BETWEEN OLD AND NEW: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND CULTURAL CHANGE*

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ABSTRACT
Social movement actors often challenge authorities on behalf of people whose needs and interests are not addressed. To do this, they must accomplish a contradictory task. They must frame their challenges in interpretive packages that are contrary to the dominant culture while at the same time struggle to make these contrary views part of the dominant culture. How do movement actors succeed in this seemingly impossible task? Our review of cultural studies of social movements points to two strategies: (1) linking controversial topics like abortion with generally accepted and valued notions like basic rights; (2) associating their interpretive package, such as protecting the ecology, with an existing theme, such as harmony with nature, that as an alternative cultural context may legitimate their package. We use a case study, the abolitionist movement in Great Britain, to test these propositions. The case material confirms their utility, but also illustrates a third strategy: relating the package to cultural themes that are becoming dominant. The role the changing cultural context has in producing new meanings is indicated. The findings lead to a discussion about the role of movement actors, the cultural context, and the changes therein in the production of meaning.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern social movement embodies, in the words of Tilly (1982: 26), the sustained challenge of authority. Powerholders are challenged by or on behalf of people without enough power to see that their needs and interests are directly addressed; movements concern the dynamics of challengers vs. authorities. Social movements are a feature of modern life that developed as a new format for collective action during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Tilly 1982: 26). British citizens in that period, for instance, acted on behalf of the outsiders par excellence, black slaves from West Africa. At the same time, authorities were challenged to redress other wrongs such as the exclusion of important parts of the middle class from politics. As the abundant literature on social movements shows, the powerholders in Britain and other countries since were challenged many times on behalf of excluded groups.

The modern social movement is not only a structural phenomenon - a complex network of actors and interactions (Tilly 1993: 5) - but a cultural phenomenon as well. The actors who organize a social movement, the social movement organizations (SMOs), have to make clear their aims. They have to put into words what is wrong in society (a diagnosis), how this wrong should be ameliorated (a prognosis), and what people have to do to bring the needed changes about (motivation). They do so in specific narratives or interpretive packages directed at authorities, movement participants, supporters, and at the public at large (Gamson 1988; Snow and Benford 1988; Fine 1995). Social movement actors give meaning to events, situations, and social practices; they function as signifying agents alongside other actors like media and government agencies (Snow and Benford 1992: 136).

Interest in the cultural side of social movements has been surging in recent years. This rise in attention has been one-sided, though, as the scholars who study social movements and culture focus almost exclusively on internal movement processes. Most of them quite naturally study internal dynamics such as mobilization processes, the forming of collective identities, or the creation of specific movement cultures (Williams 1995: 125).[1] Moreover, when these scholars consider the external cultural effects of social movements at all, cultural changes in most cases are taken for granted and seen as proceeding almost automatically from the meaning-producing activities of movements. See, for example, Johnston and Klandermans: ". . . social movements are shaped by culture and at the same time themselves form and transform culture." (1995: 20).

The external cultural dimension of movements (Williams 1995: 125) needs, however, attention in its own right. Outcomes of movement actions depend, viz., on the way movement actors use culture as a tool kit or a pool of resources in political discourses (Swidler 1986; Williams 1995). As Williams points out, the decision whether or not to use such resources--in his case the rhetoric of the public good--may make a difference. In his words, "The rhetorical struggle is part of all public politics; a vision of the good society is a useful rhetorical tool in public politics" (1995: 139). Other studies (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; d'Anjou 1996) point to other relevant aspects of cultural objects. They show that whether or not interpretive packages are culturally resonant or credible not only shapes public discourses but may also affect the way people view movement issues. In this article, we contend that cultural processes within movements differ from cultural processes in the larger society, and that these differences are large enough to merit a different approach to the internal and the external side of social movements.

One of the central problems that SMOs confront in their struggle is a contradiction inherent in their meaning-giving activities. The interpretive packages they put forward represent views that are by definition against the grain, as they concern the cause of the socially marginalized. Social movement actors cannot but challenge dominant and self-evident views, particularly the hegemonic worldviews of the authorities (Harding 1984). At the same time, these interpretive packages have to sound "natural and familiar" to the people addressed (Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 5). Packages have to resonate with current cultural narrations to be effective in mobilizing support. Snow and Benford call this "narrative fidelity" (1988, also Gamson 1988). They also must be resonant or culturally credible because otherwise they would not convince authorities or the general public that their diagnosis is accurate and the proposed changes are needed (d'Anjou 1996). Interpretive packages must thus be formulated in culturally dominant notions and terms.

Culturally, SMOs face a basic conflict. They have to devise interpretive packages that both challenge and correspond with the extant culture. How they solve this contradiction has gotten much attention since social movement scholars have discovered culture, but only as far as the creation of packages for internal use. How

movement actors deal with this problem when they shift their focus outside the movement receives less attention. In this article, we will examine the strategies movement actors use when they package their demands and how they solve the contradiction between demands that are by definition culturally challenging and a formulation that has to be culturally resonant. In this way they play the creative role that Eyerman and Jamison (1991) point to and act as producers of meaning. More specifically, the question is how do movement actors succeed in producing new meanings through public discourses while these discourses are at the same time shaped by already existing culture?

We proceed as follows. In the next section we elaborate a theoretical framework for analyzing how movement actors operate in the cultural realm. We contend that movement actors employ two different strategies to produce interpretive packages for public discourses that are at the same time culturally contrary and resonant. In the following section, the first abolition campaign is used as a test case. The case supports the theory, although we also identify another strategy that movement actors may use. The implications of the findings are discussed in the concluding section.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

SMOs as organizers of collective movement actions are most of the time involved in two different but overlapping types of discourses - internal and external. The internal discourse centers around organizational matters and the mobilization of resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977). It mainly concerns building the ideology and identity of the movement and devising the interpretive packages with which people can be mobilized into action and funds assembled (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986; Snow and Benford 1988, 1992; Gamson 1988, 1992; Klandermans 1988; Tarrow 1994). The external or public discourse is the terrain where movement actors meet their adversaries to bring about change (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Williams 1995; d'Anjou 1996).

We will focus on the public discourse, conceptualized as a clash in which movement actors and others put their cause into words and symbols. As movement actors represent interests marginal to society, their package is necessarily contrary to prevailing cultural meanings. We contend that SMOs may succeed in the seemingly impossible task of devising packages that are both culturally contrary and resonant by using specific strategies. We will elaborate each of its elements: the public discourse, the interpretive package, and the strategies movement actors employ.

The Public Discourse

A public discourse may be seen as an argument or ". . . a series of claims or assertions, topics or themes, strung together in a more or less coherent way and seeking, often with the aid of rhetorical flourishes, to persuade an audience" (Thompson 1990: 289). This definition points to the clash of ideas, arguments, and proposals organized as interpretive packages in which challenges of extant arrangements and their defense are framed (see Gamson 1988). Every public discourse has, however, a structural basis in a network of actors who are involved in the struggle that a social movement initiates. Naturally, the SMO and others active in a movement occupy a place in this network. Further, the production of a discourse self-evidently involves the authorities, as they are challenged by the movement. Movement actions also often lead to countermovements and may bring organizations whose interests are threatened into the conflict. All actors, moreover, try to win the support of the general public. The symbolic clash is thus always reflected in a dynamic structure of actors that Klandermans (1992) refers to as a multiorganizational field and Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) as a public arena.

Public discourses form a specific subculture - an issue culture (Gamson 1988) - in which meanings are contested and from which cultural changes may arise. Changes in beliefs, values, and norms (or their prevention) may be the main goal, as is the case in symbolic or moral crusades. Such crusades focus primarily on the preservation, defense, or enhancement of values and norms which may be either threatened or increasingly popular. In both cases, a way of life is at stake, and thus such crusades often entail fierce struggles. The structural changes that these groups propose are usually far less important than the culture they champion. One study of antipornography crusades observes that "most, if not all, of the accomplishments of the antipornography campaigns in both Southtown and Midville were symbolic more than utilitarian" (Zurcher, Kirkpatrick, Cushing, and Bowman 1971: 236). In other cases, changes in the cultural realm may be spin-offs of attempts to change structural arrangements, as challengers must package their proposals for structural change in cultural terms. The first campaign of the British abolition movement is a clear example. The goal of abolition - a structural change - necessitated portraying slavery and the slave trade as abject

practices. The result of the first campaign was, however, not prohibition but a fundamental change in the way the British people viewed these practices (Drescher 1986; d'Anjou 1996). The opposite is also possible, as Weitzer (1991) shows. The gay movement in the U.S. succeeded in changing some structural arrangements but has been less successful in changing public opinion. Movements may even fail on both counts, as is the case with COYOTE, the leading organization of prostitutes in the U.S., which did not succeed in making prostitution - either culturally nor structurally - a regular job (Jenness 1990).[2]

The Interpretive Package
The most important weapon of contenders in public discourses is the interpretive package, a set of ideas, metaphors, arguments, texts, symbols, etc., by which these contenders state their claims and define some situation as a problem (Spector and Kitsuse 1977). The construction of a social problem means that its solution frequently requires governmental actions to solve it. Generally stated, challengers depict a situation, a condition, or a form of behavior as urgently in need of change and/or official attention. The defenders of the status quo do the opposite; they describe the proposed changes as the problem.

The core of the interpretive package is the frame, the central idea that organizes how to look at events so they make sense (Gamson 1988: 222). Frames, as Donati (1992: 141) states, guide perceptions and allow people to recognize events as elements of the meaningful world they live in. In Snow and Benford's words, a frame is " . . . an interpretive schema that simplifies and condenses 'the world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environments" (1992: 137). However, as Donati (1992) and Steinberg (1996) show, the frame theory of Snow, Gamson, and their associates is not without problems. It is often used vaguely and too easily supposes that SMOs one-sidedly determine the content of frames. Also, it often overlooks how people may interpret the offered frames in multiple ways (Steinberg 1996: 4-6).

This critique, however, need not worry us too much because our focus is, above all, on the SMOs that pick the arguments and less on the receivers of their messages. We thus continue with the frame concept of Snow and Benford as it is well-suited for our purposes. As they make clear, collective action frames single out some situation as unjust and deserving correction, attribute a cause to it, enable actors to arrange separate events and experiences into a meaningful whole, and thus make collective action possible. In this notion frames (and interpretive packages) consist of cognitive and moral elements. The cognitive elements highlight the problematic situation, its causes, and how it may be changed. The moral element depicts how society ought to be and what and who is to blame for the negative situation (Gusfield 1981; Hunt 1992).

Although Snow and Benford elaborate the frame notion from the viewpoint of movement actors' mobilization, it can also be employed to capture their challenges. Gamson and Lasch (1983) do this by developing the concept of "interpretive package. " In their view, the political culture of contention consists of interpretive packages which contain framing as well as reasoning devices. The former functions to organize cognitively the argument, and the latter to justify it. They bring these devices together to analyze the political culture of social welfare policies. It was later used by d'Anjou (1996) to study the first British abolition campaign, supplemented by notions used by Gusfield and Hunt in earlier studies.

The instrument proves, however, not to be wholly satisfactory, mainly because the strict distinction that Gamson and Lasch made between framing and reasoning devices does not hold. On the one hand, metaphors and exemplars-- widely employed discursive tools - may function as both framing and reasoning devices. On the other hand, a specification of the underlying causal dynamics of a situation - a reasoning device, according to Gamson and Lasch- --may as easily be used to frame that situation. Moreover, pointing to the consequences of a problematic situation is more than just a reasoning device. The instrument, therefore, needs to be adapted (see d'Anjou 1996: 268).

This results in a structure that, we assume, underlies all interpretive packages, because contenders in public discourses organize their arguments to persuade. Claims-making is a rhetorical activity that is first of all directed at attaining credibility and not at some objective and irrefutable truth (Best 1987: 102). Thus, interpretive packages are rhetorical devices that consist of metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, visual images, principles, specification of root causes, etc. These are organized in an argumentative structure made up of three elements

1. Framing. This pertains to the cognitive aspects of a package that tell the intended audience what is going on and how to organize their perception, cognition, and views.

2. Reasoning. This refers to the valuational aspects of a package that justify the proffered frame. It describes why the problematic situation is the way it is. Values are invoked as reasons and justifications for frames.

3. Consequences. This part of a package refers to the effects of what is being framed as an issue - beneficial if the sponsor or entrepreneur of a package is followed, or negative in the opposite case.

Movement Strategies
SMOs use, ideal-typically, two strategies to overcome the inherent contradiction of social movements arising, on the one hand, from their intention to represent people without a voice and, on the other, from the necessity to do so in interpretive packages that culturally sound natural and familiar.

The first strategy consists of making connections between "that which is excluded" and notions that are generally accepted and valued, thereby turning negative into positive connotations. Examples are to be seen in slogans like "black is beautiful, " "prostitution is work, " or "abortion is a woman's right" that represent the core of packages. Taboo or marginalized concepts like blackness, prostitution, or abortion are linked to accepted and valued notions like beauty, work, or civil rights. SMOs hope that such linkages may put familiar situations into a new light and bring something new and against the grain into the public discourse. With the third slogan, "abortion is a women's right," a new organization, the Society for Humane Abortions placed abortion in a different cultural context, that of the basic rights, and claimed that women had a right to their own bodies and to control their own lives (Luker 1984: 96-118). With this new vision the new SMO extended the boundaries of an accepted moral domain, the autonomy of human beings, to include a new terrain, procreation, which till then had been the province of physicians, clerics, and philosophers.

The second ideal-typical strategy represents another way of linking contrary messages to larger cultural notions. In this strategy, an interpretive package is associated with so-called counterthemes or cultural undercurrents. As Gamson shows, dominant and self-evident views are often accompanied by their opposites which contradict these views. In his words: "The (dominant) theme is conventional and normative; the countertheme is adversarial and con-tentious. But both have their own cultural roots and both can be important in assessing any specific symbolic struggle" (1988: 221). He illustrates this statement by presenting one of the core theme-countertheme pairs of this era; the dominant theme of "mastery over nature by technology" versus the countertheme of "harmony with nature, which implies using appropriate technologies. " Using such an opposite view offers an excellent opportunity to frame a message so that it resonates with an opposite cultural theme that is known and adversarial. The countertheme in that case may paradoxically legitimate alternative views.

Both strategies resemble to some degree the way in which SMOs align frames in their attempts to mobilize participants, particularly the way they transform frames (Snow et al. 1986). The task of SMOs in public discourses differs, however, from that in mobilization processes. First, they must link their views to elements in the larger cultural context which they can control far less than the cultural context of their movement. Second, attempting to transform the frames of public discourse is far more difficult than in mobilization processes, as the difference between the views of SMOs and the larger society is much greater than between SMOs and (potential) participants. The task, moreover, is further complicated by the fact that this context is not an invariable given, but the ever-changing product of social processes. Cultural ideas, and themes proceed from earlier, often gradual, changes. History produces culture as well as structure.

The latter means that historical developments and events affect the conditions for public discourse, particularly the degree to which cultural arrangements facilitate or constrain movement activities. A culture may be seen as a discursive opportunity structure that is more or less conducive to collective action (Gamson 1988). It contains the basic rules about what issues may be discussed, who may participate, and how discourses are to be conducted. As these rules may change over time, history may enlarge or diminish the chances for SMOs to begin, enter, and continue a discourse. It also means that history determines the size and content of the cultural tool kit (Swidler

1986) on which the SMOs draw when they devise their interpretive packages and thus determine their choice of cultural weapons.

The historical production of culture does not proceed evenly in all realms of society which makes cultures (particularly the modern ones) look like mosaics of images, concepts, metaphors, themes, counterthemes, world views, collective definitions, and frames of reference. Some of these cultural elements are well-known - often self-evident - in society as a whole, and thus may form useful instruments for movement actions. Others occur as elements of particular subcultures and their usefulness for movements is thus circumscribed. But history may also change this situation. Some cultural themes gradually gain a more dominant position in society. Packages that refer to such themes become thereby more credible and thus the chosen strategy more effective. The same is the case with more rapid cultural changes. As a cultural climate functions ". . . as a cyclically changing filter or amplifier for the different elements of the available national pool of symbols, themes and counterthemes . . . " (Brand 1990: 12), changes therein may promote or discourage the rise and impact of an interpretive package .

All in all, we contend that movement actors find ways to state their challenging views in formulations that sound natural and familiar to the audiences addressed. They creatively use existing cultural notions and thus create ". . . new meanings . . . by appealing to and building on existing ones" (Jasper and Poulsen 1995: 496).

ABOLITION DISCOURSE, 1787-1792[3]

The year 1787 marks the beginning of the abolition movement in Great Britain, because in that year the Abolition Committee was founded. This committee acted as the central social movement organization and very soon after its foundation launched the first public nationwide campaign directed for prohibition of the British slave trade. The abolitionists aimed at a parliamentary decision to outlaw the slave trade and saw mobilizing the public as an important means to reach their goal. They began grass-roots organizing; produced written and visual materials, such as pamphlets, tracts, books, and medallions; organized lectures and other antislavery gatherings all over the country; and set up two massive petition campaigns.

This campaign started in a political system whose rules about to social protest were ambivalent. On the one hand, the system was to some degree open to influences outside the reigning elites, and the intellectual climate favored the reformation of existing institutions. On the other hand, repression of protest was easily invoked and widely supported if protest went too far. In 1787, there was room for collective action and in this situation the abolition campaign brought about a public discourse on slavery and the slave trade that went on for several years and involved the whole country. Structurally, two interdependent networks evolved: an abolitionist network and, in reaction, an antiabolitionist network.

The Abolition Committee was at the core of the abolitionist network. This committee arose out of existing, mostly informal networks of people who opposed the slave trade. They came overwhelmingly from dissident circles: Quakers, Methodists, and Church of England evangelicals. These activists built a stronghold in Parliament and the cabinet; prominent members were Wilberforce, Pitt, Grenville, and Fox. They also built a system of local associations and committees that organized the grass roots support and the propaganda. The antiabolitionist network arose out of the so-called West Indian Interest, a loosely organized alliance of returned planters, merchants trading to the West-Indies, slave traders, and landed proprietors. This alliance virtually represented the West Indian colonies in Parliament and government. The actual defense against the abolitionist attack was organized by the London Society of West Indian Planters and Merchants. This organization built an impressive bloc of supporters in the House of Commons as well as the House of Lords and, through the support of the King, also in the cabinet. Alongside these supporters, they found support among those in British society who "lived off" the West Indian colonies. All in all, the abolitionists won the battle of numbers and had far more supporters among the general public than their opponents. For the time being, however, they lost the struggle because the antiabolitionists had more political influence.

Culturally, the abolition discourse meant a clash of two diametrically opposed visions on the slave trade couched in two interpretive packages. The abolitionists took the initiative and chose the arguments. They designated slavery and the trade in slaves as practices that were fundamentally immoral, criminal, and sinful. These practices were contrary to God's precepts', human nature, and natural law. Moreover, so they stated in the political debate, the

practices ran counter to a sound economic policy; a point of view derived from the emerging economic theory of Adam Smith. The opponents' package was the mirror image of the abolitionist package. The antiabolitionists contended that both slavery and the slave trade were prime examples of sound economic policy and were, first of all, in the interest of Britain as a nation. They drew their arguments mainly from the reigning mercantilist theory and thus defended these practices as indispensable contributions ". . . to the collective wealth and power of the empire" (Drescher 1986: 20). Sometimes they also tried to justify slavery morally by appealing to the Bible and by portraying the black African as subhuman. This defense remained, however, marginal; as Drescher states, "Quite significantly. . . neither line of argument was sustained in either polemical or Parliamentary debate."[4]

The first abolition campaign came to a grinding halt at the end of 1791 and the beginning of 1792, as the political climate changed dramatically. The slave uprising in the French colony of St. Domingue (now Haiti), and the Jacobin turn in the French Revolution, with their atrocities and violence, led Britain to antipathy for radical politics, a political shift to the right, and eventually a period of political repression. The basic rules that governed public discourse had changed in such a way that ". . . any expression of political opinion through spontaneously formed associations was criminal and dangerous to the state" (Davis 1975: 93). The opportunities for collective action diminished considerably and for years to come social protest was out of the question. The abolitionists could not but choose a low-key political approach, and as a result the public discourse on slavery and the slave trade withered away. As Anstey states, "In this situation the struggle would have to be waged exclusively in Parliament and a new phase in the abolition movement began" (1975: 278).

Although the first abolition campaign did not reach its goal--prohibition of the slave trade--the public discourse it initiated affected the way slavery and the slave trade were collectively defined in British society from then on (Drescher 1986, 1994; d'Anjou 1996). Before 1787, opinion about slavery was fragmented and divided. Although the intellectual elite saw slavery as an institution that was morally and philosophically condemned and bound to disappear, many people recognized its importance for Britain. For most Britons slavery and the slave trade were self-evident elements of daily life; slavery ". . . was an overriding historical social fact" (Drescher 1986: 17). Their necessity for Britain was widely accepted and both were at best seen as necessary evils. The attitude of the average British citizen is strikingly portrayed by Reverend Newton, an abolitionist vicar, when he looked back at his earlier days as a captain of a slaver: "During the time I was engaged in the slave trade, I never had the least scruple as to its lawfulness" (cited by Sypher 1942/69: 74-5). Even those who were strongly opposed to slavery were pessimistic about the chances to do away with this institution even just before the campaign started (Drescher 1986: 86).

After 1792, slavery and the slave trade were defined by the abolitionist view, and both were now widely seen as abject and immoral practices. Drescher refers to this change as ". . . the cultural revolution of 1787-92" (1986: 86). This five-year transformation was unusually rapid - according to Walvin, ". . . one of the most rapid transformations of collective political opinion in modern British society" (1985: 32). It was also definitive - the terms of British public debate on slavery were forever altered (Drescher 1986: 67). Moreover, the abolitionist view became unassailable - it was raised "almost to the status of religion. " (Williams 1972: 181). As Craton, Walvin, and Wright assess the situation, ". . . they [slavery's defenders] had not made a major impact on the popular imagination. The people had swung behind abolition . . ." (1976: 233).

THE ABOLITIONIST PACKAGE AND ARGUMENTATIVE STRATEGIES

In this section, the abolitionist interpretive package is used to illustrate the way movement actors operate in a public discourse, particularly the way they use the available cultural resources in their strategies. We have chosen to present only the abolitionist package. Because the antiabolitionists devised their package much the same way (using only different cultural resources), analyzing their package would not add much to our argument. The abolitionist package was heavily influenced by the massive transition that Great Britain underwent during the eighteenth century. This transition was, on the one hand, a reaction to events in the seventeenth century, particularly to the scientific revolution and the turmoil of the civil war. On the other hand, the transformations proceeded from the rise of Britain to a world power and the start of the industrial revolution. In the cultural realm, developments in philosophy and religion, particularly the elective affinity between Enlightenment, providential theology, and the evangelical revival, were of central importance to the abolition movement as they produced the cultural tools and the legitimating context for it. At this point the work of Benezet, the American Quaker genius of antislavery, was crucial because he combined the antislavery tradition of the Society of Friends with the European Enlightenment

and religious thought, particularly with the work of Montesquieu and the Scottish Enlightenment.

The abolitionists constructed their package around two organizing principles or themes: the immorality of slavery and the slave trade and their impolicy.[5] Both themes were always present in the arguments the abolitionists put forward (Drescher 1990). They formed one package in which the immorality theme was dominant and the impolicy theme played an auxiliary role. In the slave-trade discourse, they were alternately emphasized depending on the audience addressed. This way the abolitionists contended that ending the slave trade was not only morally right, but also in the general interest, which made their package ". . . a double-edged sword confronting the authorities of the metropolis" (Drescher 1986: 143).

In the following, the abolition package is presented the same way the abolitionists organized it; first the immorality and then the impolicy theme. As each theme forms an argumentative structure consisting of the three elements of framing, reasoning, and specifying consequences, this structure is pre-eminently suited to show how the abolitionists strategically used existing cultural resources.

The Immorality Theme
Framing. Abolitionist writers depicted the slave trade and slavery as horrible, barbarous, bloody, and evil activities and as transgressions of morality and legitimacy. Three citations of Baxter, Benezet, and Wesley present the kernel of the immorality frame very clearly.

To go as pirates, and catch up poor Negroes, or people of another land, that never forfeited life or liberty, and to make them slaves, and sell them, is one of the worst kinds of thievery in the world; and such persons are to be taken for the common enemies of mankind; and they that buy them and use them as beasts for their mere commodity, and betray, or destroy, or neglect their souls, are fitter to be called devils incarnate than christians: It is an heinous sin to buy them, unless it be in charity to deliver them. Undoubtedly they are presently bound to deliver them, because by right the man is his own, therefore no man else can have a just title to him (Baxter, quoted in Benezet's *An Account of Guinea*, 1771).

An Evil of so deep a Dye, and attended with such dreadful Consequences, that no well-disposed Person (anxious for the Welfare of himself, his Country, or Posterity) who knows the Tyranny, Oppression and Cruelty with which this iniquitous Trade is carried on, can be a silent and innocent Spectator. How many Thousands of our harmless Fellow Creatures have, for a long Course of Years, fallen a Sacrifice to that selfish Avarice, which gives Life to this complicated Wickedness (from Benezet's *Pamphlet on Negroes in Africa*, 1762, cited in Bruns 1977: 80).

I would to God it [the slave trade] may never be found more: that we may never more steal and sell our brethren like beasts; never murder them by thousands. Oh, may this worse than Mohammedan, worse than pagan abomination be removed from us for ever. Never was anything such a reproach to England, since it was a nation, as the having a hand in this infernal traffic (Wesley, cited in Anstey 1975: 240).

Notable in the framing of the slave trade as an immoral undertaking is the use of metaphors that associate this lawful economic activity with criminality. Sharp speaks of "rapine theft" and Benezet and Wesley describe the trade as man-stealing and the death of slaves during the middle passage as murder. Writers also refer to slavery and the slave trade metaphorically as a sin and a sign of human depravity and wickedness; as Walvin shows, for abolitionists, ". . . slavery was a deep and abiding sin and wickedness, an affront alike to man and God, and a religious insult . . . " (1985: 39) . Also notable is the use of vivid depictions and visual images to convey the cruel and wicked character of the slave trade. Benezet, for example, sketches the scene as children are forcefully separated from their parents: "Mothers are seen hanging over their daughters, bedewing their naked breasts with tears . . . " (Bruns 1977:]78). Another explicit image was the schematic plan of the slave ship drawn by Clarkson. This made the horrid situation aboard a slave ship clear at a glance, especially if it was accompanied by the lively and detailed description by the former slave captain - now Reverend - John Newton (see Sypher 1969: 75-6).

This way of presenting slavery and the slave trade is an example of devising a new definition of the situation with the help of existing and accepted notions. Both were accepted economic activities and, at that time, those involved were "socially respectable" (Davis 1966: 154). Associating such activities with behavior that was generally decried meant turning social views upside-down and was thus a veritable shock for the people involved. Particularly the connection between sin and slavery was interesting, because till that time slavery had only been used in a spiritual sense as a metaphor for depicting addiction to his lusts; henceforth it was also framed as a sin in itself.

To depict an activity that one wants to put in an unfavorable light as immoral and criminal is a rather obvious strategy, but framing slavery and the slave trade as sins was significant. In addition, this portrayal concurred with an

important theme in British society that became even more important in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Sin was already a central concept in seventeenth-century dissenting thought, which kept its influence in British society despite the fact that the dissenters "lost" in 1688 (Ashley 1973). The evangelical revival brought dissent to the fore again and abolition as part of this revival derived much of its emphasis on sin and guilt from it. This revival contributed to the cultural resonance of the frame "the slave trade is sinful," while the general depiction of it as immoral made it also acceptable for those outside these religious circles.

Reasoning. The slave trade was immoral, illegal, wicked, etc. for three reasons. First, slavery and the slave trade were depicted as practices that were contrary to natural law as conceived by God. Natural law states that everyone is born free and that this freedom cannot been infringed on without consent. Therefore, human beings cannot be objects of trade and cannot be bought or sold. In Wesley's words:

. . . It cannot be, that either war, or contract, can give any man such a property in another as he has in his sheep and oxen.... Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air; and no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature (quoted in Sypher 1969: 71).

or as Benezet stated this point:

God gave to Man Dominion over the Fish of the Sea, and over the Fowls of the Air, and over the Cattle, &c. but imposed no involuntary Subjection of one Man to another" (Bruns 1977: 121)

This first reason is clearly religiously inspired. It was also affected by the Enlightenment, and in both lines of thought nature was seen as the touchstone of existing societal arrangements and rules. This vision is well-phrased by Montesquieu, a prominent representative of the natural law theory. In his *Pensées* he asserted that "L'esclavage est contre le Droit naturel, par lequel tous les hommes naissent libre & independant. " He eloquently concluded, "En vain, les lois civiles forment des chaines; la Loi naturelle les rompra toujours" (cited in Davis 1966: 406). This first reason made it possible to depict this legal form of economic behavior nevertheless as illegitimate because it was contrary to the standards of a higher law. We have here an example of how drawing on a theme that is becoming more prominent in society may help movement actors in their struggle. In this case the new way of thinking about nature gradually evolved in the seventeenth and eighteenth century in which "nature" first became the touchstone in the natural sciences and later in the social sciences, and in normative thinking as well. It could, therefore, easily be accepted by many people as a legitimate argument.

Second, the practices of slavery and the slave trade were delineated as contrary to the natural and inborn human trait of benevolence. People (normally) sympathized with the fate of their fellows and strove toward their own happiness and that of others. Those involved in slavery were portrayed as being unnaturally hardened by their desire for wealth; their avarice and greed had corrupted their true human nature and estranged them from their own humanity. Viewed in this way, involvement in slavery meant an affront to humanity, as it implied an insensitivity to human suffering and misery. Moreover, denying the trait of benevolence was a threat to civilized society, as benevolence preserved society from anarchy. As Davis states,

By the 1770s there was a widespread consensus, on the level of moral theory, that slavery not only violated natural law but represented the supreme denial of those benevolent instincts which preserved society from anarchy. The eighteenth-century "man of feeling," the ideal of so much literary, religious, and philosophical writing, had been trained to empathize with human suffering. Convinced that reason and national interest should not require unending misery and slaughter, he would respond automatically to empirical exposures of the slave trade (1975: 526).

This second reason was, like the first, an offshoot of eighteenth-century changes in religion and theology combined with the more secular philosophical reappraisal of nature as the universal standard of truth and virtue. All together, benevolence had become an important cultural theme in the philosophy, religion, and literature of the eighteenth century, particularly through the work of Francis Hutcheson. He made happiness primary and stated that benevolence was essential for promoting general happiness. In his view, individuals have ". . . two grand determinations . . . one towards our own great happiness, the other towards the greatest general good .... " (cited in Anstey 1975: 99). Both determinations are innate and natural. The latter concerns the moral sense of benevolence and social utility which, in conflict with the former, has precedence over self interest. With his work Hutcheson called for an active form of benevolence and it led him, quite naturally, to a condemnation of slavery. The growing acceptance of benevolence as natural made its use as a cultural theme by the abolitionists effective and their

definition of slavery as a violation of nature self-evident for the British public.

Third, the slave trade and slavery were portrayed as gross injustices. Greed and avarice, the sources of slavery, had overcome equity because slavery and the slave trade violated the natural equality of all human beings. As Benezet asks his readers,

When and how, has this Man [a slave] forfeited his liberty? Does not Justice loudly call for its being restored to him? Has he not the same Right to demand it as any of us should have, if we had been violently snatched by Pyrates from our native Land? (Bruns 1977: 92).

This conception of justice as equity is a typical product of the Enlightenment. In the enlightened vision, justice is seen as a complement to and a specification of the right of freedom, as it sets bounds to the actions of free citizens and realizes the liberty of all people. Infringements on individual natural rights, therefore, need a legal foundation and, moreover, a balance between what one gets and what one gives up. Justice as equity is also an important element in the period's emergent economic emphasis on contract, and therefore the notion of the slave trade as inequitable fits in admirably with capitalist developments.

Justice with equity was also connected with Christian thought, well-represented by Wedgwood's medallion. This modern, industrial producer of pottery devised, produced, and distributed a medallion that graphically depicted a kneeling slave in chains, capped by the Christian inspired question, "Am I not a Man and a Brother. " In Christian thought, all human beings were seen as equal to God, regardless of race and color, because it was assumed that they all had the same ancestors. This assumption made it possible to portray black slaves as brothers and to empathize with their fate. This conception of "brotherhood" concurred, moreover, with the Enlightenment tenet of equality which further increased its resonance. This emphasis on the equality of mankind does not, however, mean that Britons did not consider themselves the betters of black Africans. As Barker assesses eighteenth century thought about Africa, "the Negro was [by the abolitionists as well] seen as a man, certainly, but as a wild, untutored cousin rather than a brother" (1978: 200).

The abolitionists' reasoning was thus based on "nature," a growing cultural theme in eighteenth-century Britain. Nature was more than a countertheme. It was one of the central elements in a changing cultural climate that made the arguments of the abolitionists more plausible than those of the antiabolitionists. Abolition's opponents also contended that slavery belonged to the natural order; slavery was a fact of life and "a Condition of Mankind in Africa, from the earliest Times."[6] This view of fundamental social relations as immanent belonged to the "old order" which was gradually giving way to a new one. The abolitionists quite naturally chose the new view of nature because, like it, they belonged to this new society.

Consequences. The abolitionists showed what the inevitable consequences of acting immorally would be and what people must do to avert them. Slavery and the slave trade were such enormous violations of God's design and commands that retribution was inevitable. This retribution threatened not only the people directly involved in slavery but also the British nation as a whole, because the British people not only tolerated this evil but took advantage of it and were thus collectively guilty. The abolitionists therefore demanded that individuals sever all ties with slavery and the slave trade and that the British government end the trade as soon as possible. Only then would the pending disaster be averted.[7] As Sharp warned the Archbishop of Canterbury in a letter of 1769:

... the unlawfull practice of buying and Selling the Persons of the unfortunate Natives ought by all means to be prohibited if the Government is concerned, otherwise the British Government is answerable for all those unjust Wars which distract those wretched Countries, and which may draw heavy judgments upon this Kingdom" (cited in Craton et al. 1976: 239).

This emphasis on retribution was further affected by the evangelical revival, with its strong emphasis on God's wrath and retribution for those who did not repent. Retribution is a countertheme that could legitimate arguments even better as the revival grew in strength at the end of the century.

A related gradual development was also important here. In reaction to the deistic assertion, dominant in the beginning of the eighteenth century, that evils, both past and present, were to be accepted as part of the natural order, the long-existing notion of divine providence was elaborated anew. Central was idea that God has a divine plan directed at progressively eliminating all existing evils. In order to reach this goal, God will gradually reveal to

humankind these plans and its role in them. This last aspect is important because people are seen, above all, as instruments for fulfilling God's intentions. Providence thus became God's moral government through the active involvement of humankind. This instrumental vision of humankind's role in society was further strengthened in the evangelical revival, in which it became a personal obligation to find out one's task in the divine plan and to fulfill it. People who did not perform this personal obligation would be punished. This theological elaboration combined with the twist the evangelicals gave to it clearly strengthened the arguments based on the retribution theme. For many people abolition thus became a holy duty, a point of view that resonated in a society that was, above all, Protestant (Colley 1992).

This religious notion corresponded closely, moreover, to the Enlightenment notion of progress that gave the individual an active role in bringing about a better and more reasonable society.

The Impolicy Theme
This subsidiary theme is less complicated than the "immorality" theme. It is directed at exposing the errors in the defense of the slave trade, particularly the contention that these activities contributed greatly to British wealth and were thus in the national interest.

Framing. In an open letter to Granville Sharp, an anonymous adherent of Adam Smith's free market vision characterized the colonial mercantilist system as follows:

. . . that the West Indian islands, so far from being of the importance commonly described to them, have . . . long been and while the present system remains, must continue to be, a dead weight about the neck of this country, to stifle its efforts and distract its strength" (from Davis 1975: 355)

The abolitionists framed the slave system in much the same way, as unprofitable and inefficient, in other words, a waste.

Reasoning. Slavery was unprofitable and inefficient because it was founded on faulty assumptions regarding the nature of man and society. This reasoning was disseminated, above all, by Adam Smith, and the abolitionists made ample use of his work. Davis cites Smith as follows:

. . . the experience of all ages and nations' demonstrates that the labor of slaves, though it appears to cost only their maintenance, is in the end the dearest of any. A person who can acquire no property, can have no other interest but to eat as much, and to labour as little as possible (1975: 352).

Consequences. The main consequence was that the nation was less wealthy than it would have been without a slave system protected by monopolies and subsidized by the British taxpayer. In the end, ordinary citizens, particularly those of the middle classes, were the victims. In the words of Adam Smith,

The prosperity of the English sugar colonies has been, in great measure, owing to the great riches of England, of which a part has overflowed. . . upon those colonies (cited in Davis 1975: 352).

The logical solution for Britain was abolition, or as Clarkson put it,

. . . an end to the slave trade would greatly benefit the national economy by preventing the annual loss of thousands of seamen; by encouraging the development of the cheapest markets for the raw materials needed by industry; by opening new markets for British manufactured goods; by eliminating a wasteful drain of capital and a cumbersome system of credit; . . . and by creating in the colonies a self-sustaining labor force that would in time consume more British produce (cited in Davis 1975: 353).

These arguments were mainly derived from the ascendant economic theory, especially as put forward by Adam Smith. This theory attacked the reigning mercantilist economic policy with its monopolies and a dominant government, and instead propagated the blessings of the free market and restricted government. Most of the "new" economists argued that slavery was outdated economically. This became undisputed truth for them despite the fact that, as Temperley (1981) and Drescher (1977) show, it clearly ran counter to the facts. These economic ideas spread but only became dominant among more modern-thinking elites. As Semmel states, "it was at that time [the second half of the eighteenth century], also, that these political economists made their first conversions among

British statesmen; by the 1780s the converts were seeking to put the new principles into practical effect" (1970: 13).

The construction of the impolicy argument is a clear example of the second strategy. Adam Smith's view of economics was still a countertheme in 1780s Britain. At that time, Great Britain was still predominantly mercantilistic and, as Drescher (1976) asserts, the swing to free trade principles did not occur earlier than the 1820s. The free-trade vision was only dominant in a specific part of society. Although as a countertheme it helped justify the impolicy framing of the abolitionists, it was not convincing. The vision of forced labor as an economic anachronism became dominant only after the paradigmatic changes in economic thought in the nineteenth century.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In their first campaign, the abolitionists did not reach their goal: putting an end to the slave trade. The period in which the basic cultural rules in Britain enabled them to conduct their campaign was too short for that. Moreover, the opposition was too strong which precluded the political changes they strived for. They succeeded, however, in fundamentally changing the way people thought about the trade in slaves and about slavery itself. After 1792 both practices were collectively defined as abject and immoral--a striking difference from how they were defined before the campaign started in 1787.

The abolitionists brought about this change by initiating a public discourse on slavery and the slave trade in which they used their carefully crafted interpretive package. To make this set of ideas, metaphors, catchphrases, rhetorical arguments, visual images, etc. work, they employed the two strategies we discerned in our theoretical framework. In this package, they connected socially accepted and respected economic practices--slavery and the trade in slaves-- with immoral, criminal, and sinful behavior.[8] Alongside this first strategy, the abolitionists also drew on counterthemes--retribution and free market economy--to contradict reigning views of the slave trade and to legitimate their framing of these practices. This way the abolitionist portrayal transformed black slaves from objects into (legal) subjects

The case material, however, shows that there was more. The abolitionists appealed to cultural themes that were neither fully dominant nor fully opposing themes. They consciously drew on themes that were on their way to dominance in the coming cultural order. The fact that the abolitionists grounded their arguments neither fully on dominant nor on counterthemes is a third strategy that is, however, not available for every social movement. Only movements that are, so to speak, part and parcel of ongoing cultural transformations have this strategic option their disposal. The gay movement or the prostitutes' civil rights movement in the U.S., for example, could not choose this strategy because they operated in a contrary cultural climate, moreover, that showed no signs of changing in their direction (Weitzer 1991; Jenness 1990). This third strategy proved to be important in the abolition discourse because the abolitionists fully employed the opportunities the changing context offered them. History made their rhetoric more effective in persuading authorities and the public.

When we analyze the first abolition campaign we arrive at two seemingly contradictory conclusions. On the one hand, the analysis demonstrates the pivotal role of movement actors as creators of new meanings. On the other hand, it reveals the central position of the cultural context, particularly the changes therein, in making these actors successful in producing meaning. These conclusions lead to two important theoretical questions. The first concerns the role of SMOs as signifying agents: are they really the creators of new meanings, as the constructionist view suggests, or do they merely amplify the cultural context, as the cultural determinists would have it. The second question follows the first, but here the focus is on the role of history. It asks what the impact of historical events on the cultural context means for the signifying role of movement actors: do these actors sense these developments and can they therefore anticipate them in their strategies, or are they just lucky to have history on their side?

For an answer to the first question it is necessary to go back before the abolition movement began. A closer look at this period shows that every argument in favor of abolition and emancipation had been present for a long time. As early as 1657 George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, put forward the "conception of the brotherhood under God of all men, including slaves" (Craton et al. 1976: 202); and already in 1665, for example, Richard Baxter, the well-known dissenting preacher, depicted the slave trade as "one of the worst kinds of thievery in the world" (Bruns 1977: 166). Similarly, John Locke contended in 1680 that, "Slavery is so vile and miserable an estate of man, and so directly opposite to the generous temper and courage of our nation, that it is hardly to be conceived,

that an Englishman, much less a gentleman, should plead for it" (Locke, vol. II, 1680/1768: 139). All three nevertheless accepted slavery as given. By 1715 the case against slavery had been fully made when John Hepburn, a Quaker in North America, published his own and two other tracts, of which Davis states, "Taken together these remarkable essays answered virtually every proslavery argument that would appear during the next century and a half" (Davis 1966: 317). Still, slavery and the slave trade endured. What is more, before the start of the campaign abolition was "unthinkable" not only for the proponents of the slave trade, but for its opponents as well (Drescher 1986). How, then, did the "unthinkable" become "thinkable?"

Abolition was made "thinkable," first of all, by the initiative the abolitionists took in 1787. The case demonstrates that changing the way people think and perceive the world around them requires that somebody, an individual or a collective actor, must see to it that, as Luker (1984: 97) puts it, the "unspeakable" is made speakable. Initiative is needed to open public discourses about the "unspeakable" and is therefore essential to give "forgotten" people and their interests a voice.

Initiative on its own however, did not do the trick. The abolitionists were also creative with the cultural tools at hand, with regard to devising their package, choosing strategies, and conducting the campaign (on their creativity see also d'Anjou 1996). Creativity appears to be as essential for success as initiative. Moreover, it must be complemented by endurance, because public discourses will not continue on their own. Together initiative, creatively, and endurance form a unity which we call agency. It is an indispensable asset for movements; as Davis states in the case of antislavery, "No matter how "ripe" the time, there would be no coalescing of antislavery opinion until specific decisions and commitments were taken by individual men" (1966: 489).

In the abolition case, the initiative, creativity, and endurance of the abolitionists proved, however, not enough to change public thought on slavery and the slave trade. If it had been, the Quakers would have succeeded in doing so long before the 1780s (see for their efforts, among others, Anstey 1976; Davis 1966, 1975). Abolitionist agency needed at least a conducive cultural context to bring about this change, that is, basic rules allowing movement activities, tools for devising a credible interpretive package, and cultural themes that made this package intelligible and legitimate. Social movements thus need both agency and a conducive cultural context to act as producers of meaning; these are complementary elements in a symbiotic relationship. This means, on the one hand, that movements are not the independent creators of meaning as portrayed by the constructionists, but, on the other, that their role in the production of meaning is far more important than the cultural determinist view supposes. Paraphrasing Marx, (1852-69/1968: 226), movement actors produce new meanings but not exactly as they wish. They are free to choose neither the elements from which they produce them nor the circumstances under which production takes place. The situation in which they act is a given that is handed down to them.

History - and here we arrive at our second theoretical question - was important in changing the meaning of slavery and the slave trade. Historical developments produced the structural as well as the cultural conditions for the first abolition campaign.[9] In the cultural realm, they cleared the way for a new abolitionist strategy--the third one--and made the other strategies more effective as well.

For the effect of history on the signifying role of movement actors, it is important to look at what determined abolitionists' strategy for bringing their message to the British nation. First, the content of their message proceeded from deep-seated beliefs and feelings about right and wrong which left little room for strategic bargaining and compromises. Second, the way they formulated their message and brought it forward, on the other hand, was definitely influenced by tactical and strategic considerations. Here, they had room to maneuver as long as such considerations did not force them to become untrue to themselves.

In this respect, the abolitionists (as most movement actors do) differed from other claims-making actors. For example, interest groups or lobbyists may frame their proposals far more in line with current political fashions because they only have to take their own interests into account. Movement actors, on the contrary act, often act on behalf of others, and this, fact leaves them less space for moral bargaining than actors have who only have to see after their own interests. Self-interested claims-makers' framing activities may be compared with Henri of Navarra (later King Henry IV), for whom "Paris was well worth a mass," while the position of movement actors resembles that of Luther, typified by his "here I stand, I can do no other. " The result is that some movement actors have less

room for maneuvering and thus their success depends more on history. At the same time, however, their impact on the production of meaning is quite often much greater because they may contribute through their actions to the very developments that favor their cause. If they do, they are not just puppets in the hands of history, but agents active in shaping it.

In the end, it is the combination of history, agency, and public discourse that answers our question about social movements and the production of meaning. Movement actors may succeed in producing new meanings out of existing cultural material if the following conditions are met:

1. History produces the cultural tools the movement actors need as well as the cultural context that legitimates the narratives they are telling (and of course the required structural conditions);

2. Movement actors show agency in initiating public discourses on the cause of the movement and keeping such discourses going while creatively using the extant culture for their strategies;

3. The public discourse initiated by the movement actors continues. This requires, however, more than initiative or endurance. This interesting subject, however, deserves full treatment on its own.

Only then movement actors may succeed in making the "unthinkable" thinkable and the "unspeakable" spoken.[10] The abolitionists made the fate of the black slaves thinkable while at the same time transferring the concept of ownership of people to the realm of "things about which people do not speak. " As Rice assesses, "Disapproval of slavery ultimately became the kind of cultural assumption which requires no evidential support, with something of the reflexive -force of the taboo against incest" (1980: 319).

NOTES

1. See the volume edited by Morris and Mueller (1992) devoted to the recent developments in movement theory and Johnston and Klandermans's (1995) volume on social movements and culture.

2. Public discourses may also cause unintended cultural effects. We do not explore this because it leads us far from our topic.

3. The material of the case study comes from Anstey (1975), Craton (1974), Davis (1975), Drescher (1986), Rice (1975), and Walvin (1982). To enhance the readability of the text we will not refer to these authors unless specific elements or citations of an author are used.

4. That racist arguments did not appeal to the public underlines Curtin's assessment that racism developed at a later date because of the attacks on slavery and the slave trade (1964: 36).

5. SMOs construct their interpretive packages according to the pattern described above. They organize such packages around one or more organizing principles which we call the "package themes." These resemble the dominant and challenging cultural themes; they are similar but only on a smaller scale.

6. This statement was put forward "At a General Meeting of the PLANTERS, MERCHANTS, and Others. interested in the WEST INDIES, held at the LONDON TAVERN, May l9, 1789" (Cited in Anstey (1975: 293).

7. Colley contends that this argument, later on, was also positively stated because antislavery became part of the process of the formation of the British national identity. She states: "Antislavery became an emblem of national virtue . . . [and] was increasingly seized on as a means to redeem the nation, as a patriotic act" (1992: 354).

8. Although this mirrors the strategy described above. it is not different. Its content remains the same: it demands the inclusion in civil society of those who are excluded.

9. Such developments and events were so important in bringing this campaign about and in directing its course that this campaign is unintelligible if they are left out of consideration. The case study at least suggests that history deserves far more attention in the study of collective action than it is given now (see also Sztompka 1986: Shin 1994) .

10. This accomplishment does not say anything about the effects movement actions may have on the social and political structure. In the case of abolition. e.g. . the change in public thought about slavery did not automatically bring abolition and emancipation.

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