

## **MOB PSYCHOLOGY/ CROWD PSYCHOLOGY**

**Mob or Crowd psychology** is a branch of social psychology. Ordinary people can typically gain direct power by acting collectively. Historically, because large groups of people have been able to bring about dramatic and sudden social change in a manner that bypasses established due process, they have also provoked controversy. Social scientists have developed several different theories for explaining crowd psychology, and the ways in which the psychology of the crowd differs significantly from the psychology of those individuals within it. Carl Jung coined the notion of the Collective unconscious. At a general level, crowd psychology is concerned with the behaviour and thought processes of individual crowd members and the crowd as a whole. Given the (particularly modern) prevalence of crowd events, and the potential safety issues associated with such large gatherings of people, the topic is receiving increasing attention from agencies responsible for crowd management and also from governments.

### **Theories of crowd psychology**

#### **Classical theories**

The main idea of classical theory of crowd behavior theory is that people who are in a crowd act differently towards people from those who are thinking individually. The minds of the group would merge to form a way of thinking. Each member's enthusiasm would be increased as a result, and one becomes less aware of the true nature of one's actions.

"When the leaders become conscious of mass psychology and take it into their own hands, it ceases to exist in a certain sense. Just as little as people believe in the depth of their hearts that the Jews are the devil, do they completely believe in their leader. They do not really identify themselves with him but act this identification, perform their own enthusiasm, and thus participate in their leader's performance. It is probably the suspicion of this fictitiousness of their own 'group psychology' which makes fascist crowds so merciless and unapproachable. If they would stop to reason for a second, the whole performance would go to pieces, and they would be left to panic."

#### **Deindividuation theory**

Deindividuation theory argues that in typical crowd situations the borders and distance between individuals tend to disappear, as they tend to merge into a larger whole. According to pioneer Gustave Le Bon, this resulted in 'mental unity'. American social psychologist Leon Festinger and colleagues first elaborated the concept of deindividuation in 1952. It was further refined by American social psychologist Philip Zimbardo, who spelled out in great detail why mental input, through input and output became blurred by such factors as anonymity, sensory overload.

## **Convergence theory**

Convergence theory holds that crowd behavior is not a product of the crowd itself, but is carried into the crowd by particular individuals. Thus, crowds amount to a convergence of like-minded individuals. In other words, while contagion theory states that crowds cause people to act in a certain way, convergence theory says the opposite: that people who wish to act in a certain way come together to form crowds.

An example of convergence theory states that there is no homogeneous activity within a repetitive practice, sometimes observed when an immigrant population becomes common in a previously homogeneous area, and members of the existing community (apparently spontaneously) band together to threaten those trying to move into their neighborhoods. In such cases, convergence theorists contend, the crowd itself does not generate racial hatred or violence; rather, the hostility has been simmering for some time among many local people. A crowd then arises from convergence of people who oppose the presence of these neighbors. Convergence theory claims that crowd behavior as such is not irrational; rather, people in crowds express existing beliefs and values so that the mob reaction is the rational product of widespread popular feeling.