

# MOB SOCIOLOGY AND ESCALATED FORCE: Sociology's Contribution to Repressive Police Tactics

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Mob sociology is a theory of crowd behavior that is found in U.S. police literature and that has been used to design and justify demonstration management practices. Mob sociology is derived from sociological theories about crowd behavior but ignores their originators' assertions that crowds occur within a larger social context. Mob sociology was diffused throughout the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s through a national civil disorder training program and a variety of police manuals and magazines. It is highly compatible with the *escalated force* style of protest policing and has lost much of its influence since the introduction of *negotiated management* practices. However, it is still present in police literature and training programs and should be replaced by contemporary social science research and theory.

In 1992 an international panel of experts prepared a report setting out principles on "lawful control of demonstrations in the Republic of South Africa" (Heymann 1992). This panel, the Goldstone Commission, outlined a public order management system (McPhail et al. 1998) that provides protections for free speech similar to those in the contemporary United States. Among its rationale was the following claim:

Social science research of the seventies and eighties has taught us that people who engage in protest are not poorly integrated, deviant individuals. Rather, they are concerned people expressing their legitimate concerns on a variety of social/political issues such as the environment, housing, abortion, ethnic/racial concerns, and political rights. (Heymann 1992)

This upbeat picture of sociology's influence on public order management connects two trends that have developed over the past three decades. First, sociologists have systematically debunked "madding crowd" theories of the behaviors of people assembled in political demonstrations and other crowds and put forward theories that posit purposive actors (Couch 1968; Gamson 1975; McPhail 1991; Skolnick 1969; Tilly 1978). Unlike the earlier theories, current sociological claims about crowds are grounded in extensive fieldwork. Second, public order management in the United States has moved from policies that

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emphasize *escalated force* to those that rely upon *negotiated management* (McCarthy and McPhail 1998; McPhail, Schweingruber, and McCarthy 1998). This article is concerned with the relationship between these two trends.

This investigation reveals that, unlike the South African case, sociologists have made few contributions to the U.S. negotiated management model of demonstration management, which is not informed by contemporary social science ideas about crowds. However, sociologists made major contributions to the repressive, and now illegal, practices of the escalated force model through the development of what I call "mob sociology." The term "mob sociology" is not found in any of the sources analyzed for this article. Most of them make no reference to the disciplinary source of the claims they set forth, although some use the term "mob psychology," which is also found in the popular discourse. The discipline of psychology has certainly influenced popular ideas about the crowd,<sup>1</sup> but it is mainly the sociologists whose concepts and arguments appear in the police literature and in police and military crowd control manuals. I have chosen the term "mob sociology" to describe more accurately the source of this set of ideas.

This article applies a sociology of knowledge approach (Berger and Luckmann 1966; McCarthy 1996) to understanding the social control strategies of U.S. federal and state law enforcement agencies toward political demonstrators. I trace the development of the knowledge that defines the "reality" of the demonstrators that police face and show how this "reality" leads to police enacting and following particular strategies. The strategies police adopt toward these demonstrators depend not primarily on the demonstrators' "objective" actions or attributes but on the socially constructed images of the demonstrators and predictions about their behavior. This case study shows how these images and predictions were constructed and how the construction process resulted in an image of political demonstrations as potentially violent mobs that must be defeated through a strategy of escalated force. Through their own actions, police often provoked the expected violence and "proved" the "reality" of the images.

While sociologists have been studying protest policing at least since the demonstrations and riots of the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Marx 1974; Stark 1972), the recent outburst of research on the topic (e.g., della Porta and Reiter 1998) is driven by an understanding of its importance in the political opportunity structure (Eisinger 1973; McAdam 1982; Tilly 1978) facing social movements. Protest policing is "an important barometer of the political opportunities available for social movements" (della Porta 1996, p. 62). In their model for explaining protest policing styles, Donatella della Porta and Herbert Reiter (1998, p. 9) argue that the impact of other variables (e.g., public opinion, the government) is "filtered by police knowledge—that is, the police's construction of external reality, collectively and individually—which we consider to be the main intervening variable between structure and action." Although a number of scholars (e.g., della Porta 1998; Waddington 1994; Winter 1998) have addressed the role of police knowledge in protest policing, none have described in detail how ideas constructed by social scientists have shaped police knowledge and impacted protest policing policies. That is the aim of this article. This study is based on an examination of various U.S. police documents that discuss the policing of crowds, demonstrations and riots. The most comprehensive source over the time period of the study are a number of magazines aimed at police officers. These include *Police Chief* (1963–1994), *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* (1964–1994), *Law and Order* (1971–1975, 1979–1993), *Police Yearbook* (1963–1977, 1982–1988) and two unrelated journals both called *Police* (1963–1971 and 1987–1992). Every issue of these magazines in the indi-

cated period was examined to locate pertinent articles. In addition, searches were made through periodical indexes to locate articles in these and other police magazines. Approximately 375 articles were found, with about half of these published in the 1960s.

I begin by describing mob sociology as it was found in the police literature in its heyday in the 1960s. I trace its origin to Herbert Blumer's (1939) classic explanation of crowd behavior. I then describe how mob sociology was disseminated by the military police and through the police literature. Next, I explain the connection between the theory of mob sociology and practice of escalated force. I then describe the rise of negotiated management, the role of mob sociology in contemporary police literature, and the rise and fall of mob sociology as a tool for policing protest. I conclude by proposing some research questions raised by this article and by explaining why sociologists should be concerned about the past and continuing influence of mob sociology.

## MOB SOCIOLOGY

A crowd is not a mob, but it can become one! Each crowd constitutes a police problem, and each, even the most casual, has latent potential for widespread civil disobedience. (Momboisse 1967d, p. 5)

So begins *Riots, Revolts and Insurrections*, by Raymond Momboisse, one of the key disseminators of mob sociology. This simple thesis—that all crowds can transform into law-breaking mobs—is the core of mob sociology. The other principal ideas of this perspective explain how this transformation takes place and describe the attributes of crowds and mobs and the people in them. This section presents a brief outline of mob sociology as it was presented in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This outline draws on the work of Momboisse, a California deputy attorney general who wrote at least four books on crowd control, wrote and produced a police training film, and served on the Riot Advisory Committee of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement. Section 1 of *Riots, Revolts and Insurrections*, "The Problems," lays out a foundation of mob sociology similar to that found in other contemporary sources.

The mob sociology perspective attempts to explain how a law-abiding crowd becomes a law-breaking mob. The crowd is an unorganized gathering of individuals without leaders. It has "awareness of the law and willingness to respect the principles of law and order, resulting from the individual member's [*sic*] ingrained respect for the law" (Momboisse 1967d, p. 5). A mob is characterized by leadership, organization, a common motive for action, emotion, and irrationality, but the key factor differentiating it from a crowd is that a mob is not law-abiding.

Crowds begin to become mobs with some "climatic [*sic*] event." The individuals in the crowd, who are already "preconditioned" and have "built-up" frustrations, "mutter" and "mill about like a herd of cattle," "jostling" and "name-calling." During the milling, the crowd members spread rumors, which are crucial in the development of a mob. There is a "spiral of stimulation," which Momboisse (1967d, p. 17) compares to heat reflecting from one burning log to another:

As tension mounts, individuals become less and less responsive to stimulation arising outside the group and respond only to influences from within the group itself. This process creates among members of the crowd an internal rapport, a kind of collective hyp-

nosis, in which the individual loses his self-control and responds only to the dictates of the crowd as a whole. The individual loses critical self-consciousness, his ability to act in terms of cool and rational consideration for mob anonymity absolves him of individual responsibility.

The individual is absorbed into the crowd and is controlled by the "crowd mind." This leads to violent, destructive behavior. The target and details of this behavior can be influenced by leaders or agitators. These agitators can cause the precipitating incident that creates the mob, or the incident can be triggered by unjustified actions of the police. However, if the police show weakness, this too encourages mob violence.

Another aspect of mob sociology commonly repeated in the police literature is its scientific-sounding taxonomies. Momboisse presented taxonomies of crowds, mobs, and mob members and their psychological attributes. The four types of crowds are "casual," "conventional," "expressive," and "hostile or aggressive." The people in a casual crowd "happen to be present at a given place but . . . are not unified or organized" (Momboisse 1967d, p. 6). The people in a conventional crowd are "assembled for a specific purpose, such as witnessing a ball game, parade, play or fire [and] have similar common interests" (p. 6). The members of an expressive crowd are involved in "expressive behavior," such as dancing or singing. This expressive behavior is not directed in a destructive way. The hostile or aggressive crowd is "an unorganized throng willing to be led into lawlessness, but it is hesitant because it lacks organization, courage and unity of purpose" (p. 8). It is this type of crowd that is most likely to become a mob.

Mobs are classified according to their common motive for action. An escape mob's motive is to flee from a real or imagined threat. An acquisitive mob, such those that loot or run on banks, is motivated by the desire to acquire something. An expressive mob engages in expressive behavior. Momboisse does not specify how expressive mobs differ from expressive crowds other than to say that police should let expressive crowds continue their activities, while expressive mobs are potentially dangerous. The final type of mob is the aggressive mob, which includes race riots, lynchings, and prison riots. It aims to destroy persons or property.

Momboisse lists 11 types of mob members. Other presentations of mob sociology reduce these to fewer types, as in an FBI (1967) crowd control manual, which lists seven. Six participate in and/or favor violence: (1) impulsive and lawless people ("They start the riot and incite others to violence"), (2) suggestible people ("easily influenced to follow the lead of the more violent"), (3) cautious individuals ("would like to get into the fracas but who wait for the cloak of anonymity"), (4) yielders ("do not join the action until the large number of persons participating gives the impression of universality"), (5) supportive people ("enjoy the show and even shout encouragement"), and (6) psychopathic individuals ("angry at the world"). The remaining category, resisters, opposes violence. However, a U.S. Air Force (1977, p. 75) course book, which contains the same seven categories, even indicts the resisters: "These people would be better off resisting from a distance because their resistance to mob violence is countered by the mob with more violence. Normally, this violence is directed at the source of resistance. These people add fuel to the fire."

A final typology commonly found in mob sociology primers is a list of mob characteristics. Momboisse presents fourteen of these, including anonymity, emotionality, irrationality, suggestibility, contagion, homogeneity, and novelty. A year later sociologist Carl Couch (1968) called many of these same characteristics baseless stereotypes and criticized

the sociological theories that promoted them. It was from one of these sociological theories, the transformation hypothesis, that mob sociology was derived.

## THE SOCIOLOGICAL ROOTS OF MOB SOCIOLOGY

Mob sociology bears a striking resemblance to what Clark McPhail (1991) calls the transformation hypothesis, which he attributes to French sociologists Gustav LeBon and Gabriel Tarde and U.S. sociologists Robert Park and Herbert Blumer. Momboisse includes no citations in *Riots, Revolts and Insurrections*, but he clearly borrowed largely from Joseph Lohman. Lohman, a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Chicago and subsequently chairman of the Illinois Division of Correction, made an important contribution to police crowd management in 1947 when he prepared a manual for the Chicago Park District, which then employed 639 police officers. *The Police and Minority Groups* was intended to educate the park police about the various ethnic groups that used the park services so that these services could be administered “on a basis of absolute equality” (Lohman 1947, p. v). It included an overview of scientific ideas about race (which debunked numerous racist ideas, e.g., blacks have lower IQs than whites) and of racial tension in the United States and Chicago (including thirteen neighborhood maps made under the supervision of Louis Wirth). Lohman also had influence outside of Chicago. Louisville, Kentucky, hired him as a consultant and adopted a version of *The Police and Minority Groups* for its use. The Louisville manual, *Principles of Police Work with Minority Groups* (Lohman 1950), differs from the original by substituting information and neighborhood maps of Louisville for the Chicago-specific sections of the earlier manual. Both manuals also included a number of ideas that became part of mob sociology. Two key ideas in Momboisse can be traced to Lohman. First, Lohman describes how a crowd becomes a mob and includes many of the same processes later described by Momboisse (e.g., precipitating incident, milling, contagion). Second, Lohman lists the same four types of crowds. An even clearer sign that Momboisse was familiar with Lohman’s work is that *Riots, Revolts and Insurrections* contains a number of passages that were clearly borrowed (without attribution) from *The Police and Minority Groups*. For example:

### Lohman 1947

The expressive crowd is often mistakenly regarded as dangerous and treated as though it were aggressive. It is important to avoid this confusion. . . . It is far wiser to permit such activity to continue and to permit the group to so express itself if there is no serious breach of peace. Indeed, interrupting the release of energies in an expressive manner may divert the latent energies of such a crowd into aggressive and destructive channels. (p. 88)

### Momboisse 1967

Unfortunately this type of crowd is often mistakenly confused with the aggressive crowd and treated as though it were dangerous. It is important for police officers to avoid this mistake, for it is far wiser to permit such activity to continue and to permit the group to express itself if there is no serious breach of peace. Indeed, interrupting the release of energies in an expressive manner may divert the latent energies of such a crowd into aggressive and destructive channels. (p. 8)

But Lohman also borrowed from an earlier source, the work of Herbert Blumer. McPhail (1991) credits Blumer with systematizing the transformation hypothesis, which draws on the work of LeBon and Park. Lohman studied with Blumer at the University of Chicago and Blumer's ideas are clearly present in *The Police and Minority Groups* (although he is not cited). The description of the transformation process found in Lohman, Momboisse, and police training materials is derived from Blumer's (1939) theory of the development of the acting crowd. Blumer also helped develop the language that is used to describe crowds in the police literature. Examples of his terminology include "milling" (a term later used by both Lohman and Momboisse), "circular reaction" (Lohman and Momboisse both use "circular influences"), and "social contagion" (Lohman used "social contagion"; Momboisse used "contagion").

Although the ideas of academic sociologists are clearly responsible for the mob sociology perspective used by police, mob sociology left out something that was essential to the earlier sociological theories. Park, Blumer, and Lohman all placed crowd behavior into a larger social context of social unrest and change. Park (1972) saw the crowd, along with the public, as a basic form of social organization. For Blumer (1939, p. 223), the purpose of studying crowds and other "collective behavior" was to "understand the way in which a new social order arises." And Lohman prefaced his discussion of mob formation with a description of job discrimination, housing segregation, and social inequality. However, these sociological elements were missing from the version of the transformation hypothesis that was diffused outside of academe and was taught to thousands of civilian police officers and soldiers.

An interesting feature of the various documents describing mob sociology is that they "borrow" sections of text from earlier sources without citation. The above examples showing Momboisse's borrowing from Lohman are typical. In an academic setting, this borrowing is called plagiarism. But the widespread presence of this practice in the crowd control literature may signify something significant about the status of mob sociology—it had become common knowledge. No longer was mob sociology treated as a theory developed by a particular set of researchers. It was something that "everybody knew" and could be freely repeated. The common knowledge status of mob sociology was the result of a diffusion process that centered around a federal training program.

### DIFFUSION OF MOB SOCIOLOGY IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

The term "public order management system" (POMS) is used to describe the repertoires of social control practices that are "developed, elaborated and diffused to confront a variety of public order threats, including sport victory celebrations and large religious gatherings as well as political protests" (McCarthy, McPhail, and Crist 1999, p. 72). A POMS consists of "(1) civilian and/or military police organizations, (2) the public order policies of these organizations, (3) these organizations' programs for recruiting and training personnel (civilian or military) to enact these policies, (4) the actual practices of these policing personnel, and (5) the technology and equipment used while carrying out these practices" (McPhail et al. 1998, p. 64). A public order management system is developed in response to "sustained and novel waves of public order disruption" (McCarthy et al. 1999, p. 71). If old strategies of social control are ineffective, agents of social control may attempt to implement new ones. If social control strategies prove effective in one location, agents of social control in other locations may adopt them to deal with similar problems.

The wave of protests over civil rights and the Vietnam War led to the creation of the current U.S. POMS. Four government agencies played key roles in this process: (1) three national commissions that investigated the wave of protest, (2) the U.S. Supreme Court and other federal courts, which issued a series of court decisions developing First Amendment and public forum law, (3) the National Park Service, which developed an elaborate permitting system for accommodating demonstrations in Washington, D.C., and (4) the U.S. Army Military Police School, which created a national civil disorder training program for local police officials (McPhail et al. 1998). The latter agency played the largest role in disseminating mob sociology.

In 1967 the Military Police School of the U.S. Army in Fort Gordon, Georgia, developed a civil disturbance orientation course (CDOC or SEA-DOC) for training civilian police officials. SEA-DOC was "the best and most complete course available in civil disturbance planning" (Cherry 1975). John D. McCarthy, Clark McPhail, and John Crist (1999) estimate that as many as 10,000 people attended SEA-DOC over its existence from 1968 to at least 1978. The participants in the program, however, were only a fraction of those who were exposed to SEA-DOC training since they were provided with advice and materials enabling them to develop local programs for training others (Cherry 1975). The SEA-DOC course packet (U.S. Army 1972b) reveals that SEA-DOC participants were taught elements of mob sociology, including the transformation hypothesis, which was apparently borrowed from Momboisse, and a list of "psychological behavior factors [that] influence individuals to commit acts that they would not normally commit if alone" (U.S. Army 1972b). These are anonymity, suggestibility, emotional contagion, novelty and imitation.

Another audience for mob sociology was federal agents and soldiers charged with demonstration and riot management. In 1967, the FBI published a manual on *Prevention and Control of Mobs and Riots*, which teaches mob sociology. It includes taxonomies of crowds, mobs, and mob members. It also describes the process of circular reaction, although it uses the term "circular reverberation." Military manuals, including a U.S. Army *Civil Disturbances Field Manual* (U.S. Army 1972a) and an Air Force manual (U.S. Air Force 1977), also taught mob sociology. Typically, mob sociology functioned in these documents as an introduction to the topic of crowds and a justification for the tactics advocated.

Magazines aimed at civilian police were another source of diffusion of mob sociology. Momboisse was the leading author of these articles. His 1964 book, *Crowd Control and Riot Prevention*, was excerpted in a four-part series in a column on "Handling Unusual Occurrences" in *Police* magazine (Diamond 1965a; 1965b; 1965c; 1965d). Three articles (Momboisse 1967a; 1967b; 1967c) excerpted from *Riots, Revolts and Insurrections* (Momboisse 1967d) also appeared in *Police*. Other articles in police magazines (e.g., Cromwell and Lewis 1971; Dragnich 1972; Looney 1970; Pegg 1968) repeat various pieces of the mob sociology story but with differing emphases. For instance, Paul Cromwell and Robert Lewis's (1971) "sociological analysis" of crowds, mobs, and riots calls factors such as anonymity, emotional contagion and release from repressed emotions "sociological factors" instead of "psychological factors," the term used by Momboisse.

McCarthy and his colleagues (1999) view the search for policing strategies as a bounded rationality process that occurs within network structures and is affected by the status of other institutions. The rise of mob sociology was possible because of the existing network of police agencies and, importantly, the entry into this network of a high-status federal training program. Thousands of soldiers and FBI agents learned about mob sociol-

ogy as part of their crowd control training, as did civilian police officers who participated in training programs based on SEA-DOC.

### THE PRACTICE OF MOB SOCIOLOGY

Mob sociology is a set of theoretical explanations of the behavior of people in crowds and mobs. These explanations could be used to develop a variety of police techniques, but in practice there has been an affinity between mob sociology and the escalated force model of protest policing, which was dominant in the United States until the early 1970s. McPhail and his colleagues (1998) constructed five dimensions of protest policing along which particular policing practices can be placed. These dimensions are: (1) the extent of police concerns with the *First Amendment rights* of protesters and their obligation to respect and protect those rights, (2) the extent of police *toleration for community disruption*, (3) the nature of *contact and communication* between police and demonstrators and the extent to which police keep or cede the demonstration locus of control, (4) the *extent and manner of arrests* as a method of managing demonstrators, and (5) the *extent and manner of using force* in lieu of or in conjunction with arrests in order to control demonstrators.<sup>2</sup> McPhail and his colleagues (1998) use these five dimensions to contrast the escalated force and negotiated management styles of protest.

The escalated force style of protest policing that was dominant during the 1960s marks one side of these dimensions: (1) *First Amendment rights* are ignored. (2) There is low *tolerance for community disruption* and little willingness to tolerate changes in the status quo. (3) The only *contact and communication* between police and demonstrators is undercover police infiltration or use of *agents provocateurs* (Marx 1974) and police do not cede any control to demonstrators. (4) Police use massive *arrests* of individuals who violate person or property or who engage in nonviolent civil disobedience. (5) Police use *force* to disperse demonstrators and/or mete out physical punishment in lieu of arrests. Indeed, this last component of the escalated force style is its key. Police begin by confronting demonstrators with a show of force followed by increasing levels of force until demonstrators disperse. The connection between mob sociology and escalated force goes back at least as far as Lohman (1947), who included a table (Table 1) summarizing the stages in mob development and appropriate police actions.

Three strategies from Lohman's prescriptions became part of the escalated force model. First, police make a show of force. Lohman distinguishes a show of force from both the use of force and from an inadequate show of force. An inadequate show of force may require police to actually use force. Second, certain individuals must be removed from the crowd to stop the processes that make it a mob. This can be done by arresting a few key individuals or dispersing the entire gathering. Third, the crowd should be isolated from other people, who may come under its contagious effects. Police who adopt these strategies will be following the escalated force model. In fact, mob sociology provides the key to understanding the escalated force style. Four components of the escalated force style are directly related to dispersing crowds—by force or arrest, despite the First Amendment and before serious disruption results. This perspective makes perfect sense if the crowd is viewed as a potentially violent, out-of-control mob. The other component of the escalated force model, limiting communication with demonstrators and not ceding them any control of the demonstration, also follows from mob sociology.



TABLE 1. LOHMAN’S STAGES OF MOB FORMATION AND APPROPRIATE POLICE ACTIONS

Stages in the Formation of a Mob	Appropriate Police Actions
Initial stage	Quick determination of the facts and
An initial incident	immediate action to resolve and isolate
Individuals in the milling process	the incident
Stage of collective excitement	Removal of key individuals
Crowd becoming unified by circular	Adequate <i>show of force</i> by the gathering of
influence	sufficient uniformed officers
Stirred to action by key individuals	Dispersal of those who have gathered
Stage of social contagion	Adequate <i>show of force</i>
Crowd accumulating masses of innocent	Mobilization of reserves
bystanders as well as some trouble	Cordon of police around the affected area to
seekers	keep it isolated
	Loud speakers and police details to
	encourage the crowd to break up and leave
	the area

Note: Table from Lohman (1947); emphasis in original.

This empirical connection between mob sociology and escalated force existed until the rise of negotiated management. For many advocates of mob sociology, crowd control training was synonymous with using force to break up crowds (e.g., Dragnich 1972). This was especially true in military manuals, which consisted of a short introduction on mob sociology followed by instructions on baton handling and riot control formations (e.g., U.S. Army 1972a).

There were some exceptions. For instance, Momboisse’s views were not entirely consistent with the escalated force model. He defended the First Amendment right to protest and believed police should meet with demonstrators to review their plans. Significantly, Momboisse believed that demonstrations, excluding those with civil disobedience, were neither crowds (since they are organized and have leaders) nor mobs (since they are orderly, legal, and nonviolent) and that police shouldn’t try to prevent them. However, he also believed that demonstrations, like crowds, could be transformed into mobs. Thus, police should isolate demonstrators and not allow crowds to form near a demonstration. This exception is interesting because although he generally supported the First Amendment right to protest, Momboisse’s belief in mob sociology apparently caused him to advocate some policies that clearly conflicted with this right.

THE RISE OF NEGOTIATED MANAGEMENT

The role of mob sociology in the police literature changed with the appearance of a strategy called “confrontation management” in the early 1970s and the development of the negotiated management model. Negotiated management was created in response to the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960s and 1970s. It resulted in greater freedom in these and subsequent movements to organize and carry out public demonstrations. Negoti-

ated management proved to be much less compatible with mob sociology, but the lack of a replacement has delayed the complete demise of mob sociology. During the initial development of the negotiated management strategy, its principles were still justified by mob sociology. McPhail and his colleagues (1998) consider in detail the rise of negotiated management. Here I will briefly summarize the negotiated management model and important factors in its development.

The negotiated management policing style, which is now the dominant model in the United States, marks the other side of the five protest policing dimensions. These five dimensions are: (1) Police respect *First Amendment* rights and negotiate permits under public forum law regardless of speech content. (2) Police have high *tolerance for community disruption*, which is viewed as an inevitable by-product of demonstrations and social change. (3) *Contact and communication* between police and demonstrators are frank and open, with discussions of their respective goals, responsibilities and practices. Police cede control of the demonstration to the organizers and marshals. (4) Police go to great efforts to avoid making any *arrests*. (5) *Force* is avoided except as necessary to overcome resistance to arrest or to prevent death or serious bodily harm.

Between 1967 and 1970, three national commissions were formed in response to the riots and demonstrations of the late 1960s. These were the National (Kerner) Commission on Civil Disorder, the National (Eisenhower) Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, and the National (Scranton) Commission on Campus Unrest. Although the findings of these commissions differ in their particulars, they complement each other. Each criticized many features of the escalated force model. The Eisenhower Commission, which had the broadest charge, argued that "excessive use of force is an unwise tactic for handling disorder . . . [and] . . . often has the effect of magnifying turmoil not diminishing it" (Eisenhower 1969). The best means for avoiding police intervention in demonstrations is to negotiate with demonstrators over time, place and manner and to grant permits. The commission recommended taking the 1968 Chicago demonstration, a clear example of the escalated force style, as a model of how police should *not* proceed. Instead, they recommended the adoption of the policies being developed in Washington, D.C., which were used for the orderly and relatively nonviolent counterinaugural demonstrations in January 1969 and the massive antiwar rally in November 1969. The commission claimed that the escalated force strategy for "riot control" was better suited to the labor conflicts of the 1930s and race riots of the 1940s than to the variety of forms of civil disobedience in the civil rights and antiwar protests in the 1960s. The Eisenhower Commission also contradicted a key claim of mob sociology by arguing that violence is a rare event in most protests. In fact, the report claimed, escalated force practices provoked more disorder than they stopped.

In April 1969 the first SEA-DOC program (referred to here as SEA-DOC-1) was terminated and redesigned. While SEA-DOC-1 stressed escalated force practices, SEA-DOC-2 reflected the recommendations of the national commissions. SEA-DOC-2 introduced the concept of "confrontation management," which called for more flexible practices to deal with the variety of types of civil disorder. "Confrontation management is a strategy concept . . . which seeks to counter the attempts of dissident organizations" to radicalize their ranks by provoking police to overreact (U.S. Army 1972b). Police officials who attended SEA-DOC-2 were taught that civil disorders took a variety of forms, some violent and others non-violent. Thus, police needed to vary their techniques for managing these forms. The course emphasized "a high degree of flexibility and selectivity in the response to a

civil disturbance situation" (U.S. Army 1972b). For example, force was to be used only in specific circumstances.

The primary rule which governs the actions of federal forces in assisting state and local authorities to restore law and order is that you must at all times use only the minimum force required to accomplish your mission. This principle permeates all civil disturbance operations. (U.S. Army 1972b)

Another key factor in the development of negotiated management was the development of First Amendment and public forum law in the federal courts. During the wave of protest in the 1960s and 1970s, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) carried on a campaign of litigation to expand the recognized rights of demonstrators under the First Amendment. Public forum law, which was produced by this litigation, establishes the right to demonstrate, especially in "traditional public forums," such as public streets, sidewalks, and parks. In these places, First Amendment activity can only be limited by reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions. Furthermore, all restrictions must be content neutral. The government cannot restrict speech based on its message, no matter how provocative or offensive.

A final set of government agencies that played a role in developing negotiated management were the National Park Service, the Capitol Hill Police and the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police, which are responsible for policing demonstrations in their respective jurisdictions in the nation's capital. During the 1960s and 1970s these agencies created elaborate permitting systems that implemented the court dictates of public forum law and that facilitated demonstrations.<sup>3</sup>

### **MOB SOCIOLOGY IN POLICE LITERATURE, 1980s–1990s**

The change from escalated force to negotiated management led to mob sociology being replaced as a standard justification for police tactics. The most frequent justification for demonstration management techniques became the First Amendment, as explicated in public forum case law. Some magazine articles even have the First Amendment perspective as their theme (Burden 1992; Schofield 1994). Crowd control manuals also highlight the First Amendment. For instance, San Francisco's manual (SFPD 1989) begins with a section entitled "First Amendment and the Role of the Police," which contains the text of the First Amendment, a similar passage in the California Constitution, and a legal exegesis that highlights the breadth of legal protection for free speech. The ACLU contributed to writing the manual.

However, mob sociology remains the only social science theory of the crowd in the police literature. In the past twenty-five years, no new social science model of the crowd or crowd member has arisen to replace it. Sociological work that casts skepticism on the "madding crowd" (Couch 1968; McPhail 1991; Snow, Zurcher, and Peters 1981; Turner and Killian 1972; Wright 1978), illustrates the purposiveness of demonstrators (Berk 1974a; Berk 1974b; Tilly 1978), or proposes new theories of purposive actions in the crowd (McPhail 1991) has not been repeated in the police literature. During the 1980s and 1990s, mob sociology continued to be disseminated and used in a number of ways. Variations of mob sociology can be found in police magazines (e.g., Brick 1982; Cooper 1980; Gruber 1990; Gunson 1984), state-mandated police recruit training programs (Das 1984),<sup>4</sup> police textbooks (Adams 1994) and even a computer simulation program designed to train U.S.

Marines in crowd control (Varner, Royse, Micheletti, and Apicella 1998). The descriptions of mob sociology in the police periodicals in this period are not as likely to be couched in the social science language created by Blumer. But the main argument hasn't changed at all—crowds are dangerous because they make people behave differently than they otherwise would.

The most interesting change in descriptions of mob sociology is its use to justify the strategies of negotiated management. For example, Charles Gruber's (1990) account of the 1988 riot in Shreveport, Louisiana, is noteworthy for its mixture of mob sociology and defense of the police's extreme nonforceful approach. Gruber (1990, p. 12), who was then Shreveport's chief of police, claims he resisted those who called for a show of force and opted to let the force of the mob run its course:

The situation on the street was intense, with an increasingly hostile crowd doubling in size in a matter of minutes. Caught up in mob psychology, individuals were losing control of their behavior. The circumstances demanded that I make an immediate decision. We could engage the crowd, which I felt would result in more violence, or we could withdraw from the area and allow the mob emotions to burn themselves out, until order could be restored.

I decided that all officers should withdraw from the area to remove potential targets from the scene.

According to Gruber, the role of police is still to stop the dangerous power of the crowd/mob. However, this is to be achieved by more flexible and less forceful means. This approach may have originated at SEA-DOC-2. According to one police administrator who attended the training program, "the aim of police is to maintain this group of people as a crowd rather than let them become a mob" (Morgan 1971, p. 21):

By reducing the strength, force and energy of the crowd the risk of violence is reduced. This can be accomplished by minimizing the chances of expansion or escalation of the confrontation, channeling the confrontation into an acceptable form, and allowing time to dissipate the confrontation. Minimal physical contact between the police and the crowd facilitates confrontation management. (Morgan 1971, p. 20)

A theme contrary to mob sociology is also present in police magazines. This is the presentation of the demonstrator as sophisticated and organized. Though clearly at odds with mob sociology, this theme isn't as systematically articulated as mob sociology once was, nor does it show any awareness of social science research that portrays demonstrators as purposive actors. Instead, this information is more often presented as part of an account in which police explain how they perform their duties, as in Robert Johnston and Lawrence Loesch's (1989) account of how New York City police deal with demonstrations:

The sophistication of demonstrators today becomes more evident with each staged event. Organizers record the actions of the police and then train their people in ways they believe will hinder the policing of the next demonstration. The tactics employed counter the procedures and equipment used by the police.

This theme also appears in accounts of cooperation between police and demonstrators, for example in police allowing demonstrators to conduct a training program on civil disobedience for them (Sandora and Petersen 1980).

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

McCarthy and his colleagues (1999) claim that the search for policing practices is motivated by the emergence of new problems and that successful solutions to these problems may be sought out and tried by others in similar situations. Obviously, many police authorities believed that mob sociology was a successful solution to some public order problem. A network of police agencies and programs facilitated the widespread diffusion of mob sociology. But this network doesn't explain why it was viewed as a successful solution by police officials even though sociologists now claim it doesn't accurately predict or explain observed crowd behavior. The answer lies in the reflexive relationship between scientific theory and social control. Both Michel Foucault (1979), in his study of prisons, and Aaron Cicourel (1968) describe how scientific "knowledge" can produce the type of deviance it is attempting to explain. According to Cicourel, "facts" about juvenile offenders collected from police records are the product of police background expectancies regarding juveniles. For instance, the relationship between "disorganized" families and delinquency results from a greater likelihood that juveniles from these families will be labeled as delinquents. Social science theories about this relationship both guided police and were proven by their actions. A similar relationship existed among the theory of mob sociology, associated police practices, and the phenomenon of crowd behavior that the theory was supposed to explain.

Until the late 1960s, the theory of mob sociology and the related escalated force practices were successful in meeting the challenge of demonstrators' tactics. As the national commissions later claimed, the escalated force techniques were effective in quelling the labor conflicts of the 1930s and race riots of the 1940s. The theory of mob sociology was also effective in "explaining" these violent confrontations between police and demonstrators. Mob sociology predicts that crowds will become violent, and 1930s labor conflicts and 1940s race riots were certainly violent. Even in contemporary police literature, mob sociology is most often used to explain violent events, such as riots. As McCarthy and his colleagues (1999) point out, police and protesters develop strategies in response to tactical innovations by each other (see also McAdam 1983). But this situation was complicated by a pair of feedback processes that helped maintain the effectiveness of mob sociology. First, the violent police tactics were developed not just in response to actual demonstrators' behavior but also to the presumed behaviors and characteristics of protesters as defined by mob sociology. Second, the police use of force provoked violent situations, thereby "proving" the effectiveness of mob sociology and the escalated force practices. Thus, the theory justified the practice, and the practice proved the theory.

Mob sociology stopped working when police adopted negotiated management practices. The commissions pointed out one of the feedback processes that had made mob sociology effective—police provoked much of the violence in initially peaceful demonstrations. The commissions imposed the rule of "minimum necessary force," while public forum doctrine limited the right of police to restrict demonstrations. Once these guidelines were in place to limit the tactics police had used under the escalated force model, mob sociology was no longer useful for designing or justifying police practices. To be sure, mob sociology was used by some as a justification for negotiated management practices. But negotiated management was better justified by the legal decisions that helped produce it than by social science theories that had been used to justify harsher practices. The adoption of negotiated management techniques ended a feedback process that supported mob sociology. When violence occurs in demonstrations, it is usually the product of an interac-

tion process between demonstrators and police that does not begin with violent acts by either side (McPhail 1994; Tilly 1978). As police started trying to accommodate demonstrations, violence became less frequent. In contemporary demonstrations in Washington, D.C., violence is extremely rare (McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1996). This is due in part to the current POMS, which follows negotiated management practice (McCarthy and McPhail 1998). For police officers regularly meeting with demonstration organizers and viewing orderly, peaceful demonstrations, the mob sociology perspective does not seem a very accurate description of demonstrator behavior nor would knowledge about it appear to be useful information for police officers.

## CONCLUSION

While it is clear that mob sociology had a crucial role in the development of the escalated force model of protest policing, its effect today is less clear. Mob sociology appears to have influenced protest policing through two channels. First, policy makers, starting with Lohman, derived their policies at least in part from mob sociology. Second, individual police officers came into contact with the claims of mob sociology (stripped of any larger social context) through training courses and materials and police periodicals. The first channel seems to have ended. Current policies are based on First Amendment and public forum law and other principles of the negotiated management model. It is unclear what the effect is of the remaining mob sociology to which police officers are exposed today, or even the extent to which they were influenced by mob sociology during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>5</sup> This study also raises other questions about mob sociology and protest policing. In this conclusion, I will propose three of these research questions, suggesting how they might be investigated, and explain why sociologists should be concerned about the influence of mob sociology.

This study suggests several directions for future research. First, what is the geographical pattern in the U.S. distribution of the two trends discussed here? Negotiated management is clearly well entrenched in Washington, D.C., and is probably the model used in other large cities with frequent demonstrations, such as San Francisco (Bessmer 1989; SFPD 1989). In addition, at least some smaller communities draw upon the experience of larger municipalities to prepare for whatever large demonstrations they are called upon to manage (Burden 1992; Sandora and Petersen 1980). However, there has been no systematic research to determine the extent of negotiated management diffusion or whether there are areas of the country where escalated force practices are still in use. This study has shown that mob sociology still exists in the police discourse, but much more can also be learned about its extent. These two trends can be studied by systematically collecting and analyzing various police documents, including the crowd/demonstration manuals and policies used by local police departments and the training documents used in state training programs.

A second research question arises: What is the extent of the diffusion of mob sociology in other Western democracies? Although this article has dealt with the U.S. context, the work of LeBon apparently has an influence on protest policing in Great Britain (Stott and Reicher 1998) and France (Fillieule and Jobard 1998).<sup>6</sup> Little is known, though, about the historical influence of these ideas in other countries. On the other hand, it is clear that a move toward some version of the negotiated management model is also taking place in many Western democracies, including Great Britain (Waddington 1994; 1998), France

(Fillieule and Jobard 1998), Spain (Jaime-Jimenez and Reinares 1998), Germany (della Porta 1996; Winter 1998) and Italy (della Porta 1996; della Porta 1998).

The answers to both of these research questions will bear upon a third: better specifying the relationship between sociological theories of the crowd and crowd policing practices, and, more generally, the link between sociological theory and social practice. The relationship between these variables can be investigated through cross-national and cross-regional analyses. In a recent essay, Gary Marx (1998) lists twenty-five possible factors that might be used in cross-national research on protest policing. These include civil or common law traditions, single or multiple police systems, a clearly codified bill of rights, and police as a part of civil or military bureaucracy. I suggest adding another factor to his list: social science models of crowd behavior found in police training and policy documents.

Regardless of the exact relationship between mob sociology and protest policing practice, sociologists have several good reasons for wanting to see mob sociology replaced. First, it remains a potential justification for denying rights to demonstrators in Western democracies. In the contemporary United States, the rights to demonstrate and engage in other forms of free expression are usually upheld. However, these rights are always at the mercy of political developments (della Porta and Reiter 1998). If the U.S. POMS, or those of other Western democracies, is seriously challenged during a future wave of insurgency and the right to demonstrate is called into question, then mob sociology will be a potential tool for those who would limit these rights. This is an even greater concern in nations such as Great Britain, which provides no constitutional right to demonstrate. Conversely, current sociological findings about demonstrations and other crowds could lend support to a POMS based on negotiated management.

Second, mob sociology remains a potential justification for implementing escalated force style POMS in newly democratic countries or other countries where citizens' rights to demonstrate are uncertain. As the South African case demonstrates, contemporary social science findings can be used to support a POMS that facilitates demonstrating as a form of political expression.

Finally, the continued presence of mob sociology in the police literature is an embarrassment. Besides potentially contributing to repressive police practices, mob sociology is likely to lead at least some of the police officers who encounter it to believe that social science is irrelevant to their work. If contemporary social science research on crowds, demonstrations, and riots is an improvement over the 1930s sociology still present in some police training materials, then learning the new findings instead of the old should be useful for police in carrying out the duties with which they are charged in a democratic society.

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## NOTES

1. For instance, psychologists have borrowed from and extended LeBon's (1960) ideas in what they term the "deindividuation theory" of crowd behavior (Diener 1977; Festinger, Pepitone, and Newcombe 1952; Zimbardo 1969).

2. Della Porta (1996) advanced a similar list of variables to contrast protest policing styles in Italy and Germany, 1950–1990. Della Porta and Reiter (1998), drawing upon research in several Western democracies, propose an even more comprehensive list.

3. One of the TSQ reviewers argued that community policing is the leading cause of the shift from escalated force to negotiated management. This claim is not supported by the materials I examined or by the work of other scholars who have studied the change in U.S. protest policing. I would suggest that both community policing and negotiated management are related to a larger trend that Marx (1998, p. 254) calls "pacification," which involves "the decline of internal violence associated with the rise of the modern liberal state and the continuing elaboration and institutionalization of the idea of citizenship. The state has not only come to have a greater monopoly over the means of violence, but it has also been more restrained in using that violence against its own citizens."

4. Das (1984) reported that fourteen of the thirty-eight states that responded to his survey had a training course on civil disorders. From his brief descriptions of the contents of these courses, it is clear that at least six, and probably more, retained elements of mob sociology. Some, such as South Carolina's, are clearly based in mob sociology. Its course covers "a. Knowledge of the types of crowds: casual, psychological, friendly, agitated, hostile. b. Knowledge of the development of mobs from crowds. c. Familiarity with the types of mobs: aggressive, escape, acquisitive, expressive. d. Knowledge of the various psychological factors like anonymity, force of numbers, novelty, etc., which help solidify a mob. e. Discussion of the destructiveness of crowds and mobs. f. Use of force, such as chemical agents, fire power, etc., to control mobs." (Das 1984)

5. One of the TSQ reviewers suggested that social science is irrelevant to police practice and culture and proposed the alternative hypothesis that mob sociology is appealing to police because it conforms to prevailing cultural stereotypes about crowd behavior. Although the role of cultural stereotypes of crowds shouldn't be dismissed out of hand, I don't find this a satisfactory explanation of the presence of mob sociology in police magazine articles, crowd control manuals, and training programs. A more plausible explanation is that police published these ideas because they found them of some use in understanding crowds and designing policies for dealing with them. In addition, I think that cultural stereotypes of crowds did not develop independently of academic theories of the crowd. LeBon's presentation of the transformation hypothesis was inconsistent with contemporary stereotypes; in fact, it rejected them (see McPhail 1991, p. 2). Nonetheless, the role of mob sociology should be further investigated, as I explain in this conclusion.

6. "Although the police claim that their intervention takes place within the law of the republic and admit the legitimacy of protest action, they analyze demonstrations through the very peculiar prism of crowd psychology handed down through the works of Tarde and LeBon" (Fillieule and Jobard 1998, p. 84).

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