The struggles of the black community and their interest towards advancement provided the mental homogeneity. For Oliver the consciousness of the black movement does not come to a head until the communities unite physically. The movement has Freud’s psychological mind and Freud’s mental homogeneity. They may feel the same emotions, but it is not until they act together that

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they become a crowd, “Many sit-ins, lie-ins, kneel-ins, and swim-ins were conducted by ad hoc groups strongly influenced by but not necessarily organizationally linked to the movement organizations...All these different kinds of interactions affected each other, and it was these interactions that created the social movement”. They have now achieved Canetti’s moment of discharge and the have truly become a crowd.

The collective conscious of the community could not come to fruition until the demonstrators mobilized. There was a feeling throughout the black community that there was something wrong and unjust, the consciousness was rising, but it wasn’t until the community came together physically and started demonstrating that the true crowd was formed. They had attained the psychological crowd. Everyone participating in the sit-ins and demonstrations was participating in a role greater than himself or herself. They were no longer individuals; they were overcome by feel intensity of the emotion of person next to them. They rubbing of elbows allowed for a feeling of security that is inherent in group pushing towards the same goal.

Now it is in this single being that constitutes the spatial requirement of crowds. The single being is the group of people in close physical quarters under one collective mind. Le Bon states, “thousands of isolated individuals may acquire at certain moments, and under certain violent emotions—such, for example, as a great national event—the characteristics of a psychological crowd”. If this statement were completely true of Le Bon’s understanding of crowds, then crowds would not have to be physically together, but more specific characteristics of crowds demonstrate that crowds, in fact, need to be physically together. Like the example of the black movement earlier, the mere idea of a psychological mind does not mean that the crowd has formed. There needs to be more than a collective conscious. He elaborates that, “it will be sufficient in that case that a mere

21 Oliver, 3.
22 Le Bon, 3.
chance should bring them together for their acts to at once assume the characteristics peculiar to the acts of crowds”. 23 This indicates that isolated individuals that have the characteristics of a “psychological crowd” do not truly become a crowd until that “influence” has “brought them together”. Le Bon further justifies the physical proximity needed for a crowd as he begins to distinguish the certain characteristics of the crowd.

Crowds must physically be together because they must have a uniformity of environment. “It is only the uniformity of the environment that creates the apparent uniformity of characters”.24 Physically isolated individuals, whether part of the psychological crowd or not, cannot have a uniform environment. If they do not share a uniform environment they cannot become a uniform character.

Christensen has a similar viewpoint, “The hearers exercise suggestion on each other by a play of features, gestures, and cries. Each unit has an intensive feeling of being in contact with their surroundings, and is further inflamed thereby”.25 The uniform character is a collective mind. Suggestion implies de-individualization, as it transforms the crowd members into mere automatons, devoid of any distinctive individual characteristics.26 The collective mind does not function if an individual is separated. Rather, “[the] collective mind which makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual of them would feel, think, and act were he in a state of isolation.”27 They then remain individuals separated by class, race, and gender. The environment spreads the contagion of the feeling throughout the crowd. For Christensen this feeling is prompted by suggestion, “Without suggestion any physical connection

23 Le Bon, 2.
24 Le Bon, 3.
25 Christensen, 22.
27 Le Bon, 4.
between a considerable number of men of different social origin and level of education would be out of the question”. The suggestion and contagion of the environment causes the rise of the collective mind. Suggestion and contagion block out any societal differences evident in a state of isolation. These attributes allow the members of the crowd to co-exist as equals under the collective mind.

One of the best indicators that Le Bon believes a crowd consists of people physically next to one another is his example of a cell. He states, “the psychological crowd is a provisional being formed of heterogeneous elements which for a moment are combined, exactly as the cells which constitute a living body form by the reunion a new being”. Then he goes on to say, “as in chemistry certain elements, when brought into contact—bases and acids, for example—combine to form a new body possessing properties quite different from those bodies that have served to form it”. Cells, like crowds, cannot form if they are physically separated. The crowd forms because of the intensification of emotion that each cell[human] can feel, “in every case the principal cause of the intensification of the emotion is the reciprocal action between the members of the crowd, according to the principal sympathetic induction of emotion in one individual by its expressions in others”. This is also similar to Canetti’s idea of the open crowd. The open crowd is a cell engulfing other cells around it. The cells must be in contact with one another like two humans rubbing shoulders in a crowd or in a demonstration like Oliver’s example of the black movement. The rubbing of shoulders stems “solely from numerical considerations, a sentiment of invincible power which allows him to yield to instincts which had he been alone, he would perforce under restraint”. The crowd allows the individual to act in a

28 Christensen, 24.
29 Le Bon, 4.
30 Le Bon, 4.
31 McDougall, 26.
32 Le Bon, 4.
way he or she would not act otherwise. It would be difficult for a person to conduct a sit-in if he or she were completely alone. They would not be effective and fear might stop the individual from the sit-in.

Le Bon and Christensen each have a theory which runs parallel with one another. The crowd is suggestible or that through the physical relation contagion spreads. Le Bon argues, “in a crowd every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest”.

The contagion spreads through the crowd and pushes it to expand. Christensen argues that without the suggestion of the crowd there would be no unity. Suggestion and contagion come from the physical presence of being around one another. Similar is Canetti’s goal of an open crowd, which, “remains hungry as long as there is one human being it has not reached”. These functions of the crowd would not be possible without close physical proximity. The contagious desires cannot cross-oceans or mountains. There needs to be physical connection that changes the emotions and ideas of the individual into the crowd.

Freud believes that, “the most remarkable and also most important result of the formation of the group is the ‘exaltation or intensification of emotion’ produced in every member of it”. Freud is now expanding on the intensity of emotion caused by close physical relation. McDougall believes that this same intensification is present and “it shows the individual that his emotion is shared by all the rest, intensifies his own emotion, not only by way of sympathetic induction, but also because it frees him from the restraint of emotion that is habitual with most of us in the presence of any critical or adversely disposed spectators”.

For Freud and McDougall physical proximity provides an energy

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33 Le Bon, 22.
34 Canetti, 22.
35 Freud, 22.
36 McDougall, 27.
from which the group thrives. “The greater the number of people in whom the same effect can be simultaneously observed, the stronger does the automatic compulsion grow”.

As the individual has now lost his individuality, he has gained a charge provided by the interaction of the group, and “the affective charge of those individual becomes intensified by mutual interaction”. Freud and McDougall have now applied Le Bon’s and Christensen’s idea of contagion and suggestion to their intensification of emotion provided by the physically proximity of the crowd. This relates directly to Oliver’s example of the sit-in. The intensity of the physical crowd shows the individual that he or she will bypass the whole brunt of the scrutiny if they proceed with the sit-in. The individual gets lost in the intensification passed from body to body. The close physical proximity of contagion allows for the intensification of emotion that propels the crowd.

Alain Badiou analyzes physical proximity in the case of a riot. For Badiou there are three types of riots: the immediate riot, the latent riot, and the historical riots. The spatial requirement for all three riots is close physical proximity.

The first riot he examines in the immediate riot. The immediate riot is “unrest among a section of the population”. The primary characteristic of an immediate riot is youth. The youth is the tipping point for the riot. Youth has “the capacity for assembly, mobility and linguistic and tactical invention”. They mobilize together with ease, meaning that they can come together in physical proximity with relatively little difficulty. This is essential for the crowd to form. The second characteristic is, “the immediate riot is located in the territory of those who take part in it. The issue of localization of riots is quite fundamental”.

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37 Freud, 22.
38 Freud, 22.
40 Badiou, 22.
fundamental because without the riot taking place in the territory of those who partake in it there can be no riot. There are no physical bodies to form the riot together if they have no close physical proximity. The riot must be moved away from the homes of the rioters. Badiou states: “It is only when it constructs—most often in the city center—a new site, where it endures and is extended, that it changes into a historical riot”. 42 If it stays within the living community of the rioters “it rages on itself; it destroys what it is used to”.43

Badiou’s second form of riot is the latent riot, which is important because it brings otherwise strangers into the fold of physical relation. This is a physical relation that may not otherwise occur if the crowd did not abolish class and distinction. The latent riot, “involves an external popular detachment, mainly composed of people not obliged to work, occupying the site and blocking production”. 44 A historical riot is, “established localization, intensity of compact presence, and multifaceted crowd counting as a whole people”.45 This riot is exactly like Oliver’s black movement, “To begin with, people who were not members of movement organizations often participated in mass events such as boycotts, marches, rallies, demonstrations, and sit-ins. (In resource mobilization terms, they are the "transitory teams" mobilized by the activist cadre)”.46 Each example of a riot needs human participation in a sense of togetherness.

Badiou states that close physical proximity is a must. Like Canetti’s theory of density, Badiou believes that the rioters must have a “compact presence”. He is in line with Freud’s belief that it is the intensification of emotion that prompts crowds. Christensen’s suggestion theory helps the youth realize their goal

41 Badiou, 22.
42 Badiou, 23.
43 Badiou, 23.
44 Badiou, 30.
45 Badiou, 35.
46 Oliver, 5.
and move forward as a crowd. Badiou believes that this intensification of emotion comes from an event that provokes the youth to riot. The provoking of emotion is also similar to what Christensen believes is an environmental stimuli. An event occurs that provides the youth with a collective conscious. An intensification then spreads like Le Bon’s contagion through the community. Canetti’s open crowd is Badiou’s immediate riot. It surges until it cannot feed itself anymore then disintegrates. The historical riot can be viewed in the same physical proximity of a closed crowd. It occupies one specific location and has staying power. The difference is that the historical riot does not have a limited amount of occupants. In this sense it is more like the open crowd. The central factor of all four is that close physical proximity is needed to achieve a crowd.

Without close physical relation the true crowd cannot exist. The crowd is an organism in its own right. It needs to feed off of something to stay alive. The psychological crowd can exist, but the true crowd does not develop until those in the psychological crowd physically unite. The dense crowd feeds off of the intensity and emotion each individual in the crowd. I have argued that this intensity and emotion cannot take place if the crowd is not in close physical relation to one another. There is no point where a collective mind can gather and become a true crowd without close physical relation. I do not contend that there cannot be a collective mind without close physical relation. I have contended that this collective mind cannot take the form of a true crowd unless there is close physical proximity. Without physical proximity the organism has nothing to feed off of, the people cannot feel the emotion of one another. They are not able to get lost in the collective mind of the crowd. They are not able to lose their individuality.
Introduction

There exists no integrated economic theory to explain stock market bubbles.¹ Currently, behavioral economists are trying to answer: how do emotions affect stock market performance? I assert that crowd psychology provides an explanation for this dangerous economic phenomenon. Crowd psychology explains bubbles by establishing once and for all that in terms of stock market crowds, rational behavior is nearly impossible. This notion is rooted in Gustave Le Bon’s analysis, which establishes the foundation for the study of crowd behavior. My study examines literature published by behavioral economics and crowd psychologists. This analysis rests on the claim made by behavioral economists, which asserts that when it comes to making decisions about money, the human mind can behave irrationally. An evaluation of crowd psychology seems the better place to begin an analysis of stock market bubbles since investors are a group with many of the characteristics described by Le Bon and Freud.

The emotional component of stock market bubbles is best understood within the framework of crowd psychology. Behavioral economists have failed to provide scientific data that shows individuals are making irrational financial choices. For this reason, I turn to crowd psychology and argue that the tendency of crowds to act irrationally explains irregular stock market activity. I establish that when likeminded individuals

congregate with a specific purpose, individual behavior is less important. I begin this analysis with an overview of the crowd as provided by Freud and Le Bon.

This overview serves to show that when a crowd forms, the individual is much less important. Moreover, in order for the formation of a bubble, there is always a lack of independent thought. This is the aspect of the group mind provided by Le Bon. Freud sets for a theory on the herd instinct, which suggests that individuals have an innate tendency to follow the majority. From this study I establish that crowd behavior is often volatile and unpredictable.

Subsequent this study of crowd psychology, I turn to an evaluation of bubbles provided by behavioral economists. Robert Shiller provides a study of herd behavior in stock market crowds. Shiller presents his theory about the information cascade. He argues that an information cascade facilitates herd behavior in stock market crowds. In order to provide a compelling and comprehensive analysis, I turn to an examination of mankind’s brain. Neurophysiological evidence suggests that individuals are highly susceptible to making risking financial decisions due to the prospect of receiving a financial reward.

I illustrate that bubbles are caused by more than just the exchange of wrong information among individuals. Scientific data shows that when it comes to the idea making money, people are willing to do whatever it take to ensure their financial needs are completely met. I root this data in Trotter’s understanding of primitive instincts. After examining this data I conclude that the exchange of emotion between investors and outside individual plays a crucial role in explaining stock market bubbles. Of course, I only make this claim based on the neurological data that suggests during bubbles, individuals are prone to blindly following the advice of others. Before I move to an evaluation of the crowd, lets consider some basic information about the issue of stock market bubbles.
Crowd Psychology

Gustave Le Bon is among the first to study the crowd. Le Bon is mostly concerned with crowd formation. His provides a foundation for this study of stock market crowds. I seek first to define the crowd. Le Bon explains that in the “ordinary sense the word ‘crowd’ means a gathering of individuals of whatever nationality, profession, or sex, and whatever be the chances that have brought them together.”

Le Bon explains, that under certain circumstances, “an agglomeration of men presents new characteristics very different from those of the individuals composing it.” He explains that the sentiments and ideas of the gathered individuals take a uniform direction. At this point the conscious personality of each individual disappears and a collective mind forms. This marks the formation of what Le Bon calls a psychological crowd. This process illustrates Le Bon’s law of the mental unity of crowds.

Le Bon provides the characteristics of psychological crowds that emerge. According to Le Bon when an individual is exposed to the crowd for an extended period of time he or she enters a state that resembles the state of fascination. The individual is under the influence of the crowd and likely to behave differently than when he or she is insolation. Le Bon identifies distinct characteristics that emerge. The characteristics he outlines help to illustrate the behavior of crowds. He says, “it will be remarked that among the special characteristics of crowds there are several—such as impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgment and of the critical spirit, and the exaggeration of the sentiments…” Both the crowd and the

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3 Le Bon, 2.
4 Le Bon, 2.
5 Freud, 2.
6 Freud, 2.
7 Le Bon, 2.
8 Le Bon, 28.
9 Le Bon, 34.
individual are stripped of the notion of impossibility, therefore anything is possible.\textsuperscript{10} Any goal seems achievable.

Le Bon’s analysis is based on the idea that when an individual enters the crowd, he or she completely loses the ability to reason. The individual no longer makes conscious decisions but instead unconscious primal choices that way heavily on the suggestion of the crowd as a larger unit. As the conscious personality disappears, the turning of feelings and ideas towards the same direction is achieved by means of suggestion and contagion.\textsuperscript{11} Those individuals who might possess a consciousness strong enough to resist this transformation are too few. The crowd, Le Bon asserts is always intellectually inferior to the isolated individual, and all depends on the nature of the situation.\textsuperscript{12}

Freud challenges Le Bon’s understanding of contagion and suggestion in \textit{Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego}. Freud expands upon Le Bon’s understanding of contagion and suggestibility. Freud argues that contagion is a manifestation of the suggestibility.\textsuperscript{13} He connects contagion with the effects of the individual members of the group upon one another, “while we point to another source for those manifestations of suggestion in the group which are put on a level with the phenomenal of hypnotic influence.”\textsuperscript{14} Nevertheless Freud explains that Le Bon distinguishes between the influence of fascination that remains unexplained, and the contagious effect that individuals exercise upon one another by which the original suggestion is strengthened.\textsuperscript{15} Le Bon also calls attention to the intellectual abilities of the individual in becoming a member of a group. This analysis seeks to illustrate the herd in stock market crowds to

\textsuperscript{10} Le Bon, 37.
\textsuperscript{11} Le Bon, 6.
\textsuperscript{12} Le Bon, 31.
\textsuperscript{14} Freud, 13.
\textsuperscript{15} Freud, 13.
explain bubbles. For this reason, I turn my attention to Freud discussion of suggestion as it relates to herd behavior.

Freud’s study is concerned with Le Bon’s notion regarding the mutual suggestion of individuals. Freud explains that imitation is what compels individual’s within a group to submit to the forces of contagion. He argues, that what induces the emotion in us is the group’s suggestive influence. That is, when an individual is exposed to the emotion of another within the crowd, he or she tends to fall into the same emotion. Suggestion, he discovers, is actually a primitive phenomenon and a fundamental fact in the mental life of man. This understanding of intense emotional ties observed in groups rests at the foundation of his explanation on the lack of independence of individuals within the crowd.

Freud explains the importance of mutual suggestion. He argues, “the influence of suggestion becomes a greater riddle for us when we admit that it is not exercised only by the leader, but by every individual upon every other individual...” Freud relies on Wilfred Trotter’s notion of gregariousness which explains the “mental phenomenal that are described as occurring in groups from a herd instinct which is in the in human beings just as in other species of animals.” Trotter’s theory illustrates the tendency of human beings to follow the herd. Individuals anxiously avoid opposition to the crowd for the individuals feel incomplete if separated from the herd.

An examination of the herd instinct provides evidence to suggest that suggestibility is a derivative of the herd instinct. The herd instinct explains the lack of individual behavior of observed in the crowd. Freud illustrates his idea of the herd instinct with two well-formulated examples. He considers the envy with which a child receives his or her younger sibling. The

16 Freud, 29.
17 Freud, 30.
18 Freud, 50.
19 Freud, 50.
20 Freud, 50.
21 Freud, 51.
eldest child might have the inclination to separate the newborn from his or her parents. However, the eldest child eventually realizes that such an undertaking is impossible without damaging himself. The eldest child eventually is forced to abandon all feelings of hostility with the realization that his or her parents love the younger child equally. As a result, the individual is forced to identify himself with the other children.\textsuperscript{22} This example marks a transformation. In this case, the transformation is the replacing of jealousy by a group feeling. In the second of Freud’s examples, he turns his attention to the group of women cheering with a uniform love for the musician on stage. In this case, the cheering women realize the impossibility of the task at hand and renounce any jealousy.\textsuperscript{23} While the woman began as rivals, Freud explains that they have “succeeded in identifying themselves with one another by means of a similar love for the same object.”\textsuperscript{24} Both examples serve to express the derivation of the herd instinct from what was originally envy. I turn to an analysis of stock market crowds within this framework of crowd psychology set forth by Le Bon, Freud, and Trotter. Keep in mind this overview of the herd instinct, as it is important in my explanation of financial bubbles.

**Speculative Bubbles**

The New Palgrave Dictionary of Money and Finance defines stock market bubbles as, a Phenomenon in which increases in share prices are fueled by investor's expectation for further increase.\textsuperscript{25} In *Anatomy of Stock Market Bubbles* Gyorgy Komaromi explains that a stock market bubble develops when future dividends cannot justify the current stock price.\textsuperscript{26} A bubble

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Freud, 52.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Freud 52.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Freud, 52.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Komaromi, 7.
\end{itemize}
grows as individuals continue to pay higher prices for assets with the hope that the value will continue to increase. This trend of overpaying continues for an extended period. Bubbles appear innocuous, but I look at their history to discover what happens when prices suddenly drop significantly. This shape decline in price level marks the collapse of a bubble.

The 1920’s were a prosperous economic decade. Stock prices had been rising for nearly eight years. By 1929 stock prices in the United Stated had reached all time highs.27 The year 1929 began with optimism.28 Then, on October 29, 1929 prices suddenly fell.29 In his evaluation Robert Shiller discovers that market psychology mysteriously changed.30 Market psychology during this period grew incredibly negative.31 Shiller says that the optimists who had been predicting a bright economic “were silenced by events that deviated so markedly from their forecasts that it seemed they could not be explained by any convenient adjustments in theories.”32 Economic forecasters demonstrated “extreme uncertainty” about the future.33 Investors sell off stock and the price begins to decline. As the price levels decline more investors begin putting their shares up for sale to avoid a possible financial loss. As the stock price continues to fall, more investors begin to sell. This process continues until the market sets a new price.

The collapse of this bubble in October of 1929 hurled the United States into the Great Depression.34 Unemployment in the United States reached 25% and 9,000 banks failed wiping out the savings of millions.35 Speculative bubbles have catastrophic political and economic consequences. When a bubble bursts the

28 Shiller, 114.
29 Shiller, 114.
30 Shiller, 115.
31 Shiller, 115.
33 Shiller, 116.
34 Shiller, 116.
35 Shiller, 116.
flow of capital is disrupted and the economy shuts down. The severity and broad reaching nature of these consequences qualify the importance of this study using crowd psychology to better understand this economic phenomenon. Having established in greater detail the problem posed by bubbles, I move to an examination stock market crowds set forth by behavioral economists seeking who identify the psychological drivers behind irrational stock market activity.

Herd Behavior and the Information Cascade

The study of behavioral finance is largely based on psychological characteristics supported by the findings of empirical research observable during investment decision-making. He says if a market actor has inaccurate or inefficient information about a stock herding affect may emerge in the presence of rational expectations. The result is the separation of share price from fundamental value. He asserts that if individuals base their decisions off the decisions of other investors an information cascade may emerge. I look more closely at herding in stock market crowds and how theorists use this notion to explain stock market bubbles.

In "A Simple Method of Herding Behavior" Banerjee provides a model where the first two participants make a single decision that is the same. He explains that the best decision is for the two participants to imitate each other's behavior. If the first person's decision is based on false data, then the crowd begins going off in the wrong direction. Had the first individual been given the correct information than the crowd would have moved in the proper direction. Cont and Bouchaud in "Herd Behavior and Aggregate Fluctuations in Financial Markets" conduct a study where participants make decisions simultaneously. Their

36 Komaromi, vi.
37 Komaromi, 7.
38 Komaromi, 7.
study finds that herding works the same in this scenario. As long as an investor does not make an entirely independent decision from other investors, herding will evidently take place.\textsuperscript{40}

Robert Shiller attempts to explain irregular stock market activity within his notion of irrational exuberance. Irrational exuberance is a term used to describe a heightened state of speculative fervor amongst stock market investors. Shiller seeks to answer; whether the U.S. stock market reached such high levels by the turn of the millennium as a result of irrational exuberance?\textsuperscript{41} Irrational exuberance describes wishful thinking on the part of investors that blinds him or her to the truth of their situation.\textsuperscript{42} His study is an “attempt to characterize the complex nature of our real markets today, considering whether they conform or do not conform to our expectations and models.”\textsuperscript{43} Shiller examines the stock market boom that began in 1982 and picked up incredible speed after 1995. He places that this boom within the context of stock market booms historically. Shiller concludes, that the boom represents a speculative bubble, not grounded in sensible economic fundamentals. I argue that Shiller puts too much emphasis on the behavior of each individual investor. Shiller’s emphasis on information exchange lends support to my claim.

According to Shiller herdlike behavior in stock market crowds is the result of an information cascade. Information cascade theories are theories of “the failure of information about the true fundamental value to be disseminated and evaluated.”\textsuperscript{44} Shiller says, “The failure to disseminate information to others can be modeled in economic theory in terms of purely rational behavior with no limitations of intelligence, only limitations of revealed information.”\textsuperscript{45} This is based on the theory underlying

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[41] Shiller, xi.
\item[42] Shiller, xii.
\item[43] Shiller, xiii.
\item[44] Shiller, 152.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
current economic models, which suggests that individuals behave rationally. However, crowd psychology dictates that the individual within the crowd is no longer conscious of his or her actions.\textsuperscript{46}

I assert that Shiller should refrain from thinking as investors during the formation of a bubble as individual individuals acting irrationally. Instead, it is crucial to think of stock market investors in terms of the crowd. A closer look at the information cascade in market crowds shows that not all-irregular economic performance can be explained in terms of individual’s rational response to new and emerging information. Consider a more comprehensive understanding of an information cascade provided by Shiller. To illustrate how an information cascade begins Shiller constructs a scenario in which customers must choose between two adjacent restaurants based on the number of patrons inside. Imagine a couple approaches two completely empty restaurants just as they open for dinner service. The first couple must choose where to eat based on the empty restaurants. The first couple chooses where to eat based only on the look of the restaurant. Each next couple makes a choice based on the appearance of the restaurant plus the couple dining inside. Shiller explains that in the end more couples might end up dinning at the restaurant with worse food. Had all of the couple had the opportunity to pool their original impressions of the two eateries, they might have been able make a more well informed choice about where to dine.\textsuperscript{47} For Shiller this illustration provides the foundation for a theory about how individual rational investor might be led awry.

The spread of incorrect information amongst investors is an important component of Shiller’s analysis. Epidemic models, the kind used by biologists to track the spread of infectious diseases, helps to establish how the spread of incorrect information contributes to the formation of a market bubble. As is the case during the outbreak of a contagious illness, social

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\textsuperscript{45} Shiller, 153.\hfill
\textsuperscript{46} Le Bon, 7.\hfill
\textsuperscript{47} Shiller, 152.\hfill
\end{flushleft}
scientists seek to measure the rate at which investors are infected with incorrect information. Shiller explains that sociologists use epidemic models to try and measure word-of-mouth transmission rates in stock market crowds.\textsuperscript{48} However, he explains that epidemic models are less accurate for measuring social processes and such research has failed to produce influential and successful literature by social scientists.\textsuperscript{49} Recall the game of telephone where the information of the first person is mutilated as it passes from one person to another. When it comes time for the last player to reveal the phrase, we realize that a new phrase has emerged having been changed slightly by each player. Shiller asserts that the same kind of phenomenon takes place in market crowds.\textsuperscript{50} I find that he places too much emphasis on finding a method for measuring the mutation of information in this crowd. I am more concerned with the emotion that is generated from the spread of incorrect information within the framework of the crowd.

Shiller explains that behavioral experiments prove that “people are ready to believe the majority view of to believe authorities even when they plainly contradict matter of fact judgment.”\textsuperscript{51} For this reason I question why Shiller even concerns himself with the exchange of incorrect information. My analysis of crowd psychology suggests that the nature of this information is not important. Le Bon explains that when an individual is exposed to the crowd for an extended period of time he or she enters a state that closely resembles a type of fascination.\textsuperscript{52} He also explains that the individual is unconscious and devoid of reason. For this reason, I argue Shiller fails to offer a compelling explanation of speculative bubbles. Investors in the stock market constitute a crowd and Le Bon explains that their behavior can be erratic and unpredictable.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{48} Shiller, 159.  
\textsuperscript{49} Shiller, 159.  
\textsuperscript{50} Shiller, 161.  
\textsuperscript{51} Shiller, 151.  
\textsuperscript{52} Le Bon, 28.  
\textsuperscript{53} Le Bon, 28.
From here I move on to an examination of psychological data, which proves that when it comes to making financial choices individuals are blinded by the prospect of grand financial gains. This evidence serves to prove that the nature of the information being exchanged serves to exacerbate the emotional ties between crowd members. Neurological evidence also help to demonstrate that stock market bubbles are best understood within the framework of crowd psychology.

Psychological data cited by Shiller suggests that individuals, when making decisions in an ambiguous situation, use whatever information available regardless of its accuracy. In reality most people are not able to determine the ‘right’ level of the market with any degree of accuracy. This data illustrates that individual’s rarely trade on fundamental data showing again that the quality of information is irrelevant on the level of the individual investor. Instead, this incorrect merely heightens the fervor between members of stock market crowds. I assert that Shiller is mistaken and should be less concerned with the individual and more concerned with the behavior of the crowd as a whole. Here I turn to an evaluation of neurological data, which suggests when it comes to making financial choices individuals are often blinded by the prospect of future financial gains.

Neuroscience of Market Crowds

New neurological data suggests that mankind has a biologic predisposition to the allure of wealth. This scientific evidence helps to create a more compelling explanation of financial bubbles. I consider the emotion generated by top economic officials at the start of the housing boom in 2005.

In 2005 rational economic models suggested that individuals would make careful calculations about their mortgage. This is reflected in the attitudes of the countries top economic officials. On June 9, 2005 then Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan testified before the Joint Economic

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54 Shiller, 137.
55 Shiller, 136.
Committee of the United States Congress. He remarks, “The U.S. economy has weathered such episodes before without experiencing significant declines in the national average level of home prices.”

In 2005, as chairman of the President’s Council of Economic advisors, Ben Bernanke testified, “House prices have risen by nearly 25 percent over the past two years. Although speculative activity has increased in some areas, at a national level these price increases largely reflect strong economic fundamentals…” Their testimony helps to explain in relatable terms the predictions of rational economic models at the time. I argue that this illustrates how the spread of false information is not as important as the emotion that such information conjures. The raise in home prices during this period is an example of a speculative bubble that is left unexplained by economists.

While Shiller locates the cause of herd behavior in stock market crowds, he fails to address the emotional aspect of stock market crowds first stressed by Le Bon and Freud. He is mainly concerned with information exchange and herding. Neurological data helps to shed light on this emotional aspect of stock market crowds and Shiller’s understanding of an information cascade. I refer back to Freud who said, “that the intense emotional ties which we observe in groups are quite sufficient to explain one of their characteristics—the lack of independence and initiative in their members, the similarity in the reactions of all of them…to the level of group individuals.” For this reason, I argue that a comprehensive explanation of stock market bubbles using crowd psychology must consider the emotional factors of the group. I then look at the strength of emotional need to acquire financial


58 Freud, 49.
wealth, as it is rooted in the idea of a primitive instincts as discussed by Trotter.

Using powerful brain scanners psychologists explore the human mind with greater detail and accuracy. Psychologist Brian Knutson designed a study to look at the most primitive parts of the brain. The results of his study serve to express the nature of emotion in market crowds. Knutson’s experiment is designed to measure how emotion affects the oldest parts of the brain. It is however, crucial to provide a basic understanding of the complex structure that is the human brain. The results of Knutson’s study are published in Richard Peterson’s book, *Inside the Investor’s Brain: The Power of Mind Over Money*. Knutson’s research establishes the neural and mental foundations of financial decision-making. He begins with providing a basic understanding of how the human brain operates.

The brain is the product of millions of years of evolution. Knutson’s study looks at how emotions affect one of the most primitive parts of the brain. The human brain has three layers, like an onion, and the most primitive parts are found on the inner most layer. Generally, the lower a part of the brain, the further back it goes in evolution. Life-sustaining psychological processes begin in the innermost core of the brain. This is the part of the brain with which Knutson is concerned. This is where the limbic system is located. The limbic system is, “a deep, evolutionary older system of brain circuits and structures involved in emotion.” This brain system is broken up in to different subsections, one of which helps to uncover the connection between emotion and stock market bubbles.

The nucleus accumbens is a subsection of the limbic system. This important subsection is activated by “anticipation of reward and reward pursuit and procedures positive affect when activated.” This system is responsible for coordinating “the search for, evaluation of, and motivated pursuit of potential

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60 Peterson, 375.

61 Peterson, 377.
Outside studies have shown that high levels of reward system activation can generate feelings of optimism and overconfidence. This eventually can facilitate excessive risk taking. These emotional circuits also play a crucial role in drug addiction. Activation in this part of the brain can help explain why an individual would be willing to pay an overinflated price for shares of a stock. Let’s consider Knutson’s study in greater detail.

Knutson and his team determine that the nucleus accumbens is the part of the brain that generates excitement about future gains. This area of the brain is activated by the anticipation of a reward. Activation in this part of the brain can lead to excessive financial risk taking. This term *activation* is an emotional state that refers to the excited anticipation of a good outcome. This part of the brain goes back so far in evolution that humans share it with many animals. From the standpoint of survival it makes sense that natural rewards would stimulate activation in this primitive part of the brain. In this case natural rewards include sex and nutrition. Knutson attempts to discover other things that excite this part of the brain to the same extent as the prospect of sex and food.

Peterson describes Knutson’s Behavioral Investment Allocation Strategy (BIAS) task. Knutson designed a task that would allow him to test his hypothesis that this area of the reward system actually drives excessive risk taking. In this task subjects were asked to make investment choices. Knutson discovers that the prospect of receiving money caused activation in this primitive area of the brain. Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging scans show that when Knutson increases the value of the possible monetary reward, the greater degree of brain activation. Irrational risk-taking judgments can be predicted by

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62 Peterson, 25.
63 Peterson, 98.
64 Peterson, 98.
65 Peterson, 102.
66 Peterson, 100.
67 Peterson, 102.
watching changes in brain activation.\textsuperscript{68} This team of researchers observed activation in this part of the brain even before subjects made risk-seeking mistakes.\textsuperscript{69} This is the notion of knowing deep down in your gut, Peterson explains. It shows that individuals are inclined to take risk. In turn we can assume that they are inclined to believe the stories of others in the crowd when it comes to information about a ‘hot stock’. It is this emotional excitement with which I am concerned.

Crowd psychologist, Wilfred Trotter provides the foundations of Freud’s idea of herd instinct. Trotter describes the herd mentality as \textit{gregariousness}.\textsuperscript{70} Trotter’s \textit{Instincts of the Herd in Peace & War} is a principal component in the foundations of crowd theory. However, Trotter provides some insight into the most primitive of mankind’s needs. He describes such primitive needs in terms of instincts. The term instinct is used to describe inherited modes of reaction to bodily need or stimulus.\textsuperscript{71} As the desire to meet such a need intensifies, Trotter explains, there will be an inclination that might be quite extreme.

Trotter says that humans have three primitive instincts. He says, “Man and a very large number of all animals inherit that capacity to respond to physical need or emergency according to the demands which we classify as the three primary instincts of self-preservation, nutrition, and reproduction.”\textsuperscript{72} Human intelligence endows individuals with the capacity to respond to an instinctual need in a larger verity of methods.\textsuperscript{73} Trotter illustrates a strong connection between the behaviors of animals and individuals. Sometimes, in the lack of intelligence humans often react like animals. We make erratic choices that serve as a kind of defense mechanism. I am trying to establish the perfect storm of factors that helps to explain how crowd theory can help

\textsuperscript{68} Peterson, 102.
\textsuperscript{69} Peterson, 101.
\textsuperscript{71} Trotter, 94.
\textsuperscript{72} Trotter, 9.
\textsuperscript{73} Trotter, 97.
to explain stock market bubbles. As illustrated in Knutson’s neurological findings, there is a linkage between financial choices and primitive needs.

Consider the strength of an instinct such as sex. This helps to express how powerfully humans are compelled to make risky investments in search of financial gains. Knutson’s experiment and Trotter’s understanding of primitive instincts establish a connection between financial behavior and the satisfaction that comes from having sex. The human instinct to reproduce is intense. Trotter explains, “The physical energy of an instinct so important as that of sex is very great, and is not dissipated by that forces of repression brought to bear upon it, but transformed into activities ostensible quite different and directed into channels have no obvious connection with their source.”

He admits that there is more than one physical activity capable of satisfying this need. However, for this study his idea seeks to illustrate the powerful emotional factors at work at the individual and group level. People are willing to do whatever it takes to meet their most primitive needs. In terms of stock market behavior, this is another factor at work that pushes people to make financially risky decisions.

Conclusion

My analysis uses crowd theory to explain economic bubbles. I began my analysis with an explanation of the crowd according to Le Bon and Freud. Le Bon explains the development of the crowd. He explains that when an individual is exposed to the emotion or fervor, he or she often undergoes a change in behavior. In terms of stock market crowds, when individuals outside the market are exposed to the emotion of investors during a boom time, they fail to consider the possible risks of investing. In the case of the stock market crowd, false optimism in an era of good feelings pulls more and more investors in to the market. Freud provides a more

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74 Trotter, 73.
75 Peterson, 37.
comprehensive analysis of the affect that a single individual has upon another within the crowd. The spread of information helps to exacerbate these feelings. Freud also describes this aspect of herding in crowds, which is applied to market crowds by Shiller.

Crowd psychology helps to describe the lack of individual thinking during the time that a financial bubble develops. Shiller explains that herd behavior is the result of an information cascade. An information cascade is described as the spread of incorrect information. Schiller is the one who describes this idea within the framework of investing. He is mostly concerned with providing a mathematical equation able to calculate the spread of incorrect information among stock investors. He uses the spread of incorrect information to characterize this notion of irrational exuberance. His analysis suggests that the spread of incorrect information is one of the chief causes responsible for fostering irrational exuberance. For the purposes of this analysis, Shiller’s study provides the mechanism that sparks an era of good feelings that leads to the development of a financial bubble. I turn to an evaluation of neurological data that brings my analysis a step further.

Many individuals experience feelings of false optimism about the market outlook. This feeling of false optimism is the result of activation in the part of the brain known as the nucleus accumbens. Activation in this part of the brain can cause individuals to take bigger financial risks without any understanding of market fundamentals. Any comprehensive explanation of stock market bubbles within this framework of crowd psychology must include some type of evaluation of emotion. The neurological data seeks to establish this emotional component to stock market crowds. Behavioral Economists might consider evaluating bubbles from within this framework, as this group is often unable to gather scientific evidence capable of challenging the mathematical equations of rational economists.

When it comes to studying stock market activity, economists rely heavily upon an evaluation of individual actions. The fact of the matter is that individual behavior fails to single-
handedly drive market behavior. Instead, this irrational market behavior can be explained in terms of irrational crowd behavior. Le Bon and Freud both express the tendency of crowds to act unpredictably. Economists must recognize that crowds drive markets. For this reason it is crucial to look at crowd characteristics and tendencies when trying to explain any stock market trend. As I establish, crowds often behave erratically. At that point, as I explain above, the connection between irrational market behaviors and crowd behavior should be apparent. It is for this reason that I argue that crowd psychology provides a more comprehensive explanation of stock market bubbles.
Contributors

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Nathaniel Burgess is a rising Senior at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. He is currently pursuing a degree in Political Science at the Colleges while centralizing his focus on ethics and conflict within the contemporary world. He hopes to pursue a career in Politics with a focus on International politics. He will be graduating Hobart in the spring of 2014.

Brooke Lyon is a double major in Political Science and Public Policy, with a concentration in Foreign Policy, and a minor in German language at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. She is also a member of the varsity sailing team. After graduating in 2014 Brooke hopes find a career that she will be passionate about pursuing for the rest of her life.

Eleanor McDavis is a major in Politics and American History. She came to study at Hobart and William Smith Colleges as an exchange student from the University of East Anglia (UEA) in the academic year 2012-2013. Studying and living at HWS allowed Eleanor to take a wide variety of class, discover new points of view and develop amazing friendships. After graduating from UEA in July 2014 Eleanor plans to continue her education at a post-graduate level and pursue her passion for socio-cultural issues.

Patrick O’Brien is a Political Science, Pre Law major with a double minor in American Studies and Economics, Patrick is a well versed and intelligent human being. Through his newfound interest in the science of a crowd, Patrick has accurately proven the origins of collective genius and is worthy of a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize as a result. We are proud and humble to
have him as a contributor and the first article in our plethora of crowd theory and practice.

**Peter Michael Parente, Jr.** is a Political Science and English double major. In the Fall of 2012 Peter spent the semester in Washington, D.C. studying fiscal and monetary policy in the wake of the 2008 housing crisis.

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**William M. Swenson, Jr** is a Political Science major at Hobart College who is graduating in the Spring of 2013

**Peter Tardelli** is Political Science and English double major. He is from Potsdam NY and is part of a family of 6 with three younger sisters. Favorite book is *The making of a quagmire*, favorite drink is Jack Daniel's on the rock, and favorite movie is *Gladiator.*
“By the mere fact that he forms part of an organised crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd he is a barbarian - that is, a creature acting by instinct.”

Gustave Le Bon
The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind 1895

“In recent years many political theorists have examined the dilemmas that popular constituent power poses for democratic theory and democratic politics. New research into crowds and crowd theory extends this work in promising new directions.”

Jason Frank
Associate Professor, Department of Government, Cornell University.
Author of Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Postrevolutionary America

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A Hobart and William Smith Student Collaboration