Comparative Social Movements*

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IN THE LAST DECADE the dominant comparative perspective on social movements has been strongly challenged by an alternative perspective. Greatly simplifying, I refer to the former as the social-integration paradigm and to the latter as the resource-mobilization paradigm. The first section of this paper will identify the key concepts and assumptions of the social-integration paradigm and will cite representative research. The second section will proceed along similar lines, but will focus on theory and research within the resource-mobilization paradigm. I shall conclude each of these sections by noting some of the general criticisms that have been leveled against each theory/research group. The last section of the paper will note the development of the world-system perspective and will sketch its applications to the comparative study of social movements.

Before proceeding, several caveats are in order. My focus is on substantive, not methodological issues. A useful attempt to discuss some methodological problems in the comparative study of social movements may be found in the work of Snyder (1979). My review deals with literature regarding the relations between societal-level structures and processes and the rise of different kinds of social movements. Other avenues of research are ignored; for example, there is no mention of studies that seek to identify the personality or social characteristics that differentiate social-movement participants from non-participants (e.g., Wilson and Zurcher 1976; Keniston 1971) and there are no attempts to explain the interactional processes that characterize the formation of social movements (e.g., McPhail and Miller 1973; Turner 1970). And, although some of the most systematic research on social movements has examined the relation between the organization and the outcome of social movements (Gamson 1975; McCarthy and Zald 1977) this literature is not dealt with except insofar as it illuminates issues taken up in cross-national research on social movements.

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These restrictions narrow the scope of this review but the comparative literature itself is too vast and too complex to allow doing justice in a short paper to all the significant developments in theory and research. Less restricted reviews of the literature on social movements may be found in Gusfield (1969), Heberle (1969), and Marx and Wood (1975); less restricted examples of ongoing research on social movements may be found in Kriesberg (1978, 1979, 1980) and in Zald and McCarthy (1979).

Despite these restrictions some studies cited in this review may fall outside the boundaries of some definitional criteria regarding what common factors differentiate social movements from other social processes. While it is clear that all social movements involve collective action that promotes social change in accordance with some set of common interests and/or values, there is little consensus as to the importance of conscious volition on the part of participants or the level of formal organization that collective action must embody. I assume that not all carefully planned social movements materialize and not all indisputably observable social movements followed from clearly designed blueprints. Whether the interests and/or values are articulated prior to or after collective action has taken place is irrelevant in my judgment. It therefore seems to me fruitless to attempt to determine whether specific events constitute social movements independent of a careful assessment of the historical antecedents and consequences of these events. Obviously I cannot offer well-grounded justifications for all the events referred to in this paper. But I proceed from the premise that there can be much variation in both the level of awareness of social movement participants and the extent to which social movement processes are well-organized. What social movements have in common is no more than social change-oriented collective action roughly corresponding to discernible common interests and/or values.

Social Integration: Social-Psychological and Systemic Perspectives

The cornerstone of the social-integration paradigm is the conceptualization of society and other social subunits as more or less integrated systems with a core of common values serving as the moral glue. Rapid, massive, and/or uneven social institutional changes threaten the moral integration of society. These changes strain the system as a whole and at the same time provide structural sources or opportunities for collective action. The collective action may be explicitly anti-systemic (such as social revolutions) or reformist, or it may be a revitalization movement with a millennial character.1 Participants in social movements are likely to come from the social groups that have been most deprived and frustrated, either in absolute terms or relative to their expecta-

1 Within this and other perspectives, it is recognized that a social movement may be both millennial and revolutionary; that is, religious revitalizations may evolve into political rebellions (Worsley 1968).