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# Comparative Methods and Research on COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR and SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

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## A COMMENT AND QUESTION ON THIS SPECIAL ISSUE BY THE COEDITORS

In one way this special issue is an experiment. The title of the journal is *Mass Emergencies and Disasters.* The first part of the title, *Mass Emergencies* was intended to cover more conflictive types of collective stress situations than is usually thought of under the label of "disasters," a consensus type of crisis situation. Thus, when the journal was initiated it was thought we might have articles on conflictive situations ranging from wars, revolutions, terrorist attacks, rioting crowds, and similar kinds of hostile outbursts, to more peaceful but nonetheless conflict types of activities as would be involved in student strikes, mass anti-nuclear demonstrations, citizen protest groups, pro-environmental groupings and various kinds of political and social movements. But these kinds of phenomena, which in sociology are usually thought of as the province of the subspecialty of collective behavior, have not for the most part been examined in the pages of the journal up to now. This has not been because of editorial selection, but because of the paucity of submissions of manuscripts on mass emergency topics.

The latter matter is especially intriguing because some "disaster" theorists such as Pelanda in Italy and Kreps in the United States and even more "disaster" researchers have argued that the field ought to include both consensus and conflict types of collective stress situations.

As editors we therefore decided to experiment and to have a special issue on collective behavior and approached the collective behavior and social movement section of the American Sociological Association and asked if they would organize such an issue. This group was a logical choice to approach since it lists as the focus of the section: "the study of emergent and extra-institutional social forms and behavior...This includes but is not limited to disasters, riots, protests, rumors, panics, fads, fashions, popular culture, strikes, and reform, revival and revolutionary movements." The section accepted the offer and appointed Gary Marx as the editor of the special issue.

As sociology of science and knowledge students have noted, a field's coverage is strongly influenced by what its major professional outlets by way of meetings and publications systematically cover. If so, this special issue ought to help determine if those who call themselves disaster specialists want disaster studies to cover both consensus and conflict types of collective stress situations. The articles in this issue

are an excellent introduction to recent work on collective behavior and social movements around the world. It will of course be up to disaster specialists to arrive at an informal conclusion if the topics discussed are central or peripheral to the field of disaster studies. This special issue ought to help force the self-designated theorists and researchers on "disasters" to decide in what direction they want disaster studies to go. Editors of journals and organizers of meetings can present possibilities but only the practitioners in an area can determine by their work the substantive focus of an area.

We would appreciate receiving feedback from our readers on our experiment. This can be by way of letters to the editor which can be published in From the Field section of the journal, or by way of *a* statement which can be published in the Critic's Corner section, or by way of a regular article which would undergo the usual evaluation of reviewers. Some of our regular readers we know have written, for example, that war is "obviously" a disaster—do the rest of you agree or disagree and why or why not?

Pending the outcome of this experiment by the journal, the next two special issues of the journal return to its more traditional content with the 1987 special issue given completely over to the Bhopal catastrophe with most of the articles written by Indian researchers, and with the 1988 special issue devoted to an examination and retrospective view of the "classic" writings in the disaster area such as Prince's work on the Halifax, Canada explosion, the NORC study of the Arkansas tornado, the Holland flood research and similar items from the earlier day of social science writings on disasters.

**E.L. Quarantelli**
**Örjan Hultåker**

# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

**Gary T. Marx**
M.I.T.

Within North American sociology the study of collective behavior and social movements is a well established and even lively, if diverse field. The truth of Henry Miller's observation that "history is just one damn thing after another" keeps the area fresh, if somewhat discontinuous. Yet a sociologist of knowledge looking from the outside could certainly identify a broad research tradition that has become much stronger in recent decades. See for example the research and developments summarized in Marx and Wood (1975), Quarantelli and Dynes (1977), Jenkins (1983), McPhail and Wohlstein (1983), Morris and Herring (forthcoming) and Kreps (1984) and recent general work by Rose (1982), Wood and Jackson (1982), Freeman (1983), Lofland (1985) and Zald and McCarthy (1986). However, whatever its theoretical, methodological and empirical strengths, a major weakness of contemporary research has been its general failure to deal with ideas and data from other societies. The study of contemporary collective behavior and social movements has rarely involved comparative international research. This is unfortunate since the subject matter is so universal and the intellectual benefits from a comparative approach are so strong.

The need for such work has become even stronger since social movements and related mass phenomena seem less likely to stay within the confines of national borders than was the case historically. The diffusion and contraction of the student movement of the late 1960s and the Green Peace movement are examples. Increased internationalization partly represents the ease of modern communications and the transportability of resources. These have helped build international networks among activists and encouraged common forms of mass behavior.

In addition, many of the social issues which can give rise to social movements are hardly country-specific. Thus inequality based on gender, the mistreatment of indigenous peoples and other ethnic minorities, and concern over the quality of work life are common in industrial societies. In an increasingly interdependent world in which national boundaries are losing some of their meaning, other issues such as nuclear war and the environment, have a global significance and may uni activists from diverse countries into international movements.

The origins of the field in the United States can be largely traced to Robert Park and the University of Chicago. Where Park's empirical data, such as it was, came largely from the streets of America, his theoretical ideas were largely form from his study in Europe and exposure to the ideas of Simme Tonnies, Le Bon, Rossi, Tarde and Sighele. His PhD thesis was done at Heidelburg on crowd processes and first published 1904 in German (Elsner, 1972).

It is interesting that the European beginnings of the American tradition have been largely forgotten. There are of cour theoretical (e.g. a desire to avoid the emphasis on the irratiot of scholars such as Le Bon), methodological (e.g. a preference for systematic data collection) and ideological (e.g. rejection of the conservative belief that mass behavior was necessarily destructive) reasons for this neglect. But the narrowness American education and the lack of facility in other languages also plays a role.

Unfortunately North American scholars in general know little about contemporary collective behavior and social movement research elsewhere. Nor have they been drawn to comparative work. This gives a narrowness to their work which European or Japanese scholars able to read literature in several languages lack.

By focusing only on one country and only on work done North America, scholarship is diminished. To be sure some the important work of Alain Touraine (1981), Alberto Melucci (1980) and Francesco Alberoni (1984) is available in English but this represents a small proportion of the work done.

It is fitting that this international journal should thereto have a comparative focus. A major goal of this issue is to expo English readers to the important work being done in non-English speaking countries. The first half of the journal is devoted review essays along the lines of those found in the Annual Review of Sociology.

In the first article Bert Klandermans offers a broad overview of divergent theoretical developments with respect to broad similar social movements in Europe and the United States. Next, Tsutomu Shiobara and Shinji Katagiri writing on Japan, Wolf R. Dombrowsky and John Schorr on Germany, Uriel Rosenthal on the Netherlands and Bruna De Marchi on Italy offer reviews of research. They were asked to give a brief history of research in their country and then to focus on contemporary work indicating the major questions asked, the dominant theoretical perspectives, and some of the major research findings. Authors were encouraged to

adopt a sociology of knowledge perspective and to account for the research patterns they described.

The second half of the journal deals with theoretical and empirical issues in international research. The articles are varied, focusing on intellectual and methodological problems, applying and critiquing the applicability of North American models to other settings, and offering data on some comparative questions.

Sidney Tarrow makes a strong case for the importance of comparative research and argues for a synthesis of the American resource mobilization and the European new social movements traditions. Reflecting the contours of the field, most of the articles here deal with social movements. However, two articles focus on the traditional collective behavior topic of the crowd.

Drawing on research done in several countries, Leon Mann summarizes some basic findings of crowd research. From his research on violence by sports crowds in England and the United States, Jerry Lewis suggests a framework for more systematic comparisons in different national contexts. James and Patricia Wood, drawing from their research on English peace camps such as Greenham Common, consider some of the dilemmas and issues faced by foreign researchers.

The last two articles report the results of recent research. They are comparative in either assessing the applicability of American theories, or the generalizability of American findings to other cultures, or in collecting similar data from different national contexts. Thus Jeffrey Broadbent tests seven hypotheses regarding the social fabric and the process of mobilization in twelve Japanese social movements concerned with environmental and industrial issues. George Danns uses historical data on labor protest in the South American country of Guyana to raise questions about the applicability of the resource mobilization approach to third world countries. In his commentary on the papers Neil Smelser identifies six meanings of the term comparative and offers some observations on the development of the field.

I hope that this issue can stimulate increased international communication and cooperation with respect to the study of collective behavior and social movements and can point toward work that is more interdisciplinary, international and theoretically integrative. This would be facilitated by forming sections on collective behavior and social movements in the International Sociological Association and other international social science organizations. The results of the workshop on participation in social movements (described by Klandermans and Tarrow) should

be widely publicized and opportunities for such international collaborative efforts broadened. The Collective Behavior and Social Movements section of the American Sociological Association should periodically devote one of its sessions to comparative research.

The study of collective behavior and social movements would be well served by a sentiment expressed by Gandhi:

> I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible.

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