

Searching for the joy of the crowd:
Field social psychology during the re-opening of Danish society

Séamus A. Power,

Sofie Roest,

Esben Ronan,

Sigrid Vange,

Signe Vangkilde,

Laura Vangkilde,

&

Thomas A. Morton

University of Copenhagen

Corresponding Author: Séamus A. Power, Department of Psychology, University of Copenhagen. Øster Farimagsgade 2A, 1353 København K, Denmark.
Email: seamus.power@psy.ku.dk

Suggested Citation: Power, S.A., Roest, S., Ronan, E., Vange, S., Vangkilde, S., Vangkilde, L. & Morton, T. (2025). Searching for the joy of the crowd: Field social psychology during the re-opening of Danish society. *Qualitative Psychology*. Online First.

Note: ©American Psychological Association, 2025. This paper is not the copy of record and may not exactly replicate the authoritative document published in the APA journal. The final article is available, upon publication, at: 10.1037/qup0000350

Abstract:

Interventions to address the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted people's ability to gather. Denmark was early to lockdown society in March 2020. Yet by 2021, successful programs of mass testing and vaccination, and high levels of behavioral compliance, encouraged governments to begin re-opening society; and for the first time in over a year people could gather in progressively larger groups. These interventions into everyday life can be seen as a purposive form of "world-making" in which government sought to both protect and then re-form Danish society in collaboration with the perceived wishes of the people. Between August and October 2021, as the government cautiously reopened society, we conducted field social psychological research, including in-depth participant observation and *in situ* interviews with 204 individuals, at 10 cultural events held in Denmark. Congruent with previous quantitative work in this context (Morton & Power, 2022, 2023), our thematic analysis illustrates the ways in which generalized trust in others led to the potential for people to gather in crowds (theme 1). A discourse analysis (on theme 2) further reveals the ways in which crowd participants negotiated the ambivalence between felt and actual safety, and how they made decisions to participate in crowd events in uncertain times. Finally, shared identity with trusted others underpins the phenomenological accounts of the joy of crowd participation (theme 3). We end by discussing how multiple qualitative analytic methods can be fruitfully used in conjunction to develop insight; the implications of this insight for theories of crowd psychology, and; how field social psychology is a generative framework for examining – and contributing to – world-making.

Keywords: COVID-19; Crowds; Denmark; Field Social Psychology; Risk; World-Making.

The COVID-19 pandemic powerfully disrupted daily lives across the globe. Social scientists responded to this dramatic context and offered insights into whether and how individuals and societies complied with requirements for social distancing and mask wearing (e.g., Bicchieri et al., 2021; Betsch et al., 2020; Power et al., 2023; Zettler et al., 2022; van Bavel et al., 2022), testing and reporting (e.g., Jörling et al., 2023), and eventually vaccination (e.g., Murphy et al., 2021; Rathje et al., 2022). Over three years after the pandemic broke, the threat of COVID-19 was mostly downgraded. At that time, the questions being asked were whether and how society and social behavior have fundamentally changed in response to the experiences of the pandemic, and which lessons might be learned to prepare for a future in which pandemics are seen more regularly (Power et al., 2023).

In between the restrictions of the early stages of the pandemic and the “new normal” of open society was the moment when restrictions began to ease, and individuals could come together again. Just as governments grappled with the dilemma between ongoing disease threat and the desire for normal economic and cultural life to return, individuals navigated these dilemmas as they stepped out of the private space of home, friends, and family, and into progressively less-regulated spaces populated by unknown and anonymous others. Extending previous quantitative analyses of this moment (Morton & Power, 2023), here we draw on qualitative data collected *in situ* at live events across the summer of 2021 in Denmark. Through the methodology of field social psychology (Power & Velez, 2022), the current research allows a window into a unique moment in which society was shifting, and into the ways in which individuals balanced questions of risk versus safety against the joy of being together again. Field social psychology draws on multiple forms of data collection (observation, participation, and interviewing over an extended period of time), which we combine here to examine how government policies were being implemented with a view to cautiously transforming society in a direction congruent with many people’s wishes. Conceptually, our focus on transformative social and societal processes falls under the umbrella of world-making (Power, Zittoun, et al., 2023).

World-making and Field Social Psychology

Recent theoretical work in sociocultural psychology emphasizes the central importance of imagination in human and cultural development (de Saint Laurent et al., 2018; Power, Zittoun, et al., 2023; Wagoner et al., 2017; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015; Zittoun & Glăveanu,

2018). One of the key theoretical insights emerging from this literature is that we are not simply embedded in the present or solely motivated by the weight of the past. Instead, at a psychological level, we are live in many potential futures (Glăveanu 2021). The imaginative availability of multiple possible futures, and the direction or constraint imposed on that imagination by circumstances, systems, and societal discourses, profoundly shapes who we think we *are* and who we can *become*, both individually and collectively.

One of the key metaphors used to comprehend the psychology of imagination is the looping metaphor (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015; 2018). This metaphor describes how people decouple from the here and now, project into the future, and then return to the present where they recouple, transformed by the imaginations of how the future could be. Thus, imagination involves a continual back-and-forth – or looping – between present and future. Although the content of imagined futures are not real, the consequences of these imaginings can be very real when enacted. Research on the psychology of imagining draws our attention to how future possibilities motivate people's thoughts and feelings in the present, and the actions they take to anticipate or move toward the future.

The world-making approach in social psychology develops from the above theorizing (Power, Zittoun, et al., 2023) and is based on four propositions. First, on an ontological level, the world is not static and pre-defined. It is processual, developmental, and characterized by change and the emergence of new phenomena. Second, in terms of epistemology, psychologists, and other qualitative researchers, can use theoretical imagination to anticipate and participate in this changing and developing world. Third, given our participation in changing contexts - where we both study the process of change and contribute to change through studying it - we have ethical responsibility to consider the (unintended) consequences of our research. This is because our research loops through society and informs (for better or worse) the societies and cultures in which we live (Hacking, 1995; Gillespie & Wagoner, in press). Fourth, world-making happens through a variety of modalities. Reflecting this, the world-making approach advocates for a plurality of methods to overcome the inherent limitations of all methods when used in isolation.

The world-making approach has recently been generative in advancing social and cultural psychology (e.g. Dennis et al., 2025; Gergen et al., 2023; Prosser et al., 2025;

Veale & Walsh, 2024). Methodologically, this approach aligns particularly well with field social psychology (Power & Velez, 2022). “Field social psychology is an approach to describe, examine, and explain psychological phenomena at multiple levels of analysis with emphasis on the socio-cultural environments in which people are embedded, the unfolding of psychological processes over time, and the use of ecologically valid multiple methods in conjunction” (Power & Velez, 2022, p. 940). A field social psychological approach is particularly well-suited to comprehending societies and cultures as they are changing and transforming – that is, to comprehending world-making as it occurs. Through its emphasis on observation, participation, and general axiomatic embeddedness in locations, and with people, being researched, field social psychological also foregrounds the role of the researcher – and their ethics – in both documenting and contributing to processes of change. Again, this aligns the methods of field social psychology with the conceptual approach of world-making.

Transformative crowds

Crowds – that is, people gathering together to express shared values and goals, or to engage in shared interests – are a vivid example of collective life. They are also an important place in which world-making occurs. Crowds and other forms of mass gathering have the potential to contribute to transformations at multiple levels, including the psychological and social transformations that are experienced by individuals within the crowd, and the legal, political and societal transformations that can follow crowd action in the form of protest. In crowds, individuals re-imagine their self as part of a community and can act together to realize their re-imaginings of society in contrast to the status quo.

Yet, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, debates over the possibility of reopening society primarily focused on the risks posed by individuals gathering together in large numbers. A particular concern was the night-time economy of bars and clubs, as well as concerts and festivals, where individuals mix and mingle outside of the safe bubbles of friends and family, with judgement potentially clouded by drugs, alcohol, and the hedonistic desire for “abandon and release” (e.g., as expressed in a report by the UK’s Digital, Culture, Media & Sport Committee, 2021). Under this characterization, unwieldy crowds would be incubators of disease, dangers to the health of citizens, and an obstacle for attempts to re-open society. Such fears are congruent with a persistent

but stereotyped image of crowds (Drury, Novelli, & Stott, 2013), which has its roots in early social science theorizing, especially Le Bon's book *The Crowd* (1896). As part of the bourgeoisie, Le Bon's analysis of the crowd was conservative, characterizing people within crowds as barbaric and uncivilized, their behavior meaningless, instinctive, and easily exploited by leaders.

Contemporary social science theorizing, however, offers a more nuanced picture of the crowd (see Drury, 2025, for a recent review). Here, crowds can be both destructive and constructive forces depending on the exact meaning of the crowd to the individual and within the social and societal context. For example, research illustrates how crowd formation and behavior are best understood within the cultural and socio-political and economic contexts. The spread of protests, for instance, does not follow passive "contagion" of ideas between individuals submersed in crowds, as suggested by Le Bon. Instead, crowd behavior is often purposeful and directed, with people displaying agency and reflection and meaningfully patterned behavior (Drury, 2020; Reicher, 1984; Warren & Power, 2015). Importantly, while this might result in destructive tendencies towards entities outside the crowd, within crowds social relations can be mutually supportive, protective, and guided by (collective) rationality, rather than the absence of this (Hopkins et al., 2019). Equally, individual experiences within crowds can be positive and uplifting, contributing to individual well-being (Hopkins et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2015; Tewari et al., 2012). Appreciating the capacity for positive social and psychological transformations within crowds helps to understand what was at stake in debates over the reopening of society: After a year of relative social isolation, individuals – to varying degrees – needed to be around each other again, and the capacity to do so promised psychological rewards. These rewards were especially likely to follow from events that allowed individuals to (again) celebrate shared values and beliefs, a sense of community, and to live out their identities with each other rather than in isolation.

Social identity, trust, and balancing actual risk with perceived safety

Despite the demonstrable benefits to collective participation, social psychological research also highlights problematic implications of the social and psychological transformations that occur within crowds. According to the social identity model of risk taking (Cruwys et al., 2021), within identity-based crowds – that is, where the gathering

of individuals is defined by some meaningful community or group-membership – boundaries between self and other become permeable as others are incorporated into the individual's sense of self. In this context of shared identity, trust becomes a normative expectation, which is both granted to, and reciprocally expected from, other group members. The merging of self and other further attenuates disgust over bodily intrusions promoting (Reicher et al., 2016) and supporting comfort with interpersonal proximity (Novelli, Drury, & Reicher, 2010). Processes of heightened trust and attenuated disgust can contribute to increased willingness to engage in behavior that might otherwise seem risky (e.g., Cruwys et al., 2021; Hult Khazaie & Khan, 2020). Studies specifically conducted in the wake of the pandemic further demonstrate the utility of this model to understanding dynamics in the post-COVID crowd (Morton & Power, 2022, 2023; Rathbone et al., 2022; Smith & Templeton, 2022; Power et al., 2023). Thus, despite the social significance of mass gatherings, and the psychological benefits of participation, there are good reasons to predict that behavior in crowds might contribute to disease spread.

Though insightful, research guided by the social identity model of risk taking provides a mechanistic understanding of the relationships among identity, trust, and perceived or enacted risk. Following experimental logics, trust is positioned as a mediator that follows from the activation of shared identity, and in turn affects risk judgments and behavior in a causal sequence. Though demonstrating causal links between these concepts is important, such work provides only limited insight into how core concepts of trust and risk are experienced in practice, and how individuals themselves work through the balance between objective risks and subjective safety. Quantitative data also conceal the more the intricate meaning-making processes that underly people's trust in others and their decisions to engage in (or refrain from) potentially risky situations. Finally, quantitative data rarely situates individual-level transformations in response to shared identity within the broader societal transformations that might be unfolding as government debates and experiments with the balance between policies of restriction versus openness. Qualitative data can elaborate on these questions and illuminate additional layers that surround seemingly simple concepts like trust. For example, previous work interviewing residents of Denmark during the first lockdown showed how a culturally widespread and historically ingrained narrative of generalized trust was readily available and accessed

by individuals as they reasoned through the legitimacy of government restrictions and made sense of their own behavioral compliance (Power et al., 2023).

In this paper, we similarly address gaps in past research on risk taking in crowds by exploring the dynamic experience and reasoning of individuals attending crowded events in that critical moment when the global pandemic persisted, but normal life was again becoming a possibility. By drawing on observational and qualitative data collected *in situ*, our aim is to explicate the meaning-making processes of individuals as they make sense of, and negotiate, decisions to attend events despite the potential danger of COVID-19 to them and others in society. In so doing, we also aim to understand the meaning of collective participation and people's experiences of being together with others after a period of extended social restrictions.

Current Research

In this paper we draw on past theorizing about the psychological significance of collective participation, and on the roles of social identity in shaping crowd experiences, especially through concepts of trust, perceived risk, and safety. In contrast to the predominantly quantitative work in this area, we conducted in-depth ethnographic research at 10 cultural and musical events, geared towards a broad range of attendees in Denmark, as well as semi-structured interviews with 204 participants at these crowd events. We were interested in investigating how people made meaning of and experienced participating in crowd events as part of the attempted reopening of Danish society. Through interrogating this moment, the research was both an examination of, and contribution to, world-making. The earliest event was an outdoor concert by Danish popstar, Lukas Graham on August 20th, 2021, when there were still COVID-19 related restrictions on attending events. The final event was indoor in a small theatre in central Copenhagen on October 10th, 2021, when all COVID-19 related restrictions were removed. The events in between spanned a range of audience sizes (from c. 100 to 50,000), venues (indoor and outdoor), setting (urban and rural), and genres (from concerts to festivals, a rave, and theatre performances). Before presenting our analysis, we first outline our methodological rationale, sampling procedures, interviewing strategies, and analytic approach.

Methodology: Field Social Psychology

We drew on a field social psychological methodological approach to gather and analyze data throughout this project (Power & Velez, 2021). In the current case, this involved a team of researchers conducting in-depth ethnographic observations, engaged participation at these crowd events, conducting informal and semi-structured interviews with participants during the developing pandemic. Our aim was to holistically comprehend people's meaning making processes through their narration (Bruner, 1990) and to thickly describe (Geertz, 1973) people's experiences *in situ* over time (Power & Velez, 2020) as the reality of, and responses to, COVID-19 developed.

We also documented changing health advice and policy developments responding to the evolving pandemic. The early fieldwork, beginning in August, 2021, was characterized by increased uptake of vaccines, no mask-mandate, but requirements to display a valid corona passport ("Coronapas") – verifying that one had either been vaccinated against COVID-19, tested negatively within the last three days, or had been infected with COVID-19 within the previous six months, and therefore considered immune – in order to gain entry into restaurants, cafes, bars, and cultural events. One characteristic of larger music events in August 2021 was the deployment of barriers dividing larger spaces into subsections. The aim of this intervention was to create smaller crowds within the crowd and thereby to reduce the capacity for COVID-19 to spread across groups.

With further increasing vaccination rates and no dramatic spike in COVID-19 infections after the initial tentative re-opening of society, government policy changed during our field research. After September 1st, 2021, all remaining restrictions on public life were lifted. This means that it was no longer required to check corona passes to enter venues, physical barriers dividing crowded events were removed, the number of attendees at crowd events was increased, and people could mix and mingle freely for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic. This also facilitated the work of the research team and our ability to explore the changing experiences of crowded events across an uncertain and transitional time as it developed in the local Danish context.

Data Collection

The team consisted of seven researchers, with either or both of the lead and final authors attending every event in combination with several research assistants who

conducted the majority of the 204 interviews. Most interviews were in Danish, but some were in English with English speakers who also attended these events. The 10 cultural and musical events covered a range of formats and genres, including a big-name local pop star; a pop and rock festival; a theatre show attended by older people; LGBTQ+ pride events; a climate change awareness event, and; several musical festivals outside Copenhagen.

We developed an interview schedule iteratively. First research questions were developed deductively, based on pre-existing theory concerning the importance of trust and shared identity in crowd behavior. Open-ended questions aimed to allow our interviewees space to elaborate their views on trust in a variety of event-relevant actors, such as government, institutional authorities, organizers, and others in the audience (e.g., Do you trust the organizers of this festival? Do you trust the government authorities to keep you safe? Why, why not?). We also asked theoretically informed questions about shared identity (e.g., Why do you attend cultural events? Why are you here today?).

Over time, responding to our participant observations, answers given by interviewees, and the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions to enter crowd events, we developed our interview schedule. Having conducted initial interviews to become orientated with the reasons why people were attending crowd events during an ongoing pandemic, we became interested in later crowd events, for instance, in people's individual connection with others and asked more focused questions to understand why people – in the context of actual risk – joined crowd events with known, and unknown others (e.g., What is it like to be part of the crowd during the COVID-19 pandemic? What does it feel like to be here with others in this context?). Our earlier interviews also revealed tensions between how crowd attendees discussed their happiness with being present, on the one hand, with their awareness of health risks, on the other hand. Accordingly, we began asking direct questions to probe this tension (e.g., How do you feel about the risk of being so close with others at a crowd event?).

We interviewed 204 participants, some were short on-site interviews, others were longer and more engaged, some were with individuals and others were with groups of people, often family members, or friends, which acted like sample focus groups. We had no pre-defined sampling strategy. We approached different groups of people who were asked if they wanted to be interviewed about their experiences

regarding the crowd event they were at. Informed consent was obtained. All interviews were transcribed and those conducted in Danish were translated into English by the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 6th authors who are fluent in both languages. The selected extracts were back-translated by the 5th author, again fluent in both languages. Qualitative analyses were conducted on the English transcripts. Ethical approval for the research was granted by the Department of Psychology at the University of Copenhagen. Access to events was facilitated by the Roskilde Festival Experience team (a consultancy group attached to Roskilde Festival, Denmark's (and Europe's) largest outdoor music festival and in collaboration with Dansk Live (Denmark's industry association for live culture)

Qualitative Analytic Approach

All methods reveal and conceal. By using a combination of qualitative approaches, we aimed to overcome the limitations of one method when used in isolation and to create a holistic and triangulated understanding of our participants meaning-making processes and phenomenological experiences of attending musical and cultural crowd events during the COVID-19 pandemic (Denzin, 2012; Power et al., 2018). We took advice from reflexive thematic analysis Braun and Clarke (2006) as the first step of our analysis. Specifically, first we deductively coded our transcribed interview material on a semantic level to identify passages of text directly related to our theoretical issues (trust, identity, crowd experiences). Next, we moved to a latent level of analysis, moving from what was said to what was meant, identifying indirect instances of discussion of our theoretically informed concepts, based on participation-observation at these crowd events.

Second, we re-coded the entire dataset inductively. This allowed us to further refine our deductive thematic analysis. This level of analysis aimed to develop concepts and thematic patterns largely devoid from theoretically informed coding. This method allowed us to comprehend the corpus of data from the bottom up and to generate new theoretical insights largely independent of our preconceived frame. This two-step process allowed us to develop three themes: (1) trust and the possibility of coming together again; (2) negotiating ambivalence and (3) the joy of the crowd. We sought to deepen this initial thematic structure to more comprehensively, holistically, and generatively develop the depth of our analysis. To do so, we drew on the inherent flexibility of the thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and used it in combination with two further qualitative analytic approaches. The idea of trust and the possibility of coming together again was covered with a deductive thematic analysis.

However, theme two – negotiating ambivalence – seemed to necessitate a focus on the use of discourse to tease out this tension. As such, we use discourse analytic concepts (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) to explain how people used language to both position themselves and negotiate meaning during the unfolding pandemic and changing formal policies and regulations around crowd events. The third theme, the joy of the crowd, was individually focused, personal, and meaningful for participants. The inductive thematic analysis concerned with these personal and emotional responses drew our attention on the phenomenological aspects of attending crowd events. We therefore also utilized concepts from interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, 2011) to comprehend the actual lived experience of being in a crowd – based on interviewees descriptions of these experiences – to add interpretative depth to the third theme generated from the thematic analysis.

Overall, the combination of deductive and inductive, semantic and latent, thematic analysis, coupled with in-depth discursive and phenomenological analysis (to extend the themes 2 and 3 respectively) provided a triangulated account of people's meanings and experiences of cultural and musical events as these were manifested in a local Danish context but also against the backdrop of an unfolding global pandemic. This interlocking analysis, based on a process ontology, is termed abduction. An abductive approach entails theorizing beyond observed data and prior expectations to form new theoretical frameworks to comprehend psychological and societal phenomena (Gillespie, et al. 2024; Peirce, 1955). By applying this meta-methodological pragmatic interpretative strategy, we aimed to both explain the psychological phenomenon by taking a creatively informed leap and generating theories – at the nexus of deduction and induction – to comprehend data and form new knowledge.

Structure of Analysis

Our analysis is structured around three themes. In theme 1, we describe participants trust in others on explicit and implicit levels. We suggest trust led to the possibility for people to come together again in the context of an ongoing global pandemic. However, although trust created this possibility, the reality of being together again also needed to be discussed and rationalized by participants. How people discursively explain and justify their decisions to come together in crowds – how they negotiate ambiguous feelings – is the subject of theme 2 of the analysis. In theme 3, we aimed to comprehend

people's phenomenological experiences of crowd participation. We reveal, once feelings of trust led to the possibility of being together, and people navigated through ambiguous feelings related to this, that the joy of being submerged with others – known and unknown – in a crowd was an important motivator for people moving from the possible to the reality. Overall, the analysis reveals the ways in which people navigated objective risks to feel nonetheless comfortable with their actions despite the uncertainty of an ongoing global pandemic.

Analysis:

Theme 1: Trust and the possibility for coming together again.

High levels of trust within Danish society, both within the pandemic context, but also within the wider historical and cultural template, have been previously documented (Power et al., 2023). Here again trust acted as an overarching framework that allowed people the possibility of coming together again at events. Levels of trust oscillated between speakers and across different phases of the re-opening, through which COVID-19 restrictions were progressively lifted. Across the period of investigation, discussions of trust shifted from the responsibility of authorities to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 towards the individual actions of crowd attendees. Explicit expressions of trust in authorities were most common when some restrictions, such as checking corona pass upon entry, were in still in place and being enforced. Discussions of trust were more discursively complicated when restrictions were removed after September 1st, 2021. Our first theme more specifically examines three expressions of trust (explicit, implicit, and negotiated).

When we asked crowd attendees about their trust in authorities during the initial re-opening, the overwhelming response was to indicate high degrees of trust in event organizers. This conveyance of trust in organizers was often immediate and explicit. For example, two young respondents at a pop concert unambiguously responded to our inquiry about trust in the event organizers:

“Interviewer: Have you thought about whether the organizers are here to take care of us all?

Young woman 1: Yes! I definitely think they are!

Young woman 2: Yes, they did what they can

Young woman 1: Without a doubt!

Interviewer: So you've trusted them?

Young woman 1: Yes yes yes! Undoubtedly.

Young woman 2: Yes, of course, we talked about that together."

Not all the interview data was so easy to interpret. Our latent deductive coding of transcripts revealed instances of implicit trust in event organizers and other authorities in keeping people safe in the context of crowds. A woman we spoke to in a large, open-air concert, displayed more implicit trust in organizers, when she discussed being close to others in the crowd. Here is one illustrative interaction:

"Interviewer: Have you noticed any particular feelings, for example, if you were gathered with others in a crowd?

Woman 30s: I would not think multiple times "ahh, I shouldn't stand so close to people." Then I would forget it and stand close to them and then later I would regret it. In that way, I am not particularly rational. In the one moment I would have it best [I would feel better] if I stood at a distance. But I will get caught by the mood anyway and the authorities have said that we may do it again. I am also vaccinated."

This respondent oscillates between multiple standpoints, foreshadowing the second of two themes, but implicitly resolves her dilemma between enacted proximity to others while knowing this is not what one ought to do during a pandemic, by drawing on internalized discourse concerning trust in others and the role of authorities. She then moves to externalizing this internalized dialogue by stating "the authorities have said we may do it (being close to others at crowd events) again." Implicit in this statement is that the health messages communicated by government authorities should be adhered to, indicating implicit trust in the organs of the state.

Not all respondents that we spoke to had such an axiomatic trusting relationship with authorities in Denmark. An older man interviewed during an open-air event, for instance, articulated a more complex relationship with Danish authorities, explaining to us that he is critical, questioning, and vigilant of those in power, particularly in imposing COVID-19 mitigation policies. This interaction is emblematic of the types of discourse

occurring during interviews after restrictions had been lifted. The exchange went like this:

“Interviewer: And with respect to authorities, do you trust them keeping things safe?

Older man: I think actually the way they dealt with the situation during the corona crisis means that one trusted them a little less, you know? As a rule, if the health authorities say to stop, then I’ll stop. But there are some restrictions that just don’t make sense.

Interviewer: Some say Danes are trusting in authority?

Older man: And they are. I also I think I am. If the authorities say to sanitize your hands, then I sanitize them. I think there is a limit though, also for me. I think people’s limits are different. I think if you think that things don’t make sense for a long time, then you can reach a limit – I haven’t reached it yet. It’s probably a sign that I am trusting in authority.”

Similar to the previous respondent, we again see a negotiation between one’s actual attendance of a crowd event during the pandemic, and one’s rationale for being there. The respondent was critical of how Danish authorities’ responded to the global pandemic. Ordinarily, he told us, he is responsive to messages from health authorities but in the context of the pandemic he told us “some restrictions do not make sense.” When we asked again about generalized trust in authorities in Denmark, he further explained that people are receptive to messages but there’s limits to tolerance. He had not reached the limit when we spoke with him and suggested that means he is “trusting in authority.” The respondent takes a circuitous route through negotiating his conflicting thoughts, before concluding he trusts authorities and implicitly this is one way, he feels relatively safe to be in a crowd. This extract reveals how trust in authorities is not simply axiomatic, nor can it always be easily conceptualized as present or absent. Rather, trust, particularly in the context of an ongoing and developing global pandemic, is something actively reflected upon, negotiated, and uncertain. This idea of trust – not just in authorities, but also with other crowd attendees – was frequently discussed by our interviewees. One exchange, with two older women at an outdoor

event when the necessity of showing a valid coronapas to enter the event had been lifted, went like this:

Interviewer: Do you trust that the organisers of the festival to follow regulations?

Respondent 1: There aren't really any left, since they got lifted the other day. But I think we have all tried hard. Where I live we still take distance to one another, sanitise. And that's great, because then you don't have to think about it.

Interviewer: Is there any particular behaviour, that you might see today, that would make you feel unsafe?

Respondent 2: Not particularly. I mean if I stood close to people, maybe, but I wouldn't do that.

Interviewer: What about shaking hands?

Respondent 1: I mean, if the other person wanted to, sure, but it can be a bit awkward sometimes because you don't know...

Respondent 2: I would never do that with a stranger

Respondent 1: No, no.

Respondent 2: Yep, that's finished.

Respondent 1: I mean if you're somewhere where you know people a bit, then you might just ask first. And then some people will say no.

Respondent 2: Yes I think that's how we're all thinking now

In this exchange between the interviewer and two elderly women at an outdoor crowd event in early September 2021, after the last restrictions had been lifted, they expressed their general comfort at being part of the crowd. They take moderate measures, being mindful of government advice, to sanitize and keep some distance from others. Interestingly, though, they shift from speaking about trust in authorities to keep them safe to how others in the crowd have worked together through their behavior – and implicit knowledge that others like them have also worked to reduce objective risk – by saying “we all tried hard.” The interviewees mean that others in the crowd have also kept measures to reduce risk and the spread of COVID-19 through their behaviors. One example is to ask if someone wants to, or feels comfortable, with shaking hands, or not. Being cognizant of the wishes and preferences of other people who attended the crowd

event implies trust and respect between people. There is a shared consciousness, according to respondent 1, orientated around trust and shared responsibility to allow the possibility for crowd events: “that’s how we’re all thinking now.”

Through explicit, negotiated, and implicit trust in government, we learn that trust in authorities plays a central role in creating the possibility for people coming together. Reciprocal trust between organizers, government intuitions, and event attendees, was ubiquitous and lay the ground for people to feel able to come together again after being separated and isolated for a year by the pandemic and related restrictions. But despite this context of high trust, infection with COVID-19, and its continued spread throughout society, remained a real danger that interviewees were clearly aware of. The following section examines the ways in which people discursively engaged with the realities and dangers of COVID-19, to psychologically *feel* safe.

Theme 2: Negotiating Ambivalence: Fear of Covid, but the allure of being together.

The extracts above reveal various tensions in how people conceptualize and think though their relationship with trust, other people, and messages from government authorities. A similar pattern of negotiating ambivalence, concerning whether to attend a crowd event despite the actual risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19, comprises the second major theme. Here we focus on the discursive styles used by our interviewees to engage with multiple opposing viewpoints about being physically close to unknown others during a global pandemic. In so doing we reveal the ways in which people meaningfully weighed up the objective health risks with the subjective benefits of being together with others to both think through their decision to attend crowd events and to explain this decision to the interviewer. One woman, at a crowd event, in her late 30’s, was asked:

“Interviewer: Could you describe a bit further that feeling of being together with other people?”

She responded:

“Woman late 30s: I think it’s a bit double, because I have missed it actually. I miss having community with people you don’t know. I think it’s great. That you

can smile and have something with someone that you otherwise are quite different from. But at the same time, corona is here still and now it's autumn. I am fully vaccinated but I also know people that have got corona even though they were vaccinated. But I also want to live. And so I just have to learn to live with corona."

This respondent clearly expressed her fondness for being together with known and unknown others. But she opens by saying her presence at this musical event was "double," introducing tension and ambivalence to her statement. After asserting the positives of being with unknown others, she addresses the actuality that "at the same time, corona is here still and now it's autumn." The "now it's autumn" statement refers to the predictions that levels of COVID-19 would exponentially spread during this season. Her articulation of the positives of crowd experience pivots on the first use of the word "but." She uses it to transition from the positive experience she was having to a potential negative consequence she, or others, might have concerning the contraction of spread of COVID-19. She again uses "but" to transition from the security of being vaccinated to knowing others who have been vaccinated who still contracted COVID-19. Finally, she uses "but" a third time to transition from knowing one can contract the virus despite being vaccinated from it, to expressing a fundamental principle to her: "I want to live." For her, being together with others, despite known dangers, is living, and she stated, "I have to learn to live with corona." This is a clear negotiation between multiple conflicting social realities to explain, and perhaps justify to herself or the interviewer, her attendance at crowd events despite the actual risk associated with doing so.

Staying on the move between these viewpoints was very common amongst interview respondents who we spoke to *in situ*. Two younger female respondents also spoke about the fear of COVID-19, but the allure of being together with others.

"Interviewer: What's it like being in the crowd today?

Woman 1 early 20s: I have to get a hold of myself with respect to germaphobia. We have been made scared about the whole world, so I have to reassure myself "hello, this is not something you should be scared of." Yeah, it's a little hard. Now that we've become so used to keeping distance, but it's bloody lovely to see

people smile and be happy and feel that we are a part of a community and society. I feel almost touched now that I think about it.

Woman 2 early 20s: We can't live in fear. I'm still young, and listen, so much can happen. We can live in fear because of many irrational things. But we can't live in fear of each other. That's not a world I can live in."

On the one hand, the first of the two respondents told us she has been "made scared about the whole world" because of COVID-19, what she called "germaphobia," and has been habitually physically distancing from others. On the other, she articulated an externalized voice implying that she, as a young individual, does not need to be scared. The juxtaposition between generalized fear, and localized safety, is "a little hard." Yet, while navigating these ambiguous opinions, she focuses on the importance of shared identity – "community" with others that she feels "touches" her. Her friend, also in her early 20s, extends the oscillating view expressed by the first young woman with more direct statements. In response to her friends comment about feeling scared, she stated "we cannot live in fear of each other." Again, we see the importance of connection with similar, yet unknown others, and the implicit trust implied underlying this connection, echoing theme 1. Despite the fear of COVID-19, but in the context of safety conditions established by event organizers, the allure of being together with other people was both the starting and end point of many interviewees discursive rationalization and decision-making processes of attending crowd events during a pandemic. The phenomenological experiences of being part of the crowd the subject of theme 3.

Theme 3: The Joy of the Crowd: Phenomenological experiences of being together.

Trust created the possibility to come together again, but within this space, our respondents negotiated the tension between ambivalent feelings to rationalize their presence at sometimes large crowd events in the context of an ongoing global pandemic. Clearly the desire to be together with friends and unknown others was a powerful motivator: what were people's phenomenological experiences? The third theme explores the "the joy of the crowd," an attempt to capture the experiential aspect of crowd participation.

This phenomenological experience was omnipresent amongst our respondents. In the initial days of our fieldwork, we observed instances of trepidation regarding

distancing – which we term “habitual distancing” – amongst attendees at cultural and musical events (as discussed by the young female respondent in the previous extract). Yet these were atypical observations and overall, the dynamics of crowd experiences during the Danish re-opening was reminiscent of previous music and cultural crowd events the authors participated in. We observed people being together with friends, eating at communal tables, dancing with others, sharing drinks and cigarettes. These were observable group dynamics, and we explored these observations by asking people directly about these experiences.

At an open-air concert, with an estimated 10,000 people in attendance, titled “Back to Live,” held just after all corona restrictions had been lifted, some respondents discussed the strangeness, weirdness, and unfamiliarity with what was an attempt to “return to normal.” Yet, those who attended also expressed joy at the ability to be together with others again. A man in his 60’s (different from the one quoted above) was asked:

“Interviewer: How is it being part of a big crowd again?

Man early 60’s: It’s lovely, it’s just air under the wings. Really, simply, the best of all. All that corona, it has destroyed so much, you know. Community, for example. You noticed it still a bit during summer days but it was just a bit. It’ll be soon big again, and then you can go around festival areas and camping areas and spread some lovely karma ya know? Go and speak with people, and that’s what’s important no? I do that a lot, every time someone comes up to me I say OK, and I’m 100% 70’s freak with flares, and thus I have lived. My ex-father-in-law was a founder of [a large local music] festival. So when I became part of the family, he said now you have to be a volunteer, and I became that.

Interviewer: What do you like doing at a festival like this?

Man early 60’s: The most important is the people, the people. Just look, happy people the whole way. Music is secondary, really. To be with other people, it’s just simply so fantastic [Danish: *kanon*]. Have you ever been to Roskilde festival? Where they play beer bowling in the camping areas? It’s so fantastic no? It’s simply a lifestyle, and it’s just so lovely.”

This respondent clearly expresses the overall joy that he, and others, feel as part of a “community” when people come together at music concerts and festivals. His lineage at these events is long, stretching back to the 70’s and a history of volunteering at festivals (he later told us, his daughter was conceived at Roskilde Festival where he met her mother in the crowd after David Bowie cancelled his performance in 2004). It is through shared memories, and a commitment to community, and focusing on people (the music is secondary) always for the spreading of “karma,” enjoying a lovely “lifestyle” and feeling “fantastic.” Here we see a clear manifestation of trust in others to allow people to come together with similar unknown others to create meaningful connections that brings joy.

The phenomenological experience of being part of a crowd was also described not just in a distributed, communal level, as per the previous respondent, but also on a personal level by multiple respondents. An additional example is detailed here:

“Interviewer: What do you like about being part of a crowd?

Middle aged woman: You forget yourself a bit, no? Belongingness, you can get inspiration from other people. From other people’s energy. What they radiate, how they are themselves. We are a flock, you know. It’s been unnatural to be alone.

Interviewer: What is it that’s inspiring about other people?

Middle aged woman: There’s both something about how you express yourself individually, then there is also something about what you radiate emotionally. Love for each other, those kinds of things, good energy...That’s because when you are a part of a crowd then you become a mass, an organism, in some way, and feel that energy and those feelings you get, that’s really liberating.”

This phenomenological description is revealing. One noteworthy aspect is the dual description of shared identity – “belongingness” – and the idea of submergence into something beyond oneself – “you forget yourself a bit.” She then draws on naturalistic metaphors to further describe these experiences of submergence and connection: “We are a flock” and later “when you are a part of a crowd you become a mass, an organism.” Naturalistic metaphors, also used by the previous respondent who stated “It’s lovely, it’s just air under the wings” to describe his experiences, are used to express something

fundamental about ways of being. Extending this way of describing, the current interviewee addresses a potential counterpoint regarding being together in a pandemic, by stating “it’s been unnatural to be alone.” When we probed further about being inspired by other people, and a desire to connect with others, she focuses on individual and shared emotions, love, in particular. The joy she experiences by being part of the crowd is through partial submergence of self, shared emotional connections with others, that lead her to feel ‘energized’ and, ultimately, ‘liberated’ by being part of the crowd. The phenomenological experience of the being in a crowd, as articulated by our many respondents, was overwhelmingly positive. These reported experiences of the ‘joy of the crowd’ constitute a third theme and illuminate exactly why people attended crowded events during an ongoing global pandemic despite the associated risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19. In their view, the risk was worth the reward.

Discussion:

The above analysis reveals how the joy experienced by attendees at crowd events was a powerful motivator, and something that helped them negotiate the otherwise ambivalent thoughts people held about coming together again. There is also an indication of how trust – both in authorities and other people – created the possibility for coming together again in the first place. We further unpack the significance of these findings, and of the wider conceptual and methodological framework that generated them, in the discussion that follows.

It has already been argued that high levels of reciprocal trust between citizens and authorities created the possibility, in the localized Danish context, to successfully address the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and attempt to re-open society in 2021 (Petersen, 2021). In the current research, conducted in the moment between COVID lockdowns and societal reopening, we observed high levels of organizational input – attempted world-making – to create safe conditions for attendees at cultural events, with corona passes checked on entry, larger crowds partitioned into smaller pods, and clear communication between health authorities and organizers to carefully monitor fluctuating disease rates. Our first theme confirms that attendees themselves were also explicitly and implicitly trusting of authorities to keep themselves safe, a theme that was implicitly extended to other attendees, creating a generalized sense of trust between people. But, at the same time, they were also vigilant of the changing regulatory

environment and questioning of the reach of government into the lives of citizens. This shows that while trust may be a strong background operating in this context, trust is not given uncritically (Marková & Gillespie, 2011).

In the second theme we revealed the patterned reasoning, expressed discursively, through which people navigated uncertain, unfamiliar, and unknown, grounds for attending crowd events in the context of an ongoing global pandemic. At this unique time, an effective strategy used by our respondents was to acknowledge the unfamiliarity of the situation, discursively engage with arguments for not attending these crowd events, before expressing their final reasons for attending. In this way, interviewees stayed on the move between different arguments, and patterns of reasoning, to explain and justify their positions and attendance at musical and cultural events. Again, through this theme we reveal that while attendance was supported by a wider framework of trust, attendees were not unaware – or minimizing – of the risks involved in being present.

In our third theme we shifted away from discursive rhetorical arguments, towards the phenomenological descriptions of what it was like to be together with others in a crowd. We discussed “the joy of the crowd,” where shared identity and shared connections with others, simultaneously led to the submergence and forgetting of oneself, but also amplified one’s emotion with reference to other people. Clearly these are powerful psychological dynamics. Ultimately, it seemed, the strong value placed on being together outweighed the acknowledged risks involved.

Implications

Denmark utilized its high degree of generalized trust and carefully planned controlled, limited, open and closed-air events, within sensible restrictions, before finally lifting all restrictions in September 2021. In other, more politically-divided societies, decisions about whether and how to allow people to come together were more difficult and socially controversial (like in the United States) or more cautious, impacting social and economic life (like in Japan). The insights gleaned from Danish leadership, social organization, and humanistic – people centered – ways of governing are important for others to understand.

Caution, of course, is understandable. The lack of physical distancing during huge crowd events – for example, when 50,000 people gathered for an in-door music concert in Copenhagen in September 2021 – could have led to a drastic outbreak of COVID-19,

making a proposed re-opening seem neglectful, dangerous, or stupid. Denmark could have served as a cautionary tale for the rest of the world. Instead, it contributed to purposeful and humane world-making (Power, Zittoun, et al., 2023), where sensible interpretations of health data, the strength of acceptance of the norms and rules of social-democracy, and reciprocal trust and shared identity, allowed for incremental success in terms of the Danish re-opening of society within conditions negotiated as acceptable between risk and reward. The case of the Danish re-opening illuminates the difficulties faced by nations where trust is lower and political polarization higher and in which citizens must negotiate polarized views, informational environments rife with fake news, and leaders who amplify difference and difficulties for their own gain (power or financial or both), at the expense of the electorate and other citizens within their countries.

Beyond such societal implications, our research also informs theory. Crowd events have long been associated with transforming societies to alter political, economic, or social realities, through mass mobilization. Crowds are one of the most visible forms of attempted world-making. Possible futures are first imagined, and then, through looping back to the present from this imagined future, are worked towards through mobilization aimed at creating this desired future. That mobilization can be explicitly political, as is the case in protests, but it can also be subtly so, for example when people come together to dance and to affirm the meaning of this possibility. By conceptualizing crowds within a world-making framework the idea of imagined possible futures is foregrounded as is the role of collective action in challenging or transforming socio-cultural realities to be more congruent with individual and shared desires.

Early theories in social psychology have emphasized the dehumanizing experience of submergence in the crowd and the unthinking contagion of behavior in these settings (LeBon, 1895; Wagoner et al., 2023; Warren & Power, 2015). Yet research within cultural psychology (Power, 2021) and within the social identity tradition (Drury, 2020; 2025) has instead emphasized the patterned and reasoned nature of crowd behavior, as well as the meaningfulness of collective participation both individually and societally. Our research chimes with the latter by again revealing the positive emotional experience of being at crowd events (Hopkins et al., 2016). Of course, earlier perspectives on crowd psychology do not deny that people might enjoy the loss

of self that comes with submersion in the crowd (Zimbardo, 1969). But consistent with contemporary models our data show people also being engaged cognitively and providing elaborated reasoning for their decisions to attend. The latter is especially significant in relation to the unique moment of our investigation, a time period in which uncertainty about the pandemic continued but normal life, at least in Denmark, was also again becoming possible. Our data reveal people working through the two sides of collective participation, and in so doing balancing the joy of abandon within the crowd with the calculated acknowledgment of potential risks.

Ultimately, the desire to come together seemed a more powerful motivator for our interviewees and something that weighed more heavily on them than the potential risks of disease. These were people who had chosen to attend because of the meaning attached to live culture and the events in which they were taking part and expressed high levels of trust in authorities, organizers, and other audience members. As such, the analysis accords well with the social identity model of risk taking (Cruwys et al., 2021), which has also been applied in the context of mass gatherings like concerts, festivals, and sporting events (e.g., Hult Khazaie & Khan, 2020; Morton & Power, 2022, 2023; Rathbone et al., 2022; Smith & Templeton, 2022). However, to date, this model has been substantiated largely through quantitative data, including experimental tests of the causal impact of identity salience and shared categorization on expressions of trust and perceptions of risk (e.g., Cruwys, Greenaway et al., 2021; Cruwys, Stevens, et al., 2021). Examined in this way, the model can imply a certain automaticity to trust and risk consequences of activated shared identity. By instead examining how concepts of identity, trust, and risk inter-relate in the expressions of attendees on the spot, our data reveal a more active negotiation of risk combined with awareness of potential for danger. Although still consistent with the overall model, our analysis suggests a slightly different conclusion: Rather than shared identity minimizing risk (via trust), we see people fully aware of risks but nonetheless willing to take them because they value the collective settings within which those risks are embedded, and; rather than trust being given automatically, we see people trusting authorities that have proven themselves to be reliable, but in ways that also recognize the limits of that trust.

In this way, our field social psychological approach complements previous survey-based analyses of the experience of live events during the reopening of Danish society (Morton & Power, 2022; 2023). The methodological and conceptual approach of

field social psychology necessitates the examination of societal phenomena at multiple levels of analysis with emphasis on the socio-cultural environments in which people are embedded, the unfolding of psychological processes over time, and the use of ecologically valid multiple methods (Power & Velez, 2021). In combination with prior quantitative work, the participant observation and *in situ* interviews with a broad sample of people, over a time period, in which societal circumstances changed significantly, overcomes classic limitations of methods when used alone (Power et al., 2018; Power & Velez, 2020). The combination of thematic analysis, in conjunction with discursive (theme 2) and phenomenological (theme 3) lenses to comprehend how people made-meaning of, and experienced, crowd participation, further overcame standard limitations when analytic techniques are used in isolation. Some might argue breath of data collection and methods sacrifices depth, but we argue depth is sufficient to offer a unique and triangulated account of the Danish re-opening. The field social psychological methodology, then, offers promise to move beyond simplified and static quantitative accounts of emerging and developing phenomena, by providing an approach sensitive to process ontologies capable to holistically and generatively comprehending developing phenomena.

Field social psychology is one way to both examine the processes of socio-cultural realities being made and re-made and also to contribute to this world-making. Major findings from our field social psychological investigating were reflected back to event organizers and policymakers in government in the form of a policy report (Power & Morton, 2021). This, plausibly, impacted subsequent government decisions as it closely monitored the impact of its re-opening policies. The national, and then international coverage, of this and related reports in the Danish case offered evidence of the re-opening possibilities to other nations (Power & Morton, 2022). Ultimately, the graduated interventions from the Danish government were aimed at re-creating a sense of normalcy, as previously experienced, during crowd events as the world attempt to re-open following lockdowns. As such, the world-making of this case was a return to a previous reality, not the creation of a new one. Themes of societal maintenance in the face of existential threat have also been documented in the context of climate change in Scandinavia (Haugestad et al., 2021), and highlight that imagined and desired futures can also reflect longed for pasts and valued presents.

Limitations and future research

Just like prior quantitative work examining perceptions of risk and safety in post-COVID crowds (Morton & Power, 2022, 2023), the present research is limited by self-selection: People who turn up at crowded events despite the risks have already negotiated their decisions. It would be important and interesting to complement this picture with insights from people who were in principle interested in the same events but reached a different decision about actual attendance. It seems quite likely that non-attendees were less trusting of authorities and others to keep them safe (Morton & Power, 2022). It may also be that decisions to attend or not reflect different targets of identity, for example interest in a specific act or genre versus identification with live culture more broadly. Further work – quantitative or qualitative – could reveal whether different decisions reflect different inputs (e.g., levels of identification and trust) or different processes of reasoning between the two sides of collective engagement.

Our research draws attention to the importance of generalized trust in authorities and unknown others as underlying joyous phenomenological experiences of crowd events. Future research, drawing on qualitative methods, might further investigate this association in different contexts and types of crowd events to comprehend this idea more fully. This line of investigation would contribute to a more holistic understanding of the importance of crowd participation in creating positive emotions and self-realization in an era when social isolation and loneliness is being highlighted as detrimental to health (e.g., Cruwys et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2018). It would also contribute to a broader comprehension of the purpose of coming together in crowd psychology which has a tendency in academic research to focus on crowds as political entities trying to enable societal or political change (e.g., Drury, 2025; Power, 2018; Wagoner et al., 2023). Further examining the psychological benefits of being with trusted yet unknown others could help to further develop our understanding of the psychological benefits of collective participation (Hopkins et al., 2016; Tewari et al., 2012), and help to inform ways for people to come together both meaningfully and safely.

Our research cannot, and does not, reveal the correct balance between actual and perceived risk and safety at crowd events. As researchers we were also trying to strike an ethical balance between following legal requirements, health policies, and safety guidelines, while also undertaking research in the context of an ongoing pandemic. This

ethical imperative – to think through the (unintended) consequences of our research – is an essential proposition of the world-making approach in social psychology (Power et al., 2023). Winter 2021 - 2022 saw an upturn in COVID-19 infections in Denmark – and many other nations – because of the Omicron variant. Still, we argue, that researchers and policymakers must draw on contemporary theorizing that does not demonize the crowd but instead appreciates the meanings people derive from group behavior, the positive experiences associated with coming together, and the multiple implications of this for what is, and what is perceived to be, safe.

Conclusion

COVID-19 powerfully disrupted people's ability to come together to enjoy cultural and musical events. Yet, with broad compliance to health policies, frequent testing, and mass vaccination, Denmark was one of the first countries to attempt a re-opening of society, creating the possibility for people to once again meaningful participate in crowd events. Our research over summer and fall 2021 at a selection of salient crowd events revealed how people were acutely aware of the objective danger posed by COVID-19 but reasoned the rewards were worth the risk. Reciprocal trust, and shared identity with others, underlie this reasoning, leading to their experiencing the joy of the crowd. The psychological dynamics revealed through this Danish case study, based on a field social psychological methodology, reveals how crowds, and social psychology, play a key role in world-making.

References:

Betsch, C., Korn, L., Sprengholz, P., Felgendreiff, L., Eitze, S., Schmid, P., & Böhm, R. (2020). Social and behavioral consequences of mask policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(36), 21851-21853.

Bicchieri, C., Fatas, E., Aldama, A., Casas, A., Deshpande, I., Lauro, M., ... & Wen, R. (2021). In science we (should) trust: Expectations and compliance across nine countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. *PloS one*, 16(6), e0252892.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning: Four lectures on mind and culture* (Vol. 3). Harvard university press.

Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (Eds.). (2007). *The Sage handbook of grounded theory*. Sage

Cruwys, T., Greenaway, K. H., Ferris, L. J., Rathbone, J. A., Saeri, A. K., Williams, E., ... & Grace, L. (2021). When trust goes wrong: A social identity model of risk taking. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 120(1), 57.

Cruwys, T., Stevens, M., Donaldson, J. L., Cárdenas, D., Platow, M. J., Reynolds, K. J., & Fong, P. (2021). Perceived COVID-19 risk is attenuated by ingroup trust: evidence from three empirical studies. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 869.

Cruwys, T., Dingle, G. A., Haslam, C., Haslam, S. A., Jetten, J., & Morton, T. A. (2013). Social group memberships protect against future depression, alleviate depression symptoms and prevent depression relapse. *Social science & medicine*, 98, 179-186.

de Saint-Laurent, C. (2018). Thinking through time: From collective memories to collective futures. In *Imagining collective futures: Perspectives from social, cultural and political psychology* (pp. 59-81). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Dennis, U. D., Fashola, T., Haruna, A. D., Omose, O. I. J., & Moss, S. M. (2025). "I have been hearing we are the future of tomorrow for so long now. When is tomorrow?" narratives on youth and the future in Nigeria. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 64(2), e12881.

Denzin, N. K. (2012). Triangulation 2.0. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 6(2), 80-88.

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee. (2021). The future of UK music festivals (HC 49). <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6136/documents/68377/default/>

Drury, J. (2025). The Psychology of Crowd Behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 77.

Drury, J., 2020. Recent developments in the psychology of crowds and collective behaviour. *Curr. Opin. Psychol.* 35, 12–16.

Drury, J., Novelli, D., & Stott, C. (2013). Psychological disaster myths in the perception and management of mass emergencies. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 43(11), 2259-2270.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures* (Vol. 5019). Basic books.

Gergen, K. J., Freeman, M., & Josselson, R. (2023). The promises of qualitative research revisited: 10 years of Qualitative Psychology. *Qualitative Psychology*, 10(3), 375.

Gillespie A., Glaveanu V, de Saint-Laurent C. (2024). Pragmatism and methodology: doing research that matters with mixed methods. Cambridge University Press.

Gillespie, A., & Wagoner, B. (in press). Looping Effects of Psychological Theories: From Anomaly to Opportunity. *Theory & Psychology*.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2021). *The possible: A sociocultural theory*. Oxford University Press.

Hacking I. (1995). The looping effects of human kinds. In Sperber D., Premack D., Premack A. J. (Eds.), *Causal cognition: A multidisciplinary approach* (pp. 351–383). Oxford University Press.

Haugestad, C. A., Skauge, A. D., Kunst, J. R., & Power, S. A. (2021). Why do youth participate in climate activism? A mixed-methods investigation of the#FridaysForFuture climate protests. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 76, 101647.

Hopkins, N., Reicher, S., Stevenson, C., Pandey, K., Shankar, S., & Tewari, S. (2019). Social relations in crowds: Recognition, validation and solidarity. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 49(6), 1283–1297.

Hopkins, N., Reicher, S. D., Khan, S. S., Tewari, S., Srinivasan, N., & Stevenson, C. (2016). Explaining effervescence: Investigating the relationship between shared social identity and positive experience in crowds. *Cognition and Emotion*, 30(1), 20-32.

Hult Khazaie, D., & Khan, S. S. (2020). Shared social identification in mass gatherings lowers health risk perceptions via lowered disgust. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 59(4), 839-856.

Jörling, M., Eitze, S., Schmid, P., Betsch, C., Allen, J., & Böhm, R. (2023). To disclose or not to disclose? Factors related to the willingness to disclose information to a COVID-19 tracing app. *Information, Communication & Society*, 26(10), 1954-1978.

Khan, S. S., Hopkins, N., Reicher, S., Tewari, S., Srinivasan, N., & Stevenson, C. (2015). Shared identity predicts enhanced health at a mass gathering. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 18(4), 504–522.

Le Bon, G., 1895, trans. 1947. *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. Ernest Benn, London.

Marková, I., & Gillespie, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Trust and conflict: Representation, culture and dialogue*. Routledge.

Morton, T.A., & Power, S.A. (2023). Is it safe to be together again? Identity, trust, and perceived risk in the “post-corona” crowd. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*. Online First.

Morton, T.A. & Power, S.A. (2021). Coming together after standing apart: What predicts felt safety in the post-corona crowd? *Social Science & Medicine*. 293, 114649.

Murphy, J., Vallières, F., Bentall, R. P., Shevlin, M., McBride, O., Hartman, T. K., ... & Hyland, P. (2021). Psychological characteristics associated with COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and resistance in Ireland and the United Kingdom. *Nature communications*, 12(1), 29.

Novelli, D., Drury, J., & Reicher, S. (2010). Come together: Two studies concerning the impact of group relations on personal space. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 49(2), 223-236.

Petersen, M. B. (2021). COVID lesson: trust the public with hard truths. *Nature*, 598(7880), 237-237.

Peirce C. S. (1955) *Philosophical writings of peirce* (Vol. 217). Courier Corporation.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. Sage Publications.

Power, S. A., Zittoun, T., Akkerman, S., Wagoner, B., Cabra, M., Cornish, F., Hawlina, H., Heasman, B., Mahendran, K., Psaltis, C., Rajala, A., Veale, A., & Gillespie, A. (2023). Social Psychology of and for World-Making. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 27(4), 378-392. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10888683221145756>

Power, S.A., Schaeffer, M., Heisig, J.P., Udsen, R., & Morton, T. (2023). Why trust? A mixed-method investigation of the origin and meaning of trust during the COVID-19 lockdown in Denmark. *British Journal of Social Psychology*. Online First.

Power, S. A., & Morton, T. (2022, July 19). *What keeps a crowd from becoming a mob?* *Scientific American*. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-keeps-a-crowd-from-becoming-a-mob/>

Power, S.A. (2021). Revisiting the crowd: Peaceful assembly in Irish water protests. *Culture & Psychology*. 28 (1), 3-22.

Power, S. A., & Velez, G. (2022). Field social psychology. *American Psychologist*, 77(8), 940.

Power, S.A. & Morton, T.A. (2021). [SAFE2: Returning to live events in 2021](#). Prepared for Dansk Live and the Danish Ministry of Culture.

- Power, S.A. & Velez, G. (2020). The *MOVE* Framework: Meanings, Observations, Viewpoints, and Experiences in processes of social change. *Review of General Psychology*, 24(4), 321-334.
- Power, S.A., Velez, G., Qadafi, A., & Tennant, J. (2018). The *SAGE* Model of Social Psychological Research. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. Vol 13, Issue 3, pp. 359 – 372.
- Power, S.A. (2018). The *Deprivation – Protest Paradox*: How the perception of unfair economic inequality leads to civic unrest. *Current Anthropology*, 59, (6), 765 – 789.
- Prosser, A. M., Bosone, L., Fernando, J. W., & Sullivan, G. B. (2025). No time like the future? Towards a generative, prospective and possibilities-focussed ‘futures social psychology’. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 64(4), e70007.
- Rathbone, J. A., Stevens, M., Cruwys, T., & Ferris, L. J. (2022). COVID-safe behaviour before, during and after a youth mass gathering event: A longitudinal cohort study. *BMJ Open*, 12(7), Article e058239.
- Rathje, S., He, J. K., Roozenbeek, J., Van Bavel, J. J., & van der Linden, S. (2022). Social media behavior is associated with vaccine hesitancy. *PNAS nexus*, 1(4), pgac207.
- Reicher, S. D. (1984). The St. Pauls' riot: An explanation of the limits of crowd action in terms of a social identity model. *European journal of social psychology*, 14(1), 1-21.
- Reicher, S. D., Templeton, A., Neville, F., Ferrari, L., & Drury, J. (2016). Core disgust is attenuated by ingroup relations. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(10), 2631-2635.
- Smith, J. A. (2011). Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Health psychology review*, 5(1), 9-27.
- Smith, K., & Templeton, A. (2022). Social identity processes associated with perceived risk at pilot sporting events during COVID-19. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 61, 1376–1399
- Tewari, S., Khan, S., Hopkins, N., Srinivasan, N., & Reicher, S. (2012). Participation in mass gatherings can benefit well-being: longitudinal and control data from a north Indian hindu pilgrimage event. *PLoS ONE*, 7(10), e47291.
- Van Bavel, J. J., Cichocka, A., Capraro, V., Sjøstad, H., Nezlek, J. B., Pavlović, T., ... & Jørgensen, F. J. (2022). National identity predicts public health support during a global pandemic. *Nature communications*, 13(1), 517.
- Veale, A., & Walsh, P. (2024). “Where are we going”: Irish Traveller men imagining individual and collective futures. *Culture & Psychology*, 1354067X251357957.
- Wagoner, B., Awad, S., & Power, S.A. (2023). Protest crowds through the lens of distributed cognition. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*. 90 (2), 293-314.

Wagoner, B., de Luna, I. B., & Awad, S. H. (Eds.). (2017). *The psychology of imagination: History, theory and new research horizons*. IAP.

Warren, Z. J., & Power, S. A. (2015). It's contagious: Rethinking a metaphor dialogically. *Culture & Psychology*, 21(3), 359-379.

Wang, J., Mann, F., Lloyd-Evans, B., Ma, R., & Johnson, S. (2018). Associations between loneliness and perceived social support and outcomes of mental health problems: a systematic review. *BMC psychiatry*, 18(1), 1-16.

Zettler, I., Schild, C., Lilleholt, L., Kroencke, L., Utesch, T., Moshagen, M., ... & Geukes, K. (2022). The role of personality in COVID-19-related perceptions, evaluations, and behaviors: Findings across five samples, nine traits, and 17 criteria. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 13(1), 299-310.

Zimbardo, P. G. (1969). The human choice: Individuation, reason, and order versus deindividuation, impulse, and chaos. In *Nebraska symposium on motivation*. University of Nebraska press.

Zittoun, T., & Glăveanu, V. P. (Eds.). (2018). *Handbook of imagination and culture*. Oxford University Press.

Zittoun, T., & Gillespie, A. (2015). *Imagination in human and cultural development*. Routledge.

Zittoun, T., & Gillespie, A. (2018). Imagining the collective future: A sociocultural perspective. In *Imagining collective futures: Perspectives from social, cultural and political psychology* (pp. 15-37). Cham: Springer International Publishing.