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Abstract

In this paper I will emphasise the centrality that the animal protectionist theme plays in generating a specific language of moral outrage, including its ability to mobilise a range of diverse social actors toward collective action. Focusing upon a recent animal welfare campaign, the campaign to end the export of live farm animals to continental Europe, I will argue that the language of moral outrage reflected adherence to the AP theme, and was a reaction to a strong sense of 'spoiled identity' within the local communities, which assisted in the development of a temporary protest consciousness in the two towns under study. Furthermore, the moral outrage expressed by protesters was given additional intensity by the heavy handed public order policing strategies implemented by the two regional police forces, this further strengthened the protesters resolve to continue the protests. The campaign will be shown to be an outcome of a combination of specific local factors and broader social, cultural and historical values of concern over our treatment of non-human animals. I will theorise the protests as an attempt to purify a stigmatised social space of a perceived contaminating practice, or moral 'evil'.

Keywords:

Animal Protectionism; Emotions; Live Exports; Moral Outrage; Public Order Policing; Stigma

Introduction

1.1

The campaign to end the export of live farm animals to Europe from the UK exploded across the news media during January 1995, generating a steady stream of televised images of protesters clashing with the police in small port towns on the south coast of England. Whilst the campaign generated an enormous amount of media coverage, there has been scant academic interest in, or analysis of the campaign (an exception is [Benton and Redfearn 1996](#)). This paper will go some way toward rectifying this, by providing an explanation of why the campaign was able to generate local and national support from across the political spectrum. In particular, I want to focus upon way in which the language of moral outrage reflected widespread feelings of compassion toward non-human animals, attitudes which have their basis in a wider historical-cultural 'theme' that I will term, following Jasper and Nelkin, animal protectionism ([Jasper and Nelkin 1992](#)) and that these sentiments, when combined with local factors, principally, feelings of a stigmatised local social space, and outrage at the nature of the public order policing of protests, functioned to create the basis for an intensified group solidarity and collective action based on these

shared sentiments.

1.2

Public concerns over the welfare of animals has a long history in the UK in general and England in particular, as Keith Thomas' wonderfully detailed history demonstrates ([Thomas 1983](#)). However, there are few if any empirically based sociological studies to date, those that have addressed the issues have tended to take a broad focus, whether locating our present concerns as a result of a shift in epistemes ([Tester 1991](#)) or examining the status and concern for animals in terms of the culture of 'late modernity' ([Franklin 1999](#)). There are no studies which examine the development of specific contemporary campaigns, which is all the more surprising given the explosion of interest in new social movements within the social sciences over the last 20 years or so. One possible explanation is that present day campaigns over the treatment of non human animals have a lineage with established culturally embedded sentiments, thereby militating against inclusion in such a de rigueur research field^[1]. One has to look outside of the UK for academic interest in such issues, a good example is Lee's analysis of the debates over the ethics of seal hunting in Canada during the 1980's, in which he illustrated how those opposed to hunting used, as part of their campaign, a rhetoric of intense moral disgust ([Lee 1989](#)).

1.3

However, it is precisely our cultural and historically rooted attitudes toward non human animals in the UK that makes the absence of academic treatment of specific public concerns and protests all the more surprising. Especially when we consider such recent high profile public campaigns such as the attempt to discredit Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS), a campaign which has generated a great deal of positive media attention for those trying to shut HLS down, but which generated considerable anger and frustration on the part of those who have come out in support of HLS ([Moukheiber 2001](#), [North 2001](#), [Odone 2001](#)).

1.4

Within a North American context there is some research which has focused upon the extraordinary levels of commitment and zeal of animal rights activists ([Sperling 1988](#), [Jasper and Nelkin 1992](#), [McAllister 1997](#)) leading some authors to view animal rights activism as a form of functional religion ([Jamison et al 2000](#)). Jamison's research illustrates the effects of a campaigns visual and written material in the creation of converts to the cause, with other research indicating how 'moral shocks and ephiphanic events [are] central to recruiting new believers' ([Jasper and Poulsen 1995](#)). Certainly we can concur in that the campaigners shock at viewing the campaign material relating to the transport of live farm animals was central in the process of generating activism and moral outrage. Indeed, this process led to some members of the local communities to swiftly adopt vegan lifestyles as a result of their observations and reflections^[2]. However, a review of the research within the UK context illustrates the dearth of sociological attention to such contemporary campaigns. This paper is thus conceived as an attempt to rectify this lacuna.

Animal Protectionism, the Stigmatisation of Place and the Generation of Moral Outrage

2.1

By using the concept, the animal protectionist theme, we can move beyond the vexed issue of whether or not organisations support animal 'welfare' or 'rights', to focus instead upon a range of the most pertinent aspects of personal/organisational belief and action (see below). Whilst the boundaries between the three 'sub themes' presented below are not water tight, they nonetheless reflect divergent campaigning styles and ultimate objectives, in that sense they are 'ideal type' categories.

2.2

I will also suggest that the rhetoric of moral outrage that characterised the campaign against live exports, reflected in part a stigmatisation of place and identity of local residents. There have been a number of recent studies which have attempted to apply Goffman's concept of stigma ([Goffman 1990 \[1963\]](#)) to a range of phenomena, such as specific places stigmatised because of an association with crime and/or deprivation ([Cottle 1994](#), [Bush et al 2001](#)) local reactions to technologies such as nuclear waste ([Easterling 2001](#)) as well as the stigma attached to hazard products such as British Beef in the wake of the BSE crisis ([Powell 2001](#))^[3]. These applications of Goffman's concept have tended to focus upon the negative impact of poverty, social exclusion, waste disposal or food scares upon perceptions of place and identities.

2.3

I want to try and develop the research field by suggesting that the stigmatisation of place can be a result of the activation of the values associated with the AP theme, which can then generate calls for collective action via the rhetoric of moral outrage. The perception that one's community has become tainted with an immoral and disgusting practise can necessitate personal mobilisation and collective action. The stigmatisation of the two communities that we shall focus upon, was in part the result of intense emotions such as outrage and shame, that were generated due to the adherence to the AP theme and reinforced by the language of moral outrage, with residents expressing concerns with the 'outside world's' perception of 'their' town. It will become evident that further outrage was generated by local experiences of the public order policing of the protests, particularly as 'common sense' told residents that the police should not deal with 'ordinary people' in such an aggressive manner. This I want to suggest created an additional 'feedback loop' to intensify the resolve of the protesters.

Figure 1: Animal Protectionism (sub-themes)i

Sub themes	Beliefs about Animals	Major Goals	Primary Strategies
<i>Welfarist</i>	Objects of compassion, deserving of protection. Clear boundaries between species.	Avoid cruelty, limit unwanted animal populations.	Protective legislation, humane shelters
<i>Pragmatists</i>	Deserve moral consideration, balance between human and animal interests. Some hierarchy of animals.	Eliminate all unnecessary animal suffering, reduce, refine and replace uses of animals	Public protests but pragmatic co-operation and acceptance of short term compromises
<i>Fundamentalists</i>	Animals have absolute moral rights to full lives without human interference. Equal consideration/rights across species.	Total and immediate elimination of all animal exploitation	Direct action and civil disobedience. Animal sanctuaries. Moralistic rhetoric and condemnation

(adapted from [Jasper and Nelkin 1992](#): 178).

2.4

The AP theme also benefited, and continues to do so, for being perceived to be above party politics, as Benton and Redfearn have observed:

'...the moral case for animal welfare is close to a national consensus, and that it is not, as a public issue, identified with the Left or the Right. Its status in this sense as non-political has, arguably, been of considerable importance in maintaining the wide public support, both locally and nationally, that the protests have achieved' ([Benton and Redfearn 1996](#):52)

2.5

The AP theme, by providing the culturally embedded sentiments which helped ultimately to generate the protests, enabled the emerging movement to be based on a highly emotive form of collective action and rhetoric, which helped to produce the subsequent vitriolic responses from the local community which we find dominated the letters to the editor in the local newspapers.

2.6

Sociological analysis of the role of emotions in the genesis and development of social movements is currently under researched, research that has been conducted thus far, is concentrated mainly within the US (see [Goodwin et al 2001](#)) Emotions have for too long been banished from the study of social movements ([Calhoun 2001](#)) which is surprising, given the fact that 'social movements are awash in emotions. Anger, fear, envy, guilt, pity, shame, awe, passion, and other feelings play a part either in the formation of social movements ...' ([Kemper 2001](#):58). One notable exception has been the examination of the way in which moral outrage constituted a major factor in the development of the Central American peace movement ([Nepstad and Smith 2001](#)). Although not a central focus of the paper, I will suggest the importance of highly emotive language in the claims making of local residents and campaigners who were involved in the protests, particularly how such emotions were expressed and embedded within specific action contexts, and how these related to the AP theme. Emotions, viewed from this perspective, illustrate the underdetermined nature of agency ([Shilling 2001](#)). That is, the social solidarity engendered by emotional effervescence can both bind and unbind, create order and simultaneously produce social change. The eventual outcome of the emotions in social life, either as a source of social change or for the continuity of social relations, is dependent upon a number of factors, Shilling notes that:

'The incidence, intensity and scope of collective effervescence varies according to the relationships, activities and interactions of social groups, a variation which leaves considerable scope for empirical research' ([Shilling 1997](#):210)

A Short History of the Campaign to End Live Exports

3.1

The contemporary campaign to try and end the export of live farm animals to continental Europe has been ongoing for nearly forty years. The organisation Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) had, since its inception in 1967, called for an end to live animal exports and advocated a move toward a carcass only export trade. Over the subsequent years a number of other organisations also began campaigning for a ban, from the RSPCA to other ad hoc organisations. Paradoxically, it was a seeming policy success by the animal welfare movement that prompted the massive increase in the export of male calves during the early 1990's^[5]. Animal welfare campaigners had lobbied long and hard to get veal crates outlawed and during the 1980's mounted a successful lobbying campaign to ban the crates (a system whereby young calves are tethered after birth in small crates, kept in the dark and

fed a diet that consists only of substitute milk products, so as to produce an anaemic animal, ensuring the meat is whiter and more delicate^[6].

3.2

In 1990 the then Conservative government passed legislation outlawing the use of veal crates. It soon became apparent that farmers would then face a choice, either to kill the calves at birth or ship them abroad, the latter of course proving the most lucrative. As a result of these factors, calves were increasingly sold to continental European countries such as France, Italy, Holland and Belgium.^[7]

3.3

This horrified those who had campaigned long and hard for an end on both veal crates and live animal exports. In response, a further campaign was launched during the early 1990's to pressurise the government to ban the export of calves (Government regulations had already effectively outlawed the export of horses and ponies for slaughter^[8]). Unfortunately for the campaigners lobbying was proving to be unsuccessful and became more difficult as a result of the formation of a single European market after 1992, which began to impose limits on the manoeuvring power of national governments, a situation which was further exacerbated by the growing influence of neo-liberal trade policies, of which the then Conservative administration was much enamoured.

3.4

It was in this context that campaign organisations started to pressurise the ferry operators in order to try and cut the trade off at its point of exit. Respect for Animals (an organisation set up in the wake of the bankruptcy of LYNX, the anti-fur pressure group) mounted a campaign against those ferry operators who allowed live animal export lorries on board their vessels. To promote the campaign they began recruiting people from across the political spectrum, recruiting MP's such as Alan Clark and Tony Banks in order to give a boost to the campaign and generate much needed media attention.

3.5

These mainstream animal welfare organisations were not the only actors in the drama, for a group operating under the nom de guerre the 'Justice Department', effectively an offshoot of the Animal Liberation Front, had begun to send parcel bombs to the ferry operators, one of which exploded injuring a company secretary at Stena Sealink. Stena Sealink halted live exports one week later (on the ALF website the JD is indeed lauded for having ended the livestock trade, see [ALF 2001](#)). Whatever the exact cause, all of the main ferry companies followed suit and refused to carry livestock lorries^[9]. (for a discussion see [Tester and Walls 1996](#))

3.6

Unable to export their livestock, farmers turned to operators who sailed from smaller ports along the south coast of England. It was in this context that Shoreham in Sussex became the focus of farmers and hauliers attempts to transport farm animals across the channel. It was at Shoreham that the daily demonstrations began, although it should be noted that CIWF had been mounting small protests at Shoreham for some months previously (they began in October 1994) but with little local or national media coverage ([Callaghan 1995](#)). The protests only started to gain national and international media coverage when the police were called in on the night of January 4th 1995 when protesters from across Sussex and London converged in greater numbers. Live animal exports from Brightlingsea in Essex began a few weeks later.

3.7

From January 1995 onward, protests were reported in a number of other small port towns as well as small airports where exports were about to, or had already commenced, i.e.

Coventry airport and Plymouth port. The protests at Coventry airport had horrific consequences when one protester, Jill Phipps, died after falling under a livestock lorry whilst protesting during February 1995.

3.8

Shoreham port authority decided to halt live exports in June of 1995, they were similarly terminated at Brightlingsea in August 1995. After a landmark High Court ruling the export trade then shifted to Dover, Kent. National media coverage dipped and finally ended after the ban on the export of British beef by the European Union in March 1996, which halted exports indefinitely.

Sampling & Methodology

4.1

In order to examine the vernacular of moral discourse that was deployed in the campaign against live exports in the public sphere, I will examine the vituperative and emotive language that characterised the letters to the editor in two local newspapers, *The Evening News* and *The Evening Gazette* both of which are the two newspapers closest, in geographic terms, to the two main sites of public protests; at Shoreham in Sussex and Brightlingsea in Essex. The letters to the editor, as I will demonstrate, provided a key forum in which campaigners could promote and discuss their views unencumbered by editorial interference.

4.2

In total, between October 1994 and January 1996 104 letters were published in *The Argus* (the vast majority between January and April 1995) and 100 letters published over the same time period in *The Gazette* on the subject of live animal exports. Letters constituted 39% of all news items in *The Argus* that referenced live exports during the period, and 27% in *The Gazette* ^[10]. Over 97% of the published letters were opposed to the trade. All of the articles were scanned into the qualitative data analysis software NUDIST and subject to coding and analysis. In what follows I shall group the data under a number of key codes and headings.

Reactions to Feelings of Moral Disgust: Letters to the Editor in *The Evening Argus*

5.1

The letters pages in *The Argus* reflected the outrage felt by local residents at their town being used as a route for the export of livestock. The influence of the animal protectionist theme provided the campaigners with the feeling of being in possession of the moral high ground and moreover, it provided the rhetorical armoury with which to stigmatise the trade and de-legitimise opponents.

Political Opposition and Local Mobilisation

6.1

The first letter in *The Argus* on the subject of live exports appeared in October 1994 and by November the local campaign was well underway. All of the letters that opposed the trade expressed the sentiments and key values of the animal protectionist theme, criticising the existence of an unjustifiable profit motive for the export of animals, chastising the exporters and farmers for being solely profit driven, both of which are central rhetorical resources of the fundamentalist sub theme, e.g.:

'I am opposed to trade in live animals which has any possibility of suffering or death...I do believe there is a wider issue than trade for profit' ('Opposed')

[\[11\]](#).

6.2

Letters exhorted others to lobby Shoreham Port Authority:

'MAY I appeal again to all readers who are *repelled* by the thought of live animals being transported through the port of Shoreham...Write a short letter of support, stating your *abhorrence*...' ('Exports' 27/12/94:8 my emphasis).

6.3

Local people wrote letters to the newspaper encouraging others to join the campaign to help the local community resist the plan to use Shoreham port as a site for live exports, explicitly using the language of moral outrage:

'It is a controversial issue promoting moral outrage among thousands of people...please let the people of Sussex know what is about to happen on their own doorstep (28/11/94:8 par 4. J Long).

Furthermore:

'Come on, animal lovers, write to your MP to stop this export trade. The pictures on television showing the animals plight sickened me' (ibid. Mrs V M Gardner).

The exhortation continued:

'... I also wish that these same people would join us where it really matters, at the entrance to *the gateway of hell* in front of Hove lagoon' (7/1/95:8. S Read. my emphasis)[\[12\]](#)

6.4

Another letter, written by a local Sussex councillor, focuses on the emerging local political opposition:

'I was shocked to read that Shoreham port is considering being a facility for the export of live animals for slaughter...If the port authority goes ahead it can expect further resistance from some Hove councillors' (1/10/95:8).

6.5

The extent to which the letters to the editor functioned as an important forum for local campaigners to express their disgust and can be seen from the following:

'I want to congratulate you on publishing two pages of letters in Saturday's Evening Argus in connection with the shipment of live animals. It certainly shows that 99% of the people in Shoreham are against this trade and are determined to stamp it out' (26/2/95 Mrs A Dixon).

6.6

The overwhelming content of the postbag to the editor of *The Argus* on the subject were opposed to the trade, this can be evidenced in one edition in which the editor himself baldly stated that he will only print letters on the subject in future if something new is said on the topic, aside that is, from vehement opposition to the trade (*The Argus* 26/2/95)

Moral Outrage

7.1

As we have begun to see, the vernacular of moral discourse is a constant in the letters, which indicates adherence to the AP theme, one however, articulated in the letters by local residents and not established national campaign groups (such as CIWF and RSCPA who were the main sources in the national press, see Walls 2000). The list of possible harm to animals as a result of live exports is often listed at length in the letters e.g. that the animals should be: 'free from intense heat or intense cold, secure from pain, fear, injuries and suffocation, fatigue, hunger and thirst...' ('Animals' 6/10/95:8 par 3^[13]).

7.2

The letters indicated that the local protesters were themselves aware of the intensity of the emotions that were being generated by the issue, e.g.: 'Protesters could hear the animals crying out inside the lorries and could see them. So obviously emotions were running high' (ibid. A Bates) where the implicit link between outrage, emotion and action are linked.

7.3

In the same letter, the government is accused of 'a whitewash to bluff the public into acceptance of this evil trade' (ibid par 1). The trade is further characterised as 'brutal' and as a form of 'exploitation' (ibid par 4). The campaigners wrath was often visited upon the local Conservative MP, e.g.: 'We do not want this trade from Shoreham Mr Stephen, So please listen to what we are saying. *Get down off the fence and get some action towards stopping this filthy business*' (6/1/95:8 J Pulling - my emphasis).

7.4

The feelings felt by residents are also constructed in the letters as having national support:

'A total ban of import/export of live animals for slaughter is the cry of the majority in this country, so why aren't ministers taking notice?' ('Suffering' 31/10/95:8 par 3)

7.5

Europe is occasionally an issue that elicits the campaigners wrath; 'What point is there in having welfare laws in this country if we are putting animals into this cruel European system' (28/2/95:8. F Prince-Iles'). Europe is a place where countries cannot even 'agree on the most basic obligations of a civilised society' (ibid par 3).

Locality and Shame

8.1

Many people who wrote to *The Argus* emphasised their ties to the locality, either in terms of their local residence and/or employment history. This functioned to add a perceived legitimacy to their critiques. Under 'I'll join the port protests' we have one resident stating that:

'As someone born in Shoreham who has lived near the harbour and worked as a stevedore. I was disgusted at the port authorities plans to ship out live animals...Those who run the harbour can't have any feelings to ship animals about 80 miles before the suffering really starts' (4/10/94:8).

8.2

The shame of the trade is continually emphasised along with the perceived stigma of allowing livestock lorries through Shoreham town. So in a letter criticising Philip Lacey (The Manager of Shoreham Port Authority), one reader asks: 'Can he really justify the *shame* of this inhumane trade, just for financial gain?' (ibid my emphasis). This 'shame' is seen as something that has the potential to taint the whole community, with residents perceiving themselves as being under the national spotlight: e.g. 'the town's disgrace is

made known nation-wide' (28/11/94: 8. P Chandler). Indeed, collections of letters on the same subject often had one 'headline' e.g. 'We can't turn blind eye to port of *shame*' (6/1/95 my emphasis) is *The Argus*' summing up the content of 6 letters (The other 6 letters have the headline 'The suffering of our fellow creatures'). The feelings of shame and disgrace - hence stigma, were clearly a central motivational concern of those who became involved in the campaign against the export trade.

8.3

Furthermore, an association between the livestock trade and 'evil' is dramatically illustrated in the letters, with letters comparing the actions of the police and/or farmers with that of Nazis, e.g. 'I fought against evil 54 years ago and I do not want the same evil resurrected on my doorstep' (ibid J Alcott), such opinions were also expressed in interviews that were conducted with a number of the Brightlingsea protesters (see [Benton and Redfearn 1996:56](#))

8.4

In the same vein, one local resident wrote that he:

'Could hardly believe that Sussex MP Michael Stephen has threatened CIWF protesters at Shoreham by "evoking the full force of the law". Naively I thought my generation fought the last war to secure freedom and it was just this sort of repression of free demonstrators which enabled the Nazis to obtain power' (29/12/94:8).

8.5

Evil was a popular noun for the letter writers in *The Argus* to deploy in order to de-legitimise the export trade, it is a strategic and potent weapon in any protest movement's rhetorical armoury, it was used not only to justify street level activism but also to boycott the port itself, e.g.:

'We of the National Ethical Society view with great concern the attempts to continue the unacceptable export of live animals through Shoreham harbour, and have therefore voted to boycott the town until the harbour authorities put a stop to this evil trade' (ibid D Claydon)

'Ordinary People' vs. The Rhetoric of Law and Order

9.1

The letter writers were at pains to emphasise the 'ordinariness' of the protesters, typically stating that they are merely 'decent, ordinary people gathered from Brighton, Hove and Worthing' (7/1/95:8 T Sargent) Such sentiments were often expressed to counter stereotypical, mediatised images of protesters as an irrational mob, which the letter writers were at pains to counter, so that: '...instead of finding fanatics and thugs I found people very much like myself who felt so sickened...' (21/1/95:8. J Le Mesurier). Furthermore:

'We are not a mob, just ordinary people of all ages calling for the humane and compassionate treatment of all living creatures' (ibid. Jacqueline. Worthing).

9.2

The very act of protesting for many residents seemed to function to rekindle a nostalgia for a lost sense of altruism and collective purpose, so we have one letter stating that the protests have 'warmed my heart and gave me hope that in these days of greed and selfishness the human heart is not impervious to injustice and suffering' (ibid)

9.3

Letters were also critical of judicial rulings that emphasised the de jure legality of the export

trade and which criticised the protests for not acknowledging this. A number of letters were collected under the headline 'It's the public, not a mob' (20/4/95:8), one of which stated that: 'Mob rule has not taken place but a massive wave of public opinion has, and in the end this public opinion will win the day' (ibid par 2)

9.4

Many letters were concerned with criticising any appearance of the demonstration script^[14] in the hard news articles that appeared in *The Argus*. The very act of taking part in the protests and witnessing the policing tactics at first hand, made participants acutely aware of the disjuncture between certain media accounts of the protests and their actual experience of them, this enabled participants through their letters to engage in criticisms of the claims made by Sussex police spokespeople in the press, e.g.:

'THE spokesman for Sussex police says of the demonstrators at Shoreham "we were left with a hardcore determined to cause problems". Not So! This "hard core" aged 14 to 85, were pensioners, husbands wives, teenage children from every walk of life..." (7/1/95:8. R A Knutsen)

9.5

The actual methods involved in policing the protests were constantly criticised in the letters, particularly at the beginning of January when officers from the metropolitan police were on duty at Shoreham, e.g.:

'The police especially riot squad officers mainly drawn from the Metropolitan force, unnecessarily charged a dispersing crowd, causing injury and panic to young and old alike' (12/1/95:8. A Knutsen)

And that;

'I AM incensed at the way some of the police handled the public. I saw people being pushed and shoved around like the poor animals themselves. I saw couples, old people, not even being asked to move, simply manhandled' (ibid. J A Hosier).

9.6

Residents also began to link their direct action to previously morally exalted struggles, e.g.: 'Such methods have been used from as long ago as Ghandi and the suffragettes' (7/1/95 par 8).

9.7

Throughout the letters to the editor the AP theme provided the moral and rhetorical resources for the campaigners to deploy against the livestock trade. A number of 'feedback loops' generated further emotional reactions which fed into the emerging protest consciousness, principally the perceived over zealous and violent policing style which created outrage on the part of local residents in particular, as well as the heightened sense of stigmatisation of place and a spoiled identity within the town. Within the published letters to the editor we can see that Shoreham became a site of local struggle where the forces of law and order and a number of the ideas surrounding the ideology of the free market were given a critical reception.

"The British Bobby turned into a Monster" ^[15]. Letters to the Editor in *The Evening Gazette*

10.1

Although the letters to the editor in *The Gazette* were similar in their deployment of the

vernacular of moral outrage and disgust at the export trade that we found in *The Argus*, letters in *The Gazette* were more strident in their criticism of the policing of the protests than those in *The Argus*. Letters to the editor were at pains to point out and negate the demonstration script and advance the legitimacy of local protest in the face of an industry perceived to be geared toward profit from an 'evil' trade.

10.2

In Brightlingsea there were specific local circumstances which created a heightened tension between the community and the police, in particular the threat by Essex police to invoke the 1984 Public Order Act to deal with the protests (which had not occurred at Shoreham). The letters to the editor for a time became dominated by a discussion of the policing tactics, which often superseded reference to the animal protectionist theme. Letters in *The Gazette* did exhibit more of the sentiments of the fundamentalist sub theme than in *The Argus*.

Animal Protectionism , the Emotions and Moral Rhetoric

11.1

Letters voicing opposition to the export trade in Brightlingsea began a week before actual exports commenced, after rumours had spread within the town that Brightlingsea was to be the next port after Shoreham to begin exporting farm animals. The first letter on the subject presciently forecasts that the relationship between the police and the local community would be strained as they were during the 1984-5 coal dispute:

'With these memories and with the probability of protesters coming into Brightlingsea, it would appear that we in this town are about to be put upon again' (10/1/95 *ibid* par 6).

11.2

In a similar fashion to the letters in *The Argus* the letters in *The Gazette* justified their position of being steadfastly opposed to the trade by arguing that the whole of Brightlingsea was united in its opposition. The trade could then be constructed as contravening a majorities wishes and hence justifiably described as an undemocratic imposition. The port owners and ferry operators actions were thus de-legitimated with letters viewing the exporters as people who view '...the use of such inhumane methods as acceptable to them even if the overwhelming majority of the public are opposed to them' (20/3/95)

11.3

Within the published letters, animals are discussed, as befits the AP theme, as helpless and akin to children who are in need of our active intervention. An intervention which is motivated by intense emotional responses, so that in 'We must plead case for animals' (2/2/95:8), the writer argues that 'This is why animals stir the emotions because whatever is done to them, they can do nothing but endure' (*ibid*).

11.4

The right of local children to protest is strongly defended by parents in Brightlingsea, in 'Why Brightlingsea children should be allowed to protest' (1/3/95:8), the emotions stirred up by the exports are again emphasised: 'This letter is not just about the animals, but for the children. Their world has been turned upside down, they feel hurt, anger and frustration. Many could be having sleepless nights or nightmares and could be scarred for life. To let them protest is a safety valve. It allows an outlet for their emotions' (*ibid* par 5). The passivity of animals is emphasised, exposing the fact that 'adults can do with them as they please'(par 3), a strategy which generates sympathy and activism and further moral outrage among local residents.

11.5

As in *The Argus*, letters in The Gazette often recognised the legality of the trade but subsequently dismissed this as irrelevant due to the very nature of the trade itself, e.g. 'Trade is legal, but it's wrong' (8/2/95:8) and 'Yes you have to work by the law, but the law isn't always right' ('You must listen Mr Markham' (9/6/95:10). Markham (Essex Assistant Chief Police Officer) is again chastised in another letter because: 'His view of the law has no room for protests which is the right of every person in the country when they see an evil trade' ('Police policies attack rights' 13/6/95:8) The Gazette even developed a logo of a chained calf under the banner 'Cargoes of Shame' which was reproduced with every news story.

11.6

Part of the moral armoury of the protesters was to posit the exporters and their actions as reifying sentient creatures, itself a barbaric act as animals' 'lives are measured as commodities to be bought and sold rather than the sentient benign beings they are' (ibid par 10). Again their innocence and hence purity enables claims makers in the letters page to construct a forceful moral argument against exports by mobilising these cultural sentiments via the AP theme.

11.7

As in *The Argus*, the letters spell out in detail the conditions that animals endure during export. Animals are 'cramped into crates and messing on each other for 15 hours' ('Don't talk to us about cruelty' 23/3/95) and calves at Brightlingsea 'could hardly stand, the intense heat had obviously got to them' (3/8/95:8) and that they are set for 'many more hours of transport to the continent where they will be put into veal crates, a cruel method of confinement' (ibid par 4) and their fate will be a 'barbarous end' (18/4/95:10 par 3)

Public Order Policing and Community Outrage

12.1

Over the course of the campaign against live exports in Brightlingsea there was evident and growing disbelief on the part of local people in the tactics deployed by the police in their handling of the protests, which is reflected in the letters to the editor. The letters indicate that the vast majority of Brightlingsea residents had never previously participated in any form of public protest, e.g.: 'Day I lost all respect for the police' (19/1/95:8. letter headline) where the shock of witnessing police actions is expressed in detail, particularly in the first paragraph, where the writer describes himself as being in a 'state of total disbelief' because 'What I have witnessed I could never have imagined' (par 2). The background information in pars 3 and 4 establish the writers respectable credentials: 'Until Monday I had never been on a demonstration. Watching other demonstrations on television, I used to sympathise with the police in a very difficult situation'.(ibid). This prior stereotypical belief makes the subsequent observations of police tactics all the more shocking for the participant.

12.2

The result is that the stereotype of the good old fashioned bobby is exploded, 'Well so much for community policing' (9/6/95:10) and that the 'British Bobby...had turned into a monster' ('You must listen Mr Markham' 9/6/95:10). Markham is the focus of constant criticism, e.g.: 'I am amazed he can gloss over the hostility and bad feeling generated by policing of the Brightlingsea protest' (13/6/95).

12.3

As we saw in *The Argus* the fact of the demonstrators mere 'ordinariness' is used in order to criticise the public order policing strategies, e.g.: 'The police used violence, intimidation and sheer brute force against *ordinary people* intent on being peaceful (par 7) and 'The one word I heard was "disgusting" - and this from *ordinary people*' (par 8 my emphasis). This idea of the 'ordinariness' of the protesters is a tool used to justify action and further

condemn any police aggression. One letter contrasts the stereotype of protesters with this reality. Under the headline 'Long may revolt continue' one letter states that:

'Contrary to the perceived image of long haired rabid animal rights protesters projected by the predominantly right wing tabloid press, the crowd I witnessed were what I would call for want of a better description "garden centre people" (19/1/95:8 par 2) [\[16\]](#).

12.4

And another letter on the same page reinforces the sense of injustice at the attack on ordinary people:

'Their targets [the police] were just ordinary people from Brightlingsea and other local towns, not hooligans or rent a mob. That did not matter to the police. Allowing a few people to make money out of this evil trade, despite overwhelming opposition of the public, locally and nationally, is clearly far more important than the safety and well being of the men, women and children of Brightlingsea' (ibid R Bourne. Par 9) [\[17\]](#).

12.5

This idea of ordinariness is also combined with locality, so that 'the overwhelming majority of those taking part in previous demonstrations such as those at Shoreham were local people, many with no previous experience of such activity. Far from a rent a mob' (18/1/95:8. 'We must act to stop this evil trade'. Par 2). In depth interviews conducted in Brightlingsea itself confirm the shock and disbelief of those taking part in the protests at the policing methods deployed (see Benton and Redfearn 1996:56)

12.6

The impact upon the town is another constant in the letters, both in terms of injuries to protesters but also the symbolic damage to identities and sense of place. The exporters are constructed as injuring the protesters and the town symbolically :

'The thoughtless force of these exporters of this trade on our town is a crime against the people who live here, and those who visit us' (21/7/95:8) [\[18\]](#).

Discussion

13.1

How can we account for the palpable shock and anger expressed in the letters toward the policing of the protests? Fielding has noted that:

'When...protests are suppressed this may create the very alliance of legitimate protest and provocateurs which police action fear most, and enlist support for the cause among the uncommitted in reaction to heavy handed policing. Weakly founded in law and operating on a strained conception of democracy, public order policing provokes the conflict it seeks to avoid' ([Fielding 1991](#):109).

13.2

It is clear that the police, particularly in Brightlingsea, handled the protests badly, both police forces quickly developed an outlook which viewed the protesters as a body of people committed to public disorder. This is amply demonstrated in the outcome of an investigation carried out by the Police Complaints Authority on the police handling of the Shoreham protests, which reported that some police officers were overheard saying that they were going to "throw some pinkos in the sea" (reported in *The Times* 21/5/95).

13.3

Letters to the editor in both newspapers, although especially in *The Gazette*, became a forum for the articulation of local residents responses to this over zealous policing of the protests. This was perceived to be especially egregious given the fact that a majority of the town was against the livestock trade. The trade could then be further condemned for its attack on local 'democracy', particularly as the overwhelming majority of people in both towns were against the trade, as a social survey conducted during 1995 by the University of Essex amply demonstrates ([Tannenbaum 1995](#)) a national survey also conducted at the same time suggested that nearly 80% of the UK population were also opposed to the trade ([Worcester 1995](#)). Furthermore, the Tannenbaum survey data suggested that 40% of Brightlingsea residents had participated in at least one anti lorry protest (Benton and Redfearn 1996:43). The actions of the police certainly meant that many who could be classed as welfarist within the AP theme quickly moved into promoting and taking part in direct action, and became capable of the most vituperative written and verbal attacks on the tactics of the police^[19].

13.4

As the two communities became united in their opposition to the trade, letters to the editor became a site where overt criticisms of one aspect of the established value system could be mounted beyond reproach and editorial interference. Letters to the editor can be a useful forum for claims making in the local (public) sphere. More broadly, the process of questioning the treatment of non-human animals often seemed to be a cipher for broader concerns over the perceived weakness with regard to social solidarity, coupled with concerns over the negative effects of contractual, rational, market values. Furthermore, the virtual widespread adherence to the AP theme illustrates that:

'...the symptom of the value shift is that such abuse no longer dares speak its name...whether animals have rights is strongly contested, but that humans have an obligation to treat them well is publicly denied by no one' ([Benton and Redfearn 1996](#):51)

13.5

Whilst Benton and Redfearn are correct that the initial motivation for many of the protesters was based on what I have termed the values of the welfarist sub theme, the subsequent rhetoric deployed in the local public sphere was more characteristic of the fundamentalist sub theme. The rhetoric was radicalised toward the fundamentalist sub theme even when the underlying dietary habits of protesters remained unaffected, as demonstrated from one poster draped across a Colchester pub, which read: 'You don't have to stop eating meat to care - Ban Live Exports' (ibid). Attempting to locate individuals within one sub theme during such an intense, emotive and fluid campaign is fraught with difficulties.

13.6

The collective effervescence and the emotive responses generated by the protests suggests that the protests gave participants an opportunity to tap into the 'fiery furnace' of social proxemics, motivated as they were by the psychologically rewarding sense of moral outrage, functioning as it clearly did, to produce a sense of collective purpose in the attempts to collectively rectify a spoiled (local) identity and reaffirm a positive image/perception of place. We can concur with Goodenough who suggests that 'moral outrage is essential to the maintenance of social life, as well as being potentially destructive of it' ([Goodenough 1997](#):25) for it would seem that one of the main outcomes of the generation of collective effervescence is strengthened group solidarity, emotional energy as well as feelings of moral righteousness, in which 'the emotionally solidary group generates its own standards of right and wrong...those who are outside the group, or worse yet, oppose it, are morally tagged as unworthy, evil, or inhuman'([Collins 2001](#):28/29)

13.7

Collins argues that the relative success or otherwise of collective mobilisation is the degree

to which emotional transformation occurs. Collins outlines two principal means through which this occurs. Firstly, involving the amplification of the initiating emotion (in our case moral outrage as a result of the infringement of the AP theme and the stigmatisation of place) such that 'if the initiating emotion is moral outrage, the collective focus of the group makes the feeling of outrage stronger' (ibid:29) The second is the emotional and moral force that is a result of taking part in collective struggle, in that 'the ritualised sharing of instigating or initiating emotions which brought individuals to the collective gathering in the first place (outrage, anger, fear) gives rise to distinctly collective emotions, the feelings of solidarity, enthusiasm, and morality which arise in group members' mutual awareness of their shared focus of attention' (ibid:29)^[20]

13.8

Research has illustrated how local communities can react negatively to, and then marginalize outsiders, often ethnic or racial minorities and/or those with little economic or political power ([Atkinson and Laurier 1998](#)). What I have tried to demonstrate however, is that when the animal protectionist theme is a basis and resource for protest movements, the target can be (and here was) established economic and political ideas (the unfettered free market and free trade) and established legal practises (live exports). The 'deviants' in the letters to the editor were the external promulgators of the perceived 'barbaric' trade, especially the 'outside' hauliers, farmers and ferry operators. An historically rooted and culturally embedded theme has the potential to provide rationales and effective rhetorical resources to challenge established political and economic ideas and processes.

13.9

In a study of deviant leisure Rojek coined the phrase 'convoy of pollution' to metaphorically describe the manner in which certain deviant leisure activities could be contrasted with the supposedly normal and healthy ([Rojek 1988](#)) Applying this to the analysis of the local community's response to the livestock convoys, we can suggest that the convoys functioned to symbolically and morally 'pollute' the two towns, producing intense reactions from local residents, who began to characterise the convoys as 'vile', 'filthy', 'disgusting', 'evil' and 'shameful'. The trade began to tarnish them personally (by invoking feelings of shame) and negatively impacting their identities and positive perceptions of place, feelings which were expressed in the letters as demeaning the 'good name of the town'.

13.10

This generated increased moral fervour and outrage which led to a constant vilification and delegitimation of opponents, whose motives were constructed as based on avarice and moral corruption. The 'convoys of pollution' generated feelings of shame and disgust, which in turn generated intense emotions, collective struggle and collective effervescence. The livestock lorries thus became powerful 'stigma symbols' ([Bush et al 2001](#)) around which the protesters could vent their outrage and energies. In response, local residents attempted to disassociate themselves and the town from such stigma symbols. The two campaigns were attempts to re-establish ruptured symbolic and eventually geographic boundaries around the town. We can see this at work in the rhetorical attempts to construe the hauliers and exporters as deviant 'outsiders'.

13.11

We have tried to demonstrate that local communities may react not only to environmental and technological stigma (such as nuclear power stations), but also to a perception of an egregious 'moral stigma' as a result of the presence and contamination of a morally polluting practise, which is capable of generating intense emotions and hence collective action in an attempt to purify a specific social space. This close relationship between identity and place exacerbated the feelings of disgust and shame brought on by the 'stigma symbols' within the local communities, struggle and resistance ensued.

13.12

Whilst we have suggested that stigma can become a temporary attribute of a whole community, the stigma symbols were not passively accepted, for part of the campaigners' rhetorical armoury, moral outrage aside, was to attempt to rhetorically redirect the feelings of shame onto their opponents.

Conclusion

14.1

The campaign against live exports demonstrates how the animal protectionist theme provides a vernacular of moral discourse that functions to provide a rationale for collective action and a set of rhetorical tools with which to delegitimise certain practises. The letters to the editor evidenced a strong community based resistance to the livestock trade, this resistance was without doubt exacerbated and deepened due to the public order policing tactics of the two police forces, particularly in Brightlingsea. The intense emotional reactions to these tactics by the two communities are illustrated in the letters to the editor. The protests functioned to create a sense of personal agency and social solidarity. The AP theme as a specific historical and cultural thematic is capable of motivating a diverse range of individuals and groups, with the potential to transcend the traditional party political divide.

14.2

The 'convoys of pollution' were potent stigma symbols which activated shame and disgust in local residents, thereby creating the basis for collective action through public protests. The attempted purification of the social space and negation of the stigma symbols were attempts to re-establish a pride in, and positive sense of place. All of which could not have been set in motion were it not for the cultural resonance and widespread adherence to the AP theme.

14.3

Interest in the ability of the AP theme to create intense emotive reactions to perceived animal abuse is not just a rarefied academic issue but one which has real world consequences, as the recent death whilst on hunger strike of Barry Horne. Horne's hunger strike was in protest at a range of practices, including animal testing and the handling of the foot and mouth crisis (particularly the destruction of millions of healthy sheep). Horne was serving an 18 year sentence for firebombing offences. He died as a result of kidney failure on November 5 2001.

14.4

There are a growing number of issues which have the potential to generate increased activism based on the AP theme, from the more enduring issues surrounding the consumption of meat, to occasional issues such as the BSE crisis, the policy responses to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease, or the complex issues surrounding transgenic and cloned non-human animals, particularly concerns over the ethics of xenotransplantation, which are reflected in Compassion in World Farming's current campaign against the use of non-human animals in biotechnology research ([CIWF 2001](#)). It is inconceivable that sociology can continue to ignore the centrality and force of the AP theme, particularly its ability to generate such intense emotive reactions and collective struggle in reaction to perceived instances of animal abuse. It is also inevitable that it will continue to generate popular protests, often in the most unexpected places.

Notes

¹Although from a historical and social policy perspective see [Parry and Parry \(2000\)](#)

²For instance, I initially contacted BALE leaders through the Animal Liberation Front Newsletter, something reinforced by the ALF press officer, who told the author that many demonstrators he had come into contact with at Shoreham and Brightlingsea had switched from meat eating to veganism because of the sudden realisation of the link between the dairy industry and the export of veal calves ([Webb 1995](#)).

³Goffman defined stigma as an "attribute that is deeply discrediting" and that it reduces the bearer "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" ([Goffman 1990 \[1963\]: 3](#)).

⁴Although this differentiation was based on the US animal rights movement, the characterisation is applicable to the UK. Indeed, many US animal rights campaigns mirror UK issues, e.g. the campaign launched in the US state of Michigan during 1988 to ban veal crates!

⁵It should be noted that the campaign did not focus upon the transport of farm animals within the UK. As we shall see, it was the argument about hours in, and conditions of, 'foreign' transportation and slaughterhouses which generated most anger and outrage.

⁶Calves are an inevitable by-product of the dairy industry, in order for milk yields to be remain high, farmers have to continually make sure their cows are impregnated in order to maintain high milk yields. The calf is the obvious end result, with farmers not wanting the calves to then use their mother's milk (which is after all a valuable commodity)

⁷It should be noted that sheep were also exported but the dominant campaign imagery used by campaigners was either that of calves in veal crates or pictured within livestock lorries during transportation.

⁸This was accomplished not by legislation outlawing it as such but via a scheme known as "minimum values". This made it uneconomical to export horses abroad by introducing minimum values scheme which made the export of horses under a certain financial value prohibitive

⁹Live exports accounted for less than 1% of the ferry companies' annual trade, it was thus perceived by the main ferry operators to be not (financially) worth the adverse publicity

¹⁰News items include: Hard news articles, Features, Editorials and Letters (see [Walls 2000](#))

¹¹Local councillors also set up an ad hoc protest group, the Campaign Against Live Animal Shipments From Shoreham (CLASS 95)

¹²Many letters also commended *The Argus* for its coverage on the campaign. This supports my argument concerning the ample space given to voices that were critical of live exports in *The Argus*, a claim evidenced in letters with the following statements: 'Unlike so much TV and press coverage of the issue of live exports, I do think *The Argus* and particularly *Argus* letters, has handled the debate professionally' (18/1/95:8 S Harries) and 'Thank you all for being such a great paper and for your fair and truthful coverage...[it] has given us all great heart in these last few weeks' (ibid Mrs J Alcott).

¹³par - indicates paragraph followed by a number, indicating its position

¹⁴When 'violence' was perceived to be occurring in the town's, journalists and certain news sources, particularly the police, utilised what I have termed elsewhere the 'demonstration script' to understand the protests, particularly in order to account for the involvement of the

more middle class protesters. The demonstration script posited a binary opposition between outside 'extremists' and 'peaceful' local people. This enabled a dividing line to be drawn between the two putative groups in order to understand and explain the eruption of conflict in geographic areas and within social strata that 'common sense' tells us should not occur. This enabled certain news sources to attempt to delegitimise the protests. However, the letters to the editor are illustrative of how local people were resisting such attempts. (see [Walls 2000](#))

¹⁵The quote is taken from a letter to the editor (9/6/95: par 10)

¹⁶Descriptions of this ordinariness are used promiscuously in the letters, e.g. 'A law breaking mob? Have you met them? I would say the average person there is about 35 and female...They are on the side of the local community trying to bring back peace and quiet to a small coastal town' ('Exporters are to blame for disrupting our lives'. 8/2/95:8 par 3). The letter mixes such analyses like so many with the AP theme, by using evaluative noun phrases such as 'heartbreaking trade' and 'awful trade'. Any letter that criticises protesters is subsequently vilified e.g. d: 'I feel saddened by those who label us as the loony left, a bunch of veggies, or a law breaking mob with nothing better to do...We are ordinary people with a wide spectrum of backgrounds, age and political persuasion who believe in what we are doing. (16/2/95:8). The life changing effect of demonstrating is often written about: e.g. 'My life will never return to normality...I will never forget that first very cold day in January...As a result of what I saw, both in the lorries and alongside the lorries from the police shocked, sickened and horrified...The British bobby, who I had always held in esteem had turned into a monster' ('You must listen Mr Markham 9/6/95:10). The absence of a 'normality' in a 'normal' town is also a regular theme, e.g. 'Normality ? This will only return when live animal exports are no longer permitted from Brightlingsea or anywhere else in Britain' ('Police policies attack rights' 13/6/95:8). Many protesters became increasingly defiant as a result of joining the protests e.g.: 'from that moment I never missed a day' (ibid) and 'The protests at Brightlingsea will continue as long as the trade does' (R W Bourne. 18/4/95:10) The police are also constructed as verbally abusive, e.g.: 'What about their taunts' (23/3/95:10) is a letter which wonders why the Chief Constable has 'taken no action to curb the constant taunting of protesters by sections of the police' (ibid).

¹⁷The police are constructed negatively throughout the letters, so that they are written of as 'ruthless' and as merely the 'tools of their political masters', by removing people from the road 'with gusto' and were heard to shout "Go for it !" during which time they selected 'targets' of 'ordinary people' (ibid)

¹⁸The letters demonstrated how both local campaigns were attempts to purify particular social spaces, through the rejection of difference and the securing of boundaries to maintain homogeneity ([Sibley 1988](#)).

¹⁹We must also mention the effective organisational skills of local campaign groups such as BALE (Brightlingsea Against Live Exports). One of the founders of BALE, Maria Wilby, is the daughter of the founder of the successful Compassion in World Farming, Joyce D'Silva, the two organisations were often in contact during the campaign ([Callaghan 1995](#))

²⁰It is in this context that Tiryakian's analysis of the attitudinal transformations that result from being part of a 'charismatic community' becomes pertinent, in that it gives: 'a sense of power - power not based on control of physical or material resources, but effective power nonetheless by virtue of being part of a moral community...this sentiment of empowerment...transforms the group into a charismatic community, transforms, ultimately, social structure into agency' ([Tiryakian 1995:274](#))

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