Dramaturgy and Social Movements: The Social Construction and Communication of Power*

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This paper seeks to illuminate how social movements collectively construct and communicate power. Drawing on insights from dramaturgy as well as from field research of several movements, the article demonstrates how social movements are dramas routinely concerned with challenging or sustaining interpretations of power relations. Four dramatic techniques associated with such communicative processes are identified and elaborated: scripting, staging, performing and interpreting. It is suggested that movement outcomes hinge in part upon how well activists employ these techniques and manage various emergent contingencies and tensions. The paper concludes with a discussion of several sets of theoretical and empirical implications.

Introduction

The sociology of social movements currently lacks a conceptual framework to understand collective attempts to construct and reconstruct definitions of power. This deficiency highlights a paradox. On the one hand, movement activists devote considerable time articulating their understanding of power relations. Movement scholars, on the other hand, have generally neglected the processes by which these meanings are developed, sustained, and transformed.

To address this shortcoming we offer a dramaturgical framework that examines how movements construct and communicate power, focusing on intersubjective and interpretive factors. This framework is grounded in research of and experiences in various social movements including anti-apartheid, socialist, sanctuary, labor, nuclear disarmament and environmental.[1] Drawing on these observations, the paper analyzes and illustrates how movement actors collectively define, redefine and articulate power via four dramatic techniques: (1) scripting, (2) staging, (3) performing, and (4) interpreting. The article concludes by suggesting the utility of dramaturgical analyses and proposing directions for future research.

Power, Social Movements and Dramaturgy

The very existence of a social movement indicates that differences exist

regarding the meaning of some aspect of reality. At the core of these contests over meaning are differences regarding conceptions of power (cf. Gamson 1968; Gerlach and Hine 1970; Piven and Cloward 1977; Moore 1978; Tilly 1978). What is it? Who has it? Who doesn't? How is it wielded? Who ought to have it? How should it be used? While movement actors attempt to raise and answer these questions, institutional elites seek to maintain their "hegemonic ideology" by sustaining their definitions of the situation (Gitlin 1980; cf. Gramsci 1971; Hall 1972), by ". . . shaping . . . perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that . . . [people] accept their role in the existing order of things . . ." and by controlling the agenda (Lukes 1974, pp. 24, 25).

Although the outcomes of such contests hinge to some extent on how movements define and communicate power, a thorough understanding of how these dynamics work is lacking. In part, this lacuna was a consequence of the highly restrictive focus on resources (McCarthy and Zald 1973; 1977), a focus that neglected interpretive factors associated with social movement mobilization. But power has not only an objective basis, it is also grounded in the subjective,[2] as implied by the recent development of a number of concepts including Rude's (1980) "inherent" and "derived" ideology, McAdam's (1982) "cognitive liberation," Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina's (1982) "injustice frames" and Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford's (1986) "frame alignment processes."

While these contemporary efforts alert scholars to the importance of ideology and grievance interpretation and their relation to power, a conceptual framework illuminating the processes by which movements construct and communicate power is still needed. As McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1988, pp. 728–729) point out, movement scholars have tended to neglect "the dynamics of collective action past the emergence of a movement" and "the ongoing accomplishment of collective action." A dramaturgical approach facilitates an understanding of such dynamics. It does so by focusing on social acts and emergent meanings, recognizing that ". . . meaning is a continually problematic accomplishment of human interaction and is fraught with change, novelty, and ambiguity" (Brissett and Edgley 1990, p. 2). Finally, the analytical scope of dramaturgy is quite broad. It goes beyond the study of rhetorical strategies (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986; Gamson and Modigliani 1989) to consider a plethora of additional processes associated with the social construction and communication of meaning, including formulating roles and characterizations, managing performance regions, controlling information, sustaining dramatic tensions and orchestrating emotions. Dramaturgy can not only be employed to study crowd behavior, collective action related to particular events and the everyday interaction of movement

participants, it can also be used to analyze movement careers as well as the ebb and flow of social change.

With these considerations in mind, social movements can be described as dramas in which protagonists and antagonists compete to affect audiences' interpretations of power relations in a variety of domains, including those pertaining to religious, political, economic or lifestyle arrangements. Movement and countermovement activists, targets of change, and the media present divergent interpretations of extant and ideal power relations, desiring some audience to accept and act upon their particular presentation as if it were unquestionably real (Mauss 1975; Gitlin 1980; Gusfield 1981; Hunt 1991b).

However, what is real is itself problematic. Similarly, what constitutes power is subject to differential interpretation. Some activists see power as a means, others see it as an end, and still others see it as both. Given such diversity of meanings as well as the lack of scholarly consensus on the topic,[3] this paper does not seek to define or operationalize power. Rather this article seeks to understand power from the perspective of movement actors—how they collectively construct their images of power and how they struggle to alter extant power relations.[4]

Dramatic Techniques and Power

To communicate power movement actors employ a variety of dramatic techniques. We identify and elaborate four broad techniques: scripting, staging, performing and interpreting. These are sequentially arranged and treated as though they are discrete processes for analytical purposes only. Empirically, two or more may be employed simultaneously by social movements. Moreover, since movement dramas are emergent and ongoing phenomena, activity associated with any one technique affects the unfolding of subsequent techniques.

Scripting

Scripting refers to the development of a set of directions that define the scene, identify actors and outline expected behavior. Scripts are not rigid texts movement participants are required to follow. Rather, they are interactionally emergent guides for collective consciousness and action, guides that are circumspect enough to provide behavioral cues when unanticipated events arise yet sufficiently flexible to allow for improvisation. Thus, while the bulk of scripting activity occurs prior to a performance, it can be improvised as actors interact with each other and the audience.

Scripts are built upon "frames" that provide a collective definition of the situation (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986; Snow and Benford 1988; 1989). Scripting is a social process that encompasses all of the

various framing activities and alignment strategies. It differs from framing in that scripts attempt to integrate and coordinate movement activity. While framing provides actable ideas, scripting moves these ideas one step closer to enactment. It casts roles, composes dialogue and directs action.

Social movement scripts are about power relations. They include ideas, attributions, norms, values, beliefs and a universe of discourse. Scripts also provide performers with (1) diagnoses that identify problematic dimensions of power relations that are in need of amelioration, (2) prognoses that articulate an alternative vision of power arrangements, (3) compelling rationales for changing power relations and participating in movement dramas and (4) strategic and tactical direction delineating the most effective means to obtain power (Wilson 1973; Ladd, Hood, and Van Liere 1983; Snow and Benford 1988). The first two processes center around developing dramatis personae, that is constructing identities and roles for a cast of characters associated with movement dramas. The latter two entail generating dialogue and direction for movement performances and actors.

Developing Dramatis Personae. Social movement scripting begins with the development of dramatis personae or what Zurcher and Snow (1981, p. 472) refer to as ''the cast of characters.'' Movement organizers help construct identities and roles for antagonists, victims, protagonists, supporting cast members and audiences (Hare 1985; Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986; Snow and Benford 1988), including scripting their own identities and roles (Alinsky 1971).

In identifying an antagonist, movement actors usually point to a specific event or situation as problematic and attribute blame to some person, group, social institution or idea (Snow and Benford 1988). They frequently vilify the identified antagonist by invoking caustic labels such as ''capitalist pigs,'' ''male chauvinists,'' ''baby killers,'' ''warmongers,'' ''fascists'' and ''scabs.'' Typifications of opponents as immoral, evil or villains serve to ''galvanize and focus sentiment'' (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986, p. 470; cf. Coser 1956; 1969; Lang and Lang 1961; Klapp 1962). An American labor song, ''Talking Union,'' epitomizes such attributional processes:

> He's puffing a big seegar, feeling mighty slick
> 'Cause he thinks he's got your union licked.
> Well, he looks out the window, and what does he see
> But a thousand pickets, and they all agree
> He's a bastard . . . unfair . . . slave-driver . . .
> Bet he beats his wife. (Almanac Singers 1947)

The ''evil'' actions of an antagonist are usually presented as directed

against some group activists identify as undeserving victims or potential victims. Without victims there would be no social movement dramas (cf. Burke 1954; Holstein and Miller 1990). A number of scholars have observed as well that movement participation requires the development of a sense of injustice among a critical mass of structurally connected actors (Turner 1969; Piven and Cloward 1977; Moore 1978; Gamson et al. 1982; McAdam 1982; Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986). These writers tend to neglect, however, the basis for movement claims about injustices and victimage. Movement dramas demonstrate how antagonists have violated cultural norms regarding the proper use and distribution of power. The imputed victims of such abuses of power can be protagonists, part or all of the identified audience, the supporting cast, or some "innocent" bystander such as fetuses, the homeless, children, aged, handicapped, minorities, or one's self.

Those identified as having the capability of overcoming injustice or solving the problematic situation are the protagonists. They are scripted as the embodiment of good, the negation of all that the antagonists represent. Protagonists articulate a more just world, one devoid of innocent victims, and claim to have the capacity to alter existing power relations. They can be idolized or charismatic figures, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez, Angela Davis or Jerry Falwell, an entire movement, a specific movement organization or some combination of the three.

A successful performance usually requires enlisting and empowering a supporting cast. Though the size of the supporting cast varies considerably across movements, typically a large number of auxiliaries are needed to perform numerous front- and backstage roles such as peacekeepers, writers, emcees, leafletters, fundraisers and the like. This involves recruiting cast members via persuasion (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986) or by offering "selective incentives" (Olson 1976; Fireman and Gamson 1979; Oliver 1980).

The final type of dramatis personae is the audience. Movement performances can be directed toward a variety of audiences ranging from those who hold and wield power to the victims of extant power relations. More typically, performances are for the benefit of those who have the potential to alter existing power arrangements, even though they may not be cognizant of their capacity. Indeed, supporting cast members are frequently recruited from audiences. At a 1986 campus anti-apartheid sit-in the senior author observed, for instance, several of those arrested began as spectators but were eventually persuaded by the demonstrators to join the action.

Dialogue and Direction. While movement participation literature tends to focus exclusively on recruitment processes, sustaining the cast's involvement

is equally crucial to an ongoing production. This is contingent in part on empowering the cast. Empowerment refers to an interactive process of convincing individuals or groups that they have the capacity to affect power relations. Social movements facilitate empowerment in a variety of ways (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967; Alinsky 1971; Dellinger 1975), many of which are predicated upon the construction of a universe of discourse (Mead 1934; Snow and Machalek 1984) and a vocabulary of motives (Mills 1940; Scott and Lyman 1968).

Vocabularies of motive supply adherents with compelling reasons or rationales for taking action and provide participants with justifications for actions undertaken on behalf of the movement's goals, particularly when their behavior is called into question by friends, family or coworkers. Social movements construct and nurture vocabularies of motive concerning the severity and urgency of the problem as well as the efficacy and propriety of taking action. A vocabulary of motive helps participants answer such questions as: Why take any action? Why take action now? What is to be done? Will my actions make any difference?

Evidence of the promotion of rationales for taking action can be found across a variety of social movements. In *The Feminine Mystique*, for example, Friedan (1963, p. 10) seeks to instill in women a vocabulary of efficacy convincing them that they have the capacity to alter power relations:

> . . . women can affect society, as well as be affected by it; that, in the end, a woman, as a man, has the power to choose, and to make her own heaven or hell.

Scripting also provides direction for appropriate performances. This includes the scripting of emotion, as Zurcher's (1982b; 1985) work suggests (cf. Shott 1979; Hochschild 1979; 1983; Lofland 1985). Movement performers offer facial and verbal cues as well as utilize props intended to define and evoke the appropriate emotion or mood. The following excerpts from field notes of a carefully orchestrated disarmament event staged during the 1985 Pantex Peace Encampment illustrate the organizational scripting and staging of emotions:

> About 175 people gathered around the stage. By the smiles and chatter . . . I judged the mood to be festive. The emcee [a peace activist], four Japanese, and an Anglo man filed onto the stage. The emcee smiled, and as she spoke, her expression turned solemn. The expressions of those watching were now solemn. The emcee introduced two of the Japanese, as "hibakusha" [A-bomb survivors] and the other two as translators.
>
> The hibakusha related their experiences on the day of the bombing, their struggle to survive, and their subsequent treatment as social outcasts. . . . I felt pity for them. I could see pained expressions on most faces. A few rocked their upper bodies. Their eyes began to fill with tears. . . .
>
> The emcee then introduced the Anglo as "the first American to witness the destruction

of Hiroshima." . . . He explained how he was assigned to fly over Hiroshima immediately
after the bombing to determine its effectiveness and to film the devastation. At first, he ap-
peared in control of his emotions. But soon his voice began to quiver. He broke down
completely and began sobbing. He reached out, grabbed both the hibakusha, embraced
them, and wailed, "Oh God! What did we do to these lovely people?"

Everyone I could see through my own tear-filled eyes was weeping. Several sobbed
aloud. The emcee stepped forward and proclaimed, "This is a wonderful occasion! What
we have witnessed here today is an extraordinary reconciliation! . . . Each of us must
take that spirit . . . back to our communities and put its power to work so that there will
never be another Hiroshima or Nagasaki again!" . . . The audience stood and applauded.
. . . The joyous mood had been restored.

The foregoing also illustrates how emotions can be scripted to dramatize
ideas regarding the exercise of power. The performers' accounts of the abuses
of power and the Air Force officer's conversion from antagonist to protagonist
served as forceful affective prods for those who witnessed the event. The emo-
tions served to empower observers by instilling in them both a sense of propriety
and efficacy—propriety by exemplifying the sacrifices others are making for
peace, efficacy by demonstrating that even antagonists can be converted to
the disarmament cause.

Furthermore, the performance calls attention to the ongoing dialectical
tension between passion and organization (Zurcher and Snow 1981, p. 479).
Managing this tension is a key to the survival of a movement organization.
Too little passion with too much organization fails to inspire participants; but
too much passion with too little organization reduces a potentially powerful
group to an undirected crowd.

A similar tension exists regarding the scripting of unique and routine
events. Tactical innovations provide variety for movement participants, at-
tract media coverage (Tuchman 1978; Molotch 1979; Gitlin 1980) and impede
attempts by antagonists and authorities to damage or control movement per-
formances (McAdam 1983); but too many unique actions suggests that the
movement organization lacks focus and purpose. Routine events and move-
ment rituals provide opportunities to reinforce group values, goals and images
of power relations. Too much routine, on the other hand, suggests that the
movement organization is static, unimaginative and hence lacks the capacity
to affect change. Whether performers and audiences view movement dramas
as suspenseful, captivating and persuasive or predictable, boring and unin-
spiring often depends upon the management of unique/routine and passion/
organization tensions.

One peace movement organization studied, for example, had a long-
standing reputation for mobilizing hundreds of participants on short notice by
scripting and staging novel events usually characterized by enthusiasm and
excitement. They staged die-ins and sit-ins, performed street theater, erected

human billboards, and presented Lockheed with a "Bad Neighbor Award." Each dramatically portrayed problems associated with existing power relations. In 1983, members turned to restructuring the organization. By focusing exclusively on organizational matters, the only participation opportunities the group offered were meetings that most of the supporting cast found boring. Gradually, the number of active members declined. Six months later, after finally completing their reorganization plans, the group disbanded, never to meet again. It had organized itself to death.

Staging

Nevertheless, some organization is needed to stage movement performances. Staging refers to appropriating, managing and directing materials, audiences and performing regions. This involves the maintenance and expansion of an organization's capacity to communicate their ideas about power. It requires that movement organizations concern themselves with garnering and managing money and other material resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Goffman (1974, p. 1) makes a similar point: "Whether you organize a theater or an aircraft factory, you need to find places for cars to park and coats to be checked. . . ."

Although staging frequently entails such logistical matters, a dramaturgical approach suggests that activists must also attend to developing and manipulating symbols. One central dramatistic task, for instance, involves the staging of performances that are consistent with the script, including engaging appropriate audiences and using "politically correct" symbols. To illustrate, one peace movement coalition studied attempted to prevent the local Revolutionary Communist Party from displaying symbols of guns, burning American flags, and clenched fists at an event. Organizers considered those props to be antithetical to the non-violent scripts of the peace movement and thus inappropriate displays of the exercise of power.

Another major staging task involves promotion and publicity activities. Social movement dramas require audiences. Unless a performance is staged where people are already assembled for other purposes such as sporting events, conventions or near pedestrian or vehicular arteries, movement organizers must publicize upcoming performances and solicit attendance. A plethora of specialized and labor-intensive tasks are required to produce newsletters, brochures, pamphlets, leaflets, posters, letters to the editor, press releases, print and electronic media ads, mass mailings, door-to-door campaigns and phone banks.

The final staging problems presented here concern the interrelated issues of audience segregation and backstage control. The content of performances are often tailored to specific audiences. Movement actors, for example, typically

stage a different performance for elites than for the masses. This reflects a common sense notion shared by most movement activists that institutional elites interpret displays of power differently than the powerless. However, it may not be possible to control audience homogeneity.

Moreover, as Goffman (1959) suggests, performances can be architecturally and temporally organized so as to prevent audiences from witnessing backstage activity or earlier performances that could undermine the image or message being fostered frontstage. Activists frequently encounter difficulty segregating regions, because their performances are staged in spaces designed for other purposes and controlled by authorities. Movement organizers sometimes devise creative means for concealing backstage activity in public places. Anti-apartheid activists, for instance, had to hide their role in organizing an "illegal" rally or otherwise be banished from campus. They also wanted the demonstration to appear to be an impromptu reaction to arrests of protesters by campus police. As the rally began, the senior author joined a dozen gagged protesters standing on a wall facing a main walkway and was discretely handed an instruction sheet by a rally organizer that read, "STRESS SPONTA-NEITY, NO GROUPS ARE PARTICIPATING AS ORGANIZATIONS." The instruction leaflet thus served as a backstage communication medium in the absence of physical barriers segregating regions.

The foregoing example also illustrates how staging is an interactive process in which organizers and antagonists adjust to each others' actions (McAdam 1983). Frequently, antagonists control or limit the places where movement performances are staged (cf. Snow, Zurcher, and Peters 1981). University of Texas officials attempted to prevent mass demonstrations by erecting architectural barriers, restricting "free speech" to specific times and places, requiring assembly permits and sanctioning and even arresting violators of these rules. One reason antagonists seek to control such spaces is that they are typically involved in managing their own dramas, including preventing counter-performances that might upstage or disrupt their performances.

In 1984, for example, Dallas city officials attempted to prevent protesters from demonstrating near the Republican National Convention in hopes of avoiding an encore of the spectacle of the 1968 Democratic Convention. Cognizant of the lack of drama associated with nominating an incumbent president, officials feared that the throngs of reporters would find the protesters' performances more interesting and newsworthy. A lengthy court battle ensued over the distance from the convention center the city would be permitted to erect a hurricane fence preventing "undesirables" from getting too close to the main performance.

Not only must those who stage movement dramas deal with problems associated with the segregation of regions during specific performances, they

must also be concerned with overall backstage control. As Marx (1974; 1979) reports, agents provocateurs infiltrated various U.S. movements for purposes of damaging their performances, exacerbating or instigating internal conflict and encouraging defections. These counter-agents were able to do dramatistic damage because of the privileged information regarding scripting and staging they acquired by virtue of having been accepted backstage as loyal performers.

Performing

Performing involves the demonstration and enactment of power. It concretizes ideas regarding the struggle between protagonists and antagonists and reveals to audiences ways they can achieve or preserve desireable power relations. Furthermore, performing is itself empowering. By taking action to alter or sustain power arrangements, movement participants experience a transformation of self, moving from a person who is acted upon by external forces to an agent actively shaping the scene.

Presenting a movement performance that effectively communicates power to audiences and empowers actors requires the coordination of a variety of dramatic techniques. Here dramaturgical loyalty, discipline and circumspection will be considered. Although these techniques often emerge from movement scripts and are frequently rehearsed, they are also skills that actors employ while performing.

Dramaturgical Loyalty. Dramaturgical loyalty refers to allegiance to a movement's constructed definitions or emergent norms (Turner and Killian 1987). Successful movement dramas require its performers to ". . . act as if they have accepted certain moral obligations," that is, they must display dramaturgical loyalty (Goffman 1959, p. 212). It requires commitment on the part of participants to keep the secrets of the group, to check criticisms of the team so as to present an image of solidarity to outsiders, to avoid exploiting their presence in the front region, to accept minor roles within the group, and to be taken in by their performance enough to appear sincere but not so much as to become overinvolved.

Actors who become overinvolved, for example, such as prolifers who bomb abortion clinics, antinukers who remove railroad tracks serving nuclear weapons facilities, or Christians who believe they are the next Messiah, perhaps share the movement's general views regarding macro-level power arrangements. From the perspective of other participants, however, the disloyal fail to understand their appropriate roles, misframe the tenor of the unfolding drama and use power illegitimately. Their actions thus not only upstage or parody collective performances, they tend to discredit movement attempts to sustain a unified image.

Dramaturgical Discipline. Loyalty to the underlying values expressed in the movement's script and to the collectively constructed images of power being fostered does not by itself insure a successful performance. Participants must also exercise dramaturgical discipline. This involves sustaining self-control so as to behave in ways that maintain the movement's affective line: avoiding involuntary disclosure of secrets, having the presence of mind to ". . . cover up on the spur of the moment for inappropriate behavior . . ." (Goffman 1959, p. 216), taking seriously that which is defined as serious and taking as humorous that which is defined as such.

An encounter we observed at a campus rally illustrates such dramatistic concerns. A woman in the process of being arrested for illegal assembly responded to reporter's questions regarding her motives by stating, "It's what's happening!" Upon continuing to indicate that she was participating because it was exciting and "the thing to do," one of the protest organizers pushed his way between her and the television camera and interrupted with:

> That's not the main reason why we're out here. We're here to protest U.T.'s eight-hundred and fifty million dollar investment in companies that do business in South Africa!

This not only illustrates the need for espousing an appropriate vocabulary of motive, one that conveys the gravity of the situation, but also the importance of having the stage presence to save the show when actors are perceived as muffing their roles.

Dramaturgical Circumspection. The success of a social movement drama also frequently hinges upon dramaturgical circumspection, the ability to prepare for performances in advance and to adapt an ongoing performance to unforseen circumstances (Goffman 1959). Regarding the first concern, this includes recruiting actors who are loyal and disciplined, targeting an appropriate audience for each performance, attending to the logistical details of staging and anticipating various contingencies that might arise.

Equally essential to the smooth flow of movement dramas is the capacity to adjust or improvise performances as unexpected developments or incidents occur. Thus rather than strictly adhering to every detail of movement scripts, actors must be adept at fashioning new performances out of the emergent scene.

One contingency a core company of movement players frequently must confront is stigmatization. In the context of social movements, stigmatization typically involves the labeling of an organization as unfit to hold or wield power. Activists seek to manage stigma by neutralizing discreditable actions, disassociating the organization from embarrassing actions and actors, purging the organization of disreputable characters and conducting face work once

the organization has been given a discreditable label (Goffman 1955; 1959; Snow 1979). The Ku Klux Klan, for example, engages in impression management in order to overcome its unfavorable image. A Klan public relations director expressed awareness of their discreditable label: "People think we are hoodlums, but we ain't" (Williams 1961, p. 46). One face work strategy is to emphasize that the movement is part of "respectable" society. A Klan member articulated this ploy:

> You have heard about irreligiousness of the Klan and its being composed of hoodlums. . . . Maybe there have been some that entered the Klan that were unworthy; there have been. . . . But of the thirteen men who compose the governing body of our Klan, . . . eleven are bona fide members of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, many of them with more than thirty years in the ministry. That's the kind of Klan we are trying to build. (Williams 1961, pp. 47–48)

Finally, movements face a unique staging concern in that they must be prepared to manage counter-performances and piggy-backers. Any social movement that attempts to challenge or reinforce existing power relations is likely to encounter opposition often in the form of another group staging a countervailing performance. Furthermore, extramovement individuals and organizations present dramatistic problems when they exploit a movement's audience by promoting their own interests, selling products, proselytizing, and vying for media attention. Dramaturgical circumspection requires that the sponsoring movement groups handle such piggy-backers in ways that do not undermine the theme of the main performance.

Returning to an earlier illustration, several agents of a peace coalition advocated limiting Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) members' participation in the Pantex Peace Pilgrimage. This created a dramaturgical dilemma. On the one hand, the peace movement could risk being stigmatized as illegitimate power contenders by allowing "pinkos" to exploit the peace movement's performance. This might jeopardize their image with local media and citizens, an image that had been carefully constructed over a two-year period. On the other hand, the peace coalition could contradict fundamental movement precepts regarding appropriate uses of power, including rights of free speech and assembly, by attempting to exclude the RCP actors from the stage. After considerable internal debate, the coalition allowed the RCP to participate but distanced themselves from the "communists." Ultimately, such dramatistic decisions rest on the negotiation of interpretations of the scene.

Interpreting

Thus far the dramatic techniques social movements employ have been discusssed as though they were discrete, time-bound stages. However, these

techniques are inextricably linked and temporally fused. There are, for example, scripting processes operating throughout the application of staging and performing techniques. The same could be said for interpreting. However, interpreting is fundamentally different from the other dramatic techniques in that it is the basis of all social activity. No other domain of social life is more pervasive and problematic than interpreting, the process of individually or collectively making sense out of symbols, talk, action and the environment, or, more succinctly, determining what is going on (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969; Goffman 1974). It is particularly problematic given the possibility of diverse interpretations and hence "multiple realities" (Schutz 1962; cf. Gusfield 1981).

According to Burke (1945), audiences and performers must interpret the act, scene, agent, agency and purpose as well as the relations among them in order to develop a line of action, which in turn is interpreted by self and others, and so forth. Hence, interpreting is a never-ending social activity that makes movement scripting, staging and performing possible. For each dramatic technique, activists seek to develop a line of action they perceive to be consistent with their collectively negotiated reality interpretations, idealistic visions and readings of the audiences' interpretations. Movement scripts, for instance, represent the collective construction of meaning, particularly concerning real and ideal power arrangements, taking various audiences' interpretations into account. Staging techniques, too, are predicated upon interpreting elements of the scene and imagining how a specific performance might appear to others. Finally, no movement performance could occur unless the actors were constantly monitoring their social and physical environments, especially the reactions of other performers and the audience, and adjusting their performances accordingly.

Interpretations are not only central to producing movement dramas, they are the very object of those productions. Performances seek to affect audiences' interpretations of reality, interpretive work that fundamentally concerns power relations. It identifies who had and who lacks power, portrays how it is wielded, presents an alternative vision of power arrangements and articulates how such transformations might be realized. Movement interpretive work thus stimulates audiences to redefine their situations as unjust and mutable so that existing power structures can be altered.

Yet movement scripts and performances do not have intrinsic meaning. Meaning is derived in part from audiences' interpretations, and these in turn are affected by personal biographies as well as by understandings of the wider social context (Mills 1959). According to Snow and Benford (1988) there are three such contextual factors that affect audiences' interpretations. First, events may occur that undermine the empirical credibility of movement

claims. Second, audiences filter such evidence through an interpretive screen based on their personal experience. A movement presentation may be too far removed from experiences of the audience for them to identify with or develop empathy toward the protagonists. Finally, an audience's cultural heritage, that is their folk wisdom, narrations and myths affects their interpretations. In sum, movement performances incongruent with audience interpretations of their empirical, experiential and cultural realities may fail to resonate or move them to participate actively in the collective drama.

To illustrate, one attempt by Austin Peace and Justice Coalition actors to recruit minorities entailed sponsoring a barbecue at a lower-class neighborhood community center. One of the peace activists recounted:

> I was serving food to people, when this middle-aged black guy walked up and asked if he could have some chicken to take home to his family. I said, "sure," and he asked me what we were doing there. I told him about the march and rally and explained why we were trying to stop the deployment of missiles in Europe. I wish you could have heard what he said to me. He goes "Lady, a nuclear war is about the best thing that could happen to us, because we'd finally be on an equal footing with white folks."

In short, the peace coalition's communications about national and international power relations failed to resonate with the audience's interpretations of everyday life experiences involving power relations between whites and blacks.

Factors beyond the control of social movements can also distort or otherwise modify the desired interpretations of the intended audiences. Producers of modern movements frequently find that their audiences' interpretations are filtered by media agents and agencies who take an active role in the reality construction business. Thus many are exposed only to those movements or performances deemed newsworthy, and when media outlets choose to cover movements they often trivialize them or demean their participants (Tuchman 1978; Gitlin 1980). For example, a magazine article, based on in-depth interviews with several Austin peace activists who worked for nine months to stage a statewide disarmament march and rally, focussed on the "hippies" in the movement referring to their "beards and sandals," while neglecting the performance's central theme. The activists felt that the media had in effect reduced a drama about global power relations and the survival of our species to a "cute" human interest story.

Members of the audience who articulate their interpretations essentially provide reviews or critiques of social movement dramas. Activists interpret audience reactions and decide either (1) to make subsequent scripting, staging and performing adjustments to fit the targeted audience, (2) to target a different audience or (3) to discount the reviews as unrepresentative, ill-informed or flat out wrong (cf. Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986). Activists

who completely ignore audience interpretations risk being discounted as a fringe group, while those who continually compromise their scripts to accommodate audience reviews risk being seen as a movement without principled direction and hence an unsuitable contender for power.

Conclusion

Activists and revolutionaries have long appreciated both the objective and subjective bases of power. Alinsky (1971, p. 127), for example, proclaims that "power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have." By recognizing the subjective bases of power, this paper illuminates how social movement actors socially construct and communicate their conceptions of power. It does so by identifying and elaborating four interrelated dramatistic techniques social movements employ—scripting, staging, performing and interpreting.

This effort makes several theoretical and empirical contributions. First, it adds to an understanding of how movements actually acquire and mobilize resources. Though resource mobilization theory has advanced understanding of social movement processes in a number of ways, it has begged the question of how movements and movement organizations acquire resources from members, conscience constituents and third party supporters (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; McCarthy and Zald 1977). Dramaturgy provides a framework for analyzing the dynamics of resource acquisition and deployment.

While extant theories and research have contributed to an understanding of the factors affecting movement emergence and decline as well as the correlates of recruitment, commitment and participation, they have failed to illuminate adequately the processes associated with these phenomena. Consequently, most literature tends to depict movements as relatively static. By extending the temporal span of analyses and attending to the ongoing flow of interaction among actors, events and performances, dramaturgy captures more fully than heretofore the dynamic qualities of movements.

One set of dynamics frequently overlooked concerns the intense emotions, dramatic tensions and heightened sense of expectancy associated with movement activities. This recent neglect of emotions is attributable in part to resource mobilization theory's domain assumptions regarding rationality. In reaction to the psychopathological models which characterized collective behavior as irrational, resource mobilization theorists recast movement participants as ultra-rationalistic actors devoid of feeling. But movement actors are neither psychotics nor computers. Participants must be more than mobilized to act; they have to be inspired. Indeed our observations suggest that passion is crucial to constituent mobilization. Dramaturgy attends to this shortcoming by providing a foundation for analyzing how affect can be

orchestrated as well as the role emotions play in movement mobilization (Zurcher 1982a).

The dramaturgy of social movements has additional utility in that it inspires a somewhat different genre of research questions than suggested by other perspectives. One set of issues concerns the relationship between dramatic techniques and outcomes. This paper represents an initial attempt to delineate several factors associated with producing an effective movement performance. Future research could move forward along these lines by examining the conditions under which various movement dramas succeed in mobilizing supporters, neutralizing antagonists and affecting power relations. We suspect, for example, that a variety of movement outcomes, from resource mobilization to longevity, depend upon scripting and sustaining agon. Mobilization is more difficult if the antagonist is not particularly susceptible to vilification or the protagonist is not very likable.

Furthermore, the more thematically consistent a movement's dramatic techniques appear to audiences the more likely they will consider the movement a legitimate contender for power. Some potential pro-life sympathizers, for instance, might call into question the movement's life affirming theme upon hearing about abortion clinic bombings and thus doubt its sincerity and legitimacy.

The above illustration suggests another set of issues to be explored. Frequently, fundamental differences erupt among a movement's organizations regarding the most appropriate and effective ways to communicate power (Benford and Zurcher 1990). What happens when intra-movement disputes take an acrimonious turn? While research suggests that some infighting is beneficial (Gerlach and Hine 1970; Anderson and Dynes 1973; Meier and Rudwick 1973), it can be detrimental when it incessantly diverts audience attention from the movement's principal theme. When movements fail to present a unified front they are perhaps more vunerable to countervailing tactics of antagonists. Future research ought to attend more fully to how movement factions negotiate basic dramatic elements so as to present an image of a unified effort. On the other hand, what happens when such unity is not desired by all factions? Attending to the dramatistic techniques employed could illuminate how some actors use movement diversity and internal conflict to their advantage.

ENDNOTES

[1]The six movements were investigated using multi-method, grounded theory approaches including overt participant observation, interviews, and document analyses. For more extensive descriptions of the methods employed, see Snow, Benford, and Anderson (1986), Benford (1987) and Hunt (1991a). For elaborations of grounded theory, see Glaser and Strauss (1967), Lofland and Lofland (1984) and Strauss and Corbin (1990).

[2]Weber (1978, pp. 53 and 212ff.) seemed to suggest as much in his discussions of power (*macht*) in terms of "probability" as well as his distinction regarding "legitimate domination." Numerous writers since Weber have called attention to other subjective dimensions of power, particularly processes of maintaining or challenging legitimate authority via the manipulation of symbols, language and myths (Edelman 1964; 1971; Gramsci 1971; Lukes 1974; Young and Massey 1978; Gaventa 1980).

[3]For reviews of controversies on power, see Lukes (1974; 1986) and Wrong (1979).

[4]Social construction refers to the notion that the meaning and sometimes the very existence of "things" in the human environment are collectively derived via sustained social interaction (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Blumer 1969). Once meaning has been attributed to some thing, it obtains the status of objective reality, that is people tend to act toward it as though it were real. However, to use the term social construction, does not imply that meaning is fashioned ex nihilo. At any given point in time, extant meanings are subject to reconstruction. Thus, the term social construction refers not only to the initial collective attribution of meaning, but to the ongoing and frequently contentious processes of negotiation, renegotiation, and reconstitution of meanings.

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