

*Using Publicity in Movement Building: "It's Like a Bread Slicer"*

Organizers: Ashley Currier (University of Pittsburgh) and Kathleen Blee (University of Pittsburgh)

Karen Jeffreys (Coordinator, Communicating for Change Campaign, National Network to End Domestic Violence); Linda Blozie (Connecticut Coalition to End Domestic Violence; National Chair, Communicating for Change Campaign); and Charlotte Ryan (University of Massachusetts-Lowell): "Using Publicity in Movement Building: It's Like a Bread Slicer"

Drawing on varied scholarship, including global South communication theory, social marketing, and social movement theorizing focusing on strategy, Jeffreys, Blozie, and Ryan shed light on how anti-domestic violence organizers communicate their messages to the public. Ryan stated, "We want to minimize the risks that people take. We know we're in a long-term war" to eradicate domestic violence. Jeffreys stressed that the anti-domestic violence movement is young and ended up "chang[ing] public attitude by accident." Anti-domestic violence organizers in Connecticut and Rhode Island realized that the only way to end domestic violence was to influence public attitude. Specifically, organizers worked with journalists to shift how they portrayed domestic violence and used public communication to forge strategic alliances. For instance, organizers strategically deployed the rhetoric of "system failure" in cases in which a victim of domestic violence was murdered. Jeffreys stated, "If there's a crack in the system, then the victim is susceptible." Blozie explained that when she joined her organization, there was no communication strategy in place, but the organization needed money to fund an anti-domestic violence publicity campaign. An important shift her organization experienced involved ensuring that all anti-domestic violence activists saw themselves as communicators, as "everyone [was] responsible for the movement message." Organizers developed a curriculum to train activists and advocates to exert some control over how media framed movement issues. Of importance to these presenters was the public communication of a unified movement message.

Kenneth T. Andrews (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) and Bob Edwards (East Carolina University): "Making the News: How Movement Organizations Shape the Public Agenda"

Kenneth Andrews and Bob Edwards began with the premise that being able to access the media is an important "intervening variable" in social movement actors' ability to "engender" political, social, and cultural change. They positioned the media as an important influence in movement recruitment and leadership in their study and posed provocative research questions for scholars including:

1. How should scholars compare organizations' messages in the public sphere? (Standing, media attention, favorable content, preferred frame)
2. Why do some organizations receive more media attention than others? (Reasons include geographic location, organizational form and resources, organization's strategic orientation and tactics, issue-attention cycles).

To answer the last question, Andrews and Edwards conducted an in-depth, structured survey of hundreds of North Carolinian environment social movement organizations (SMOs) and analyzed how frequently organizations were mentioned in a sample of eleven daily newspapers between 2004 and 2005. They paid particular attention to the geographic dispersion of newspapers and SMOs.

Andrews and Edwards' preliminary findings suggest:

1. “Proximity matters”: an organization is more likely to appear in a newspaper if it is located in close proximity to the publication’s coverage area.
2. Staff size, the presence of task committees, and organizational networks influence whether an SMO receives media coverage.
3. SMO membership size does not appear to influence media coverage.

Andrews and Edwards stressed that though their analysis is preliminary, it could yield fruit future social movement scholars.

Clifford Bob (Duquesne University): “Publicizing Human Rights Violations: From Indifference to Activism”

Clifford Bob focused on how activist groups obtained third-party support, not just media attention, in order to pressure institutions to initiate change. He posed the question, “How and why do some human rights violations receive media attention while others do not?” He cited the example of the Darfur genocide receiving media attention, while a comparable genocide in Congo has largely gone unnoticed by the media. Bob’s “political marketing approach” juxtaposes the agency and strategy of victims of human rights violations and structural factors that influence the ability of victims’ organizations to lobby third parties and the media. Using the case of the Zapatista rebellion and less successful indigenous mobilization in 1994 in Mexico, he elucidated organizations’ “pitch” (direct lobbying of third parties or media or “diffuse consciousness raising about human rights violations) and “match” (organizations’ reframing of a local conflict to appeal internationally, of victimization, of tactics, and of organizational characteristics) as important variables in understanding their public reach.