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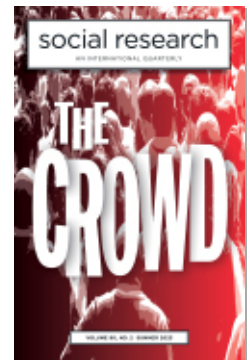
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PEOPLE MOBILIZE AROUND DIFFERENT COLLECTIVE CAUSES THAT RESONATE with who they are and what they stand for; we can call these groupings “protest crowds.” Some causes quickly expand to mobilize people across time and geographical spaces, while others are short-lived and do not manage to motivate a critical mass to initiate and sustain a movement. In this article, we explore the various scaffolds of crowd action that when used skillfully can transform ideas into collective causes that rally and sustain protest crowds. Crowds have traditionally been treated like the elephants of the social sciences, seen as strange, pathological, yet at the same time fascinating (Reicher 2001). More recent research has aimed to show that crowds are in fact highly normatively regulated through social identity. While largely an advance on earlier theories of the group, more contemporary approaches typically leave out the embodied and distinctive feeling of being vitally connected to other people’s presence and movements through noncognitive factors. Traditional crowd theories went as far as to describe this condition as a distinctive psychological state, a kind of group consciousness.

We aim to include the strengths of both approaches as well as other insights about the crowd within the broad framework of dis-

tributed cognition, which has brought back earlier notions of “the group mind” but without its excesses. To do this, we outline a number of different distributed dimensions that point to factors that extend beyond discourse. This approach contrasts with approaches othering the crowd as pathological and those treating it as mainly based on discursively held identity concerns. Instead, we argue that the processes facilitating and sustaining protest crowds can be observed in more subtle forms of how people think together and interact. We begin by briefly reviewing traditional and contemporary theories of the crowd and then introduce the perspective of distributed cognition to fill in gaps in existing crowd theories and integrate different research that has been done on them. The sections that follow each highlight different overlapping dimensions of distribution: social interaction, affective symbols, narrative forms, and physical and virtual spaces.

THE CROWD: TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES

Protest crowds pose a threat to those in power in both democratic and dictatorial societies. In more open societies freedom to protest is fundamental to functioning democracies, while in more closed societies the risks to protesters are greater but so too is the potentially transformative power of protest. In his influential book *The Crowd* ([1895] 2002), Gustave Le Bon was well aware of the potential of the crowd to challenge the status quo, establish new leadership, and ultimately transform society. Informed by fears of societal upheaval, he developed a conservative theory that saw crowds as inherently irrational forces that need to be controlled by skillful leaders. In an often-quoted passage, he states: “by the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he might be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian—that is, a creature acting by instinct” (12). Le Bon used the notion of suggestion taken from the context of hypnotism (Feber 1996) to explain how this transformation occurs. Unlike the contemporary concept of social influence, it implies the submerging of indi-

viduals into a different (group) psychological state when in a crowd. Suggestion works mainly from imagery rather than rational discourse (as we discuss below). It can lead members of a crowd to commit acts of violence as well as bravery and self-sacrifice on behalf of the group.

Like previous theorizing (see van Ginneken 1992), Le Bon saw the crowd as being uncivilized and instinctual. However, his theory differed from what came before in the idea that anyone could be caught up in the thrall of the crowd, not just socially deviant types. Le Bon used the notion of contagion as an analogy to understand the spread of behavior in a crowd (Warren and Power 2015). This metaphor again highlights the lack of agency in the spread of behavior and a loss of a sense of self within the mass. Actions of crowd mobilization, spread of ideas and behaviors within crowds, and perspectives of the crowd toward authorities such as government or agents of the state are seen as non-agentic and nonpurposeful, at least until they are directed by a skillful leader. Consequently, authorities take strong actions to control or disperse crowds, similar to measures to mitigate the contagious spread of deadly viruses, through various forms of direct (physical) and indirect (structural, cultural, or imagined) violence (Cornish 2012).

Le Bon's theory was, and continues to be, influential. Famously, Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler were both inspired by *The Crowd*, as were other statesmen across the political spectrum (Moscovici 1985; Wagoner 2018). Contemporary governments (especially those controlled by conservatives) often portray crowds as barbaric and uncivilized to delegitimize them (Bozatis and Teliou 2018) and draw on the concept of contagion to explain rioting and looting (Reicher and Stott 2011). Some ideas outlined by Le Bon were also formative to the development of related theories of crowds and group behavior (Power 2021). Le Bon's idea of individuals being "submerged" in a crowd led to one significant line of research that developed the notion that the individual self and by extension self-control are lost in a crowd. These "deindividuation" theories highlighted that the anonymity of the individual in groups created dysregulation, which in turn led

to antisocial behavior. People act in the crowd in ways they would not do when alone. In contrast to Le Bon's focus on a distinctive group mentality, however, these later thinkers grounded their analyses in individual cognition.

Many contemporary theories of the crowd seek to challenge Le Bon's assumptions by approaching crowds as meaningful, agentic, and purposeful in their aims (Drury 2020). This paradigmatic shift has its roots in both historical analyses of previous social movements and field research conducted during protests. Studies of historical riots and social movements through archival analyses point toward larger societal and economic contexts in which protests began and toward the meaningfully patterned, goal-directed, and highly agentic and purposeful motivations underlying them (e.g., Thompson 1971). Within psychology, ethnographic fieldwork interpreted through a social identity framework of a police raid and subsequent escalation of violent protests by community members and the police in the UK led to the establishment of the elaborated social identity model (ESIM; Reicher 1984). This is a useful model—emphasizing the (mis)identification of perceptions and actions between police and protesters—that allows us to understand how peaceful protesters can be represented and treated as a homogenous threat by police, who have disproportionate power and are often also identified as a homogenous aggressor by protesters once they are perceived as threatening. Mutual escalation ensues, and what were at first peaceful protests lead to rioting. This does not happen in the senseless manner described by Le Bon, but as part of dialogical interactions, interpreted within broader sociological and economic conditions.

The ESIM has been useful for understanding crowd dynamics and generative in policymaking around shared identification to help ensure peaceful crowd events (e.g., Reicher and Stott 2011; Morton and Power 2022). The model has been applied to many forms of crowd events in multiple cultural and situational contexts. However, intergroup interaction and identification, expressed discursively as an empowered “we,” remain the central focus, while other important

scaffolds of group feeling and orientation are largely neglected. There is also a tendency in this research to work with “progressive” protest crowds rather than movements that might be labeled “conservative.” In this article we aim to develop an understanding of the crowd through the concept of distributed cognition in an effort to extend theorizing beyond the current psychological literature and thus create a broad and generative lens to theorize crowds.

THE DISTRIBUTED COGNITION FRAMEWORK

At its core, distributed cognition highlights that mental processes are not simply the products of individuals’ minds working on inputs from the outside world, but that our bodies, other people, material spaces, and cultural artifacts are fundamental to these processes. Cognition happens across the brain, body, social interactions, and material-technological resources. This perspective is often traced back to the cognitive anthropologist Edwin Hutchins (1995), who analyzed systems of coordination and communication between groups of people and technological devices on a naval ship. The complex processes of thinking and acting done in this context could not be accomplished by individuals working alone but required that the researcher analyze them as part of a system of people and artifacts. In philosophy, Andy Clark and David Chalmers (1998) developed the approach to a philosophical position in their influential paper “The Extended Mind.” Subsequent commentators have noted that their position has proven truer with time, as smartphones and other devices became ubiquitous.

Further empirical investigations have explored how, for example, established groups distribute among their members responsibility to remember. Building on the work of Lev Vygotsky and Maurice Halbwachs, James Wertsch (2002) has used the concept of “distributed” to talk about how a group has a collective memory in the weak sense of the word, meaning that the resources of remembering are unequally distributed among members of a group and that when people remember, they draw on these resources. From this point of view, part of what holds a group together is the shared resources of

collective remembering that help to forge a sense of group identity. Wertsch emphasizes narrative templates (used across generations to construct historical narratives of different events) as key here, but we can just as well point to other resources. For example, Halbwachs (1980) had earlier pointed out how spatial structures of a city are powerful scaffolds of collective memory. The power of place to organize and enhance memory has in fact been employed for purposes of rhetoric since ancient times in a tradition called “the art of memory” (Yates 1966). Vygotsky used mnemonics, such as spatial and imaginative techniques from the art of memory, as an example of how humans use “culture” to expand their psychological capacities beyond what is possible with simple “natural” memory. Humans structure their environments so as to regulate their own psychological processes. According to Vygotsky (1987), it is the fundamental mark of civilization that human beings build monuments so as not to forget.

All these examples point to the idea that focus on the brain alone is insufficient for understanding complex human behavior. Instead, the physical, social, and symbolic environments we construct and participate in frame and guide thought. The now common figure of speech “my brain did x” relies on the idea of an isolated organ of cognition that works like a computer. In this approach, what happens outside the brain can be no more than inputs into the true system in which thinking takes place. It makes no difference to a computer whether it does its calculations, for example, in a university, park, or cafe; for the human being, on the other hand, the environment and the resources it provides are essential (Wagoner 2017). The internal and external components of thinking and identification are dynamic and part of a wider system. From this approach, we draw together several different strands of research within protest crowd formation and dynamics, under the banner of distributed cognition, in order to draw attention to their complementarity, overlap, and sites for future exchange.

DISTRIBUTED INTERACTIONS: BODIES, ROLES, AND NORMS

Anyone who has been a part of a crowd knows how uplifting it can be. We often get a feeling of elation and extension of ourselves into the group. Émile Durkheim (1912) famously described these moments as “collective effervescence.” On the one hand, Durkheim seemed to be drawing on Le Bon’s description of crowd psychology, but rather than simply seeing the crowd as an irrational force, Durkheim emphasized its positive functions of reaffirming the social order, strengthening group ties, and giving vitality to its members. In Durkheim’s thinking, when the individual is isolated from the group, they grow weak and lose vitality (relatedly, at a group level, rates of suicide increase where social bonds are weak but might also increase where collective integration is too strong [Durkheim 1897]). How precisely does this bonding through reciprocal interaction take place? Durkheim emphasized collective rituals in which the whole community participates. More recent research has pointed to the importance of rhythm and synchrony in forging effective groups, what William McNeil (1995) has appropriately referred to as “muscular bonding.”

McNeil himself first vividly encountered “muscular bonding” in the form of the marching he did as a military recruit. While it appears to be a seemingly pointless activity as a skill for battle, he is clear that its psychological effect on group formation and feeling was indispensable. Through such tactics, military leaders can install a sense of commitment to the group and its cause among poorly paid and treated recruits. Other devices besides drill for creating an emotional response through rhythm include songs and dance. These sorts of movements are not found among other primates and likely played a crucial role in human evolution, predating the development of language. There is little doubt that these rhythmic group movements function to create what Jonathan Haidt (2012) calls the “hive switch,” in which our mostly selfish orientation shifts toward group altruism (according to Haidt, we are “90 percent chimp and 10 percent bee” [xxi]). Such a switch might help to explain the submerged group men-

tality identified by Le Bon, but without the emphasis on its violence and irrationality.

Protest crowds of all types (not to mention crowds at sporting events) have effectively used chants, songs, drums, and dance to the same effect as drill through the synchronization of group members in movement and sound. To pull off this feat, however, there usually needs to be some role differentiation: someone must initiate and carry the rhythm, whether it be a drill sergeant, protest leader with a megaphone, or simply a drummer. Thus, even in relatively simple protest crowds, individuals have distinct roles to play within the whole. From a distributed cognition perspective, we need not expect homogeneity of action within the crowd but could see it instead as a transactive system, whereby individuals have different functions in the group that mutually support one another. This is analogous to Daniel Wegner's (1986) findings, which show how members of a family, for example, distribute responsibility to remember things between them. Similarly, people in protest crowds typically self-organize into different roles; the longer the crowd endures, the more differentiations and structure are likely to occur.

At the level of interactions, we also need to mention the dynamic between protesters and police, which is a key component of ESIM. Here let us consider an example from anti-water-charge demonstrations in Ireland in 2015. Séamus Power (2021) conducted observations and interviews at both large and small protests in Dublin and a smaller city. In contrast to Le Bon's conceptualizations of the crowd, Power's ethnographic evidence reveals the purposeful, agentic, and meaningful experiences of crowd members. Although they were initially motivated to demonstrate against the introduction of the new charge on water, extensive interview data revealed that the water charge became symbolic of a multitude of other reasons motivating and justifying protest. These included the increased cost of living, high taxes, perennial problems with the healthcare system, increased homelessness, and perceptions of the government and police as not representing the people.

Interactions between protesters and police at the national level, in Dublin, were peaceful. Police facilitated the protests by helping to plan routes, providing support, and engaging with demonstrators in a friendly manner. In contrast, the interactions between police and protesters on a local level in a small Irish city were more confrontational. Participant observation at these events, particularly when conflicts between some members of the crowd and the police lead to arrests, largely aligned with the predictions of the ESIM. Mistrust and misrecognition of the intentions, goals, and behaviors between some members of the police and some members of the crowd led to escalation of conflictual behaviors. These local events were in contrast with national demonstrations, where the crowd was treated with fairness and respect by police and allowed to communicate their central message, surmised in a common chant: “From the rivers to the sea, Irish water will be free!”

VISUALS AND SLOGANS AS AFFECTIVE SYMBOLS

Moving up a level of abstraction from physical interactions, the role of shared protest symbols in the formation and endurance of a protest crowd must be highlighted. These protest symbols can take the concrete form of visual images, slogans, or hashtags, and they serve several functions. First, they represent and communicate the cause in a condensed and easily graspable form. Second, as shared identity markers, they form, mobilize, and sustain crowd members. And third, they act as a resource for collective remembering. As symbols, they can travel beyond the concrete protest situation and be adopted by new crowds in different times and spaces (Awad and Wagoner 2018; Wagoner 2018). In short, visuals and slogans are effective anchor points for a group, condensing abstract ideas into a concrete, emotional, and memorable form. As such they represent both the cause that is being fought for and the protest movement itself.

Durkheim (1912) famously argued that symbols and rituals are central to group formation and maintenance. They give the group a common direction for action. By focusing on this, Durkheim empha-

sized the creative force that comes with the mutual innervation of a crowd acting together, which distinguishes his approach from Le Bon's more conservative view. Serge Moscovici (1986) extended this idea further to look at the dynamic exchange of ideas within a group; for him a group's shared social representations give its members order and a way of orientation in the material and social world. From Moscovici's (1981) social representation theory, symbols are seen as the different "objectifications" of a group where abstract ideas are transformed into concrete images such as that of a national flag or a religious icon. These symbols are especially powerful in that they speak to an image-based, affective consciousness in contrast to discursive thought (Moscovici 1985; this idea clearly aligns with Le Bon's notion of suggestion).

An obvious protest symbol is the image of a crowd's physical occupation of a central urban place, which can be interpreted as a kind of visual performance. It represents the success of the mobilizing cause and helps to attract more people to join and claim the space. This visibility is important in politics as part of the struggle over representation and recognition (Rancière 2004), speaking to the question of who can be represented, seen, and heard. Crowds also produce various visual symbols in the form of photographs, street art, logos, and graphic designs. These images work as mediums through which protest movements communicate their ideologies across physical and virtual contexts to a broad crowd network (as we discuss below) and also begin to construct a collective memory of the group's actions (Awad and Wagoner 2018). Image taking and sharing have become more accessible today through technologies such as smartphones and digital media. This enables every crowd member to also be a broadcaster of the protest, documenting its happenings. Many recent protest movements (e.g., the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions in 2011 and Black Lives Matter protests in the US) were triggered by people using their mobile phones to transform police violence from a state-controlled act into visual evidence for dissemination and mobilization (Khatib 2013).

However, not all images produced by a crowd develop into mobilizing protest symbols; to do so they must connect with existing values and grievances (Wagoner and Brescó de Luna 2021). Symbols, according to Frederic Bartlett (1924), are signs that come to embody multiple meanings, carrying a face value and underlying sentimental value, giving the symbol stability and effectiveness. The images that become symbols of such movements are often ones that are able to vividly condense broad meanings of violence and injustices into one personalized affective story. In Le Bon's words: "Whatever strikes the imagination of crowds presents itself under the shape of a startling and very clear image . . . a great victory, a great miracle, a great crime, a great hope" ([1895] 2002, 37). People empathize most easily with these symbols and position themselves in the place of the individual represented. The image of Khaled Said that sparked mobilization for the Egyptian revolution in 2011 exemplifies this. The image showed the face of Said (a relatable, middle-class young man) before and after he was brutally beaten and killed by police. Along with the image was a slogan that exemplifies why this image became a protest symbol: "We are all Khaled Said."

Slogans such as this sum up the moral and affective shared meaning of a cause. "Black lives matter," "Me too," "My body my choice"—all these slogans connect people through a moral dimension that unites those who have experienced the injustice themselves and those who have not but who choose to fight against the injustice exemplified by the protest symbol. One example of an enduring slogan from the Egyptian context since 2011 has been "Despair is treason" (اليأس خيانة). This slogan puts hope as a shared social responsibility among the activists despite the counterrevolutionary measures that have taken place since 2011. The slogan has been expressed in protest posters, online images, graffiti, and political prisoners' letters (Awad 2017b). The slogan remains today as a shared reminder among the activist groups that despair means giving up on those who lost their lives for the cause, and hope, against all odds, is needed for the protest cause to endure. The slogan as such puts the collective remem-

bering of the revolution and its cause as a shared responsibility among the protesters as a group.

DISTRIBUTED NARRATIVE RESOURCES

Successful protest crowds need a convincing narrative that brings people together. Individual and collective narratives are effective resources that mediate people's interpretation of the world. Narratives also provide one way of understanding a society's shared values and meanings (Bruner 1990). Social movements often build their story around a master narrative, which is a simplified form of making sense of the past, present, and future of a community through a conventional narrative template, such as "the power of the people" or "the quest for freedom" (Wertsch 2002). These narratives help create a collective memory for the group, which brings the group's members together in the present and orients them toward a shared imagined future. Narrative thus facilitates the distribution of cognition across time. Hutchins (2000) argues that cognition could be distributed through time in such a way that the consequences of earlier events can transform the nature of present and future events. Narratives are thus key resources in generating meaning for and continuity of a protest cause.

It is important to highlight here that narratives operate differently than other forms of language use, such as reasoning and argumentation. One of their principal features is that they position listeners as part of the story. In hearing a story, we accompany its protagonists as they encounter the world, make decisions, and overcome obstacles. In this way, narrative goes beyond the surface level of language to simulate the experience of acting in the world from a certain position with its constraints, motives, and choices. For this reason, thinkers like Richard Rorty (1982) have argued that narrative offers a more powerful tool for teaching ethics than abstract philosophy. Others have shown that when material is presented to people in the form of a story, it is understood more thoroughly and remembered more accurately (Arya and Maul 2012). But most importantly, stories

evoke our emotions and imaginations. It should be clear why a protest crowd needs a convincing story behind it.

The #MeToo movement provides a good example of utilizing the power of both individual and collective narratives. The movement grew online through the sharing of personal and embodied experiences of sexual harassment using the hashtag #MeToo on digital media. By bringing those personal experiences together to a shared public space, the movement powerfully showed how common those personal experiences are and utilized the power of this shared narrative to mobilize around it a community driven to act against sexual harassment. That shared collective narrative also gained momentum by connecting to the broader feminist master narratives of historical struggles and the group identity associated with that cause. The #MeToo narratives positioned different social actors, holding the violator accountable and stimulating the listener to take a position in relation to the story.

But collective narratives can also impede protest under some conditions. Unlike in other European countries such as Greece and Portugal, in Ireland the economic crisis of 2008 was met with few protests and no riots. Yet, there were mass demonstrations and civic unrest in 2014–2015 against austerity measures when Ireland had the fastest growing economy in the European Union. Why? Previous research conceptualized this observation as the deprivation-protest paradox (Power 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Power and Nussbaum 2016). One explanation for the acceptance of economic hardship in Ireland lay in a culturally pervasive moral principle that in life “you reap what you sow” (Power 2015, 2016; Power, Mandalaywala, and Kay 2021; Power and Nussbaum 2014). Here the narrative, shared by elites and unemployed youth (Power 2018a), illustrated how Irish people blamed themselves for their supposed role in the economic collapse and therefore believed it was illogical for them to protest against authorities. Instead, they suffered austerity with the expectation that when the economy recovered, they would reap what they sowed, benefitting in the future from the current financial hardship. But this was not the case.

When Ireland experienced rapid economic growth in 2014–2015, people had expected to reap the benefits too. Instead, the government signed into law a new charge on water. Historically, water charges were paid for through general taxation of the Irish public. People felt the new charge on water was a “double tax” that disproportionately impacted working-class and poorer people and significantly violated their expectations of increased wealth during an economic recovery. They felt relatively deprived. And they took to the streets to protest. Ethnographic and experimental research suggests that the narrative had shifted (Power 2018a, 2018b; Power et al. 2021). It was no longer members of the people who should “reap what they sowed.” Instead, the demonstrators believed it was the government that should be served their just desserts. The protesters no longer felt culpable for their role in the economic crisis. It was the government that had introduced a new charge disproportionately impacting poor and working-class people and therefore that must be replaced by a new, more left-leaning government.

DISTRIBUTED SPACES: PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL

As already mentioned, places have been recognized since ancient times as powerful aids to memory and thought (Yates 1966); Halbwachs (1980) argued that collective remembering occurs within spatial frameworks of a city, which carries the affective relationships among a community. A well-organized protest march will use historically significant places to enhance the present movement. Consider the already mentioned case of Ireland: the protests were choreographed to move through historical places in Dublin that are associated with previous Irish rebellions, to situate the anti-water-tax mobilization within earlier struggles (Power 2018b). Several mass demonstrations began at the Garden of Remembrance, a park in the inner city on the traditionally working-class north side of Dublin. The plaque on the entrance to the park declares: To All Those Who Gave Their Lives to the Great Cause of Irish Freedom. By meeting in this location, organizers explicitly framed the cause in terms of a continuation of previous

rallies and revolutions against unjust systems. The anti-water-charge protests followed a route through streets in central Dublin before finishing at O'Connell Street. Named after the well-known Irish nationalist leader Daniel O'Connell, the wide boulevard is the site of the General Post Office, which flies the Irish tricolor flag from its exterior and is visible throughout the street. This was the headquarters of the 1916 rebellion of Irish revolutionaries against British soldiers. Given its prominence in Irish revolutionary history, it was consequential to end protests in this location, as a final attempt to link Irish revolutionary history to the struggle to end water charges, to vote out the government that helped create and oversee unequal economic growth, and to create a fairer and more equal Irish society (Power 2018a, 2018b).

Thus, physical crowd events are typically orchestrated through carefully chosen places in a city that carry within them a history of protest and struggle. Those spaces are then transformed by the crowd into new symbols of the movement's memory and collective identity. The symbol of the square occupation itself can be a verbal or visual image that travels from one geographical space to another and from one cause to another, uniting different movements (Mitchell 2012). Likewise, an empty square after a revolution, reclaimed by authorities to reestablish and show their power, communicates defeat. Tahrir Square in Cairo became that symbol for the Egyptian revolution of 2011. The square already held the memory of many iconic moments in Egyptian history. The name "Tahrir," meaning liberation, unofficially comes from the 1919 anti-colonial revolution and was officially given to the square after the 1952 "revolution" (coup d'état) that changed the country from a monarchy to a republic. In 2011 the space was likewise the epicenter of the revolution that ousted President Hosni Mubarak. The square was appropriated through protester sit-ins and developed quickly into a place to produce the revolution narrative through speeches, songs, street theater, and street art (Awad, Wagner, and Glăveanu 2017). In the years that followed 2011, the square became a symbol of an idealized temporary state of being and of the

shared memory of the revolution. Subsequently, the Egyptian government has invested a lot of resources to transform the square, erasing any traces of the protests and symbolically reshaping the memory of the revolution through new monuments (Awad 2017a).

Today, physical crowd networks are connected into digital networks (Greijdanus et al. 2020). The defining moment of many contemporary social movements is the transition from virtual to physical space (thus, even in the digital age, protest performance in urban space remains important). Virtual space has further enabled the connection between different crowds and social movements across the world through digital social networks. Manuel Castells (2015) argues that social movements have always relied on existing communication mediums such as pamphlets and manifestos, and now digital media is providing further communicative tools that are interactive, less hierarchical, and more participatory. These properties of digital media have facilitated a space where alternative narratives can spread and create counter-publics—collectives that produce alternative or non-dominant forms of knowledge that challenge and subvert the mainstream public sphere (Fraser 1990). The #MeToo crowd is one example of a counter-public whose participants challenged the stigma traditionally associated with speaking up about sexual harassment and abuse. The movement created networked counter-publics (Jackson and Welles 2015) in which nondominant narratives were produced and transmitted online, leading to the creation of affective publics surrounding the cause (Trott 2021).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Through a framework of distributed cognition, we assembled the different extracranial dimensions that bring together and sustain protest crowds. By considering the wider ecology of protest and the various mediators involved in it, we hope to sensitize researchers to the range of complex social, material, and technological resources used by crowds and their leadership. We have intentionally emphasized how these resources go beyond verbal language expressions (the

typical methodological tool of researchers) to highlight bodily, imagistic, affective, and expressive qualities, even in language use. The framework outlined here also aims to overcome some of the dichotomies in the crowd literature, such as irrational/rational and instinctive/agentive. In brief, Le Bon saw crowds as having a “group mentality” in which people lost themselves and their agency, while ESIM focused on purposeful individuals joining and identifying with a group. For us, there is still something to be learned from Le Bon’s characterization of crowd mentality (especially the notion of submersion in the group). However, we see it not as an automatic irrational force, but as cultivated through distributed resources that can give agency to the group. It is precisely through these symbolic and material resources that collective intentionality can be created and possibilities for the future imagined. These possibilities are, however, always constrained by the established social, economic, and legal structures.

The attentive reader may have also noticed that our examples of protest movements tend to be progressive (and mostly peaceful) ones. This is probably a bias in the larger contemporary crowd literature; violent crowds today tend to be explained through outside factors (Power 2020; Wagoner and Power 2021). Our theoretical models should be applicable to the entire ideological spectrum of protest crowds. For example, the same overlapping kinds of resources were employed during the US Capitol Hill attack on January 6, 2021, that was an attempt to stop Joe Biden from being confirmed as president. Protesters marched, chanted, and later fought the police together (bodily interactions). They used ready slogans like “Stop the steal” and displayed Trump political insignia in addition to some alt-right symbols (affective symbols). They had a straightforward narrative that the election was fraudulent and Trump was the rightful president (narrative). The crowd first gathered for Trump’s speech on the Ellipse in front of the White House and afterward marched to the Capitol (both highly symbolic and historical places in US collective memory). All this was coordinated through social media platforms (digital spaces). These various kinds of resources overlap and support

each other, guiding crowd formation and action. In short, this approach requires analyzing the crowd as part of a system of people, artifacts, and material and symbolic spaces. This is increasingly relevant for understanding today's crowds that emerge in virtual as much as physical spaces and travel and transform meaning across time and geographical space at an unprecedented speed.

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