Chapter 13
The Moral Dimension of Countermovements: The Case of Anti-Feminism

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Abstract The aim of the chapter is to develop an analytical framework for studying the moral dimension of countermovements, which despite obvious significance for movement mobilization is rarely considered in countermovement theory. We argue that Axel Honneth's theory of recognition can be used to develop an analytical framework that allows for grasping not only the moral dimension of struggles between social movements and countermovements but also moral divisions within countermovements. According to Honneth, social struggles stem from perceived misrecognition in relation to a set of moral meta-values that form the basis of legitimate claims in Western society: love, equality, and achievement. These meta-values can be understood differently in concrete areas of political struggle, and activists from different camps tend to make quite different interpretations. With this approach, it is possible to analyze countermovements' moral claims in relation to social movements' societal values and norms, and whether and how different strands within a countermovement make different types of moral claims.

We demonstrate the usefulness of the analytical framework by applying it to the division between feminism and anti-feminism and the division between varieties of anti-feminism (the Christian Right movement, the mythopoetic men's movement, the men's rights movement, and the manosphere). What emerges is a picture of the interrelationship between feminism and anti-feminism that is more complex than the common designation of progressive versus reactionary movements. It is clear that the different strands of anti-feminism relate morally in partly different ways to feminism. They all react against what is understood as misrecognition of men as a result of feminism, but the types of moral claims and their specific emphasis on them vary.

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A. Sevelsted, J. Toubøl (eds.), *The Power of Morality in Movements*, Nonprofit and Civil Society Studies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-98798-5_13

Keywords Countermovements · Moral motivations · Recognition · Feminism · Anti-feminism

Introduction[1]

In social movement scholarship, the interaction between social movements (SMs) and countermovements (CMs) is an established research field. For example, scholars study the pro-choice and pro-life movements, the gun control and gun rights movements, and the environmentalist and climate skeptics movements. The focus tends to be on the dynamics between the two, such as how the gains of one affect the strategies of the other, how the choice of one to struggle in a new political arena forces the other to follow, and how the two sometimes mimic each other in terms of organizational structures, and even political claims (Dillard, 2013; McAdam & Kloos, 2014; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996; Zald & Useem, 1987).

We argue that CM theory has two weaknesses. First, CM theory assumes that activists are motivated only by instrumental concerns. This assumption has been the basis of somewhat mechanistic theories on inter-movement dynamics (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012). However, as the contributions to this volume demonstrate, many activists in both SMs and CMs are primarily animated by moral convictions. Second, CM theory tends to homogenize the opposing movements and treat them as monolithic entities. In contrast, both CMs and SMs comprise a diverse set of actors that can be more or less loosely connected. Their agendas and action repertoires may differ considerably even though they may share the same overarching goals.

The aim of our chapter is to develop an analytical framework for studying the moral dimension of CMs. The framework should be capable of accounting for moral motivations for action and allow us to elucidate, in moral terms, the divisions and tensions between SMs and CMs, as well as the divisions and tensions within the different actors and groups of actors that make up the CM. The path with which we have chosen to develop such a framework follows Axel Honneth's theory of recognition and social struggle (Hartmann & Honneth, 2006; Honneth, 1995, 2003). This theory fits well with our purposes, as it underlines the importance of moral motivations for activism. Honneth argues that the academic study of SMs has exaggerated utilitarian motives and instead needs to strive for "a concept of social struggle that takes as its starting point moral feelings of indignation, rather than pre-given interests" (Honneth, 1995, p. 161). His theory understands personal moral motives as situated within society's moral order. This order is comprised of three "spheres of recognition" that are governed by three different principles: the sphere of intimate relationships (*love*), the sphere of parity in rights (*equality*), and the sphere of meritocratic prestige and particularity (*achievement*).

[1]This work was conducted as part of the research project "Civil society elites? Comparing elite composition, reproduction, integration and contestation in European civil societies," supported by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, reference number M17-0188:1.

We have chosen anti-feminism to illustrate our theoretical argument, partly because it is commonly treated as a typical reactionary CM or backlash phenomenon (Ayoub & Chetaille, 2020; Banaszak & Ondercin, 2016; Chafetz & Dworkin, 1987; Hughes, 2006; Kaoma, 2014; Meyer & Staggenborg, 2008; Miceli, 2005; Steuter, 1992; Weiss & Bosia, 2013). Furthermore, anti-feminism is not a homogeneous movement but consists of many different segments that often have differing moral objections to the emergence and progress of the feminist movement. Since our ambition in this chapter is theoretical more than empirical, our analysis is mainly based on previous research but also on material produced by the movements themselves—such as statements and promotional material on websites.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. We first turn to the literature on CMs and identify strengths and weaknesses. We then move to introduce anti-feminism, in terms of its most important characteristics and its current political and social manifestations. Next, we present the framework that we have constructed from Axel Honneth's theory on recognition, followed by the analysis, where we demonstrate the usefulness of the framework by applying it to the division between feminism and anti-feminism and the division between varieties of anti-feminism (the Christian Right movement, the mythopoetic men's movement, the men's rights movement, and the manosphere). The chapter ends with a summary.

Countermovement Theory

The literature on CMs took off when researchers in the 1960s and 1970s noted that the organized protests of the SM of that era were strikingly similar to the movements that were opposed to it. They often used the same tactics and the same repertoires of action, their inner dynamics was similar, and they both aimed for social change, though they clashed over the direction this social change should take (Dillard, 2013).

The first generation of scholars had a normative and evaluative approach to the subject. To them, SMs and CMs were fundamentally different in terms of politics. Their opinion was that SMs represented society's underdogs—they wanted to challenge the status quo, rework societal power relationships, and were socially progressive and often leftist in orientation. In contrast, CMs represented societal elites who wanted to defend the status quo, as its activists feared a loss of privilege and status and were, therefore, conservative, or even reactionary (Mottl, 1980). The political context of these authors seemed to confirm this presumption. For example, the success of the civil rights movement caused strong and vocal resistance among conservatives, as later shown by Doug McAdam and Karina Kloos in their historical study of the dynamics between party politics and progressive and backlash movements in the USA (McAdam & Kloos, 2014).

However, later generations of scholars challenged the inclusion of political orientation as part of the theoretical definitions of SMs and CMs. According to Lo (1982), general resistance to social and political change cannot be seen as a core element of a CM, as both SMs and CMs advocate some changes and resist others. Instead, the defining feature needs to be its resistance to another *movement*.

Therefore, we cannot assume that CMs take a given political position, and "countermovements can be either right-wing or left-wing" (Lo, 1982, p. 118). Since then, research has been overwhelmingly concerned with the dynamics of SM-CM interaction; how the strategies, framing choices, and political alliances of one shapes the alternatives available to the other. Research has found that the struggle between two movements may become prolonged so that the two sides are solidified as opposing movements. They then become part of each other's political opportunity structure, which means that they have to take into account the anticipated reactions of the other when they decide on political action. In this situation, both movements not only adapt their strategies to gain influence with politicians but also to defeat each other (Fetner, 2008; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996). This is arguably the case with the SM-CM struggles over abortion, LGBT rights, and gun control (Bob, 2012; Meyer & Staggenborg, 2008). This politically neutral and somewhat mechanistic approach has been criticized for neglecting power relationships and psychological motives, such as the perceived loss of status and privilege engendering counteractions (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p. 29).

Here, we want to make two different critical points in regards to the literature. [2] First, its focus on strategic interactions emphasizes a view of actors as rational and primarily motivated by instrumental concerns, such as influence maximization. As important as these concerns surely are, SM scholarship recognizes other types of motivations (Jasper, 2011; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). Motivations may, for example, be linked to collective identity or the sociopsychological satisfaction of acting as part of a larger group, as we have found in a previous study in the anti-feminist context (Kalm & Meeuwisse, 2020). But activists may also be strongly motivated by moral beliefs; they may enjoy the pleasure of "doing the right thing" and acting in accordance with their convictions. This can lead to inner satisfaction and also be rewarded with admiration and approval from others (Klandermans, 2015; Rosati, 2016; Van Stekelenburg, 2013). Research has also shown powerful collective mobilization potential when people have a shared sense of moral duty (Snow & Owens, 2014, p. 667–676).

Second, CM theory tends to treat the SMs and CMs as two homogenous entities. In their investigations, scholars focus on how the actions of one shape the space of action of the other. Their aim is to lay bare the dynamics between them, not within them, so internal divisions quite naturally fall out of focus. Then, the risk is that the opposing sides appear as overly homogenous and monolithic. We wonder whether it is possible to develop a theory that not only focuses on the moral dimension of activism but is also capable of grasping internal differences regarding morality while not denying that the core dividing line runs between the two entities.

[2] Another possible objection to the literature is that it might not always be possible to clearly tell SM and CM apart. This may, for instance, be the case with the movements concerned with COVID-19 and policy responses in various countries. One movement is critical to governments' restrictions and demands for vaccinations, while another movement instead is in support of the same policies. Thanks to one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing this out.

Below, we move toward developing an analytical framework that can respond to these two concerns, but first we need to introduce anti-feminism and specify how we conceive of "our" actors as moral.

Anti-Feminists as Moral Actors

There is currently an upsurge in anti-feminist mobilizations in several regions of the world. Anti-feminism has a history that is about as old as feminism itself, but it has changed and evolved over time. Today, it is characteristic for anti-feminist activists to claim that they struggle against "gender ideology," which they see as a set of values held by a minority elite (Corredor, 2019). Another common claim is that feminism has gone "too far" in its demands, as it has assumedly taken over all of society's main institutions, silenced all opposition, and infiltrated the minds of decision-makers (Hennig, 2018; Korulczuk & Graff, 2018; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017a, 2017b).

Despite similarities, current anti-feminism comes in many different forms. "As is true of feminism, anti-feminism is a heterogeneous current, traversed by various ideologies, and present on several fronts" (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p. 22). In this chapter, we approach anti-feminism as a broad CM that responds to the emergence and advancement of the feminist SM. We agree with Alva Träbert (2017) that we should be cautious with the admittedly negative-sounding term anti-feminism in order not to delegitimize all kinds of critiques of feminism. [3] Therefore, it is necessary to be as specific as possible. In this chapter, we rely on Kenneth Clatterbaugh's definition in which anti-feminists deny at least one of the following statements that are widely accepted among feminists: (1) Existing social arrangements do not stem from God's will nor from some natural order; (2) these social arrangements favor men over women; and (3) we should take action to transform these social arrangements so that they become more equal (Clatterbaugh, 2007, p. 21–22). Below, it will become clear that different strands of anti-feminism put different emphasis on the three statements.

As we have seen, many authors see current anti-feminism as a conservative backlash in response to achievements by progressive social actors (Butler, 2019; Faludi, 1991; Hennig, 2018; Mansbridge & Shames, 2008). Many researchers explain anti-feminism and other backlash movements as reactions by dominant actors to threats to their status and power positions. Lipset and Raab (1978) described backlash politics as "the politics of despair." Such movements are motivated by status

[3] In line with Träbert's approach, we argue that it is reasonable to distinguish anti-feminism as a particular and illegitimate style of argumentation: it "does not engage with the diversity of feminist approaches, instead constructing a [homogenous] 'enemy' … It is conceptualized as omnipotent, as wielding political power in the shape of a 'femocracy'." This goes hand in hand with holding feminism responsible for social and legal structures, the creation of which it has not significantly impacted (Träbert, 2017, p. 274–275).

anxiety, and their efforts are aimed at protecting their members' power and values. In a similar vein, Joseph Gusfield (1963/1986) analyzed the American conflict over drinking habits at the turn of the last century. Alcohol drinking was established as a moral issue mainly because the dominant social groups used it to preserve, defend, and enhance their own status and prestige. In an epilogue written for the second edition, Gusfield refers to parallels with the conflict over abortion between pro-life and pro-choice movements as described by Kristin Luker (1984). Much like the symbolic crusade against alcohol, this political struggle is not only about the issue itself (abortion) but also about status and whose ways of life (concerning gender roles, parenting, etc.) that will dominate. Mansbridge and Shames (2008) understand current anti-feminism in a similar way. They argue that men as a group have become used to a position of dominance and come to see it as naturally theirs. Men interpret feminist progress as a threat to this expected position, and it triggers emotions that are the basis of activism. Thus, in these analyses, it is the loss of status and power that are the basic drivers, and moral motivations are not awarded much significance. The moral arguments that actors use to motivate their actions are seen as secondary, or as a kind of cover-up for their *real* motivations.

Our intention here is to take a somewhat different analytical route. We want to take the stated moral concerns of anti-feminist actors seriously and pay attention to them in their own right. They repeatedly provide strong moral arguments for their actions, and they often display moral outrage (see, e.g., David, 1984; Kalm & Meeuwisse, 2020; Salter, 2016). This quote is an example, taken from *Restoring the Natural Order*, which was written by a European-wide initiative that fights against the "sexual revolution" and all that it is considered to entail: "We have a narrow window of 10–20 years left. If we do not use this time window, then the Western civilization, due to having embraced a perverse ideology, may easily have destroyed itself" (cited in Datta, 2018, p. 11). The goals are very often expressed and justified morally, marking a clear boundary between good and bad and right and wrong. Of course, stated goals do not necessarily tell us all about an actor's motivations, which may be instrumental, social-psychological, moral, or any mix thereof. It is also possible that actors are not always fully aware of their own underlying drivers of action, and it is certainly likely that motivations differ between individuals within a broad movement, so that some are primarily morally motivated, whereas others are mainly engaged for instrumental motives and yet others for the collective energy boost that movement activity can entail (Collins, 2001, p. 30). In this regard, our CM is just like any other movement, and we cannot know activists' underlying motivations for certain. Therefore, our position is agnostic when it comes to "real" motivations, and we concentrate on the stated moral motivations. By approaching our study objects as moral actors, we also recognize them as possessing volitional and intellectual competences and as being capable of moral reflection (cf. Jakobsson & Lindblom, 2016). We want to stay clear of treating them in a derogatory manner, as irrational and merely victims of their emotions.

A Moral-Sociological Framework for Studying Countermovements

As Hitlin and Vaisey (2013) point out, recent sociology of morality shows that, in complex modern society, there is not *one* overarching morality to which everyone adheres, but different moralities that depend on, for example, religion, occupation, and generation, and that vary in content and are often in conflict. The moral codes that exist in a society vary greatly in the generality of application, from specific local and professional norms to widely shared abstract values for which recognition is universal or near universal (Turner & Stets, 2006). The coexistence of moralities at different levels has important implications for activism. Kerstin Jakobsson and Jonas Lindblom (2016) make a distinction between existing social norms and more abstract meta-values on what society should look like. For example, in many Western societies, meat-eating has long been a dominant social norm, but at the same time, there are overarching meta-values, such as harm avoidance and environmental protection, that animate activists and that, if interpreted in a particular way, clash with the practice of meat-eating. It is not straightforward how these abstract values should be understood in concrete circumstances, and activists are continuously involved in a reflexive process of interpreting them in their contexts.

With respect to SM-CM dynamics, this may lead us to question the perception that opposing movements necessarily espouse fundamentally different moral values. We may suspect that they accept the same meta-values but interpret them in different ways, which lead them to take very different political positions. We will now turn to Axel Honneth's theory of recognition in order to elaborate on these meta-level values.

Axel Honneth on Spheres of Recognition and Misrecognition

Writing from within the critical theory tradition, Honneth's ambition is to develop a normative framework that can be used to judge various kinds of social developments. A starting point is that the development toward capitalism and modernity was accompanied and enabled by a system of modern values that form a moral backbone for Western societies. These values are linked to new forms of personal identity, enabled by processes of modernization, that required different forms of recognition and could result in self-realization in previously unparalleled ways. To develop a positive relationship with self, the modern individual has to feel recognized in different spheres that each corresponds to such a meta-level value (Honneth, 1995; Hartmann & Honneth, 2006).

There are three main spheres of recognition: love, equality, and achievement. [4] Together, they "make up the socio-moral order of bourgeois–capitalist society" (Honneth, 2003, p. 149–150). *Love* captures a broad set of relationships: friendships, romantic partners, and parent-child relations, among others. Such relationships are noninstrumental and authentic, at least according to the ideal, and they attend to the person as a creature with emotional needs. These relationships need to balance a simultaneous need for symbiosis and autonomy for the person to develop a sound relationship with self. Love is described as distinct from the other spheres of recognition in that it did not appear with modernity but is more ahistorical in character (Honneth, 1995, p. 95–107). In modern capitalist societies, it fulfilled a particular role by providing "a utopian vanishing point" which "allowed members of society increasingly subject to economic pressures to preserve the vision of an emotional transcendence of day-to-day instrumentalism" (Hartmann & Honneth, 2006, p. 42).

Equality, on the other hand, is specific to modernity. Prior to modernity, a person's legal rights and obligations varied with their social standing. With modernity came a conception of universal legal equality, which disallowed privileges and exceptions and was to accrue to all individuals. When we recognize each other as equals, we consider each other as competent members of the political community. The precise meaning of equality is not static but has expanded over time, as political actors have referred to it to push for new rights (from civil to political and social as in Marshall's famous triptych), as well as new groups (women, ethnic minorities, etc.) (Honneth, 1995, p. 107–121).

Achievement also came about with modernity. Achievement is the basis of social esteem in the modern world. In pre-modern times, similar to one's legal standing, social esteem was tied to the status of one's group. Today, social standing and prestige are distributed on the basis of individual achievement, so this sphere is related to the principle of meritocracy. Unlike equality, recognition in the achievement sphere is directed "at the particular qualities that characterize people in their personal difference" (Honneth, 1995, p. 122). It includes not only achievements in the domain of work but also recognition of one's unique character, ways of life, etc. (Honneth, 1995, p. 121–130).

There are also three forms of misrecognition linked to the forms of recognition above. The first is physical abuse, such as rape, torture, or other forms of violence, directed toward bodily integrity. It exposes the individual to the will of the other and makes the world appear unsafe. It is the direct contrast to love and the most elementary form of misrecognition. The second form is to bereave someone of legal equality. When excluded from enjoying certain rights, a person is denied the status of an equal partner in social affairs, which leads to loss of self-respect. Finally, the third form of misrecognition is the denial of one's particular characteristics,

[4] Hartmann and Honneth later identified a fourth one: institutionalized individualism (2006, p. 43). In the list of spheres above, we only include the original three. Honneth labels the spheres slightly differently in his texts. We have chosen labels that are close to those in Hartmann and Honneth (2006).

achievements, or ways of life. This can include anything from insult to full social stigmatization, which socially disapproves of particular forms of self-realization and modes of being (Honneth, 1995, p. 132–134).

Misrecognition, Expectations, and Entitlements

SMs, and social struggles in general, are crucial for Honneth's theory. He argues that SM studies have overlooked the moral character of struggles while focusing too much on instrumental motives that are assumed to arise from objective inequalities: "The motives for rebellion, protest, and resistance have generally been transformed into categories of 'interest,' and these interests are supposed to emerge from the objective inequalities in the distribution of material opportunities without ever being linked, in any way, to the everyday web of moral feelings" (Honneth, 1995, p. 161).[5] Moral motives are entwined with instrumental motives in some cases and in other cases motivate collective struggles on their own (Honneth, 1995, 2003). Social struggles can help people overcome humiliation, convince them of their social worth, and shape a more positive relation to self (Honneth, 1995, p. 164). To Honneth, "the experience of a withdrawal of social recognition—of degradation and disrespect—must be at the center of a meaningful concept of socially caused suffering and injustice" (Honneth, 2003, p. 132). Importantly, to say that social struggles stem from perceived misrecognition does not imply that all such struggles are necessarily justified.[6]

As we have seen, Honneth hypothesizes that SMs are formed when the experience of misrecognition becomes politicized. When people realize that their private experiences of misrecognition are shared by many others, a collective movement can arise. The likelihood that it actually does so depends on a range of contextual features, such as the surrounding institutional and cultural context and the availability of means to turn passive emotions, such as shame, into active emotions, such as assertiveness, anger, and pride (Goodwin & Jasper, 2006; Honneth, 1995, p. 137–139, 164–166; Klandermans, 2015; Schieman, 2006).

Honneth talks consistently of the experience of misrecognition as an impetus for movement formation: "models of conflict that start from collective feelings of having been unjustly treated are those that trace the emergence and the course of social struggles back to moral experiences of social groups who face having legal or social

[5] However, one can note that after Honneth's, 1995 contribution, social movement scholars have increasingly begun to explore the cultural and emotional aspects of activism (see, e.g., Goodwin et al., 2001; Flam & King, 2005; Jasper, 2011; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). But as the introduction of this volume demonstrates, the *moral* aspect has not been the center of much research attention.

[6] Some movements fight with violent means or for purposes that most people think questionable. There is literature that seeks criteria for judging between legitimate and illegitimate struggles for recognition (Alexander & Lara, 1996).

recognition withheld from them" (Honneth, 1995, p. 165). We are then faced with "the analysis of a struggle over the intersubjective conditions for personal integrity" (Honneth, 1995, p. 165). The reason that people experience it this way is that we have come to expect to be treated in a manner consistent with love, equality, and achievement. Thus, Honneth's theory differs from, and adds to, those that see movements as resulting mechanically from objective material inequalities (Honneth, 1995, p. 166–167).

But what is the more precise relationship between objective inequalities and experiences of misrecognition? We think that *sense of entitlement* gives us additional guidance here. This concept originates from social justice theory and refers to "beliefs or feelings about having rights to something based on what is understood as fair and equitable" (Brandth & Kvande, 2019, p. 1157). It reflects subjective but socially structured perceptions and values. Some people and groups may feel that they are entitled to less than others. As many studies—and biographies and fictional novels—have shown, those that suffer the most from all kinds of misrecognition tend *not* to take action: "One of the most robust findings of research is that the objective conditions of peoples' lives often bear only minimal relation to their subjective satisfaction with those conditions" (Major, 1994, p. 293; McNay, 2012). Disadvantaged people often come to believe that their lot is all they deserve in life. On the other hand, other people and groups may have an inadequately excessive feeling of entitlement (Major, 1994; Fisk, 2010).This has among others been said about (some) men:

> When one knows what a capacity feels like, knows one can have it, and accustoms oneself to it, one begins to naturalize its existence and comes to think of it as a right … In such circumstances, a loss of these capacities causes outrage along with mere pain. For many experiencing such loss and rage, an immediate reaction may be an attempt to regain the lost power as capacity, through the use of coercive power if necessary (Mansbridge & Shames, 2008, p. 627).

We suggest that the reason that some objective deprivations, but not others, are felt as experiences of misrecognition, which may become the basis of a movement, varies with the intervening variable of whether the suffering group has a sense of entitlement, alternatively develop it in the process of mobilization.

The way we approach the moral dimension of movement-countermovement dynamics is through the moral formulations of claims. The spheres of recognition presented above form the basis of legitimate claims in Western society, and claims of misrecognition may appear as legitimate if they can be understood in relation to any of the spheres. Thus, the three spheres are not only used for understanding psychological needs for recognition in modernity but also to grasp a higher-order moral societal structure (Basaure, 2011).

The main aspect that we will be attentive to in our study of moral claims made by anti-feminists is their interpretation of meta-values. The meta-values often find institutional expression in various laws and institutions in society, but each of them has a "normative surplus," which means that they cannot be defined once and for all (Hartmann & Honneth, 2006, p. 42; cf. Honneth, 2003, p. 151). The meta-values are open to interpretation, and this is what activists are often engaged in, as they

interpret general moral values (e.g., equality) within a particular context and push their understanding of each value forward (Honneth, 2003, p. 152; Jakobsson & Lindblom, 2016).

Both Honneth (1995, 2003) and Jakobsson and Lindblom (2016) have mainly written about progressive movements whose interpretation of the meta-values is expansive. This focus has also marked SM scholarship overall (Bob, 2012; Blee, 2017; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996, 2008). However, we argue that the normative surplus also allows conservative activists to push for interpretations that preserve the status quo, and it allows reactionary activists to argue for contractive interpretations, often by recourse to a mythical historical past (Lilla, 2016). In the analysis below, we focus on whether actors formulate the moral claims in expansionary or contractionary ways. Then, what are the benchmarks against which one can make such normative evaluations? Honneth (2003) proposes two criteria: *individualization* (when new aspects of the individual are recognized) and *inclusion* (when more people and groups are recognized). He concludes that "only demands that potentially contribute to the expansion of social relations of recognition can be considered normatively grounded" (Honneth, 2003, p. 187). In this text, we use the concepts as tools to analyze CM claims in relation to the three spheres of recognition.

Feminist Social Movements' Moral Claims

What are feminism's interpretations of the meta-values that the anti-feminists react to? This is a complicated question, not least of all because of the coexistence of different strands of feminism (see Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; Lorber, 2005). We can only treat it here in a cursory manner.

Feminism is usually described as a movement in three waves that have clear connections to Honneth's three spheres of recognition and misrecognition: love, equality, and achievement. The first wave of feminism, at the turn of the last century, fought for legal equality—the right to be recognized as a legal equal entitled to inherit, to vote, and to stand for election. These demands were progressive in the sense of inclusiveness. At the time, they were met by harsh opposition on part of patriarchal society and its institutions. In the 1960s and 1970s, the second wave of feminists were fighting for having their household work recognized as real work, which introduced the principle of equality into the sphere of achievement. They also fought for equality in wages and workplace conditions overall. Under the motto "the personal is political," they further struggled for criminalizing violence and rape within the family and for gaining control of their own bodies through the right to contraceptives and abortion. As we will see, there are groups of anti-feminists who question these demands for recognition from women. The third wave of feminism, from the 1990s onward, continues the struggles of the previous generations but has also added new issues, including the recognition of fluid gender and sexual identities, LGBT rights including gender correction surgery, the right to assisted

conception and adoption for singles and LGBT couples, and the recognition of intersectional oppression of women of sexual and ethnic minorities (Snyder, 2008). To a large degree, the claims of the third generation stem from the new and non-essentialist understanding of sexual identity to which gender theory of latter decades called attention. These moral claims have been met with particularly strong opposition from several different groups of anti-feminists.

In the two last waves, we have seen an expansion of the interpretation of the meta-values in the sense of both individualization (recognizing more aspects of individuals, as is clear in the expanded notions of sexual and gender identities) and inclusion (more groups of people included in existing forms of recognition). However, we can also note a shifting of boundaries between the spheres in an expansionary manner (Honneth, 2003, p. 186–188). The principle of equality has entered into the private sphere of love and intimate relations, as women have claimed equal standing in law, in the household, in the labor market, and elsewhere (Waring, 1989). Moreover, the principle associated with "love" has also entered the third sphere. Although called "achievement," it is not only about meritocracy and professional esteem but also about the much more general need to be recognized as a unique person with a particular way of life. Now, people claim recognition for many different ways of leading their lives in a plurality of family and private sphere constellations, relating to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Moral Claims by Different Strands of Anti-Feminism

Below, we address some of the main strands of anti-feminism in the USA and Europe (Messner, 1997) using our Honneth-inspired framework for CM analysis. The anti-feminist mobilizations that we engage with have been selected to illustrate variety.

Anti-Feminism within the Christian Right Movement

One strand of anti-feminism is found within conservative Christian organizations with growing political influence in several countries (Graff & Korolczuk, 2021; Kováts & Põim, 2015; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017a, 2017b; Köttig et al., 2017; Youngs, 2018), in large part due to transnational networking (Bob, 2012; Datta, 2018; Trimble, 2014). This form of anti-feminism refers to the authority of God, "the natural order," or tradition (Kalm & Meeuwisse, 2020; Trimble, 2014), and challenges or reinterprets the liberal interpretation of all main meta-values that Honneth (2003) argues make up the socio-moral order of modern Western societies. It fights against "gender ideology" (Hennig, 2018; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017a, 2017b) or the "cultural revolution," which is claimed to have led to social and moral decay. Some of the manifestations are elitist networks of political advocates with

support from the Vatican and various other conservative sponsors (Buss & Herman, 2003; Datta, 2018). Others are mass protest movements that take to the streets in, for example, France and Spain (Kováts & Põim, 2015).

Here, we let the International Organization for the Family and its annual event, the World Congress of Families (WCF; which we attended in 2019, and which tens of thousands of feminists from several countries demonstrated against), serve as an example of moral claims within this movement. The WCF is an international gathering of conservative and religious NGOs, politicians, and scholars who work together on "pro-family" issues against the alleged "global liberal agenda" that promotes abortion and birth control, female emancipation, gender theory, and sex education in schools (Buss & Herman, 2003; Kalm & Meeuwisse, 2020; Trimble, 2014). WCF events have taken place in different countries since 1997, with key sponsors from the US Evangelical, Catholic, and Mormon right and with support from a growing list of political allies in different parts of the world, including Europe.

The Congress's core values fit well with Clatterbaugh's (2007) definition of anti-feminism, and all three feminist claims are more or less explicitly denied. The rhetoric is based on a mix of religious doctrine and science. As Buss and Herman (2003) point out, the Christian Right has developed a powerful counter-discourse in response to the perceived ideological success of feminism. At the WCF, this was clear in the contractionary use of the discourse of human rights, which pertain to the sphere of equality. While feminists have pushed for an expansionary interpretation of this meta-value, the WCF delegates gave it a very different meaning. For example, the rights of the child and of women were reinterpreted to the right to "have a mother and a father," respectively, the right to "have valid and accessible alternatives to abortion" (see the Verona Declaration, adopted 31 March 2019). [7]

"The natural family" is a central concept in the WCF counter-discourse. The concept refers to the only form of family accepted by the Christian Right, which is considered to be seriously threatened by feminists. "The natural family" is a particular form of family that consists of a mother, father, and biological children, and it is built on moral principles, such as heterosexuality and lifelong marriage. That this is the only acceptable family constellation is motivated either religiously or by archaeological findings that are claimed to show that people have always lived this way. This conceptualization allows for policy positions against, for example, gay marriages and LGBT adoptions, but "natural" also signals resistance to all forms of reproductive interventions, such as the use of contraceptives, abortions, and assisted conceptions.

Using the terms of our framework, one could understand these moral claims as being contractionary in terms of both individualization (as people are disallowed from recognition for new, sexual aspects of their individuality) and inclusion (fewer groups of people are recognized). Therefore, it is clear that the WCF activists also pursue a restricted understanding of "love" and the private sphere, as they strive to push back many of the achievements of the feminist movement. However, the

[7] http://www.profam.org/verona-declaration-adopted-at-wcf-xiii-on-31-march-2019/

demand for the embryo's right to life could also be perceived as a demand for an *expansion* of social relations of recognition, which is how activists interpret it themselves. Many feminists, at least since the second wave onward, consider the availability of legal abortions a necessary condition for women's freedom and equal standing. But the Christian Right's interpretation is that abortion amounts to murder of living beings and, thus, a severe form of misrecognition.

According to the WCF, "the natural family" is under serious threat, and the "sexual revolution" of the 1970s (i.e., the second wave of feminism) contributed much to the societal degradation, alienation, and "excessive individualism" that has followed. The main form of misrecognition that the WCF activists claim to experience is devaluation of their particular (and traditional) way of life. "Gender ideology" and people motivated by it are harshly criticized (Kalm & Meeuwisse, 2020). Gender theory is attributed to destroying the family and society at large by questioning the fundamental truth that there are two, and only two, genders that relate to each other as complements. Furthermore, by recognizing most sexual behavior between consenting adults, gender theory is assumed to encourage socially and morally destructive and perverse behaviors. For the WCF supporters, prohibiting sexual education in schools is imperative in order to avoid "gender indoctrination" of the young. The pro-family activists claim they are being persecuted by a global, gender-crazed establishment (e.g., as seen in the EU and the UN). Not least of all, the critique of gender ideology conveys a populist impression of the WCF (Hennig, 2018; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017a and b).

WCF activists claim that the family is the "fundamental unit of society" (Soutern Poverty Law Center, n.d.). This assertion is perhaps the most radical challenge to the modern meta-values that Honneth identified. The spheres of legal equality and achievement are both based on the individual as the central rights-bearer, in contrast to the premodern centrality of groups. For a very long time, women did not have the right to decide for themselves or their children, they could not initiate divorce, and there was no legal sanction of violence within the household, which is still the case in several countries. Earlier waves of feminism have pushed for legal equality in a way that recognizes women as being equal to men, and that has shifted the boundaries between the spheres. What the WCF suggests with the description of the family rather than the individual as the fundamental constituent of society is doubtlessly a contractive interpretation. What follows from it is, among other things, a rejection of regulations against household violence against women, such as the Istanbul Convention (Otto, 2019). In addition, regarding the significance of the mother's role in the family, there are differences between the familialist-religious and some of the masculinist approaches described below.

The Mythopoetic Men's Movement

Another strand of anti-feminism is the mythopoetic men's movement, which is a form of self-help inspired by the poet Robert Bly (1990). Translated to Honneth's spheres of recognition, the mythopoetic men's movement's moral claims primarily relate to the *achievement* sphere. The members of the movement find themselves misrecognized in modern society's alleged denial of the particular characteristics and ways of life of men and want to defend them in ways that most feminists would perceive as a reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity. They do believe that there is a natural order and want to take action to reinforce rather than challenge it (compare Clatterbaugh's definition, statement one and three). The movement was at its peak of attention in the 1990s but still exists today. The ManKind project organizes meetings and "New Warrior Training" in many different locations, including Sweden. [8] What is specific to this strand is that it relies to a large extent on rituals, including rites of initiation (from boy to man) and spiritual rituals that involve drumming and chanting with the aim of reclaiming a deep form of masculinity. These rituals are often performed within large gatherings in forests and other rural places (Messner, 1997, p. 17–23).

The mythopoetic men's movement is concerned with re-envisioning masculinity, helping men rediscover their "authentic" masculinity and to be more in touch with their feelings and emotions. According to Magnuson (2007), the attempt to create communities of men that are rooted in spiritual and emotional intimacy can be considered a challenge to dominant Western norms of competition, isolation, and self-control. To some extent, this implies a challenge of hegemonic masculinity, at least the part of it that says that men must be competitive, independent, and never show emotions. In contrast to this, the views of the mythopoetic men's movement may appear to be a morally redefined and expansionary interpretation of the achievement meta-value. However, upon closer inspection, the masculinity that men are trained to discover retains many of the features of hegemonic masculinity, and the movement reasserts essentialist notions in which men and women are depicted as opposites possessing complementary natures (Ferber, 2000). Feminists (e.g., Hagen, 1992) have questioned the movement's sole focus on the intrapsychic realm and criticized it for failing to acknowledge sociopolitical, economic, and ideological realities of privilege that accrue to hegemonic masculinity.

According to Kimmel and Kaufman (1993), p. 4), the mythopoetic men's movement can be summarized by four main themes: "essentialist assumptions about gender distinctions, a contemporary diagnosis of feminization of … manhood, the search for lost fathers (and father figures), and a vision of retrieval of heroic archetypes as models for men." The adherents often base their gender essentialist thinking on Jungian archetypes of femininity and masculinity. They argue that masculinity and male comradery have been severely damaged because of feminism and modern industrial society, through which men became distanced from their sons and

[8] https://www.maniphesto.com/post/mankind-project-review and https://mankindproject.org

overidentified with the world of women. Thus, the movement's goal is to regain the lost ideals of masculinity. It suggests that misery and destruction result when men and women try to deny their essential natures, and de-masculinization processes are seen as the root of many social problems in contemporary society (Ferber, 2000). All of society is said to be threatened when masculinity is lost, which is why it claims that restoration of the "natural" gender order is the key to solving pressing social ills.

Although the mythopoetic men's movement is more about personal development and empowerment than about political pressure in any particular direction, and although some researchers have pointed out that certain strands of feminism share its tendency to represent gender as binary (Gremillion, 2011), the mythopoetic men's movement has clear anti-feminist elements in some of its manifestations (Ferber, 2000; Kimmel & Kaufman, 1993). The movement's proponents argue that society must facilitate men achieving adult male status because misplaced "warrior energy" can have serious consequences, such as domestic violence and drug abuse, among others. Kimmel and Kaufman (1993) also point to a claim of victimhood and entitlement at the same time, which explains why these men who feel like boys want to retrieve their "inner king":

> Men's movement participants believe themselves entitled to … the power that comes from being a man, the power we might call patriarchy, or male privilege. They don't feel that power yet—but they want to, and they feel themselves entitled to it (Kimmel & Kaufman, 1993, p. 17).

Men's Rights Movement

A third strand of anti-feminism is the men's rights movement, which consists of various groups and individuals who focus on social issues and government services that they claim adversely impact or structurally discriminate against men and boys. The movement denies the second of Clatterbaugh's three feminist statements, that social arrangements favor men over women (Clatterbaugh, 2007). Some of them would also deny the third statement ("We should take action to transform these social arrangements so that they become more equal"), whereas others would agree on it as a principle but argue that it is men, not women, who are subordinated. Translated to Honneth's spheres, their moral claims primarily relate to the sphere of *equality*, where they experience misrecognition. They maintain that men are treated unfairly in society and that feminism has deprived them of the rights that they are entitled to as human beings and as fathers.

The men's rights movement includes both those who claim that men and women are harmed equally by sexism and those who argue that society is favoring women and degrading men. A common view is that it is men, rather than women, that currently suffer from discrimination, which is said to be proven by trends such as boys being less successful than girls in school, higher suicide rates among men, that they are more often sentenced to jail, and that male victims of domestic violence and

prostitution receive scant attention in society (Anderson, 2014). That men suffer and are victimized is seen as a result of feminism pushing its demands too far.

Within the men's rights movement, divorced fathers make up the most militant part of the movement in the USA and various European countries, and their legal claims center on men's equal right to parenthood (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012; Jordan, 2009; Vingelli, 2017). They claim that fathers are subjected to systematic discrimination as men and fathers in a system biased toward women and dominated by feminists. They demand the abolition of policies that are considered unjustly favoring women and aim to revise family law and the legal system in order to guarantee the rights of fathers. Their moral claims are directed at feminism's perceived attack on fatherhood through family law, and equality arguments are used to assert men's equal right to child custody, access, and support.

Divorced fathers are also said to be victims of psychological manipulation by women.

Many websites for divorced fathers' groups refer to "parental alienation syndrome," a controversial theory that describes a process through which a child becomes estranged from a parent as a result of the psychological manipulation of another parent. [9] Parental alienation is also asserted in courtrooms as a basis for awarding custody to a parent who alleges estrangement or to modify custody in favor of that parent (Johnston & Sullivan, 2020).

It is a bit difficult to judge whether the movement's interpretation of the meta-value equality is contractive or expansionary because the question of whether gender inequalities exist in the right to parenthood is, to a large extent, an empirical one and is likely to vary between locations. [10] The movement's moral claims are not expansionary in the terms of individualization, as it does not strive for more aspects of individuals to be recognized, nor does its moral claims seem to be expansionary in the sense of recognizing more groups. Rather, what is claimed is that feminism's problem formulation is misleading and unfair.

The Manosphere

As parts of the men's rights movement have become active online, [11] they partly overlap a fourth strand of anti-feminism: the manosphere. The manosphere is men's activism carried out on various Internet platforms. According to the dominant moral

[9] See, for example, *https://mensdivorce.com/recovering-parental-alienation/* and http://www.fathersrightsdallas.com/fathers-and-parent-alienation-syndrome/

[10] Feminists argue that the movement's push for formal equality seeks to stop challenges to established hierarchies of power by denying the existence of significant general inequalities between men and women (Vingelli, 2017).

[11] A popular men's rights site is A Voice for Men. It was founded in 2009 by Paul Elam, who has also articulated what he defines as a "Men's Rights Activist," see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdYAypmjO4s, accessed 12 February 2021.

argumentation, through feminism, women expose men to all three forms of misrecognition that Honneth (1995) addresses (physical abuse, bereavement of legal equality, denial of achievements, and particular ways of life). The claims are filtered through a sense of entitlement. Men are denied their right to women's bodies, their legal right to traditional men's roles, and their right to respect when they express their true masculinity. The manosphere spreads misogynist ideas associated with the far-right and the alt-right, arguing that (white) men are under attack from feminism, leftism, and political correctness (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019; Lewis, 2019; Nagle, 2017). It is not an ideologically homogenous bloc; it contains contradictory masculine formulations, and the severity of anti-feminism expressed within different communities varies (Ging, 2019), but their common goal is to defeat feminism. The dominating strand surely fits Clatterbaugh's all three criteria for anti-feminism.

Gotell and Dutton (2016) argue that men's right activism has changed to focus more on shifting attitudes among young men through cyberactivism than by influencing law, and it has become less "familial" and more directed toward sexual politics. Feminists are accused of exaggerating women's victimization while disregarding the sexual violence experienced by men. False allegations of rape are said to be widespread, and the feminist concept "rape culture" has allegedly produced a moral panic that stigmatizes innocent young men while women are absolved from taking responsibility to prevent sexual assaults (Gotell & Dutton, 2016).

The manosphere has its own jargon that clearly expresses the philosophy of the movement and its status order. A common idea is that men have been deluded by feminists' world view and that this must be revealed to them (i.e., "red pill philosophy"). A major aim is to uncover the true nature of feminism as repressive and to help men reclaim their rightful place in society (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019). A so-called red piller has reached this realization, while a "blue piller" is still misled. The manosphere is very concerned with issues of social stratification and provides advice on sexual strategies for male "self-improvement." At the top of the status is the (strong, virile) "alpha male," whereas the (weak) "beta male" has lower status and is associated with femininity and feminism. Men at the bottom of sociosexual hierarchies are sometimes referred to as "omega males," or as "truecels" in the Incel community.

The Incel (abbreviation of involuntary celibacy) community is made up of frustrated men that have not been able to find a romantic or sexual partner despite wishing for one, a fact that they blame on feminism. They share a sense of entitlement to sex and perceive themselves as being discriminated against by women. Kimmel (2017) calls this emotional framework "aggrieved entitlement," a feeling of unfair deprivation of what these men consider to be their privilege. Incels became infamous due to its participants, on several occasions, stepping out of the digital universe to commit acts of real-world violence, and even murders. [12]

[12] Alek Minassian, who killed 10 and injured 16 in Toronto in 2018, is probably the most well-known.

The manosphere obviously cultivates an aggressive form of anti-feminism that combines ideas of power and hegemonic masculinity with ideas about male oppression (O'Malley et al., 2020). [13] Their moral claims involve a reversal of modern notions of gender equality and group welfare:

> These efforts are a backlash to more gender-neutral state policies … with Red Pill men seeking not only to reclaim traditional masculinity, but also to transform modern understandings of gender to suit their own needs. The achievement of alpha status thus reflects one's complete embodiment of neo-liberal masculine norms, with personal fulfillment being far more valuable than group welfare (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019, p. 601).

These aspirations undoubtedly involve contractive interpretations of the meta-values that Honneth (2003) argues make up the socio-moral order of modern Western societies.

Conclusion

This chapter attempted to address two weaknesses in CM theory. One shortcoming is that the theory mainly pays attention to the instrumental and strategic interaction of CMs in relation to SMs, overlooking activists' moral motivations, which may be just as important for CM mobilization. The second weakness is that CM theory tends to treat movements as homogeneous entities without paying attention to moral divisions and tensions within them. This approach runs the risk of producing a simplified and distorted analysis of what characterizes a CM and what motivates its various strands.

We argue that Axel Honneth's theory of recognition as the basis for moral struggles can be used to develop a theoretical framework that enables a more complex analysis of CMs, one that allows us to grasp the moral dimensions of the SM and CM's struggles and to identify differences within the movements. Part of our contribution is to demonstrate the framework's usefulness not only for philosophical reasoning but also for concrete empirical research. Here, we have exemplified with the broad and differentiated anti-feminist movement. Honneth's three spheres of recognition and corresponding spheres of misrecognition are well-suited for analyzing moral claims raised by CMs. The spheres can be seen as meta-level values that make up the backbone of modern, Western societies. However, they are not fixed, but open to various interpretations. With this approach, it is possible to analyze CM actors' moral claims in relation to SM actors' societal values and norms, and whether and how different strands within a CM make different types of moral claims. The framework also allows us to examine moral claims-making in terms of expansive or contractive interpretations of the meta-values.

[13] A more peaceful internet phenomenon is the Swedish YouTuber who calls himself The Golden One. Often posing in Viking-inspired costumes, this extremely athletic man teaches his followers how to pull themselves together, to work out, and to better themselves in a tone reminiscent of Jordan Peterson (2018).

We demonstrate the usefulness of the elaborated theoretical framework by applying it to anti-feminism, which is usually considered a typical CM that has arisen in opposition to the feminist movement. The main contribution of this Honneth-inspired framework is that it theorizes the SM-CM dynamic differently from earlier work on feminism and anti-feminism. It allows us to interpret differences and similarities as the different and conflicting strands that spring from the same moral meta-order; what emerges is a picture of the interrelationship between feminism and anti-feminism that is more complex than the common designation of progressive versus reactionary movements. It is clear that the different strands of anti-feminism relate morally in partly different ways to feminism. They all react against what is understood as misrecognition of men as a result of (the second and third wave of) feminism, but the types of moral claims and their specific emphasis on them vary. For example, the mythopoetic men's movement asserts that feminism has delimited men's opportunities for personal self-realization (a denial of their particular characteristics) and stresses the importance of rediscovering "authentic" masculinity, whereas the men's right movement blames feminism for the bereavement of men's legal equality in family matters and fight for men's right to parenthood. Unlike feminism, none of the anti-feminist movements make expansive interpretations of the meta-values, and several also testify to a gendered sense of entitlement. However, the moral claims of the manosphere and the Christian pro-life movement are based on unambiguous objections to all core values of feminism, though from different moral positions, and represent particularly regressive interpretations of modern meta-values. With the theoretical approach that we suggest, one would most likely find moral differences and tensions also within other CMs.

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