

Crowd: “temporary collection of people who share an immediate common interest”

Four Types of Crowds

1. Casual crowd – *stopping to watch a street performer*
 - a. Least organized, least emotional, most temporary
 - b. Share point of interest, but is minor and quickly fades
 - c. Not much interaction of members
2. Conventional crowd – *watching a movie in theatre, riding a bus*
 - a. Selected purpose, follows accepted norms
 - b. Not as much interaction of members
3. Expressive crowd – *dancing at a club, rock concert*
 - a. Highly emotional, free emotional expression – yelling, crying, laughing – main characteristic
 - b. More interaction between members
4. Acting crowd – *Political protests, tearing down goal-posts after a football game*
 - a. Has an objective, people act together to accomplish it
 - b. Often violent, willing to use violence to accomplish goals
 - c. Two types of acting crowds:

Mob:

- Emotional (acting) crowd ready to use violence and destructiveness for a *specific purpose*.
- Anything but the goal are distractions, and all who deviate from the mob’s purpose are pressured to conform or punished.

Riot:

- Similar to mob, but without a sense of common purpose, still possibly violent and destructive
- Behavior is much less organized
- A mob may burn a building, kill a person or destroy property for a specific purpose, but a riot would do it for convenience.

Theories of Crowd Behavior

(Specifically mobs and riots)

1. **Contagion Theory** – Contagion theory focuses on the spread of emotion in a crowd. As emotional intensity in the crowd increases, people temporarily lose their individuality to the “will” of the crowd. This makes it possible for a charismatic or manipulative leader to direct crowd behavior, at least initially. Contagion theory was started by Gustave Le Bon (1895), who thought that people in crowds were reduced to something of a subhuman level. According to LeBon, Contagion theory happens in three stages
 1. *Milling* – People move around in an aimless and random fashion, much like excited herds of cattle or sheep. Through milling, people become increasingly aware of and responsive to one another in the crowd. They enter something similar to a hypnotic trance, preparing the crowd to act in a spontaneous way.
 2. *Collective Excitement* – A more intense form of milling. Members become more impulsive, unstable and highly responsive to the actions and suggestions of others. Individuals begin to lose their personal identity and take on the identity of the crowd.
 3. *Social Contagion* – Behavior in this stage involves rigid, unthinking and irrational adherence to crowd behavior.
2. **Convergence Theory** – Whereas contagion theory referred to an otherwise independent individual's willingness to conform to the collective thoughts and behaviors of a crowd, convergence theory takes a more logical (rather than emotional) approach. Convergence theory suggests that people form riots not because of any collective consciousness of a crowd, but because already like-minded people come together to form a crowd. Members have pre-existing common interests and come together to accomplish a shared goal (at least initially)
3. **Emergent-Norm Theory** – Emergent-Norm theory states that crowds have a dynamic set of norms that develop as the crowd category shifts, or as the behavior of the crowd changes. For example, ordinarily it would be abnormal for a person to break into a jewelry store. However, within a riot, that behavior may be within the norm, and accepted. A person that would have called the police from the looting may view the behavior as acceptable if they are a member of the riot.