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1 Introduction: A Moral-Sociological Perspective on Social Movements

I am engaged in many different things, but I sense a special responsibility for animals. Maybe it matters here that animals are so helpless. Of course there are humans needing help from us who are privileged and well-off, but animals need this to an even greater degree. They don't even have a theoretical possibility of achieving their theoretical liberation (Swedish animal rights activist).¹

As this Swedish animal rights activist stated, social movements make it their responsibility and task to challenge and transform institutionalized morality. Historically, social movement activists proved to be a reflexive force in the development of novel moral ideals, making possible the theoretically improbable. The women's movement, the environmental movement, the civil rights movement, the peace movement and the animal rights movement have all radically changed our sensibilities and conceptions of moral reality. The animal rights movement is particularly interesting as it invites us to extend our moral concern to encompass a new category of beings – animals. By viewing animals as helpless and unprivileged, yet as individuals with intrinsic value and rights, animal rights activists seek to change dominant social practices and moral codes. In this book, we develop a moral-sociological perspective, stressing the role of moral reflexivity in social movements. As the quoted animal rights activist displays, activists think, work, and act rather than responding routinely on moral matters. Social movements, such as the animal rights movement, provide society with moral tests and “an opportunity to plumb our moral sensibilities and convictions, and to articulate and elaborate on them” (Jasper, 1997: 5).

While the moral aspects of contemporary forms of collective action were frequently acknowledged in previous research (e.g. Touraine, 1981; Cohen, 1985; Gusfield, 1986; Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Jasper, 1997; Crossley, 2002; Smelser, 2011/1962 to name some of the best-known works), in this book we examine social movements as essentially moral phenomena. The moral-sociological perspective draws on an original reading of Émile Durkheim's reflections on morality in *Moral Education* (2002/1925). An insight throughout Durkheim's production is that social life and moral life

1 All translations from the original Swedish by the authors.

are intertwined and cannot be comprehended separately. As Durkheim already noted in *The Division of Labor in Society*, co-operation between individuals cannot be explained in terms of economic contracts alone as these presuppose the existence of moral trust and understanding in order to be respected: "In reality, moral life permeates all the relationships that go to make up co-operation, since it would not be possible if social sentiments, and consequently moral ones, did not preside over its elaboration" (Durkheim, 1984/1893: 221). While these insights were fundamental for the development of sociology as a discipline (e.g. Shilling & Mellor, 2001), they have not been systematically used in theorizing social movements.

According to Durkheim, it is morality that keeps social groups internally together (Durkheim, 2002/1925: 85). Morality, in this perspective, has two components: first an element of obligation that prescribes or proscribes certain behaviors or types of behaviors and are backed up by sanction. Although Durkheim generally spoke of "rules of conduct" rather than "norms" when describing this element of morality, we employ the term norms throughout this book (see also Hall, 1987: 47-48). Second, there is also the element of ideals, denoting a conception of what the world should be like, which are internalized and perceived as desirable (Durkheim, 2002/1925: 96). Collective ideals are vested with prestige because they belong to the sphere of "the sacred" (Durkheim, 2001/1912; see also Emirbayer, 1996). To this realm Durkheim assigned societal phenomena that he saw as having intrinsic value – such as, first and foremost, moral ideals – as distinct from objects that only have instrumental value, which belong to the sphere of "the profane". All societies, including modern societies, have ideals that are perceived as sacred and inviolable. They form part of the self-identity of the group. Indeed the ideal aspect of morality is essential to Durkheim's concept of society. "Society", Durkheim noted, "is above all a composition of ideas, beliefs and sentiments of all sorts that realize themselves through individuals. Foremost of these ideas is the moral ideal which is its principle *raison d'être*" (Durkheim, 1993/1887: 20). Thus, morality is both external and internal to the individual; it is both imposed through social pressure and internalized as embraced ideals. Ideals and norms are the mechanisms that give rise to social solidarity, constituting the moral order in society.

The distinction between ideals and norms is important for our analysis. Ideals tend to be unrealized and as yet un-translated into social obligations. The role of activists, we suggest, is to interpret and pursue these ideals to achieve social change. Seeking to realize and embody moral ideals, activists thus draw their sustenance from the burning fire of the sacred; the closer they stay to the sacred ideals, the hotter that fire that fuels their passion.

This is something that is reflected even in everyday language: English speaks of highly energetic activists as “balls of fire”, and in Swedish, they are often described as “souls of fire” (*eldsjälar*), or persons who “are afire” for a cause, driven by burning enthusiasm. Drawing on Durkheim’s ideas, we conceptualize social movement activists as *pursuers of moral ideals* as they interpret and formulate new societal visions about the environment, peace, democracy, animal rights, etcetera. It is the sacred ideals and the sentiments that these ideals evoke that are the driving force that propels social movement activists to social change.

However, as pursuers of ideals, activists readily come into *conflict with established social norms*. This resonates with common understandings of social movements, such as Diani’s definition of movements as consisting of “a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities” (Diani, 1992: 1). Social movements seek to challenge and transcend the present order (Melucci, 1985, 1989). As pursuers of sacred ideals, activists tend to have an ambivalent relationship with institutional politics built on compromise, pragmatism, and a piecemeal approach to change. Even though there are variations in the degree to which social movements challenge mainstream society, they should, therefore, analytically be distinguished from such entities as companies, interest groups, or political parties (see also Melucci, 1989; Diani, 1992; Eder, 1993).

Social movements’ conflicts with established social norms have wide-ranging significance for the analysis of moral reflexivity in protest. Melucci has importantly pointed out that social movements play a reflexive role as mirrors, enlightening “what every system doesn’t say of itself, the amount of silence, violence, irrationality which is always hidden in the dominant codes” (Melucci, 1985: 81), at the same time announcing that something else is possible (see also Melucci, 1989). Or, as put by Eder: “The collective moral protest follows the logic of the ritual reversal of official reality” (Eder, 1985: 879). Thus, “[t]he difference between moral ideal and social reality becomes the motivating force of collective protest” (Ibid). In Eder’s analysis, what characterizes a social movement in contrast to pressure groups, as well as moral crusades, are the ongoing collective learning processes, whereby moral issues also become the subject of argumentative debate (Eder, 1985: 886). This is in line with our notion of the moral reflexivity in social movement activism.

However, more than these previous approaches we stress, and explore the consequences of, social movement activists’ *inherently ambiguous moral standing* in relation to the moral order of society. On the one hand,

social movement activists may be seen as defending important ideals (the sacred). Being in conflict with established social norms, on the other hand, activists may *also* be perceived as outsiders, threats, villains, and/or criminals by the general public (the profane). And typically, they oscillate between these positions, performing both the “angelic” role and the role of “the illegitimate” in the moral order of society. As will be shown in the following chapters, this ambiguous moral position is consequential for social movement activists in a variety of ways. It carries implications for activists’ lifeworlds, including their emotional life, their group life and their social relationships. We suggest that a Durkheimian understanding of morality is particularly enlightening for exploring activists’ equivocal moral position in mainstream society as pursuers of sacred moral ideals as well as norm transgressors, which prompts and fosters moral reflexivity in social movement activism.

Furthermore, moral reflexivity in social movements is promoted by the cultural modernization process. In Durkheim’s terms, this development forms part of the “secularization of morality” in modern societies (Durkheim, 2002/1925: 1-14). As shown by Giddens (1991) and others (e.g. Moore, 2006; Adkins, 2003) today’s societies are characterized by institutional reflexivity. By this they emphasize actors’ capacity to continually examine and interpret the past in light of new knowledge, with increasingly more areas of life being opened up for reflexive questioning and choice. The focus is on the break with tradition as more dogmatic and ritualistic. Reflexivity theorists stress the widespread significance of self-conscious self-monitoring, individual identity formation and lifestyle choices in society. This transformation is stimulated by innovative technologies, and social movements are at the forefront in engaging in new moral issues, such as those related to reproduction, gene-modification, and nano-application. And, as pointed out by social movement researchers, reflexivity is further increased by activists’ questioning of the structures of domination existing in the present age (Cohen, 1985: 694; Melucci, 1985; see also Touraine, 1981, 2000).

However, approaches such as Giddens’, which emphasize the role of self-fashioning, run the risk of reinstating voluntarism. While modernity opens for moral reflexivity, this always takes place within the confines of the moral order of existing norms and ideals. As Alexander puts it: reflexivity can only be understood “within the context of cultural tradition, not outside it” (Alexander 1996b: 136). Furthermore, reflexivity is embodied and demands a different moral practice. This means that reflexivity is not only an individual but also a collective endeavor, as it takes place among

fellow actors within groups (e.g. Adkins, 2003). Social movements are a case in point. Here reflexivity is deeply social in nature, arising from clashes between activists' novel ethical orientations and the various norms of society; to reach their desired goals activists need to habitually and collectively reflect over the institutionalized meanings.² The activist community provides, we suggest, a community of thinking and arguing on moral issues. This point is supported by King (2006), who argues that activists need to distance themselves from traditional norms in order to transform social conditions. Similarly, as Pallotta well described, animal rights activism implies a turning away from "dominant cultural ideologies", normalizing concern and empathy for animals (Pallotta, 2008: 150; see also Hansson & Jacobsson, 2014).

What is needed is a perspective on morality, which reconciles structure and agency. Thus far actor-oriented approaches have been more developed in the study of social movements. Typically, morality is seen as a cultural resource that actors interpret and use (following Swidler, 1986; see e.g. Williams, 1995; for a critique, see Alexander, 1996a), rather than focusing on the structural dimensions of morality. For instance, it has been pointed out that social movement activists are often fuelled by their moral principles, intuitions and emotions (e.g. Jasper, 1997), or that activists may harbor altruistic motives (Melucci, 1996). Yet, having elaborated their models within the cultural tradition of social movements, there has been less focus on how morality imposes constraints on social movements' conduct.

We suggest that the actor-oriented models of morality need to be complemented with a conception of morality as social fact. Moral reflexivity, as exerted by activists, is structurally conditioned by the moral order. Morality

² A moral-sociological understanding of moral reflexivity thus differs from moral philosophy. Firstly, a moral-sociological perspective is exclusively oriented towards an empirical inquiry of activists' moral beliefs, providing no normative theory. A focus on observable moral realities in social movements thus replaces the philosopher's elaboration of, and arguments for, moral principles. Second, a moral-sociological perspective is historical in its nature. It pays attention to the development and alterations in moral beliefs across different societies over time. Moral philosophy is, on the other hand, usually ahistorical as it relates to history as an intellectual source of accurate or erroneous ideas. Finally, and consistent with the aforementioned differences, a moral-sociological perspective takes a relativist stance towards moral reflexivity. When developing, what he called, "the science of moral facts", Durkheim criticized the moral philosophers who establish their own idealist conceptions without reference to the actual moral state of society. As Durkheim noted: "One hears it said today that we can know something of economic, legal, religious, and linguistic matters *only* if we begin by observing facts, analyzing them, comparing them. There is no reason why it should be otherwise with moral facts" (Durkheim, 2002/1925: 23, original italics).

imposes constraints on activists when they go against societal norms and ideals. For instance, norm transgressions are met with social sanctions, whether in the form of legal punishment, public opinion reactions or waves of indignation (Durkheim, 1982/1895). Indeed, Durkheim's sociological method encourages us to capture morality by studying responses to norm-breaking. A Durkheimian understanding of morality carries important implications for the study of social movements. First, as social fact, morality restricts activists in their striving for social change; activists have to take existing norms into account when carrying out actions. Second, morality is not something that can simply be "used" and "traded" instrumentally as more actor oriented and voluntaristic models on protest would have it (such as Snow et al., 1986; Benford & Snow, 2000). In other words, activists are constrained by norms as well as being a prominent force in changing norms. And this necessitates moral reflexivity.

A Sociology of Morals and the Research on Social Movements

For a long period, social movement researchers tended to shun Durkheim, associating him with the "collective behavior" tradition along with authors such as Gustave Le Bon (1960/1895) and Neil Smelser (2011/1962). Collective protest here readily became associated with unruly crowds or deviant behavior. Durkheim was also commonly identified with the heavily criticized structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons. Since then there has been a renewed interest in Durkheim generally, focusing *inter alia*, on the symbolic dimensions of social life (e.g. Alexander, 1988), micro-sociological analysis of emotions (e.g. Collins, 2001, 2005/2004) and social network and relational analyses (e.g. Emirbayer, 1996, 1997). Prominent authors such as Alexander (e.g. 1988) and Emirbayer (1996) have explicitly attempted to bridge the structure and agency divide.

All these neo-Durkheimian approaches are highly relevant for, and have been used in, the study of social movements over the last decades. However, few if any of the previous studies have taken Durkheim's sociology of morality as developed in *Moral Education* (2002/1925) as their point of departure. Rather, Durkheim's contribution to the study of activism has been viewed variously through the lenses of "a symbolic framework" (e.g. Alexander, 1996a; Olesen, 2015), "a network theory" (Segre, 2004), "a relational theory" (Emirbayer, 1996), "a functionalist approach" (Tamayo Flores-Alatorre, 1995), "a disintegration theory" (Traugott, 1984), "a theory of moral economy"

(Paige, 1983), “an interaction ritual theory” (Collins, 2001) or in terms of “symbolic crusades” (Gusfield, 1986/1963), to mention but a few alternatives.

Instead, it is Durkheim’s sociology of religion (Durkheim, 2001/1912) that has been the main source of inspiration, and understandably so, given the importance of symbols (Olesen, 2015) and rituals in movement life. Activists’ participation in rituals, such as demonstrations, sit-ins, acts of civil disobedience, meetings, and the like, can have the function of developing and strengthening the moral ties between them. Indeed, rituals have been shown to have a positive effect on the level of engagement in political action and social movements (e.g. Tiryakian, 1995; Barker, 1999; Peterson, 2001; Casquete, 2006; Gasparre et al., 2010). Rituals create a heightened sense of awareness and aliveness, or what Durkheim (2001/1912) called *collective effervescence*, without which activists would not be able to transcend individual self-interest and produce norms, symbols, heroes, villains, and history.

Many critics of Durkheim, such as Tilly (1981),³ focused on his early and arguably more structuralist conception of morality. *The Division of Labor in Society* (1984/1893) and *Suicide* (1951/1897) may invite such macro-oriented and determinist readings. In contrast, *Moral Education* allows for a decidedly less structuralist reading of Durkheim. His analysis here is located at the micro- and meso-levels focusing on the social group as the main unit of analysis. Here, it is useful to recall Durkheim’s views on society, which refers to all kinds of social groups. Durkheim was well aware of our simultaneous membership in many different groups, such as family, occupational/professional organization, company, political party, nation, even humanity (Durkheim, 1984/1893: 298, 1993/1887: 100, 2002/1925), and, we might add, activist group. Thus, as Collins has put it in his discussion of

3 Few authors have been more merciless against Durkheim than Tilly (1981) in his piece with the telling title *Useless Durkheim*. Tilly’s interest was the link between large-scale social change and collective action. Thus, like most of Durkheim’s critics, Tilly took his point of departure in *The Division of Labor in Society* and *Suicide*. He derived three hypotheses for which he found no historical validity: (1) Weakened social control (as a consequence of anomie) leads to heightened levels of social conflict; (2) Periods of rapid social change increase levels of social conflict and protest; and (3) Different forms of social disorder, such as suicide, crime and protest, tend to coincide since they stem from the same reason (lack of moral regulation due to social change). Emirbayer (1996) questioned this one-dimensional reading of Durkheim. In his reply to Tilly entitled *Useful Durkheim* he pointed to the relevance of Durkheim’s sociology of religion for historical-comparative analysis of collective action. Taking into account both the structural contexts for action and the “dynamic moment of *human agency*” (Emirbayer, 1996: 111), his conceptualization aimed to bridge the structure and agency divide, just as our perspective in this book aims to do (see also Olesen, 2015).

Durkheim's notion of society; "when he speaks of the principles of a 'society' and its integration, we should not take this to mean that *empirically* this necessarily refers to a 'whole society' as conventionally defined (which in practice usually means a political unit, especially a nation state)". Instead, Collins adds, we should "take 'society' in its generic sense, as any instance of prolonged sociation, whatever its boundaries in time and space" (Collins, 1988: 109).

Moreover, Durkheim's sociology of morality (Durkheim, 2002/1925) is less consensus-oriented than his more functionalist works (cf. Durkheim, 2001/1912). Being "at once complex and a single whole" (Durkheim, 2002/1925: 111), Durkheim also acknowledged the tensions and contradictions of moral reality. Indeed, Durkheim's approach to morality is compatible with moral consensus as well as conflict. As morality is group-specific, and groups exist at different levels, there will be competing ideals and norms in a pluralist world. If anything, Durkheim was aware that social diversity means moral diversity. Thus, an individual is not embracing only one ideal since she belongs to many different social groups that all exert pressure on her. We even have several collective consciences operating within us (Durkheim, 1984/1893: 67). Collins also emphasizes this point: "'Collective conscience' can exist in little pockets rather than as one huge sky covering everybody" (Collins, 2005/2004: 15). This is why Collins is able to read Durkheim as a contribution to conflict theory (e.g. Collins, 1988; see also Collins, 1975). The parallel focus on conflict and consensus that such a moral-sociological perspective provides, opens new venues for social movement theorizing.

Furthermore, Durkheim's sociology of morality allows for agency and reflexive action. Few authors have acknowledged that Durkheim identified, alongside ideals and norms, a third element of morality, which he called *autonomy* (Durkheim, 2002/1925). The modernization process – secularization, the development of modern science, and, especially, individualization – increases the autonomy of the individual in relation to collective imperatives:

Society is continually evolving; morality itself must be sufficiently flexible to change gradually as proves necessary. But this requires that morality not be internalized in such a way as to be beyond criticism or reflection, the agents *par excellence* of all change (Durkheim, 2002/1925: 52).

In modern society, discipline and authority must be based on a critical rational individualism. Morality can thus no longer be endorsed blindly, Durkheim claimed, but must be accepted voluntarily and be open to criticism

(Durkheim, 2002: 52, 118 ff). It is for this reason that we can claim Durkheim has provided a point of departure for an analysis of moral reflexivity, even if he did not himself develop his views on this aspect much further. More than Durkheim himself, but consistent with his outline of morality in modern societies, we emphasize social actors' potential awareness of discrepancies between ideals and norms – in other words their moral reflexivity.

A pluralist understanding of a Durkheimian framework calls for an examination of the relation between ideals and norms. As Jacobsson and Löfmarck (2008) pointed out, some norms are spread throughout vast geographical and social areas; they are generalized social facts. Other norms operate more locally; they are localized or, as we prefer to put it, contextual social facts. Furthermore, many contextualized ideals are group-specific interpretations of more generalized ideals. For instance, Wahlström and Peterson (2006) argued that, in Sweden, there is “an open cultural opportunity structure” in that people in general are inclined to listen to, and be affected by, the message of the animal rights movement. This may indeed be true concerning animal welfare, as it is a widely shared ideal in Sweden that animals should be treated well. However, this is much less true of animal rights proper, as the animal rights activists regularly encounter resistance from the public in their actions and daily life. Even so, the ideas that animal rights activists promote are not alien to the public at large. Other movements, in contrast, may operate in an environment where the cultural opportunity structure is more closed and their contextualized ideals clash with more generalized ones. The neo-Nazi movement is a case in point; its notions and values are usually viewed as undemocratic and dystopian (Cooter, 2006). While some social movement activists evoke not only annoyance but also sympathy among the general public, the neo-Nazi activists are seen as “evil” and as a threat to their fellow citizens and society at large.

A pluralist view on morality in contemporary society should not be equated with decreased salience of social norms. There is a tendency in postmodern sociology to talk about a nihilistic or anomic state in today's societies. Yet, there is an erroneous reasoning in the postmodern view of moral reality. The fact that social norms become outdated does not imply that morality disappears and disbelief enters (cf. Bauman, 1993). Instead, other social norms arise replacing the older ones.⁴ For instance, corporal

4 Joas, too, stresses “how false it would be to characterize our contemporary moral situation through terms such as ‘liberalization’ or ‘value loss’. The relaxation of norms in certain areas often contrasts with greatly increased sensitivity in others”, such as the growing awareness of sexual molestation in general and child abuse in particular (Joas, 2013: 57).

punishment in the classroom is replaced by a new respect for the pupil's needs and talents. Ever-increasing demands to respect the rights of the individual spouse substitute the moral imperatives of marriage, illustrating the sacrality of individualism in modern societies (Durkheim, 2001/1912, 2002/1925; Goffman, 1967). Similarly there are societies where the ideals highlighting the value of democracy and equality are accepted by the majority of people. Put differently, rather than the sacred being abolished, we can, with Emirbayer, speak of a "developmental history of the sacred" and the rise, more intensely in some periods than others, "of conflicts over the very meaning and legitimate definition of sacred ideals" (Emirbayer, 1996: 115; see also Alexander & Mast, 2006: 7 ff.). It is precisely in such conflicts that social movement activists engage.

Rethinking Concepts in the Study of Social Movements

Our moral-sociological perspective puts morality at the heart of social movements, showing how the social grammar of social movements is morally based. Without denying the analytical relevance of other aspects of social movements, such as their resource mobilization or their political or discursive opportunities, we argue that it is the moral dimension that is constitutive of social movements. This carries implications for the understanding of key concepts in social movement studies.

Collective identity

Collective identity is one of the most important concepts in theorization of social movements. Most often it has been used to refer to shared meanings, understandings of the world, stories and narratives, identifications, symbolic allies and enemies, which constitute the activist group (e.g. Melucci, 1996; Della Porta & Diani, 1999; Jasper, 2007; Johnston & Klandermans, 1995; Davies, 2002; Polletta, 2006; Flesher Fominaya, 2010). Theorists, especially within the "New Social Movement" paradigm, have pointed out that identity formation in social movements involves non-negotiable demands, as Cohen put it (1985: 692; see also Pizzorno, 1978). Yet, the cultural approaches in general have come to concentrate more on the cognitive and symbolic rather than the moral aspects of culture (e.g. Eyerman & Jamison, 1991; Johnston & Klandermans, 1995; Davies, 2002; Baumgarten et al., 2014). Even if it has been recognized that shared moral dedication is an important aspect of activist identity (Jasper, 1997; Polletta & Jasper, 2001), we would take this

one step further. In viewing morality as constitutive of social movements we are saying that morality is at the top of the salience hierarchy of the activist identity to agree with Sheldon Stryker (1980). This means that the collective identity of protesters cannot be reduced to common lifestyle markers and interests, for instance. As a thought-experiment, take away activists' moral convictions, principles and sentiments, and all the cultural elements referred to above lose their meaning. As Downton and Wehr pointed out, "all movements which have high levels of community will also have high levels of agreement about 'core beliefs'. In short, they will be moral communities" (Downton & Wehr, 1991: 119). Protests depend on activists' shared identification with moral convictions that then create bonds between them.

Framing

What would a distinct moral-sociological perspective add to the framing approach to protest? In response to structural-functionalist theorizing, the post-1970s development of studies on activism has largely been influenced, explicitly or implicitly, by the rational actor theory (as noted by e.g. Alexander, 1996a; Udéhn, 1996; Crossley, 2002). These theories place instrumental rationality and strategic decision-making at the core of social movements. Different versions of this theory are found, among others, in the "classical approaches" of resource mobilization (following McCarthy & Zald, 1973) and political process theory (e.g. Eisinger, 1973; McAdam, 1982, 1988; Tarrow, 1998). For resource mobilization theorists, for instance, moral resources are simply one type of resource, among others, to be exploited to reach one's ends (Edwards & McCarthy, 2007), a component among others in the "tool-kit" that culture provides (e.g. Williams, 1995, drawing on Swidler, 1986). Thus, the cultural models, too, often exhibit features of the rational actor theory, as may be most clearly visible in the highly influential "framing approach" (following Snow et al., 1986).⁵ Frames are externally oriented tools developed and deployed to recruit new members, to mobilize adherents, and to acquire resources (Benford & Snow, 2000). According to Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford (1986), activists need to display their messages in

5 Indeed, as Alexander has argued, "this instrumentalization of the cultural approach" shows "the extraordinary influence that the classical model has come to exercise over contemporary social science" (Alexander, 1996a: 210). This analytical approach undermines the relative autonomy of, in Alexander's vocabulary, the symbolic patterns of representations (*Ibid*), and, in our conceptualization, the moral domain.

a favorable light and use the right rhetoric to resonate with the public. Here social movement activists are depicted as salesmen concerned with formulating and packaging their message in such a way that it can appeal to a wider audience, but without giving enough attention to how morality as a social fact limits the manner in which this can be done. Moreover, the precise object of resonance remains under-theorized. By concentrating mostly or even exclusively on the rhetoric or narrative level of analysis, framing theorists tend to overlook the weight of the target audiences' moral convictions and sentiments, and thus "the depth and richness of that which must be connected to" (Crossley, 2002: 142-143). In our terms, it is "moral resonance" that is at stake.

Emotions

A moral-sociological perspective sees value in the (re-)emergent interest in the role of emotions in social movements. For instance, research on emotions has shown the mobilizing capacity of moral emotions, and the significance of moral batteries (e.g. Jasper, 1997, 2011; Collins, 2001). As Jasper (1997), among others (e.g. Gamson, 1992), pointed out, many of the different emotions that trigger protests are intertwined with activists' moral beliefs. Activists' righteous anger, discontent, and indignation, represent deeply moral reactions, evoked by transgression of normative boundaries. Moreover, this branch of research has emphasized the role of rituals which, as do protests in general, produce emotions (e.g. Peterson, 2001; Goodwin et al., 2001). Two of the most important contributions in this area are *Passionate Politics*, edited by Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta (2001), and *Emotions and Social Movements*, edited by Flam and King (2005). Both volumes point out, alongside a manifold of other themes, the intimate link between activists' emotions and moral life, much along the same lines as the moral-sociological perspective advocated in this book. Yet our perspective also differs from these sociology of emotions approaches in perceiving morality as constitutive of social movements; this implies that morality is more fundamental than emotions. On the one hand, it is in the light of the burning fire of their sacred ideals that activists' emotional responses can be understood; for instance, violating the sacred prompts strong reactions of righteous anger or resentment. On the other hand, being transgressors of norms, activists experience emotions such as anger, hostility and guilt, and otherness and estrangement are common. Therefore, activists need to actively perform emotion work (cf. Hochschild, 1983) to deal with the entailed emotional costs. This is another instance of moral reflexivity in a social movements' activism.

Deviance

The understanding of activists' norm-breaking requires a rethinking of the concept of deviance. Traditionally, a deviance perspective has been associated with a negative view of social movement protest, equating activism with crowd behavior and unfounded emotionality. Protest has been explained in terms of individual as well as societal pathology by authors such as Le Bon (1960/1895) and Smelser (2011/1962). Even though Durkheim (1951/1897) did not focus explicitly on protest, authors have used his concept of anomie to associate protest with other types of deviant behavior such as crime (e.g. Tilly, 1981). The criticism put forward by social movement scholars of the early deviance perspective has, in many ways, been justified (e.g. Goodwin et al., 2001; Jasper, 2007). Nevertheless, by making deviance an area of taboo in social movement studies scholars risk throwing out the baby with the bathwater.⁶ By not taking into account the central importance of social norms as a building block of the moral order, researchers fail to grasp the wide-ranging significance of activists' oftentimes minority or outsider position in society. Animal rights activists are a case in point. As will be illustrated later, there is a need to conceptualize animal protesters' frequent experiences of social exclusion and victimization in relation mainstream society (see also Pallotta, 2008). This calls for a new way to theorize deviance in social movements.

A deviance perspective needs to encompass both structure and agency. This can be illustrated with reference to Smelser's (2011/1962) classic approach to collective behavior. This is where the actor is defined by her institutional affiliation, and the focus is on her conforming to norms and roles (cf. Parsons, 1951). In Smelser's view, social movements arise from conditions of social strain, and in response, protesters form "generalized beliefs" that have a strong effect upon the behavior that will follow (Smelser, 2011/1962: 31-42, 51-82). Yet, these generalized beliefs "short-circuit" the social system, meaning that social movements fall short of a proper solution to the systemic problems. Not taking all relevant aspects of the situation into account, activists are instead prone to magical thinking and primary psychological processes, basing their protest on emotions, such as hysteria and hostility (Ibid: 51-82). This lack of agency in Smelser's model means that his theory does not allow for moral reflexivity, which is of critical

6 For instance, in general deviance has been excluded as a topic in overviews of social movement research (see e.g. Crossley, 2002; Snow et al., 2007; Goodwin & Jasper, 2009).

importance in our framework.⁷ Instead of being overwhelmed by their emotions, activists reflexively work with their emotions to underpin their moral agenda; instead of being imprisoned by an assigned role, activists actively reflect on their identity and social expectations. Moreover, in contrast to Smelser's approach, the moral-sociological perspective on deviance advocated in this book incorporates a life-world perspective. This means that it is not the analyst who attributes deviance to protesters; deviance arises from processes of social definitions and labeling (Becker, 1963). Activists' own experiences of being perceived as deviant become crucial here.

Social status

Social status in activist communities has been an important topic in previous research (e.g. McAdam, 1988; Friedman & McAdam, 1992; Peterson & Thörn, 1994). In one of the most influential studies of the political process approach, *Freedom Summer*, McAdam (1988) examined how white students from American universities joined black civil rights activists to assist in political undertakings in the south. One important conclusion was that those who participated could use their involvement to become rising stars and leaders of the new social movements that later emerged, such as the student movement, the women's movement, and the environmental movement. Yet, while it is well-known that activist identities generally involve claims to social status (see also Friedman & McAdam, 1992), we need to know more about the criteria that lie behind this. The moral-sociological perspective put forward here provides a novel angle, taking on the task of investigating how activists' moral distinctions also produce social effects. Durkheim and Mauss (1963/1903) called attention to the fact that in social life people and things are frequently classified according to a moral affective rather than descriptive rationale. This means that the very categories and divisions that make up activists' moral world of rightness and goodness are also manifested in status distinctions. These are manifested in clear divisions between in-group and out-group members as well as influencing the informal positions within the activist-community. Thus, we investigate

7 Smelser makes a distinction between norm-oriented and value-oriented movements (Smelser, 2011/1962: 159-218). Yet this distinction is untenable as all movements draw on moral ideals. Even a professional group that seeks to raise the employees' salary, to use one of Smelser's examples of norm-oriented movements, base their collective behavior on ideals; for instance the ideal of equality.

how activists in the same movement establish “moral hierarchies” among themselves.

A Moral-Sociological Study of Animal Rights Activism

The moral ideal is not fixed: it is alive, it evolves, it transforms itself endlessly in spite of the respect with which it is surrounded. Tomorrow's ideal will not be that of today. There are always new ideas and aspirations springing up which necessitate modifications, and at times there are even deeper revolutions in the existing morality (Durkheim, 1979/1920: 81).

To illustrate the usefulness of the moral-sociological perspective advanced above, we apply it to an empirical study of Swedish animal rights activists. It is well-known that many social movement activists burn for their cause. Activists' convictions are invested with strong moral and affective force, fueling their public actions and guiding them in their everyday lives (e.g. Jasper, 1997; Goodwin et al., 2001). Rarely is this more evident than in the case of animal rights activists. Conversion to an animal rights universe of meaning has implications for both the public and private dimensions of a person's life. Animal rights activism involves “a totalizing life-style” pervading every aspect of the lives of activists and making the members' confrontations of social norms more thorough than observable in most other social movements (see e.g. Pallotta, 2005). Historically, other social movements have pursued radically new ideals. However, the animal rights movement provokes us to extend our moral concern and obligation to animals as sentient beings, as individuals with intrinsic value and entitled to rights. By viewing meat consumption as murder and modern insemination practices as institutionalized rape, and by drawing parallels between industrial meat production and the Holocaust, they seek to radically transform social practices and moral codes. The movement has been characterized as bringing “a Copernican revolution into Western moral discourse” (Kochi & Ordan, 2008). The animal rights case, therefore, effectively illustrates not only how social movements are pursuers of ideals, but also how this readily leads them into conflict with existing social norms. This makes moral reflexivity salient in animal rights activism.

Several scholarly contributions on the animal rights movement exhibit similarities with the approach presented here. The moral nature of the animal rights activists' protest was explored earlier (e.g. Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Jasper, 1997). The fact that activists diverge from the meat-normative order of mainstream society and thus require de-socialization in relation to the dominant

norms, and re-socialization into the animal rights community has been highlighted (Pallotta, 2005; Hansson & Jacobsson, 2014). Likewise, aspects of the lifeworlds of activists (e.g. Herzog, 1993; Shapiro, 1994; McDonald, 2000; Pallotta, 2005) have been investigated, along with their protest repertoires and tactics (e.g. Munro, 2001, 2005). However, our Durkheimian interpretation allows us to provide coherence to these findings. We understand these findings as interdependent rather than separate from one another, examining them in terms of the relationship between ideals and norms; in other words, as social facts of the moral order. What our moral-sociological perspective adds to earlier research on animal rights activism is thus an overall frame for otherwise diverse results and conclusions. In addition, in novel ways it explores the role and consequences of moral reflexivity in the animal rights movement, illuminating activists' moral performances, symbolic boundary-drawing, emotion work and deviance management.

The focus on animal rights protesters in Sweden serves to redress the Anglo-Saxon focus in existing research, as most animal rights movement studies were conducted in Anglo-Saxon countries, in particular the US, Great Britain, and Australia (see e.g. Herzog, 1993; Shapiro, 1994; Einwohner, 1999, 2002; Jamison et al., 2000; Pallotta, 2005; Gaarder, 2011; Groves, 1997; Jasper, 1997; Munro, 2001, 2005; Taylor, 2004; Metcalfe, 2008; Upton, 2011; Monaghan, 2013).

In Sweden, as in many other countries, animal protection organizations were developed in the latter part of the 19th century, and, similar to other countries, there were two branches: anti-vivisection societies and animal protection societies. The Swedish General Animal Protection Association (*Svenska Allmänna Djurskyddsföreningen*; unofficial translation) was inaugurated as a national organization in 1875, though some local groups already existed at that time. In 1897, a number of animal protection organizations formed a joint umbrella organization, *De svenska djurskyddsföreningarnas centralförbund*, which has been called Animal Welfare Sweden (*Djurskyddet Sverige* since 2004). In 1957, The Swedish General Animal Protection Association, together with two other organizations with origins in the 1880s, decided to build a joint organization, The Swedish Animal Protection Organization (*Svenska Djurskyddsföreningen*).

The anti-vivisection society, the Nordic Society against Painful Experiments on Animals (*Nordiska Samfundet mot plågsamma djurförsök*), was founded in 1882 with inspiration from Britain (Carlsson, 2007). It has become the most important animal welfare organization in Sweden. In 1999, its name was changed to Animal Rights Sweden (*Djurens Rätt*), reflecting a

radicalization of the organization's claims, as well as a widening of the agenda from anti-vivisectionism to animal rights more broadly.

Following international trends, the Swedish animal rights movement had a revival period in the 1970s and 1980s, with animal ethics and vivisectionism debated more in the public sphere (Carlsson, 2007). Animal rights activism in its more radical form developed during the 1970s in many countries, under the intellectual influence of thinkers such as Peter Singer and later Tom Regan (e.g. Garner, 2004). More recently, Gary Francione (1996; see also Francione & Garner, 2010) also served as a source of inspiration for the Swedish movement. While animal welfare activism focuses on improving animal protection, animal rights activism takes a more radical position questioning the power relations underlying the exploitation of animals by humans and the instrumental use of animals for human needs. While the distinction between animal welfare and animal rights is very important for activists, it is not always easy to classify organizations along these lines. For instance, Animal Rights Sweden today tries to combine animal-welfare activism (pleading for the humane treatment of animals and improving animal protection) with more radical animal-rights claims (challenging animal oppression and human superiority in a more fundamental way). Its name change in 1999 reflected that move. Today Animal Rights Sweden has a membership of approximately 36,000 (in 2014). Just as in the U.S. and Britain, the Swedish animal rights movement had its peak in 1990 when Animal Rights Sweden had almost 65,000 members. Its official policy is to work within the boundaries of existing law, engaging in a broad range of activities. This includes lobby work and awareness-raising campaigns against animal experiments, fur farms, the industrial production of meat, excessive meat consumption, and the like.

In 2005, the Animal Rights Alliance (*Djurrättsalliansen*) was founded as a more activist and radical alternative to Animal Rights Sweden. It conducts mainly traditional public opinion work in combination with undercover filming of animal farms (pigs, minks), but also gives its explicit moral support to other types of illegal action.

During the 1980s, actions of animal liberation started in Sweden, first in the form of rescuing animals from research laboratories and, from the 1990s onwards, frequently in the form of releases from fur farms (minks). A Swedish version of ALF (Animal Liberation Front) actions started in 1985, with inspiration from Britain where the organization was established in the mid-seventies. Typical of ALF is their use of illegal methods such as breaking into laboratories, poultry farms and fur farms to free animals. ALF represents a form of "militant activism" since the actions of the organization regularly feature elements of violence; e.g. threats, stalking, harassment,

physical assaults, destruction of material property and even bombings (see e.g. Tester, 1991; Best & Nocella II, 2004; Garner, 2004; Liddick, 2006; Donovan & Timothy Coupe, 2013). Sweden is one of the countries where illegal actions in the ALF-manner are more frequent (as self-reported by activists on the Bite Back site). Occasional actions performed under the label of the Animal Rights Militia (*Djurrättsmilisen*) have also taken place in Sweden. This grouping is even more militant than ALF, not shunning violence against humans (which according to the ALF code of conduct should be avoided).⁸

In this study we focus on animal rights activism rather than the activities performed by animal protection organizations.⁹ We have examined animal rights activism over three different periods – late 1990s, mid 2000s and late 2000s. Despite the fact that the movement was more active and salient in the first period, our results point to a continuity when it comes to activists' lifeworlds; involving their outlooks, experiences and social relationships (cf. Dahlberg et al., 2008).

Our study is based on 23 open-ended, in-depth interviews with activists involved in various networks of the wider animal rights movement, carried out over a period of 12 years. Five of the interviews were conducted in 1998, four of which were with activists affiliated with Animal Rights Sweden and one interviewee representing the Animal Liberation Front. An additional ten interviews were conducted in 2004, with activists engaged in Animal Rights Sweden. The remaining eight interviews took place in 2010 with activists belonging to the Animal Rights Alliance and a local network of animal rights activists in Gothenburg. The Gothenburg group is a local network with an approach similar to the Animal Rights Alliance. Some of these interviewees also had experience with ALF actions. Indeed, the majority of activists studied for this research belonged to several networks, or had been engaged in them in the past, thus not limiting their commitment to only one group. This means that our sample includes both activists who only work within the boundary of the law (who were in majority) and militant as well as non-militant activists who carried out illegal actions.¹⁰ Regarding the latter difference, the

8 For instance, in 2014 a couple of animal rights activists were sentenced to long prison terms for actions such as arson and defilement of graves directed at fur-farmers and their families.

9 In this research we have thus excluded animal welfare organizations, such as Animal Welfare Sweden (*Djurskyddet Sverige*) and the Swedish Animal Protection Organization (*Svenska Djurskyddsföreningen*).

10 The concept of militancy is not applied here to animal rights activists who perform non-violent forms of illegal actions (cf. Peterson, 2001 who operates with a wider definition of militancy and violence including such actions in her understanding of militant action). Typically, in Sweden non-violent protesters have been influenced by the Plowshares-group

sample includes both activists who follow the Gandhian principles of civil disobedience and carry out their actions (such as the rescue of hens) in the open, informing the farmer and the authorities about the action afterward, and activists who have been engaged in violent forms of animal liberation and sabotage. However, in this book we are not primarily interested in the activists' preferred forms of action but their outlooks, experiences, and social relationships. Since these are notably similar regardless of organizational affiliation, we will treat them as one sample and only make distinctions between the different groups of activists if relevant. As we will show, the animal rights groups share a common moral worldview, and the forms of moral reflexivity mentioned can be found among animal rights protesters in general.¹¹

Furthermore, the lifeworld research-method employed here seeks to encompass the actor-structure nexus. Following the traditional formulation of the method, which solely focuses on the actor-level of analysis (e.g. Moustakas, 1994), we also study morality through animal rights activists' explicit descriptions and statements about their lives and their motivations. As social fact, however, morality also needs to be studied through *the effects* it has, *inter alia* on friendships, work, family life, education, relationships with the public, and experiences of the media. As pointed out by Durkheim (1982/1895: 53-56), often we are not aware of social forces operating, until we notice the reactions when we go against the stream. Thus, morality is consequential and it also operates through feelings and experiences. Put by Durkheim, "social pressure makes itself felt through mental channels" (Durkheim, 2001/1912: 211). Following Durkheim, a methodological device to capture norms is to study norm transgressions and the reactions that they evoke (see also Jacobsson & Löfmarck, 2008). This idea has most clearly been taken up in the legacy of ethnomethodology and its use of "breaching experiments" (e.g. Garfinkel, 2002). Here we study reactions to, and experiences of norm transgressions, as self-reported in the activist interviews.

(see chapter 2) and its use of civil disobedience. This is also the case with another animal rights group, The Rescue Service (*Räddningstjänsten*), which was formed in 1999 and specialized in freeing animals and placing them in caring sanctuaries. Two of our interviewees had previous experiences of activism in The Rescue Service.

¹¹ However, this world-view is not necessarily shared by so-called animal welfarists. The internal cleavages and differences in outlooks between the animal rights and animal welfare groups, as two branches of the wider animal rights movement, are well documented in international research (e.g. Groves, 2001; Jacobsson, 2012). Drawing on Munson's vocabulary, we may speak of an animal rights stream and an animal welfare stream. Being "together but not one" (Munson, 2008: 96-131), the animal rights groups usually perceive animal welfare activities as morally insufficient or even condemnable.

To select our interviewees we adopted the approach of “intensity-sampling”, focusing on information-rich cases that clearly manifest the phenomenon of interest (e.g. Patton, 2002). Against this backdrop the selection criteria were that all interviewees were vegans (eat no animal products for ethical and political reasons) with distinct animal-rightist and activist identities, which means that we have only interviewed the most dedicated activists. We contacted the key figures in the respective groups at the times when the interviews took place, either those holding formal leading positions or those who functioned as informal leaders. The remaining participants were then recruited through the activists’ social networks, with the aim of securing diversity in terms of age and gender. We interviewed 13 women and 10 men aged between 20 and 60. Most of the activists worked professionally, although some of the younger ones were students, and a few were unemployed or on sick leave. For all of them, the animal rights issue was a priority concern in their lives and paid work more of a necessity. The participants came from the two largest cities in Sweden, Stockholm and Gothenburg.

After establishing a relationship of mutual trust with the key-figures of each group, nearly all activists immediately accepted when asked about participating in the study. The interviews lasted between one-and-a-half and five hours, exploring the activists’ lifeworlds. As a consequence of the open-ended approach we employed, talk about outlooks, experiences and social relationships not only came up in connection with our pre-formulated questions but also featured spontaneously in the interviews as the activists shared information about their biographies. The recurrent stories of activists’ thoughts and feelings led us to conclude that the 23 interviews were enough to reach saturation. Our findings are also well in line with the research findings of the studies of animal rights activism in the Anglo-Saxon countries (see above), indicating that the animal rights movement is in many ways a transnational movement and that the moral universe of activists does not differ much across countries. However, their concrete action strategies may differ depending on the specific context (see, for instance, Jacobsson, 2012, 2013 on animal rights activism in Poland).

Outline of the book

Using animal rights activism as a case study, this book is intended to illustrate the fruitfulness of a moral-sociological perspective on social

movements. The various chapters explore different aspects of moral reflexivity in activism.¹²

In chapter 2, we illustrate empirically how moral reflexivity is exerted both in the internal movement life and the movement's outwards strategies and the staging of collective action. It is argued that it is in the light of the relationship, and clashes, between ideals and norms, that the need for moral reflexivity should be understood. For comparative purposes, we compare animal rights activism with peace-activists engaged in the Plowshares movement in Sweden. Moral reflexivity, we argue, is prominent in both movements but plays out in partly different ways in the two activist-communities. Moreover, we show how morality permeates both the inner life of the activist groups and the outward strategies, which leads us to speak of the moral grammar of strategy.

In chapter 3, moral reflexivity is illuminated by the emotion work performed by social movement activists. In this chapter we explain both the activists' need for emotion work and the ways in which this is conducted. The chapter identifies five types of emotion work frequently performed by animal rights activists; that is, what we name, "containing", "ventilation", "ritualization", "micro-shocking" and "normalization of guilt".

In chapter 4, we explore moral reflexivity in terms of the symbolic boundary drawing performed by activists, showing that animal rights activists challenge established boundaries between sacred and profane when dismantling the symbolic boundary between humans and animals. Furthermore, the chapter investigates the implications of the sacred character of moral ideals, analyzing animal rights activism as an instance of "secular religion". Here we identify a number of elementary forms and experiences of religious life in animal rights activism: "conversion experiences", "dedication and commitment", "moral community building", "protection of the sacred", and "rituals".

In chapter 5, we further explore moral reflexivity, developing a deviance perspective on social movements. As social movement activists challenge established social norms, they are frequently defined as norm transgressors or outsiders by their social environment. Relating to Howard Becker's (1963) classic theory, the chapter conceptualizes activists as "entrepreneurial deviants", showing both similarities and differences with traditional deviant groups. Empirically, the chapter presents the ways in which animal rights

12 This book draws on earlier formulations of our moral-sociological perspective published in a number of journal-articles (Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2012, 2013; Lindblom & Jacobsson, 2014; Jacobsson, 2014).

activists counter stereotypes, which is interpreted as a form of deviance management. We identify six such strategies: “passing”, “confronting”, “neutralization”, “idealization”, “group cohesion” and “group transformation”.

Finally, in chapter 6 we summarize our moral-sociological framework and give some suggestions for further research.