

Bell-curve Model's Insight into Crowd Psychology



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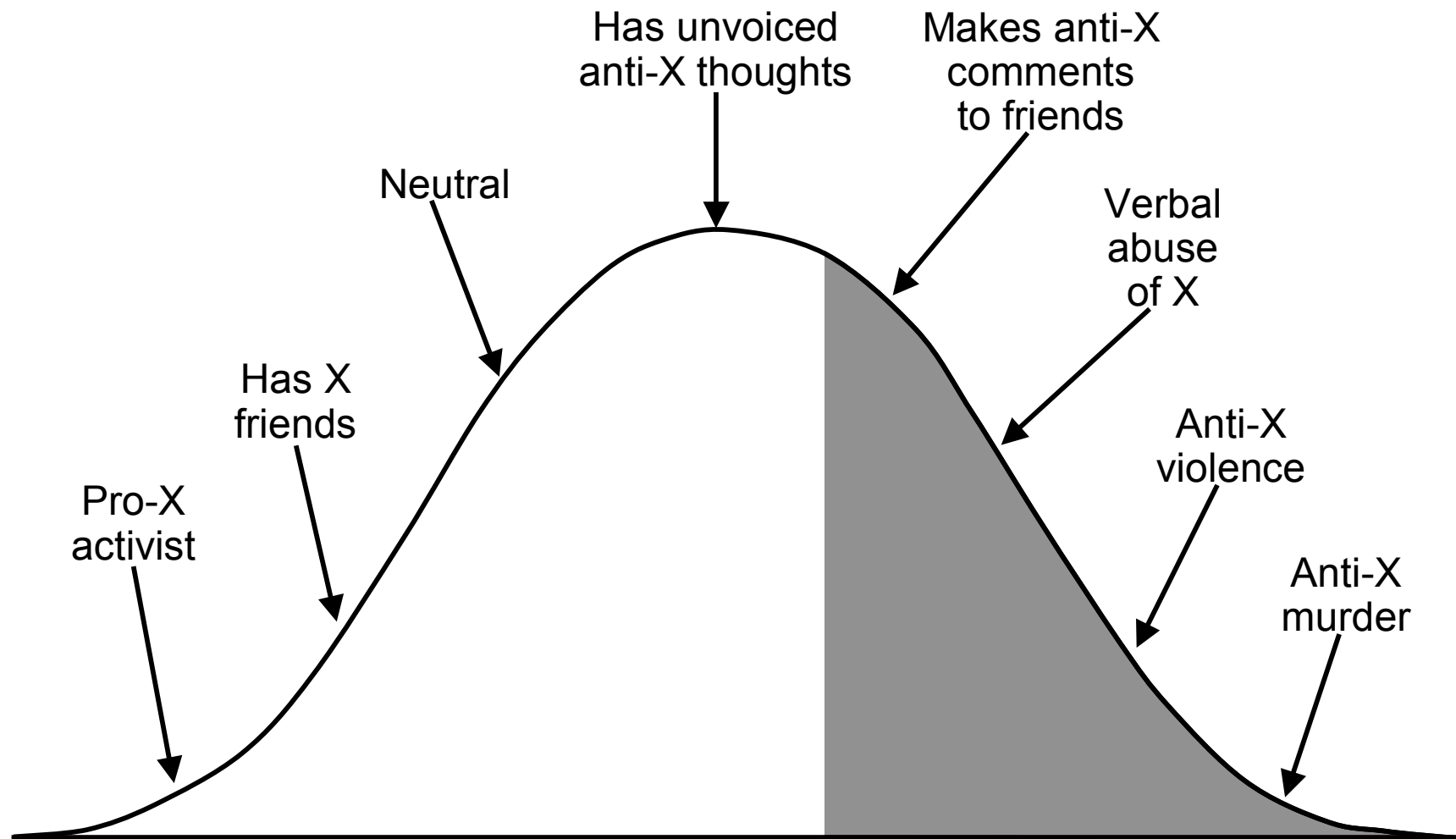
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Crowd psychology

- A crowd acts differently to the individuals in the crowd
- Example:
 - An angry mob might kill a person
 - But most individuals in the mob do not intend for that to happen
 - Perhaps they just want to shout their disapproval of something
- Crowd psychology is typically viewed as being mysterious:
 - There are several competing psychological theories
 - None seem entirely convincing or understandable to a lay person
 - Example: Convergence theory:
 - States: people who wish to act in a certain way come together to form crowds
 - But most individuals in a mob do not intend to do harm

Explanation offered by the bell curve model

- Participants in a crowd are a skewed representation of society



Explanation offered by the bell curve model (cont')

Examples of crowds...

- An angry mob contains:
 - Lots of anti-X people
 - Very few, if any, neutral or pro-X people
- A “sun, sand and sex” holiday resort attracts:
 - Lots of “let’s party” people
 - Very few, if any, religious people or families with young children
- This type of skew can result in unusual behaviour...

How an angry mob might kill people

- The skewed population sample in a mob results in a domino effect:
 - Nobody opposes the shouting of anti-X slogans
 - So a *lot* of anti-X slogans are shouted
 - People who want to commit violence take the shouting as encouragement to beat up somebody
 - Then people who want to kill take the beatings as encouragement to kill
- Likewise, in a “sun, sand and sex” resort:
 - There is nobody to re-enforce self-restraint or inhibitions
 - People behave during a holiday unlike they would at home (where there is a more balanced sample of the population)

Relevance to activism

- If you organize a march...
 - Beware that the marchers are a skewed representation of society
 - So unusual behaviour might occur
- A march of angry protestors might turn into an angry mob riot
- Ways to reduce the chances of this occurring:
 - Introduce a fun theme into the march
 - Costumes, funny placards, funny chants
 - Or, introduce religion into the march
 - Sing hymns

Summary

Crowd psychology can be explained as follows...

- Some crowds contain a skewed sample of the population
 - Examples: an angry mob or people on a “sun, sand and sex” holiday
 - Vitally, the crowd is missing people who say “Don’t do that”
- Sequence of events:
 - Starts with behaviour that is unusual in a “normal population”
 - Lack of “Don’t do that” comments encourages more unusual behaviour
 - Which encourages more extreme behaviour
- Take steps to ensure that a protest march does not turn into an angry mob, which then turns into a riot
 - Introduce fun or religion into the march