

Nonviolent Strategy, Tactics, and Collective Identity



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Nonviolent Strategy, Tactics, and Collective Identity

- Religion
- Nationalism
- Youth
- Ethnicity
- Gender



Game Plan

- The sociological study of social movements, particularly with respect to culture, identities, and tactical repertoires
- Understanding WHAT movement activists do, and HOW they do it (tactics), is important.
- Some of the leverage behind nonviolent strategy and tactics is culturally-based and is related to collective identities.

Collective Identity

- A sense of 'we-ness' that derives or emerges from shared cognitions and beliefs. An individual's sense of connection with a broader group or community.
- Other closely related concepts:
 - Solidarity
 - Commitment
 - Consciousness
 - Ideology
 - Emotions
 - Self



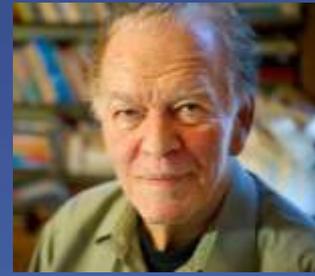
Collective Identity & Social Movement Theory

- The distinction between individual and collective identity is never complete.
 - “Framing” work is required to “align” personal and collective identities.
- Movement participation to repair “spoiled” identities among those with marginalized statuses.
- New Social Movement Theory has identified a trend among modern movements to form around identities instead of class.

Collective Identity

- “Boundary formation” = the construction of collective identities by framing *both* SMOs and opponents’ in relation to one another.

Nonviolent Methods



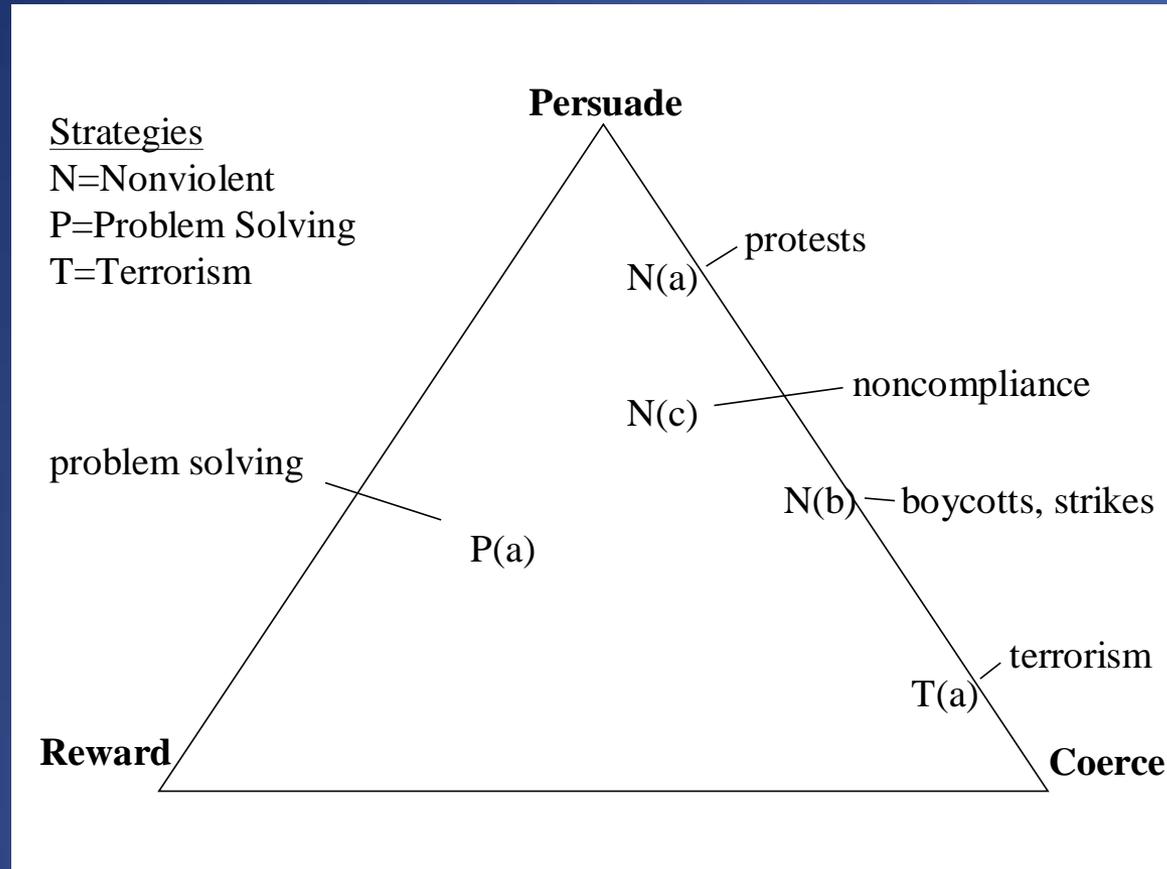
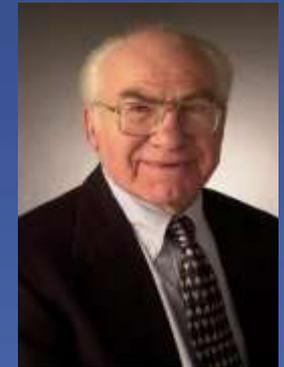
Protest & Persuasion (symbolic)	Noncooperation (disobedience)	Intervention (takes initiative)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• public speeches• petitions• flags, posters• newspapers, pamphlets• mock funerals• parades• vigils• picketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• boycotts• refusal taxes• slowdown strike• sit-down strike• resigning posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• nonviolent invasion• hunger strike• sit-ins• overload facilities• nonviolent sabotage

Tactical Repertoires

- SMOs tend to select from stable sets of tactics or “repertoires of contention”
 - have not fully addressed the *wide array* of tactics
 - or the *relational implications* of targeting others in fields of contention

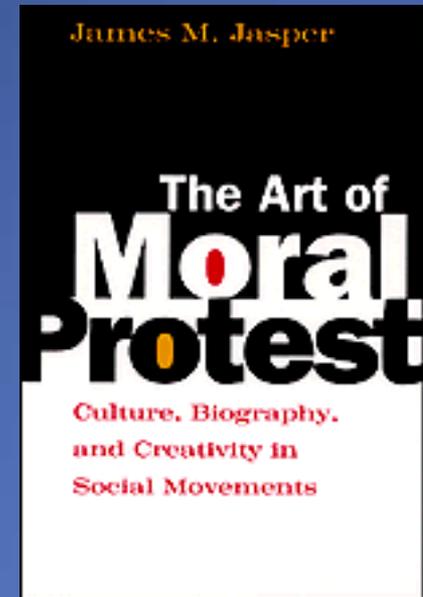


Conflict Methods and Tactics



Repertoires, Conflict, and Culture

- “Strategic choices depend so much on the interactions between various players that we need a ‘conflict’ lens to relate social movements to the broader strategic field.” – Jasper 1997, (p. 296)
- “Artful strategies”: Strategic and tactical choices are conditioned by cultural environments, but they are also often creative and effective acts developed by those who can proficiently interpret their cultural and political scene.



Symbols and Choreography



Serbia



Ukraine



Czechoslovakia



Philip and Daniel Bergan

United States



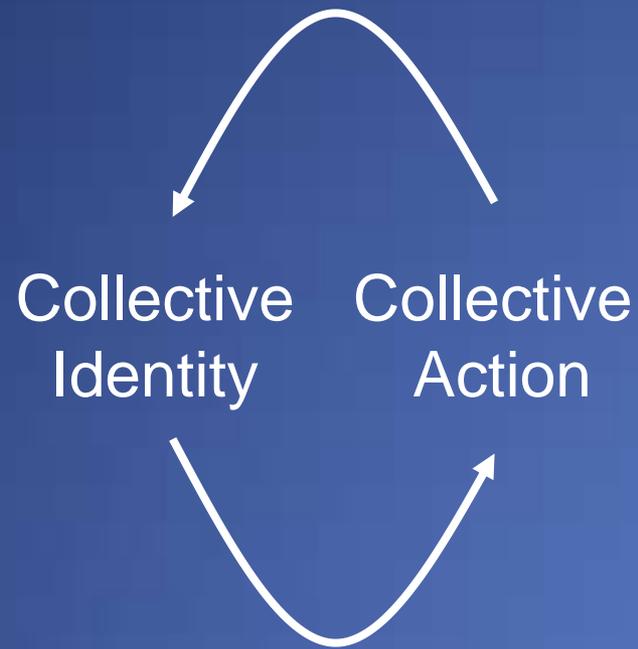
Collective Identity Shaping Tactical Choices

- “Taste in tactics” (Jasper 1997)
- Movement organizations are inclined to adopt tactics that express or reflect their shared identity, beliefs, and experience
 - “Tactics are rarely, if ever, neutral means about which protestors do not care. Tactics represent important routines, emotionally and morally salient in these people’s lives. Just as their ideologies do, their activities express protestors’ political identities and moral visions. To participate in NRC [Nuclear Regulatory Commission] hearings or to block traffic in the street outside is to say different things about one’s personal identity, a movement’s identity, attitudes toward governmental authority, and much else” (p. 237).

Collective Identity Shaping Tactical Choice

- Plowshares activists developed dramatic tactics, such as pouring blood on missiles, that were both expressive of their theological beliefs and designed to challenge both the state and the Catholic church hierarchy. (Nepstad 2004)





Tactics Shaping Collective Identity

- Some tactics are adopted because they are particularly suited to boundary formation and building collective identity
- At critical moments of collective action, identities can be renewed or transformed.



Reconciling Identity and Tactics

- Any given tactical choice is likely to offer a better “fit” for some SMOs or individuals than for others.
- External factors, such as political opportunity and countermoves by opponents, can produce **strategic imperatives** that recommend some tactics over others.



Reconciling Identity and Tactics

Internal debate over reconciling collective identity with innovative tactics can serve to

1. create the bounded tactical repertoires that sociologists have observed
2. instigate shifts in the content of collective identities to incorporate new forms of collective action
3. lead to contention within social movement organizations

Cultural Preparation



- Importance of identities for mobilization
- “Cultural preparation” or
 - “A confusing situation, where old images no longer work, opens people to new, more adequate images of the world. Cultural preparation is a stage when agitators use these images to explain, to discuss, and to ask questions. People begin in this stage to achieve a common identity strong enough to support them in the struggle.” (p. 50)
- Build oppositional consciousness

Identity, Tactics, and Nonviolent Struggle

- Tactical choices that resonate with prevailing identities
- Tactical buy-in via framing
- “Casting off fear”
- Nonviolent discipline
 - Resorting to violence risks:
 - Reduced participation in resistance
 - Increased repression
 - Higher casualties
 - Increased solidarity within the opponent group
 - Enhanced morale among the opponents’ troops and police while conducting repression
 - Loss by the resisters of the ‘moral high ground,’
 - Reduced or lost international sympathy and support (p. 488-89).



Identity, Tactics, and Nonviolent Struggle

- Undermine solidarity in opponents' camps by appealing to shared identity.
- Use the ethical systems with which opponents identify in a form of cultural jiu-jitsu.



Notes and Further Considerations

- Not a reliance on principled nonviolence
- Steger, Manfred B. 2000. *Gandhi's Dilemma : Nonviolent Principles and Nationalist Power*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- “The collective identity appropriate to a revolutionary movement for world community is difficult to label. King used the term ‘world consciousness’; others have used ‘humanism’ to suggest that we are all part of the same overarching collective which transcends sectional loyalties such as class and nationality” (Lakey 1973, p. 52).

Summary

- Nonviolent struggle takes place on a cultural landscape.
- Power of identity and culture
- Artful nonviolent strategic action

- **Smithey, Lee A. 2009. "Social Movement Strategy, Tactics, and Collective Identity." *Sociology Compass* 3:658-671.**

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