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Resonance, Radicalism, and the Death Penalty:
A Framing Analysis of the Anti-Death Penalty Movement, 1965-2014

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Abstract

This study employs a longitudinal, quantitative content analysis to examine the evolution of the framing choices of the anti-death penalty movement over a period of five decades. In this time period, several major doctrinal shifts in the national legal landscape structured and restructured the discourse surrounding capital punishment. Although other scholars have studied death penalty framing, none have applied a systematic, empirical approach that centers the frames employed in the speech of movement participants. With additional consideration of the diversity of frames found among these movement participants, this project assesses: (1) what frames achieved dominance in anti-death penalty movement discourse during the early 1970s, at the height of the abolitionist movement; (2) how framing dominance shifted in response to later changes in discursive opportunities, as anchored in major court decisions; and (3) what frames were marginalized as other frames gained dominance, and what social impacts resulted from this marginalization. To answer these questions, this study analyzes the anti-death penalty frames employed in a representative sample of newspaper articles published in the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* from 1965 to 2014. The results demonstrate that the movement has shifted to rely increasingly on instrumental frames over moral frames, but that this shift may have been overstated in the movement literature. By discussing framing differences between movement factions, the relationship between movement framing and public opinion, and the role of the media in determining cultural resonance, this study yields further insight into a movement that has struggled to gain significant purchase in both popular discourse and policy debates.

Resonance, Radicalism, and the Death Penalty:

A Framing Analysis of the Anti-Death Penalty Movement, 1965-2014

Although the death penalty is a perennial subject for debate in both the policy and legal arenas, the anti-death penalty (ADP) movement in the United States has struggled to achieve widespread success. The subject of the death penalty implicates core normative questions, including most centrally whether the criminal justice system should pursue vengeance or mercy, punishment or rehabilitation, and death or life. Unsurprisingly, it provokes impassioned stances on both sides of this morally-charged issue. For ADP movement participants, the often-flawed legal procedures surrounding capital offenses, the demonstrated racial disparities in the death penalty's application, and the global and historical trends away from capital punishment have redoubled their shared belief in the moral imperative of abolition.

However, these criticisms have failed to result in broad social support for the movement's abolitionist or reformatory goals (Radelet & Borg, 2000). According to Gallup polling, support for the death penalty has ebbed and flowed over the last six decades, yet it has never ranged far from 60-70%. This suggests that whatever legal or policy successes the ADP movement has achieved may not have found much resonance with broader American culture. The ADP movement itself has cycled in strength over time (Haines, 1992), making it even more difficult to determine at any point whether abolition is imminent, impossible, or somewhere in between. For example, the movement appeared to reach its apex with the effective abolition granted by the 1972 Supreme Court ruling in *Furman v. Georgia*, only to confront reinstatement in 1976 with *Gregg v. Georgia* (Radelet & Borg, 2000). Recently, some predict that abolition is again imminent (Steiker & Steiker, 2016, p. 255), as evidenced by multiple abolitionist victories at the state level and a downturn in public support for capital punishment since the turn of the century. However, others still see critical flaws in the movement's strategies (e.g., Eren, 2015).

Empirically examining the ADP movement and its evolution over time helps to distill its strategic successes and shortcomings, providing useful information for both the ADP movement itself and other social movements attempting to address injustices. By focusing my analysis on the framing choices the ADP movement has made in its public discourse, I hope to provide a new perspective on the movement and its attempts to effect social change. Exploring this topic also contributes to current academic discourse on framing and social movements.

Accordingly, this project answers the following questions: after the Supreme Court's 1976 ruling in *Gregg v. Georgia* legally legitimized the death penalty, how did the anti-death penalty movement shift its framing? Specifically, what were the dominant frames used by anti-death penalty actors during the early 1970s, at the height of the abolitionist movement? How did frame dominance adapt to changes in discursive opportunities as anchored in significant legal doctrines, including the *Gregg* decision? And finally, what frames were marginalized as these dominant frames emerged, and what were the social impacts of this marginalization?

Framing and the ADP Movement

This review focuses on two bodies of literature central to my question. First, I explore the literature concerning framing and social movements, particularly those works focused on how movement strategically select and employ certain frames. This provides both the theoretical background for my examination of the ADP movement and the mode of analysis I modeled in my study. Second, I outline literature concerning ADP movement assessments. Specifically, I detail the intersection of these two discourses, which is the literature featuring framing analyses of the ADP movement, and locate my project within this intersection.

Framing and Social Movements

In the last thirty years, sociologists have developed a large body of literature devoted to applying the concept of framing to social movements, to the extent that framing is now considered central to understanding the nature and trajectory of social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 612). In the context of social movements, framing generally refers to “the conscious, strategic efforts of movement groups to fashion meaningful accounts of themselves and the issues at hand in order to motivate and legitimate their efforts” (McAdam, 1996, p. 339; see also Snow & Benford, 1988). A frame can therefore be understood as an “interpretive package” employed by a social movement to accomplish this meaning-making. Ferree (2003) complicated this definition somewhat by arguing that frames must be understood not only as strategically chosen interpretations, but as schemes negotiated and shaped by the interaction of hegemonic power structures with social movements; still, she agreed with the existing scholarship that framing analysis generally can illuminate a movement's core values, strategies, and potentially its odds of success.

One common category of frame is the injustice frame. Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina (1982) coined this term to refer to “an interpretation of what is happening that supports the conclusion that an authority system is violating the shared moral principles of the participants” (p.123). Applying Snow and Benford’s (1988) frame categorization, injustice frames are at once diagnostic, in that they attempt to convey the nature of the problem confronted by a social movement, and motivational, in that they attempt to inspire movement participants to mobilize. Through case studies, many authors have examined how social movements’ use of injustice frames have capitalized on this motivational dimension to trigger movement action against authorities perceived as unjust. For example, Taylor (2003) identified the use of injustice frames as a key contributor to the rapid growth and mobilization in the environmental justice movement. Injustice frames appear to gain extra motivational heft when based on legal concepts, drawing on the law both specifically as a source of framing language and more broadly as the institutional anchor that attracts support for the movement’s goals (Pedriana, 2006; Marshall, 2003). Pedriana (2006) went as far as to argue that law is a “master frame” that can hold deep motivational and persuasive power across movements and time periods.

While many scholars applied framing analysis to movements as monolithic rational actors (e.g., Eren, 2015; Taylor, 2000), others criticized this practice and instead recommended that sociologists study disputes over framing within social movements in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of those movements (Benford, 1997; Gamson & Meyer, 1996). In this view, movement factions must struggle over their preferred frames to define which interpretations are viewed as “real” or legitimate, and thus made salient to the broader population (Benford, 1997, p.417). Subsequent movement scholars have hence examined intra-movement contention over framing choices and its effects on movement success. Some concluded these differences motivated movement progress through healthy debate or assisted in the achievement of a broader range of goals by use of a broader range of frames (Pedriana, 2006; Anheier, Neidhardt, & Vortkamp, 1998; Haines, 1996). Others found the internal disputes led to the marginalization of certain views as others gained dominance, or detracted from the ability of movement organizations to coordinate their efforts, creating message disunity (Ferree, 2003; Smith, 2002). This split in opinion may result from the heterogeneous nature of social movements; the effect of frame disputes may vary from movement to movement.

Many scholars argued that the success of the use of a certain frame depends on the cultural resonance the frame achieves. The cultural resonance of a frame refers to the frame's "objective congruence with society's values and principles" (Ferree, 2003, p. 307; see also Snow & Benford, 1988). Intuitively, most authors argue that movements that employ culturally resonant frames will achieve more success because their frames more easily garner public sympathy (e.g., Berns, 2009; McCammon et al., 2007). For example, McCammon et al. (2007) suggested that the US women's jury movement drew on high-resonance equality frames to successfully persuade policymakers of the merits of their feminist goals. However, a critical minority contends that cultural resonance is not determinative of success, especially when success may be measured by dissent or challenging the status quo (Maney, Woehrle, & Coy, 2005; Ferree, 2003). In this view, persistently using radical frames can be strategic in the long term even if they fail to resonate in the short term, since radical ideas may gradually effect broad cultural changes and reshape societal discourse in a way that already resonant ideas could not.

Under the theory of political opportunity structures, which frames achieve cultural resonance may depend on the dominant political institutions of any given time. This theoretical framework suggests that movement actors' framing decisions and the success of the frames they employ depend on the opportunities that institutional structures – such as government policies, newsworthy events, or political figures – present (Gamson & Meyer, 1996). Koopmans and Statham (1999) introduced a modified version of this theory to address how these institutions structure discourse and language, which they termed "discursive opportunity structure theory." Extending their work, Ferree applied discursive opportunity structure theory to the American and German reproductive rights movements in her 2003 article, "Resonance and Radicalism: Feminist Framing in the Abortion Debates of the United States and Germany." Therein, Ferree defined discursive opportunity structures as "institutionally anchored ways of thinking that provide a gradient of relative political acceptability to specific packages of ideas" (p. 309). These structured discourses, which for Ferree included court decisions, legislated ideas, and constitutional principles, anchor or define which frames are acceptable and which are unacceptable to mainstream discourse, constricting the framing strategies available to movement participants.

In "Resonance and Radicalism," Ferree employed a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of newspaper interviews featuring movement actors to discern the dominant and

marginalized frames they employed. This approach was and remains atypical for the field. Snow et al.'s (2014) review of framing literature found that, among empirical investigations of social movement framing efforts conducted in six leading sociology journals from 2000 to 2011, only two used a quantitative method, or less than five percent of the articles surveyed. They recommended a greater focus on quantitative content analysis, in line with Ferree's method to "verify and build upon what we have learned from a rich body of qualitative scholarship" (p. 31-32). The same study also found that a majority of these empirical studies rely on movement publications or researcher interviews with activists (e.g., McCammon et al., 2007; Maney, Woehrle, & Coy, 2005; Anheier, Neidhardt, & Vortkamp, 1998), while a much smaller percentage studied media coverage (e.g., Berns, 2009; Haney & Greene, 2004; Haines, 1992). While Snow et al. cautioned that reliance on media publications can filter out certain discourses, thereby introducing selection bias into one's findings, Ferree's method intentionally made use of this filtering effect to identify mainstreaming and marginalizing trends. A frame regularly published in a major news publication has been by definition deemed acceptable for mainstream discourse, whereas those frames less prevalent in news publications have by definition been marginalized. Ferree's choice to survey only movement speech published by the media, as opposed to media coverage in general, further accounts for Snow et al.'s concerns over frame distortion by outside parties.

The Anti-Death Penalty (ADP) Movement

Perhaps reflecting the relatively small size of the movement itself, the body of literature analyzing the ADP movement is not extensive. Within this literature appear several different analytic modes. One subsection concerns itself with the ADP movement as it relates to other sociopolitical forces, including the Supreme Court (Steiker & Steiker, 2016), pro-death penalty activists (Radelet & Borg, 2000), and the mass media (Haney & Greene, 2004). While these externally-focused analyses provide insight into the movement's interactions and outcomes, they are limited in their ability to capture internal movement disputes or to assess the movement's strategic choices. Another subsection does evaluate the ADP movement's internal strategies, but does so from a political-legal perspective (e.g., McLaughlin, 2013; Kirchmeier, 2002). This literature does not engage in a sociological analysis of the ADP movement, but typically discusses the arguments of ADP groups and actors in terms of "rhetoric." While this analytic

tactic bears a resemblance to framing analyses in its emphasis on discursive choices, its insights are constrained by its narrow, movement-specific focus and corresponding lack of systemic perspective.

Apart from these genres, several works have applied the sociological concept of framing to the ADP movement. Foremost among these is Haines's 1996 book, *Against Capital Punishment: The Anti-Death Penalty Movement in America, 1972-1994*. After recounting the recent history of the ADP movement, Haines argued that the movement is split between abolitionists, who focus on organizing for policy changes, and litigators, who engage in the representation of those sentenced to death. Haines evaluated the prognostic aspects of the framing debates between the two factions, as each endorsed different solutions and strategies in the pursuit of their common goal. Subsequent framing analyses declined to emphasize this divide, instead choosing to assess the framing employed by the movement as a whole. The bulk of this analysis drew on media coverage to identify the changes in frames used in death penalty discourse, arguing that these changes had significant impacts on public opinion and policy (e.g., Berns, 2009; Baumgartner, De Boef, and Boydston, 2008; Dardis et al., 2008). A smaller subset of authors took an argumentative approach to advocate for the superiority of one framing strategy over others (e.g., Eren, 2016; Ryan, 2016; McLaughlin, 2013; Kirchmeier, 2002). I could not locate any framing analysis that systematically considered ADP movement speech; the sampled materials used in these studies either included the speech of non-movement actors or evaluated trends without any significant empirical rigor.

Despite these shortcomings, ADP framing studies present a compelling consensus view that the ADP movement has shifted away from the use of moral framing, which frames capital punishment as inherently immoral, and toward the use of pragmatic, utilitarian frames over the last fifty years. However, the literature diverges on the merits of this transition out of morality framing. Some scholars argued that the growing emphasis on cost, utility, and problems in the death penalty's application has resulted in increased public support and fewer executions (e.g., McLaughlin, 2013; Baumgartner, De Boef, & Boydston, 2008). This argument suggests that pragmatic frames hold more cultural resonance than the morality frames, making them more effective. Others contended that the corresponding de-emphasis of the immorality of capital punishment has limited the long-term potential of the ADP movement (e.g., Ryan, 2016; Eren, 2015; Kirchmeier, 2002). In this view, the ADP movement is sacrificing the future possibility of

achieving outright abolition in favor of making more moderate reforms. Separately, the literature also emphasized the growing use of the innocence frame, which highlights the risk of executing potentially innocent people (e.g., Eren, 2015; Sarat, 2005; Kirchmeier, 2002). This frame seems to somewhat stand apart from the others identified here, since the idea of innocence appeals both to a utilitarian and moral perspective. The centrality of DNA evidence in the innocence frame connects it to the popular idea of scientific certitude, providing it additional cultural resonance (Aronson & Cole, 2009).

Across this diversity of opinions, few authors engage in quantitative study of ADP movement framing. For example, Eren (2015) addressed a similar question to the one presented herein, but drew her conclusions about framing shifts from her personal, anecdotal experiences as a community organizer. Berns (2009) more systematically reviewed published documents concerning the death penalty, but applied a qualitative analysis to those documents in order to achieve a non-representative survey of the range of ideas represented. These approaches offer great insight into ADP movement discourse, but lack quantitative support for their conclusions about framing trends. Baumgartner, De Boef, and Boydstun's (2008) case study proves a notable exception in its use of quantitative content analysis, but they studied media coverage framing rather than frames that movement actors employed. By focusing on external perspectives, rather than the framing choices of movement participants, this study missed key insights about the movement's strategies and values.

Theoretical Statement

My project advances these literatures in two main ways. First, I use the insights and methods of existing social movement framing literature to structure my assessment. As previous framing scholars have gained evaluative insight into the strategies and successes of various social movements, I employ framing analysis to examine how the ADP movement's framing choices have shifted over the last fifty years, and whether a relationship can be established between these choices and broader sociopolitical conditions. At the outset of this study, I expected to find that movement groups and actors have utilized several injustice frames, with different frames competing for dominance over time. Specifically, I anticipated I would find that, in accordance with the prevailing view in the literature, the movement's framing shifted from moral-oriented to instrumental-oriented frames, in response to the changes in Supreme Court

doctrine on capital punishment and the resulting changes in the cultural resonance of particular frames.

I model my research design on Ferree's (2003) quantitative content analysis of published movement speech within abortion rights movements. As Ferree did, I consider major Supreme Court decisions as the main discursive opportunity structures that have grounded the ADP movement's strategic framing choices. Her approach enables me to center the movement's choices, and the tensions therein, in the context of each era's discursive hegemony. As a result, I similarly use the filtering function of mainstream media to identify which frames were granted access to the dominant discourse, and which were pushed aside. Before collecting my data, I hypothesized that, like Ferree, I would find that more radical frames have been marginalized in the frame dispute process as the discursive opportunity structures in the United States prioritized other legal arguments. In this case, the more radical frames are those that adopted moral reasoning in an absolute rejection of capital punishment.

Second, I build on ADP movement literature by addressing some of the shortcomings in the field as it stands. My work features empirical, quantitative analysis, an approach severely underrepresented in extant literature. These previous qualitative analyses did help to identify which frames I could expect to find in my sampled documents; for example, I observed whether my research supports the commonly-described moral-to-pragmatic framing shift. Furthermore, my analysis is limited to speech originating from actors within the ADP movement, thereby focusing on the movement itself rather than the larger public debate about the death penalty. Unlike many unitary ADP discourse analyses, I also attempt to capture disputes within the ADP movement by tracking several framing strategies over time and correlating them with their authors. My findings thus contribute to the ongoing debate over the effects of intra-movement framing conflicts. Haines (1996) most notably considered these conflicts within the ADP movement, but focused his analysis on prognostic frames. My project considers instead the diagnostic frames in use. At the outset, I expected to find that advocates adopt less radical frames than activists or sympathizers, due to the greater short-term stakes they face on behalf of their clients. My study also reaches temporally beyond Haines's work, which stretched only to the mid-1990s. This expanded timeframe is especially important given the movement's significant successes achieved since Haines concluded his analysis. Altogether, these methodological

differences enable my project to further our understanding of the ADP movement and its evolution over time.

Methodology

Research Strategy

I used quantitative, longitudinal content analysis modeled on the methodology Ferree (2003) employed in her study of how advocates, activists, and other actors framed the abortion debate in German and U.S. newspaper articles over a quarter-century. Specifically, I coded instances of published ADP movement speech in the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* for the frames they feature, spanning over half a century. This strategy allowed me to observe broad trends over time in the ADP movement's diagnostic framing of the death penalty and enabled comparison of different frames by their frequencies of publication. Despite its advantages, the use of content analysis risked potential coding errors due to the necessarily subjective inferences that the researcher must make to classify both implicit and explicit frame expressions. However, this method offered the most systematic approach to draw quantitative and longitudinal comparisons of framing. Content analysis also offered a useful method for studying the meanings signaled in a set of documents for which other, more interactive, research modes are not possible.

Unit of Analysis

My unit of analysis is the frame, focusing on the frames utilized by the ADP movement in the United States and the variation therein. My units of observation are publications, specifically newspaper articles.

Sample

My sample is drawn from newspaper articles published in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* from 1965 to 2014. Although these sources do not exhaust all sources of published movement speech, these two newspapers are highly visible publications, both in their respective regions and from a national perspective, and therefore capture a significant slice of mainstream discourse. In addition, both offer complete digitized archives on ProQuest spanning the study period, providing a stable and exhaustive source of data. From these archives and for the study period, I first constructed a population of articles, which either a) were written by an

ADP movement participant or b) featured the perspective of an ADP movement participant. I considered all speakers who affirmatively advanced an ADP position as movement participants, given that their willingness to have their views published in the newspaper provided a minimum threshold of engagement with the issue. Furthermore, I did not include articles featuring vague references to the views of death penalty opponents; rather, I selected only those articles that contained either a direct quote or a clear reference to a specific statement made by a movement participant. This filtering ensured that my data was limited to the explicit statements of movement participants, rather than external observers. Following this rationale, I also excluded the speech of politicians and judges, since they are better understood as targets of the ADP movement rather than movement participants, regardless of whether they personally oppose or support capital punishment.

To structure my archival review, I split the study period into five eras, as defined below. Within each of these eras, I then searched ProQuest for relevant articles using the string “death penalty OR capital punishment” to account for the main terms used to describe this issue. I also excluded documents classified as “Table of Contents” or “Advertisement” to focus my results on more substantive materials. Since this search yielded thousands of hits within each era, I opted to review a five-percent sample of the results, sorted by “Relevance” to ensure I would capture the most relevant discourse in my review. This step preserved a proportional distribution of document review across the separate eras. For each article I reviewed, I determined whether the article contained at least one instance of the desired speech and then saved those that did. In total, I reviewed 3,609 documents and generated a modified population of 1,085 documents, separated across the five eras.

From this population, I then selected a systematic random sample stratified by era, which aimed to yield a representative set of documents and allow me to generalize about the ADP movement as a whole. Specifically, I first sorted the population within a given era by publication date. Within that population, I then sampled articles at an interval that would yield at least thirty articles, distributed proportionally by publication date. Repeated across each of the five eras, this process yielded a final sample size of 154 documents. These documents consisted of a mix of news articles, features, editorials, columns, and published letters. The overall sample of articles somewhat favored the *Los Angeles Times* (n = 86) over the *New York Times* (n = 68), but the difference was distributed fairly evenly across eras. I assigned each document in the sample an

accession number and then coded for several identifying aspects, including the number assigned to the article by the ProQuest system, the article's title, the type of article, and the publication where the article was published. I also coded for multiple analytic variables as described below.

Variables

My central independent variable was the era during which a particular article was published. Because I intended to examine the relationship between discursive opportunity structures and the ADP movement's framing choices, I bounded these eras using Supreme Court decisions that I hypothesized would have had a significant effect on the ADP movement. The earliest era I defined, Era 1, was 1965 to 1975, the period leading up to and directly following *Furman v. Georgia* (1972), when abolitionism achieved its greatest national success. I defined the next era, Era 2, by *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976) and the immediately ensuing years, when the Supreme Court legitimized capital punishment and seemingly foreclosed direct legal challenges to the practice. In 1986, the Supreme Court ruled in *Ford v. Wainwright* that the mentally ill could not be executed. This defined the beginning of the next era, Era 3, in which some classes of defendants gained additional protections from capital punishment. Era 4 begins in 1993 with *Herrera v. Collins*, in which a petitioner was denied relief despite a claim of factual innocence, a case marking the growing salience of innocence as a death penalty issue. Finally, I defined the start of Era 5 with *Nelson v. Campbell* (2004), the first significant instance in which the Supreme Court entertained a challenge to the lethal injection protocol in a state. By comparing articles across eras, I hoped to observe what, if any, quantifiable differences in framing resulted from significant changes in the law and legal discourse. I also coded each article with its specific year of publication to allow an examination of more disaggregated trends.

To provide an additional point of analysis and to expand on Haines's (1996) discussion of ADP movement factions, I also coded for the speaker's role in the ADP movement. I coded for three main types of movement participants: *activists*, who affiliate with movement groups or otherwise deliberately engage in policy debates and legislative efforts toward reform or abolition; *advocates*, who litigate on behalf of the capital clients they represent; and *sympathizers*, who lack official affiliation with movement groups but affirmatively oppose the death penalty. These represent a modified version of Haines's categories that focus more on the nature of speakers' involvement in the movement, to acknowledge that different speaker types

often share the ultimate goal of abolition. I also encountered a few instances of speech from *directly-affected* persons, or those facing death sentences, and coded them separately due to their unique positionality within the movement; however, the relative scarcity of this identity made this data less informative as a point of analysis. For articles that featured multiple types of movement speakers, I coded the role of the speaker most prominently featured, as represented either by the author's emphasis or, if that was unclear, by which speaker was first introduced. This allowed me to observe whether any significant differences emerged among the frame employment of each group.

My dependent variable was the diagnostic frame or frames that movement participants employed within each article – operationally, the language used by movement participants to describe rationales for objecting to the death penalty. To establish a list of the relevant frames to which I assigned codes, I drew on two sources of information. First, I drew on the frames examined by previous studies of the ADP movement, expecting that they would be featured significantly in my sample, and used these to form an initial coding typology of frames. This typology included categorical objections to killing, the cost-ineffectiveness of the death penalty (especially in comparison to alternative forms of punishment), and the potential innocence of those sentenced to death. Second, I used the aforementioned initial review of the archives to verify that these anticipated frames were present, and to supplement this typology with other frames that I observed to be in common use. As a result of this process, I obtained a set of the most common frames that the ADP movement used.

As Appendix A depicts, I sorted these frames into categories, and then further classified the categories into two larger clusters, *instrumental* or *moral*. Instrumental frames refer to the group of frames that contain objections to the death penalty based on its effects, including problems with its procedures, applications, and material costs. Frames included in the moral cluster, by contrast, invoke both secular and religious concerns about the fundamental nature of capital punishment and its violation of humanity, dignity, or civilized values. While many of the frames implicate both moral and instrumental reasoning, I conceive the key difference to be the inherence of the moral objection, compared to the solvability of the instrumental objection. In other words, modifications in process or application could address the concerns in an instrumental frame, while a moral frame expresses an objection to a quality of capital punishment that is inseparable from the practice.

For each article, I coded both the primary frame the movement participant used, as well as other frames present within their discourse. For example, a speaker could emphasize their moral objection to the death penalty most strongly, but also mention the high costs and lack of deterrence associated with the punishment. In this case, I would code the primary frame as “immoral,” and the frames present as “immoral,” “expensive,” and “no policy purpose.” In articles featuring the speech of more than one movement participant, I attributed the primary frame to the most prominent speaker, as defined above, and then recorded all frames used by any movement participants in the article. To assist in answering my sub-questions regarding framing dominance and marginalization, I consider those frames published more frequently as the dominant frames of the era, and those published infrequently as the marginalized frames. This classification relies on the same insight Ferree (2003) draws about the role of major news publications in filtering and shaping mainstream discourse.

The most significant confounding variable I identified was the presence of other political opportunity structures that may constrain or facilitate certain framing choices. High-salience violent crimes, the views of influential politicians, legislative activity, or other such factors likely influence movement participants’ frame selections as much as the discursive structures centered in this study, Supreme Court decisions. In fact, these other factors likely play a role in shaping these decisions themselves. At an even broader level, all of these structures are formed in the context of a given era’s overarching sociopolitical climate, whether that was the progressivism of the 1960s or the rise of neoliberalism through the 1980s and 1990s. Due to the complex interactions between the sociopolitical forces of an era, the numerous political opportunity structures in play, the particular discursive opportunity structures highlighted here, and the data examined in this project, it is impossible to draw causal conclusions with confidence. However, any observable correlations between eras and frames can still contribute significant insight into the ADP movement.

Method of Analysis

I conducted a quantitative analysis of frame frequencies as correlated with several other factors. After coding each article in my sample for the variables described above, I aggregated the data primarily by era to compare the relative frequencies of each frame between eras. I then compared the usage of different frames by various speaker roles and how the frequencies of

individual frames changed over time. To observe broader framing trends, I further aggregated my data into moral and instrumental frame clusters and compared the shift in the distribution between these clusters over time. I also conducted a disaggregated analysis of my sample by year to observe longitudinal shifts in these broader clusters. For each of these comparisons, I relied on Microsoft Excel to record, organize, and analyze my data.

Limitations

One of the chief limitations of this approach is its reliance on the subjective judgements of a single coder. My judgement shaped the construction of the initial population and the evaluation of each document in the sample, introducing a potential source of bias. For each document, I coded for both implicit and explicit expressions of each frame, the primary speaker and their role, and what frame they privileged, all of which at times required a distillation of ambiguous or nuanced information into a single code. Ideally, the coding process would have spanned several rounds and multiple coders to ensure validity and consistency in the results. Unfortunately, the limited time and resources available for this study made such a rigorous process impossible, although iterative definitions and revisions of my codebook with the assistance of advisors helped to mitigate some of the risks. I also relied upon single indicators of each discursive era, which also may limit their explanatory power. Furthermore, unlike an experiment, this approach could not conclusively demonstrate causal inference among the selected variables, especially given the complexity of the legal-political systems in question. Finally, this study was restricted by its sample size. With a sample limited in its scope by feasibility concerns, there remains some chance that sample does not capture the full breadth of frames in use, or provide accurate representations of speaker sub-groups and eras. My reliance on the digitized ProQuest archives also assumed the archives were exhaustive and properly indexed for text-based searches. While a media-based sample is normally subject to concerns regarding the selection bias of the newspaper writers and editors, in this case the filtering performed by the newspapers was central to my method as a means of defining which frames have been allowed into dominant discourse, thus serving an advantage rather than a limitation.

Advantages

Despite its reliance on some subjective evaluation, content analysis offers a systematic examination of the documents of interest due to its rule-based approach. By coding and analyzing frame frequencies in a quantitative fashion, this project supplements existing qualitative studies, which often draw conclusions about changes in the ADP movement without rigorous empirical or longitudinal support. Quantitative analysis provides important context for broader arguments about the nature of movement change. A quantitative, longitudinal content analysis is optimal for observing changes over time and other patterns in the data that would be difficult to isolate through less systematic approaches. This examination of change over time allowed me to begin to speculate about causal relationships, another benefit of my approach. Finally, and perhaps most centrally, content analysis presents the best way to examine published discourse, since articles generally cannot be interviewed, surveyed, or tested in an experiment.

Findings

Shifts in Frame Dominance

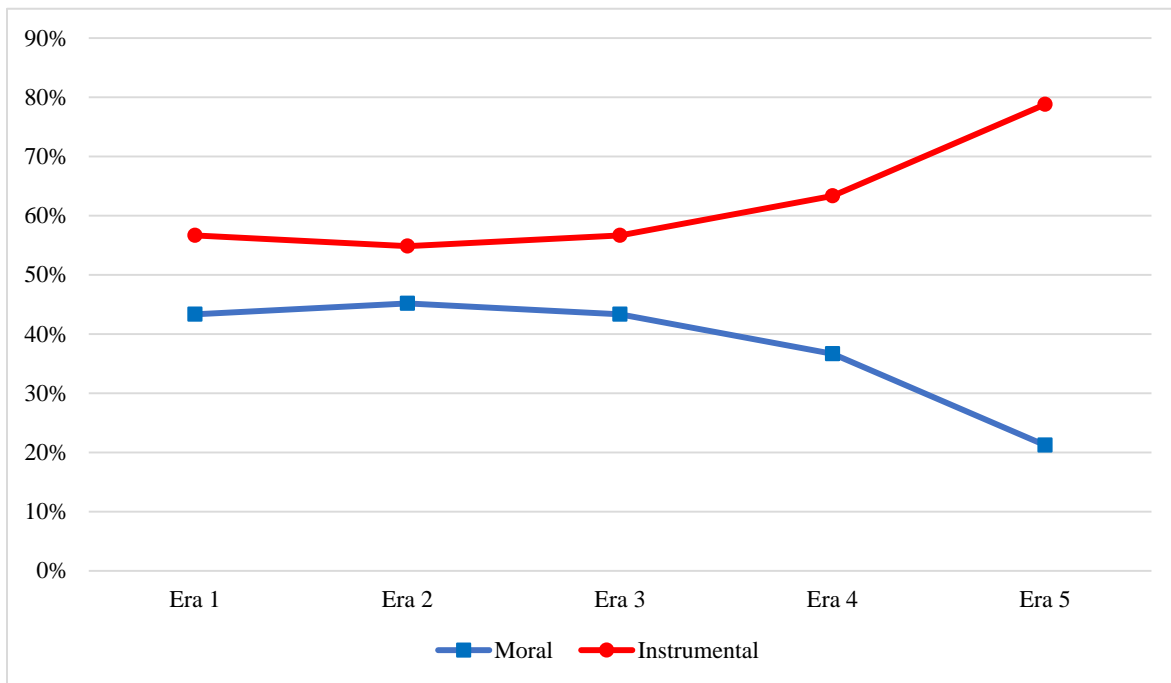


Figure 1. Use of moral and instrumental frames by era, as percentage of total primary frames.

Primary frames. My data on primary frames largely support the prevailing view that the ADP movement has shifted toward an increasing reliance on pragmatic, or what I term “instrumental,” frames. In the earlier eras, moral and instrumental frames occupied somewhat

similar shares of the discourse. This contradicts the persistent implication by movement scholars that moral frames dominated discourse up through the 1960s (e.g., McLaughlin, 2013; Baumgartner, De Boef, & Boydstun, 2008). However, more in line with prevailing thought, instrumental frames have absorbed an increasingly large portion of primary frames over the last several eras, as Figure 1 shows. The trend toward instrumental frames appears to begin between Era 2 and Era 3, encompassing the early- to mid-1980s. By Era 5, there is a significant disparity between the two frame clusters. If one defines frame dominance and marginalization as zero-sum, the discourse’s turn from moral framing to instrumental framing is immediately evident.

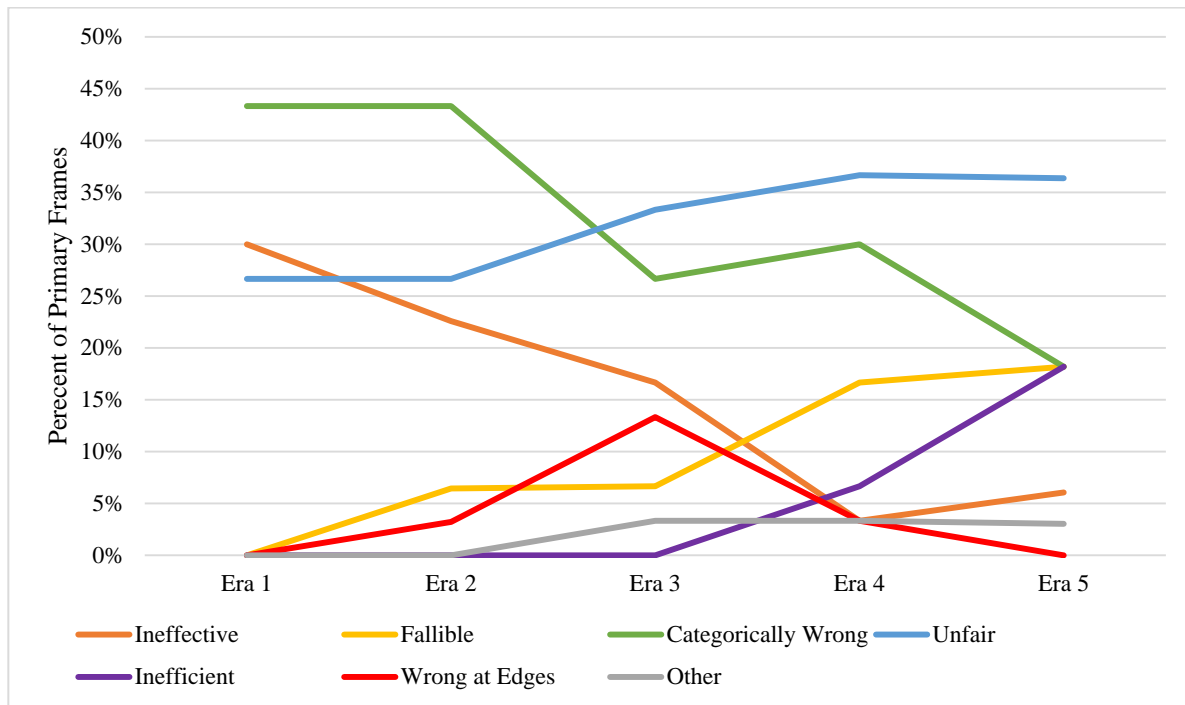


Figure 2. Use of frame categories by era, as percentage of total primary frames.

Broken down by frame categories, as shown in Figure 2, the primary frame data still demonstrate the moral-to-instrumental trend under a zero-sum conception of dominance. In Era 1, the main moral frame category, Categorically Wrong, dominated the plurality of sampled discourse. Only three primary frame categories were in use, representing a relative lack of framing diversity. Notably, neither Fallible nor Inefficient frames were yet in use. In subsequent eras, however, Categorically Wrong frames exhibits a strong overall decline, with most of the instrumental frame categories exhibiting a contrasting gain over time. The use of Fallible frames rose across each era, likely fueled by the onset and continuing incidence of DNA exonerations. Inefficient frames also saw a gain in popularity, from no primary uses up through Era 3, which

ended in 1992, to its prominence as one of several frame categories in consistent use by Era 5. This uptick seems to trail what one might expect by several years, as the neoliberal emphasis on efficient government emerged in the previous decades. In the most notable exception to the overall trend, Ineffective frames fell significantly across eras, despite representing one of the most purely instrumental frame categories.¹ Still, overall the binary tradeoff between moral and instrumental frames can be seen among these individual frame categories.

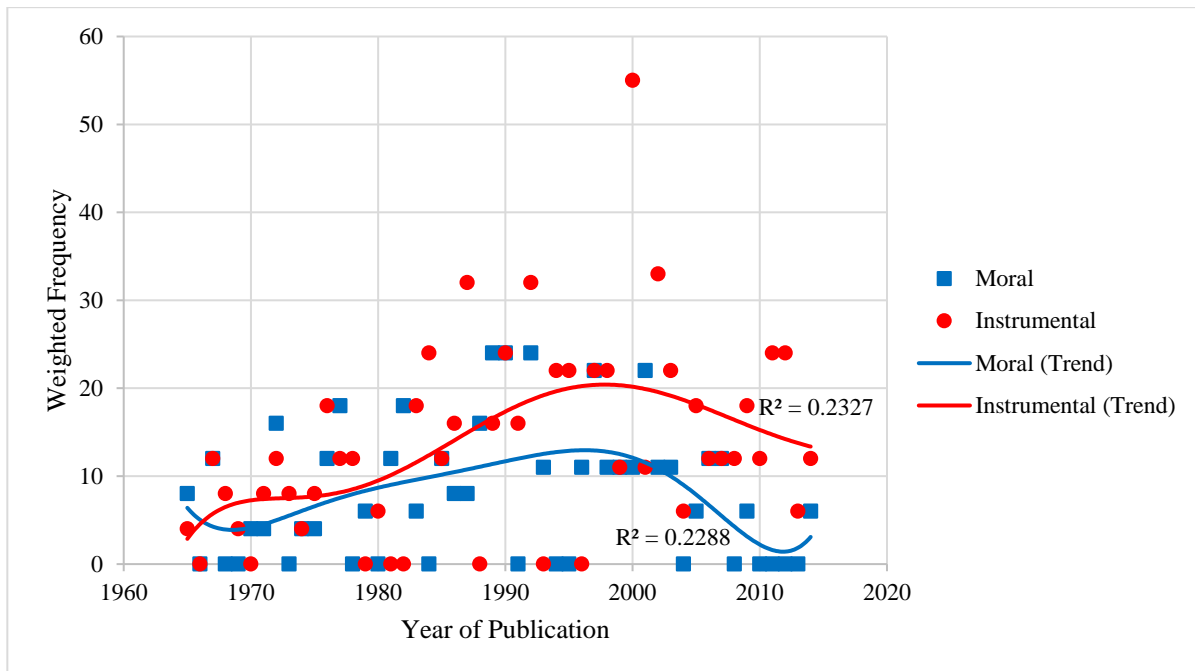


Figure 3. Weighted frequency of moral and instrumental primary frames by year of publication.

However, when the data on primary frames are disaggregated by year and displayed in absolute quantities, the moral-to-instrumental trend is significantly less clear. Figure 3 represents the frequency with which moral or instrumental primary frames appeared in the sample each year, weighted to reflect the different sizes of the populations in each era. The data are overlaid with polynomial trendlines to give a general, descriptive idea of the data’s trends, but with both $R^2 < 0.25$, their statistical explanatory power is low and should not be used for predictive or interpolative purposes. This disaggregated view shows instrumental frames have gained dominance over time, whereas they previously were employed at a similar rate to moral frames.

¹ Ineffective frames largely center on the concept that capital punishment fails to deter capital crimes. Thus, it represents a defensive frame used to respond to pro-death penalty arguments about deterrence. As more academic studies were published that did not support the deterrence potential of capital punishment, pro-death penalty groups may have de-emphasized such arguments, resulting in a corresponding decrease in Ineffective frames. Ineffective frames may also have fallen out of favor as other instrumental arguments gained traction.

The predicted corresponding marginalization of moral frames, however, does not manifest as clearly. There is no visible indication of an abandonment of moral framing in the late 1970s, when the *Gregg* decision came down, or through the 1980s and 1990s, as neoliberal thought came to prominence in political discourse. It is difficult to assess whether the actual downward trend in moral frame usage shown in this data through the 2000s reflects a shift in speaker choices² or merely the overall decline in the amount of movement discourse, as indicated by the similar decline in instrumental frames. In either case, this decrease in moral frames occurs much later than described in the literature consensus, and is not equivalent to an absolute abandonment.

This diverges from the widely accepted notion that moral frames have been lost in ADP movement discourse, instead suggesting that they remained featured at frequencies comparable to their historical use. One possible explanation for this difference is this study's exclusive focus on the speech of movement participants, rather than overall media discourse about capital punishment. ADP movement participants may be more faithful to moral frames because morality generally underlies their initial motivation for active engagement against the death penalty. The media may also turn to movement participants to provide the moral frame on the issue, even in death penalty stories that emphasize other instrumental concerns. Therefore, an examination of death penalty discourse writ large could indicate a more dramatic abandonment of moral frames than this more narrow study does.

Frame inclusion. My data on the overall rates of inclusion of frames, primary or otherwise, further problematizes the assumption that moral frames have effectively disappeared within ADP movement discourse. In general, the data provide some support for the moral-to-instrumental hypothesis. While over 70% of the discourse in Era 1 featured some use of moral frames, by Era 5 the proportion shrank to just over 50%. In contrast, instrumental frames never fell below 80% inclusion, and in Era 5 were present in over 90% of sampled articles. A similar trend can be observed in individual frame categories, as shown in Figure 4. As with the primary frame analysis, the Categorically Wrong frame dominated in Era 1, then subsequently diminished in presence. The data also exhibit the same upward trends for the presence of Fallible and Inefficient frames as observed with the primary frames. However, in the final era there is a

² If due to speaker choices, one possible explanation could be that moral frames were shifted out of primary usage due to the growing salience of instrumental issues such as DNA exonerations (tied to the Fallible frame category). As Figure 4 shows, movement speakers regularly included moral frames during this era, so the diminishing presence of moral primary frames does not indicate moral frame abandonment.

notable resurgence of moral frames not found in the primary frame analysis. The reemergence of moral framing occurs with both the Categorically Wrong and Wrong at the Edges categories, which substantiate the two main moral frame types. This pattern in the frame inclusion data contradicts the predicted trends and diverges from the observed trend in the primary frames.

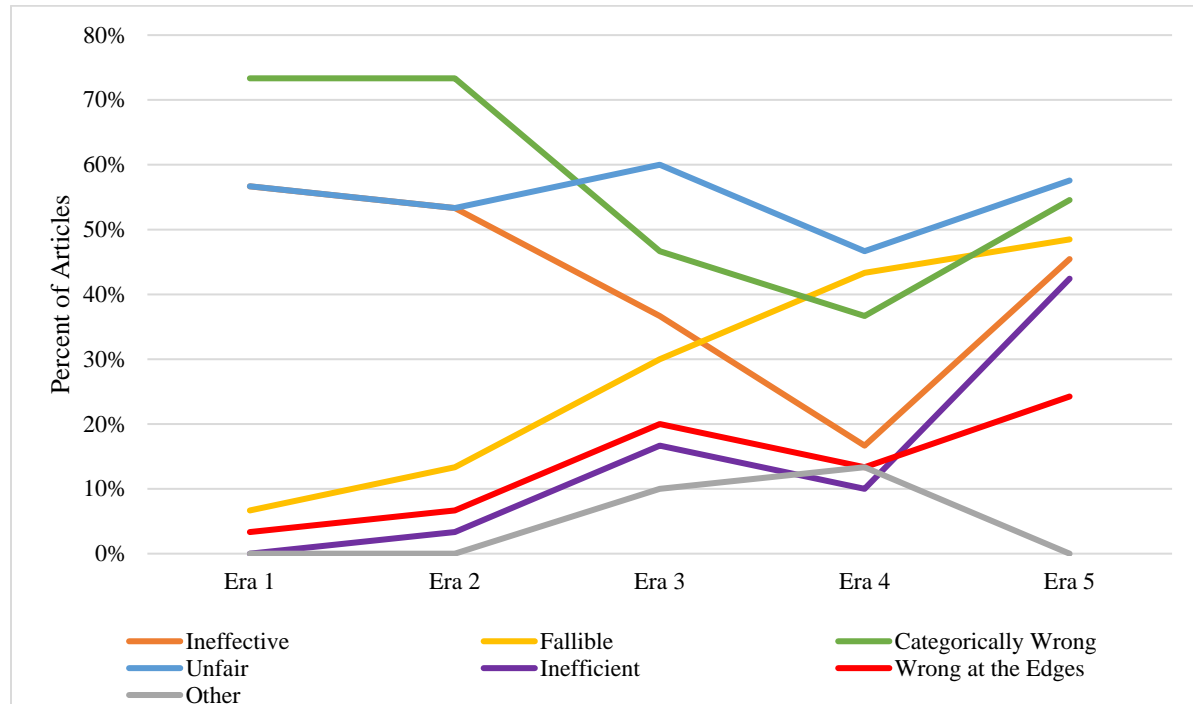


Figure 4. Frame category inclusion by era, as a percentage of all articles in which the frame was referenced. Percentages may total greater than 100% due to the use of multiple frames per article.

One could speculate as to several potential reasons for this phenomenon. Again, the combined personal and political motives of ADP movement participants could contribute to their more persistent inclusion of moral frames compared to the speech of those external to the movement. Alternately, the return of moral frames could be symptomatic of a larger trend toward increased frame diversity. All of the major frame categories exhibit a marked growth in use from Era 4 to Era 5. The average number of distinct frames used per sampled article also rose between these eras by approximately 60%, meaning that movement participants more often opted to reference several ADP frames when describing the issue, rather than focusing on a single message. For Era 5, a greater diversity of frames used in each speech instance may have allowed more leeway for speakers to include moral frames, even if they remained unattractive as primary frames.

Variation by speaker role. As Haines (1996) predicted, frame selection in this data appears to vary by the speaker’s role in the ADP movement, especially in more recent discourse. One illustrative difference can be found in each role’s relative employment of moral primary frames and how that employment shifted across eras. In Era 1, the three main speaker roles (activists, advocates, and sympathizers) expressed moral primary frames at approximately equal rates. However, as Figure 5 illustrates, the movement sub-groups later diverged. For example, activists and advocates split in Era 3. This distinction between their use of moral frames beginning in the 1980s tracks with Haines’ (1996) observation that the two groups became more distinct in their roles during that time. By Era 4, the three groups become even more differentiated in moral frame usage. Sympathizers sharply gain in their use of primary moral frames, while advocates appear to relinquish their use entirely.³ In contrast, primary moral frames in activist speech exhibit a steady decline that most closely resembles the trend in the discourse overall. (See, for example, the consistent downward trend of the “categorically wrong” frame category in Figure 2.)

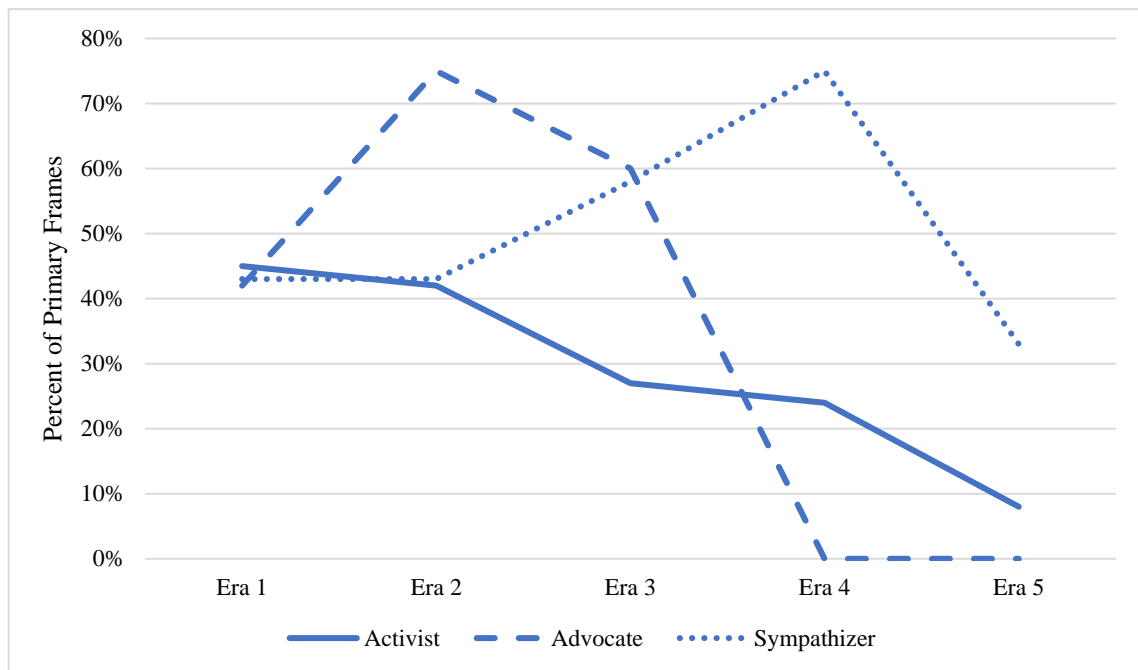


Figure 5. Selection of moral primary frames by speaker role, as a percentage of total primary frames.

³ Advocates’ apparent wholesale abandonment of moral frames, while notable, is of limited quantitative significance because of the small sample of advocate speech from which that data derives. In Eras 4 and 5, the sampled articles rarely featured advocate speech, as Figure 6 depicts. Accordingly, the actual rate of advocate moral frame use was likely somewhat greater than zero, even though the sample featured no instances of such.

The close conformity between the trends in activist discourse and overall discourse suggests that activists represent the primary driving force in shaping the framing choices of the ADP movement. While it is beyond the scope of this study to determine conclusively the reasons underlying the differences in frame selection between groups, one possible explanation could be the different stakes underlying each type of speaker’s messaging. Advocates risk the most by making broad or radical arguments because their short-term duty is to their clients’ interests, which often require narrow or case-specific claims. This may motivate more pragmatic framing choices. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Sympathizers risk the least in their choice of frames due to their minimal investment in the movement. Therefore, they may feel less constrained by pragmatic considerations and more willing to adopt moral frames. Activists, significantly invested in the ADP movement but able to prioritize movement strategy over case-specific concerns, would then fall somewhere in between.

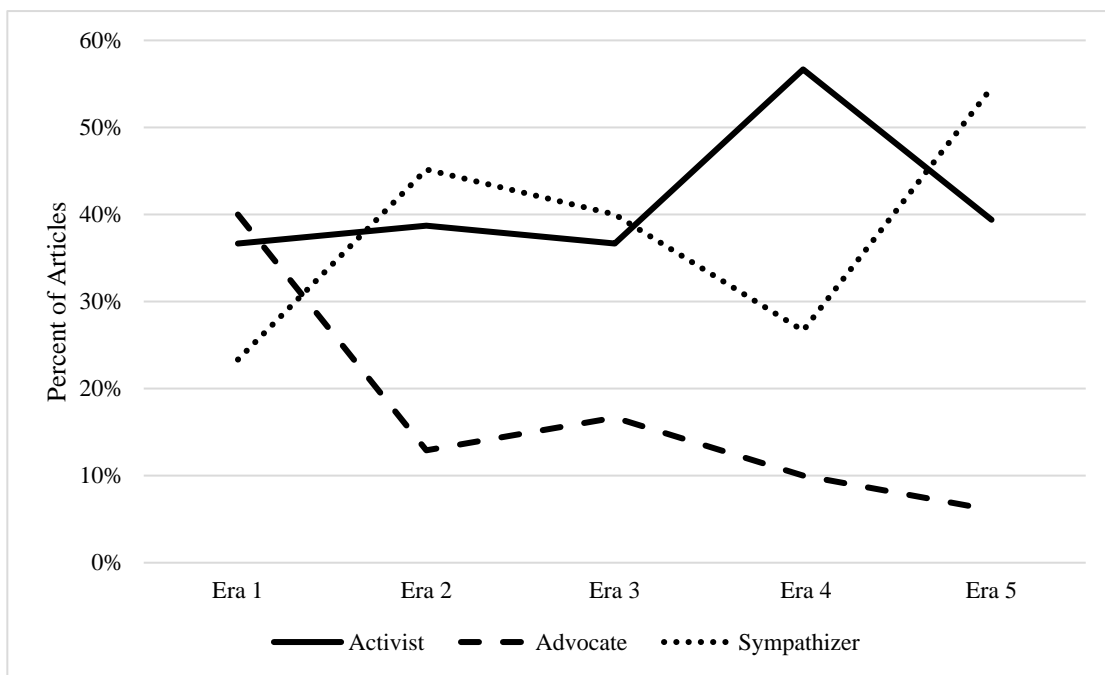


Figure 6. Speaker role shares by era, as percentage of sampled articles.

Regardless of any strategic choices, however, the most significant contributing factor to the power of activists to shape movement discourse appears to be the share of media attention each group received, depicted in Figure 6. First, advocates suffered a precipitous drop in their rate of inclusion in the sampled articles. During Era 1, advocates provided 40% of the speech instances. However, in every succeeding era advocates never represented more than 20% of the

featured speakers, and by Era 5 barely represented 5%. Again, one may only speculate based on this data as to the contributing factors to the drop. One such factor may be advocates' deliberate choice to refrain from comment on the general issue of the death penalty while representing a client undergoing the appeals process. This legal strategy would reflect the new legal paradigm established following Era 2, when the Supreme Court effectively foreclosed consideration of broad-based attacks on capital punishment. It also could reflect a growing desire to avoid the appearance of politicizing an individual case, in pursuit of the best possible outcome for that client. Regardless, with such a diminished presence, any framing choices advocates made appear to have had minimal effects on movement discourse. The limited instances of advocate speech included in the later eras of this sample also limit the significance one may afford to the associated drop observed in advocate use of moral framing, since the small sample may be non-representative.

In contrast, the other two speaker roles received greater shares of media attention. Media coverage featured the speech of sympathizers at increasing rates, finally reaching a majority in the Era 5 sample. The reason for this change is difficult to diagnose; changes in public opinion (described below in more detail) may have made sympathizers more numerous, but one would assume the media could still identify and access activists with greater ease due to activists' institutional affiliations and often intentional engagement with the press. Instead, the media may have chosen to increasingly feature sympathizers, for reasons unknown. Despite their growing prominence, sympathizers did not appear to have much effect on the nature of ADP movement discourse; their late-era proclivity to opt for moral primary frames is not reflected in the observed primary frame trends. More consistently included than the other groups, activists remained consistently around or above 40% across eras. Activists' stable media presence may have allowed them to seize the bulk of message-determining power within the movement, since they could strategically select frames with the knowledge that they could be consistently disseminated. The lopsided distribution of media attention between the groups, even by Era 2, demonstrates that the sampled articles favored activist speech over that of advocates. As a result, intra-movement framing disputes between activists and advocates, the two key groups that align most closely to Haines's (1996) framework, were likely shaped by the media's filtering function, a concept explored further below.

Potential Factors Contributing to Framing Shifts

The nature of this study prevents the declaration of any conclusive findings about the causes of the observed shifts in framing. Adherents of cultural resonance theory would suggest that changes in cultural discursive forces would be a primary driver of framing shifts. To assess this contention, I will propose and evaluate four possible explanations for the shifts, using four different conceptions of cultural resonance.

Significant Supreme Court decisions. In some ways the primary hypothesis of this study, the discursive opportunities established in major Supreme Court decisions on capital punishment could be one potential driver of framing shifts in the ADP movement. Under this discursive opportunity structure framework, by rewarding or punishing certain framing choices through rulings, the Supreme Court would signal movement participants to adapt their choices to the Court's perceived preferences. In other words, the Supreme Court would be the primary determinant of perceived cultural resonance. As a result, one would observe a signal, in the form of a relevant ruling, followed relatively quickly by a corresponding shift in movement framing. Therefore, an examination of frame use before and after the five eras highlighted in this study can help to assess the explanatory power of this hypothesis.

Figure 7 overlays the primary frame trends from Figure 3 with black lines signifying the years in which the cases that define each era were decided. As Figure 7 shows, there does not appear to be a strong relationship between the selected shifts in discursive opportunity structures and the observed shifts in the frequencies of moral and instrumental frames. The majority of the era markers do not coincide with major inflection points in the trends, nor do there seem to be clear distinctions in the data before and after each decision year. However, the lack of observable effect at this level of frame analysis may be due in part to the nature of the selected decisions. Except for *Gregg v. Georgia* in 1976, none of the other decisions address the constitutional validity of the death penalty outright, instead addressing facets of its application. As a result, their effects on discourse may not be observable at this level of frame aggregation. This explanation gains some credibility since *Gregg* is the only decision that corresponds somewhat with an inflection point in both trends. During and following 1976, there is a general increase in instrumental frame frequency. In the same period, while moral frames also continue to increase in frequency, the rate at which they increase appears to flatten. Both of these would fit the predicted effects of *Gregg*, since the decision disfavored the purely moral argument against the

death penalty. The magnitude of *Gregg*'s discursive impact, both legally and politically, may have distinguished it from the others in terms of its impact on movement framing, as no other similar reaction is discernible. To test whether each decision had narrower effects on specific frame category shifts, one can instead compare the expected influence of a particular ruling to the observed category shifts, depicted in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

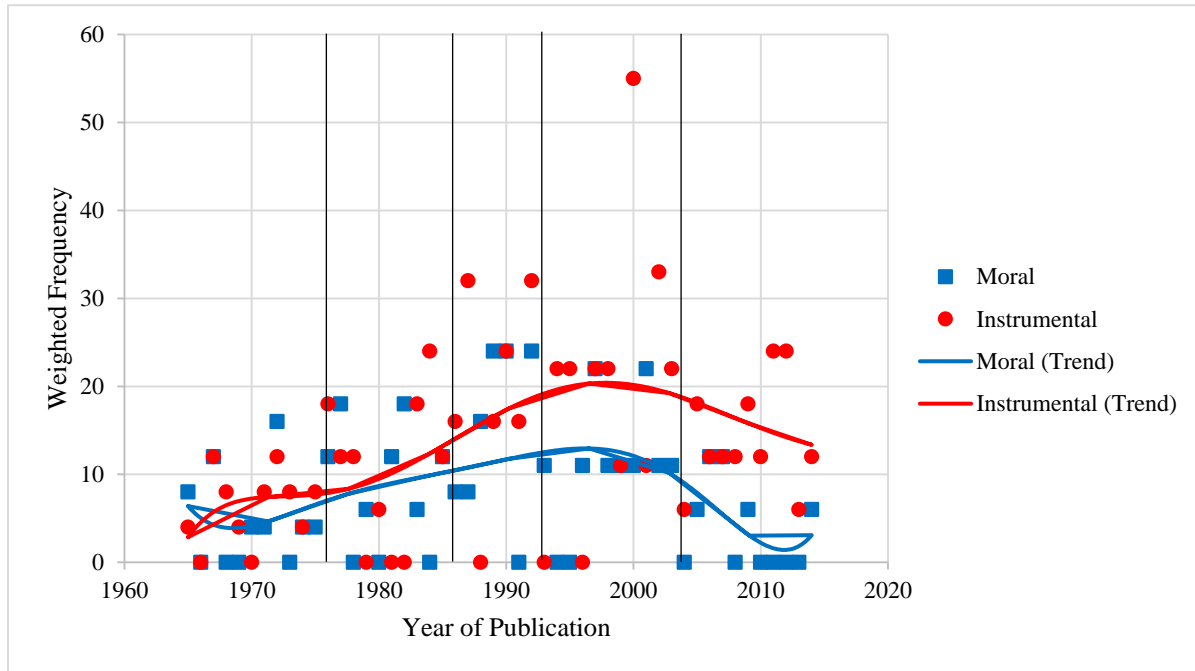


Figure 7. Weighted frequency of moral and instrumental primary frames by year of publication, divided by era. Black lines mark years in which the Supreme Court made significant decisions regarding capital punishment.

Such a comparison does not support the notion that ADP movement framing choices responded primarily to the discursive opportunity structures of Supreme Court decisions. The framing trends following the selected rulings in some instances correlated with the discursive opportunities established by those rulings, and in other instances did not. First, the *Gregg* ruling, marking the transition from Era 1 to Era 2, held that the institution of capital punishment was not necessarily cruel and unusual punishment. This in essence announced that direct challenges to the constitutionality of the death penalty would not be met with success going forward, potentially signaling movement participants to turn away from frames that attacked capital punishment outright. However, in both primary frames and frame inclusion, movement participants maintained the same level of use of the Categorically Wrong frame across Era 1 and Era 2. While a few new instrumental categories appeared beginning in Era 2, the lack of effect

on Categorically Wrong framing suggests *Gregg* did not significantly alter movement participants' perception of the discursive opportunities before them. The next selected decision, *Ford v. Wainwright* (1986), exempted mentally ill persons from execution and marked the beginning of a series of decisions in which certain classes of people received special consideration in capital cases. These cases could signal to movement participants that the Supreme Court was amenable to frames that promoted exceptions to capital punishment on moral grounds, termed here as Wrong at the Edges. In line with this prediction, the Wrong at the Edges frame spiked in both primary frame frequency and in frame inclusion during Era 3. Similarly, *Herrera v. Collins* (1993) marked an institutional acknowledgement of the innocence claims gaining salience in capital cases. As expected, Fallible frames demonstrate significant growth in the corresponding era, Era 4.

However, in Era 5 the response of movement participants to the Court's signaling is less clear. *Nelson v. Campbell* (2004) highlighted issues in lethal injection procedures and marked persistent litigation on that issue. The implications of the ruling would suggest that movement participants might turn again to Wrong at the Edges frames, focusing now on method-specific arguments. Strangely, this category disappears from primary frames in Era 5, but reaches its highest level of inclusion at the same time. *Nelson* may have encouraged greater use of Wrong at the Edges framing, but the frames' inherently limited nature may have prevented it from occupying a large portion of primary frames. In sum, while one could draw correlations between some decisions and the framing trends that followed, this effect is not consistently or rigorously demonstrated in this data. Therefore, discursive opportunity structure theory does not provide a satisfactory explanation of the ADP movement's framing choices.

Public opinion. Alternately, perceived public support could be driving movement frame selection. In this conception, public opinion would define cultural resonance, and movement participants would attempt to match their selected frames to public opinion in order to draw the widest support for their positions. The concept of "public opinion" is difficult to define with any specificity, especially as it would be perceived by movement participants, but here public opinion polling will serve as an adequate quantitative representation of the national mood over time.

A comparison of public opinion polling data to the frame frequency data shown in Figure 3 suggests that public opinion tended to anticipate, rather than follow, shifts in ADP movement

framing strategies. As displayed in Figure 8, Gallup measured public support for the death penalty at its lowest in this study’s earliest era, when the *Furman* decision temporarily abolished capital punishment in the United States. Public support for the death penalty then climbed steadily through the early 1990s, peaking at 80% in 1994, before falling throughout the following decades back to levels around 60%. The initial growth in public support for the death penalty, shown here to begin around 1970, appears to precede the divergence between moral and instrumental frame frequencies, which began closer to 1980. Under the theory that public support defines cultural resonance, this could suggest that movement participants decided to increase employment of instrumental frames in the early 1980s in an attempt to recapture support for their position, in essence adopting a less radical stance to attract more mainstream acceptability.

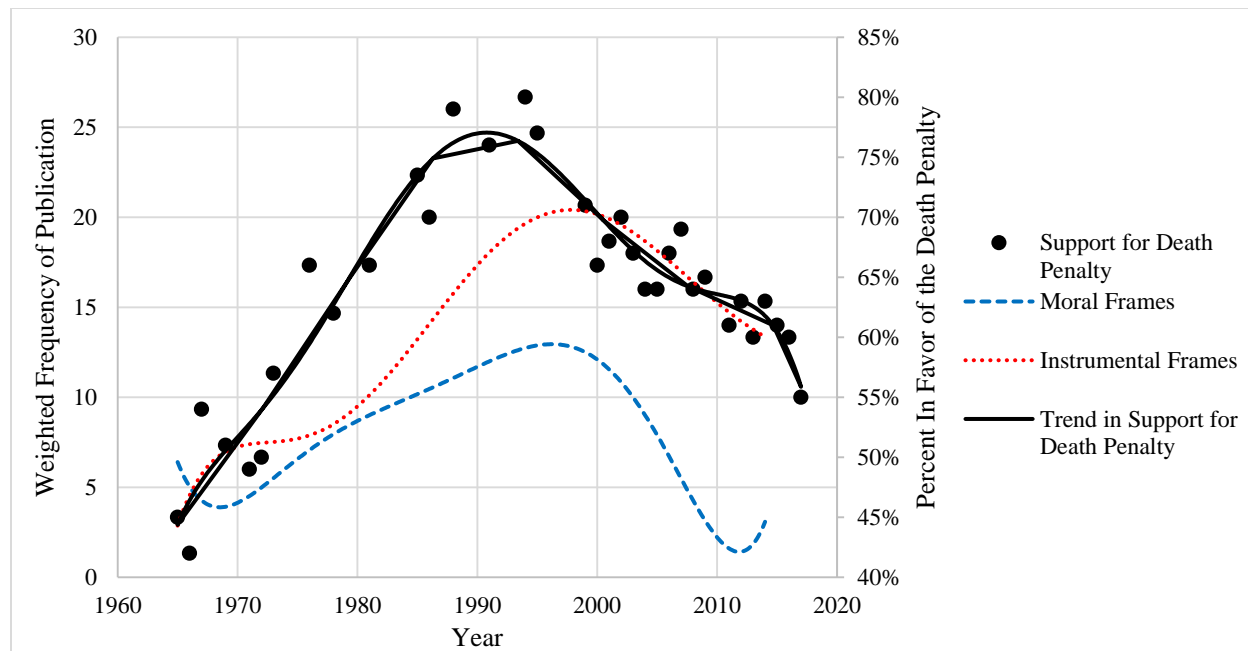


Figure 8. Public support for the death penalty over time, as percent of polling respondents, overlaying weighted frequency trends for moral and instrumental primary frames, by year. Polling data from Gallup.

Furthermore, the eventual downturn in the trend of public support around the early 1990s occurred without any significant corresponding changes in the moral or instrumental frame frequencies. In fact, the employment disparity between moral and instrumental frames continued to widen for several years after this downturn, before narrowing again in the early 2000s. Applying a public opinion model of cultural resonance here supports two inferences. First, the public began to change its mind about the death penalty in reaction to something besides a strategic shift in framing strategies by the ADP movement. Second, and more relevantly, the

ADP movement may have slowly initiated a reversion toward moral frames in response to a perceived initial return of public sympathy. In other words, the deflation of public support for the death penalty may have made it “safe” for movement participants to begin re-adopting the moral frames that represent their more radical stance on the issue.

However, the described framing shifts in both cases lag behind the shifts in public opinion by several years, somewhat complicating the causal narrative. While one may expect some delay in framing shifts, especially given the non-monolithic structure of the ADP movement, the ability of published public opinion data to gain immediate salience would make it unlikely that movement participants would take years to absorb and employ that information in their strategic decisions. The imperfect correlation between the two may be better explained if, instead, both public opinion and movement framing choices were responding to some other underlying variable or variables.

These observations do not support the idea that the ADP movement’s broader framing choices were a significant driving force for public opinion shifts. Instead, they are more suggestive of the reverse relationship, that public opinion may have had a role in driving the framing choices of the ADP movement. However, by comparing these trends in public opinion with the more disaggregated frame category data, a more plausible correlation could be drawn. Public support for the death penalty in Era 5, from 2004-2014, was on average significantly lower than in the preceding decades. During the same period, the ADP movement demonstrated its highest level of frame diversity, as shown in Figure 4. Era 5 marked a significant recovery in inclusion of Categorically Wrong frames, the most radical moral frame category. While it is impossible to establish a conclusive relationship between these two phenomena, their coincidence at least suggests that increasing frame diversity, including resurgent moral frames, could have contributed to the turn in public opinion.

Media filtering. By its relative inclusion and exclusion of certain speakers and frames, the media itself could set the boundaries of cultural resonance . In this hypothesis, the media’s choices to include certain types of speakers more than others could drive framing shifts if those speaker types tend to favor some frames over others. As Figure 5 shows, speakers in this sample varied significantly in their frame selection depending on the role they occupied in the ADP movement. For example, by Era 5 sympathizers employed moral frames at much higher frequencies than other movement participants. In the same era, the studied newspapers featured

sympathizers more frequently than other types of movement participants, as Figure 6 depicts. The combined growth in the prominence of sympathizers in published speech and in sympathizers' preference for moral frames could explain the growth in moral frame inclusion shown in the final era on Figure 4, rather than any sort of broader movement strategy to return to frequent use of moral frames.

In this light, the media's selection bias would in many ways mitigate the effects of any explicit or implicit strategic conflicts between ADP movement factions on movement framing choices. The role of the media in mediating frame disputes is not thoroughly discussed in Haines (1996) or in most other studies on the topic, with such discussions instead focusing on the efforts of factions to either define their discourse independently or in cooperation with others. Here, the media's filtering function favored activists and their selected frames over advocates, to the extent that advocates vanish from the sample by the later end of the study period. This filtering function makes it difficult to evaluate whether the media publish a representative selection of movement discourse; if they do not, and instead select discourse on other rationales, then the media hold a singular ability to structure popular discourse. It then becomes doubtful that any strategic discussions or philosophical differences among movement participants hold much potential to determine which frames would be presented to the public.

Admittedly, engaging such a media-centric framework necessarily results in some circularity in explaining these findings, since the filtering effect of the media would be both determinative of the data and provide the explanation for that data's contours. However, this tension speaks to the limitations of the study design employed here, since the data collected cannot provide insight into the media's rationales for speaker and speech selection. This framework also credits the mass media with significant power to shape popular discourse, an assumption that becomes increasingly questionable with the growth of new media forms. If movement participants can propagate frames effectively through smaller web-based publications or social media, the determinative power of the mass media on frame resonance becomes less salient. The marked differences in the media landscape from the 1960s to the 2010s may have thus contributed to the observed longitudinal shifts in movement framing.

Other factors. A project of this scope will, by its limited nature, be unable to account for all of the social, political, and legal forces at play and may only speculate on the influence of most; it remains highly possible that some combination of other factors were the central drivers

of the observed frame shifts. For example, the growth of the instrumental frame cluster during the 1980s coincided with the birth of a new right wing in American politics, which supported the death penalty as part of its emphasis on law and order. The rhetoric of Reagan conservatives also included a strong emphasis on government efficiency and reduction of government waste. During this period, ADP movement groups may have employed instrumental frames at higher frequencies to respond to conservative arguments; in this framework, cultural resonance is defined by the discursive structures established by movement opposition, and frame selection operates as a response rather than an independent strategic choice. This represents only one of many imaginable connections between sociopolitical trends and the trends observed in the data, each with its own implications for our understanding of cultural resonance.

Conclusion and Implications

Over a half-century of activism and advocacy, the ADP movement experienced both major policy victories and dramatic setbacks, all while remaining on the relative outskirts of mainstream American politics. Previously, gaps in existing scholarship made it difficult to diagnose the movement and its strategic choices, particularly in relation to discourse and framing. This study addressed some of the deficiencies in ADP movement literature by conducting a novel, quantitative framing analysis of movement discourse, distilled down to the discourse of movement participants exclusively. By examining a study period of over five decades, extending further into contemporary times than previous longitudinal studies, these results provide greater insight into the evolution of the ADP movement as it navigated changing social and political contexts. Furthermore, by disaggregating the ADP movement into its component factions, this analysis offers a more nuanced view of the movement as variegated in its goals and strategies, rather than a monolithic body. In the end, my findings contribute empirical support for some of the commonly-held notions about the ADP movement and challenged others, contributing to a more contextualized and grounded understanding of the movement's historical and contemporary course. Perhaps most centrally, the data described herein suggest that the much-discussed moral-to-instrumental shift may indeed have occurred, but to a less drastic degree and in a more gradual sense than often described in other works.

My findings also contribute to existing models of cultural resonance and frame selection. As outlined above, cultural resonance evades easy definition. However, the lack of concrete

correlations between the data and any of the proposed models may actually suggest that the impossibility of defining which frames are most culturally resonant is central to the observed operation of the ADP movement. In other words, cultural resonance may be best understood as fragmented, rather than the unitary “objective congruence with society’s values and principles” (Ferree, 2003, p. 307) that other scholars have described. Especially in societies where values and principles have diverged across increasingly polarized social and political groups, as one might observe in the contemporary United States, a movement may opt to vary its framing in order to appeal to several distinct audiences within a singular polity. This conception of cultural resonance as fragmented would help to explain both the observed diversification of frames in later eras (see Figure 4) and the overall growth in the volume of frames observed (see Figure 3).

The theoretical implications recounted here are of particular relevance to those concerned with the potential for the ADP movement to reach continued and greater success in shaping public policy. As public support for capital punishment has waxed and waned over the decades, the ADP movement has adapted its framing with only limited success. Most notably, the movement’s much-discussed turn to instrumental frames in the 1980s did not appear to capture the public’s sympathies, despite these frames’ ostensibly greater cultural resonance. Furthermore, the movement’s 21st-century turn to greater frame diversity, including a return to regular use of moral frames, has coincided with a steady turn in public opinion toward the movement’s stance. As Figure 8 shows, public support has fallen even further since 2014, the end of this study period, marking its lowest levels since the 1960s. The ADP movement is facing a rare opportunity to capitalize on public sympathies and drive lasting policy changes, making their strategic decisions at this juncture even more critical. While the ultimate impact of movement framing choices on public opinion is impossible to determine from this data, this correlation is as strong of empirical evidence as is available to ground framing decisions. As such, movement participants concerned with attracting widespread public support for the end of capital punishment would do well to persist in a heterogeneous framing approach that does not neglect moral rationales, in the hopes of appealing to a broad, diverse audience.

While capital punishment touches only a relative handful of lives in any given year, its unique relationship to life and death, and to the perception of our nation’s moral character, make its study and the study of its opposition perennially worthwhile. This study presents opportunities for further exploration of the ADP movement for those interested in the relationships between

social movements, media discourse, and the factors that shape both. The fast-changing nature of media, particularly the interplay between traditional mass media and newer digital forms, invites the consideration of other sources of movement discourse beyond the two newspapers sampled here. Future studies could also examine movement discourse not filtered through the media, such as advocacy organization publications, to determine if salient differences emerge between internally-determined frames and those granted mainstream access. Finally, a study period extended both before and after the one considered here would provide greater context for understanding the movement's past and current trajectory. Continued observation of the ADP movement's efforts and outcomes will substantiate whether its successes will persist or whether, as in the past, they will recede in the face of broader sociopolitical forces beyond one movement's control.

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Appendix A

Table of Frame Classification

Examples	Frame	Frame Category	Frame Cluster	
The death penalty doesn't deter The death penalty is pointless	No Policy Purpose	Ineffective	Instrumental	
Life without parole is a better punishment	Alternatives Better			
The death penalty risks taking innocent lives The death penalty involves too much human error	Innocence/Error	Fallible		
The death penalty is racially biased The death penalty tends to only punish the poor	Discriminatory	Unfair		
There's no real difference between those who get the death penalty and those who don't The death penalty is like getting struck by lightning	Arbitrary			
Death penalty appeals are stacked against defendants There aren't enough attorneys or funding for capital defendants	Procedural Problems			
The death penalty is too costly	Expensive	Inefficient		
The death penalty drags on and prevents closure	Takes Too Long			
The death penalty is state-sanctioned murder It is wrong to take a life	Immoral	Categorically Wrong		Moral
The death penalty violates my religious beliefs Only God should pass ultimate judgement	Religion			
The death penalty is a barbaric punishment The death penalty is cruel No civilized nation should have the death penalty	Uncivil			
The electric chair is a gruesome punishment Lethal injection is too painful	Method-Specific	Wrong at the Edges		
The mentally ill should not be executed Juveniles should not be executed	Population-Specific			
The death penalty is a violation of human rights	Human Rights	Other		
Our society should be merciful	Mercy			
[Speaker does not emphasize a particular frame]	Laundry List			