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Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action. by Mark Traugott  
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outright contradictions in ideological common sense.

I found terrifically useful the concise reviews of literatures outside sociology—Billig on discursive psychology, Fine on narrative, Hank Johnston on linguistic analysis—as well as Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier's recuperation of Killian's emergent-norm approach. To be sure, the sheer profusion of conceptual vocabularies can become confusing, as the editors point out in an excellent introductory essay, and dangerous if theoretical elaboration crowds out empirical substantiation. The explicitly methodological essays strike useful cautions—Alberto Melucci against treating collective identity as a fixed object rather than as a process and product of participants' interaction, Johnston against taking as transparent the meanings apparently embodied in movement discourse, and John Lofland against theorizing movement cultures before analytically *describing* them. The methodological alternatives they propose are sophisticated, but fuller discussion of the kind of results yielded would have made the analytical payoffs clearer.

A more substantial problem lies in the volume's failure to address what might be called the relative autonomy of culture. Under what conditions do counterhegemonic voices become effective? When does oppositional culture come to *matter*? Several authors pin their analyses of the emergence of effective oppositional culture on a strikingly similar formulation. "[E]xplicit cultural ideologies emerge during 'unsettled' historical periods when such coherent systematic worldviews can powerfully influence their adherents" (Swidler, p. 34). "[D]uring certain moments of economic and political turbulence long-standing social relations become more permeable to innovations and inventions, to the challenges mounted by subordinate groups seeking redress" (Jenson, p. 108). "In the context of acute social conflict . . . subcultural havens may become oppositional or countercultural social spaces that are capable of being mobilized by movements, thus posing a direct threat to elites" (Hirsch and Fantasia, p. 157). "[I]n unsettled times and periods of crisis, mobilizing collectivities reject old cultural models and articulate new ones" (Johnston and Klandermans, p. 8). The

argument for culture is a weak rather than strong one—cultural challenge is possible and matters when social, political, and economic institutions have become unstable. But doesn't that argue for attention to structural conditions rather than to culture? Is there ever a time when societies are thoroughly stable? Can't social movements themselves contribute to destabilizing the institutional logics that inform everyday life?

Questions about the autonomy and boundaries of the "cultural" have animated debates within the sociology of culture for the last decade. We needn't make the sociology of social movements simply a subset of that field to fully address such questions. Instead, we need further theoretical specification and more empirical work, especially comparative, to get at the circumstances in which culture inspires, impedes, and shapes collective action, and with what effect.

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*Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, edited by Mark Traugott. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994. 250 pp. \$28.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-8223-1527-0. \$13.95 paper. ISBN: 0-8223-1546-7.

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Let me confess, at the outset, that I had my doubts about this book. Except for the chapters by Doug McAdam and Marc Steinberg, all of the essays had appeared previously in two issues of *Social Science History*, and two of the eight chapters rehash earlier work by the authors. Second, just glancing at the table of contents made me want to title my review "Where the Boys Are." A number of women scholars—including Carol Mueller, Pam Oliver, Myra Ferree, Suzanne Staggenborg, Barbara Ryan, Nancy Whittier, Anne Costain, Leila Rupp, and myself—have undertaken important research documenting the significance of tactical repertoires and protest cycles for understanding women's collective action. Yet not a single woman was included in the conference where these papers were read or wrote a chapter for this volume. Beginning this book with such

strong misgivings, I was surprised to discover that it makes an important contribution.

If there are two ideas that together have been most useful for explaining what Traugott (p. 7) characterizes as the “surprisingly orderly pattern that often governs even the most disorderly of acts,” they are the concepts of collection action repertoires and protest cycles. Charles Tilly formulated the notion of repertoires to emphasize both the continuity that collective action exhibits over time and the fundamental changes that occur in the forms of protest over longer historical intervals. His main body of evidence comes from the observation that in Great Britain the nature and style of protest changed dramatically between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with what we now think of as the national social movement coming to prevail in the nineteenth century. Prior to that time, protest tended to be confined to a single community and to be directed against a specific situation or actor that was the object of a group’s claims. The prevailing forms of conflict during the eighteenth century included seizures of grain or food riots, tollgate attacks, disruptions of festivals or ceremonies, group hunting on forbidden territory, invasions of land, destruction of property, and shaming routines. By the nineteenth century, these types of protest had all but disappeared and given way to less direct forms of collective action, namely, demonstrations, strikes, rallies, and public meetings that span several localities and challenge national authorities in the name of a deprived or excluded group.

Sidney Tarrow contends that if we consider the history of collective action solely from the perspective of repertoires, we miss those great “moments of madness” where expanded political opportunities spawn new tactics and challenging groups. Tarrow calls for the study of protest cycles, basing his formulation on a period of mass mobilization and protest in Italy from 1965 through 1974. Tarrow’s conceptualization of protest cycles has guided the work of numerous scholars who have been interested in explaining the 1960s and ’70s upsurge of activism in the United States and its subsequent decline. By comparison, Tilly’s notion of collective action repertoires, as he laments in his own essay in this volume, has had little impact on

our understanding of the way that the history of particular forms of contention influence subsequent social movements.

This is the reason that I find this volume particularly useful. It brings together an interesting set of papers on vastly different cases of collective action, both geographically and historically, to highlight the usefulness of these two concepts and the relationship between them. In addition to the landmark essays by Charles Tilly on Great Britain and Sidney Tarrow on Italy, an essay by Mark Traugott describes the use of barricades in sixteenth-century France to explore the limits of the repertoire construct. Focusing on the protest of nineteenth-century silk weavers in London leads Marc W. Steinberg in another chapter to call for the extension of the repertoire notion to include the discursive strategies and framing discourses the workers used to legitimate their claims. James W. White explores the ebb and flow of protest in early modern Japan, and Charles D. Brockett analyzes violent state repression against mass political activity in Central America in the 1970s and 1980s, demonstrating that the protest-cycle model resolves the paradoxical relationship between repression and mobilization. The book concludes with two first-rate chapters by Craig Calhoun and Doug McAdam. Calhoun analyzes a broad range of nineteenth-century American movements to correct the assumption, advanced by European new social movement theorists, that contemporary identity-based movements represent an entirely new repertoire. Finally, McAdam presents a model of reform cycles that emphasizes the continuities that often link different phases of the same movement and highlights the unacknowledged origins of social movements in the tactics and ideas of earlier “movement families.”

As different as these essays are, they have one thing in common. They locate the roots of social protest in broad social change processes that destabilize existing power relations and increase the leverage of challenging groups. In contrast to theorists who have viewed social movements as a collective response to deprivation, to the availability of resources, or to the contradictions of late capitalist society, these writers are political-process theorists who view external structural and cultural processes as key to

understanding the strategies and cycles of social protest. This volume, which makes accessible in one place a set of readings that demonstrate the complementarity and centrality of the concepts of repertoires and cycles for the political-process model, deserves to be read by scholars and students of social movements, politics, and history.

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*The Union Makes Us Strong: Radical Unionism on the San Francisco Waterfront*, by **David Wellman**. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 364 pp. \$59.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-521-45005-5.

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Few students of class consciousness pay much attention to union-management grievance hearings. In fact, conventional academic wisdom holds that the grievance machinery is largely an obstacle to the expression of class interests. The right to grieve, so the argument runs, was a sop thrown to workers in the wake of the post-World War II bargain that they struck with employers: Unions would relinquish all claims to control over production and in return would be assured a place at the collective-bargaining table where they could negotiate higher wages and better fringe benefits and air their grievances. This bargain ensured that American trade unionism would never amount to more than simple business unionism.

David Wellman's book challenges this conventional wisdom. Focusing on the case of Local 10 in San Francisco of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), he points out that the collective bargaining agreements that ostensibly ceded control of the West Coast ports to employers actually just shifted the terrain of conflict from the work site to the conference table. The contract, notwithstanding its statements of managerial prerogatives, is as much a weapon in the hands of this local as is the job action.

Wellman makes his argument by scrutinizing both contract negotiations and the disputes that are aired in Labor Relations Committee (LRC) meetings. LRC meetings are where employers and workers trade

grievances; most accounts of grievance procedures emphasize their role in trivializing workers' complaints and in enforcing worker compliance with the contract. Wellman sees matters differently, however. He shows, for example, how seemingly arcane disputes over minor points of jurisdiction, such as the rigging of gear by the ship's crew rather than by longshoremen, actually indicate a profound disagreement over how work should proceed. On occasion, longshoremen may refuse to "work as directed," citing violations of the chain of command as specified in the contract. He argues convincingly that the contract is itself contested terrain, with each side struggling to impose its reading of the contract on the other.

The central concept in his analysis is "defensible disobedience." For longshoremen, defensible disobedience means taking a document, the collective-bargaining agreement, which was designed to legitimate managerial authority, and using it against that authority. For Wellman, defensible disobedience is more than a question of union tactics or occupational self-interest, however—it represents an "implicit critique of capitalist authority" and a challenge to "capital's right to rule" (p. 308). It is class-struggle unionism. The question that Wellman raises, as he concludes his analysis, is whether this brand of class-conscious unionism is to be found in other industries as well. Could it be, he wonders, that in our search for worker militancy in socialist politics, we have been too quick to dismiss grievance procedures and union-management agreements as inherently reactionary?

I find this an interesting question, but I am less persuaded by the argument that precedes it. The difficulty lies in figuring out how typical the ILWU and San Francisco longshoremen are of other unions and workers. As Wellman points out, there are a number of factors that make West Coast longshoremen unusual, and perhaps unique: their ethos of freewheeling, participatory union democracy, which, among other things, dictates that local officers must relinquish their offices after serving two consecutive terms; the rotational dispatch, which not only makes longshoremen employees of the industry as a whole rather than of individual employers, but also equalizes access to work opportunities; and, finally, the extraordinary