
PART I

UNDERSTANDING THE 'MOVEMENT OF MOVEMENTS'

CHAPTER ONE

**UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: TOWARDS A
THEORY OF INTERPRETATIVE FRAMES**

1. INTRODUCTION

Social movements are most commonly defined with reference to three properties: they consist in a number of individuals working together voluntarily; this collective actor strives to change or defend some structural feature of society; and they tend to use non-institutional means of pursuing that change.¹⁵ In section two, below, I explain how the study of social movements has progressed from focusing on public outbursts of protest to the organisational processes taking place on a fairly continuous basis. This has led to a number of insights. However, in doing so, until the mid 1980s the beliefs and values held by participants, i.e. the very source of the desire for change that is clearly central to the social movement, were largely ignored. Out of this context, ideas were reconsidered via the study of interpretative frames: relatively coherent structures of beliefs and values that, as a whole, offer a particular understanding of the world and a justification for acting to change it.

This chapter offers a critique of the framing perspective as it has developed thus far, arguing that if we are to understand the ideational features of particular social movements then we need to move away from the positivist attempt to discover predictive laws and into a more interpretative endeavour. It is for this reason that I introduce a novel conception, using the label ‘orientational frames’ to distinguish it from the concepts of the framing perspective. Frames are ‘orientational’ in a number of senses: they relate to people’s basic beliefs and attitudes; they offer direction since they are inherently action-focused; and they allow actors to understand their own position relative to others. This concept is closely related to Michael Freeden’s understanding of ideologies, which is detailed below. I will argue that ideologies form part of the political context within which we can identify activists’ orientational frames. I also describe a

¹⁵ Scott, A., 1990, *Ideology and the New Social Movements* (Routledge, London), p. 6; Castells, M., 1997, *The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Volume II*. (Blackwell, Oxford), pp. 69-72; della Porta, D. & Diani, M., 1999, *Social Movements. An Introduction* (Blackwell, Oxford), pp. 15-25; Kriesi, H., 1988, “The Interdependence of Structure and Action: Some Reflections on the State of the Art” in Klandermans, Kriesi & Tarrow, eds., *From Structure to Action: Comparing social Movement Research Across Cultures*, pp. 350-1.

hermeneutic approach to the identification of such frames within contemporary movements and describe the particular fit between this broad approach and the specific ethnographic methodology I employ for this study.

2. THE ROLE OF IDEAS IN SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORIES

In this section I will present a number of strands of thought that aim to offer a predictive explanation of the emergence and dynamics of social movements. In later sections I will argue for a notably different basis for approaching current social movements. My focus in reviewing the literature is, therefore, simply to present some of the most important ways in which the ideational aspects of social movements have been integrated into more general theories.

Social Movements as Collective Behaviour

Within the broadly defined phenomenon of ‘collective behaviour’, social movements have received sustained attention from scholars and theorists of society since the late 1950s.¹⁶ Collective behaviour could include the mob, the fad or the riot and much of this work attempted to explain ‘deviant’ behaviour on behalf of the individual with reference to crowd psychology.¹⁷ Much of this work has been heavily criticised for simplistic explanations based on the mental abnormalities of leaders and gullibility of their followers.¹⁸ However, towards the late 1960s and early 1970s this work advanced considerably, and Crossley’s more sympathetic account is a necessary corrective to the tendency of contemporary scholars to present a straw man of the collective behaviour approach.¹⁹

With a strong wave of left-wing political protest since the late 1960s, the study of social movements shifted. The explosion of social movement activities, firstly, drew academics from various disciplines to focus exclusively on the social movement as a form of collective behaviour. Secondly, a normative shift occurred, reflecting the

¹⁶ It is possible to find substantial studies from an earlier period; see fn. 2, below. Furthermore, attempts to understand political movements by prominent figures such as Marx, Lenin and Gramsci all provide recognisable roots for more recent social movement theories; Tarrow, S., 1998, *Power in Movement. Social Movements and Contentious Politics – Second Edition*, (CUP, Cambridge), pp. 11-13.

¹⁷ For instance, Le Bon, G., 1913, *The Psychology of Revolution*, translated by B. Miall, (Putnam, New York).

¹⁸ For a critique, see Turner, R.H. & Killian, L.M., 1972, *Collective Behavior, Second Edition*, (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey), p. 408.

¹⁹ Crossley, N., 2002, *Making Sense of Social Movements*, (Open University Press, Buckingham), esp. ch. 2-3.

gaining acceptance among government officials and the general public that certain kinds of disorder should be viewed as legitimate political protest.²⁰ The fascist and nationalist movements which had provided the most contemporary empirical ingredient for early studies of collective behaviour, had temporarily sunk into the background.²¹ New movements for the liberation of women, ethnic minorities and homosexuals, often couched in the liberal discourse of legal rights, generated a much more sympathetic audience within academia. While previous studies of the conditions for success for protest movements had (usually implicitly) provided policy advice for suppression by elites, some scholars began to question the implications of such advice.²²

Among sociologists attempting to explain the deviance of collective behaviour participation through reference to broader societal trends a number of key concerns emerged that have particular relevance today.²³ One strand of current research, for instance, examines the creation of collective identity within activist organisations that allow members to maintain a reasonably coherent and consistent understanding of the group, while providing affective benefits for participation. Such considerations are found in the much earlier work of Blumer who delineated the role of a variety of social processes in the creation, on a group level, of “a culture, a social organisation, and a new scheme of life.”²⁴ His references to *esprit de corps* and morale seemingly foreshadow the concern with collective identity. Blumer’s stress on analytically distinct roles of the formation of group ideology and group tactics also seem to highlight processes close to those examined within the framing perspective on which this thesis is based. The notion that ‘social unrest’ creates situations in which individuals may find innovative spaces through which “‘speeded-up’ interactions, new ideas and projects take shape”²⁵ will, it will become apparent, echo throughout the thesis. Similarly, Gurr examined the role of relative deprivation as a grievance that created the potential for political violence. Because, like Blumer and other contemporaries, Gurr recognised that grievances or strains must be interpreted by the protagonists, he highlighted the need

²⁰ Turner, R.H., 1969, “The Public Perception of Protest” in *American Sociological Review* 34(6), p. 815.

²¹ Eyerman, R. & Jamison, A., 1991, *Social Movements. A Cognitive Approach*, (Polity, Cambridge).

²² See, for instance, Oberschall’s critique of Gurr’s relative deprivation theory on the grounds of its counter-intuitive policy implications with respect to the black civil rights movement; Oberschall, A., 1978, “Theories of Social Conflict” in *Annual Review of Sociology* 4, p. 302; Gurr, T., 1970, *Why Men Rebel*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey).

²³ Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, p. 14.

²⁴ Blumer, H., 1969, quoted in Crossley, *Making Sense...*, p. 29.

²⁵ Crossley, *Making Sense...*, p. 29.

for “normative and utilitarian justifications for political violence among members of a collectivity.”²⁶

One further early understanding of the culture of social movements is worthy of note. For Neil Smelser, also, the growth and spread of some generalised belief was essential to the eruption of collective action. Smelser offered a systematic account that located this interpretative activity in a wider process. The eruption of collective action could only be explained when a number of factors were present: facilitative structures for collective behaviour; strain around which that behaviour were mobilised; the spread of a common belief relating to the strain; some precipitating event; mobilisation through communicative networks; and weakened forces of social control. Most importantly, Smelser insists on the accumulation of these variables such that each is a necessary condition and “the sufficient condition for [collective behaviour] ... is the combination of every necessary condition, according to a definite pattern.”²⁷ There are many levels on which these accounts of social movement activity have been criticised, particularly with respect to integrating understandings of structure and agency.²⁸ The most useful and enduring facet of this work is the attempt to understand social movements as the result of multiple and interlocking social phenomena.

‘Supply Side’ Explanations

Mancur Olson’s statement of the problem of collective action grounds much subsequent social movement research.²⁹ Bringing an economic mode of analysis to the field, he began with an assumption of rationality on behalf of social movement participants. This highlighted the possibility of the ‘free-rider’ problem in struggles over collective goods; put simply, why would the individual pay the costs of participation when the nature of collective goods (a clean environment or a universal health care system, for example) when they would receive the benefits whether they participated or not? The rational individual would ‘free-ride’ on the efforts of others.³⁰ In seeking solutions to this problem Olson stressed the role played by organisations in mobilising collective action. The collective may both reduce the costs of participation to

²⁶ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, pp. 360-377; a detailed critique of Gurr’s work may be found detailed in Oberschall, “Theories of Social Conflict”, pp. 300-1.

²⁷ Smelser, N., 1962, *Theory of Collective Behaviour*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London)

²⁸ Again, for a sensitive account see Crossley, *Making Sense...*, p. 29.

²⁹ Olson Jr., M., 1965, *The Logic of Collective Action*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge).

³⁰ Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, pp. 5-8.

individuals and create selective benefits, such as group membership, that would only be available to participating individuals.³¹

Two foci – the rationality of the individual and the importance of the organisation – set the agenda for a generation of ‘resource mobilization theorists’.³² Olson’s collective action problem focuses the study of social movements around the question of how social movement organisations (SMOs) create a situation in which it is rational to act collectively in order to contend for collective goods. At root is a methodological individualism that forgoes structural theorising in order to explain sociological phenomena with reference to individual action. A satisfactory explanation, on this account, is one which begins with a minimal image of the individual actor as a rationally calculating agent with an ordered set of preferences or goals. Such goals are typically understood as private and asocial, since positing altruistic desires that would overcome the collective action problem leads down a ‘slippery slope’ to arguing that some people participate in social movements simply because they have a desire to participate in social movements.³³

On the basis of such assumptions, resource mobilisation theory (RMT) developed the argument that in explaining social movement activities ‘supply-side’ variables, such as the availability of finance, skills and organisation, were more important than ‘demand-side’ variables, such as the desire for social change.³⁴ McCarthy & Zald’s classic statement of the resource mobilisation approach defines the social movement as, “set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society.”³⁵ By analogy with economics the level of preferences for social change is considered as a demand which is satisfied by the entrepreneurial activities of SMOs. Key definitions are, therefore, ‘social movement industries’ (collections of SMOs relating to one set of concerns) and ‘social movement sectors’ (all social movement industries within a given society). These structure the field in which SMOs compete to attract the resources of potential beneficiaries or ‘conscience adherents’.³⁶

³¹ Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, pp. 43-48.

³² Garner, 2002, “Olson and Beyond: Recruitment and Mobilization in the Animal Rights Movement” a paper for the *Eight International Conference on Alternative Futures and Popular Protest*, (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2nd – 4th April 2002).

³³ Crossley, *Making Sense...*, pp. 61-5.

³⁴ Leits, N. & Wolf Jr., C., 1970, *Rebellion and Authority. An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Markham, Chicago); Oberschall, A., 1973, *Social Conflict and Social Movements* (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey), ch. 4-6.

³⁵ McCarthy, J.D. & Zald, M.N., 1978, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory” in *American Journal of Sociology* 82(6), pp. 1217-18.

³⁶ McCarthy & Zald, “Resource Mobilization...” pp. 1220-27.

Understanding collective action in this way led the RMT perspective to profitably analyse “the variety and sources of resources; the relationship of social movements to the media, authorities, and other parties; and the interaction among movement organizations.”³⁷

The resources to which an SMO might have access are not evenly spread. Explaining differential access partly relates to the performance of particular SMOs. A broader focus, however, offers a valuable connection between social structural change and the micro-level assumptions about the individual agent. Two points are noteworthy in this context. First, the development of the concept of ‘political opportunity structures’ highlights the relationship between the state and society and the SMO. Political opportunity structures are defined as elements of the political environment (polity structure, governmental responsiveness, social stability) linked in such a way as to provide a context in which political behaviour takes place.³⁸ Because political opportunity structures constrain or enable social movements in particular way, the concept facilitated valuable cross-national comparisons of particular social movements.³⁹ The development of what became known as the political process (PP) approach recognises that changing political opportunities “act indirectly upon incidence and forms of conflict by changing the mobilization potential of various social formations, by changing the social milieu and ecological locus of conflict, and by changing the social control capabilities of the authorities.”⁴⁰

RMT was broadened in a second direction through explaining how particular SMOs’ utilised pre-existing networks. This is a particularly robust finding within the empirical literature.⁴¹ Close-knit groups may reduce the potential of free-riding through both selective incentives and social forms of punishment for non-participation. An ostensibly non-political network can, therefore, be a fertile ground for the recruitment of human resources. Furthermore, like the church groups and colleges studied in relation to the black civil rights movement in the US, networks often contain a resource

³⁷ McCarthy & Zald, “Resource Mobilization...”, pp. 1210.

³⁸ Eisinger, P.K., 1973, “The Conditions of Protest in American Cities” in *American Political Science Review* 67(1) pp. 11-28.

³⁹ Kitschelt, H.P., 1986, “Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies” in *British Journal of Political Science* 16(1), p. 58.

⁴⁰ Oberschall, A., 1978, “Theories of Social Conflict” in *Annual Review of Sociology* 4, pp. 291-315.

⁴¹ Oberschall, *Social Conflict...*, esp. pp. 120-4.

base of leadership, finance, physical space, affective bonds and organisational and administrative skills.⁴²

Doug McAdam's sustained work on the US civil rights movement is particularly relevant as he frequently notes the role of ideas within networks. Specifically, those who take part in protest activities frequently have intense 'ideological affiliations' for the goals of a the broader social movement as well as being integrated into appropriate pre-existing networks.⁴³ McAdam describes a process of 'cognitive liberation' in which would-be protesters must first define their experiences as injustice, overcoming the 'fundamental attribution error' of blaming either themselves or insignificant others for their woes. With a Marxian inflection, McAdam argues that those suffering injustice must also come to realise their collective strength, gaining, as a community, an 'insurgent consciousness'.⁴⁴ Cognitive liberation and movement networks interact. On the one hand, frequent contact with others involved in a political network is likely to increase one's exposure to a particular ideological stance. On the other, similarity of worldview is likely to be one reason for being in that network in any case.⁴⁵ This description of a process of psychological empowerment as a pre-requisite for collective action is intuitively appealing and connects with previous empirical work as well as receiving empirical support since.⁴⁶ The recognition of the importance of beliefs centred on injustice is hardly novel, as demonstrated in the preceding section; it is among such ideational claims that we find the roots from which the framing perspective grew.⁴⁷

⁴² McAdam, D., 1982, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago).

⁴³ McAdam, D., 1986, "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of freedom Summer" in *American Journal of Sociology* 92(1), pp. 74-76.

⁴⁴ McAdam, *Political Process...*, pp. 48-51.

⁴⁵ McAdam, "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism...".

A further connection between ideas and networks is notable. Nepstad presents convincing empirical evidence that the structures of interlocking networks, that allow for particular individuals to provide a communication channel between disparate groups, also enable the spread of ideas. The connections between networks thus provide clues to why particular ideas take hold at particular times; Nepstad, S.E., 1997, "The Process of Cognitive Liberation: Cultural Synapses, Links, and Frame Contradictions in the U.S.-Central America Peace Movement" in *Sociological Inquiry* 67(4), pp. 470-487.

⁴⁶ Piven, F. F. & Cloward, R. A., 1977, *Poor People's Movements : Why They Succeed, How They Fail*, (Pantheon Books, New York). For examples of recent applications see: Klandermans, B., 1992, "The Social Construction of Protest and Multiorganizational Fields" in Morris & Mueller, eds., *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, (Yale University Press, New Haven), pp. 77-103; Nepstad, "The Process of Cognitive Liberation...".

⁴⁷ Snow, D.A., Rochford Jr., E.B., Worden, S.K., & Benford, R.D. (1986) "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation" in *American Sociological Review* 51(4), pp. 466-7.

The study of framing processes is thus contextualised within models of social movements that attempt to provide a predictive theory of the emergence of and potential for success for particular SMOs within broader social movements. With evidence of the importance of a number of distinct processes in explaining social movement emergence and dynamics several scholars have reconsidered the synthetic potential of Smelser's 'value-added' approach as an integrative schema.⁴⁸ It is clear, however, that interpretations and perceptions, and hence, interpretative framing, appear as pervasive throughout various social movement processes.⁴⁹ For instance, the role of political opportunities must properly be understood as impacting on social movement behaviour only through the understanding that relevant actors have of those opportunities.⁵⁰ This point has received considerable empirical support.⁵¹ Furthermore, the examination of frames has led to connections with a wide range of mobilising structures where the latter refers to the material, organisational aspects of social movements.⁵² The study of interpretative frames therefore takes on a central role within broader attempts to explain social movement processes.

Interpreting Social Movements – A Preview

The potential significance of the framing perspective is heightened further in connection with a body of theory I will only briefly introduce at this point. The approaches adumbrated above are generally associated with American sociology and political science. Simultaneously a different perspective on social movements has developed among sociologists and social theorists within the European context.⁵³ Melucci characterised the distinction as that between (US) theories which sought to explain how social movement processes functioned and (European) theories more

⁴⁸ Crossley, *Making Sense...*, esp. ch. 9; Garner, R., 1996, *Contemporary Movements and Ideologies*, (McGraw-Hill, New York), pp. 62-4.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Melucci, A., 1988, "Getting Involved: Identity and Mobilization in Social Movements" in Klandermans, Kriesi & Tarrow, *From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research Across Cultures*, pp. 339-41.

⁵⁰ Gamson, W.A. & Meyer, D.S., 1996, "Framing Political Opportunity" in McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, pp. 275-290.

⁵¹ Cornfield, D.B. & Fletcher, B., 1998, "Institutional Constraints on Social Movement 'Frame Extension': Shifts in the Legislative Agenda of the American Federation of Labor, 1881-1955" in *Social Forces* 76(4), pp. 1305-1321; Stanbridge, K. (2002) "Master Frames, Political Opportunities, and Self-Determination: The Åland Islands in the Post-WWI Period" in *Sociological Quarterly* 43(4), pp. 527-552.

⁵² Nepstad, "The Process of Cognitive Liberation..."; Polletta, F., 2000, "The Structural Context of Novel Rights Claims: Southern Civil Rights Organizing, 1961-1966" in *Law and Society Review* 34(2), pp. 367-406; Nathanson, C.A., 2003, "The Skeptic's Guide to a Movement for Universal Health Insurance" in *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 28(2-3), pp. 445-474.

⁵³ Tarrow, S., 1988, "National Politics and Collective Action: Recent Theory and Research in Western Europe and the United States" in *American Review of Sociology* 14, pp. 421-40.

concerned with why particular movements emerged at particular times and what they could tell us about broader societal developments.⁵⁴ In fact, Melucci argues that these academic differences actually reflect genuine political differences between the American and European social movement landscapes.⁵⁵

The notion that the differential development of social movement research in Europe and America is due to different political traditions introduces two important concerns. First, it implies a difficulty with the very notion of creating theories of social movements that may be of general applicability. The focus on political opportunity structures, for instance, ought to offer flexibility to the researcher to apply the theory in different political contexts. To the extent that European scholars have found US theories unhelpful in analysing their local movements it suggests that despite ambitions to generalizability, the theories produced as yet, remain tied to a particular range of movements in a particular context. A second, concern is the significance of ideas. Among the US literature we will see that interpretative framing is understood primarily as a strategic process in which SMOs engage in order to attract new members to the cause. Reflecting on this, Wall argues that “movements, more so than pressure groups, are motivated by political belief, they do not construct attractive forms of ideology simply as a means of resource mobilisation. It is easy to slip ... to the assumption that activists simply spin words and images in search of donations to fund alternative forms of career politics.”⁵⁶ This relates to the division between American and European social movement research because the former tends to examine the relatively professional SMOs (that is, organisations that resemble pressure groups) whereas the latter attempts to understand whole social movements. A key purpose of this chapter and the next is to strengthen both the claims that positivistic theorisations of social movements have only limited applicability and that the interpretative frames that we may identify within social movements have a greater significance for participants than is ordinarily supposed. It is ultimately these two arguments on which my ‘reframing’ of frame analysis is based.

Returning to Melucci’s approach, he is particularly concerned with the ‘new social movements’ as challenging dominant cultural codes, rather than aiming at the

⁵⁴ Melucci, A., 1989, *Nomads of the Present. Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, (Century Hutchinson, Victoria), pp. 17-19.

⁵⁵ Melucci, A., *Nomads of the Present...*, ch. 9. This point is made from another angle by Garner, *Contemporary Movements and Ideologies*, pp. 100-103, and is related specifically to the development of frame theory by Oliver, P. & Johnston, H., 2000, “What A Good Idea! Ideology and Frames in Social Movement Research” in *Mobilization* 5(1).

⁵⁶ Wall, D., 1999, *Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement. Radical Environmentalism and Comparative Social Movements*, (Routledge, London), p. 144.

distribution of material resources. Such movements are, therefore, indicative of deeper shifts towards an information or network society.⁵⁷ Here movements not only signal broader changes but are products of them. Thus examining the broader context tells us why social movements emerge in particular forms and the significance of the movements is that they relay important signals about broader structures. To the extent that frame analysis is capable of explicating the character of the cultural challenge mounted by social movements it uncovers their significance as a commentary on contemporary social structures.

Studying the ideational content of social movements thereby offers the possibility of connecting the political and social context with the various processes described above. Naturally, one cannot simply merge the disparate approaches into a grand theory of social movements. The ‘how’ questions are being answered within a broadly positivist framework while the ‘why’ questions are associated with a more interpretative endeavour. Attempts at integration, therefore, potentially introduce a host of epistemological and ontological tensions.⁵⁸ Evaluations of the potential of a synthesis between theories of structures that affect organisations, on the one hand, and cultural impacts of broader structural change, on the other, remain mixed.⁵⁹ In the remainder of this chapter I will examine the current literature on interpretative frames and lay out some theoretical and methodological benefits to drawing frame analysis away from its positivist roots and into a more hermeneutic project. In chapter two I set out a rather different argument for this approach, suggesting that the diversity ideational claims within the current ‘movement of movements’ demands a different conception of interpretative frames from that so far developed in the literature.

3. IDENTIFYING THE FRAME

To specify the character of interpretative frames I will begin with this definition from a recent overview of the literature:

⁵⁷ Melucci, A., 1996, *Challenging Codes. Collective Action in the Information Age* (CUP, Cambridge).

⁵⁸ Steinberg, M.W., 1998, “Tilting the frame: Considerations on collective action framing from a discursive turn.” in *Theory and Society* 27, pp. 845-872.

⁵⁹ On the optimistic side, see: Benford, R.D., 1997, “An Insider’s Critique of the Social Movement Framing Perspective” in *Sociological Inquiry* 67(4), pp. 409-430; Zald, M.N., 1992, “Looking Backward to Look Forward: Reflections on the Past and Future of the Resource Mobilization Research Program” in Morris & Mueller, eds., *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, pp. 326-348. On the pessimistic side, compare Jenkins, J.C., 1983, “Why Do Peasants Rebel - Structural And Historical Theories Of Modern Peasant Rebellions” in *American Journal of Sociology* 88 (3), pp. 487-514; Cohen, J.L., 1985, “Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements” in *Social Research* 52(4), pp. 663-716.

“Frames’ are collective patterns of interpretation with which certain definitions of problems, causal attributions, demands, justifications and value-orientations are brought together in a more or less consistent framework for the purpose of explaining facts, substantiating criticism and legitimating claims.”⁶⁰

This draws our attention to three important elements. First, frames are often conceived of as an entity belonging to the collective level. This, however, immediately raises difficulties because the concept was developed on the grounds that it has a basis in individual cognitive structures. I shall explore this problem in the second sub-section below. Second, frames have a range of content consisting of beliefs and values, structured in a way that fulfils certain functions for those using them. I will argue that exploration of the content of frames has either been oversimplified, or underplayed. I outline a more sensitive approach to exploring the content of frames at a level of abstraction that allows us to connect particular movement instantiations to longer traditions of protest, on the one hand, and more general social structural changes on the other. I will propose that the concept of ‘orientational frames’ may fulfil this function. Third, frames are employed by agents (both individual and collective) for various social movement tasks. It is this latter point that is most thoroughly covered in the social movement literature and indicates the conception of frames specific to social movements. And it is this to which I will immediately turn.

Strategic Framing

There are understood to be two sides to the frame, metaphorically distinguishable as being akin to a picture or window frame and a house frame or scaffold.⁶¹ The key functions of frames can be related to this metaphorical distinction. So, on the one hand, frames define boundaries around what is important, thereby allowing a group to focus on the ‘relevant’ detail. On the other hand, frames provide a basic structure on which more detailed arguments and information are hung. Frames situate information. That is, when a frame is available to both speaker and listener then adumbration of one or more parts by a speaker increases the salience of other elements and their connections in the listener: frames offer discursive shortcuts.⁶² In a recent intervention, David Snow added a third property to collective action frames, namely, that they are transformative

⁶⁰ Rucht, D. & Neidhardt, F., 2002, “Towards a ‘Movement Society’? On the Possibilities of Institutionalizing Social Movements” in *Social Movement Studies* 1(1), p. 11..

⁶¹ Creed, W.E.D., Langstraat, J.A. & Scully, M.A., 2002, “A Picture of the Frame. Frame Analysis as Technique and as Politics” in *Organizational Research Methods* 5(1), pp. 34-35; Davies, S., 2002, “The Paradox of Progressive Education. A Frame Analysis” in *Sociology of Education* 75(4), pp. 270-1.

⁶² Fisher, K., 1997, “Locating Frames in the Discursive Universe” in *Sociological Research Online* 2(3).

“as in the transformation or reconfiguration of aspects of one’s biography ... or in the transformation of routine grievances or misfortunes into injustices or mobilizing grievances”.⁶³ The collective action frame necessarily highlights injustices in the world. However, the most useful aspect of this quotation is the reference to biography. As well as helping us understand the world around us, the interpretative frame also aids our self-understanding; bringing particular aspects to the foreground and situating them among a number of related concepts.

The interpretative frame is considered to be a facet of all social life. However, frames have gained particular attention in relation to social movements because one of the most obvious functions of movements is to make claims about the world and attempt to persuade others of the veracity of them. Social movements, therefore, can be considered as a potential source of new interpretative frames. Gamson’s description of the ‘collective action frame’ is among the most influential attempts to describe a generic structure of ideas found in social movements. He suggests that a collective action frame exists when people articulate three ideational components. First, an injustice component is required which defines a problem in an emotion-laden way. Second, an agency component refers to the possibility of political action having an impact on the problem. Third, an identity component defines both the ‘we’ of interested people, and perhaps more importantly, a ‘they’ who hold opposing values.⁶⁴ Following Snow, I shall use ‘collective action frame’ to refer to the concept as used in the social movement literature and use ‘interpretative frames’, or simply ‘frames’, when describing the more general, social-psychological properties of such.⁶⁵

The bulk of social movement frame analyses have, in either historical or contemporary context, examined the framing activities of SMOs.⁶⁶ Here it is the process of framing, rather than the content of the frame, on which analysis is focused. The SMO is often considered to be a conscious agent of framing; demonstrating varying degrees of skill in manipulating the presentation of particular issues in order to bring bystanders to their view, make some positions appear illegitimate and ultimately force policy change. The manipulation of discourse through strategic framing appears to be required for the self-reproduction of organisations: “We assume that social movements

⁶³ Snow, “Framing Processes...”, p. 384.

⁶⁴ Gamson, W.A., 1992, *Talking Politics*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge), pp. 7-8.

⁶⁵ Snow, D.A., 2004, “Framing Processes, Ideology, and Discursive Fields” in Snow, Soule & Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, p. 380-413.

⁶⁶ Polletta, F., 1997, “Culture and Its Discontents: Recent Theorising on the Cultural Dimensions of Protest” in *Sociological Inquiry* 67(4), pp. 439.

cannot exist in the long term without the promotion of convincing movement-specific frames.”⁶⁷

Snow *et al.* influentially outlined four processes of ‘frame alignment’: bridging, amplification, extension and transformation.⁶⁸ Each involves the reconstruction of collective action frames on the basis of expectations about the effect this would have on the general public. Because interpretative frames are conceived as having an existence at the individual, cognitive level, each of these processes entails an SMO seeking a degree of fit between the collective action frames they portray and the interpretative frames already used by bystanders to make sense of the world. Snow and Benford take their work on frame alignment further by attempting to offer an explanation of how exactly frame alignment can produce positive movement outcomes. They develop the concept of ‘master frames’, which are simply a larger scale, more generic form of collective action frame: “master frames are to movement-specific collective action frames as paradigms are to finely tuned theories.”⁶⁹ The particular explanatory potential of the master frame is laid out in connection with Sidney Tarrow’s work on cycles of protest. Tarrow, among others, found that protest movements occur clustered through time, and spread geographically from an ‘epicentre’ of protest.⁷⁰ Snow and Benford suggested that this could be explained by the development of a particular master frame developed by ‘early riser’ movements. The development of the master frame (‘civil rights’ is perhaps the most solidly applied example) offers a cultural tool which could then subsequently be used in different contexts by different social movements. That is, other SMOs, having perceived the success of the master frame in connecting with the cultural values of the general public, then build their own collective action frames with direct reference to that master frame.

The concept has been applied in a number of different ways, leading to some uncertainty over its meaning.⁷¹ There is an overemphasis on the creative role of early risers in the initial description that Snow appears, later, to accept. He claims that in empirical application of the concept, scholars found the master frame useful, rather, in describing sets of ideas with broader applicability than the particular SMO.⁷² This may be closer to how Gerhards and Rucht, for instance, apply the concept in investigating

⁶⁷ Rucht & Neidhardt, “Towards a ‘Movement Society’?...”, p. 11.

⁶⁸ Snow *et al.*, “Frame Alignment Processes...”.

⁶⁹ Snow, D.A. & Benford, R.D., 1992, “Master Frames and Cycles of Protest” in Morris & Mueller, eds., *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, pp. 138.

⁷⁰ Tarrow, *Power in Movement*.

⁷¹ Benford, R.D., 1997, “An Insider’s Critique of the Social Movement Framing Perspective” in *Sociological Inquiry* 67(4), pp. 412-3.

⁷² Snow, “Framing Processes...”, p. 390.

coalitional movements opposing the IMF in Germany.⁷³ There, a number of groups had consciously constructed a text to which a wide range of other groups would sign up to. The master frame retains the purposively constructed nature that is descriptive of most understandings of the collective action frame but is understood as simply existing at a broader level; that is, its content is less specific and therefore a greater number of groups can align their collective action frames with it. Broader still, some scholars view the master frame rather in the light of Gamson's notion of 'cultural themes'. The main definition of the latter is that they transcend specific issues and suggest a larger worldview.⁷⁴ Indeed, the case of the 'civil rights' frame suggests that rather than constructing a master frame anew, activists included elements of framing that existed in broader liberal-democratic culture around the rule of law and the principle of equality within it. That is, they directly connected with notions that were created, not in social movements, but within mainstream political discourse. Exactly the same can be said of, for example, struggles for national self-determination. The strategy here lies in being able to utilise broadly agreed cultural values in order to transcend current practices.⁷⁵ There are three clarifications of the idea of strategic alignment processes that are illustrative, before I move on to examine their foundations in social-psychology.

First, groups that do not choose to promote their interpretations with some awareness of bystanders' frames are unlikely to grow. This understanding is quite common among social movement activists.⁷⁶ Consequently those groups that do not engage in frame alignment processes are rare. However, participants in some groups may be less interested in gaining support, and more interested in targeting their opponents in a forceful, direct manner. A stark example would be animal rights activists who harass and assault individuals involved in vivisection. The way one is understood to be acting may be less important to participants, than the concrete results of their actions.⁷⁷ Alignment processes do not, therefore, seem to be a ubiquitous feature of social movement activities, merely a common one. Furthermore, because part of the content of a collective action frame is seen to be a conception of agency

⁷³ Gerhards, J. & Rucht, D., 1992, "Mesomobilization: Organizing and Framing in Two Protest Campaigns in West Germany" in *American Journal of Sociology* 98(3), pp. 555-95.

⁷⁴ Gamson, W., 1988, "Political Discourse and Collective Action" in Klandermans, Kriesi & Tarrow, *From Structure to Action: Comparing social Movement Research Across Cultures*.

⁷⁵ Tarrow, *Power in Movement*.

⁷⁶ The role of activists' interpretations of the views of 'the public' are described in case studies on both the anti-war movement and the social forum movement presented in chapters seven and eight of this thesis.

⁷⁷ Indeed, this is considered quite central by some activists utilising the 'direct action frame' I describe in chapter four.

(‘how we can change the world’) the content of the frame itself is likely to determine to what degree a movement group aims at aligning its collective action frame with outsiders. This signals a connection between the contents of particular collective action frame and ‘repertoires of contention’, i.e. the distinctive sets of tactics that SMOs may employ. This connection will be explored further below.

The second clarification is based on the fact that a movement is “a field of actors, not a unified entity”.⁷⁸ While we might accept that consensus on a collective action frame existing within a particular organisation, this cannot be assumed to be representative of a movement as a whole since movements are typically made up of a plurality of organisations. Indeed, the RMT approach gained credence through examining social movements as ‘multi-organisational fields’ that generated dynamics of competition. The individual bystander may be expected, therefore, to come across a range of collective action frames within a single movement. This is clearly the case with the movements contesting globalisation.⁷⁹ Thus, strategic framing by SMOs is, at best, only part of the story of alignment between collective action frames and individual’s understandings. As a result we cannot expect examination of strategic framing to give us access to the full range of political beliefs and values within the movement. To the extent that we are interested in the ideational basis of individuals’ decisions to participate in a social movement we therefore need a supplementary, or alternative, approach.

Third, if an individual is not already a participant in some movement, their access to collective action frames is usually mediated through some third party. Many SMOs are dependent on mass media coverage. The knowledge of mediation often has a strong affect on both the actions and statements coming from SMOs, and the possible interpretations for bystanders and constituents who become aware of such activities through those channels.⁸⁰ SMOs find themselves in a relationship of ‘asymmetrical dependence’ when attempting to utilise mainstream media; that is, while the SMOs have a particular need for the media, the media has no particular need for them. It is apparent that the nature of the political project that a group is engaged in, that is, its political content, determines the strategies available to the group when dealing with this unequal, structured relationship. Carroll and Ratner argue that groups with aims

⁷⁸ Gamson & Meyer, “Framing Political Opportunity”, pp. 283-4.

⁷⁹ Welsh, I. & Chesters, G., 2001, “Re-Framing Social Movements. Margins, Meanings and Governance” in *Cardiff University School of Social Sciences - Working Paper Series*.

⁸⁰ Zald, M.N., 1996, “Culture, Ideology and Strategic Framing” in McAdam McCarthy & Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, pp. 270; Rohlinger, D.A., 2002, “Framing the Abortion Debate: Organizational Resources, Media Strategies and Movement-Counter-Movement Dynamics” in *Sociological Quarterly* 43(4), pp. 482-4.

that can be described in terms of universal needs, like those working on environmental issues, can justify their newsworthiness by the broad relevance of their project. Groups with very particular interests that are not understood in universal terms, like those defending particular cultures, may have to resort to the kinds of tactics that will attract the media whether or not they are interested in the ideas themselves.⁸¹ This point offers a little more evidence for the connection between repertoires of contention and collective action frames.

In sum, while strategic ‘frame alignment’ captures a part of the activity of some (though by no means all) SMOs, its focus on strategically manipulated collective action frames may mislead us as to the actual political beliefs of participants. This becomes problematic within the positivist project of frame analysis because, as I shall now describe, the causally effective nature of interpretative frames is supposed to lie at the individual level. Most problematically, for my own purposes, it focuses only on the ideas that collectives agree to portray without investigating where those ideas have come from, namely, the range of individual interpretations of a situation.

The Social-Psychological Foundation of Interpretative Frames

The interpretative frame was first defined for application to social movements, using a concept borrowed by Snow *et al.* from Erving Goffman’s *Frame Analysis*. Quoting Goffman they explain frames as: “‘schemata of interpretation’ that enable individuals ‘to locate, perceive, identify, and label’ occurrences within their life space and the world at large.”⁸² The language of ‘schemata’ and the related concept of ‘scripts’ remain central to understanding cognition in social psychology where they help to explain how actors decide on appropriate behaviour in novel situations. Schemata may cover a myriad of topics from the stereotyping of ethnic minorities to the mundane activities of our everyday lives.⁸³ The interpretative frame building on this literature is, therefore, presented as a cognitive shortcut utilised by the individual to order their perceptions of the world.⁸⁴ To paraphrase Donati: rather than understanding an object or event through reconstruction from its component parts, we actually assign a satisfactory definition to a complex whole that, in turn, enables us to understand the

⁸¹ Carroll, W. & Ratner, R.S., 1999, “Media Strategies and Political Projects: A Comparative Study of Social Movements” in *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 24(1), pp. 29-31.

⁸² Snow *et al.*, “Frame Alignment Processes...”, p. 464; Goffman, E., 1974, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience*, (Northeastern University Press, Boston).

⁸³ Baron, R.A. & Byrne, D., 2003, *Social Psychology, Tenth Edition*, (Allyn & Bacon, Boston), pp. 80-82.

⁸⁴ Johnston, 1995, “A Methodology for Frame Analysis: From Discourse to Cognitive Schemata” in Johnston & Klandermans, *Social Movements and Culture*, pp. 235-7.

component parts as having an identifiable meaning; “perceptive data are ‘grouped’ together under the heading of one subsuming category, a larger ‘frame’ which provides them with a recognizable structure and meaning.”⁸⁵

There are dangers, however, in the sociologist taking too readily from the psychologist. It is ontologically attractive to think that there might, at some deep structural level of the brain, be a physical representation of an interpretative framework. However, it is impossible to simply assume an isomorphic relationship between enunciable ideas and physical brain structure. More importantly, for the student of social movements the idea is epistemologically and methodologically troublesome. An individual interpretative frame (schema) is, by definition, privy only to the individual. Even for them the effects are indirect, rather than resulting from conscious knowledge. One cannot become, as it were, part of that individual to learn the frame as one can (with some methodological caveats) become part of an organisation that shares a collective action frame. What numerous applications of the framing approach have been able to show is that collectives in social movements appear to come to a degree of common understanding about particular salient issues. This understanding, we as researchers (or as activists) can attempt to access.

The solution for students of social movements at present is seeking an understanding of interpretative processes in movements *as if* the individual holds certain, reasonably structured interpretative frames. It is certainly the case that individuals come to communication with certain preconceived beliefs, values and so on that affect their subsequent communications. However, the only context we have for examining frames is communicative. The impact for the study of strategic framing is that its assumptions about the efficacy of frames when explaining mobilisation or movement are just that, tempering somewhat the claimed significance of this link between the micro level of individual beliefs and the meso level of social movement activities.

Furthermore, the dualism of conceiving of the interpretative frame at both the individual and collective level raises a deep problem of the conception of agency within the framing literature. Framing is posited to be causally effective because the issues raised by the SMO appeal to some set of ideas held by some bystanders. To the degree that the SMO aligns its claims with some more broadly accepted set of beliefs the greater will be its success at mobilising resources. But “It is not clear whether actors largely are synchronizing frames or ideologies provided to them within a larger political

⁸⁵ Donati, P.R., 1992, “Political Discourse Analysis” in Diani, M. & Eyerman, R., *Studying Collective Action*, pp. 140-1.

culture, or whether they creatively are reformulating ‘ideational elements’.”⁸⁶ Frame alignment assumes a rather limited level of agency for the bystander with respect to interpretative frames. Yet, simultaneously, the members of the SMO (‘constituents’) have chosen to present their issues in a particular way, assuming a wide degree of control over their collective action frames. At some point the bystander becomes a constituent and, on this model, will gain control over their interpretative framing. This problem plainly highlights the deficiency of the bystander-constituent distinction when faced with the rapidly changing field in which social movements operate and the many shades of grey that may colour an individual’s assessment of their ‘membership’ of a movement. The individual-collective dualism also raises the larger question of the extent to which any agents, including those in well-resourced SMOs, have the freedom to meld their own understandings in a particular way. It is clear that the presentation of ideas may be manipulated, within some broad limits of credibility. Yet the presentation of ideas in a particular way does not imply the internalisation of those ideas on behalf of either the author of that presentation or the recipient.

Growing out of the study of ‘supply-side’ variables, the framing literature has focused on the way that SMOs can offer understanding as an incentive to participation in a movement. However, “Frames are not objects or utensils in the objective world, which agents can pick up and use like tools. They are constitutive aspects of the subjectivity of social agents which those agents cannot get behind or detach themselves from.”⁸⁷ While claiming to bring the realm of beliefs and values into a theory of social movements criticised for its ignorance of culture, the focus on strategic framing has in fact pushed beliefs themselves to the periphery of its own approach. Simultaneously, its attempt to slot the interpretative frame into an explanatory theory that bridges the micro and meso levels of analysis is unconvincing. The fundamental understanding of schemata is that ideas may be organised into broader interpretative frames which provide understanding by locating individual elements within a constellation that, as a whole, make sense. This remains an appealing notion, and one that potentially dovetails with sociological work on discourses and narratives as well as continuing work in social psychology.⁸⁸ In the following section I ‘reframe’ the notion of framing, bringing it into an interpretative endeavour that, I argue, is suitable for understanding the diverse plurality of meanings that are presented within contemporary social movement activity.

⁸⁶ Steinberg, “Tilting the frame...”, p. 849.

⁸⁷ Crossley, *Making Sense...*, p. 141.

⁸⁸ Fisher, “Locating Frames...”.

4. CENTRING THE IDEA: A DEFINITION OF THE ORIENTATIONAL FRAME

In the following the ‘orientational frame’ is described as identifying a justificatory worldview which may be utilised by social movement participants to create understanding of significant events and processes of which they are aware. The contents of an orientational frame may be directed to a range of political issues including: political processes at a variety of levels; moral values; visions for long-term change; the agency of the individual or the group in a variety of fields of action; and the relationship of other social actors to different sets of ideas.⁸⁹ The frame may be visualised as a web of interconnected beliefs and values. Some ideas may be more central, and have more connections than others. Importantly, ideas are given meaning not through a simple linguistic representation, but rather through their connections with a range of other ideas.⁹⁰ Particular ideas may be imbued with moral force for those who believe them. The orientational frame does not, therefore, simply describe a cognitive process valuable for understanding, but one that also provides a drive to act in particular ways and a basis for an emotional reaction to events or the beliefs of others.

The orientational frame is an analytical construct and should, therefore, simplify the ‘really existing’ beliefs and values to which individuals subscribe. Within an interpretative process the orientational frame is useful to the extent that it makes sense of the proclamations and behaviour of individual and collective actors. The critiques presented above suggest that we should not assume that all individuals within a movement share exactly the same set of ideas. Neither should we assume that the ideas are ordered in a manner similar to the logical systems used by philosophers and theorists. Rather, individuals gather their ideas from multiple sites: their biographies, the events they’ve been involved in, the groups they’ve joined or been thrust into, the groups they’re opposed to; in short, the infinite variety of life circumstances that brings individuality to the human condition. If the concept of the orientational frame is to bring these multitudinous contextual factors into a simplified form then it must be an abstraction. Individuals may use multiple signifiers to convey the same meaning; or the same words and phrases to convey multiple significations. In the processes of abstraction – an attempt to corral this herd of ideas into a simplified structure – some

⁸⁹ I have not found it helpful to limit the contents of the frame to a formulaic description of injustice, agency and identity as found in Gamson’s collective action frames, although all of these types of element do, at times, appear.

⁹⁰ This point neatly articulates, on the one hand, the understanding of meaning in cognitive structures described above, and on the other, recent work on ideologies, described below. In particular, my understanding of meaning in this context rests on Michael Freedén’s work on ideologies which, in turn, links the fields of political theory and linguistics.

ideas can be penned together in a way that makes sense of movement activity and discourse. Others refuse to submit. It is through this process that we begin to find the boundaries of an orientational frame; boundaries appear where the connections between elements become less referential or reinforcing and more distant or divisive.

As we will see throughout the thesis, movement protagonists' belief structures are complex, varied and, at times, contradictory. Even within the abstracted orientational frames there will, therefore, be tensions between elements. The identification of such tensions is highly illuminating when attempting to understand particular movement dynamics. Furthermore, no frame exists in isolation and individuals' beliefs about orientational frames utilised by other people (perhaps described as ideologies or dogmas) help to give their own belief-structure solidity.⁹¹ The tensions within and between frames can lead to intensely fractious political behaviour. The orientational frame represents, therefore, a field of struggle in itself. While this point is primarily developed in an analysis largely located within the field of social movement activities, it has broader relevance. It is hardly novel to note that discourse can represent both the exertion of power and a field of struggle.⁹² To the degree that orientational frames can be identified in all political behaviour then doing so illuminates those battles.

Because the evaluation of the use of particular orientational frames is dependent on the understanding it creates of particular strips of activity, the value of the concept 'orientational frame' can only be established in empirical application. In the second and third parts of the thesis I will describe the results of my ethnographic research. Among Sheffield activists involved in movements contesting globalisation I identify three prevalent orientational frames: the revolutionary socialist frame, the direct action frame and radical liberal frame. These frames are not all encompassing with relation to individual activists or ideas expressed, but I present evidence that these frames are particularly significant. In Part III I examine these frames as utilised by activists in two periods of coalitional activity, both noted for their diversity of participation: the anti-war movement and the social forum movement. Because my interpretative approach can only be fully evaluated after such empirical application the following will not attempt to hypothesise the explanatory potential of the 'orientational frame'. Rather, I will mark out the conceptual territory which the orientational frame covers, and give a description of the way it may be utilised in research. In doing so, it is possible to further reflect on the literatures within which this concept is located.

⁹¹ This point indicates the conceptual similarity between interpretative frames and collective identity, discussion of which is postponed until chapter two.

⁹² Fisher, "Locating Frames..."; Steinberg, "Tilting the frame...".

Finding the Level

By describing the orientational frame as an abstraction from common individual beliefs I am attempting to move away from the tendency to describe the 'shared' beliefs of some collection of individuals. This is a subtle distinction from the notion of the 'collective action frame'. There are two ways that we can attempt to describe the ideas an individual may hold without simply presenting, in full, the transcript of a long and in-depth interview with that individual.⁹³ We can, firstly, shift our attention from the individuals' thoughts to the groups' 'thoughts'; this is usually described as a change in levels of analysis. This move requires a simplification and reduction of the number of ideas presented, so that it can be demonstrated to reflect a set of ideas on which the collective is in agreement. Secondly, we can shift our attention from the particular representations of ideas which our empirical research presents us with, to implied meanings and connections, tensions and contradictions that lay behind the ideas communicated. This move progresses through increasing the complexity of that with which we are presented, to a simplification of these ideas for the purposes of presentation.

The first approach is that usually taken within the social movements literature around the concept of collective action frames. These are intended to convey the ideas that a group holds. Or rather, the ideas that all members of the group agree upon. The production of position papers and policies is taken as an indication of agreement within the group and the assumption is that individual members should all express these same ideas when the opportunity arises. In short, the collective action frame takes us from the individual level of analysis to the collective. As explained above, this is not in keeping with the origin of the concept of 'frame'. Ontologically, it can only be based on the notion that members of the group all share a particular set of ideas on a particular set of topics. This generally leads the researcher to a very specific set of ideas, expressed in the language used by the particular SMO under study. The concept of the 'master frame' is an attempt to broaden out the framing perspective, and to link it to sets of ideas that were more widely available, thus shifting the level of analysis again. Essentially, it is a step to a much broader collective, no longer defined by the SMO. However, the definition of the group necessarily becomes rather vague. This is problematic since the predictive explanatory model, which intends to link multiple

⁹³ In fact, even here there are methodological difficulties if the conception of schemata presented above is broadly accurate, since the presentation of an idea by either the interviewer or the respondent 'keys' both discussants' frames; i.e. raises some elements to the surface and lets others sink into the background.

levels of analysis, requires one to infer from group membership adherence to a particular set of beliefs.

In fact, at any level the assumed link between the projected beliefs of an SMO and the actual beliefs of individual members is dubious because notional agreement can be created in ways that does not require genuine consensus. In an electoral structure of decision-making, for instance, many participants may disagree with the statements made by an organisation while in continuing agreement with the process through which they were decided on. In any case, as I will describe in chapter two, my own research subject is characterised by ideational diversity. The individual-collective link, while it may hold up for particular small organisations, is only likely to hinder understanding in such a situation. Indeed, both chapters in Part III evidence the fact that statements from organisations with which I worked rarely represented the views of all the participants. Sensitivity to internal conflict is a particular benefit of the combination of ethnographic methodology with this analytical approach to social movement ideas.

The second approach to moving away from the detailed description of individual beliefs to some sort of generalisation is that we can make an analytical abstraction. Here we must give up the attempt to describe an idea-set that many (or indeed any) individuals will whole-heartedly agree to. Our abstraction must, nevertheless, be connected to the real world of activists' beliefs and values. That is to say: the component parts of the orientational frame must all appear in activist discourse. Since it is the structure of ideas that give particular elements their meaning, the component parts of the orientational frame really encompass the connections between ideas rather than particular beliefs about the world or particular moral values. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of a belief that can have substantial meaning without, in fact, connecting two or more subjects. Connections may consist in arguments that progress in a logical manner or associations of ideas that frequently occur together. The latter, refers to elements that appear as ideationally proximate yet whose logical connection is unclear or may be expressed in a myriad of different ways. The inclusion of ideational connections in one orientational frame is valid to the extent that they appear in activist discourse. Because the orientational frame is an abstraction, however, its empirical base may be found in the speech or text produced by a variety of activists at a variety of times.

As argued above, the individual interpretative frame is unknowable because at any time some parts are latent and others prominent. As Thomas Scheff comments in a critique of the tendency for misunderstanding of Goffman's work, "The difficulty of

measuring latent frames could partially explain the gradual theoretical shift toward a conceptualization of frames as being more actively adopted and manufactured.”⁹⁴ While not explicitly oriented towards social movement theory this quotation clearly points out the direction such scholarship has taken. The active process of framing issues in a particular way for a particular audience is relatively easy to perceive as it becomes ossified in the various textual artefacts that one can find within a movement. Yet here we do not detect the frame in its entirety since we can only perceive those aspects of the frame that are, for particular purposes, intentionally put to the fore. While this is certainly valuable data we must reject the notion that it accurately reflects any individuals’ (let alone a group of individuals’) full set of beliefs. The hermeneutic endeavour need not make any such substantive claims as to the ontological status of the tools we use to understand the world. Or rather, the ontological status of our tools is simply that their existence is an artefact of our research. They must nevertheless be grounded in empirical research in order to offer an understanding of a particular situation that makes sense. As this thesis will demonstrate, such tools may both increase understanding of a substantive area of human activity, and present a model of analysis that is reproducible in other contexts.

Frames Over Framing

The framing approach has done much to bring the concrete ideas that drive movement participants back into our sociological understandings. Having problematized the ideational processes within social movements we have some strong indications of how such work is carried out. With ‘signification work’ now in the foreground of social movement studies, it has become even more important to consider the signified itself. Taking part in a debate over the role of ideology in such research (discussed below) Oliver and Johnston state this position clearly:

“Of course, all of social life is emergent, negotiated, and contextual ... but to insist on the primacy of emergent processes above all ... limits all research to descriptions of process. To ... talk about how frames or ideologies relate to other features of social life, it is necessary to make the verbs of process in to nouns of ideas.”⁹⁵

Our understanding of social movements, and of the societies in which they arise, will become richer if we accept the importance of the content, along with the process. My primary positive justification for this is simply that what we are examining are political, as well as sociological phenomena. Echoing the Meluccian distinction between the how

⁹⁴ Scheff, T.J., 2005, “The Structure of Context: Deciphering *Frame Analysis*” in *Sociological Theory* 23(4), pp. 368-385.

⁹⁵ Oliver, P. & Johnston, H., 2000, “Reply to Snow and Benford” in *Mobilization* 5(1), pp. 62.

questions and the why questions of social movements, it is still the case that the former have received by far the greatest body of systematic study.⁹⁶ The framing approach offers the beginnings of a more sensitive way to 'listen' to social movements; "Social movements must be understood on their own terms: namely, they are what they say they are. Their practices (and foremost their discursive practices) are their self-definition."⁹⁷ To be sure, such discursive practices require analytical work to understand the significance of social movements; nevertheless, they offer reflections on the organisation of social, political and economic life which are of value to all those for whom a normative appraisal of current political and social structures is necessary.

Secondary justifications for the importance of the message of movements come from several directions, but all hang on the potential to increase our sensitivity to the multiplicity of messages within any movement. From the sociological angle understanding the various bases of the political projects in which movements engage will feed back into our attempts to understand the processes - the how questions - of social movements. As indicated above, the content of frames affects the many processes in which social movements are engaged. From a public policy angle it is now necessary to accept the social movement as an institution of social change or defence.⁹⁸ In discussing the historical background of the radical liberal frame in chapter five I describe a process through which certain organisations have become increasingly politicised within the formal institutions of 'global civil society', yet have turned increasingly to social movement activities and so operate in both fields. But the multi-vocal nature of social movements makes it difficult to predict reactions to policy innovation and implementation. Understanding the many messages from social movements engaged in a contentious issue area ought to aid the creation of policy, and the understanding of the process in hindsight. Frame analysis has already been taken into a range of substantive policy areas, and improvement in the tools of frame analysis can potentially, therefore, have a broader impact.⁹⁹ Finally, from the perspective of the

⁹⁶ Melucci, A., 1989, *Nomads of the Present. Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, (Temple University Press, Philadelphia), pp. 21-2.

⁹⁷ Castells, M., 1997, *The Power of Identity. The Information Age Volume 2: Economy, Society and Culture*, (Blackwell, Oxford), pp. 69-70.

⁹⁸ Nathanson, C.A., 2003, "The Skeptic's Guide to a Movement for Universal Health Insurance" in *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 28(2-3), pp. 445-474.

⁹⁹ Other fields include: public health (Lawrence, R.G., 2004, "Framing obesity - The Evolution of News Discourse on a Public Health Issue" in *Harvard International Journal of Press-Politics* 9(3), pp. 56-75); education (Davies, 2002, "The Paradox of Progressive Education..."); management (Creed, Langstraat & Scully, 2002, "A Picture of the Frame..."); and international relations (Hafner-Burton, E. & Pollack, M.A., 2002, "Mainstreaming Gender in Global Governance" in *European Journal of International Relations* 8(3), pp. 339-373). In these fields advocacy is seen to take place in a form that is, in terms of signification processes, analogous to social movement contention.

engaged researcher, the focus on message and the relationships between messages, offers interesting potential for active research within the current general movements. Elements of these movements, most visible in the social forums described in chapter eight, are consciously striving to bring together and debate a variety of political positions. Focus on the content of the orientational frame can offer a position from which one can gain deeper understanding of a range of perspectives in relation to each other. It becomes possible to highlight what is at stake in competition between the ideational patterns, which differences between positions might be central, and which are peripheral.

Frames and Ideologies

Interpretative frames undoubtedly have a very close conceptual linkage with ideologies. Snow and colleagues use the terms almost interchangeably, and consciously develop their description of three key framing tasks (diagnosis, prognosis and motivation) from Wilson's decomposition of ideology.¹⁰⁰ These authors and others have been criticised for failing to distinguish between frames and ideologies, resulting in conceptual opacity.¹⁰¹ However, the debate has been relatively unproductive; Snow's most recent contribution, for instance, simply asserts that ideologies are variable phenomena and that the relationship between ideologies and collective action frames requires empirical study.¹⁰² In describing ideologies it is necessary to simplify a massive area of study; I therefore choose movement-focused criteria to judge some rival conceptualisations of ideology. Two distinct viewpoints may be initially assessed for their utility for frame analysis: the critical approach and the political science approach. These are the conceptions utilised within the social movement literature and will therefore ground consideration of those recent debates. I will introduce a third approach to ideology, Freedman's 'ideological morphology', and through this delineate exactly where the concept of orientational frames fits in relation to ideology and collective action frames.

The critical approach to ideologies has had, in truth, as many guises as it has proponents. That the critical edge remains central to conceptions of ideology is witnessed by the encyclopaedic definition as: "a collection of beliefs and values held by an individual or group for other than purely epistemic reasons".¹⁰³ Jorge Larraín

¹⁰⁰ Wilson, J., 1973, *Introduction to Social Movements*, (Basic Books, New York).

¹⁰¹ Fisher, "Locating Frames..."; Steinberg, "Tilting the frame...".

¹⁰² Snow, D.A., 2004, "Framing Processes, Ideology, and Discursive Fields" in Snow, Soule & Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, p. 399.

¹⁰³ Railton, P., 1995, "Ideology" in Honderich, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, pp. 392-3.

extensively charts developments in the concept, finding that it has been considered an antithesis to science as it lacks positivistic standards of rationality and objectivity with regards to accepted knowledge. Alternatively, science has been branded as a form of ideology itself. Where it has been (within Habermasian thought) it is as a criticism of science for the instrumental nature of its work and science's inability to consider the acceptability of the ends to which it is put. Another critical strand sees ideology as a form of knowledge that stems from class position. With roots in Marx, the pejorative conception of ideology has been variously considered to apply to all class-based thinking or to bourgeois science as distinct from the thinking of the conscious working class.¹⁰⁴ What ties all these approaches together is the perception of ideology as an aberration from rational thought. While this aspect may usefully highlight one component of ideology (that it can be coherent without being strictly logical) the critical conception would require some stretching to be applicable to the sets of beliefs carried within current social movements. Against the latter strand, contemporary social movements take a huge range of social bases, and participants may be consciously opposed to a class based analysis. Furthermore, as they are intrinsically in conflict with the status quo, ideologies in social movements clearly do not take, as their source, attempts to justify the current distribution of resources. Against the former strand, in social movement studies we need not seek a rationalisable understanding of any particular ideology, but to treat them as unique analytical categories that inform an actor's judgement.

It may be that the conception of ideologies described above is the main reason that ideologies have lacked attention within the framing literature; Oliver and Johnston, for instance, explicitly call for a non-pejorative conception of ideology.¹⁰⁵ For these authors, what I refer to as the political science approach to ideologies appears the obvious alternative, and it is almost certainly the one with which US social movement scholars are most familiar.¹⁰⁶ Here, ideology is understood as, "idea complexes containing beliefs ... which support or contest political arrangements and processes, as well as providing plans of action for public political institutions; and in doing so they act as devices for mobilizing mass political activity".¹⁰⁷ As Freedon explains, this conception has been utilised in order to bring a positivist stance to the cataloguing and classification of various ideological traditions. In most uses, ideologies are considered to have a weight

¹⁰⁴ Larrain, J., 1979, *The Concept of Ideology*, (Hutchinson, London), ch. 6.

¹⁰⁵ Oliver, P., & Johnston, H., 2000, "What A Good Idea! Ideology and Frames in Social Movement Research" in *Mobilization* 5(1), p. 39.

¹⁰⁶ See Zald, 1996, "Culture, Ideology and Strategic Framing", p. 262.

¹⁰⁷ Freedon, M., 1996, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford), p. 16.

and tradition that collective action frames do not. Collective action frames are temporary solutions, and the focus on strategic framing suggests they are somehow less deeply held than ideologies are normally considered to be. Because of the conceptual focus on processes of frame construction, some argue that “Frames and ideologies are related concepts, of course, and overlap somewhat in their empirical referents, but each points to different dimensions of social construction. Very roughly, framing points to process, while ideology points to content.”¹⁰⁸ Ideologies may also be considered as a ‘cultural tool’ which, among others, provides the ingredients for the creation of collective action frames; this point, from another angle, will appear closer to the mark.¹⁰⁹

The ‘cataloguing and classification’ project from which the political science approach to ideologies stems aims to create from a multiplicity of ideas, a single, coherent thread that can pass judgements on a huge range of political issues. It is this that suggests a distinction between this view of ideologies and my understanding of orientational frames. In the context of social movement studies, by papering over the cracks of ideational debate we get drawn into treating the movement as a unified political actor, with unified aims and strategies. This severely hampers our potential for understanding the processes by which a movement finds its voice, articulates its message, and ultimately meets success or failure.¹¹⁰ Snow seems to agree with this point when he suggests four incorrect assumptions used in trying to connect ideologies and frames: the assumed coherence of ideologies; assumed ideological unanimity among groups; assumed correspondence between ideology and behaviour and a tendency to see collective action frames in movements as derived from ideologies.¹¹¹ These are useful points, despite the fact that it is difficult to see exactly who Snow is suggesting makes these assumptions since the only work on the link between frames and ideology has so far been theoretical, not empirical, and generally sensitive to such problems. Indeed, the first three of these problems could equally be directed at much work on framing itself. If, as Snow implies, these assumptions have more solid ground in

¹⁰⁸ Oliver & Johnston, “What a Good Idea!...”, p. 45.

¹⁰⁹ Snow, D.A. & Benford, R.D., 2000, “Clarifying The Relationship Between Framing and Ideology in the Study of Social Movements: A Comment on Oliver and Johnston” in *Mobilization* 5(1), p. 59.

¹¹⁰ Melucci, A., 1988 “Getting Involved: Identity and Mobilization in Social Movements” in Klandermans, Kriesi & Tarrow, *From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research Across Cultures*, pp. 329-348; Melucci, A., 1992, “Frontier Land: Collective Action between Actors and Systems” in Diani & Eyerman, *Studying Collective Action*, pp. 238-258.

¹¹¹ Snow, D.A., 2004, “Framing Processes, Ideology, and Discursive Fields” in Snow, Soule & Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, p. 397-9.

examinations of collective action frames then this serves to highlight the small-scale and temporary nature that such constructions must have.

It is here that a third conception of ideology - the morphological approach – may be profitably introduced. Michael Freeden steers a course between the positivist and the critical positions, attempting to avoid either a normative or epistemological critique of ideologies or an oversimplification of their contents. There are a number of points that are highly relevant to concept of ‘orientational frames’ that I have been developing. Definitionally, Freeden claims that ideologies are “ubiquitous forms of political thinking” that are “produced by, directed at, and consumed by groups”. Ideologies are functional, performing the services of “legitimation, integration, socialization, ordering, simplification and action-orientation” which are essential within the social context. Ideologies are essentially concerned with power, in connection with encouraging political action, justifying political decisions and so on.¹¹² Freeden attempts to take a delicately balanced ontological and epistemological position that bears a lengthy quotation:

“ideologies are distinct thought-products that invite careful investigation in their own right... it is vital to recognize that in studying ideologies we are directing our analyses at actual arrangements of political thinking.... True, we may never be able to detach completely the thought-products we examine from our own values and interpretative frameworks, but at least we should try to represent and discuss the features of ideologies that can be shown to exist. We need to do so while remembering also ... not to neglect their wealth of detail, intricacy of structure, and complexity of argument.”¹¹³

Here, the subjects of ideological research, for instance liberalism or socialism, appear as facts with existence beyond the individual, rather resembling Durkheimian ‘social facts’.¹¹⁴ The features of ideologies are knowable, though requiring self-reflection on potential biases by the researcher. The reference to their internal complexity indicates the authors’ respect for the ideational work represented by ideologies and that ideologies when conceived as a method of categorisation are likely to be so oversimplified as to retain little value. It also supports an earlier claim that the category of ideology itself, significantly singular, is less real than the concrete ideologies: “The many theorists who concentrate on the generic term ‘ideology’ are largely conducting a debate about a particular perspective on the social and political world, and not a debate

¹¹² Freeden, *Ideologies...*, pp. 22-3.

¹¹³ Freeden, *Ideologies...*, p. 23. The reference to ‘interpretative frameworks’ is something of a red herring for the social movement researcher, being rather a reference to one’s own consciously chosen method of understanding.

¹¹⁴ See Durkheim, E., 1982, *Rules of the Sociological Method*, translated by Steven Lukes, (Palgrave MacMillan, London).

about a phenomenon within that world, or one helping concretely to constitute that world.”¹¹⁵ The implication seems to be that theorising ideology, where that implies imbuing the category with reality through inclusion in supposedly generalisable predictive-explanatory models, rather misses the point. “Theoretical treatments of ideology have been largely silent on the nature, forms of, and differences among, concrete ideologies and have adopted far too unitary an approach. On the other hand, the explorations of concrete ideologies have been insufficiently analytical ... frequently limiting their effort to classifying attitudes.”¹¹⁶ In sum, particular ideologies need to be explored in depth, not because they are particular instances of some over-arching category, but because they are interesting and valuable in themselves.

A number of other noteworthy features of ideologies are well understood from Freeden’s perspective. First, ideologies overlap in their ideational terrain; the same ideas and arguments may well be found in different ideologies that are often categorised as mutually opposed.¹¹⁷ Second, while ideologies are constructed at the collective level, this does not mean that they adhere to particular groups or parties. Together, these points suggest a far more complicated, multidimensional picture of political beliefs that has little use for the standard left-right spectrum.¹¹⁸ These features will be evidenced throughout the thesis in relation to the orientational frames identified in Part II. Third, “ideologies, like other forms of human thinking, will exhibit combinations of rational and non-rational components... [they] may vary among themselves in respect of the emotive force attached to their principles... ideologies mix rational and emotive debate freely.”¹¹⁹ A related point is that “logic may not always be the most conspicuous attribute, and it may well be that mass belief-systems display low degrees of logical constraint.”¹²⁰ Again, this feature will appear empirically in the following chapters. This is not to criticise the political thought of social movements as irrational, but to recognise both the emotive and rhetorical features of communication of that thought. As a result, comparing different instances of communication of particular elements found within the same orientational frames may highlight deeper differences that appear to spawn ‘internal’ tensions. Fourth, because ideologies are the product of groups, incorporating beliefs that are widely held, “they may have no

¹¹⁵ Freeden, *Ideologies...*, p. 22.

¹¹⁶ Freeden, *Ideologies...*, p. 23.

¹¹⁷ Freeden, *Ideologies...*, p. 24.

¹¹⁸ Freeden, *Ideologies...*, pp. 24-25.

¹¹⁹ Freeden, *Ideologies...*, pp. 29-30.

¹²⁰ Freeden, *Ideologies...*, p. 36.

identifiable makers, or many makers”.¹²¹ This latter connects directly with my contention that we must investigate orientational frames at a level of abstraction away from individuals’ thought and communication. Each of these features, which Freeden attaches to ideologies, have influenced my conceptualisation of orientational frames because they must be understood as features common to political thought in general. Moreover, this analytical perspective is wholly grounded, through the hermeneutic process described below, in the empirical examination of ideas in movements presented in parts II and III.

The first chapter of Freeden’s book is an argument that the political concepts of ideologies, that is, their content, should matter to those engaged in political philosophy. He progressively breaks down the distinction between philosophies and ideologies arguing that the difference is found, rather, in our mode of interpreting these ideational patterns. Indeed, political philosophies can be examined as ideologies. That is to say, one examines the particular pattern of concepts at an abstract level, making inferences from both explicit arguments and political and historical context in order to reconstruct a pattern of ideas that transcends the individual. The orientational frames I have identified in this thesis may be conceived as very much the same family of phenomena: they are patterns of political ideas that are pieced together by actors in a manner that produces particular kinds of meaning, and makes purposive action possible.¹²² The orientational frame is analytically distinguishable from the ideology, but as a matter of degree along a number of dimensions. As ideologies shade into political philosophies, so too, orientational frames shade into ideologies.

There are two dimensions in particular on which I would like to differentiate orientational frames from ideologies, and both require some explication. The first relates to the particular action-orientations of ideas utilised among social movements and the second to the role of intellectual leadership in ideational production.

The orientational frame is conceived to make sense of thought in social movements; we would therefore expect particular frames to say something about the nature of action required for social change. To be sure, all ideologies contain some beliefs that influence action decisions. As explained in the introduction, however, social movements are partially defined by their public instantiations in non-institutional forms of political action. The depth of critique of liberal democratic institutions varies, yet some element of that critique is inherent in each frame identified in this thesis. Furthermore, that critique must insist that to change society one needs to find forms of

¹²¹ Freeden, *Ideologies...*, pp. 34-35.

¹²² Freeden, *Ideologies...*, esp. pp. 45-6.

action outside of electoral politics. Interrogating the way that social and political beliefs lead to certain forms of action is, therefore, central to an ideational study of social movements.

Above, I suggested a link between repertoires of contention and the nature of the political beliefs that a movement projects. The repertoire of contention is understood to refer to knowledge of a certain way to act to achieve change. Sometimes, particular movements or particular cycles of contention are largely brought together by particular repertoires.¹²³ In the following chapters I explore some of the connections between repertoires of contention (or simply tactics, or strategies) and the political beliefs and values with which they are connected. Tactical choices convey political beliefs and values.¹²⁴ Clearly, purposive action must be related to some conception of agency and some conception of power. However, even where the action appears almost identical on the outside, these ideational connections may provide a different understanding of that action for its participants. A brief example will be illuminating. It makes sense to chain oneself to a tree if the felling of that tree is a part of (or wholly constitutes) a particular injustice that ought to be stopped. Alternatively, it makes sense to chain oneself to a tree if one believes that the public display of moral commitment is an efficient way to change wider societal beliefs and thus reduce future injustices. These action justifications are far from mutually exclusive. However, the results of these ideational differences emerge when, for instance, weighing concerns of security against those of ensuring media coverage. To put it another way, once the journalist has left, is it acceptable to unchain oneself? This thesis is based on the premise that particular social movement activities are highly reflective. The practices of protest activity and structures of political beliefs are highly intertwined. To be sure, Freedon says that the “action-orientation of ideologies distinguishes them by their propensity either to recommend political conduct directly or, indirectly, to make others adopt conduct-evoking thinking.”¹²⁵ Nevertheless, what Freedon is interested in throughout, that is, what he substantively studies, are almost exclusively written texts.

This point connects with the notion of ideological production as an élite activity which, for Oliver and Johnston, marks an important difference between ideologies and frames. “Systematic ideologies are generally developed by the more educated members of a group, and are generally developed in intellectual dialogue with prior ideas and

¹²³ See Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, ch. 6.

¹²⁴ McAdam, 1996, “The Framing Function of Movement Tactics: Strategic Dramaturgy in the American Civil Rights Movement” in McAdam, D., McCarthy, J.D. & Zald, M.N., eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements...*, pp. 338-355.

¹²⁵ Freedon, *Ideologies...*, p. 105.

ideologies and cultural values... ‘The masses’ come to adopt systematic ideologies through processes of education and socialization.”¹²⁶ This view of ideology sharply divides it from ideas around frames and framing. I would contend two points however. First, it is certainly true that ideological development takes place in dialogue with pre-existing political ideas, yet if we are to take the notion of political culture seriously then we can expect that access to political ideas need not require direct access to the words of intellectual leaders. Each of the chapters in Part II demonstrates a number of ideational continuities that tie presently existing orientational frames to a longer history of contention; such ties are certainly attributable to a cultural awareness of movement histories among present activists.

Second, it must be noted that the role of intellectuals in performing the ideational work of social movements has, at times, been incredibly strong.¹²⁷ Yet to begin with an assumption that ideological production is removed from ‘the masses’ must surely be mistaken in any endeavour that seeks to understand the use of ideas within social movements. Freedon asks whether another view is possible: “to regard ideologies as forms of grass-roots political culture, focused on the political issues of the day, reflecting the widely prevalent thought processes that a specific society evolves over time, as well as those ideas that smaller groups within it generate differentially... ideologies may be ubiquitous, emanating from popular reasoning and prejudice.”¹²⁸ Freedon’s own work claims to balance these perspectives. Yet while he undoubtedly pays attention to social and political context he nevertheless ties his investigation to great works of notable individuals. These individuals are understood to represent a wider set of beliefs. While necessarily putting their own imprint on these ideas, they are therefore “serving as nodal and eloquent points of ideological discourse ... offer[ing] an excellent illustration of a particular ideological position.”¹²⁹ Given his broad historical sweep, Freedon’s decision to use particular individuals in this way is partially methodological and he admits that in another context “the investigation of ideologies ought to examine mass, or at least large-scale, social thinking ... Out of that examination the contours of ideological families will begin to emerge, ... as a reflection, to the best of the analyst’s interpretative ability, of discoverable ideological patterns.”¹³⁰ I present this quotation not to suggest that it is this undertaking that I aim to achieve,

¹²⁶ Oliver & Johnston, “What a Good Idea!...”, p. 48.

¹²⁷ This is the case with the connection between the new left and the anti-nuclear movement; Kenny, M., 1995, *The First New Left. British Intellectuals After Stalin*, (Lawrence & Wishart, London).

¹²⁸ Freedon, *Ideologies...*, p. 105-6.

¹²⁹ Freedon, *Ideologies...*, p. 106.

¹³⁰ Freedon, *Ideologies...*, p. 106.

but to evidence the implication that the grassroots ought not to be ignored in the analysis of political ideas.

In sum, the orientational frame is conceived to be very similar to Freeden's conception of ideologies. It is a patterned set of ideas that exists in the interactive realm, in the sense that its effects may be seen on the political thought of individuals and their subsequent behaviour. It is discoverable through an analytic abstraction from concrete expressions of political ideas that fit together into a coherent whole. The orientational frame gives meaning to idea elements by situating them in a structure of other ideas. Particular orientational frames are internally complex, involving a range of elements that may be in relationships of tension as well as those of reinforcement. Orientational frames may overlap and particular individuals' political communication may mix elements, *ad hoc*, from different orientational frames. However, this study of orientational frames is directed to understanding a particular set of social movements in a particular context. This means that the orientational frame has a stronger relationship to certain conceptions of political action than Freeden's ideologies; indeed, the frame may be represented through action as much as through speech or text. The link with social movements provides a second distinction from ideologies, and one that situates the study strongly within the realm of social movement research. That is, orientational frames are produced by actors deeply involved in social movement activities. It is through the discourse and action surrounding political contestation, carried out through a variety of non-institutional means, that ideas are assembled in particular patterns.

5. AN ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY FOR FRAME ANALYSIS

In the preceding discussion I have frequently referred to this investigation of ideas within social movements as a hermeneutic endeavour. In the following I will briefly describe hermeneutics as an attempt to recognise the role of interpretation within the social sciences, while avoiding the impossibility of truth implied by absolute relativism. I will then detail how the ethnographic methodology utilised in this thesis engages practically with the hermeneutic method.

Tracing the Hermeneutic Circle

Rather than offering an exegesis of the long philosophical tradition of hermeneutics the concern of this thesis is simply to draw out some implications for the interpretation of orientational frames in social movements. For this purpose we can understand hermeneutics as the development of a critique of positivist social science. The attempt

to ape the natural sciences in both methodology and theory construction is the target of that critique. Centrally, hermeneuticists claim that there is something starkly different about understanding human behaviour that differentiates it from understanding the phenomena of the natural world; that is, the need to interpret human meaning. To the degree that we consider the meaning attached to events, processes, structures and communication as important, social science that is primarily oriented to behaviour loses value. Yet, where human behaviour may be objectively and empirically observable, the meaning that actors attach to their behaviour can only be interpreted.

Interpretation is defined as, “an attempt to make clear, to make sense of, an object of study. This object must, therefore be a text or text-analogue, which is in some way confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory ... The interpretation aims to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense.”¹³¹ It should be noted that *wherever* we seek meaning, that meaning will always be confused, incomplete and cloudy. This is a result of the inextricably interwoven nature of meaning and language.¹³² As described above, the present study of orientational frames seeks to transcend the particular expressions of the ideas found within movement speech and literature and seek an ideographic expression of the significant components. Nevertheless, the elements of the orientational frames themselves – the political concepts from which worldviews are created – are likely to be contested themselves. Connolly explicates this point with reference to the set of conditions required to assess valid truth conditions for statements about the political world. For instance, the concept of revolution has a range of features that we may include such as: involving popular violence, causing lasting change to an established state order, being performed by citizens conscious of their rebellion, leading to change in basic class relations, being aimed at such a change, happening in a relatively short space of time. The list may go on, but already we can see that some periods of political change we might want to class as revolutions may not involve all these elements. We may, however, insist that those conditions are still part of what ‘revolution’ means. The point of having the word is to collect these elements under one rubric. Thus, the conditions are variable and one cannot specify a necessary and sufficient set.¹³³

The hermeneutic perspective understands the interpretation of such concepts as a circular process. One exposition describes it thus:

¹³¹ Taylor, C., 1971, “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man” in *Review of Metaphysics* 25(2), p. 15.

¹³² Winch, P., 1958, *The Idea of a Social Science: And Its Relations to Philosophy*, (Routledge, London), pp. 40-44.

¹³³ Connolly, W., 1993, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, (Blackwell, Oxford), pp. 13-4.

“We face the dilemma: how can we know the parts without already knowing the whole context and, conversely, how can we grasp the whole without prior knowledge of the parts? This circularity is gradually and partially overcome by working backward and forward between the wider context and the particular text or action in question, building up an interpretation in layers since not everything can be understood at once... Movement between the part and the whole necessarily involves understanding phenomena in their intellectual, social and historical context.”¹³⁴

In its simplest application to the notion of frames, this suggests that we cannot proceed simply from the ideational elements we find expressed within social movements to understanding the orientational frames in their entirety in one step. Rather, we must engage in an iterative process wherein the ideational elements themselves are continually reinterpreted as understanding of the larger structure of ideas is improved. This quotation also demonstrates the importance of context; a point to which I will return.

Importantly, “There are no final truth claims ... since understanding is always part of a hermeneutic circle – a process of criss-crossing horizons mutually affecting each other and never converging in a final objective viewpoint.”¹³⁵ This flows from a slightly different conception of hermeneutics, wherein the circle is described as that between the interpreter and the author of the relevant text. Each has a horizon of understanding, consisting in a set of pre-existing beliefs, understandings and prejudices which can never be fully transcended.¹³⁶ This inevitably means that the particular worldview within which the researchers’ pre-existing beliefs must be recognised. Here we essentially introduce a second dimension to the iterative, interpretative process. However, the never-ending nature of the hermeneutic process is applicable to both dimensions since the impossibility of final truth claims can be understood as a result of the contested nature of concepts. To put the same point differently, hermeneutics highlights context and the tentativeness of understanding which “is underlined by a consciousness of its own historicity. History is part of the process of understanding. Understanding is thus always interpretation, and has no constant points of reference.”¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Oliver, I., 1983, “The ‘Old’ and the ‘New’ Hermeneutic in Sociological Theory” in *The British Journal of Sociology* 34(4), pp. 527-8.

¹³⁵ Tate, J.W., 1998, “The Hermeneutic Circle vs. the Enlightenment” in *Telos: A Journal of Critical Thought* 110, pp. 14.

¹³⁶ Tate, J.W., 1998, “The Hermeneutic Circle vs. the Enlightenment” in *Telos: A Journal of Critical Thought* 110, pp. 13.

¹³⁷ Freedman, *Ideologies...*, p. 116.

Despite the denial of ultimate or permanent truth values on political concepts the hermeneutic circle, understood epistemologically, halts the slide into the meaninglessness of absolute relativism. It asserts that it is possible, through the 'conversations' between text and interpreter, between author and interpreter and between rival interpretations, to gain a substantially better understanding of really existing social processes. That this understanding does not resemble in form the mode of explanation claimed by the natural sciences is to be expected, since hermeneutics is grounded on the distinction between the subjects of the human and natural sciences. Hermeneutic understanding should not be conceived as inferior to scientific explanation.

“The "hermeneutic circle" (the fact that observation and interpretation of meanings are inseparable) is no more damaging for the empirical credentials of interpretative sociology than the corresponding circularity of theory and theory-laden observations in natural science. When we attribute a meaning to an individual, we are able to cite various pieces of evidence that serve to support or disconfirm the attribution; and this is all that is required in order to provide an empirical basis for the attribution.”¹³⁸

Within the human sciences, the failure to perceive that one's observations are theory-laden is commonly perceived as a serious failing of the research project as a whole. The hermeneutic process forces us to be conscious of our own place in traditions and “makes conscious the prejudices governing our own understanding, so that a more balanced evaluation of a text becomes possible.”¹³⁹

Hermeneutics has been criticised for its lack of clear, practical methodological guidelines.¹⁴⁰ It is certainly the case that the philosophical complexity associated with the broader ontological and epistemological debates mitigates against clear understanding of the implications for the researcher. More importantly, however, its focus on individuals' traditions, historical context and the variability of meaning make the production of a schematic methodology for universal application impossible. Rather, we must take the hermeneutic circle as a starting point to be adapted in one's particular research situation. Nevertheless, some methodological tendencies encouraged by a hermeneutic perspective are discernible. First, the notion of a 'text' for interpretation is understood very widely, encompassing human action in general. Second, context must always be defined, and may be done so at different levels of comprehensiveness. Third, context may be defined either synchronically or

¹³⁸ Little, D., 1995, "Objectivity, Truth, and Method. A Philosopher's Perspective on the Social Sciences" in *Anthropology Newsletter*, November 1995.

¹³⁹ Freedon, *Ideologies...*, p. 115.

¹⁴⁰ Hamel, J., 1998, "The Position of Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Touraine Respecting Qualitative Methods" in *British Journal of Sociology* 49(1), pp. 1-19.

diachronically. Fourth, analyses often begin at the level of most specificity, and move towards a more general level. In other words, the first iteration generally progresses from the parts to the whole. Fifth, because hermeneutics does not seek to understand the authors' intentions, but rather a deeper, more holistic meaning, such analysis is eminently suitable for texts with many or identifiable authors or none.¹⁴¹

The Benefits of Ethnography for Hermeneutic Frame Analysis

The points listed in the previous paragraph form a 'rough guide' to the use of hermeneutics; however, such guidelines need greater detail in order to produce a comprehensible and performable research project. The ethnographic methods utilised for this study combined participant observation, open-ended audio-recorded interviews with a minimal script, *ad hoc* informal interviews recorded with observation notes, and documentary analysis from movement literature and news reports. Participant observation was the primary method of data collection throughout, and participation took a variety of forms including: protest events and public meetings; protest planning meetings, publicity work and activist training workshops; and prolonged discussions via email discussion lists, via websites with interactive bulletin board and chat facilities and in informal, though not ostensibly movement-focused settings. The practicalities of data collection and analysis, and issues around sampling, reliability and validity will be detailed in the methodological appendices at the end of this thesis. This section focuses primarily, therefore, on the relationship between participant observation and the theoretical perspective detailed above.

The process of identifying abstract orientational frames in order to understand the ideational content of a social movement must be absolutely empirically grounded. That is to say, the ideas and connections identified must be those commonly enunciated by activists. However, as explained above, identifying meaning is not a straight-forward task. There are three strands of justification for participant observation as particularly suited to interpreting meaning in social movements.

First, the non-obvious relationship between language and beliefs and values requires the researcher to 'read between the lines' of activist discussion. The contested nature of political concepts that are common elements of the activist vocabulary and the polysemy of the words used to represent them hold potential for profound misunderstanding. A social movement that is avowedly 'pro-democracy', for instance, must be read closely to discover the uses to which 'democracy' is put. As this thesis

¹⁴¹ Prasad, A., 2002, "The Contest Over Meaning: Hermeneutics as an Interpretative Methodology for Understanding Texts" in *Organizational Research Methods* 5(1), pp. 24-6.

demonstrates repeatedly, even within the relatively narrow context of social movement groups commonly judged to have broadly similar aims, words like ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’ are essentially contested. Following Freeden, I have argued that it is through embedding such concepts within a wider ideational context – the orientational frame in this case - that they are decontested. Because social movements are principally concerned with contestation, and because they interact with political realities, social structures and individual will and whim, decontestation is only ever temporary. Ethnography in the social movement submits the researcher to frequent, repeated linguistic contestation and decontestation, thus enabling the researcher to perceive trends in use, discovering which meanings appear more durable and widespread. The early phases of research were characterised by the attempt to understand who meant what by using particular key terms.

There is a quantitative argument that can be made for the value of participant observation in this case. The psycho-sociological understanding of frames described above recognises that the precise linguistic context influences the enunciation of elements of cognitive schemata. That is, preceding conversation topics will prime conversants, raising the salience of particular issues. Therefore, the larger the number of interactions, the broader the view we will get of the frames being utilised. A survey may claim a greater number of cases, because it has interacted with a greater number of individuals. However, each individual only represents one interaction, and then they have each been identically ‘primed’. Interaction over time, however, even with relatively few individuals ensures a large, if less quantifiable, number of cases, where the case is understood to be an expression of meaning. Multiple interactions with the same respondents is particularly valuable, of course, where it is relevant that it is the same individual expressing meaning. This latter is essential if we are to develop a valid interpretation of the meaning that individuals habitually ascribe to particular signifiers. In sum, if we are to access how an activist understands the world, we must hear the answers in a variety of linguistic contexts that can only be made available to the researcher through repeated observation.

The second strand of justification concerns the interactive nature of meaning production. The interaction of the reader’s mind (filled with preconceptions, beliefs and values) and the author’s text (containing sub-texts and implying broader discourses) produces temporary understanding. However, as described above, the expression of meaning is primed by ideational context. The parties to a conversation are a significant contextual factor since their interjections will mould subsequent expressions of meaning. While the researcher can never completely leave the ideational context while continuing to observe interactions, since one’s impression of how others are likely to

receive your comments will shape your presentation, it is, at least possible not to play an active role in the conversation.¹⁴² This is a clear benefit of participant observation over the interview as a method of collecting data and relates to the much cited ‘naturalness’ of the ethnographic research context. This justification demonstrates that within a hermeneutic understanding of interpretation of meaning we can specify exactly why ‘naturalness’ should be a valued feature.

In addition to offering many interactions involving particular concepts, therefore, each of these interactions represents a different ideational context. Participation offers the chance to observe the use of particular concepts in a new light, potentially bringing to the fore new angles on the same ideas and highlighting different connections between related ideas. The third strand of justification for participant observation relates to the iterative nature of the hermeneutic process. Ethnography necessarily involves a less-clear cut distinction between data collection and data analysis than many other social science methods. The circular progressions from parts to whole and back again may, of course, be performed on an unchanging set of texts, where the texts are the parts and whatever the selection of texts represents is the whole. However, because each iteration should increase ones understanding of both parts and whole, it may effect the way that the next iteration is carried out. To put the point concretely, when our analysis of the data (individuals’ statements, groups’ position papers and so on) leads to the view that there is an orientational frame being utilised by some activists that is broadly related to activist understandings of liberal ideology, one’s knowledge of that ideology may suggest new ways to interrogate the understandings of research participants. To be sure, that can, and has been performed repeatedly on the same texts (interview transcripts for example) through recoding in the light of new hypotheses. However, such work may highlight questions for which the data does not currently hold the answers, and it is here that the continuous nature of ethnographic data collection becomes particularly valuable. Following the hermeneutic circle lends itself to the creation of new understandings or new hypotheses to test and participant observation lends itself well to continually testing such hypotheses. There is a potential pitfall in this repeated method, that the researcher begins to seek only data for the confirmation of developing theories. However, through examining new data in the light of a re-examination of previously collected data, and with data coming from substantially different sources (for example, documentary analysis) a degree of triangulation is possible. With care, the opportunity to collect new data while developing analyses

¹⁴² In the appendix I will describe some techniques used for sinking as far into the background as possible.

further leads to an accumulation and broadening of knowledge, rather than a narrowing of ones own horizons.

Finally, participant observation, supported by interviews and analysis of primary documents offers rich data for the analysis of the beliefs and values inherent in contemporary movements contesting globalisation and war. However, the hermeneutic approach stresses the importance of diachronic context. Clearly, the current ideational structures within social movements cannot be treated as historically discontinuous, not least because many members of contemporary movements have long activist biographies spanning other political contests in other times and places. The need for context in the identification of orientational frames is met with recourse to secondary materials concerning either the history of social movements or the history of political ideas. Conceptualising the orientational frame as a category of political thought similar in kind to ideology helps to highlight similarities between particular frames and particular ideologies. Activists' understandings of ideologies provide some of the ideational content for orientational frames. However, activists' awareness of the contents of ideologies will generally (but with noted exceptions) be raised in settings connected with movement activities, rather than the academic arena. For this reason, the broadest contextual material in the thesis, found at the beginning of chapters three, four and five, is biased towards the history of movements, rather than the philosophical history of ideas.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The present study is firmly located within the study of social movements through its connection to the preceding research on interpretative frames. The latter successfully brought much greater focus to the impact of political ideas in social movement activities, finding that for many movement organisations the production and presentation of beliefs is a central activity and has an impact on potential for success in both mobilisation and longer-term outcomes. However, because such work self-consciously seeks laws governing social movement processes it has focused excessively on the interpretative frame as a resource utilised by organisations and framing as a process determining success or failure.

Furthermore, the treatment of frames as resources, that is, as 'supply-side' variables, is somewhat inconsistent with its explicit grounding on a psychological theory of cognition that stresses the necessity of the individuals' cognitive schemata in creating understanding. This necessarily implies that interpretation is deeply individualistic in nature. The 'collective action frame' has an exceedingly unclear

collective-level ontological status, but is supposed to impact on all mobilised individuals in approximately the same way. It may be argued that a broadly shared cultural perspective among mobilised bystanders creates enough common content to allow the strategic production of frames to work in this way. However, this is a matter for empirical assessment that simply has not been addressed. Most important, for the present purposes, such theorisation mitigates against the possibility of discovering diversity within social and political movements, reinforcing the tendency within social movement research to reify the movement as a homogenous object.

My specification of the 'orientational frame' brings together three separate treatments of the same basic phenomenon of the use of political beliefs and values by individual agents. First, the cognitive psychological conception initially utilised by Snow and Benford, understood as stressing that meaning is constructed through the interplay of presented ideational elements and those with which the listener is already familiar, is reaffirmed. Second, Michael Freeden's treatment of ideologies is read as indicating a similar ideational structure: a set of ideational elements that only have meaning in the context of a structure of other ideational elements. Third, a hermeneutic methodology that explicitly seeks to understand interpretative phenomena through an iterative process that works with both individual elements and the broader structure of ideas.

This understanding guides my interpretation of the political content of current movements confronting globalisation. I abstract from the individual level of meaning construction in order to find a level at which such interpretation becomes a significant portrayal of particular social movement beliefs. Because this is an interpretative, rather than a predictive-explanatory, endeavour, identified abstractions need not be linked by assumption to the particular beliefs of particular individuals. It is the contention of this thesis that the analysis of orientational frames through ethnographic research does point to significant cultural structures that are effective in UK social movements. They 'exist' in the same sense that other social structures exist: a structuration process wherein individual agents' behaviour is constrained or enabled by extraneous features of the world.¹⁴³ In this case, behaviour connects to the recreation of beliefs and values, and their expression through action; what Freeden theorises as 'thought-behaviour'.¹⁴⁴ The extraneous features of the world are, of course, created by the thought-behaviour of other agents similarly constrained. This thesis begins a journey around the

¹⁴³ Giddens, A., 1984, *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, (Polity, Cambridge).

¹⁴⁴ Freeden, *Ideologies...*, p. 43.

hermeneutic circle and finds its own justification for these contentions. However, judgement on the value of this journey will only be improved as the circle is widened to take in new readers with other horizons.