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The Pub, the People, the Place, the Passions, and the Principles: The Social and Personal Context of Engagement in a Collective Action

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Thoughts and actions of boycott participants after a historic pub stopped selling a locally produced beer are explored and found to be motivated by a range of community concerns.



The Pub, the People, the Place, the Passions, and the Principles: The Social and Personal Context of Engagement in a Collective Action

Paul Sparks and Tom Farsides

Abstract

Towards the end of 2006 the owners of a small, historic public house withdrew from sale the locally produced beer that had been sold there for many years. Pub regulars instigated a boycott in an attempt to have the beer reinstated. Following a four-month widely supported boycott and considerable media coverage, the pub company owners returned the local beer to the pub. This paper reports on a selection of the experiences of some of those taking an active role in the boycott. Following intensive semi-structured interviews, we extracted a number of themes from participants' accounts. We identify potentially important factors in the "causal net," explaining their involvement in the boycott. Affective experience, collective interests, and deontological considerations [the obligation to do the right thing even if doing so could be personally damaging] emerge as important dimensions of people's discussion of their participation. The findings are discussed in relation to theoretical perspectives bearing on an understanding of action choices.

(I)t is very common to single out only one of the antecedents under the denomination of Cause, calling the others merely Conditions. ... The real Cause is the whole of these antecedents; and we have, philosophically speaking, no right to give the name of Cause to one of them exclusive of the others. ... If we do not, when aiming at accuracy, enumerate all

the conditions, it is only because some of them will in most cases be understood without being expressed, or because for the purpose in view they may without detriment be overlooked. (John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*)

Collective action spans the interests of a number of social science disciplines. Formal definitions of collective action from within social psychology sometimes reflect the discipline's focus on social groups: "A group member engages in collective action anytime that he or she is acting as a representative of the group, and the action is directed at improving the conditions of the entire group" (Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990, as cited in Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996, p. 19). Perspectives from sociology adopt a somewhat more heterogeneous focus, admitting "many types of collective action" (Oliver, 1993) with many using the term (following the work of Olson, 1965) to refer "to activities which produce collective or public goods, that is, goods with the nonexcludability property that their provision to some members of a group means that they cannot be withheld from others in the group" (Oliver, 1984, p. 602).

In this paper we address a small-scale collective action which took the form of a boycott of a small pub in a small market town in the south-east of England during 2006-07. The reasons for the boycott are explained below. Our concern in this paper is to describe some of the experiences of a sample of those actively engaged

in the campaign insofar as those experiences provide some potential insights into the motives for people's engagement with the action.

In the hills above Lewes in 1264, the forces of Simon de Montfort clashed with those of Henry III, his brother, and son (later Edward I). The details of the famous Battle of Lewes (see Mann, 1976) are not important here but the direct link between these events and the setting up of the first national Parliament in 1265 is seen as the "major contribution that Lewes has made to the history of democracy" (Poole, 2000, p. 6). Many people consider that another Lewesian contribution to the public good flows from its one remaining brewery, Harvey's. Harvey's beers have been sold in Lewes since the establishment of the brewery in 1790, including in pubs owned by other breweries. One of these pubs is the Lewes Arms (LA) bought by Greene King from Beard's (formerly a Lewes brewery) in 1998; however, in 2006, the decision was made by Greene King PLC to remove the sale of Harvey's Best Bitter beer from the pub. The Lewes Arms is a Grade II [a designation by the government for important buildings of special interest] building in the heart of the town, adjacent to the building that was formerly Beard's brewery. Harvey's is now the only remaining brewery in a town known to once possess "seven churches, seven breweries, and seventy inns"¹ (Davey, 2006, p. 5) and is hugely popular locally. Over the years, Greene King had removed Harvey's beer from other local public houses, including some in Lewes, and a massive effigy of Greene King had been paraded and burned at the local annual bonfire celebrations in 2003 largely as a response to this. The threat of the impending removal of Harvey's beer was known to the regulars of the Lewes Arms in advance and opposition was extensive and swiftly organized. A petition calling on the pub company owners to retain Harvey's beer/bitter was available for signature in the pub itself (it was eventually signed by over 1,200 people), and an initial meeting was convened (in the Lewes Arms) in early October 2006 to discuss possible responses to any removal of Harvey's bitter from the pub. The local Member of Parliament signed the petition and became involved in discussions with the pub owners in an attempt to resolve the dispute². On December 19, Harvey's best bitter was withdrawn from the Lewes Arms and a boycott

of the pub was initiated. A "Friends of the Lewes Arms" (FOLA) group emerged in support of the boycott and of "restoration" of Harvey's to the pub, vigils were organized, a website was set up, media attention developed, informal meetings of FOLA took place, badges, car stickers, and banners were produced, an "Exiles Music Night" was arranged, and – most (in)visibly³ – the local population largely avoided the pub (rumours spread that bar takings were severely damaged) as the boycott remained largely solid. After a very quiet winter for the pub (a "winter of discontent" for the boycotters), on April 20, 2007, the pub company owners announced that Harvey's would be restored to the Lewes Arms beginning the following week, expressing the view in a press release that it had "underestimated the depth of feeling and level of reaction about our initial decision."

The decision by Greene King to restore Harvey's Bitter to the Lewes Arms was widely seen as a local victory. There were great celebrations at the pub that weekend⁴ and of course the boycott was over. *The Independent* newspaper ran with the headline "Drinkers win battle of Lewes: a boycott by the locals brought a major brewery to its knees,"⁵ and many involved with the campaign were unambiguous about the importance of the events that had occurred. The restoration of Harvey's to the Lewes Arms was seen variously as a great collective effort, a prime example of an effective consumer boycott, an instantiation of the local defiant view that "we won't be druv," a victory for those campaigning for local produce, a blow against corporate greed, and an affirmation of the importance of preserving communities, historic local pubs, and hugely popular local traditional beer.

In the series of interviews for this study, we describe the accounts and experiences of some of the people closely involved in the boycott campaign. The purpose of the interviews was both to record the experiences of the campaign that people chose to mention and to explore particular themes of social psychological significance (such

¹Davey actually notes nine breweries.

²The MP's constituency office was located roughly midway between the pub and the Harvey's brewery.

³Thanks to participant #9 for this "observation."

⁴The beer had been delivered and was ready to drink (and was drunk) on Thursday, April 26, 2007.

⁵*The Independent*, April 22, 2007.

as participants' motives for involvement and their perceptions of the campaign's outcomes). In this paper, we provide an account of some themes relating to background factors and motives that were highlighted by participants during the interviews. In all cases, we construe these themes as embodying potentially important motives for involvement in this campaign or as referencing distal parts of the causal network (van Fraassen, 1980) influencing people's motives. In taking this approach, we take a cue from Mill (see above quote) in making no clear distinction between "causes" and "antecedent conditions" in the explanation of action. Moreover, we also find it useful to draw upon the ideas of Giddens (1982) about the "unacknowledged conditions of action" as important features of the causal network of action.

Method

Participants. Twenty-one people who were actively engaged in one way or another in the LA campaign were invited to take part in the research. Participants' involvement in the campaign was indicated by information provided by the Chairperson of the "Friends of the Lewes Arms" group. Nine (four females, five males) agreed to take part within the required time-frame, and it is their accounts that form the data for the present study. Data were collected during July and August 2007. Given the small number of participants in the study and their high distinctiveness within a small community, all identifying information (other than participant numbers indicated in parenthesis) has been removed from the interview excerpts to promote anonymity.

Interview schedule. A semistructured interview schedule was set up: This schedule centered around the themes of participants' experiences of the boycott, their motives for taking part, and their views on the outcomes of the campaign. Individual interviews were arranged at a place most appropriate for participants and at a time that was mutually convenient to participant and interviewer. Usually this was in the participant's home. Interviews lasted between 62 minutes and 200 minutes ($M=132$ minutes).

Results

Recordings of the interviews were listened to on multiple occasions by both authors before the

recordings were fully transcribed. Broad topics of interest that arose from the interviews and from the subsequent discussions between the researchers were considered and debated as the interviews were listened to (and read) repeatedly and carefully. The findings reported here relate to extracted material that addresses the motives that played a role in participants' decisions to take part in the campaign. Some of these motives are interpreted as such because they are made in direct response to questions about reasons for getting involved in the campaign, and/or they reflect statements prefaced with direct statements about causes or reasons behind their participation in the boycott. Some of the statements are made in the absence of direct reference to motives, goals, causes, or reasons; however, since the authors identify these statements as encapsulating objects of value for the participants, they are judged as likely to have played a role in the structure of motives that underpinned their engagement with the campaign.

The interrelated themes identified are presented below. Subsequently, reflections on the relationship between these themes and various theoretical frameworks familiar to social psychological perspectives (although these frameworks did not direct the conduct of the research in any structured way) are offered.

The Pub

"I like going in" (#9). Descriptions of the pub were, perhaps unsurprisingly, uniformly positive. The pub itself was described in glowing terms: "a fantastic pub" (#1), "a quintessential pub" (#4), as "quintessentially Lewes" (#4), as "having a certain spirit here not found in other pubs" (#7), as an "important community facility" (#1), a "community hub" (#1), likened to one's own home (#8) or "a second sitting-room, where you sit around and natter about this and that" (#4). The Lewes Arms was described as being a "completely central part of my life" (#2), "a central part of everybody's lives" (#6). One participant suggested that "we're so lucky to have this place" (#2). Another participant described how they "really liked," this "perfect," "special" place (#2). Another, redolent of the view that the pub is the "primordial cell of British life" (Charles Booth, as quoted in Brown, 2003, p. 109), suggested "it's a f----- good pub. People like pubs. It's an important

part of the community. It's an important part of people's lives" (#8).

However, there was also an acknowledgement of the dangers of creating a false image of the pub. For one participant, while it is an "ideal pub" (#5) and "it's like pubs ought to be" (#5), the sentiment is also expressed that "it's not a paradise" (#5):

"(I)n fact a mythology had been built up amongst the LA that it was a complete paradise where everybody went in like that awful American Cheers. You know, where everyone knows you. It wasn't like that ... if you haven't got some sort of irritation, it's not a proper pub you can't have ... if it were too bucolic and glorious, it would be insufferable ... I don't go there for the whole 'Cheers' experience; I go there to see people I know and talk to my friends ... I don't want it to be the apple-cheeked matronly type behind the bar and everything to be all too perfect and wonderful because it would be (the) ghastly tourist faux version ... it's the fact that it can be dull, it can be grubby, it can be annoying" (#5).

Congruent with the simile of the home or sitting-room, the removal of the local beer was likened to "a burglary" by one participant (#8). Ostensibly, the campaign was about the restoration of the local beer to the pub: for some, restoration indicated the success of the campaign; for others, the restoration of Harvey's was a means to another end: "We want the right to drink Harvey's back ... but it [the declaration] *was* shorthand for what was important: We want the Harvey's back *in order* that we have everything else ... the Harvey's represented ... the package" (#5).

Indeed, a dominant feature of the interviews was understandably the wish to "get the pub back to what it was before ... The actual campaign wasn't just about the beer" (#1). The goal of saving the pub was one of saving "the community" (#5). At a broader level, however, there was also the view that the LA was "important beyond Lewes"

(#8) and that "good pubs are valuable and rare" (#2).

One participant commented upon the physical structure, calling it "an important building ... special ... precious" (#2), although another suggested that the pub was not particularly attractive when empty. However, the core feature of the pub seemed to be represented by its social, rather than its physical, fabric.

The People

"The pub was the people ... it wasn't the building ... it was the people in it" (#5). As a preliminary caveat to the categories that we are presenting, we should note that the identification of the pub with the people obviously makes for an uneasy separation of the two. Essential to the social role that the LA was seen as playing were the people who made use of the pub. At one level, a positive feature was the "variety of people ... people from all walks of life" (#1), even "huge variety of people" (#2), the "complete cross-section of people One of the best things about the pub ... the complete diversity ... it's truly one of those pubs, that's what makes it so special" (#8). Different groupings were likened by one participant to different "tribes" (#5). Another participant commented on the "disparate group of people who went in there ... you could always go in there and you could always meet someone that you knew" (#9). "It is a place where you can just walk in and just bump into somebody you know and just have a chat, even if you don't know them terribly well" (#4).

The ecosystem metaphor was used by some to describe the social structure of the pub. "Without Harvey's you don't get the Harvey's drinkers and without the Harvey's drinkers, you haven't got the pub's ecosystem" (#2). "If the beer goes, all the people go" (#3). "It was about the beer because a number of people who did say they would no longer frequent the pub if the beer wasn't there would have changed the dynamics of it all" (#1).

One participant recalled a busy occasion when he recognized everyone there he could see; on the other hand, he later commented how dismal the pub can be when you "don't know anyone" (#5). While it was clear this was a busy pub and not everyone there knew each other, among some there was a view that:

“... (T)he one thing about the Arms, the best thing about the Arms I always found, is you can go in there any time of day or night and there would always be someone to talk to. It might be that there’s just one other complete stranger that you’ve never met before, but if they are in the Arms ... they’d be worth talking to because they’d found their way into the Arms rather than any of the other pubs in Lewes, and you would also go into the Arms because you’d know you’d see your friends in there; you couldn’t guarantee that they’d be out that particular night but if they’re going to be out anywhere they’ll be in the Arms” (#8).

The Place

For some, the history of Lewes constituted an important element of the campaign. On the one hand, Lewes as a town was described as having a “strong community spirit” (#3), an “underculture of subversion” (#9), as well as a “history of dissent” (#3), a feature of the town that maps onto an important element of the history of the public house in England (Brown, 2003; Jennings, 2007). One participant suggested that “people were drawn to Lewes” (#3) by that dissenting spirit. Reference was also made to the history and camaraderie of the annual bonfire celebrations and to the town’s connection to the life of Tom Paine⁶. One participant suggested that “you can’t live in Lewes without having a sense of history” (#3). The campaign itself was also viewed as a means of “keeping Lewes as a nice place to live” (#7), as a means of preserving something personally and socially important (#9).

The Passions

The pub clearly elicited a great sense of

⁶Author of *The Rights of Man and Common Sense*, Tom Paine had lived and worked in the town between 1768 and 1774.

⁷Resonance with “activism does not revolve around considerations of perceived effectiveness but reflects a feeling of moral duty or responsibility to ‘stand up and be counted,’ to register a protest about injustice even if one cannot hope to bring about change, at least in the short term. Not to do so, would be contrary to an important aspect of self” (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996, p.173).

affection: One participant indicated “I love it very much” (#8), and another described how they “fell in love with the Lewes Arms” (#4) when they first came there. Perhaps as a consequence of the strong affection held for the pub, a number mentioned the strong emotions they felt when Harvey’s had been removed, or had been threatened to be removed, from the pub. One participant reported being “angry and annoyed” (#1) when the local beer was removed, another “angry” (#3), another “absolutely appalled” (#5), another “infuriated” (#9), another “furious” (#4), another’s “heart sank like a stone” (#2). More widespread emotions of people connected to the pub were mentioned: it was suggested that people were “passionate about Harvey’s” (#6), that the removal of Harvey’s was “a deeply felt thing” (#4), which “hit a lot of people’s deep emotions” (#2), and “so many people were pissed off about it” (#8). At the same time, there was also the suggestion that Greene King’s actions served as an “outlet for personal fury against the corporate world” (#5). Allied with the strong feelings aroused by the prospect of the removal of the local beer, and of the removal itself, was the feeling not only of the sense that “we had a very high moral ground ... built on a series of very good, carefully discussed, and worked-out arguments” (#3), but also of the “visceral sense of being right” (#4).

The Principles

There is a Sussex adage, “we won’t be druv,” that featured prominently in participants’ accounts. This saying underlines a certain mixture of autonomy, reactance, and bloody-mindedness (#2), a “resistance to being pushed around” (#2), a certain “stubbornness” and “independence” (#4), or more poetically explained by one participant as, “no bugger from outside tells us what to do” (#2) and encapsulated in the view that “this big corporation shouldn’t be allowed to dictate to us” (#4). The “we won’t be druv” adage seemed to be used as a rallying cry for the campaign, treated more literally by some and more rhetorically by others. Ironically perhaps, there was also some reference to some of the few non-observers of the boycott also employing the same aphorism in order to justify their unwillingness to comply with the boycott!

Other principles or rules found their way into participants’ accounts: “always fight” (#5),

“never give up, never ever give up ... you can do anything” (#9). One participant talked of their “conscience” (#8); another suggested that “we have to take responsibility” (#3). Another spoke of offering “moral support to others” and of explaining the action as something that “just had to be done” (#7), by another as “the right thing to do” (#3), another “because it’s what I do” (#5) and “didn’t think much about the outcome” (#5).

Some of the comments appear at first to reflect a non-utilitarian concern with the consequences of the campaign. One participant noted, “The thought of actually winning – I don’t know if anyone ever really thought about that. I don’t know. I don’t know. It just had to be done, I think” (#7). Another suggested:

“People would say, ‘You’re not going to win, you know.’ I suddenly thought, it never occurred to me that we would, and when we *did* win, I do remember saying I’d never actually been involved in a campaign before where we’d won ... it never occurs to me to do it to win, you just do it to fight ... it didn’t occur me to think about it ... it was only towards the end when we got all this mad press interest after the Guardian article, that it started really hotting up and I remember sitting there with [X] and thinking we might actually win: how alarming! (laughter) ... just that sense of I’m not going to lie down and just do nothing, I’m not going to accept this ... I like being an active thorn in people’s sides ... I didn’t really think much about the outcome, I just thought ‘this is what I do’”(#5)⁷.

The negative psychological consequences of inaction and the positive consequences of action were also apparent: “If we don’t do anything, we’ll feel terrible ... action makes you feel better” (#3). In terms of a broader impact, one participant observed that “Even if we didn’t win, they wouldn’t try it elsewhere” and the action would “damage Greene King” (#9).

Personal histories. It was apparent from some of the accounts that some participants had a

history of some kind of activism: “strike veterans” (#5), as one participant put it. This involvement was related to the environmental movement and to trade union activism. However, this was by no means a universal feature of people’s accounts; one participant described themselves as not very involved; one even described themselves as “not the sort of person who takes to the streets” (#1). One had been actively involved in previous campaigns and petitions organized by the regulars of the pub.

Greene King [Pub Owners]. “The Leopard never changes its spots” (#2). Unsurprisingly, the brewing company that owned the pub (Greene King) came in for lots of criticism. At one level, there was suspicion of their motives, dislike of their “arrogant attitude,” a feeling that they had a “moral responsibility” (#1) towards the communities within which they operate and within the pub itself: “It’s theirs to run but not theirs to smash up” (#2). At another level, there was a more angry criticism of what was seen as their hypocrisy for promoting local pubs while at the same time “they were about to wreck what was by anybody’s standards an ideal local social pub” (#3). For this last participant, this “gross hypocrisy ... was really one of the key things that drove the campaign all the way through” (#3). Another participant suggested, “GK were holding themselves out to be one thing and in fact behaving in another way. They were saying they were ... supportive of real ale, local pubs, and local people ... and they were actually behaving ... corporately in a way that was completely at variance with what they said” (#9). One described a campaign goal as bringing “GK to their knees” (#7); another described the company as “extraordinarily bloody irritating” (#9); another that they “loathe corporate bullying” and described the company as “scum awful” (#5); another described the company position as “corporate bollocks [nonsense] and demonstrable bull—” (#9).

Harvey’s. Despite the explicit *raison d’être* of the campaign to restore Harvey’s to the LA, the view that Harvey’s was “the one constant” (#5) at the LA, that the LA was “soaked” in Harvey’s, (#4) or, alternatively, “fueled” by Harvey’s (#2), there was a widespread view, as we have mentioned, that what would be lost if Harvey’s were removed from the LA was the Harvey’s drinkers. In fact, some participants were keen to point out that

they themselves were not Harvey's drinkers, but that if Harvey's were removed from the LA, a number of people for whom the beer was very important would abandon the pub and thus the social character of the pub would change. For one participant it was obvious "if you took the Harvey's out of there, you'd kill the pub" (#6).

Harvey's itself as a small brewery was commented upon as being an important feature of Lewes, the place: "Harvey's do a lot for Lewes"; "Harvey's are a big part of Lewes" (#6). And one participant likened drinking Harvey's to drinking holy water in Lourdes and described one long-term regular of the pub as "part man, part Harvey's" (#5).

Discussion

"If we stopped doing everything for which we do not know the reason, or for which we cannot prove a justification ... we would probably soon be dead" (Hayek, 1988, cited in Gigerenzer, 2007, p. 54). "Don't let us forget that the causes of human actions are usually immeasurably more complex than our subsequent explanations of them" (Dostoevsky, cited in McKenzie-Mohr & Smith, 1999, p. 19).

The passion for the pub (and all it entails) and the anger at the threats to its existence are dominant features in this handful of accounts of the experiences of those who were actively engaged in protesting about the removal of the local beer. Our overview offers some indication of people's reflections on their involvement in this local collective action [or their "rationalization of action" (Giddens, 1982)] and of the backdrop to their actions that they chose to mention. We do not doubt that part of these accounts may reflect participants' wishes to convey their experiences and that part may be motivated by more extrinsic goals (e.g., constructing a particular version of events that took place; cf. Drury & Stott, 2001). Nevertheless, we would hope that these accounts provide some indication of part of the explanation of this local collective action by highlighting some of the motives that are likely to have played an influential role. We have limited our interpretation of participants' comments and

have sought to avoid generalizations, although we have of necessity needed to be selective in the illustrative material that we have presented.

Because of both the nature of the structure of these interviews and of the incomplete insight that people may have into the full causal structure of their actions (cf. Giddens, 1982; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), we should point out that certain influential factors in participants' engagement may not be well represented in these accounts. For example, the roles of emotional/affective factors, of social influence processes, or of other social-contextual factors (e.g., group size, education levels, social networks [Oliver, 1984]) may be relatively underrepresented. We do not view this as a shortcoming of the research; rather, it is an inevitable yet interesting feature of such accounts that certain influential factors will be highlighted with others remaining unacknowledged (cf. Garfinkel, 1981; van Fraassen, 1980). The accounts elicited here are just that, and we would not wish to downplay the role of conscious or unconscious psychological influences or contextual factors that influenced people's actions but that are not represented here in these accounts. Nevertheless, the stories of this small group of participants demonstrate a number of motivational factors that are likely to have played a role in people's decisions to get involved, and stay involved, in this campaign. We make no attempt to judge the relative strength of these motivational factors or to assess the influence of any of their interactions. We would simply point out the diversity of potential explanatory factors: we are not attempting to provide a comprehensive account of the antecedent conditions of people's actions. It should also be borne in mind that these are just a handful of the views of some actively engaged in the campaign and that the pattern of motives of the hundreds who observed the boycott are likely to have been somewhat different.

This concern for the future of the pub and the people is marked by a strong sense of affection for the pub. Orwell's (1946) famous description of his ideal (albeit mythical pub) is not out of place with many descriptions of the "local" at the centre of this dispute and of the formulation of the goal of the boycott campaign to "get the atmosphere back" in the pub:

My favourite public house, The Moon

under Water, is only two minutes from a bus stop, but it is on a side street, and drunks and rowdies never seem to find their way there, even on Saturday nights. Its clientele, though fairly large, consists mostly of regulars who occupy the same chair every evening and go there for conversation as much as for the beer. If you are asked why you favour a particular public house, it would seem natural to put the beer first, but the thing that most appeals to me about The Moon under Water is ... its atmosphere.

In this paper we have stayed fairly close to the data in order to provide an illustration of the themes arising in participants' accounts of their involvement in this boycott. It would be possible to interpret or frame these in any number of ways that might be influenced by well-known theoretical ideas about social action. Motives, for example, might be interpreted in terms of an augmented theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Conner & Armitage, 1998) in which affective influences, identity-related motives or normative/moral judgements might be seen as operating alongside more utilitarian concerns with the likely outcomes of action. Similarly, and highly congruent with the above framework, the accounts might also be viewed from the different kinds of social action put forward by Weber (1947), which include orientations towards *zweckrationalität* (instrumental outcomes), *wertrationalität* (compliance with certain values), affective influences, and the influence of habit/tradition. Alternatively, and specifically from the literature on collective action, the findings might be interpreted in terms of *material, solidary* [in law, similar to group obligation] arising "from social relations with other participants" [p. 279]), and *purposive* (arising "from internalized norms and values" [p. 279]) incentives to action (Oliver, 1993). It would also be perfectly possible to compare the themes identified in our participants' accounts to broader theoretical ideas relating to, for example, collective identity (Polleta & Jasper, 2001), participation (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987), and affective processes (Snow & Oliver, 1995) in the literature on social movements, or to the literature on the psychology of cooperative

behavior (Tyler, 2008). While we have largely declined this opportunity in favor of a more descriptive perspective less likely to constrain ways of interpreting the data, we don't doubt that the construction of themes from these interviews was influenced both by our own partisan attitudes⁸ and the theoretical perspectives with which we are familiar.

A prominent feature of these interviews is that participants' stories seem to reflect less of a self-interested, consequentialist account of attitudes and actions than many economic and psychological theories would appear to propose. Given the possibility of alternative interpretations of what participants had to say, such accounts may of course be construed in terms of people's self-interest (cf. Fehr & Gintis, 2007), but perhaps not readily without losing the usefulness of a distinction between self-interest and other kinds of motive (Holmes, 1990; see also e.g., Singer, 1993). Parts of these accounts provide a hint of what James March has called a concern with "obligations" rather than "expectations," with "appropriateness" rather than "consequence," and with a "sanity of identity" rather than "rationality" (1994, p. 268). It is thus perhaps ironic in the face of views that might seem less than "rational" from the perspective of many psychologists and economists that one of the participants complained, with some apparent irritation and incredulity, about Greene King's apparent lack of rational judgment during the dispute: "If you are engaged in a conflict, you expect the other side to act rationally" (#9). Another participant complained about how some of the handful of those who did not observe the boycott "weren't susceptible to rational argument" (#4). The arguments for the effectiveness of irrationality (e.g. Frank, 1990) are not unfamiliar to decision theorists and it has perhaps been telling in terms of motivational theories and of great benefit to the Lewes community that its citizens have not turned out to be the "rational," self-interested, consumerist, *homo economicus* caricature portrayed in some academic research [a view recently described as a "biased" view of human nature "hitched to the wrong anchor" (Fehr & Gintis, 2007, p. 44)]. A lack of "rationality" in these

⁸As an axiological snippet, we might note that both authors are familiar with the ambience of the pub and the quality of the local beer.

interpretations should not be construed as an accusation of unintelligibility or disparagement; rather, it is an indication that people's motives are perhaps not that well represented in the kinds of narrow material self-interest, or in the calculation of "objective" costs and benefits (Oliver, 1994, p. 278), that is often portrayed as characteristic of economists' models of decision-making processes (cf. Marglin, 2008). The passion, the persistence, and belligerence⁹ of these activists and of the citizens of Lewes more generally, and the importance they attach to a sense of community seem to have served them well.

From participants' accounts, one gleans the idea that the pub was an important part of their lives and that important values and principles were at stake in their actions. At the same time, the boycott was seen in perspective. One participant described it as "struggle lite" and that "ultimately it was serious but also you know ... nobody's going to die" (#5). Another indicated that he used to "strike for pay, now I go out and strike for beer. How the mighty have fallen!" adding, "one of the most pleasant picket lines I've ever stood on" (#4). The campaign itself was marked by "general humour and banter [and] funny stories" (#1); it was "great fun ... if you've got a bunch of people whose main interest in life is being in a congenial boozier, it's not going to be a dreary campaign" (#5).

In light of the local legacy of Tom Paine, the recent 200th anniversary of his death¹⁰ and his role in the history of the U.S. Declaration of Independence (Keane, 1995) with its inclusion of a right to the pursuit of happiness, it is perhaps apposite to note Hirschman's (1998) inversion of this idea in his suggestion of the benefits of "the happiness of pursuit" – "the felicity of taking part in collective action" (p. 103). Participants, we suspect, would readily concur both with this sentiment and with the importance of "voice" (Hirschman, 1970), of trying to exert influence on an "objectionable state of affairs" (p. 30) via their participation in this collective activity.

We would hope that our account of people's

involvement with the vitality of their community might provide useful points of reference both for others who study civic engagement and for those who are directly engaged in pro-community actions. The dangers of over-generalizing empirical findings should, of course, always be heeded, but we would hope that the social context and motives discussed in this article provide some potential clues about how the quality of communities and community life might be promoted and enhanced.

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⁹Perhaps this is better (and/or more flatteringly) characterized as "strong reciprocity": "the behavioral disposition to cooperate conditionally on others' cooperation and to punish violations of cooperative norms even at a net cost to the punisher" (Fehr & Gintis, op. cit., p. 45).

¹⁰June 8th 1809.

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