Social Movement Discourse: Manifestos

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Introduction

Among the vast repertoire of the contentious activities of social movements, various types of discourse play a fundamental, but often ignored, role. Without text and talk activists are unable to express their claims, organize their activities, communicate their concerns to the general public, the media or governments, or acquire new members.

Typical protest movements, such as demonstrations, strikes or occupations not only involve non-verbal actions, but also are accompanied by slogans, banners, declarations or press releases. Meetings and assemblies are essentially forms of discursive interaction. Each of these discourse genres used in social movements would need at least a monograph to show their relevance as part of the contentious activities of social movements.

Discourse is not only a form of social action in its own right. Discourses of social movements also express the personal and social cognitions of their members, represented in mental models of personal experiences, shared knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values. Also these cognitive aspects of social movements have received little theoretical or analytical attention (but see Passy & Monsch, 2020), or they are also vaguely subsumed under the notion of ‘frame’, without further cognitive analysis.

Among the discourse genres defining the communication activities of social movements, manifestos have important roles and functions. They often are the first public discourse of a movement or are published when a movement has changed it aims
or methods or when important social or political events require their comments and position. Yet, manifestos of social movements have been studied relatively infrequently.

This chapter offers a theoretical foundation for the study of manifestos and provides some examples of analysis. It not only aims to contribute to the study of social movements, but also to the field of Critical Discourse Studies, because manifestos are a prominent discourse genre of protest, resistance and solidarity.

Our theoretical framework is multidisciplinary, systematically linking discourse structures with social structures via a cognitive interface. It continues my earlier research on (anti)racist discourse, news in the press, ideology and knowledge, and is intended as a contribution to my current project on social movement discourse and cognition.

**Discourse Analysis of Social Movements**

The study of social movements in the social sciences usually focuses on their organization and non-verbal contentious activities, or their relations to governments on the one hand, or the general public and potential members, on the other hand (among a vast number of introductions and handbooks, see Della Porta & Diani, 2015). The cultural paradigm of social movement studies, emerging in the 1990s, also paid attention to discourse, but usually did so in terms of rather vague concepts of frames and framing (Benford & Snow, 2000), instead of using more detailed and explicit theories and methods of contemporary discourse studies.

Many genres of discourse are pervasive part of the repertoire of social movements. Besides the manifestos examined in this chapter, discourse is constitutive of social movement activities such as personal conversations, informal meetings and assemblies, storytelling, declarations, press releases, advertising, campaigns, letters, and much more (see, e.g., Steinberg, 1999; Skillington, 1997). Many forms of text and talk accompany other forms of contentious action, as is the case for slogans during demonstrations, strikes or occupations. Discourse plays a crucial role in the acquisition of the specialized knowledge of social movements, as well as sharing attitudes or ideologies among its members. To make their claims known to governments or the general public, social movements need to engage in many forms of text and talk.
In sum, social movements are unthinkable without the pervasive role of discourse. Yet, the study of social movements, especially in the social sciences, has only paid marginal attention to the systematic study of such discourse. Despite interest in the repertoires of contentious actions, few repertoires have been formulated for the discursive aspects of such actions (but see the study of revolutionary words by Tarrow, 2013). With the exception of the study of stories and storytelling (e.g., Davis, 2002; Polletta, 2006; Polletta, Chen, Gardner & Motes, 2011), contemporary handbooks of social movement research (such as Della Porta & Diani, 2015), do not even feature chapters on discourse. Within the cultural paradigm of social movement studies, text and talk have received more interest, but often in terms of traditional content analysis, or in terms of the popular notion of frame, which vaguely may be used to stand for a large variety of discourse structures, such as themes, topics, rhetoric, style or perspective, without a more detailed and systematic analysis in terms of structures studied in contemporary linguistics, discourse studies, conversation analysis stylistics, rhetoric, or pragmatics (for critical analysis, see Van Dijk, 2020).

A review of discourse analysis in social movement research is beyond the scope of this chapter, so we’ll only briefly mention some scholars who have paid attention to social movement discourse.

Especially the work of Hank Johnston has advocated discourse analytical and cognitive approaches while critically discussing pervasive framing research. He emphasizes especially the role of the pragmatic categories of the speech situation (some to be discussed below for manifestos, for instance in his study of interviews and fieldwork in Catalonia (see, e.g., Johnston, 1995, 2002).

Another scholar engaged in discourse analysis of social movements is Marc Steinberg, whose prize-winning monograph Fighting Words (Steinberg, 1999) on working-class formation, collective action and discourse in early nineteenth century England, stresses that discourse is a “key component of social life”, and that it mediates the processes of class formation and class conflict.

An article linking frame analysis with discourse analysis is Caiani & Della Porta’s (2011) study of elite populism of the extreme right in Italy and Germany. Within a discourse analytical paradigm, Flowerdew (2017) offers a discourse historical study of the Umbrella Movement in Hongkong.
Studies of Manifestos

We have been unable to locate systematic discourse analytical studies of social movement manifestos. Most studies (some 400 books and articles) of manifestos focus on party and election manifestos, some of which will be briefly mentioned here in order to be able to mention some general properties of manifestos, which are part of a class of “foundational texts” (Holland & Nichele, 2016), such as party programs, principles, policies, agendas, plans and other important discourses of social movements, as is the case for mission statements of organizations and institutions (see, e.g., Connell & Galasinski, 1998). Besides party and election manifestos, most studied are artistic or literary manifestos (see, e.g., Lyon, 1999; Scott, 2019). The most impressive collection of manifestos and related discourses of a social movement are the 150 feminist texts cited and presented by Weiss & Brueske (2018), of which we’ll analyze one manifesto below.

Under direction of Ian Budge, there is a comparative international project of (political) manifesto analysis (see, e.g. Budge & McDonald, 2006). Few of these studies engage in systematic discourse analysis, and still generally are content analytical. Also, these studies analyze manifestos as any other political discourse of parties on specific topics, such as their attitudes about the European Union. Few define manifestos as a genre.

Discourse Analytical Studies of Political Manifestos

There are some discourse analytical studies of political manifestos, but these too focus on linguistic analysis, e.g., of word frequencies or syntactic structures of sentences, without a broader focus on distinctive properties of the genre. Kyerewaa-Owusu (2017) in a thesis presented at the University of Ghana (Legon), analyzes the political manifestos of two political parties in Ghana (NDC and NPP), using discourse analysis. She defines manifestos as persuasive written discourse featuring special rhetorical structures, such as blame, contrastive use of indigenous linguistic lexemes, comparison; and linguistic features such as nouns, pronouns, verbs and adjectives. But the structures of the manifestos are rather superstructural (schematic), such as Introduction, etc. rather than semantic categories of the overall meaning (macrostructures) of the manifestos (see
also Ehineni, 2014; a critical discourse analysis of modals in Nigerian political manifestos.

Wozniak (2020) in his study of the manifestos of political parties in Poland using a “qualitative content analysis” found that the growing economic polarization is hardly discussed in these manifestos. Using a definition of manifestos by Pfau-Effinger (2005), as “values, ideals and stocks of knowledge” of the parties. Manifestos are a description of the vision of the desired nation, state and society, and define the party’s self-description and attitude towards social groups. As is the case for the parties in Ghana, also the manifestos of the Polish parties specifically attack the political opponent.

Using a critical discourse analytical perspective, Taub & Hamo (2011) examine the first and second manifesto of Israel’s settler movement, defining manifestos as “written summaries of ideologies”, a definition consistent with our theoretical approach (see below), referring also to the work of Budge et al (2001) on ideological comparisons between party programs, also referred to by Wozniak (2020), and the study of Kosic and Triandafyllidou (2004) for which party platforms are a “highly coherent and harmonious representation of ideology”. They follow Wodak’s (2001) Discourse Historical Approach, analyzing both the immanent analysis of the text “as a site of negotiation” as well as the sociopolitical analysis, as a “tool of persuasion”. Their analysis thus focuses on temporality (the first manifesto is atemporal and abstract when mentioning Zionist ideals, whereas second related to contemporary events of the war in the Sinai), and point of view or perspective e.g., as expressed in first person plural pronouns, and the terms of reference (e.g., Israel vs. the Jewish people).

Also within a CDA perspective, Pearce (2004) studies Conservative and Labour manifestos (“the distillation of party policy”) in the UK of the 1987 and 1997 elections, focusing on the “marketization” of education, e.g. by analyzing transitivity, social actors, semantic prosody and coherence. Also referring to the work of Budge (1999) on party programs, he defines party manifestos as “rare” texts (only produced every 4 years) and as “set[ting] the tone and themes of campaign discussion”:

No other single document produced by a political party has the power to generate such an extensive discursive chain; and no other document is pored over with such forensic intent by politicians and certain branches of the media. This makes the election manifesto a highly significant public text (Pearce, 250-251).

Also from a CDA perspective, but rather using a corpus approach, Nadeem, Mahmood, & Mahmood (2014) examine the persuasive strategies and ideological
components of eight Pakistani party programs between 2008 and 2013. Their analysis focused on agentless passive voice, used by all parties, pronouns such as we (as a nation or as a country), and they, and especially nouns such as policy, growth, country, party or health, different for different parties, as is the case for the word women and promote especially used by the PPP in 2013. Of course, isolated word frequencies provide less detailed insights into the local and global propositional meanings of the manifestos, whose general genre status is much less discussed in this paper focusing only on frequencies of various grammatical structures of the party manifestos.

Malghani, Akhtar & Farooqi (2019), offer a more qualitative analysis of Pakistani party manifestos, combining semantic CDA analysis, social psychological group identity and political science analysis of party programs. In their analysis they focus on vagueness, pronouns (such as polarized Us and Them), actives and passives, adjectives and adverbs, presuppositions and implications, modalities, concluding the ideological polarization between positive ingroup and negative outgroup. However, beyond this ideological polarization, also this paper does not discuss in much detail the typical structures and functions of manifestos.

Kiratli (2016) offers a discourse analytical study of election party programs and manifestos (from 1950 to 2012) about European integration and national identity in Germany, the UK and the Netherlands, featuring the ideas, values and policy proposals as formulated by the political elites. He specifically analyzes cognitive-evaluations, emotive aspects of identity and future projection. The paper does not feature remarks on the genre nature of the texts as party programs or manifestos.

Without further comments, we may mention some other discourse studies of party manifestos:

- Hubé & Rambour, 2010; on French political parties;
- Evans & Jeffries, 2015; on the use of the word ‘choice’ in British manifestos between 1900 and 2010;
- Holland & Nichele (2013) offer an ideological content analysis of corporate manifestos, within a “semantic grammatical” definition of manifestos as “foundational discourses”.
- Gould (2000) analyses the high frequency terms in the political language of German political parties.
- Dobson (2007) This paper examines the language used by two British political leaders of the 1990s in their election manifestos.
- Chaney (2013) applies frame analysis examination of how, as key political texts, manifestos enable parties to construct (or ‘frame’) policy proposals on constitutional, governance and other matters.
• Chaney (2014) defines manifestos as political texts fundamentally concerned with setting out parties’
general position on a multiplicity of contemporary policy issues in advance of an election.

• Carlson & Usher (2016) examine how corporate manifestos, defined as “metajournalistic discourse”,
play for attention, authenticity, and authority in a crowded news market, news start-ups introduce
themselves to the public.

• Jayo (2020) examines the relation between political manifestos as social networks.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework presupposed in this chapter is multidisciplinary. It not only
features notions of linguistics and various fields of discourse studies (itself a
multidisciplinary field), but also notions of the social sciences, on the one hand, and
cognitive studies, on the other hand.

This sociocognitive approach to discourse emphasizes that there is no direct
(causal) link between discourse structures and societal structures. Within a
constructivist paradigm, we claim that societal structures only influence discourse
structures through the personal and socially shared cognitions (interpretations,
representations, etc) of language users as social actors and as members of social groups
and communities. The same is true for the influence of discourse on society.

In our earlier research, we elaborated and applied this framework to describe and
analyze the reproduction of racism (and antiracism) in society, notably through elite
discourse in politics, the media and education (Van Dijk, 1984, 1991, 1993). Racism as
a form of ethnic power abuse or domination, expressed by many forms of
discrimination and exclusion, including racist discourse, is based on socially shared
racist ideologies and attitudes and racist personal mental models. These forms of
personal and social cognition are largely acquired by the many forms of racist public
discourse in politics, education and the media, especially of the symbolic elites that
have preferential access to these discourses, as well as those members of social media
influenced by these elites. It is in this way that we relate (racist) discourse structures to
(racist) practices via the interface of racist personal and social cognition. Our claim is
that in these relationships discourse plays a crucial role: without racist discourse there
would not be racist cognition and without racist cognition there would not be racist
practices and hence no dominant system of racism. Actually, the same relationship
holds between antiracist discourse, cognition and practices.
This framework also applies in the theory of social movements – and its discourses. Whether as protest or as solidarity movements, their practices presuppose personal mental models (experiences) of their members or socially shared knowledge, opinions, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values about events and structures of oppression, exclusion or marginalization. These forms of personal and social cognition are expressed and presupposed by the myriad of discourses of the members of social movements. These discourses themselves are not only part of the repertoire of social movements, but also co-constitutive of their other practices, such as internal organization, meetings, assemblies, protests, demonstrations, strikes or occupations, on the one hand, and the relations with potential members or supporters, the media, the government, or other organizations, on the other hand. In other words, without discourse no social movement is conceivable, no less than without forms of personal and social cognition, or, indeed, without social practices – and discourse is at the same time one of these social practices.

Most relevant of this theoretical framework for the study of social movement manifestos are the shared knowledge of communities (Van Dijk, 2014), and the ideologies of social groups such as social movements (Van Dijk, 1998). Manifestos presuppose knowledge about the (usually negative) social situation, and thus may give rise to the sociopolitical situation descriptions of manifestos. Ideologies are foundational forms of social groups, and their generally polarized (Us vs. Them) structure are also expressed in foundational texts such as manifestos. Indeed, as has been observed for party and election manifestos, also manifestos of social movements are perhaps the most direct discursive expressions of underlying ideologies.

Given this crucial role of discourse for the formation and reproduction of social movements, its analysis needs to be taken seriously. This means that the sophisticated theories and methods of multimodal discourse studies need to be applied, developed in the last 50 years. Popular notions used in many social movement studies, such as ‘frames’, need to be made more explicit in such a framework, and no longer used to vaguely describe such different discourse structures as those of semantics, pragmatics, rhetoric, stylistics, narrative or argumentation, among others.

On the other hand, studies of social movements may contribute to discourse studies by their social and political analysis of social movement practices, their underlying social cognitions and their discourses. In this chapter, for instance, the study of the roles and functions of manifestos in social movement research contributes to our
insight in the structures and strategies of such a discourse genre, for instance as part of Critical Discourse Studies.

**Contexts of manifestos**

Before we examine the discourse structures of some manifestos below, we must emphasize the fundamental role of contextual analysis for the study of discursive genres in general, and manifestos in particular. Therefore, we distinguish between a close ‘pragmatic’ context, defining the communicative situation, on the one hand, and a broader ‘semantic’ context presupposed by the meaning of discourse.

Within our sociocognitive framework, the communicative context is not an ‘objective’ situation, but a subjective one as defined by the participants as mental ‘context models’, which feature the parameters for the appropriateness of the discourse (Van Dijk, 2008, 2009). It is only this cognitive model that is able to control the cognitive processes and structures of discourse, such as its indexical expressions. The standard categories of the context model are Time, Place, Participants (and their Identities, Roles and Relations), the Communicative Act (and its Goals) and the Knowledge (about the Knowledge) of the participants. It is especially this ‘pragmatic’ communicative context that defines manifestos as a genre.

The broader social-political context is also cognitively mediated, through the (shared) knowledge of the relevant sociopolitical situation, that is, all the actors, situations and events introduce or presupposed by text and talk.

The general discussion on the relevance of contexts for discourse analysis also holds for the study of genres of discourse in general, and for the study of manifestos in particular. Indeed, we may even hold that without such a contextual analysis, manifestos as a genre cannot be properly or completely described in terms of discourse properties alone.

The first type of relevant context of manifestos, thus, is the communicative context, at least consisting of Time, Place, Participants (and their Identities, Roles and Relations), ongoing social Actions and Knowledge.
Participants

Speakers or authors of manifestos generally are *collectives*, such as social movements in our case, or artistic movements or political parties, even when manifestos may be originally composed by leaders or secretaries. They are published as manifestos of the collective, and not of an individual person. Even though individual authors have published texts they called ‘manifestos’, they are not so interpreted by the public at large as recipients, but rather as literature, confessions, autobiographies, and so on.

But authors of manifestos are not just any collective of social actors. Indeed, governments may produce discourses that have some aspects in common with manifestos, such as programs, policies or declarations of principles, but these would not generally be called manifestos either. The same is true for generic collectives, such as all women, or all men, or all doctors or all professors – simply because they are not a bound collective that is able to plan and collectively act and hence produce discourse. As is the case for this article, social movements, as well as artistic movements, are the prototypical authors of manifestos. We have seen above that new political parties may also publish a manifesto, as do established parties on special occasion, such as elections, but such manifestos are -- and should rather be -- called programs.

A further constraint on the identification of the authors of manifestos is that they are often collectives in opposition against, or critical of, established power structures or majorities, e.g., because they have been excluded, discriminated, marginalized or otherwise treated badly by the powers that be. In this case, the manifesto is itself an act of protest or resistance by any collective defined in terms of lacking power because of their gender, ethnicity, origin, nationality, sexual orientation, age, etc. In other words, it is not just the collective that is author, but the identity of the collective.

Sociopolitical context

The communicative context of manifestos, as described above, is of course part of a broader sociopolitical context. This context also influences manifestos in a more indirect way, for instance through the social cognition of the authors about the own movement, its history, ideas, actions and aims, its relations to other social actors, institutions such as governments or other social groups or organizations, and especially the very social situation that has motivated the formation of the movement in the first
place. Although a complete account of this sociopolitical context is rather the object of research of the social sciences, its relevance for the structures of manifestos is limited by the knowledge of the authors about this context and expressed or presupposed by its semantic ‘content’ of the manifesto. As is the case for the communicative context, it is not the ‘objective’ nature of this sociopolitical context that influences manifestos, but the ways this context is interpreted, and hence mentally represented in the shared social cognitions of the authors. Indeed, grievances of social movements are not about ‘objective’ social situations, but how movements interpret these situations. In our analyses below, we’ll show in more detail how social, political and cultural contexts influence manifestos.

The Discourse Structures and Strategies of Manifestos

It is within the cognitively construed influence of the communicative and sociopolitical context of a social movement that its manifestos are produced and structured. Part of this structure is controlled by the grammatical rules of the language of the manifesto, and by the genre structure of manifestos as known to the authors (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). This may also mean that the authors may use other concepts to describe the current discourse genre, or have a concept of manifestos that is different from the one shared by other groups or movements of the same discourse community.

For a first approach to the structure of manifestos, let us begin with a brief analysis of a specific manifesto: the manifesto of Black Lives Matter as published on the website of the movement:

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What We Believe
Four years ago, what is now known as the Black Lives Matter Global Network began to organize. It started out as a chapter-based, member-led organization whose mission was to build local power and to intervene when violence was inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. In the years since, we’ve committed to struggling together and to imagining and creating a world free of anti-Blackness, where every Black person has the social, economic, and political power to thrive. Black Lives Matter began as a call to action in response to state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism. Our intention from the very beginning was to connect Black people from all over the world who have a shared desire for justice to act together in their communities. The impetus for that commitment was, and still is, the rampant and deliberate violence inflicted on us by the state.
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First of all, the manifesto is not explicitly named as such but its title focuses on the important cognitive dimension of the movement, its beliefs. These beliefs are specified
by the plural first person pronoun *we*, the general pronoun of much political discourse in general, and referring to the social movement as the ingroup, and more specifically to the authors of the manifesto or the leaders of the movement. The fact that these beliefs are referred to explicitly in the headline confirms that this cognitive aspect is crucial for the identity of social movements in general and this movement in particular, and at the same time a distinctive property of the overall semantic structures of manifestos. More specifically, the headline is indexical, not only because it refers to the authors of the communicative situation, but also to their beliefs, as construed in the context models of the authors.

Our next analytical step is to relate semantic structure with relevant properties of social movements, not only in theory, but as represented by the movement, a type of analysis that we may call ‘indexically relevant’, because it represents a relation between the text and the movement whose text is currently expressed. A first relevant semantic category is that of **History**. Many discourses of social movements, and especially foundational texts such as manifestos, count the history of the formation of the movement, as we have also found in parliamentary debates on university quotas for black students in Brazil (Van Dijk, 2020). This semantic category has the broader function of narrative: manifestos may engage in storytelling, as does this manifesto. In this case, the narrative dimension is pervasive, because also the next sentences are about past events and developments: *it started out, in the years since, began, from the very beginning, was and still is*. In other words, the overall cognitive category of ‘what we believe’ is described in historical terms and as part of movement storytelling.

The next overall category of this manifesto is **Identity** expressed in the very first sentence: *what is now known as the Black Lives Matter Global Network began to organize*. Besides indexically relating the history to the present (*now*) and hence stressing its continuity as well as change, the movement is (*now*) known not just as Black Lives Matter, but also as a Global Network. Thus, the name and identity of the movement is no longer just local or national, but international, obviously implying a change of status and fame. We see that this brief expression not only functions as part of the Identity of the manifesto (and the movement), but also as an expression of the important **Location** of the movement.

After the very word *organize* in sentence 1, sentence 2 (lines 3-4) adds other relevant categories, for instance **Organization** in the expression *member-led*, implying that the movement is not hierarchical, but horizontal and democratic.
Crucial in the same sentence is the fragment *whose mission was to build local power and to intervene when violence was inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes*. The very keyword *mission* may be the very name of the next category, and more generally refers to the name of the **Aims** or **Goals** of a/this movement. The metaphor **TO BUILD** expresses and emphasizes the second major action of the movement, and hence may be categorized as part of the important **Action** of manifestos, of course inherently related to its goals.

The expression *(build) local power* introduced another important category of movements and their manifestos: the **Resources** of the movement, generally the resources needed to struggle and to resist, here expressed by the verb to **intervene**.

The rest of that (passive) sentence expresses another fundamental category of social movements and their manifestos: their very raison d’être or **Motivation**, why the movement was created in the first place: in this case as a movement resisting (systemic) violence, implicitly also interpreted as a serious violation of social norms. Indeed, BLM was not founded for petty embarrassment by the police.

At the same time, this sentence expresses the **Beneficiary** of the (actions of the) movement, the Black Communities, as expressed as Patient in the grammatical structure, as well as the **Opponent** or **Enemies** of the movement, the State, making violence systemic, and vigilantes, making it widespread and uncontrolled.

The next sentence (line 5-7), continues the **Action** category with the classical movement metaphor of struggle, and the **Identity** category adding the **Unity** of the movement with its Beneficiary, and finally the crucial cognitive (imagining) category of Vision, representing a situation where the motivation of the movement (police violence etc) is no longer a problem, in this case further specified as *anti-blackness*, and the aim of a generalized **Resource** (various kinds of power) for all, a strategic generalization to stress the importance of the movement for the Black community. Presupposed by this sentence, thus, is that BLM is an **antiracist** movement, thus further specifying its **Identity**.

The sentence in lines 7-8 partly repeats not only the **History** category (**BLM began**) and the **Motivation** the movement (**anti-blackness**) but repeats and emphasizes the responsibility of the state, and hence its role as the main **Opponent** of the movement, ultimately responsible for police violence. Indeed, further analysis may distinguish between actual Opponents or Enemies (of which the black community is the victim), but at another level, the institution that is actually politically responsible of the negative situation of police violence: the State, thus adding also an **Explanation** to the manifesto.

The sentence *Our intention ...* in line 9 and 10, continues the **History** category of the narrative function of the manifesto (**from the very beginning**), the category of Action (to
connect) and the Aims category (our intention), the Beneficiary (black community), this time extended to its place (all over the world), thus again stressing the global importance of BLM, as well as a cognitive aspect attributed to the this community (shared desire for justice) introducing one of the crucial Values shared between BLM and black communities, as well as part of shared Action (act together).

The final sentence (lines 10-1) repeats and hence emphasizes the Cause of the movement (impetus), continues the story of the History of the movement (was, and still is), the Motivation of the movement (violence) rhetorically emphasized (rampant and deliberate), and the Responsible Opponent or Enemy of the movement (the State). The final pronoun us, implies the shared Identity between BLM and the black community in its grammatical and semantic role of Patient and Victim of the actions of the State.

This brief analysis of a typical example of a recent (short) Manifesto of a famous movement shows that the text can be analyzed in relevant semantic macro-categories, that indexically reflect the main social and cognitive categories of the social movement, and at the same time organize the (discontinuous) expressions of the text, defining it as a manifesto of a social movement, and at the same time expressing its overall coherence. The categories can be summarized in the following schema, as a hypothesis of manifesto superstructure:

- Identity
- Actions
  - Time
    - History
    - Present
  - Place
- Beneficiary
- Opponents
- Aims/Vision

Actually, the schema could be further simplified with a category of Actors, of which the movement, the Beneficiary, and the Opponents are participants in different roles, each with their own actions. Since the categories are quite general, the schema might hold not just as major categories of a theory of social movements, but also as discourse categories of their foundational discourses such as manifestos.

There is another important corollary of the schematic structure of movement theory and its manifestos: In our earlier work on the structures of ideologies, we postulated an ideology schema consisting of the following categories (Van Dijk, 1998):

- Identity (who are we?)
- Action (what do we do?)
- Goals (what do we want?)
- Norms/Values (what is good/bad for us?)
• Relations (who are our allies and enemies?)
• Resources (what defines our – lack of – power?)

The similarity of the structure of the ideology of a movement and its manifesto is of course not a coincidence. Indeed, as has been observed by analysts of party manifestos (see above), a manifesto is a discursive expression of an underlying ideology, but always adapted to the communicative situation as represented in the context model of the authors. Both are fundamental: an ideology is a type of fundamental social cognition shared by an (ideological) group, and a manifesto a foundational text of a movement, precisely with the aim to express, publicise and communicate its underlying ideology. It is also for this reason why the BLM manifesto is titled *What we believe*.

The global semantic categories of the manifesto do not define and explain all its structures. We have seen that the grammar of sentences expresses the role of actors, time and place, and its rhetorical strategies emphasize the global meanings of the text locally by various predicates – properties they share with all discourse or all political and persuasive discourse. The global semantic categories discussed above, on the other hand, define the general semantic structure of the genre of the manifesto. We need further analysis to see whether this is indeed the case for other manifestos.

Relevant for ideological discourses such as manifestos is that the ideology usually is expressed by polarized structures, emphasizing the Good things of Us, and the Bad things of Them (Van Dijk, 1998). This is also the case in the manifesto of BLM, which emphasize (by repetition and lexical selection) the bad things of the police and the State, and the good things of BLM (*build local power, intervene when violence is conflicted against the Black community, struggling, imagining a world free of anti-Blackness*, etc) or the Black people (*shared desire for justice to act together in their communities*). Also, positive self-presentation of BLM is expressed in its democratic organization: member-led, its commitment and its international role.

Finally, it is theoretically and analytically crucial to distinguish between underlying ideologies as shared forms of social cognition, on the one hand, and the discourses controlled by such an ideology, of which the current manifesto is just one, specific example, produced by the current organization, published on a website, at a specific time, place, etc, that is, a specific communicative situation. The same antiracist ideology will probably control many other discourses of BLM as well as other black or antiracist organizations. This ideology specifically also controls more specific forms of socially shared cognition, namely attitudes, in this case the specific attitude about police violence against the black community in the USA. Thus, the specifics of this manifesto is not only controlled by a general antiracist ideology, but also by a more specific (antiracist) attitude about police violence, as will be case by all or most discourses about police violence against the black community in the USA.
Finally, the actual (indexical) structures of the manifesto are controlled by the communicative situation as represented in the context model of BLM as author of this manifesto. This is shown in the specific temporal information (four years ago, now known, was and still is, and the passive tense of the “historical” sentences) and the pronouns (our intention).

The various levels of sociocognitive discourse analysis, hence, are the following, from bottom to top, ignoring the details of the underlying and applied grammatical knowledge of English:

Social Cognition
- General (shared) sociopolitical knowledge about police violence, anti-Blackness and the role of the State in the USA
- General genre knowledge about manifestos
- Specific knowledge of BLM about its history, activities, intentions, commitments etc.
- General antiracist ideology
- Socially shared (ideological) attitudes about police violence against blacks in the USA

Personal or Group Cognition
- Specific (BLM) mental models about its past and current activities
- Current context model of the communicative situation of the current manifesto

Discourse Structures
- The overall schema (superstructure) consisting of manifesto categories (Identity, etc)
- Polarized ideological organization of the global semantics of the manifesto
- Expression of locally and globally coherent sentences expressing these semantic structures
- Stylistic appropriateness and rhetorical emphasis in the selection of the words of the sentences
- Expression/production, in English, as part of the website.

The Stop Mare Mortum Manifesto in Spain

Our next example is a manifesto in Catalan of the Stop Mare Mortum movement in Catalonia, Spain, especially active since the many deaths in the Mediterranean of refugees since 2015, especially from Syria, and other countries in the Middle East and Africa. The manifesto was published on the website of the movement.

Stop Mare Mortum
La sensibilització, la incidència política i la mobilització de la població
Qui som?
Som una plataforma ciutadana que té per objectiu fomentar un canvi en les polítiques europees migratòries i d’estrangeria per tal d’aconseguir que es garanteixin i es respectin els drets humans. Treballem per assolir que s’estableixin vies legals i segures d’accés a territori europeu per evitar totes les morts en el camí. Com a plataforma creiem en la llibertat de moviment sense restriccions de totes les persones i que els drets humans han de ser garantits sense fer distinció entre persones migrants i persones refugiades. En aquest sentit, considerem que les polítiques migratòries europees i la manca de voluntat dels estats membres de la Unió Europea i de la mateixa organització han esdevingut el major obstacle per salvar les vides dels milers de persones que moren a les portes d’Europa. Entenem que el que passa al Mediterrani és una nova forma de genocidi del segle XXI.

Stop Mare Mortum va néixer a finals d’abril de 2015 com a reacció a la mort de gairebé un miler de persones durant el naufragi de l’embarcació amb què esperaven arribar a costes sicilianes. La primera acció va ser davant la seu de la Comissió Europea a Barcelona.

Stop Mare Mortum
Awareness, political advocacy and population mobilization

Who are we?
We are a citizen platform that aims to promote change in European migration and immigration policies in order to ensure that human rights are guaranteed and respected. We are working to ensure that legal and safe access routes to European territory are established to prevent all deaths along the way.

As a platform we believe in the unrestricted freedom of movement of all people and that human rights must be guaranteed without distinguishing between migrants and refugees. In this sense, we believe that European migration policies and the unwillingness of the member states of the European Union and the organization itself have become the biggest obstacle to saving the lives of the thousands of people who die at the gates of Europe. We understand that what is happening in the Mediterranean is a new form of genocide in the 21st century.

Stop Mare Mortum was born in late April 2015 in reaction to the deaths of nearly a thousand people during the sinking of the boat they were hoping to reach off the coast of Sicily.
The first action was in front of the headquarters of the European Commission in Barcelona.

For convenience our analysis will be based on the English translation, though with some specifications that are necessary for the original in Catalan.

The headline of the manifesto not only is self-referential to the author and identity of the movement, but its grammatical structure and pragmatic function at the same time signifies an order or recommendation – namely to stop a “Dead Sea”. The verb to stop, as a change of state, presupposes that at the moment there is indeed a dead sea, metonymically implying death people at sea, and local knowledge permits the inference that the sea is the Mediterranean. As is generally the case for headlines, they express the semantic (global) coherence of the text as well as its global semantic macrostructure or topic, controlling also the local coherence of the manifesto.

Without detailed semantic analysis, as shown for the BLM manifesto, let us first establish the overall manifesto schema we have postulated, possibly correcting or expanding it for this manifesto.

After the title, his manifesto is headed also by three keywords or slogans identifying the three main Activities of the movement: Awareness, Political Advocacy and Population Mobilization, whereas the noun Awareness implies the act of making
people aware, activities that also define the movement as sociopolitical. The next manifesto categories are then expressed as follows:

**Identity:** Who are we? We are a citizen platform; As platform

**Opponent:** Member states of European Union

**History:** Stop Mare Mortum was born in late April 2015

**Motivation:** in reaction to the deaths of nearly a 1000 people; EU migration policies

**Activities:** to promote, are working to ensure; The first action was in front of the headquarters of the European Commission in Barcelona

**Cognition (ideology)** (we believe in the unrestricted freedom of movement of all people and that human rights must be guaranteed without distinguishing between migrants and refugees)

**Cognition (knowledge)** European migration policies, unwillingness, obstacle, etc. the lives of the thousands of people who die at the gates of Europe

**Cognition (Opinion, Attitude)** unwillingness, obstacle, genocide

**Aims** (change in European migration and immigration policies, safe access, prevent all deaths)

**Norms and Values:** (human rights, legal and safe; freedom of movement)

We see that that also this manifesto features typical semantic categories also observed in the BLM manifesto. In fact, the Cognition categories are more detailed here, focusing on knowledge (of a bad situation: deaths, policies), opinions/attitudes (about EU policies) and a more general human rights ideology.

In addition to this semantic schema organizing the manifesto and at the same time defining the main dimensions of the social movement (and its ideology), we observe the ideological polarization between Positive Us (the movement) and Negative Them (the EU member states), throughout the text. Part of (positive) Us are not only the positive actions and critical opinions of the movement, but also their identity as democratic citizen platform – and not a huge NGO.

The polarization is **stylistically expressed** by such relatively polite criticism as unwillingness, biggest obstacle, and **rhetorically enhanced** by the usual numbers game (thousand of people) and the pragmatic speech act of an **accusation** of genocide.
The few elements of **knowledge** expressed in the manifesto summarize a vast body of publicly shared knowledge in Europe about the plight of the refugees, the deaths in the Mediterranean and the negative migration policies of the EU member states. It is also this epistemic dimension of the text that defined the first slogan mentioned under the headline: making people aware of the situation. The other main dimension of the underlying cognition of the manifesto is the (general, critical) **attitude** about EU migration policies.

Finally, the **norms and values** of the manifesto (*legal and safe access*, etc) as something to be ensured, **presuppose** that such is not the case at the moment, hence the activities and aims of the movement.

**The Manifesto of First Continental Summit of Indigenous Women Puno, Peru May 27–28, 2009**

The third manifesto to be (briefly) analyzed here is the manifesto of indigenous women of the Americas, adopted in Puno (Peru) in May 27-28, 2009). The Editor of the collection of feminist manifestos explains the context of the manifesto as follows: “At the Third Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples held in Guatemala in 2007, women decided to hold their own gathering preceding the fourth summit in Peru. Over two thousand Indigenous women came together in Puno, Peru, on May 27, 2009”. In this introduction to the manifesto, she describes this meeting I terms of the marches, ceremonies and panels and workshops, and a session of 4 hours in which the manifesto was decided – information crucial for the sociopolitical and communicative contexts of the manifesto, including the prominent presence and active participation of the women. The manifesto consist of the following text, translated to English, and followed by Resolutions and Agreements, not analyzed here:

1. **Manifesto**
2. We, indigenous women gathered in the sacred lands of Lake Titicaca, after two days of discussions and deliberation raise our voices in these times when Abya Yala’s womb is once more with childbirth pains, to give birth to the new Pachakutik for a better life on our planet.
3. We, indigenous women, have had a direct input into the historical process of transformation of our peoples through our proposals and actions in the various struggles taking place and engendered from the indigenous movements. We are the carriers, conduits of our cultural and genetic make-up; we gestate and brood life; together with men, we are the axis of the family unit and society. We join our wombs to our mother earth’s womb to give birth to new times in this Latin American continent where in many countries millions of people, impoverished by the neoliberal system, raise their voices to say ENOUGH to oppression, exploitation and the
looting of our wealth. We therefore join in the liberation struggles taking place throughout our
continent. We gather here at this summit, with our hearts, minds, hands and wombs, for the
purpose of seeking alternatives to eliminate injustice, discrimination, machismo and violence
against women, and to return to our ways of mutual respect and a life of harmony with the
planet. Whereas women are part of nature and the macrocosm, we are called to defend and take
care of our mother earth, because from her comes our ancient history and culture, that make us
what we are: indigenous peoples under the protection and spiritual guidance of our parents and
grandparents who gave life to all the human beings that now inhabit this wonderful planet,
even though a few oligarchs and imperialists seek to plague it with death in their quest for their
god called greed. Therefore, before the memory of our martyrs, heroes, leaders, we present to
our extended families (Ayllus), communities, peoples and nations of the world the conclusions
of our rebellious hearts.

The relation of the indigenous women manifesto with its communicative context is
expressed in its indexical expressions, for the Authors as active Participants (We, indigenous women), the Place (sacred lands of Lake Titicaca), the Time (after two days of discussion in these times when...), and the current Communicative Act of the manifesto (to raise our voices).

The social or sociocultural context of the meeting and the manifesto is expressed
not only in the place of the Titicaca lake (at the border of Peru and Bolivia), but also by
the specific use of the metaphor Abya Yala’s womb, the Kuna expression for the
“Continent of Life” or “Land of its Full Maturity” referring to the Americas or the lands
of the Indigenous people, an expression presupposed to be known by the authors of the
manifesto and its addressees. Also the times are metaphorically described in terms of
cchildbirth pains, implying these are hard times. The same is true for the Quechua word
Pachakutik, signifying rebirth, change or transformation, implying a change of times in
the lands of indigenous people, and more generally on the planet.

We see that the context model of the authors defining the communicative situation
also needs to be related to broader sociocultural contexts and the knowledge shared by
indigenous people. More specifically, the selection of the metaphor of CHILD BIRTH PAINS,
and describing the lands as a woman, also signifies and stresses that the authors of the
manifesto are women. The metaphors in the rest of the manifesto confirm this identity
of the authors.

Besides these pragmatic categories of the manifesto expressed in its indexicals,
the global semantic categories of the manifesto, as studied above, deserve special
attention. Let us briefly discuss some of these.

The general category of all or most manifestos is the often initially expressed in
its indexicals, namely the Identity of the authors, as well as the very movement of
indigenous women for whom they are speaking, as members of two general categories: women and indigenous people, as expressed or implied by the following expressions in the manifesto (followed by the line numbers of the text):

- We, indigenous women (2, 5)
- From the indigenous movements (7)
- We are the carriers, conduits of our cultural and genetic make-up (7-8)
- We gestate and brood life; we are the axis of the family unit and society (8-9)
- We join our wombs to our mother earth’s womb to give birth to new times in this Latin American continent (9-10)
- We therefore join in the liberation struggles (12)
- We gather here at this summit, with our hearts, minds, hands and wombs (13)
- (…) to eliminate injustice, discrimination, machismo and violence against women (14-15)
- Whereas women are part of nature and the macrocosm, we are called to defend and take care of our mother earth 16-17)
- (…) that make us what we are: indigenous peoples (17-18)

We see that with more detail than in the manifestos analyzed above, the double Identity category of the authors and participants of the manifesto and communicative event, as women and indigenous people is spelled out. This happens again in metaphorical and metonymical terms, such as (we as: CARRIERS, CONDUITS, AXIS OF THE FAMILY, OUR WOMBS, etc) emphasizing both material and biological identities, specifically related to childbirth. Also the reference to families in the manifesto may be interpreted as a special concern of women. Indeed, there is no doubt about the gender identity of the authors as well as the participants of the movement. More briefly there is even a third participant identity implied in such expressions as We therefore join in the liberation struggles (12) implying that the women are active members of the indigenous movement and its struggle, and hence also fighters. The same is true for their resistance against machismo (14-15).

Besides the gender identity of the women the indigenous identity is expressed throughout the manifesto, as well as implied by references to their lands, the continent, the indigenous movement, history and culture, family relations and memories:

- We, indigenous women
- sacred lands of Lake Titicaca
- Abya Yala’s womb
- the new Pachakutik
- the indigenous movements
- our mother earth’s womb
- to return to our ways of mutual respect
- our mother earth
- our ancient history and culture
- indigenous peoples under the protection and spiritual guidance of our parents and grandparents
- the memory of our martyrs, heroes, leaders
We see that the sociocultural context of the manifesto, presupposed and only partly expressed here, plays a prominent role, also to specify the indigenous identity of the authors and participants in the movement, and as aim and motivation for their struggle and other actions of resistance.

The Opponents/Enemies of the (women’s, indigenous) movement are only briefly expressed, namely as machismo men, and as few oligarchs and imperialists (20), implying not only their gender, but also their sociopolitical identity as oppressors. But at the same time, men are also briefly mentioned as Allies of the movement (line 8).

From the start, as is typical of many manifestos and other forms of resistance discourse, also the History category is expressed, also to stress that such historical contribution of women is often ignored in movements and manifestos of men:

We, indigenous women, have had a direct input into the historical process of transformation of our peoples through our proposals and actions in the various struggles taking place and engendered from the indigenous movements (5-7).

Besides the detailed Identity category, the most prominent category is that of the self-described Actions of the indigenous women:

- (...) women gathered (2 x)
- discussions and deliberations
- raise our voices
- to give birth (2 x)
- had a direct input
- proposals and actions in the various struggles
- we gestate and brood life
- we are the axis of the family
- we join our wombs
- we join the liberation struggles
- seeking alternatives to eliminate….
- return to our ways
- we are called to defend and take care of our mother earth.

The nature of these actions, and the (often metaphorical) ways they are described deserve some further comments. First of all, and especially relevant for this paper, are the discursive forms of resistance (discussions and deliberations, raise our voice, proposals), indexically including the very manifesto. Secondly, of course, are the references to the actions specific of women (to give birth, we gestate and brood life, join our wombs, we are the axis of the family). Thirdly, are references to all (other) forms of resistance (join the liberation struggles, seeking alternatives to eliminate
injustice...), and finally all acts associated with being indigenous women (return to our ways, take care of our mother earth, etc).

Finally, the manifesto emphasizes ideological Norms and Values, such as a better life, mutual respect, harmony.

The manifesto is followed by a 500-word list of “Resolutions and Agreements”, including specifications of the manifesto, such as the defence of human rights of indigenous women, defence of mother earth, training, international representation, solidarity with indigenous peoples and their struggles, the inviolability of our lands, condemnation of all forms of violence and ethnocide.

Conclusions

Discourse is a prominent, but often ignored, part of the contentious repertoire of social movements, often also part of their non-verbal activities, as is the case for slogans during a march or an occupation. If studied at all in the social sciences, this often happens in terms of vague notions such as ‘frames’ instead of applying the detailed notions of methods of contemporary discourse studied. One of the ‘foundational’ discourse genres of social movements are their manifestos, so far hardly analyzed systematically as a genre, and even less in terms of a discourse analytical paradigm. Most studies of manifestos have been offered in political scientific approaches to party or election manifestos, although these studies focus on political aims and policies, and not on the detailed discourse structures of these texts as a specific genre. These studies do mention the role of ideologies as polarizing beliefs of political manifestos.

Within a multidisciplinary framework, this paper provides a theoretical framework for the systematic study of social movement manifestos. The first relevant dimension is a pragmatic analysis of their communicative situation, represented in the context models of the authors and expressed in the indexical expressions of manifestos. The next dimension is a global semantic analysis of typical ‘superstructural’ or schematic categories organizing the meanings of manifestos, such as Identity, History, Activities, Participant Actors (allies and enemies), Aims, Norms and Values, and Resources, indexically also representing the main sociological categories of social movements. These global semantic categories are locally expressed by formal (lexical
and grammatical) styles of manifestos, typical of the communicative situation, as well as the rhetorical structures emphasizing the polarization between Us and Them.

References


