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Collective action and discourse

Ideology and frames

Framing processes, as discussed in the recent literature on social movements (Snow *et al.* 1986; Snow and Benford 1988, 1992; Benford 1993; see also Gamson 1992b) are part of the symbolic production of a social movement. The literature on frames contributes to a better understanding of how actors define their action but it tends to forget the 'ideological' aspect of such a definition. As a relational process, framing activity is related to the particular position of the actor in the social field and carries with itself the partiality, plurality and tensions of that position. Frames are to be defined as the discursive representation of collective action organized according to the position of the actor in the field, and they must be located within a theory of ideology. Even after Mannheim (Mannheim 1960; see also Shils 1968; Manning 1980), sociological thought is still a prisoner to its dualistic inheritance, which considers symbolic production either as a transparent expression of beliefs and values or as a pure reflex of material interests. Recent advances in theory (for a synthesis, see Thompson 1984, 1990; Wuthnow *et al.* 1984, Wuthnow 1987, 1989; Swidler 1986, 1995; Billig 1991, 1992; Billig *et al.* 1988) have contributed to a new awareness of the complexity of cultural and symbolic levels in individual and collective action.

Ideology is a key analytical level for the understanding of social movements and should include the framing activities as part of the representational system of the actor. The way in which the actors represent their own actions is not a simple reflection of more profound mechanisms (economic constraints or unconscious psychological motivations, for example), but it carries the very meaning of action, although this meaning is removed from the system of social relationships of which it is a part. Ideology can neither be written off as false conscience, simply mystifying real social

relationships, nor redeemed as the transparent representation of shared social values.

Ideology is a set of symbolic frames which collective actors use to represent their own actions to themselves and to others within a system of social relationships. Such symbolic production is a constituent part of these relationships, but at the same time the actor tends to separate it from the system of which it is a part, turning it to the defence of her/his own particular interests. Hence the interweaving of truth and falsehood that characterizes ideology: it is geared to the reproduction of real social relationships, but at the same time it hides and negates them. The symbolic elaboration of action 'rationalizes' social relationships according to the interests of the actor. It supplies a representation which tends to legitimate and reinforce those interests while at the same time defining the relational field of collective action. The meaning of this action, which is to be found in the system of relations of which the actor is a part, is instead identified with the particular point of view of the actor himself: the field of social relationships, which is always made up of a network of tensions and oppositions, is restructured according to the position occupied by the actor. When sociological analysis takes these representations back to the system of relationships in which they are produced, and there tries to discover the meaning of collective action, it becomes a critique of ideology. Frame analysis should therefore not be separated from a deconstruction of the ideological dimensions of the frames produced by collective actors.

What can, then, be said of the role and the form of ideology within a social movement, during its formative phase and its organizational consolidation? At the most general level, the ideology of a movement always includes, as Touraine has pointed out (Touraine 1977), a (more or less clearly articulated) definition of the actor her/himself, the identification of an adversary, and an indication of ends, goals, objectives for which to struggle. But ideology also stabilizes a set of relationships among these elements which serve on the one hand to legitimize the actor, and on the other to negate any social identity of the opponent. By declaring to be fighting for a goal which belongs to her/him, but which goes beyond her/his own immediate interests, a collective actor always tries to affirm the general legitimacy of her/his action. By at the same time indicating the opponent as the major obstacle to the attainment of such a goal or to the realization of such an objective, the collective actor negates the adversary's right to a social stature or to any form of legitimacy.

The connection between the particularism of the actor and certain general values (truth, freedom, justice, emancipation, and the like) is a key mechanism of the framing activity of a collective actor. A link of necessity

is established between the role of the actor and some kind of a totality to be reached through his action. The actor is the true interpreter of this totality, which has always positive attributes in cultural, political, or moral terms. On the other hand, the adversary is seen only as having a negative relationship to the totality: the opponent is, in fact, the very obstacle that prevents general needs from being satisfied or social goals from being attained.

In the ideology of a social movement, it is then always possible to identify, more or less explicitly, a definition of the social actor who is mobilized, of the adversary against whom the movement must struggle, and of the collective objectives of the struggle. These three analytical elements are combined in a complex system of representations that defines the position of the collective actor with respect to the opponent and the collective goals in the following ways: (a) the definition of the social group in whose name actions are undertaken determines the limits of collective identity and the legitimacy of the movement; (b) the undesirable situation which has given rise to the need for collective action is attributed to an illegitimate adversary, usually identified in nonsocial terms; (c) objectives, or desirable goals for which it is necessary to fight, exist for society as a whole; (d) there is a positive relationship between the actor and the general goals of the society, and therefore the actions of the movement go beyond the particular interests of the actor; (e) the adversary is seen as an obstacle to the general goals of the society; and (f) there is thus an irreconcilable opposition between the actor and the adversary.

These constituent elements of the ideology of a social movement take on different cultural contents and vary at different moments in the trajectory of collective action. As far as the birth of a collective actor is concerned, Alberoni (1984) has pointed out the many ways in which the fundamental experience during the *status nascendi* is framed into different ideological contents. In the formative phase, I consider that two elements characterize contents. The first is the *negation of the gap* between the ideology of a movement. The first is the *negation of the gap* between expectations and reality. The birth of a movement is marked by 'moments of madness' (Zolberg 1972), when all things seem possible, and collective enthusiasm looks forward to action, confident of a positive outcome. Ideology overcomes the inadequacy of practice: the less capacity for action the still weak and unorganized movement has, the greater will be the production of symbols. This is the moment of the fusion of the various components of a movement into a new form of solidarity, in which the expressive dimensions and emotional identification with collective goal prevail.

The second characteristic is the central role of the theme of *rebirth*.

Collective actors often make reference to a 'mother society' or to a golden age, temporarily rewriting the chronicle of the group's infancy. The ideology of rebirth, of a return to an atemporal past, is closely bound up with the need for a totalizing legitimacy mentioned above. In the moment of its formation, the movement restructures old social allegiances in a new collective framework: the defence of an identity still defined by reference to the past is often the way through which new problems are addressed. When a new conflict arises, the only solid points of reference, the only known language, the only images to be entrusted with the new claims, belong to the past.

A return to a situation of original purity, which can assume a variety of cultural connotations in different cases, allows collective action to combine its ancestral components into a new solidarity, and restructures existing identities projecting them towards the prospect of change. A movement joins past and future, the defence of a social group with a demand for transformation. Symbols and cultural models are sought in the traditions of the group and the social movements that came before the movement now in formation. Symbolic referents and the language in which new collective demands are expressed come from the past. A new movement always views its own action as a rebirth – as a regeneration of the present through a mythic reaffirmation of the past, which in reality is the cocoon in which new needs and new conflicts are formed.

For a long time, the labour movement spoke the language of the French Revolution and dreamed of a return to the community and the solidarity of corporations. Marx's analysis, which tried to scientifically define the specific characteristics of that movement within the capitalist mode of production, was accepted only at a certain phase reached in the movement's development, and it still had to come to terms with the other components – Utopian, humanitarian, religious, solidaristic – coexisting within the movement. The evocation of a Leninist purism or Maoism on the part of many small sects coming out of the youth movement of the 1960s reflects in an analogous manner this taxing, hardening search for a backward-looking identity by a movement in its formative stage. The profound crisis of so many of the political groups stemming from 1968 does not, contrary to how many would rather have it, indicate the end of the movement or its disintegration, but rather the end of a utopian, fragmentary phase of collective action. In the late 1970s, the movements left behind the myths and symbols which had helped to bring it about in the first place; in the 1980s, the new problems and new conflicts which the movement carried with it surfaced and began to manifest their real contents.

I would call this situation of movements in formation a *regressive Utopia*.

The general characteristic of Utopia is the immediate identification between the actor and the goals of a global society. The cultural model of transformation of the society coincides, in the utopian view, with the action of a particular actor, who thus becomes the direct agent of general change. A Utopia is regressive when the transformation is equated with a return to the past and the myth of rebirth. After the nascent phase, these utopian components do not disappear, but progressively give way to an ideological elaboration which is more directly linked to the specific problems of the movement. New languages and new symbols are created to define the field and the actors of the conflict. The mobilized social group, the adversary, and the collective goals are redefined in a more pertinent manner; ideology becomes a more complex and detailed symbolic system. At the same time, the movement finds that it is faced with the necessity to assure internal integration and to improve its position *vis-à-vis* the environment.

Integration and strategy

As the movement grows, two essential aspects of ideology are thus called into play. First of all, ideology fulfils a *function of integration* with respect to the movement as a whole; this function is accomplished by a repeated proposal for values and norms, the control of deviant behaviour, and the stabilization of certain rituals. Secondly, ideology performs a *strategic function* in relation to the environment. Discursive capacity is one of the resources that can be used to reduce the costs and maximize the benefits of action. This process can take place in two ways. On the one hand, there is an effort to widen the margins within which the movement acts within the political system, in order thus to increase the scope of its possibility to exert influence. On the other hand, ideology tries to widen the movement's base and to push the groups which were previously outside the conflict to become involved in it. Both of these processes imply a complex game, in which discursive messages are sent in an effort to turn social interactions to the actor's advantage by symbolically undermining the adversary's position. In particular, one of the fundamental tasks is that of making evident the illegitimacy of the adversary, and the negative nature of its position, in the eyes of both neutral observers and potential supporters. Let us examine the integrative and strategic functions separately.

A movement is subject to strong centrifugal pressures, due to both its own internal fragmentation and the initiatives of the adversary. The need to maintain organizational unity becomes stronger as the movement is consolidated. Ideology emerges as one of the main tools which can be used to guarantee integration. The multiplicity of interests and demands which are

always to be found in an organized movement must be mediated and unified. Ideology coordinates, articulates, and makes coherent these demands, associating them with general principles. By reformulating the values and norms of the group, discursive frames solidify the collective identity and prevent internal conflicts from damaging unity (see Fine 1995). At the same time, it fixes the boundaries of belonging (see Gyerin 1983) and the criteria for the identification and punishment of those who deviate from these norms.

Nevertheless, the discursive apparatus of a movement is not a static entity: it is also influenced by tensions, and remains a field of conflict between groups and factions. The control of ideology and, more generally, the flow of information is an important leadership resource, being as it is necessary in the continuous adaptation of symbolic representations to the present state of the movement. The bottom line of the costs and benefits cannot always be directly calculated, particularly when what is in question are non-material resources. Thus ideology, enlisted to minimize costs, to facilitate the perception of rewards, to cover losses or to substitute for resources in short supply, comes to play. The relative rigidity or flexibility of the discursive frames will in turn make the adjustments more or less difficult (see Moaddel 1992).

A last aspect of the integrative function of ideology can be found in ritual practices. Every movement creates rituals which serve to consolidate its components. The adoption of linguistic or gestural codes, of costumes or ways of dressing creates traits common to those who are part of the movement. Actual ceremonies, governed by codified procedures, represent the synthesis of a shared organizational culture. These rituals, through the quasi-sacred crystallization of the norms of the group, tend to guarantee the continuity and the efficacy of ideology, in spite of the tensions at work within it.

The second fundamental need for any movement in the phase of consolidation is that to improve its position in relation to the environment. This is handled by, on the one hand, increasing the movement's influence within the political system while, on the other, simultaneously widening the base of consensus on which it can rely within the overall society. In this sense ideology has a strategic function, for it is through the articulation of the symbolic meaning of the action that the actor can increase her/his advantage over the others. In particular, this means gaining the consensus of components of other organizations, and the support of groups not directly involved in the conflict against the initiatives of the adversary.

With respect to other organizations, ideology must call forth loyalty to the general aims of the movement, while at the same time differentiating

the image and the contents of the single organization. Competition between organizations can increase the differentiation of symbolic contents, without any real corresponding conflict in practice. In a situation in which the market of potential supporters is a limited one and there are restrictive margins for action, different organizations will tend to accentuate competition on an ideological level.

As far as the adversary is concerned, ideology will tend to assign the blame for the negative situation to the initiatives of the adversary, attempting to deny the opponent of any legitimacy. Along with this, it is the positive task of ideology to attempt to improve the position of the actor *vis-à-vis* the antagonist in the eyes of a public, from whom support or favor is sought. The contrast must be symbolically articulated in such a way as to turn to the actor's advantage the unbalance of the power relationship. Ideology can be used to obtain a positive identification with the movement on the part of potential supporters and neutral observers, by deflecting all negative feedback onto the adversary. In these 'dramatic encounters' (Klapp 1965), different situations may develop with a variety of symbolic meanings, following, however, no more than a few standard scripts. In the 'victory of the hero' version, the actor makes an attempt to present her/himself as culturally or morally superior to the antagonist; this symbolic tool is often complemented by the 'vanquishing of the villain' variation in which a temporary or occasional disadvantage of the opponent is presented as a due and deserved punishment. When the actor finds her/himself in an uncomfortable or disadvantaged position, then the 'unfair tactics' or 'dirty fighting', or even the 'oppression of the weak', scenarios are used as symbolic means to rebuild a relatively even confrontation with the opponent. And, in case these efforts do not succeed, the 'defeat without dishonor' script is often the last resort to maintain or recapture the attention and support of the potential followers.

All of these symbolic scenarios framing the relationship between a movement and its opponents respond to the strategic function of ideology, which aims at widening the support base of a movement and the space within which it can act inside the political system, subverting at the same time any attempts of the adversary to maintain the legitimacy of its action. This dramaturgical role of ideology (Snow *et al.* 1981; Benford and Hunt 1992) is that of securing the actor's emergence out of every confrontation with the most favorable image possible. In the case of a positive outcome of the conflict, the situation will be symbolically articulated as the victory of the good and the righteous over arbitrary injustice. In the case of a defeat, ideology will retell the story as the battle of the weak against the powerful, with

special attention to any unfair tactics. In either case, ideology intervenes on behalf of the actor in an attempt to increase the consensus mobilization and to symbolically redefine the field to its advantage.

It should not be forgotten that these mechanisms also operate, with even greater efficacy, in the area of social control. The attempt to discredit collective forms of protest or to turn public resentment against a movement, thus legitimizing repression, is one of the essential components of the framing activity of the ruling groups. Control over the flow of information and the media guarantees a structural advantage to the powers that be; in social conflict, as in any contention for public consensus, the game is never entirely open and the positions are not those of parity.

The ambivalence of collective frames

The discursive frames of collective action are produced by internal negotiations and conflicts: individuals and groups within a movement construct them, laboriously adjusting the different orientations that express multiple and contrasting requirements of a collective field. But this deep constructive activity of a collective actor is not visible, particularly since some unity and effectiveness must be maintained over time. Ideological patterns and leadership functions are always at work in an attempt to give a durable and predictable order to the continuously negotiated process. One of the main tasks falling on the part of the leaders is precisely that of producing those frames that reinforce the unity and improve the effectiveness of the collective actor.
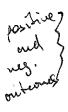
Ideological dimensions expressed in framing processes are therefore necessarily ambivalent because, on the one hand, they express the actual meaning and goals of collective action, but, on the other, they cover and hide the plurality of orientations and tensions corresponding to the different components of the movement. Leaders claim a unity that they seldom achieve and tend to present the movement as homogeneous and coherent as possible.

The frames produced by a collective actor are ambivalent also in another, even more important respect. The very idea of a social conflict implies the opposition of two actors struggling for the same resources, symbolic or material, which they consider valuable. The adversaries share the same field of action but they interpret it in opposing ways, as part of the effort of trying to submit it to their own control. The actor identifies her/himself with the entire field, while denying any legitimacy and role to the opponent. Conflict is a social relationship, but the actors tend to reify it: each pole of the opposition wants to erase the other, labelling it in non-social terms. A

relational field, constructed by conflicting orientations, is thus reduced to the particularism of a single actor.

The ideology of a movement carries with it this ambivalence because it is an interpretation of a social field; but it is also a misinterpretation, guided by the particularism of the actor. It at once reveals and covers what is at stake in a conflict. The task of sociological analysis is precisely to discover the field behind the actors' particularistic frames and to reveal the internal tensions of the frames themselves.

Both movements and their opponents speak the same language; they define a common field from opposite poles. In fact, they both address the same basic dilemmas of social life in a planetary world, problems which have no solutions and which define the cultural and social boundaries of complexity. They constitute polarities which represent impossible choices, inasmuch as the roots of the tension between them are located at the core of a highly differentiated system. They bring forth the problems which society cannot but try to solve, but whose solution only transfers the uncertainty elsewhere. Society copes with the situation by making decisions, attempting thereby to reduce uncertainty within the range of possible action. But a decision, which thus would permit action, is also an attempt at escape, a denial and cover-up of the dilemmas implicit in the decision itself. A decision may be tantamount to avoidance of a tension which has become unbearable, a means for neither seeing nor speaking of such dilemmas.

Both movement activists and ruling groups deal with these dilemmas, framing them in opposite ways while denying any truth to the opponent's frames. They also tend to hide their internal plurality. Sociological analysis can detect the ambivalence of these discourses and recognize a conflictual field common to the adversaries. The enormous expansion of individual capacities and room for choice contrasts with the parallel tendency for creation of capillary systems of behavioural manipulation; the fact that social systems have extended their power of action beyond the boundaries known to any society of the past bears witness to the unprecedented capacity of contemporary societies to consciously produce themselves to the extreme measure of potential self-destruction; the tendency to continuously expand the capacity of human systems to intervene even in their very own development runs counter to the need to respond to the limits given in internal and external nature; the irreversible accumulation of scientific knowledge is governed by the administrative rationality of organizational and political apparatuses, whose choices are reversible; inclusion in the world culture tends toward a levelling of cultural differences, and resistance to the pressures towards homogeneity produces self-

exclusion or marginalization – contemporary movements deal with all these dilemmas. They challenge the technocratic power on a symbolic ground, opposing to its instrumental rationality cultural codes which reverse the logic of the dominant techno-scientific, political, and industrial-economic apparatuses: they assert the need for autonomy and meaning, call for awareness of the limits of human action, urge for the search for a new scientific paradigm, alert for the respect due to the marginalia of human cultures. Revealing the shadowy side of the technological power, movements allow society to take responsibility for its own action.

But when producing these challenging codes, movements also frame the dilemmas just discussed, in accordance with their particular standpoint: they reject the field in which they partake in the shared trust in science, rationalization, and efficiency. The affirmative and negative side of ideology, the revealing and the covering function, are simultaneously present: ambivalence marks the consciousness of collective actors and reminds us that social action is never transparent.

Reversing the symbolic order

An analysis of the ideological dimensions of collective action is made today more difficult by the fact that societal processes are increasingly located at the symbolic level (Klapp 1969, 1991; Moscovici 1993). The struggle of contemporary movements is aimed at the foundations of power in complex societies, at its more extreme claim to impose the codes governing our relation with the world. The importance of this endeavour becomes central if one acknowledges that the act of *nomination* is a crucial factor in the construction of social life. And that act becomes even more crucial in a society in which the distinction between the real and its representation has all but disappeared. Contemporary movements strive to reappropriate the capacity to name through the elaboration of codes and languages designed to define reality, in the twofold sense of constituting it symbolically and of regaining it, thereby escaping from the predominant forms of representation.

The movements have waged a critical struggle against the representation of the world served up by the dominant models, denying their claim to uniqueness and challenging the symbolic constitution of politics and culture; they have refused the predominant communicative codes and they have replaced them with sounds, idioms, recognition signals that break the language of technical rationality (Melucci 1985). Through social practices that are not solely the object of thought but lived experiences, movements have introduced a breakdown in the norms of perception and production

of reality, from which different ways of addressing things and of imagining them, new languages and new scriptures struggle to emerge. They have prompted the redefinition of Nature itself in her rhythms, spaces, odours, and colours, beyond those inscribed in the hegemonic codes of scientific and technological discourse.

The transformation of codes is equally substantial when they stress the spiritual dimension of human experience, when they attempt to modify the symbolic relationship with the world – which is not what one is induced to perceive by the most diffuse criteria of codification. Hence derives the impossibility of sharing the dominant social language, and the destructuring of meaning which opens up the way for other modalities of experience beyond instrumental rationality and which affects the forms of knowledge themselves. One finds an endeavour to subvert shared criteria of codification, the obligatory set of signs with which the social order seeks to impose a reality which is solely its own. Though easily incorporated into the market, these languages remain a powerful challenge to the functional neutrality of the dominant discourse. Contrary to the case of relationships based on material strength or physical power, in which those in possession of the greatest share of resources hold sway, here the relationship hinges on the symbolic capacity to reverse meaning to demonstrate the arbitrariness of the power and its domination. And it is enough to structure reality using different words for the power monopoly over reality to crumble.

In the neutralized scenario of signs, with the fragmentation of identities and the breakdown of every unitary symbolic principle, individuals and groups are propelled into an anguished state of uncertainty. Contemporary movements resist the destructuring of the symbolic universe, and *symbolic reintegration* is one of the terrains on which they pit themselves most forcefully against established power. In complex societies the incoherent flux of the signs entail the legitimation of a rationality which feeds upon itself and upon its operational results. We witness the risk of a radical draining and deprivation of the individual's symbolic life, the loss of those symbolic functions which govern the social expression of desire and imagination and their integration into the social texture. In movements, symbolic reintegration patterns itself as an attempt to heal this breach, and the adoption of alternative codes constitutes a first step towards that end. If it is possible to remake the world by adopting new ways to nominate, perceive, and imagine reality, it may once again become possible – at a remove from the imperatives of operational functionality – to recompose the various parts of the self. This objective is pursued by contemporary movements in a variety of ways but always by disputing the very meaning of social production. Movements orient their strategies towards the recovery of the dimensions

of symbolic existence eradicated by the operational model of technical rationality: Resistance to instrumental investment and to deferred satisfaction of relational and affective needs, the recovery of fantasy and play, the symbolic relationship between humankind and the environment, the revival of the mind/body relationship.

The movements' challenge is also evident in the *non-negotiability* of their goals. Their marked indifference towards the political does not stem from an inability to formulate demands designed to pass through the filters of the system, but rather from a shift in the arena of confrontation. The struggle no longer centres on the definition of the terms of exchange acceptable to both parties as in every political strategy. They are, instead, simply ignored and the action is carried forward elsewhere: at the level not of real efficacy but of symbolic efficacy. The radical nature of the challenge derives precisely from that which evades negotiation; not because collective actors refuse to compromise with power – indeed, they have shown proneness to a reckless pragmatism in their dealings with the political institutions – but inasmuch as they address forms of symbolic relation non reducible to any instrumental logic.

Finally, movements' action is geared primarily to *offering*. To offer instead of asking represents another breakdown in the rules of the game, another challenge whose impact is incomprehensible on the basis of strategic and instrumental logic but perfectly justifies itself on the basis of symbolic logic. At the symbolic level, domination is accomplished when the possibility of the reversion of the gift into the countergift is successfully precluded (Baudrillard 1993). It is the unilateral power of giving, of generating and providing cultural models which constantly reproduces the predominance of the apparatuses in complex societies. Movements attempt to extricate themselves from this asymmetry, with the offer of alternative models which the system itself cannot replicate, because they are non-negotiable. Hence, movements tend to lose their claimant thrust and develop forms of action aimed at the autonomous and gratuitous production of cultural models not governed by cost-benefit calculations but by symbolic waste.

The significance assumed by *forms* of action in movements gives us a better understanding of the decline in the importance of general ideological messages. Hence derives the transfer of conflict potentiality from contents to the modalities of symbolic relation, or to the medium. The means of communication is not the support for the content communicated; on the contrary, it is the latter which serves to support the means. And it is here, at the level of codes, that movements distance themselves most radically from the prevailing norms. The strategic use of the media is to be found in

all contemporary movements: music, bodily signals and clothing, radios and images, theatre and art, communication networks and vitual reality are all media through which the mental, sensory, and emotional perception of the world is altered and tries to evade the codification imposed by mass society. These media, of course, can be easily incorporated into the market, but new forms tend to reappear elsewhere with other actors involved.

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Forms of action

Revolutions

In this chapter I shall focus on several forms of collective action which are frequently associated with the study of social movements. The discussion of these forms should demonstrate the utility of an analytical approach to collective action which is able to differentiate levels and meanings, particularly when complex historical phenomena are considered.

Let us start with revolutions. After many classic studies (Johnson 1964; Brinton 1965; Hobsbawm 1962), writing and discussion on revolution still continues steadily. No other topic is so resistant to analysis as revolution. Apart from the affective investments and political implications that characterize it, the difficulty stems from the fact that revolution is always a global phenomenon whose analytical meanings are extremely difficult to unravel.

Evidence of this situation is provided by the wide variety of the definitions given to the term, and the equally wide variety of misunderstandings that continue to surround it (for a general introduction, see Aya 1990; De Fronzo 1991). Only twenty years ago, one of the most systematic bibliographies on the topic, published in 1976 (Blackey 1976), comprised about 2,400 titles, and since then the list has considerably increased in length (see the most recent studies by Tilly 1993 and Skockpol 1994). Nevertheless, as before the confusion of languages reigns supreme. The object of identification or rejection, a goal pursued or an event expected, a phenomenon to be observed and analysed, revolution still retains the glamour of a controversial myth and still prompts people to take sides.

It is difficult to find a coherent definition of revolution in the studies on the subject. One need to look no further than the many sociological theories and analyses of the phenomenon (Paige 1975; Foran 1994; Taylor 1988; Wood 1991) to realize that the opinions vary considerably.