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THEORY OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR

by

NEIL J. SMELSER

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Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent

FOR HELEN

who has taught me
that both conflict and stability
are essential for growth

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PREFACE

Gordon W. Allport of Harvard first introduced me to the study of collective behavior. When I was a freshman in 1948, his introductory course in Social Relations set my mind working. Later, when I was a graduate student in 1955, he reactivated and deepened these workings. During the years after studying with him his words have returned to haunt me. So far as I know, he is unaware of my intellectual debt; I should like to record it now.

In working on my doctoral dissertation[1] I delved into the collective protests of the British working classes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In trying to decipher the content and timing of these eruptions, I came to be deeply impressed with the explanatory potential of a distinctively sociological approach. The idea of attempting a theoretical synthesis of collective behavior came to me in the summer of 1958. Since then I have worked continually on this volume.

Between 1959 and 1961 I was a member of the Center for Integrated Social Science Theory at the University of California, Berkeley. Known familiarly as the Theory Center, this group consisted of six or seven scholars from various departments. Each member was relieved of academic duties for one semester in each of his two years in the Center. At meetings we discussed theoretical issues arising from the work of one or more members. We had no office for meetings; we wandered peripatetically from one member's study to another. We had no secretary, no research assistants, no stationery with letterhead. Simple as it was, the Theory Center had unparalleled value. With the advance of academic specialization in the mid-twentieth century, few things can be more salutary than to have scholars take temporary leave from the confines of their research projects to discover the minds of others in an unhurried atmosphere.

In the Theory Center we read one another's work with great care and did not fear to fire broadsides when the occasion demanded. My work on collective behavior received and gained immensely from merciless criticism. I should like to thank the following men, members whose tenure overlapped with mine: Frederick E. Balderston (Business Administration); Jack Block (Psychology); Julian

[1] Published in 1959 as *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution* by Routledge and Kegan Paul and the University of Chicago Press.

Feldman (Business Administration); Erving Goffman (Sociology); Austin C. Hoggatt (Business Administration); Leo Lowenthal (Sociology and Speech); Richard S. Lazarus (Psychology); William Petersen (Sociology); Theodore R. Sarbin (Psychology); and David M. Schneider (Anthropology, now at the University of Chicago). In addition, I profited from informal explorations with Professors Lazarus, Petersen, Block, and Sarbin.

Herbert Blumer of the University of California, Berkeley, deserves a special word. His own pioneering work on collective behavior is well known; reading it stimulated me to new lines of thought. More directly, he gave me his extraordinarily painstaking criticism of an earlier draft of Chapters I–IV. I would hesitate to estimate the time and energy he devoted to writing long, detailed memoranda and to conversing with me after I had responded to these memoranda. It is only candid to report that on points of principle we were frequently at loggerheads. But his thoroughness and his keen ability to locate weaknesses in reasoning led me to revise the early chapters extensively. Several other colleagues at Berkeley offered helpful comments on the manuscript—Reinhard Bendix, William Kornhauser, Seymour M. Lipset, and Hanan C. Selvin.

The influence of Talcott Parsons of Harvard on my intellectual development—influence which can be seen in these pages—began more than a decade ago. Even though we now stand at opposite ends of the nation, we have managed to continue periodic discussions during the past several years. His comments were especially helpful for Chapters II and III. Finally, Guy E. Swanson of the University of Michigan and Jan Hajda of Johns Hopkins wrote critical comments on the manuscript. Responsibility for all the ideas in this book is of course mine; but in the formation of these ideas all these men had an important place.

Before the final draft was prepared, Marvin B. Scott, my research assistant, combed the manuscript with unusual care. His criticisms added substance and above all clarity to the presentation. He also prepared the index and assisted with proof-reading. The inevitable but important chores of typing and writing for permissions were handled capably by Mrs. Carroll H. Harrington, Mrs. Helen Larue, Mrs. Pauline Ward, Miss Aura Cuevas, and by the staff of the Institute of Industrial Relations at Berkeley.

My wife, Helen, who is a sort of Frenchwoman at heart, conducted much independent research for me on the social and political turbulences that have appeared in France since the middle of the eighteenth century. Later she read almost the whole manuscript in draft. She is the most intelligent layman I know; she has a

disquieting ability to detect a loose argument, a subtle inconsistency, an unintended meaning, and a meaningless expression. Even more, she has a way of phrasing criticisms that makes it very difficult to rest before doing something about them. These qualities, infuriating at the moment, proved in the end to be a source of value for the manuscript, humility for the author, and charm for her husband.

NEIL SMELSER

Berkeley, California,
February, 1962

CHAPTER I

ANALYZING COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

INTRODUCTION

The Problem. In all civilizations men have thrown themselves into episodes of dramatic behavior, such as the craze, the riot, and the revolution. Often we react emotionally to these episodes. We stand, for instance, amused by the foibles of the craze, aghast at the cruelties of the riot, and inspired by the fervor of the revolution.

The nature of these episodes has long excited the curiosity of speculative thinkers. In recent times this curiosity has evolved into a loosely defined field of sociology and social psychology known as collective behavior. Even though many thinkers in this field attempt to be objective, they frequently describe collective episodes as if they were the work of mysterious forces. Crowds, for instance, are "fickle," "irrational," or "spontaneous," and their behavior is "unanticipated" or "surprising." For all their graphic quality, such terms are unsatisfactory. They imply that collective behavior flows from sources beyond empirical explanation. The language of the field, in short, shrouds its very subject in indeterminacy.

Our aim in this study is to reduce this residue of indeterminacy which lingers in explanations of collective outbursts. Although wild rumors, crazes, panics, riots, and revolutions are surprising, they occur with regularity. They cluster in time; they cluster in certain cultural areas; they occur with greater frequency among certain social groupings—the unemployed, the recent migrant, the adolescent. This skewing in time and in social space invites explanation: Why do collective episodes occur *where* they do, *when* they do, and *in the ways* they do?

In this introductory chapter we shall merely raise some questions posed by such an inquiry. What is collective behavior? What are its types? How is it to be distinguished from related behavior such as ceremonials? What are the determinants of collective behavior? Are the determinants related to one another in any systematic way? What can a sociological approach contribute to an understanding of collective behavior? Having raised the questions, we shall devote the remainder of the volume to searching for their answers.

An Initial Clarification of Terminology. Our inquiry will cover the following types of events: (1) the panic response; (2) the craze response, including the fashion-cycle, the fad, the financial boom, the bandwagon, and the religious revival; (3) the hostile outburst; (4) the norm-oriented movement, including the social reform movement; (5) the value-oriented movement, including the political and religious revolution, the formation of sects, the nationalist movement, etc. The justification for choosing these particular types will become clear only after detailed theoretical arguments in Chapters II–V. At present we must ask: By what name shall we label these kinds of behavior?

As might be expected of a field which is underdeveloped scientifically, even its name is not standardized. Perhaps the most common general term is "collective behavior."[1] Different analysts who use this term, however, do not refer to a uniform, clearly defined class of phenomena.[2] In addition, Brown, a psychologist, has used the term "mass phenomena" to refer to roughly the same range of data which is encompassed by "collective behavior."[3] Other terms used to characterize this body of data are "mass behavior" and "collective dynamics." Both are found wanting. Because of the ideological polemics which "mass" has accumulated, this term is misleading.[4] A more neutral, but equally misleading, term has been coined recently by Lang and Lang—"collective dynamics."[5] Although collective behavior bears an intimate relation to social change,[6] it seems wise to reserve the term "dynamics" for a field more inclusive than collective behavior alone. Words like "outburst," "movement,"

[1] This term was given wide currency in the 1920's and 1930's by Robert E. Park at the University of Chicago. Those who follow in his general tradition have continued to use the term. Cf. H. Blumer, "Collective Behavior," in J. B. Gittler (ed.), *Review of Sociology: Analysis of a Decade* (New York, 1957), p. 127. Also R. H. Turner and L. M. Killian, *Collective Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1957).

[2] Blumer, for instance, excluded R. T. LaPiere from his general survey of collective behavior—even though his major work is entitled *Collective Behavior* (New York, 1938)—on the grounds that LaPiere's treatment "represents a markedly different conception of the field." "Collective Behavior," in Gittler (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 127.

[3] R. Brown, "Mass Phenomena," in G. Lindzey (ed.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), Vol. II, pp. 833–876.

[4] Representative classics in the literature on mass society are J. Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York, 1932); E. Lederer, *State of the Masses* (New York, 1940); K. Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (London, 1940), and H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1958). For a recent attempt to eliminate some of the ambiguities of this literature and to synthesize the material theoretically, cf. W. Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (Glencoe, Ill., 1959).

[5] K. Lang and G. E. Lang, *Collective Dynamics* (New York, 1961).

[6] Below, pp. 72–73.

and "seizure" also indicate the attempts to delineate the scope of the field. In the face of this plethora of words and meanings, we must decide early on conventions of usage.

The most accurate term for encompassing the relevant classes of events would be an awkward one: "collective outbursts and collective movements." "Collective outbursts" would refer to panics, crazes, and hostile outbursts, which frequently (but not always) are explosive; "collective movements" would refer to collective efforts to modify norms and values, which frequently (but not always) develop over longer periods. For brevity we shall condense this awkward term into the conventional one, "collective behavior." The reader should remember that this chosen term is being used as a specific kind of shorthand, and that it has its own shortcomings. In certain respects the term is too general. "In its broad sense [it] refers to the behavior of two or more individuals who are acting together, or collectively. . . . To conceive of collective behavior in this way would be to make it embrace all of group life."[1] The business firm, for instance, which responds to heightened demand by increasing its production, is engaging in "collective behavior" (because persons are acting in concert), but we would not classify this response as an instance of collective behavior. Despite such shortcomings, we shall continue to use the term, partly from a desire to avoid neologisms, and partly from a lack of suitable alternatives.

An Advantage of Studying Collective Behavior. Under conditions of stable interaction, many social elements—myths, ideologies, the potential for violence, etc.—are either controlled or taken for granted and hence are not readily observable. During episodes of collective behavior, these elements come into the open; we can observe them "in the raw." Collective behavior, then, like deviance, affords a peculiar kind of laboratory in which we are able to study directly certain components of behavior which usually lie dormant.

The State of Research on Collective Behavior. In almost every division of sociology, a general analysis must be prefaced by a commentary on the sad state of available research. Collective behavior is no exception:

> The paucity of investigation is seen easily by surveying the literature on forms of collective behavior. Examples of "forms" are: panic, fad, fashion, rumor, social epidemic, rushes, reform movements, religious movements, etc. If one examines the literature concerned with each of these forms, he can see easily both the crude descriptive level of knowledge and the relative lack of theory in this area. Most investigation is in the nature of reporting:

[1] Blumer, "Collective Behavior," in Gittler (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 128.

either by persons fortuitously on the scene or by historians who describe, after their occurrence, certain collective behavior events.[1]

The indictment is sound for several reasons. First, because collective behavior is viewed as spontaneous and fickle, few points are available to begin a coherent analysis. Points of reference melt before one's eyes as a crowd develops into a mob, a mob into a panicky flight, and a flight into a seizure of scapegoating. Second, because many forms of collective behavior excite strong emotional reactions, they resist objective analysis.[2] Third, episodes of collective behavior, with few exceptions,[3] cannot be controlled experimentally. Even direct observation is difficult, since the time and place of collective eruptions cannot be predicted exactly. Finally, it is virtually impossible to "sample" the occurrence of collective episodes from a large population of events. The analyst of collective behavior must often settle for inaccurate and overdramatized accounts. For such reasons the field of collective behavior "has not been charted effectively."[4]

THE NATURE OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

Having chosen a term—collective behavior—we must now ask: To what kinds of phenomena does this term refer? This question breaks into two parts: (1) By what criterion or criteria do we exclude

[1] A. Strauss, "Research in Collective Behavior: Neglect and Need," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 12 (1947), p. 352.

[2] For a sketch of the varying emotional attitudes toward the crowd in Western history, cf. G. W. Allport, "The Historical Background of Modern Social Psychology," in G. Lindzey (ed.), *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Vol. I, pp. 29–31.

[3] For example, G. W. Allport and L. Postman, *The Psychology of Rumor* (New York, 1947); L. Festinger, A. Pepitone, and T. Newcomb, "Some Consequences of De-Individuation in a Group," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 47 (1952), pp. 382–389; J. R. P. French, "The Disruption and Cohesion of Groups," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 36 (1941), pp. 361–377; French, "Organized and Unorganized Groups under Fear and Frustration," in *Authority and Frustration*, University of Iowa Studies: Studies in Child Welfare, Vol. XX (Iowa City, 1944), pp. 231–308; D. Grosser, N. Polansky, and R. Lippitt, "A Laboratory Study of Behavioral Contagion," *Human Relations*, Vol. 4 (1951), pp. 115–142; N. C. Meier, G. H. Mennenga, and H. Z. Stoltz, "An Experimental Approach to the Study of Mob Behavior," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 36 (1941), pp. 506–524; A. Mintz, "Non-Adaptive Group Behavior," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 46 (1951), pp. 150–159; A. Pepitone, J. C. Diggory, and W. H. Wallace, "Some Reactions to a Hypothetical Disaster," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 51 (1955), pp. 706–708; N. Polansky, R. Lippitt, and F. Redl, "An Investigation of Behavioral Contagion in Groups," *Human Relations*, Vol. 3 (1950), pp. 319–348; G. E. Swanson, "A Preliminary Laboratory Study of the Acting Crowd," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 18 (1953), pp. 180–185.

[4] H. Blumer, "Collective Behavior," in Gittler (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 127.

and include instances as appropriate objects of study? Do we include the rumor? the riot? the mass migration? Are conventionalized festivals, demonstrations, and heroes' welcomes a part of the field? How do we classify semi-institutionalized forms like the lynching mob? In posing such questions we attempt to establish *outside limits* for the field. (2) What are the major types of collective behavior? By what principles do we derive these types? What, for instance, is the relation among the boom, the bandwagon, and the fad? Should we consider them separately, or are they special cases of a larger type? These questions demand that we establish the *internal divisions* of the field. Although the demarcation of lines is not an end in itself, and is not so intriguing as the inquiry into causes and consequences of collective behavior, it is of prime importance. Before we can pose questions of explanation, we must be aware of the character of the phenomena we wish to explain.

In delimiting and classifying the field of collective behavior, we may proceed with varying degrees of formality. By a common-sense method we would simply list those kinds of behavior that traditional conceptions of "collective" or "mass" denote and connote. The boundaries of such a common-sense classification are usually vague. By an analytic method, at the other extreme, we would specify in advance the formal rules for exclusion and inclusion and classify instances according to these rules. For purposes of scientific analysis it is always desirable to move as close as possible to the analytic extreme. Let us consider two recent attempts to demarcate the field of collective behavior, then indicate the lines along which we shall move in this volume.

Roger Brown has advanced a number of dimensions for classifying collectivities: (*a*) size—it is important to know whether a group will fit into a room, a hall, or whether it is too large to congregate; (*b*) the frequency of congregation; (*c*) the frequency of polarization of group attention; (*d*) the degree of permanence of the psychological identification of the members. Using such dimensions, Brown distinguishes collective behavior (which he calls mass phenomena) from other forms of behavior.[1] Brown, then, circumscribes the field largely on the basis of *physical*, *temporal*, and *psychological* criteria. Within the field, Brown first mentions crowds, which he divides into two types —mobs and audiences. Mobs are subdivided into the aggressive (lynching, rioting, terrorizing), the escape (panic), the acquisitive (looting) and the expressive. Audiences may be intentional (recreational, information-seeking) or casual. Here the criterion for

[1] Brown, "Mass Phenomena," in Lindzey (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 833–840.

sub-division seems to lie in the different *goals* of collectivities. In addition, Brown mentions certain kinds of mass contagion, mass polarization (audiences of radio or television broadcasts), the social movement, and finally "the mass as an unorganized collectivity."[1] The last four types receive little systematic treatment. Nevertheless, on the whole Brown has attempted to set off a distinctive field according to explicit criteria.

Herbert Blumer, in his attempt to circumscribe the field of collective behavior, contrasts it with (*a*) small group behavior, and (*b*) established or culturally defined behavior. In the first instance, then, the criteria for inclusion are *physical* (size), and *cultural* (relation of the behavior to rules, definitions, or norms).

The contrast between collective behavior and small group behavior reveals several criteria other than physical size alone, The first criterion is *psychological.* In the small group, the individual has a "sense of personal control or a . . . sense of command over the scene of operation." In collective behavior, or large group behavior in general, the group conveys a sense of "transcending power" which "serves to support, reinforce, influence, inhibit, or suppress the individual participant in his activity." The second criterion refers to the mode of *communication* and *interaction.* In small groups these processes "[rest] on personal confrontation and [follow] the pattern of a dialogue, with controlled interpretation by each participant of the action of the other." In large groups new forms of communication and interaction arise, such as the uncontrolled circular reaction of the psychological crowd, or the one-way communication of the mass media. The third criterion refers to the way in which participants are *mobilized for action.* "A small group uses confined, simple, and direct machinery." In larger groups new devices such as "incitation, agitation, gaining attention, the development of morale, the manipulation of discontent, the overcoming of apathy and resistance, the fashioning of group images, and the development of strategy" gain precedence.[2]

With respect to the *cultural* basis of contrast, Blumer states simply that "most large group activity and structure in human societies is an expression of [established rules, definitions or norms]." Collective behavior, by contrast, "lies outside this area of cultural prescription." It is behavior which develops new forms of interaction to meet "undefined or unstructured situations."[3] In order to decide whether an instance of behavior qualifies as collective behavior, then,

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 840–873.
[2] Blumer, "Collective Behavior," in Gittler (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 129–130.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

an analyst would apply these criteria. Although Blumer has not explored many of the logical relations among the criteria, he gives a number of relatively explicit bases for defining a relevant range of phenomena for study.

Within the field of collective behavior, Blumer notices two major foci of interest: (*a*) the study of "elementary forms of collective behavior," such as the excited mob, or the war hysteria; (*b*) the study of the ways in which these elementary forms develop into set and organized behavior.[1] The defining characteristic of elementary collective behavior is restlessness which is communicated by a process of circular reaction, "wherein the response of one individual reproduces the stimulation that has come from another individual and in being reflected back to this individual reinforces the stimulation."[2] Several mechanisms characterize the development of such a state of unrest—milling, collective excitement, and social contagion.

Blumer identifies four basic elementary collective groupings: the acting crowd, the expressive crowd, the mass, and the public. The first two differ in that the acting crowd (a mob, for instance) has a goal or objective, whereas the expressive crowd (the dancing crowd of a religious sect, for instance) expends its impulses and feelings in "mere expressive actions." The mass differs from both in that it is more heterogeneous, more anonymous, less organized, and less intimately engaged in interaction; mass behavior is, in fact, a convergence of a large number of individual selections made on the basis of "vague impulses and feelings." The public, finally, is a group of people who focus on some issue, disagree as to how to meet the issue, engage in discussion, and move toward a decision. The public differs from the crowd in that disagreement (rather than unanimity) and rational consideration (rather than spectacular suggestion) occupy a prominent place in the development of a public.[3] Even this brief summary shows that a number of disparate criteria—character of the group objective, nature of interaction, degree of organization, degree of rationality—are used to distinguish among these elementary groupings. On the whole, the relations among these criteria remain unclear in Blumer's work.

Blumer illustrates the transition from elementary collective behavior to organized behavior in discussing the social movement. During its development, the social movement "acquires organization and form, a body of customs and traditions, established leadership, an

[1] H. Blumer, "Collective Behavior," in A. M. Lee (ed.), *New Outline of the Principles of Sociology* (New York, 1951), p. 168.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 170. For a critique of this and related concepts, below, pp. 154–156.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 178–191.

enduring division of labor, social rules and social values—in short, a culture, a social organization, and a new scheme of life."[1] The major types of social movements are the general (for instance, the women's movement), the specific (for instance, a movement to reduce the tax on alcoholic beverages), and the expressive (for instance, a fashion movement). The difference between the general and the specific lies in the breadth of objectives involved in the attempt to reconstitute the social order. The expressive movement differs from both in that it "[does] not seek to change the institutions of the social order or its objective character."[2] Later we shall modify some of these distinctions. At present we wish merely to illustrate some of the existing principles of division in the field of collective behavior.

In this study we shall attempt a delineation of the field of collective behavior which differs considerably from those just reviewed. As a first approximation, we define collective behavior as *mobilization on the basis of a belief which redefines social action.* Blumer's definition of a social movement—"[a] collective [enterprise] to establish a new order of life"[3]—implies such a redefinition. Our conception, however, extends to elementary forms of collective behavior as well, such as the panic and the hostile outburst. Such a definition calls for clarification of such terms as "redefines" and "social action." We shall take up these tasks in Chapters II and IV.

Collective behavior must be qualified by two further defining characteristics. As the definition indicates, collective behavior is guided by various kinds of beliefs—assessments of the situation, wishes, and expectations. These beliefs differ, however, from those which guide many other types of behavior. They involve a belief in the existence of extraordinary forces—threats, conspiracies, etc.—which are at work in the universe. They also involve an assessment of the extraordinary consequences which will follow if the collective attempt to reconstitute social action is successful. The beliefs on which collective behavior is based (we shall call them *generalized beliefs*) are thus akin to magical beliefs. We shall define and explore the nature of these generalized beliefs in Chapters IV and V.

The third defining characteristic of collective behavior is similar to Blumer's contrast between collective and culturally prescribed behavior. Collective behavior, as we shall study it, is not institutionalized behavior. According to the degree to which it becomes institutionalized, it loses its distinctive character. It is behavior

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 199.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 214.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 199.

"formed or forged to meet undefined or unstructured situations."[1] In Chapter III, when we discuss structural strain, we shall attempt to outline how situations may lose their definition or their structure.

Such are the criteria by which we shall establish the outside limits of collective behavior. What, next, are the internal divisions of the field? Or, to put the question in terms of the definition, what are the components of social action that people attempt to reconstitute? In Chapter II we shall outline the basic components of social action. These components are: (*a*) values, or general sources of legitimacy; (*b*) norms, or regulatory standards for interaction; (*c*) mobilization of individual motivation for organized action in roles and collectivities; (*d*) situational facilities, or information, skills, tools, and obstacles in the pursuit of concrete goals. We shall derive our typology of collective behavior from these components. The basic principle is that each type of collective behavior is oriented toward a distinct component of social action. Thus (*a*) the value-oriented movement is collective action mobilized in the name of a generalized belief envisioning a reconstitution of values; (*b*) the norm-oriented movement is action mobilized in the name of a generalized belief envisioning a reconstitution of norms; (*c*) the hostile outburst is action mobilized on the basis of a generalized belief assigning responsibility for an undesirable state of affairs to some agent; (*d*) the craze and the panic are forms of behavior based on a generalized redefinition of situational facilities. In Chapter V we shall derive these types in full detail, and show their complex relations to one another.

Our definition and classification of the field differs from many previous versions in the following ways:

(1) The defining characteristics of collective behavior are not *physical* or *temporal.* Both Brown and Blumer use such criteria to set collective behavior off from other fields. On a more common-sense level, explanations of types of collective behavior are frequently guided by a sort of pictorial model. The word "panic," for instance, connotes the surge toward a theater exit when a fire breaks out, the crowd leaping from a sinking liner, the rout of troops on a battlefield, or the pile-up of traffic under threat of invasion. Although all these instances are *bona fide* cases of panic—and cases we must explain—we hope to go beyond these particular pictures.

We shall characterize panic in terms of the kind of belief which gives rise to flight. What aspects of the environment does this belief define as threatening? What is the nature of the threat? How does it

[1] Blumer, "Collective Behavior," in Gittler (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 130.

operate? What are the perceived opportunities for escape? By asking such questions we shall be able to discuss, within the same conceptual framework, the dramatic incidents just mentioned as well as other forms of panic, such as the run on the bank, the speculative bust, and the desertion of a political candidate by his former supporters. All these forms possess similarities which transcend the particular physical setting in which they occur. Both small and large groups may become involved in a panic; the affected individuals may be in physical proximity or they may be dispersed; the actual panic may be completed in a matter of minutes, or it may take days or weeks to run its course.

To move beyond the particular physical and temporal setting of an episode is not to deny that physical and temporal factors affect collective behavior. The number and nature of exits, for instance, are important in determining whether a panic will materialize.[1] The sheer physical presence of other individuals makes the spread of rumor easier than if these individuals were forced to rely on modes of communication other than face-to-face interaction. The seriousness of reactions to disasters depends on the character of the catastrophe and the extent to which it destroys communications in the community.[2] These kinds of factors affect the timing, form, and extent of episodes of collective behavior. They are not, however, essential defining characteristics.

(2) The defining characteristics of collective behavior do not lie in any particular kind of *communication* or *interaction.* In Blumer's analysis concepts such as circular reaction, agitation, and incitation occupy a prominent place among the defining criteria of collective behavior. Other investigators have been even more specific in associating a type of communication with a type of collective behavior. Allport and Postman, for instance, have advanced a "law of social

[1] Below, p. 136–139.

[2] Carr, for instance, distinguishes among disasters on the basis of "(1) the character of the precipitating event, or catastrophe, and (2) the scope of the resulting cultural collapse. On this basis there are at least four types of disaster: (*a*) an *instantaneous-diffused type* such as the Halifax explosion which was over before anyone could do anything about it and wreaked its effects on the entire community; (*b*) an *instantaneous-focalized type* such as the Bath, Michigan, schoolhouse explosion of May, 1927, which killed or injured more than a hundred children and teachers in the village school, yet left the rest of the community physically intact; (*c*) a *progressive-diffused type* such as the Galveston hurricane of 1900 or the Mississippi floods of 1927, one of which lasted several hours and the other several weeks, and both of which affected whole communities; and (*d*) a *progressive-focalized type* such as the Cherry Mine fire or the wreck of the 'Titanic'." L. J. Carr, "Disaster and the Sequence-Pattern Concept of Social Change," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 38 (1932–33), pp. 209–210. These different types of physical events have different implications for the form, timing, and seriousness of collective reactions.

psychology" that "no riot ever occurs without rumors to incite, accompany and intensify the violence."[1] Others emphasize the interaction between the demagogue and his followers as crucial in the mobilization of collective action.

Our position on the relation between communication and interaction and the definition of collective behavior is as follows. As mentioned, the central defining characteristic of an episode of collective behavior is a belief envisioning the reconstitution of some component of social action. In order for behavior to become collective, of course, *some* mode of communicating this belief and *some* mode of bringing people to action must be available. No *single* form of communication or interaction, however, constitutes a defining characteristic of collective behavior. The belief may be communicated by gesture or sign, by face-to-face rumor, by the mass media, or by the buildup of an ideology. The form of communication may be a dialogue, an uncontrolled circular reaction, or a one-way communication. Similarly, the mode of mobilizing people for action is variable. An episode may be triggered by an actor who simply "sets an example" and who does not intend to lead the group into action; it may be initiated by a leader who has arisen spontaneously; or it may be "rigged" by a subversive organization which has moved in to capitalize on unrest. As in the case of the physical and temporal setting, the form of communication and interaction is very important in determining the timing, content, and extent of an episode of collective behavior. We shall consider their importance when we discuss the determinants of collective behavior. No particular type of communication or interaction, however, is a central defining characteristic of collective behavior.

(3) The defining characteristics of collective behavior are not *psychological.* The definition we have presented does not, by itself, involve any assumptions that the persons involved in an episode are irrational, that they lose their critical faculties, that they experience psychological regression, that they revert to some animal state, or whatever. The definition asks simply: During an episode of collective behavior, what happens to the components of social action? Any episode is to be described, in the first instance, in these terms.

We shall rely, however, on many psychological assumptions as we attempt to build determinate explanations of collective behavior. We shall assume, for instance, that perceived structural strain at the social level excites feelings of anxiety, fantasy, hostility, etc. We shall assume that people in certain kinds of social situations are more

[1] *The Psychology of Rumor*, pp. 193–196. Italicized in original.

receptive to suggestion than in others. We shall assume that individuals who hold a generalized belief respond more readily to leaders than those who do not. We shall refer to some psychological research to justify these assumptions. The reader should remember, however, that the *definition* of collective behavior is social, not psychological. In Chapters II–IV we shall attempt to say, in great detail, what we mean by the social level.

THE DETERMINANTS OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

The Organization of Determinants. So far we have attempted to establish outside limits and internal divisions for the field of collective behavior. Explanation raises a different set of issues: What determines whether an episode of collective behavior *of any sort* will occur? What determines whether one type *rather than another* will occur? Many of the existing answers to these questions are unsatisfactory scientifically. As Strauss has observed, many students of panic have failed to distinguish any specific and determinate set of conditions for the occurrence of panic above and beyond a simple list of possibly operative factors:

> The conditions of panic can be roughly classified into three categories: physiological, psychological, and sociological. Physiological factors are fatigue, under-nourishment, lack of sleep, toxic conditions of the body, and the like. Psychological factors are surprise, uncertainty, anxiety, feeling of isolation, consciousness or powerlessness before the inevitable expectancy of danger. Sociological factors include lack of group solidarity, crowd conditions, lack of regimental leadership in the group. An effective statement of the mechanics of panic causation cannot be made by merely listing the factors entering into that causation when these factors are as diverse in character as they seem to be. A student seeking a genuinely effective statement of panic causation would attempt to find what is essential to these diverse conditions and tie these essential conditions into a dynamic statement of the development and outbreak of the panic occurrence.[1]

These determinants must be organized. Each must be assigned to its appropriate contributory role in the genesis of panic. A mere list will not suffice.

Even more, we must organize the determinants precisely enough so that panic is the *only* possible outcome; we must rule out related outbursts. To quote Strauss again,

> . . . the conditions of panic which have been noted, because they are not genuine causative conditions, are conditions for more than panic. That is

[1] A. Strauss, "The Literature on Panic," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 39 (1944), p. 324.

to say, the conditions for panic which are listed in the literature are not conditions for panic specifically; they are also conditions for other kinds of closely related phenomena. . . . The thin line between the occurrence of panic and the occurrence of . . . other types of nonrational behavior is attested to by the rapid shifts from one of these forms to another in battle—from collective exaltation to panic, from panic to collective fascination, and the like.

In a genuine sense, then, the causes for panic are not specific causes. They are also conditions for other types of collective behavior.[1]

We need, then, a *unique* combination of determinants which yields a *unique* outcome, panic. We must systematize the determinants, and note the changes in the combinations of determinants which produce different outcomes.

Similar problems of explanation arise in connection with social movements. In examining the anthropological literature on messianic movements, Barber concludes that there exists a "positive correlation of the messianic movement and deprivation [of various types]."[2] The first difficulty in attempting to assess this correlation—assuming that it exists—is that "deprivation" is a vague term. A statement of the kinds of deprivation is necessary. In addition, there are many types of messianic movements; some are associated with a positive sense of regeneration of society, others with passive resignation. Finally, as Barber notes, messianism is not the only reponse to deprivation; among "several alternative responses" he mentions "armed rebellion and physical violence" and "depopulation." Thus, in spite of Barber's correlation, there remain several kinds and levels of deprivation and several responses besides messianism. This is what we mean when we say that there exists a residue of indeterminacy in the connections between determinants and outcomes in the field of collective behavior. To reduce this residue is one of the major tasks of this study.

The Logic of Value-added. The scheme we shall use to organize the determinants of collective behavior resembles the conception of "value-added" in the field of economics.[3] An example of the use of this term is the conversion of iron ore into finished automobiles by a number of stages of processing. Relevant stages would be mining, smelting, tempering, shaping, and combining the steel with other parts, painting, delivering to retailer, and selling. Each stage "adds

[1] *Ibid*, pp. 324–325.

[2] B. Barber, "Acculturation and Messianic Movements," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 6 (1941), pp. 663–669.

[3] For an elementary account of the nature of value-added, cf. P. A. Samuelson, *Economics: An Introductory Analysis* (fourth edition) (New York, 1958), pp. 187–188.

its value" to the final cost of the finished product. The key element in this example is that the earlier stages must combine *according to a certain pattern* before the next stage can contribute its particular value to the finished product. It is impossible to paint iron ore and hope that the painting will thereby contribute to the desired final product, an automobile. Painting, in order to be effective as a "determinant" in shaping the product, has to "wait" for the completion of the earlier processes. Every stage in the value-added process, therefore, is a necessary condition for the appropriate and effective addition of value in the next stage. The sufficient condition for final production, moreover, is the combination of *every* necessary condition, according to a definite pattern.

As the value-added process moves forward, it narrows progressively the range of possibilities of what the final product might become. Iron ore, for instance, is a very general resource, and can be converted into thousands of different kinds of products. After it is smelted and tempered into a certain quality of steel, the range of possible products into which it might enter is narrowed considerably. After it is pressed into automotive parts, it can be used for very few products other than automobiles. If we were to view the finished automobile as the "outcome" to be explained and the stages of value-added as "determinants," we would say that as each new stage adds its value, the "explanation" of the outcome becomes increasingly determinate or specific. As the value-added process develops, it allows for progressively fewer outcomes other than the one we wish to explain.

This logic of value-added can be applied to episodes of collective behavior, such as the panic or the reform movement. Many determinants, or necessary conditions, must be present for any kind of collective episode to occur. These determinants must combine, however, in a definite pattern. Furthermore, as they combine, the determination of the type of episode in question becomes increasingly specific, and alternative behaviors are ruled out as possibilities.[1]

[1] This methodological position has been developed by Meyer and Conrad with reference to explanation in economic history. "If [the economic historian's] intention is indeed to know about and explain specific, historical events, then it is our contention that he must follow the rules of scientific explanation. To explain an event one must be able to estimate a range of admissible possibilities, given a set of initial conditions and a causal or statistical law. . . . Like other economists and other scientists, it must be [the economic historians'] aim to narrow the range of possibilities, to explain why the particular realized development did in fact occur." J. R. Meyer and A. H. Conrad, "Economic Theory, Statistical Inference, and Economic History," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 17 (1957), p. 532. For a mathematical formalization of such logic, cf. M. E. Turner and C. D. Stevens, "The Regression Analysis of Causal Paths," *Biometrics*, Vol. 15 (1959), pp. 236–258. Our approach also seems consistent with two general remarks made

The following are the important determinants of collective behavior:

(1) Structural conduciveness. We read that financial booms and panics, fashion cycles and crazes do not plague simple, traditional societies; we also read that America as a civilization is prone to such seizures, and that, within America, places like Los Angeles and Detroit are especially productive of bizarre movements.[1] Are such statements true, and if so, why? Do certain structural characteristics, more than others, permit or encourage episodes of collective behavior? To illustrate this condition of structural conduciveness with respect to the occurrence of financial panic, let us assume that property is closely tied to kinship and can be transferred only to first-born sons at the time of the death of the father. Panic under such conditions is ruled out, simply because the holders of property do not have sufficient maneuverability to dispose of their assets upon short notice. Under conditions of economic pressure, certain responses are possible—for instance, a movement to change the customs of property transfer—but not panic. The structure of the social situation does not permit it. At the other extreme lies the money market, in which assets can be exchanged freely and rapidly.

Conduciveness is, at most, permissive of a given type of collective behavior. A money market, for instance, even though its structure is conducive to panic, may function for long periods without producing a crisis. Within the scope of a conducive structure, many possible kinds of behavior other than panic remain. We must narrow the range of possibilities. In order to do so, we add several more determinants. In this way we make more probable the occurrence of that event (e.g., panic) which is merely possible within the scope of conduciveness.

(2) Structural strain. Financial panics develop when loss or annihilation threatens the holders of assets.[2] Real or anticipated economic deprivation, in fact, occupies an important place in the initiation of hostile outbursts, reform movements, revolutionary

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recently by Morris Ginsberg on the problem of social change. The search for social causation (or explanation), he maintains, involves a search for "an assemblage of factors which, in interaction with each other, undergo a change of character and are continued into the effect." Such processes of social causation, moreover, often have a "cumulative and frequently circular character." "Social Change," *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 9 (1958), pp. 220–223; see also R. M. MacIver, *Social Causation* (Boston, 1942), pp. 251–265. Thus it may be possible to treat many types of social change other than collective behavior by this value-added conception. Cf. N. J. Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution* (Chicago, 1959), pp. 60–62.

[1] Below, pp. 175–188, and 345.

[2] Below, pp. 149–150.

movements, and new sects as well.[1] Extreme religious movements seem to cluster among deprived groups such as colonial populations, the disinherited members of a society, and recent migrants.[2] Race riots follow population invasions and new kinds of cultural contacts.[3] In Chapter III we shall outline the major types of structural strain—ambiguities, deprivations, conflicts, and discrepancies—and show how these give rise to episodes of collective behavior.

In explaining any case of collective behavior (a panic, for instance), we must consider the structural strain (the threat of economic deprivation, for instance) as falling *within the scope established by the condition of conduciveness.* Otherwise this strain cannot be a determinant of panic, however important it may be as a determinant of some other kind of behavior. It is the *combination* of conduciveness and strain, not the separate existence of either, that radically reduces the range of possibilities of behavior other than panic.

(3) Growth and spread of a generalized belief. Before collective action can be taken to reconstitute the situation brought on by structural strain, this situation must be made meaningful to the potential actors. This meaning is supplied in a generalized belief, which identifies the source of strain, attributes certain characteristics to this source, and specifies certain responses to the strain as possible or appropriate. In Chapter V we shall examine the anatomy of several beliefs—hysterical, wish-fulfillment, hostile, norm-oriented, and value-oriented. The growth and spread of such beliefs are one of the necessary conditions for the occurrence of an episode of collective behavior.

Many generalized beliefs, however, enjoy a long existence without ever becoming determinants of a collective outburst. Throughout history, for instance, men have harbored superstitions about creatures from other planets, their powers, and their potential danger. Only on very specific occasions, however, do such beliefs rise to significance as determinants of panicky flights. These occasions arise when the generalized beliefs combine with the other necessary conditions of panic.

(4) Precipitating factors. Conduciveness, strain, and a generalized belief—even when combined—do not by themselves produce an episode of collective behavior in a specific time and place. In the case of panic, for instance, these general determinants establish a predisposition to flight, but it is usually a specific event which sets the flight in motion. Under conditions of racial tension, it is nearly always a dramatic event which precipitates the outburst of violence —a clash between two persons of different race, a Negro family

[1] Below, pp. 54–59, 245–246, 287–288 and 339–340.
[2] Below, pp. 324–330. [3] Below, pp. 241–245.

moving into a white neighborhood, or a Negro being promoted to a traditionally white job.[1] These events may confirm or justify the fears or hatreds in a generalized belief; they may initiate or exaggerate a condition of strain; or they may redefine sharply the conditions of conduciveness. In any case, these precipitating factors give the generalized beliefs concrete, immediate substance. In this way they provide a concrete setting toward which collective action can be directed.

Again, a precipitating factor by itself is not necessarily a determinant of anything in particular. It must occur in the context of the other determinants. A fistfight, for instance, will not touch off a race riot unless it occurs in the midst of—or is interpreted in the light of —a general situation established by conduciveness, strain, and a generalized belief.

(5) Mobilization of participants for action. Once the determinants just reviewed have been established, the only necessary condition that remains is to bring the affected group into action. This point marks the onset of panic, the outbreak of hostility, or the beginning of agitation for reform or revolution. In this process of mobilization the behavior of leaders is extremely important.

(6) The operation of social control. In certain respects this final determinant arches over all the others. Stated in the simplest way, the study of social control is the study of those counter-determinants which prevent, interrupt, deflect, or inhibit the accumulation of the determinants just reviewed. For purposes of analysis it is convenient to divide social controls into two broad types: (*a*) Those social controls which minimize conduciveness and strain. In a broad sense these controls *prevent* the occurrence of an episode of collective behavior, because they attack very nonspecific determinants. (*b*) Those social controls which are mobilized only *after* a collective episode has begun to materialize. These determine how fast, how far, and in what directions the episode will develop. To assess the effectiveness of the second kind of controls, we shall ask how the appropriate agencies of control—the police, the courts, the press, the religious authorities, the community leaders, etc.—behave in the face of a potential or actual outburst of collective behavior. Do they adopt a rigid, uncompromising attitude? Do they vacillate? Do they themselves take sides in the disturbance? In later chapters we shall examine how these responses of the agencies of social control affect the development of the different kinds of collective behavior.

By studying the different combinations of these six determinants,

[1] Below, pp. 249–250.

we hope to provide the best possible answer to the explanatory questions posed at the beginning of this section: What determines whether an episode of collective behavior *of any sort* will occur? What determines whether one type *rather than another* will occur? By utilizing these analytically distinct determinants, moreover, we shall be better equipped to untangle those complex empirical situations (e.g., wars, depressions) in which many different types of collective behavior unfold simultaneously.[1]

Value-added and Natural History. According to the logic of the value-added approach, any event or situation, in order to become a determinant of a collective episode, must operate within the limits established by other determinants. At first glance this approach is very similar to the widespread "natural history" approach to collective behavior. In its simplest form, this approach involves the claim that there exist certain empirical uniformities of sequence in the unfolding of an episode of collective behavior. A classic model of the stages of a social movement is the sequence developed by Dawson and Gettys—the sequence beginning with a "preliminary stage of social unrest," passing through a "popular stage of collective excitement" and a "stage of formal organization," and finally reaching a kind of terminal point of "institutionalization." The entire sequence introduces some new institutional form—a sect, a law, a new kind of family structure, or a political reform.[2] A comparable model for revolutions is Crane Brinton's suggestive sequence involving first economic and political weakness of the old regime in the midst of general prosperity; disaffection of specific groups, especially the intellectuals; transfer of power; rule of the moderates; accession of the extremists and the reign of terror and virtue; and finally, a period of relaxation of some of the revolution's excesses, institutionalization of some elements of its program, and a return to many of society's old ways.[3] Many investigators, following the pioneer work of Prince,

[1] For an account of the parade of outbursts during the early part of World War I in England, cf. W. Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (London, 1922), pp. 140–141. For other characterizations of the clustering of collective behavior, cf. L. Whiteman and S. L. Lewis, *Glory Roads: The Psychological State of California* (New York, 1936), pp. 4–5; K. G. J. C. Knowles, " 'Strike-Proneness' and its Determinants," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 60 (1954–55), p. 213; J. W. Thompson, "The Aftermath of the Black Death and the Aftermath of the Great War," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 32 (1920–21), p. 565. At the level of social movements, "it is rare for a mass movement to be wholly of one character. Usually it displays some facets of other types of movement, and sometimes it is two or three movements in one." E. Hoffer, *The True Believer* (New York, 1958), p. 26.

[2] C. A. Dawson and W. E. Gettys, *An Introduction to Sociology* (New York, 1929), pp. 787–803.

[3] *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York, 1958). See also P. A. Sorokin, *The*

have used the logic of natural sequence to account for the events during and after disasters.[1] Dahlke has suggested a typical sequence of events leading to a race riot.[2] Recently Meyersohn and Katz have attempted to outline the natural history of the adoption of fads[3]. In most of these accounts it is not stated whether the temporally prior stages are necessary conditions for the later stages.

To appreciate the difference between the value-added and the natural history approaches, let us return to the analogy of the production of an automobile. In one respect the stages of value-added can be described as a natural history. The ore is smelted before the steel is shaped; the steel is shaped before the paint is applied, and so on. It is possible, however, that the paint itself has been *manufactured* prior to the shaping of the steel. This circumstance complicates the simple account of a natural history. Now we must consider the paint to have been in existence—dormant, as it were, as a determinant—*before* the preceding determinant. The paint can be activated as a determinant, however, only after the steel has been shaped and readied for painting. In the value-added process, then, we must distinguish between the *occurrence* or *existence* of an event or situation, and the *activation* of this event or situation as a determinant. The value-added logic implies a temporal sequence of activation of determinants, but any or all of these determinants may have existed for an indefinite period before activation.

The same logic governs the explanation of an episode of collective behavior. A simple natural history approach to panic would involve an account of one event or situation (for example, the closing off of exits) followed by a second (the growth of fear), followed by a third (a shout or loud noise), followed by yet another (someone starting to run), and so on. Under the value-added approach, these events or situations would become activated as determinants in a certain temporal order, but any of them might have been in existence already. The fear of entrapment, for instance, is a near-universal fear which has endured through the ages. It is activated as a determinant of

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Sociology of Revolution (Philadelphia, 1925); L. P. Edwards, *The Natural History of Revolution* (Chicago, 1927); R. D. Hopper, "The Revolutionary Process: A Frame of Reference for the Study of Revolutionary Movements," *Social Forces*, Vol. 28 (1950), pp. 270–279.

[1] S. H. Prince, *Catastrophe and Social Change* (New York, 1920); for more recent use of the concept, cf. W. H. Form and S. Nosow, with G. P. Stone and C. M. Westie, *Community in Disaster* (New York, 1958), and Carr, "Disaster and the Sequence-Pattern Concept of Social Change," *op. cit.*

[2] H. O. Dahlke, "Race and Minority Riots—A Study in the Typology of Violence," *Social Forces*, Vol. 30 (1951–52), pp. 419–425.

[3] R. Meyersohn and E. Katz, "Notes on a Natural History of Fads," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 62 (1956–57), pp. 594–601.

panic, however, only after conditions of conduciveness and strain (danger) have been established. Even precipitating factors need not occur at a specific moment in time. A loud explosion may have occurred some time in the past without causing any particular alarm. Once certain determinants of panic have accumulated, however, this explosion may be remembered and reinterpreted (i.e., activated as a determinant) in the light of the new situation. The logic of value-added, in short, does posit a definite sequence for the activation of determinants but does not posit a definite sequence for the empirical establishment of events and situations.

Finally, certain *single* empirical events or situations may be significant as *several* determinants of collective behavior. A severe financial crisis, for instance, may create widespread economic deprivation (structural strain) and at the same time may touch off one or more outbursts (precipitating factor). A long-standing religious cleavage, such as that between Protestants and Catholics, may be frustrating for each group (structural strain); the same cleavage may harbor hostile sentiments within each group toward the other (generalized beliefs). Under the appropriate conditions these latent determinants may be activated to contribute to a collective outburst. We must always distinguish clearly, therefore, between the empirical occurrence or existence of an event or situation, and its significance as one or more determinants in the value-added process.

Psychological Variables and the Determination of Collective Behavior. Our outline of determinants departs radically from the social psychological tradition of the analysis of crowds and other collective behavior—the tradition of Tarde, Le Bon, Ross, Freud, Martin, F. A. Allport, MacDougall and others. These men and their followers have based their explanations primarily on psychological variables, whether of the "superficial" types such as imitation, sympathy, contagion, and suggestion or the "deeper" types such as projection, regression, and transfer of libidinal ties.

Although recognizing the importance of such psychological variables in crowd behavior,[1] we must introduce determinants at the social level for an adequate explanation of collective behavior. With psychological variables alone we cannot discriminate between the occasions on which these variables will manifest themselves and the occasions on which they will lie dormant. Let us illustrate this point with reference to fashion. Nystrom, in attempting to explain some of the vagaries of fashion behavior, has claimed that

[1] These variables have been questioned on psychological grounds. Cf. Brown's criticism of terms like "circular reaction," "rapport," "contagion," and "social facilitation." "Mass Phenomena," in Lindzey (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 843.

. . . The specific motive or factors for fashion interest and fashion changes, in addition to the physical reasons for change such as occur at the end of each season, are the boredom and fatigue with current fashion, curiosity, desire to be different, or self-assertion, rebellion against convention, companionship and imitation. . . .[1]

To this primarily psychological explanation Bell responds:

This is no doubt true enough as far as it goes; we have here a sufficient catalogue of human motives, but obviously it leaves a great deal unexplained. Why, for instance, should these human motives have expired among men and yet persisted among women at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and why should they have been absent in China until our own times? We may here have an accurate account of states of mind, but we do not have the reasons which produce them, the motor of fashion itself. We can only conclude that human nature is itself subject to fashion.[2]

Like the episodes of collective behavior itself psychological variables, such as suggestion, projection, displacement and fetishism, are products in part of social determinants. In using the sociological approach, we shall be asking: Under what social conditions do these psychological variables come into play as parts of collective behavior?[3]

PLAN OF THE VOLUME

Two main theses underlie the argument of this volume: (*a*) Collective behavior can be classified and analyzed under the same conceptual framework as all social behavior. (*b*) The forms of collective behavior constitute a series ranging from the simple to the complex. The more complex forms, moreover, include *as components* the elements found in the simpler forms, but not vice-versa.

To implement these propositions, we shall first outline, in Chapter II, the basic components of social action. Although abstract and distant from the concrete details of collective behavior, this chapter must come first in the volume, since it constitutes the foundation on which we shall build a definition of collective behavior, a classification of types of collective behavior, a classification of types of structural strain, and a discussion of the operation of social controls.

Chapters III and IV also are general. In Chapter III we shall classify and discuss the many foci of structural strain which are important in the genesis of collective behavior. In Chapter IV we shall define collective behavior in a way which distinguishes it from other types of behavior.

[1] Quoted in Q. Bell, *On Human Finery* (London, 1947), p. 50.

[2] *Ibid.* For similar remarks on the use of psychoanalytic variables as explanatory concepts, cf. p. 52.

[3] Below, pp. 152–153.

After establishing this theoretical groundwork, we shall turn in Chapter V to the analysis of beliefs on the basis of which action is mobilized for collective behavior. We shall arrange these beliefs in a series from the simple to the complex. From this typology of beliefs we shall derive the major types of collective behavior.

In the chapters which follow—Chapters VI through X—we shall analyze each type of collective behavior in detail: the panic, the craze, the hostile outburst, the norm-oriented movement, and the value-oriented movement. We shall recapitulate each in terms of the six basic determinants of the value-added scheme: structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth of a generalized belief, precipitating factors, mobilization for action, and social control. In Chapter XI we shall set forth some concluding remarks.

CHAPTER II

BASIC CONCEPTS: THE COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Collective behavior is analyzable by the same categories as conventional behavior. The two differ, to be sure. At one hypothetical extreme, collective behavior involves a collective redefinition of an unstructured situation; at the other extreme, conventional behavior is the working-out of established expectations. In spite of this difference, the two have an essential similarity. Both face exigencies imposed by social life. In many cases, for example, both must be legitimized by values; both involve an assessment of the situation in which they occur, and so on. Because of these common characteristics it is possible to use the same theoretical framework to analyze both conventional and collective behavior.

Given this position, it is important to assemble a number of categories to describe the components of action at the social level. This is our task in this chapter. The result will be a kind of "map" or "flow chart" of paths along which social action moves. In the chapters which follow we shall investigate what happens to these components of action when established ways of acting fail in the face of unstructured situations. One major set of reactions to this failure constitutes the major types of collective behavior. Such behavior is an attempt to reconstruct a disturbed social order, or at least a part of it.

In discussing the principal components of action, we shall rely on the accumulated sociological thought in Europe and America during the last century or so. In a more direct sense, we shall refer most to the work of Talcott Parsons, Edward Shils, R. F. Bales, and their associates.[1] In this study we shall not attempt any direct application of this body of thought. Rather we shall borrow generously from its logic and substance.[2]

[1] T. Parsons and E. A. Shils (eds.), *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951); Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, Ill., 1951); Parsons, R. F. Bales, and Shils, *Working Papers in the Theory of Action* (Glencoe, Ill., 1953); Parsons, Bales, *et al.*, *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process* (Glencoe, Ill., 1955); Parsons and N. J. Smelser, *Economy and Society* (London and Glencoe, Ill., 1956).

[2] In certain respects the theory to be developed in this volume marks an

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Parsons and Shils have defined action in the following way:

> [The theory of action] conceives of [the behavior of living organisms] as oriented to the attainment of ends in situations, by means of the normatively regulated expenditure of energy. There are four points to be noted in this conceptualization of behavior: (1) Behavior is oriented to the attainment of ends or goals or other anticipated states of affairs. (2) It takes place in situations. (3) It is normatively regulated. (4) It involves expenditure of energy or effort in "motivation" (which may be more or less organized independently of its involvement in action).[1]

According to this formulation, a number of things must be known before we can describe action: the valued ends, the environmental setting, the norms governing the behavior, and the ways in which motivation is mobilized.

Parsons and Shils define action from the actor's point of view. It is possible, however, to apply the same definition to a system of action composed of the *interaction* of two or more actors. At this level of abstraction we no longer treat individual personalities as the principal systems; we move to the analysis of the *relations* among actors. At this, the social-system level, the units of analysis are not need-dispositions or motives, but roles (e.g., husband, church-member, citizen) and organizations (e.g., political parties, business firms, families).[2] A social system may be constituted by an informal, even casual interaction among two persons, or it may be constituted by a large-scale, enduring institutional complex such as a church, a market system, or even a society. In this chapter we shall deal with action at the social system level.

The four basic components of social action, then, are: (1) the generalized ends, or *values*, which provide the broadest guides to purposive social behavior; (2) the regulatory rules governing the pursuit of these goals, rules which are to be found in *norms*; (3) the mobilization of individual energy to achieve the defined ends within the normative framework. If we consider the individual person as actor, we ask how he is *motivated*; if we move to the social-system level, we ask how motivated individuals are *organized* into roles and organizations; (4) the available *situational facilities* which the actor utilizes as means; these include knowledge of the environment,

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extension of the thought begun in my study of social change in the North of England during the Industrial Revolution. *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution*, especially Chapters VII–XI.

[1] *Toward a General Theory of Action*, p. 53.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 190–197.

predictability of consequences of action, and tools and skills. Let us now define these components more thoroughly and illustrate them with political and economic examples.

Values. The most general component of social action resides in a value system. Values state in general terms the desirable end states which act as a guide to human endeavor; they are so general in their reference that they do not specify kinds of norms, kinds of organization, or kinds of facilities which are required to realize these ends.

To illustrate this *general* character of values, let us first examine "democracy." This value, as it has evolved in the liberal traditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, forms the core of legitimacy for the political systems of Great Britain, the United States, and the French Republics. Although common elements are present in the definition of democracy for all these nations—the principles of representation, elective systems, majority rule, etc.—these do not specify the exact institutional arrangements. In fact, the systems of representation, election, courts, legislation, and administration differ widely among these three political systems. But these differences do not lie at the value level; they are differences in regulative norms, in social organization, and in means of attaining concrete political goals.

The economic value of "free enterprise," like the political value of democracy, is extremely general. One of the apparent paradoxes of free enterprise is that it has been the basis for legitimizing *many* types of economic organization. The two most conspicuous forms have been the owner-managed enterprise of the late nineteenth century and the manager-dominated corporate enterprise which has come to dominate in the twentieth century. The structural characteristics of these two forms vary considerably,[1] yet both came to be institutionalized under the label of free enterprise.

Values, then, are the most general statements of legitimate ends which guide social action. According to Kluckhohn, they involve "generalized and organized conception[s], influencing behavior, of nature, of man's place in it, of man's relation to man, and of the desirable and nondesirable as they may relate to man-environment and interhuman relations."[2] Kluckhohn's choice of the words "nature, man's place in it, and man's relation to man," implicitly restricts his definition to very comprehensive kinds of values, usually

[1] A. A. Berle and G. C. Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (New York, 1935).

[2] C. Kluckhohn, "Values and Value-Orientations," in Parsons and Shils, *Toward a General Theory of Action*, p. 411. Actually, Kluckhohn's definition applies to "value-orientations" which include not only notions of the desirable and nondesirable but also existential claims.

those found in religious belief-systems. Values such as "democracy" and "free enterprise" show, however, that general values may refer only to sectors of society, such as the political or economic. Later in the chapter we shall show how values may vary in their specificity of reference.

Two clarifying remarks on the study of values are in order: (*a*) Like all the components of social action, the concept of value is a construct; it refers to an aspect of social action which is not physically and temporally isolable. Therefore the social scientist cannot simply identify values as things which are given in nature; rather he must impute values to social systems. To assess the correctness of this imputation, two kinds of evidence are available. The first is direct; the investigator uses a number of indices, such as written documents, verbal statements, institutional patterns, ritual expressions of devotion to the sacred, and so on. No one index is valid. To unravel the different kinds of evidence given by the different indices, moreover, poses many difficult methodological problems. The second kind of evidence is indirect, but very important; the social scientist must incorporate his version of values into definite empirical propositions. If he has erred in his imputation of values, his error will be revealed by his inability to explain the behavior he wishes to explain. (*b*) At any given instant in history, a given society is characterized by some values which are accepted more or less universally, some values which are in conflict with dominant values, some values toward which the populace is ambivalent, and so on. Our definition of values does not imply any perfectly integrated system of values for any society. In fact, we shall devote much of this volume to studying those occasions on which the legitimacy of values is challenged, and the ways in which people collectively attempt to change values.

Norms. If values only are present, no action is possible. The value of "democracy," for instance, provides only criteria for judging the legitimacy or illegitimacy of whole classes of behavior. Various rules must be established which indicate how democracy (or any other system of values) may be realized—rules of election, office-holding, rights and privileges of the state and the citizens. These rules represent, in certain respects, a narrowing of the possible applications of the general values.

Again, "free enterprise," as a value, defines the general relationships of man to the economy, and of men to one another in the economy. This value, however, does not define any detailed mutual rights and privileges of actors, or norms for expected behavior. Such norms are found in the institutional structure of the economy, par-

ticularly in the legal institutions of contract, property, and employment, as well as in more informal customs governing economic behavior, such as understandings among producers concerning the share of the market which should go to each.

Norms, then, are more *specific* than general values, for they specify certain regulatory principles which are necessary if these values are to be realized. They are the "ways in which the value patterns of the common culture of a social system are integrated in the concrete action of its units in their interaction with each other."[1] Norms range from formal, explicit regulations found, for instance, in legal systems to informal, sometimes unconscious understandings found, for instance, in neighborhood cliques. One purpose of this study is to examine the conditions under which new norms arise and become established through a norm-oriented movement.

Mobilization of Motivation into Organized Action. By themselves values and norms do not determine the *form of organization* of human action. They supply certain general ends and general rules; they do not specify, however, who will be the agents in the pursuit of valued ends, how the actions of these agents will be structured into concrete roles and organizations, and how they will be rewarded for responsible participation in these roles and organizations. In fact, norms allow considerable variability at the organizational level. Property law (which is a system of norms) specifies rights and obligations which cut across organizational forms of individual enterprise, partnerships, and corporations.[2] So while norms regulate organizations, they do not define the precise structure and system of rewards for these organizations.

We have to specify, therefore, in addition to values and norms, a third component which gives more detail to social action, and which cannot be reduced to either of the other two components. In dealing with this third component, we ask questions such as the following: Will economic processes be carried on by individual merchants and artisans, by small firms, or by gigantic corporations? Will political processes be carried on by small, informal political cliques, by pressure groups, by political parties, or by a structure involving the interaction of all of these types?

Most of what sociologists call "social organization" or "social structure"—families, churches, hospitals, government agencies, business firms, associations, political parties—is specified by this

[1] Parsons and Smelser, *Economy and Society*, p. 102.

[2] Some branches of law, e.g., corporation law or partnership law, define rights and obligations appropriate for specific kinds of organizations. Even these kinds of law do not specify, however, all the characteristics—e.g., size, internal power relations—of such organizations.

third component of "mobilization of motivation into organized action." Furthermore, around this component we find the operative play of rewards, such as wealth, power, and prestige, which accrue as a result of effective performance in roles and organizations.

Situational Facilities. The final component of social action involves the means and obstacles which facilitate or hinder the attainment of concrete goals in the role or organizational context. We call this component "situational facilities." It refers to the actor's knowledge of the opportunities and limitations of the environment and, in some cases, his knowledge of his own ability to influence the environment. In both cases this knowledge is relative to the possibility of realizing a goal which is part of his role or organizational membership.

To illustrate this fourth component in the economic example which we have used throughout the discussion, the term "situational facilities" refers to the various means for making a decision in the market. How thorough is the producer's knowledge of market conditions? How much capital is available for the investment, and how well is the businessman able to finance his projected enterprise? How thoroughly can the businessman rely on the behavior of those who work for him? In sum, the businessman acts on his knowledge of the means and obstacles to attain his goals of producing and profit-making.[1] This characterization does not imply that his knowledge is always complete; it does imply, however, that his assessment of the situation is one of the components that enters his action.

For any instance of action which we wish to analyze, then, we have to pose four basic questions: What are the values that legitimize this action at the most general level? By what kinds of norms is this action coordinated and kept relatively free from conflict? In what ways is the action structured into roles and organizations? What kinds of situational facilities are available? As we shall see, when strain is exerted on one or more of these components, *and* when established ways of relieving the strain are not available, various kinds of collective outbursts and movements tend to arise. We shall interpret these episodes as attempts to reconstitute the component or components under strain.

[1] Max Weber's famous list of the conditions for the maximum realization of the goals of economic rationality can be viewed as a specification of two of the components of action, norms and situational facilities. (1) Norms: the institutional arrangements required for maximum rationality, such as segregation of the enterprise from the workers' appropriation, ownership of the means of production, etc.; (2) Situational facilities: calculability of the technical conditions of production, including labor discipline, etc. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Glencoe, Ill., 1947), pp. 275–276.

INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL ACTION

In ordinary language we often distinguish—implicitly and vaguely —among these four components of social action by using different words to characterize the relevant individual attitude toward each. In connection with values, for instance, the relevant attitude is *belief in*, or *commitment to*, or *faith in* the value in question. This commitment often takes an "either-or" form. This is not to claim as an empirical generalization that people do not "compromise their values" from time to time. All we are attempting to do at this time is to outline the conventions of usage of words like "faith" and "commitment."

With respect to norms, the appropriate individual attitude is *conformity* or *deviation*. Does the individual observe the rule or not? In general a person "conforms" to norms rather than "believes" in them. When we say we believe in property law, we do not mean that we conform to its specific regulations; we mean rather that we are committed to the value of regulating property by law. When we say we conform to the laws of private property, however, we mean that we are obeying the particular laws; whether or not we believe in the value of property is irrelevant. To say we conform to a value—such as free enterprise—is senseless, for such a value is too general to prescribe ways of conforming. We can conform only to the more specific laws of private property by which the free enterprise system is institutionalized.

One appropriate attitude toward the component of organization is the individual's *responsibility* or *lack of responsibility* in a role—whether this role be in a business firm, a postal agency, a hospital, a school, a church, or a family. We also refer to the individual's *loyalty* to these organizations by referring to him as a faithful employee, a faithful husband, or a faithful churchgoer. It is meaningless to say that an individual is "committed" to an organization; rather he is "committed" to the overall values of the organization. Nor can we say properly that he "conforms" to the organization; rather he "conforms" to the norms which regulate the organization.

Finally, with respect to situational facilities, one appropriate attitude is one of *confidence* or *lack of confidence* in our ability to predict and control the environment. If uncertainty is high, we have little confidence; as uncertainty diminishes, confidence grows.

The loose conventions for using the words "values," "norms," "role or organization," and "facilities" parallel the conventions for

using words like "commitment," "conformity," "responsibility," and "confidence" in the following way:

Component of social action	*Definition of individual attitude toward component*	*Economic example*
Values	Commitment, belief in, faith in	Free enterprise
Norms	Conformity	Contract, property, etc.
Role or organization	Responsibility, loyalty	Business firm
Situational facilities	Trust, confidence	Confidence in skills, knowledge, availability of capital, etc.

This is not to claim that people always have these attitudes toward the components of action. Opportunists, for instance, may feign commitment to values in order to maximize power or prestige. Yet the very fact that we use the word "opportunist" illustrates the conventions for using the above terms; this word implies that the actor is, by adopting an expedient attitude toward value-commitments, "using" them illegitimately for purposes other than personal belief. In the chapters that follow we shall show how these connections between individual attitudes and the components of action help us to identify the kinds of strains that give rise to collective behavior, as well as to identify the episodes of collective behavior itself.

FURTHER ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE FOUR COMPONENTS

In illustrating the components of social action we have relied on economic and political examples. In other spheres the same components are equally applicable:

(1) Religion. The *value-component* is found in the theology and cosmology of the religion. In Christianity, for instance, the most general values include the belief in God, the mission of Christ, the implications of sin, grace, and salvation, and the eschatological notions found in the Bible. Religious *norms* are the general prescriptions and prohibitions believed to emanate from the general values. Examples of such norms are the Ten Commandments, various dietary regulations, and rules regarding the observation of holidays. At the *organizational* level is some set of roles or organizations—monasteries, churches, sects, or individual ascetic roles—which constitute the organized social medium for pursuing the religious life. Finally, with respect to *facilities*, we would identify the liturgy, techniques of prayer and communion, rituals, confession, and so on,

which constitute the means for worshipping and attaining the desired religious state.

(2) Education. In America we are committed to a *value* of free public education. To implement this value at a *normative* level, we establish rules guaranteeing children of certain ages an opportunity to go to school, specify qualifications for entering and leaving school, enact property laws and float bonds to construct schools, and so on. At the *organizational* level we mobilize human motivation and talent into roles of administrators, teachers and pupils to realize the goals of education in a concrete social setting. And finally, with regard to *facilities*, we use techniques of instruction, books, musical instruments, etc., to implement the goals of education.

(3) Family. Normally the nuclear family is *valued* as an organization which perpetuates the central values of a culture through the socialization of children.[1] As *norms* to implement these values, we have marriage and divorce laws which specify how families are formed and broken, customs regulating the rights and obligations of family members to one another, and so on. Many norms are found in domestic law; many persist in less formal traditions. At the *organizational* level we have the kinship system, which is variable in its structure and residential patterns. Finally, we might specify several *facilities* for the family, such as the techniques of socialization, a minimum level of wealth, power, and prestige (to maintain a style of life for the family), and so on.

THE COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL ACTION AND CONCRETE SOCIAL ACTION

No concrete instance of action is identical to any one of the components of action. In fact, because the components are analytic aspects of action, any concrete instance of action includes all the components, whether this action be designed to maximize wealth, to implement territorial claims through war, to promote social stability, or to attain a state of religious bliss.

Some institutional clusterings of concrete action, however, seem to bear an especially close connection with one or more components of action. To illustrate this connection, we may consider values, norms, organized motivation, and facilities as "resources" which enter the "production" of action.[2] We may classify various institutional clusters of a society in terms of their "specialization" in supplying these resources. On the whole, the religious, philosophical, literary

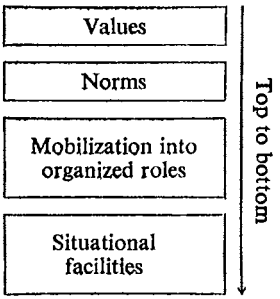
[1] Families also may transmit wealth, perpetuate lineages, link clans, and so on.

[2] For an exposition of this concept of social resources, cf. Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution*, Chs. III, VIII.

and esthetic complex creates and defines general *values*. Legislatures, courts, police forces, social welfare agencies, schools, families, and informal groups specialize in varying degrees in creating *norms* and bringing deviant individuals and groups "back into line" through processes of social control. Governments, political parties, advertisers and the press are among the agencies responsible for *mobilizing* motivation. Finally, scientific research and education specialize in creating and transmitting *facilities* required for attacking a wide range of problems which arise in the pursuit of individual and social goals.

THE HIERARCHICAL RELATIONS AMONG THE COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL ACTION

How are the four components related to one another? To state it most simply, they stand in a *hierarchy* which reads as follows:



Values stand highest, situational facilities lowest. Several dimensions characterize this hierarchy:

(1) As we move from top to bottom, the concrete details of action receive increasingly more specific definition. Values provide only general notions of desirable end states, and hence are the most general guides to action. At the level of norms certain general rules define the broad rights and duties of human agents in interaction. This transition from values to norms *restricts the possible situational applications* of values as such. Property law, for instance, although it might favor the producer at the expense of other economic agents, limits the broadest interpretation of the value of "free enterprise." Broadly interpreted, the value could include piracy, use of duress, neglect of the interests of third parties, etc., in the pursuit of profits.[1] Property norms allow certain kinds of interactions and rule

[1] These normative restrictions of law received classic definition in E. Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (Glencoe, Ill., 1949), especially Ch. 7.