

**COLLECTIVE  
BEHAVIOR  
AND SOCIAL  
MOVEMENTS**  
process  
and structure

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## PREFACE

Our goal in this text is to expose students to some of the major ideas and issues in the study of collective behavior and social movements and to note their common features and how they have evolved. While the study of collective behavior does not generally rest on the shoulders of giants, it is supported by the steady scaffolding of four decades of careful research and thought. Because selective illustration, not comprehensiveness, is our means of achieving our goal, we do not summarize these four decades of work. Instead, we draw on ideas and studies that we have found useful for making sense of the emergent phenomena defined as collective behavior. The momentous events involving the breakup of the former Soviet Union and the changes in Eastern Europe provided timely examples as well.

The field of collective behavior is rich and diverse. Our intention is to clarify and sort out some of this diversity through the way the book is organized. The first chapter provides a general overview of what collective behavior is and its relation to culture. In the second chapter, we consider collective behavior processes such as rumor and patterns of influence, which may occur regardless of the type of behavior. We then devote Chapter 3 to two forms: fads and disaster behavior. Chapters 4 and 5 consider the form of social movements, first in their emergent state, then as mature movements. The final chapter considers two main issues: first, why we should care about collective behavior, and second what the salient issues for collective behavior are likely to be in the future. And for those students interested in pursuing the area in greater depth, a wealth of empirical and theoretical studies will be found in the bibliography.

In recent decades, those working in the field of collective behavior (particularly researchers in the United States influenced by models of rational behavior from economics) have stressed the supposed differences between collective behavior and social movements. Many texts and courses now treat these two phenomena

separately—too separately in our view. The period following the 1960s saw an emphasis on their differences and attempts to establish a clear dichotomy between supposedly spontaneous forms of collective behavior and rational and organized social movements. Emergence, cultural elements, and subjective meanings received less attention as emphasis was placed on organizational factors. Without denying the obvious differences between social movements and collective behavior, we think a strong case can be made for considering them within the same broad framework, and we have done so.

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