

Collective Behavior and Social Movements Workshop

War Without End? Evaluating Peace Movement Strategies

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Hofstra University, Student Center Room 145

Group B: Movement Strategy and Activist Beliefs

Is there symbiosis or tension (or both) between the peace movement's strategic choices and the beliefs, values, and group commitments that unify the movement? How should the movement respond to any tensions between effectiveness and principle?

SD: Conflicting goals and perceptions between groups is a constant struggle. The peaceniks can't even get along.

DL: how do we understand the first question?

TB: We stopped the Vietnam War but didn't effectively address the structure of war in the US. You can't just stop the war.

DL So, how do we reconcile our long-term goals with the immediacy of dealing with one goal at a time. How do you merge those two?

MBM: How do you deploy your energies? We spend a lot of time Xeroxing etc. You can't stop doing it but the lack of time to reflect on long-range issues is taxing.

SC: See Robert Burrowes' book on nonviolent action and its different types. I critique Tom Hayden's book in my article. We need to focus on bringing in the principled and revolutionary nonviolence forms. Revolutionary NV brings in the long-term strategizing. The MST (landless movement) can help show the way on how these different forms can be combined. Don't get rid of the pragmatic and reformist, but you have to have a broader revolutionary vision. This takes a long time. Took MST at least 15 years to be on our radars. I try to focus on that longer term process. Doesn't get results right away.

MBM: The landless movement in Brazil is built on discontent and we do not have sufficient discontent.

TB: There is discontent, but we haven't developed a technique to activate it. We don't have it now. People are scared about economic collapse and that might

MM: I begin my day by reading Tolstoy's calendar of wisdom. Today: Live in the moment. We are facing an extraordinary crisis. We may be in war with Iran within weeks. The laws are already in effect. FISA law, etc. to effect martial law. We have to mobilize people for the immediate crisis. We have to deal with it now.

JS: I would like to hear from people engaged in protest strategies.

SD: A lot of us know each other. We see the same people all the time. To get one more person is a struggle. You might have 100-150 at a good event. I have a big mouth, flyers, etc. I tell people 'just come to one thing'. 'Can you just come and stand there?' and they don't come and I don't

stop doing what I do. No matter what we do ... Most people don't even know what FISA is. Instead people know that Lindsay Lohan is in jail again.

DL: I might be able to make you feel a little better but not much. In my social movement classes. These are 18-20 yr old Boston College students. They do care. They care deeply. They feel completely powerless. They say this is horrible and I'm depressed but what am I supposed to do. The problem is that they don't feel personally touched. They feel emotionally empathetic but they don't feel the urgency, like a draft card. You have to speak to what makes THEM feel discontented, which is connected to Iraq, but they haven't yet made the connection. Why do they spend their time in the mall or watching TV. They are anesthetizing themselves so they won't feel the pain or feel there is nothing they can do about it. How do we talk to what is bothering them first and then link that to the War.

TB: We can't do it to them. We have to be mentors to the activists on the campuses who will speak to them and text them in their milieu and their meeting. We're just a bunch of old farts who gave them the debts they and their children will have to pay back. We have to motivate and grow from the grassroots.

DL: We have to listen to them.

TB: We are still using the same strategies that we used 40 yrs ago = big mass marches of 500,000 people plus in DC is not creating the synergism. They think its useless. I think its useless.

SK: Even in the vehicle for their empowerment (the peace movement), they are not feeling it.

MBM: They are challenged with loans, poor job prospects. Poor short term future. Greed is good. It puts them dead against themselves. Do we organize enough around simple tactics like phone calls, etc.

SD: My 11 yr old spruced up our website. This is how you have to get through to these kids. They know what appeals. The old mass march does not = the internet. My son sits all the day at the computer and thinks he has spent time with people. They don't go onto the streets. I want to get in the schools. I used to sit in at the principles office, there have to be agitators.

SK: What do you see on college campuses re: activism?

MM: They are interested in environment, darfur, gay and lesbian. The peace part of it is not there. Nixon was great on the environment which diverted anti-war activism toward environmental issues. Move on has some good tactics (some disagreement here).

TB: We have to go back. College students are like Tom Hayden in early SDS. Port Huron 1962. Vietnam wasn't a glimmer yet. They articulated Peace with Justice = the same alienation today's youth have. Might be fruitful for the academy to go back and see underpinnings...

MM: We have had a problem mobilizing our Jewish students. It has to do with Palestine (TB: the elephant in the peace movement). They don't want to address Iran. They want to deal with Iran militarily. There is a strong dominant group that is progressive on every other issue.

TB: Palestine is verboten. Its our responsibility to educate them about the very vibrant that is within Israel. Combatants for Peace for example. Their platform is easily adopted and agreed to. APAC has been much more successful however. Bombing, using American arms.

JS: What about the message? Can the message be the same it always has been? Are their new ways to frame for youth?

MBM: I have a sense that there is an intimate connection between environmentalism and the 500 pound bombs that destroy the earth / depleted uranium. Its unnatural to kill your own species, but we do. Maybe that's an avenue for youth.

TB: The interest people do have in Darfur and the environment... and piggy back on that.

LS: Student resources: see <http://warnewsradio.com> for weekly student radio broadcast on war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

See also PJSA newsletter Summer 2007

<http://www.peacejusticestudies.org/documents/summer07.pdf> for report on Swarthmore student activism.

SD: They are used to snippets, pre-digested news. Al Gore: What can change that is the blogosphere and kids are having a dialogue. Our natural inclination as adults / parents is to direct them and say this is what you have to do. You have to let them find their place and their voice.

DL: The tendency of organizers is to tell them. They have to find their voice.

LS: Older generation to provide resources and facilitate the spaces through which youth can

SC: The culture has to change ... Its hard to do things where you don't see an immediate benefit. There has to be something in the culture that encourages them.

JS: Do the kids you all deal with see themselves as a common generation.

SC: [missed this, apologies]

MM: We are avoiding two groups: veterans (they stopped the war in Vietnam). That made an impression. If we can get that, = an important contributions. We have yet to touch the elites. The youth are fine but they have little input. Do they not understand that it is their world too? How do we get those elites? The 1,000 people who

SD: They are profiting from the war.

Resource that aims to bring sociological study of social movements to activism.

Moyer, B. *Doing Democracy : The Map Model for Organizing Social Movements*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2001.

Group C: High Risk Activism

What are the factors involved in recruiting and sustaining participation in costly or high risk nonviolent activism?

Recruitment

Successful counter-recruitment requires concrete alternative life possibilities being presented.

Peace movement should develop powerful narratives that present personalized, melodramatic accounts of those engaging in high risk, nonviolent activism on behalf of peace.

Those with more time (e.g., seniors), with fewer familial commitments (e.g., traditional students; nuns), and identities that compel action (e.g., religious persons) are most likely to become involved in high risk activism. Grannies for Peace and church sanctuary movement provided as examples.

Peace movement should utilize latest technologies more to reach out to students (e.g., Blogs, YouTube, Websites, Public Access).

We should not succumb to the neo-liberal logic of a corporatized higher education. Peace groups should develop campaigns that challenge students to act upon their consciences (e.g., “What is college for?”).

Participants highlighted the need for religious leaders to both encourage and directly participate in high risk activism against the war. The Right to Life movement and Central America peace movement were given as examples of this potential. The Catholic clergy’s role in organizing the RTL movement presents an effective model. The narrative of the life and death of Archbishop Romero was offered as an illustration of how certain religious language and symbols can be used to mobilize participation in high risk activism.

Scholars participating in the breakout group promised to provide local activists with examples of language that peace activists have effectively used to recruit those with religious identities.

Sustaining Participation

The peace movement needs to develop organizational capacities to provide a support system for those who are both considering joining the military and are in the military.

Perception among participants that Conscientious Objector organizations are not as active as they were in previous conflicts.

Need a pool of money to support participants and their dependents. One idea for raising money is to create a “Support a Radical” campaign where people can use their credit cards to support those engaging in high risk activism.

Those who engage in high risk activism can be fired from their jobs and find themselves unable to afford housing, day care, and other basic human needs. We brainstormed the following as ways that the peace movement can minimize these impediments:

- Create affordable housing (e.g., Catholic Worker houses; cooperatives)
- Workers owned cooperatives
- Day care system among movement participants living in the same areas

Activist and Scholar Relationships (all workshop participants address)

Based on what we have learned in this workshop, how can the resources, experience and, knowledge that activists have assist researchers and teachers in improving their work on social movements? What about the other direction? How can academics assist social movements in achieving goals?

How Scholars Can Assist Peace Activists

- Is evaluative research appropriate and can it be applied to help activists?
- Do research with movements
- Synthesize activist and scholar knowledge
- Conduct research that's relevant to specific campaigns being conducted by activists
- Participate in public deliberative forums discussing issues of peace and conflict (e.g., Wikipedia)
- Put working papers online to get ideas out
- Support IndyMediaCall into NPR or other shows
- Wrote op-ed pieces for local papers
- Make ourselves available to the media as experts. In this role, also put reporters in touch with activists
- Provide academic analysis of side-lining of community activists from the mainstream media
- Publicly distribute critical analyses of local media coverage (especially the exclusion of the ideas and events of local peace movement organizations)
- Provide tips on ways for PMOs to garner sympathetic coverage
- Assist in developing materials for press packets
- Participate in conferences organized by activists
- Make our research more readable—use less jargon in our writing and present in brief, concise formats
- Research historic lessons for the peace movement—what's worked, what hasn't, and why
- Research what type of language the peace movement can use that will appeal to broad audiences
- Scholars connect with young student leaders to get them to motivate other students.
- Bringing in activists to speak to students in the classroom. During class time. Note: there was not consensus on this. JS mentioned university policies which do not allow this, and SK had mentioned that the suggestion raises ethical questions that would need to be taken into consideration because we are involved in a power relationship over students.
- Have a day of dialogue with balanced speakers.
- More gatherings of academics and activists. Like the Peace and Justice Studies Association.
- Junior faculty are the most active but have the most to lose. The system socializes people away from activism.
- Have community-based panel discussions that invite scholars to contribute but not take over the process.

How Peace Activists Can Assist Scholars

- Actively support and defend academic freedom