

The (mis)use of controversial terminologies in evacuation research

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AFCON stampede: Eight dead as 40 fans hospitalised and children crushed in stadium chaos

Liberian church stampede kills 29 worshippers in Monrovia

What went wrong at the Astroworld Festival and how panic played a role in the crowd surge

They Thought It Was a Shooting. The Real Danger Was Mass Panic.

Fear is contagious — and people actually feel it more in a crowd

(Don't overuse) Panic!

How common is 'panic'?

- Used content analysis on 630 media articles about 127 collective flight responses to misperceived threats
- Searched False AND Alarm AND (Crowds OR Stampede OR Flee OR Fled OR Panic
- Stampedes found to be rare and resulted in few serious injuries
- Competitive behaviour like pushing and trampling relatively rare (less than half the incidents)
- Diverse responses to (misperceived threat): some people ran, many walked away, others stopped and filmed or investigated the reason for the situation, or intervened with the apparent source of the threat
- Reports of behaviour such as running, screaming, and crying occurred more in text accounts of the events than evidence from the videos of those incidents

Barr, D., Drury, J., & Choudhury, S. Understanding collective flight responses to (mis)perceived hostile threats: A systematic review of ten years of false alarms in crowded spaces

What is 'panic'?

- Emergencies can be uncertain and scary events
- From an external perspective crowd behaviour may look irrational
- We need to get the perspectives of people in the crowd

A very brief history of crowd psychology

- Le Bon (1895) The crowd: A study of the popular mind
- The crowd as criminal, spineless masses
- In emergencies crowd members irrationally panic and typically do the wrong thing
- Automatic transference of emotion (contagion)

>> ~100 years later

Language used by survivors of the Hillsborough disaster suggests 'panic' means many different things:

- Individual panic but not widespread
- Feeling fear but not 'panic'
- When someone talked about 'blind panic' it was under very extreme circumstances when they struggled to articulate what they meant or to explain feeling frustration (rather than behaviour)
- Panicking because they wanted to help others

Panic and selfish behaviour?

Int: Do you think anybody panicked?

LB12: In our carriage no, or if they did they panicked inwardly, they didn't express their panic. I mean there was no screaming in our carriage I mean people were trying to get out the door but they weren't trying to get out of the door stupidly.

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Some people were really itching to get off the train so more people the more agitated people were not being shaken up they felt they were, even though they wanted to get off at the same time so it was quite a calm calm evenly dispersed evacuation there wasn't people running down the train screaming their heads [off]. It was very calm and obviously there was people crying [] 7 but generally most sort of people were really calm in that situation, which I found amazing. (LB 1)

Drury, J., Cocking, C., & Reicher, S. D. (2009). The nature of collective resilience: Survivor reactions to the 2005 London bombings. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, 27(1), 66-95.

Drury, J., Cocking, C., & Reicher, S. D. (2009). Everyone for themselves? A comparative study of crowd solidarity among emergency survivors. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 48(3), 487-506

Cocking, C. (2013). The role of "zero-responders" during 7/7: implications for the emergency services. *International Journal of Emergency Services*, 2(2), 79-93.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

Personal identity
(the singular)



Social identity
(the collective)

- We have multiple social identities (e.g. fan of a particular sports team, an academic, a fire fighter)
- We understand our self-concept in terms of which identity is salient (relevant) at a particular time
- Ingroup member: someone who we perceive as being in our group
- Increased helping behaviour towards ingroup members (e.g., Levine et al., 2005)

Self-categorisation theory (Turner et al., 1987)

Aims to explain *how* we categorise ourselves and others into groups in different contexts, and how we shift from considering ourselves as an individual to considering ourselves as a group member

Perceived common fate can bring people together

~~Contagion~~ Social Influence

Social influence

Influence is bounded by social identity

DLUHC – group processes in evacuations from high-rise buildings

Interviews with 23 FRS and 40 occupants

Thematic analysis to search, review and define themes

Social influence

- Delay evacuation to seek and share information
- Seek validation from group members

Social influence

- Group processes core to which information is trusted

Perceived threats and 'stampedes': A relational model of collective fear responses



Method



		Noise		
		Threatening (gunshot)	Non-threatening (door slamming)	Control (unknown)
Given interpretation	Ingroup			
	Control (unknown)			

Current DVs: identification with others in the crowd, intended response, trust in information about the noise, perceived danger

Preliminary findings:

- 1) perceived threat increases shared social identification
- 2) extent of influence associated with group membership

Recommendations

- Let's not rely on the word 'panic'
- Integrate research on group dynamics
- ~~Contagion~~ social influence

Thank you!

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