Countermovement and Media Coverage Outcomes: A Case Study of the Abortion Debate

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Countermovement and Media Coverage Outcomes:  
A Case Study of the Abortion Debate

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For social movement activists, mass media are a primary vehicle through which their messages are disseminated and reach an audience. However, creating, distributing and controlling media messages is no easy task. “Meaning” making is a contested process that is influenced simultaneously by oppositional groups, structures of media, social events, and bystanders (Gitlin 1980; Ryan 1991; Smith 1996; Benford and Snow 2000).

Given the multitude of obstacles, how does a social movement organization (SMO) handle media coverage? This study tries to answer this question by examining how two opposing SMOs, the National Organization for Women (NOW) and Concerned Women for America (CWA), attempted to manage media coverage during critical moments of the abortion debate. The paper analyzes how the organizations create media messages, the strategies they use to get media coverage, and the relative success of each organization’s efforts in mass media outlets. I begin with a brief summary of the obstacles SMOs confront when trying to get media coverage, and then I outline the data and methods used in the study. The remainder of the paper is divided into three sections. The first section analyzes the media strategies of NOW. The second examines the media strategies of CWA. The third compares the coverage outcomes of NOW and CWA in mainstream media. I conclude the paper with a comparison of NOW and CWA’s media strategies and coverage outcomes.

Obstacles in the Movement-Media Relationship

In the social movement literature, the framing perspective is useful for examining the process of producing and mobilizing meaning on a mass scale. Frames are a central organizing idea that tells an audience what is at issue. Framing is the process of constructing and defining events for an audience through the control of the agenda and vocabulary. Packages are a set of related ideas that are used to structure and negotiate an issue’s meaning over time (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Ryan 1991; Gamson 1992; Gamson et al. 1992; Smith 1996; Snow et al. 1997; Noonan 1997; Benford and Snow 2000; McCaffrey and Keys 2000). Movement leadership presents frames and packages as a way to define a situation as problematic, identify the responsible party or structure, articulate a reasonable solution, and call individuals to action (Gamson 1992; Ellingson 1997; Benford and Snow 2000). Because media coverage can bring an issue to a large audience, it is an important resource for social movements. Movement activists encounter several obstacles in their efforts to control media messages, however.

One challenge SMOs face is opposition, or countermovements. An oppositional group counter-frames an issue, or attempts to undermine another organization’s collective action framework (Benford and Snow 2000; McCaffrey and Keys 2000). Successful frames draw on common cultural resonances, or cultural stereotypes, that make the frame seem natural and familiar to an audience. While this familiarity can be used to reinforce the goals of SMOs and
garner media attention, an opposing organization may attempt to use the cultural resonances from another group’s frame. When opposing groups use the same cultural resonances, the arguments and emotional appeals may become confusing to the audience and reduce the effectiveness of the frame (Ryan 1991; Gamson 1992; Ellingson 1997; Noonan 1997).

In addition, mass media outlets are not impartial observers, but have interests, norms, and practices that influence what and how messages are relayed to an audience. Activists face the obstacle of the structure of media, which is visible in the commercial nature of media, the routinization of journalistic practices, and conventional news coverage. Journalists, who consistently deal with scarce resources, tight deadlines, and limited space for their articles, routinize their news beats, meaning they tend to rely heavily on known and ‘legitimate’ sources (Gans 1979; Ryan 1991). This creates an over-reliance on “insider” sources such as politicians, government officials, and think tank researchers and often marginalizes activists, whose opinions are too far outside of the mainstream to be included in legitimate news coverage (Gans 1979; Tuchman 1987; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Smith 1996; Barker-Plummer 1997; Rojecki 1999). The routinization of journalistic practices and the commercial nature of media outlets have a homogenizing effect on news coverage. Coverage is formulaic with a conventional structure that focuses on “expert” opinion and episodic events rather than ongoing interpretations of social and political issues (Bagdikian 1969; Ryan 1991; Rojecki 1999). In order to make the nightly news, activists must represent a newsworthy issue, or an issue deemed current, publicly recognized, and interesting by journalists and editors. Newsworthiness, however, also depends on the availability of “news pegs,” or events that provide a “hook” on which a story may “hang”.

There are times when an issue is particularly salient to an audience. These “critical discourse moments” provide opportunities in which activists have a better chance of getting media coverage. While many researchers have discussed critical discourse moments (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Ryan 1991; Gamson 1992; Rojecki 1999), definitions are generally unclear. For the purpose of this study, I suggest that government action on an issue creates a news peg as well as an opportunity for SMOs to get media coverage. Critical discourse moments are not identified by examining past events, but represent opportunities that SMOs may “grab” or “miss” (Sawyers and Meyer 1999).

Social movement organizations are not simply the objects of media coverage, but are reflexive agents that interact with the structures of media (Ryan 1991; Gamson et al. 1992; Barker-Plummer 1997) and use instrumental strategies to influence media coverage. In addition, SMOs do not regard getting media coverage as an end-point (Ryan 1991), but conceptualize media “success” as having various components. A SMO does not simply want to get its ideas out there and help shape the political/social agenda; it wants coverage to provide information about the organization, to reflect its preferred frames and packages, and to regard the organization as a legitimate voice on a political issue. In sum, organizations want “credit” for the ideas (Meyer 2000). Media coverage gives organizations legitimacy in the larger public sphere, which in turn may help build the organization in terms of membership size and political clout. Therefore, the strategies SMOs use to get coverage are important.
Data and Methods

This study examines how opposed organizations get media coverage and tracks the relative success of their strategies by analyzing mass media during three critical discourse moments, in this case, news pegs created by government action. Since the issue is salient, critical discourse moments are particularly useful times to assess the relative success of SMOs to get coverage. The abortion debate serves as a useful case study because there is not an obvious corporate interest in abortion policy outcomes and there is a clear division between the two sides of the debate (pro-choice and pro-life).

For sampling purposes, I examined three critical discourse moments based on Supreme Court cases that, according to SMOs and researchers alike, reflect landmark decisions in the abortion debate (Staggenborg 1991; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Staggenborg 1997; Ginsburg 1998). Webster v. Reproductive Health Services, decided on July 3, 1989, upheld a state law that ruled that human life begins at conception, barred the use of state hospitals for abortions, and required fetal viability testing. Ohio v. Akron Center for Reproductive Health et al., decided June 25, 1990, ruled that a state can require a waiting period and parental notification before administering an abortion on a minor, but also made a judicial bypass provision. Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey, decided June 29, 1992, upheld a 24-hour waiting period before the administration of an abortion as well as required anti-abortion counseling and parental consent for minors.

I examined two SMOs, the National Organization for Women and Concerned Women for America, that are ideologically opposed on the abortion issue, but comparable in terms of structure and resources. Both organizations are large with federated structures, although NOW reports more financial resources and CWA reports a larger membership (Table 1). NOW (which is pro-choice) and CWA (which is pro-life) are multi-issue organizations that present themselves as advocates for public policy on women’s issues and actively lobby for policy that supports their ideological position. Each organization’s national office is centrally located in Washington D.C., employs a staff of 30 women, and relies on a membership to fund organizational activities and campaigns. In addition, both NOW and CWA sponsor “grassroots” branches across the country staffed by volunteers, publish monthly magazines, hold annual conventions, and maintain websites that offer extensive information on their organizational goals.

Reproductive issues such as abortion are a primary concern for both organizations. CWA seeks to save “pre-born” humans and NOW seeks to secure reproductive freedom. It is worth noting that more than 20% of the total articles in each organization’s newsletters from 1985 to 1992 focused on the abortion issue (Table 2). However, the percentage of articles on abortion varied from one year to the next for each organization. Additionally, the two organizations do not always emphasize the abortion issue in their newsletters at similar rates. For example, in 1989, 43.4% of the total articles in the NOW Times discussed the abortion issue, while only 31.9% of the total articles in the CWA Publications discussed abortion. In 1985, 35.2% of CWA’s total articles addressed abortion, while only 18.9% of the articles in the NOW Times discussed the abortion issue.
Table 1. Average Financial and Membership Information for NOW and CWA, 1989-1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NOW*</th>
<th>CWA**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Budget</strong></td>
<td>$7,941,132.00</td>
<td>$6,050,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Services</strong></td>
<td>$4,284,887.00</td>
<td>$4,598,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Members</strong></td>
<td>230,000</td>
<td>573,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Since CWA would not supply their actual revenue, expense, or membership information membership and chapter numbers were obtained from the Encyclopedia of Associations 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 which uses information reported from the organization. CWA did provide guidelines as to how the budget is allocated: 76% of the budget is used on program services, 19% on fundraising, and 5% on general and administrative costs. These guidelines were applied to the self-reported budget information in the Encyclopedia of Associations for 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1992.

This research poses four questions: What were the preferred frames and packages of CWA and NOW in the abortion debate? Did the preferred frames and packages of each organization change during the critical discourse moments? What strategies did CWA and NOW use to get media coverage? What types of media coverage outcomes did CWA and NOW receive in mainstream media during the critical discourse moments? To find the preferred frames and packages of each organization, I read all the articles relating to the abortion issue in the *Now Times* and the CWA publications from 1985-1992.² I tallied how often abortion was mentioned in each publication relative to other organizational issues and noted the nature of the discourse. From this data I derived two frames (*rights* for NOW and *morals* CWA) and 24 preferred packages used by the organizations during this time period.³

The next research question asks what strategies NOW and CWA used to get media coverage. Since CWA does not deposit its documents with an archive or make its internal documents available to the public, I conducted several interviews with past and present employees/volunteers at both the national and state level. NOW, in contrast, would not grant interviews, but its executive committee allowed me to conduct archival research on their vertical files housed at Radcliffe. Despite not having parallel data, I was able to clarify the ideological claims of each organization, examine resource availability and allocation, assess the perceived level of message distortion by media outlets, and examine the organizational tactics used to control media messages. I feel confident that meaningful comparisons between the organizations can be made.

The final research question assesses the success of each organization in media coverage. I offer three measures of success: First the type of coverage each organization receives, that is whether an organization is pictured, mentioned, quoted, or has its frame/packages contained or adopted within the coverage; second whether or not the organization gets its preferred packages in media coverage; third how NOW and CWA rank when compared to other organizations mobilizing around the abortion issue.
Table 2. Percentage of Articles on Abortion in NOW and CWA Publications, 1985-1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NOW Times</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>CWA Publications</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% on abortion</td>
<td># of articles on abortion</td>
<td>total # of articles</td>
<td>% on abortion</td>
<td># of articles on abortion</td>
<td>total # of articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>1079</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The National NOW Times and CWA Publications

I conducted a content analysis of mainstream media after each Supreme Court decision. I included the following national, print media outlets in the study: The New York Times, Time, Newsweek, The Nation, and The National Review. I included the New York Times (NYT) because it is often considered the arbiter of national news (Gamson 1992; Rojecki 1999). I used the New York Times Index and the heading “abortion” to select the articles to be included in the sample. Because newsmagazines also serve as a record of news while reaching a larger and more diverse audience than daily newspapers (Rojecki 1999), I included two weekly newsmagazines in the sample. I chose Newsweek and Time because they have the highest circulation rates of newsmagazines and they have been used in other empirical examinations (Gamson 1992; Rojecki 1999). Finally, I included a conservative weekly magazine, The National Review, and a liberal weekly magazine, The Nation, in the sample in order to broaden the scope of media discourse coded. I expect these media outlets to be more sympathetic to the messages of conservative and liberal organizations respectively.

NOW'S Media Strategies

The National Organization for Women is a multi-issue women’s public policy group that supports abortion rights and works to keep abortion legal and accessible in the United States. From its inception in 1966, NOW viewed the media as a powerful resource and attempted to gain media attention and to control the information disseminated about it. NOW prioritized communication with media outlets as an organizational goal and quickly built an “issue beat” with female reporters and established links to media channels by creating a news service and producing information. These initial activities and NOW’s bureaucratic and centralized organizational structure in Washington D.C. provided access to media outlets, and allowed NOW spokeswomen
to respond to press requests and breaking news (Barker-Plummer 1997). The discussion below highlights NOW’s media strategies through an examination of three overlapping organizational processes: Message formation and adaptation, frame and package coordination, and message assessment.

Message Formation and Adaptation

While NOW consistently used a woman’s right to an abortion as its frame, it employed informal and formal research to develop more specific pro-choice packages that appealed to a broad section of the American public (Box 7, Operation Rescue; Box 14, Abortion Facts). NOW determined the appropriate package given the current political situation and oppositional activity. The organization assessed the political climate and public attitudes toward abortion in several ways. NOW subscribed to a clipping service, which monitored NOW and “anti-choice” coverage in newspapers nationwide, collected newsletters and documents from opposing organizations (Box 4), watched the public opinion polls and statistics (Box 14, Polls), and produced information on the abortion issue to be disseminated to the larger public.

Shifts in abortion-rights packages are visible in NOW’s organizational newsletter, the NOW Times. Table 3 illustrates that NOW emphasized different packages as the political environment and pro-life tactics changed. It is important to note that the packages roughly fall into two response periods: 1985-1988 and 1989-1992. During the 1985-1988 time period, NOW polarized and vilified the opposition. NOW equated “anti-choicers” with abortion clinic violence, filed federal injunctions against key pro-life leaders, and led a legal attack against “bogus” clinics run by pro-life and religious organizations. By 1988, however, pro-choice organizations were clearly losing the battles in the state legislatures. Pennsylvania passed parental consent legislation and the pro-choice side lost in three state referenda. Rather than focusing on these losses, NOW identified a specific enemy to abortion-rights, Operation Rescue (OR), a “terrorist organization” whose members posed both a physical and mental threat to women seeking clinic services (Box 14, Abortion facts).

During the 1989-1992 time period, NOW focused on reinforcing the legitimacy of its rights frame, or engaged in frame saving. At the December 1989 board meeting NOW leadership discussed what they believed to be a loss of abortion rights. The board stressed the need to have more and better information in order to “sharpen their frame” and “advance their position” in the media (Box 55, Board minutes 89-95). In its newsletter, NOW focused on its victories against OR, both in the courtroom and in front of abortion clinics across the country. It emphasized that the majority of public opinion supported “a woman’s right to choose” and decried the institution of the “gag rule” and the Supreme Court decisions as an attack on all women that ultimately would deprive women of crucial services, lead to back alley abortions, and cause the unnecessary deaths of women. NOW reinforced its non-compromising stance on abortion, which stressed that abortion-rights must be extended to all women, including young women, and attempted to extend the abortion debate by supporting the legalization of the “abortion pill,” RU486.
Table 3. NOW’s Abortion Packages from 1985 to 1992 in the *NOW Times*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Packages Used to Support Position</th>
<th>Opposition’s Activity</th>
<th>Political Climate &amp; NOW Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1985 To 1988 | • *Anti-abortion terrorism:* “anti-choicers” commit violence against clinic workers and patients. Operation Rescue identified as an enemy to abortion-rights.  
• *Safety:* a lack of abortion services will lead to back alley abortions and the unnecessary deaths of women.  
• *Focus on the woman and not the fetus:* a woman’s rights must be prioritized over those of the fetus.  
• *Moral bankruptcy:* “so-called Christians” use sneaky and manipulative tactics to deceive the public.  
• *Demyystification:* scientific evidence “proves” that the fetus is not a person.  
• *Global Sisterhood:* there is a feminist community working worldwide to make abortion safe and legal.  
| • Released the Silent Scream, a videotape of an abortion  
• Opened “bogus” clinics that counsel women on the “evils” of abortion  
• Challenged the scope of Roe v. Wade in state legislatures  
• Challenged use of federal funding for abortions | • Congressional hearings on abortion clinic violence  
• By 1988, Pennsylvania passed parental consent legislation and three state referendums went “anti-choice”  
• NOW filed for federal injunctions against 3 pro-life leaders and lead legal attack against the “bogus” clinics |
| 1989 To 1992 | • *Operation bust:* NOW continually thwarts OR’s attempts to close clinics.  
• *American failure:* Supreme Court decisions and the “gag rule” are an attack on young, poor, and minority women.  
• *Safety:* Supreme Court decisions and the “gag rule” compromise the lives of women, who will seek back alley abortions.  
• *Public opinion:* The majority of Americans support a woman’s right to choose.  
• *No compromise:* abortion must be a constitutional right for all women, including young women. Young women who do not tell a parent about an abortion are typically abused sexually or emotionally.  
• *Demyystification:* The “abortion pill,” RU486, must be included as an abortion service option.  
• *Global sisterhood:* Women fight for abortion-rights worldwide. | • Operation Rescue staged protest nationwide and attempted to shut down abortion clinics  
• Challenged state abortion legislation for minors on the basis of parental notification and consent | • “Gag rule” prohibited state employees from mentioning abortion to patients  
• Supreme Court “limited” abortion rights in the Webster, Akron, and Casey decisions.  
• NOW challenged the constitutionality of state legislation in the Supreme Court |

Source: The *National NOW Times*

**Coordinating Frames and Packages Nationally**

In addition to adapting its message to a changing political environment, NOW made systematic attempts to get national and local media attention. First, NOW attempted to get free coverage for its issues and events through the use of press releases, press conferences, and media kits. NOW announced organizational activities and responded to abortion legislation through the use of press
releases, which were provided to the wire services and reporters, and press conferences that were planned to accommodate journalistic deadlines (Box 48, MOW Aug 1993). In addition, NOW provided journalists with media kits that contained relevant information on a particular issue or event. The media kit on abortion-rights, for example, outlined the history of NOW action on reproductive rights, provided a history of reproductive rights legislation, offered a status report on the abortion issue that included statistics on public opinion, and supplied names of organizations both supporting and opposing abortion rights (Box 7, Operation Rescue; Box 43, Reproductive Rights; Box 48, Gay and Lesbian March 1993).

Free media was especially important to local chapters, which were responsible for their own fundraising and media budgets. National NOW provided chapters with detailed information on strategies to gain free publicity and encouraged local activists to develop relationships with the press and learn how it operates, especially in regard to journalistic deadlines. National NOW also recommended that activists arrange interviews on news programs and talk shows, post notices on the community calendar and on public access cable stations, write letters to the editor, and place public service announcements (PSAs) on the radio (Box 35, Leadership Mailings 1985; Box 47, Mobilization and Mailings to Chapter; Box 48, MOW Aug 1993; Box 48, 30th Anniversary March on Washington).

While it is difficult to establish how often the national office contacted its local chapters with information on organizational messages (the degree of formalization), there is evidence that NOW did try to coordinate its frames and packages nationally. Media kits not only provided carefully crafted packages to chapter volunteers, but also instructed activists on mobilization techniques, timelines for action, and background information on the issues as well as offered scripts for speeches, press releases, letters to the editor, sample flyers and banners, and updates on oppositional activities (Box 7, Operation Rescue; Box 35, Leadership Mailings 1985; Box 47, Mobilization and Mailings to the Chapter; Box 48, 30th Anniversary March on Washington). The national office provided specific guidelines on holding press conferences and requested notification from local activists before they held a press conference (Box 48, NOW Aug 1993). In sum, national frame and package coordination reflected a larger organizational attempt to control the messages disseminated to the media. As early as 1980, national NOW recognized that local activists could “hurt” the abortion-rights position and NOW with phraseology that countered the preferred messages (Box 35, Planning and Training 1980).

NOW also used paid media to circulate its frame and packages as well as to mobilize its constituency. NOW advertised in Time, Newsweek, The Wall Street Journal, feminist publications and African-American and Hispanic newspapers (Box 9). Additionally, NOW used the internet/electronic mail and commissioned videos to increase awareness of organizational issues, activities, and goals (Box 48, 1989-90 Marketing Strategies). NOW designed its media campaigns to introduce issues to targeted audiences and attract media-savvy women to serve as spokeswomen. After the Webster decision, for example, NOW initiated a media campaign designed to highlight the adverse political conditions for pro-choice supporters. The campaign focused on presenting abortion-rights to the media in a concise and consistent format nationwide. The organization targeted 15 key cities across the country and placed activists who knew how to “sell” NOW to the press in these locations (Box 9; Box 48, 1989-1990).
Assessment of Media Coverage

NOW assessed its media coverage in two ways. First, it determined whether or not its frame and packages were presented accurately within the coverage. Second, it evaluated its ability to get coverage. The clipping service was important in terms of the former process because NOW evaluated its image, frame/package effectiveness, and frame/package continuity nationwide. This allowed the organization to adjust its messages or target parts of the country where its messages were distorted and respond to media coverage by writing letters to journalists, producers, and editors. NOW did not, however, consistently respond to media coverage (Box 4; Box 7).

NOW evaluated its ability to get media coverage using internal and external sources. Internally, NOW tracked the number of press phone calls received, which indicated the number of attempts made by the press to get information from the organization (Box 7, Operation Rescue; Box 14, Operation Rescue; Box 68, Memo). NOW also hired public relations firms to evaluate its ability to get coverage. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the firms evaluated NOW as having poor message control and employing a “put-out-the-fire” media strategy. For example, McKinney & McDowell Associates reported that NOW did not have a well-defined image in the media, and more specifically that NOW needed a clear message and goal. The firm also noted that NOW did not respond to inaccurate coverage consistently, which contributed to confusion over its position on particular women’s issues. C. Montgomery Johnson Associates criticized NOW’s “put-out-the-fire” strategy in the state referenda media campaigns. According to the firm’s report, public opinion indicated that the pro-choice forces should have won the state referenda, but because the campaigns lacked organization, a clear message, and a pro-active media strategy they lost several state battles (Box 7, Operation Rescue; Box 48; Box 65, Abortion Funding; Box 67, State strategies).

CWA’s Media Strategies

Concerned Women for America is a multi-issue women’s public policy group that supports the abolition of abortion in the United States. Unlike NOW, however, CWA did not immediately recognize media as a powerful resource nor did it establish media coverage as an organizational goal at its inception. CWA regarded mainstream media as having a liberal bias that made journalists hostile to CWA issues and events.

Beverly LeHaye founded CWA in 1979 after she heard Betty Friedan, the founder of NOW, interviewed on television. CWA reports that it struck LeHaye that NOW, whose values she regarded as anti-God, anti-family, and otherwise humanistic, positioned itself as a spokesperson for most women. LeHaye founded CWA as a political response to NOW that initially focused on value outcomes through the use of prayer and grassroots organization. In 1985, CWA decided to become more active in national politics and it moved the organization from San Diego, California to Washington D.C. After the move, CWA formed a communications division under the direction of a “journalist and public relations professional” (CWA publication, July 1989) and actively sought media attention. The discussion below highlights CWA’s media strategies through an examination of the three organizational processes: message formation and adaptation, frame and package coordination, and assessment of media coverage.
Message Formation and Adaptation

Unlike NOW, CWA did not tailor its message to the political environment. One CWA representative said the image the organization is trying to portray to the public is embodied in its mission statement.

The mission of CWA is to protect and promote biblical values among all citizens. First through prayer, then education, and finally by influencing our society, thereby reversing the decline in moral values in our nation. The vision of CWA is for women and like-minded men, from all walks of life, to come together and restore the family to its traditional purpose and thereby allow each member of the family to realize their God-given potential and be more responsible citizens. (http://www.cwfa.org)

The representative explained that the sanctity of human life is the foundation of every CWA issue. Abortion, then, is a moral absolute that does not change over time (Interview A).

Messages on the pro-life position in CWA publications were constant throughout the seven-year period. Table 4 illustrates that CWA’s packages remained constant even as the political environment and oppositional tactics changed. Additionally, CWA focused on frame saving, or reinforcing its position on abortion, as well as “debunking” oppositional frames and packages. “Frame saving” largely focused on the value of human life and the failure of Americans and legislation to recognize this value. The packages focused on legislation that permitted federal funds to be used for abortions and court decisions that violated the First Amendment right of pro- lifers to protest in front of “abortuaries.” CWA, however, remained optimistic because they said public opinion increasingly favored restrictions on abortion.

CWA packages also emphasized the rise of humanism and moral relativism in America, which attacked family values, parental rights, and the sanctity of human life. The group believed that abortion advocacy encouraged minors to have sex, use contraception, and normalized abortion. In addition, counselors rarely presented adoption as an alternative to abortion because of their own lack of education on the issue. As a result of these factors, “abortionists” exploited women and left them to suffer physical and psychological consequences after the abortion. Abortion advocates also failed to recognize abortion as the foundation for the degradation of human life, which paved the way for “death advocacy” (euthanasia and fetal tissue harvesting) and “eugenics.”

Frame and Package Coordination

CWA perceived mainstream media as having a “liberal bias” and therefore an obstacle (CWA publication July 1989; Interviews A and B). CWA identified two problems surrounding media bias. First, journalists travel in “social circles” that discuss only one side of the issues. As a result of their lack of education on oppositional views, many journalists either failed to present oppositional views or offered unbalanced coverage in their articles (Interviews A and B, CWA Publication). Second, CWA battles the stereotypes of the conservative activist including the “blue-haired, elderly woman,” the “Bible-banging fanatic,” and the “white man who is totally
wacko” (Interview B). These perceptions of mainstream media affected the strategies CWA used to get coverage in media outlets.

Table 4. CWA’s Abortion Packages from 1985 to 1992 in the CWA Publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Packages Used to Support Position</th>
<th>Opposition’s Activity</th>
<th>Political Climate &amp; CWA Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985 To 1992</td>
<td>• Protecting the preborn: life begins at conception and therefore abortion murders babies that have the “God-given right to life”&lt;br&gt;• American failure: legislation that sanctions the killing of human life is a failure&lt;br&gt;• Attack on the family and parental rights: the legalization of abortion represents a rise in humanism and moral relativism, which undermine the traditional family&lt;br&gt;• Unfair press: media promotes a pro-abortion view&lt;br&gt;• Public opinion: favors restrictions on abortion&lt;br&gt;• Illegal activity of abortionists: abortion-promoters use school clinics to normalize abortion, coerce women into abortions, and perform abortions on healthy, unpregnant women&lt;br&gt;• Next Step: surgical abortion paves the way for a chemical assault on the unborn with drugs, permits the use of murdered fetuses for medical testing and organ transplantation, and normalizes euthanasia and eugenics.&lt;br&gt;• After the abortion: women suffer physically and psychologically as a result of abortion&lt;br&gt;• Adoption alternative: clinics rarely discuss this option to women because counselors are uneducated on the issue&lt;br&gt;• Feminist folly: feminists promote the rights and desires of women at the expense of family and men&lt;br&gt;• Moral saviors: grassroots activity and prayer helps individuals understand the value of human life</td>
<td>• Sued bogus clinic in Fargo&lt;br&gt;• Filed charges against pro-life leadership&lt;br&gt;• Challenged the legitimacy of state legislation on abortion in the Supreme Court.&lt;br&gt;• Defended the use of Title X funds for abortions&lt;br&gt;• Encouraged contraception use in school clinics.&lt;br&gt;• Advocated the use of RU486 in the U.S.</td>
<td>• Federal funding, especially Title X funds, used for abortions.&lt;br&gt;• State judges prohibited demonstrations at abortion clinics.&lt;br&gt;• Supreme Court decisions by in large upheld constitutionality of state legislation on abortion&lt;br&gt;• CWA mobilized grassroots support for parental consent laws in state legislatures and initiated write-in campaigns as well as lobbying in local constituencies&lt;br&gt;• CWA legal team defended Fargo clinic and assisted in the defense of the Supreme Court challenges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CWA Publications

CWA categorized media outlets as secular (mainstream), conservative, or Christian. This division enabled CWA to monitor the frequency and type of coverage it received in each category and to adapt its message to the media outlet. CWA representatives suggested a “roadblock” existed when it came to getting secular media coverage because “the majority of people in the media realm come from a different viewpoint than we do, and they simply are personally shut down [when it comes to a Christian viewpoint and values]” (Interview A). Therefore, when contacting secular media, CWA downplayed the Bible as the standard for living (Interview A).
Additionally, CWA warned its constituents to exclude Biblical references from letters to the editor and to legislators because the “mainstream” often regard such references as “fanatical” and immediately discounted their point of view (CWA Publication 1990). CWA, however, had more freedom to express Christian viewpoints in Christian and conservative media because these outlets understood the difficulty CWA had getting secular media to do a balanced story (Interview A).

CWA was also self-conscious in its attempts to get free media coverage. Much like NOW, CWA used press releases and press conferences to respond to breaking news and geared these activities almost entirely around accommodating journalists. Unlike NOW, CWA spent time deliberating on the location of press conferences. Because CWA believed its viewpoints contrast with those of most journalists, the organization garnered media attention through sponsorship. Specifically, CWA held its press conferences at Capitol Hill when it wanted to accommodate a Congressman/woman who supported its position. A representative explained:

> There are sometimes where we hold press conferences at the Capitol because we’re as interested in having the Congressman there because Congressmen are a draw to the media. They’re [the media] interested when a Congressman speaks out on something.

Other times, CWA wanted to attract the press and held the conference at the National Press Club (Interview A). The type of issue being addressed influenced where CWA held the conference. For example, CWA held a press conference at the National Press Club on the issue of child pornography, which was fairly likely to be covered by mainstream media. CWA positions on abortion or homosexuality, however, may not be covered in mainstream outlets without the legitimacy of a public figure (Meyer and Gamson 1995).

CWA representatives recounted several instances in which personal “biases” prohibited CWA from receiving national media attention. One representative described a story to be aired on ABC’s news program “20/20” that presented both sides of the abortion debate. At the last minute, however, the producer decided to focus the story on NOW’s 25th anniversary and edited CWA from the program (Interview B). Another representative indicated that CWA also has difficulty advertising in secular media. Most recently, CWA tried to place television ads in Washington DC, Detroit, and Orlando, but the stations refused to air them. “Here we were buying the time and they still wouldn’t let us buy the time because they didn’t agree with the message” (Interview A).

In response to the perceived hostility of mainstream media, CWA adjusted its strategies in at least three ways. First, CWA “piggybacked” on NOW events and public statements. When NOW publicly commented on the Akron decision in 1990, for example, CWA attached itself to the event by offering an “oppositional voice to NOW” (Interview B). Second, CWA disseminated its messages using “friendly” media, such as radio. Radio generally targets narrower audiences and in fact proved to be more receptive to conservative messages as well as more likely to carry CWA messages at low and no cost (Interviews A and B). The receptivity of radio to CWA messages may be attributed to LeHaye’s status as a radio personality, which heightened organizational legitimacy in the media space, and the increased number of conservative radio programs over the last ten years, which created a conservative network of voices that actively supports conservative issues and organizations (Interview B).
Finally, CWA provided greater flexibility in who may speak to media on behalf of the organization. As a general rule, reporters want expert opinion. Therefore, the individual with the most expertise at CWA provided statements and interviews to the press (Interview A). This loose structure also applied to state and local chapters. National CWA regarded its 38 state directors as “experts” on state issues and did not attempt to coordinate their media frame and packages. Hence, state directors may run their statements by the national office, but it is purely for guidance purposes rather than an attempt to keep messages consistent nationally (Interview A). As a result, national CWA did not provide the chapters with media kits, but offered a prayer and action list that focused on current legislation and potential action (usually in the form of grassroots letter-writing campaigns) as well as offered a prayer for activists to consider (CWA publication 2000). This directed the focus of state and local CWA chapters towards grassroots organization rather than on honing media strategies (Interviews C and D).

Assessment of Media Coverage

At best, assessing CWA’s ability to get media coverage was “difficult” (Interview A). There were, however, organizational characteristics that hindered CWA’s ability to get coverage. First, the structure of the communications department itself was problematic. The communications department was internal, and consisted of one person rather than a media team. Although CWA used a clipping service to monitor coverage, feedback was limited and typically offered when coverage was particularly “slanted” (Interview A). In addition, the communication department lasted only as long as the director maintained her employment. One woman, who became the communication director in 1991, indicated that the department ceased to exist when the previous director left CWA several months before her arrival. As such, she built media lists and networks from scratch, individually faxed press releases to media outlets, and responded to inaccurate media coverage across the nation. Since she did not have staff or intern assistance, she did not have time to organize media training for state and local activists (Interview B).

CWA wants to increase its media coverage in secular outlets because this could stimulate broad mobilization around its issues. In this regard, a large media team or the use of a public relations firm would be useful. Instead, CWA stressed personal contacts with journalists as a strategy.

We can’t expect everyone to know that we’re here because of our website….There has to be the personal touch… Cold calling is just a step above sending a press release, but it all depends on what time you’re reaching them and if they’re in the midst of a story, or if they’re not interested in the topic. So the best is personal contact. But in particular when the personal contact is around an issue that both we work on and they cover (Interview A).

CWA representatives sought to find ways to personally meet journalists and maintain these contacts. However, because secular journalists ran in different “social circles” (Interview A), the types of personal networking done by CWA may have increased its visibility in conservative and Christian outlets only.
NOW and CWA in Mass Media

I now turn to the issue of the relative success of each organization in the mainstream media sample. First, I examine the types of coverage NOW and CWA received. Then, I discuss the prominence of each organization’s preferred packages in the sample. Finally, I compare the relative success of each organization to other SMOs that appeared in the sample. The mainstream media sample included 316 articles featuring the abortion issue. The articles are not evenly distributed over the three critical discourse moments or media outlets. Almost half the sample is comprised of articles from NYT (147 articles). Since NYT is a daily newspaper, this is expected. Because NYT could disproportionately influence the results, I ran the tests both with and without NYT. The inclusion of NYT did not skew the results.

Neither NOW nor CWA received a great deal of media coverage in the sample (Table 5). NOW received media coverage in only 10.8% (34) and CWA in only .6% (2) of the articles coded. It is important to note, however, that NOW not only received more media coverage, but also got more diverse coverage. Whereas CWA was mentioned only twice (once in the New York Times and the Nation), NOW was quoted and its frame/packages contained and adopted in the coverage.

Table 5. Media Coverage Outcomes of NOW and CWA in the Mass Media Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Outcome</th>
<th>NOW</th>
<th>CWA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Total N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Only</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentioned</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contained Frame/Package</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoted</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopts Frame/Package</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The type of media coverage also varied by year and media outlet. NOW received the most diverse media coverage in 1989 (Table 6) and in the New York Times, which mentioned, quoted, contained, and adopted NOW’s frame/packages more than any of the media outlets (Table 7). Specifically, articles in Time, National Review, and The Nation did not contain NOW packages, and articles in the National Review and The Nation did not quote NOW officials.
Table 6. Media Coverage Outcomes of NOW and CWA in the Mass Media Sample by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Outcome</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>1992</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOW</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentioned</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contained Frame/Package</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoted</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopts Frame/Package</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CWA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentioned</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 7. Media Coverage Outcome of NOW and CWA in the Mass Media Sample by Media Outlet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Outcome</th>
<th>NYT</th>
<th>Newsweek</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>National Review</th>
<th>The Nation</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOW</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Only</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentioned</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contained Frame/Package</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoted</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopts Frame/Package</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>147</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CWA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentioned</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>147</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This leads to the next question of whether or not the preferred frames and packages are more prominent in the media sample than the organizations. In fact, the preferred frames and packages of the organizations are more visible than the organizations themselves. Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of NOW and CWA packages in the mainstream media. The *rights* frame appeared in 49.4% (or 156) of the 316 articles coded, and the *morals* frame appeared in 13% (or

**Figure 1. Frequency of NOW and CWA Packages in the Mass Media Sample**

Source: The sample consists of 316 articles from *The New York Times, Newsweek, Time, The Nation*, and *National Review*. *Operation Bust* (NOW package) and CWA action (CWA package) are not listed since they did not appear in the mass media sample.
41) of the articles. Not only was the rights frame more prominent than the morals frame, but NOW’s preferred packages were mentioned more often than CWA’s preferred packages in the sample. What is immediately apparent in the figure is that only four of CWA’s twelve preferred packages were mentioned more than fifteen times: protect the preborn (56 mentions), public opinion (23), unfair press (22), and American failure (19). In contrast, seven of NOW’s preferred packages were mentioned more than fifteen times in the sample: Focus on the woman not the fetus (58 mentions), American failure (45), safety (34), public opinion (28), demystification (22), anti-abortion terrorism (18), and NOW action (17).

Although the rank order of the top six packages varied by media outlet, all of the outlets except National Review had at least four packages in common (Table 8). If National Review were excluded, protect the preborn package would be the only CWA package ranked in the top eight. While the frames and packages cannot be necessarily attributed to these two organizations, it is possible to determine who gets credit for these ideas in mainstream media.

Table 8. Rank Order of Top 6 Packages in Each Media Outlet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New York Times</th>
<th>Newsweek</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>National Review</th>
<th>Nation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOW Focus (40)</td>
<td>CWA Protect Preborn (9)</td>
<td>NOW Public Opinion (7)</td>
<td>CWA American Failure (17)</td>
<td>NOW Focus (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOW American Failure (27)</td>
<td>NOW American Failure (8)</td>
<td>CWA Public Opinion (4)</td>
<td>CWA Unfair press (14)</td>
<td>NOW American Failure (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWA Protect Preborn (26)</td>
<td>NOW Safety (6)</td>
<td>NOW action (4)</td>
<td>CWA Protect the Preborn (13)</td>
<td>CWA Protect the preborn (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOW Safety (23)</td>
<td>NOW Focus (5)</td>
<td>CWA Protect the preborn (3)</td>
<td>CWA Public Opinion (7)</td>
<td>CWA Next Step (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOW Terrorism (13)</td>
<td>NOW Unfair Press (5)</td>
<td>NOW Focus (3)</td>
<td>CWA Next Step (4)</td>
<td>CWA Attack on the family (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOW Public Opinion (13)</td>
<td>NOW Public Opinion (5)</td>
<td>NOW American Failure (3)</td>
<td>NOW Safety (3)</td>
<td>NOW Moral bankruptcy (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOW Demystification (13)</td>
<td>CWA American Failure (13)</td>
<td>NOW Focus (3)</td>
<td>CWA Protect the Preborn (5)</td>
<td>NOW American Failure (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The number in parenthesis is the frequency of the frame in the media outlet.

First, note the positions of NOW and CWA in comparison to the other pro-choice and pro-life organizations mentioned in the media sample (Figure 2). NOW received a total of 29 mentions, which was only 9 times less than Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) and only 8 times less than the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), both of which are single-issue organizations that dedicate their resources solely to reproductive issues. CWA, however, received very little media coverage even in comparison to other pro-life organizations, especially the National Right to Life Committee (30 mentions) and Operation Rescue (19 mentions). This suggests that NOW is fairly successful at getting mentioned in media coverage, relative to other SMOs, while CWA is not. Overall, it is apparent that pro-choice organizations were mentioned more often than pro-life organizations. Of the four organizations with more than
20 mentions in the sample, only one was pro-life (National Right to Life Committee). In fact, all of the media outlets in the sample, including *National Review*, mentioned pro-choice organizations more often than pro-life organizations.

**Figure 2. Frequency of Pro-Choice and Pro-Life Organizations Mentioned in the Sample**

![Figure 2: Frequency of Pro-Choice and Pro-Life Organizations Mentioned in the Sample](image)


*Pro-Choice Organizations: Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), National Abortion Rights Action League (NARL), National Organization for Women (NOW), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Abortion Rights League (ARL), Republicans for Choice (RFC), Women’s Action Coalition (WAC), National Abortion Federation (NAF), Federation of Feminist Women’s Health Clinics (FFWHC), and Coalition for Abortion Rights (CAR). There are also 6 other pro-choice organizations with 1 mention each that are not pictured. *NOW reflects 29 overall mentions after the codes for pictured only are removed.

**Pro-Life Organizations: National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), Operation Rescue (OR), Pro-Life Committee (PLC), Right to Life League (RLL), Concerned Women for America (CWA), Americans for Life League (ALL), Eagle Fourn (EF), and Catholics for Life (CFL). There are 4 other pro-life organizations with 1 mention each that are not pictured.
Discussion and Conclusion

The media strategies SMOs use to influence coverage matter. NOW viewed media as a tool to influence political outcomes and regarded media as important to its vision of political change. Moreover, NOW believed that it could influence media coverage. Getting coverage in and of itself was a primary organizational goal. NOW tested and adapted its messages to the prevailing political environment in order to garner mass appeal as well as produced information to support its position in the abortion debate. NOW attempted to coordinate its media messages at multiple levels through direct and indirect control. Indirectly, national NOW provided an “official line” on abortion to its chapters and offered step-by-step guidance for chapters to establish connections to media outlets. NOW directly policed the “phraseology” used by the chapters in the abortion debate and strategically placed spokeswomen across the country who could “sell” NOW to media. Finally, NOW assessed media coverage through monitoring and evaluated its ability to get coverage.

CWA, in contrast, initially regarded mainstream (secular) media as hostile to its messages and therefore did not consider getting media coverage an organizational goal. Additionally, CWA is only now beginning to fully appreciate the importance mass media plays in political issues.

Conservative groups did not understand media or its importance then [10 years ago] as much as they do now. [Now they understand] media is the name of the game and whoever frames the issue wins the argument. (Interview B)

While cynicism about media is not limited to organizations on the right, these factors made a different repertoire of action available to the organization in the 1980s and 1990s. CWA believed abortion was a moral absolute and did not adapt the issue to the political environment. CWA did not coordinate its frames and packages nationally, nor did it “sell” itself to the media. Instead, it emphasized the use of grassroots techniques and personal networking to establish meaningful links to media outlets as well as potential constituents. In sum, media did not seem to play an important role in CWA’s vision of social change and therefore messages were largely disseminated at the personal level (See Table 9 for a comparison of the organizations).

Although CWA did not get much attention, other pro-life organizations did. Several factors that may explain CWA’s lack of prominence in the media sample. First, its perception of mainstream media as hostile to movement messages may make it much more difficult to get coverage. Movement activists are unable or unwilling to build a relationship with journalists because they view and subsequently treat mainstream media as the “enemy” (Ryan 1991; Interview B). Moreover, once this hostility toward mainstream media is embedded in the organization and used as a package disseminated to constituents (such as unfair press in Table 4), this can have real-world consequences. Journalists may regard CWA as hostile and therefore do not contact it as a source of information.

Another possibility is that CWA’s focus on personal networks as a strategy may strengthen its presence in Christian and conservative media, but hinder its ability to get coverage in secular media. Since CWA emphasizes personal networking as a strategy and regards conservative and Christian media as more “sympathetic” to its messages and the media represent the constituency CWA seeks to mobilize, it may not do the necessary legwork to build a
relationship with mainstream media. It is also possible that mainstream journalists do not consider CWA a legitimate source or as having cultural power in the public/political sphere. Barker-Plummer’s study (1997) indicates that journalists regard NOW as a legitimate source because it represents a mass constituency on a salient issue.

Table 9. Comparison of NOW and CWA Media Strategies and Coverage Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of the Media</th>
<th>National Organization for Women (NOW)</th>
<th>Concerned Women for America (CWA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gaining media coverage is an organizational goal</td>
<td>• Mainstream coverage is biased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Occasional difficulty getting coverage</td>
<td>• Difficulty getting coverage in secular media outlets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Structure and Media Access</td>
<td>• Centralized and bureaucratic</td>
<td>• Decentralized and less bureaucratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Located in Washington DC from 1966 to the present</td>
<td>• Located in San Diego, CA until 1985 at which time the office moved to Washington DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Strategies</td>
<td>Instrumental with an emphasis on formalization:</td>
<td>Instrumental with less of an emphasis on formalization:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Message formation and adaptation: monitoring opposition, testing messages, and producing information</td>
<td>• Message formation and adaptation: Abortion is a moral issue and therefore the message does not change over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Frame and package coordination: Systematic response to “breaking news,” coordination of information and messages nationally, and education and strategic placement of spokeswomen</td>
<td>• Frame and package coordination: Systematic response to “breaking news,” and division of media into secular, Christian, and conservative categories. Do not coordinate messages nationally and communication department not consistently active.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assessment of coverage (2 processes): Was the message presented clearly in the coverage? Are structural factors maximizing or inhibiting organization’s ability to get coverage.</td>
<td>• Assessment of coverage: Fairly systematic evaluation and limited response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage Outcome</td>
<td>• Frame and packages are present in coverage more often than NOW</td>
<td>• Frame and packages are rarely present in coverage, except for the discussion on the pre-born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• NOW is not as prominent as single-issue organizations, but is the most visible multi-issue organization in the sample.</td>
<td>• Pro-life organizations are not as prominent as pro-choice organizations and CWA is not nearly as prominent as single-issue organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pro-choice packages and organizations get more coverage than pro-life packages and organizations.</td>
<td>• Pro-life packages and organizations get less coverage than pro-choice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, it could be that CWA is correct and mainstream media is hostile to its organizational messages and generally offers unbalanced coverage in news stories. While it is worth noting that getting media coverage is not simply a function of finding ideological agreement with a media outlet (Zald and McCarthy 1987), CWA would find some support for this claim. Despite the potential media bias, there appears to be a pro-life media space that CWA is missing. There is, however, a dearth of information on conservative organizations and mass media, and further research is necessary to understand this relationship.

Two additional points are worth making. First, it is important to note that while the SMOs responded to one another’s positions in their organizational documents, it is not clear that organizations respond to one another in mass media. For example, CWA’s feminist folly package received some coverage in mainstream media, but NOW’s Operation Bust package did not appear at all in the sample (Figure 1). SMOs may use rhetorical strategies in their organizational documents to address oppositional viewpoints (Table 2 and 3), but national media may not pick up on this dialectic. Additionally, SMOs do not disseminate information on all their packages at all times. Second, that single-issue organizations received more mentions than multi-issue organizations in the sample. While most of the organizations listed in Figure 2 have long histories and are still active, Operation Rescue (OR) stands out as a notable exception. OR was an active pro-life group during this timeframe that was known for using dramatic techniques to gain media coverage (so much so that NOW organized training groups across the country to counter-act OR tactics). However, as Gitlin (1980) noted, drama is an excellent way to get into the mainstream media, but that this tactic is often short-lived and counter-productive. If an organization wants to sustain itself and get media coverage over the longer haul, certain formalized strategies, such as those used by NOW, seem to work better than others. It is worth noting, however, that just because an organization gets media coverage, it does not mean it wins the war in the political arena. While NOW may have received more coverage than CWA in mainstream media, the pro-life forces clearly won the political battles at the national and state level during this time period. The lesson, then, is that both perceptions of media and strategies matter. While resources and the structure of media are important in the media game, the importance of organizational strategies has been under-emphasized in the literature.

In summary, this study contributes to social movement research in three ways. First, I bring the agency of SMOs to the forefront by examining the strategies SMOs use to overcome media obstacles and get coverage. Previous research focuses on the importance of resources and the structure of media in the relationship between movements and mass media (Gans 1979; Gitlin 1980; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Gamson et al.1992; Croteau and Hoynes 1994; Smith 1996; Rojecki 1999). Undoubtedly, resources and the structure of media are important. Strategies, however, are also important and have been underemphasized in the literature. Second, I offer a definition of media success that considers the various components of media coverage and treats coverage as a beginning point for strategic action. Finally, I consider countermovement activity in the abortion debate. The examination of countermovement influence is particularly important because it has been virtually ignored in the social movement literature (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996) and because it provides two fields of analysis: it provides a general picture of who gets media coverage on a particular issue, and it allows comparisons to be made among both politically like-minded and opposing organizations.
Future research should examine not only the strategies SMOs use to get coverage, but examine how journalists choose their sources on particular issues. Examining social movement issues from the journalistic perspective will allow researchers to determine why particular organizations get credit for ideas while other do not. Additionally, it will begin to shed light on the dynamic between conservative organizations and mainstream media outlets.
Methodological Appendix

This section provides detail regarding the preferred packages used by CWA and NOW, which are highlighted by italics. As I read through the organizational material I was cognizant of metaphors, catch phrases, slogans, visuals, moral appeals, and other symbolic devices, which are all components of packages, used in the articles (Gamson 1992). In the description below, I include the tone and words used in the organizational material to describe the packages.

CWA Packages

CWA frames the abortion issue as one of morals. Sanctity of human life is the most important value, and as such abortion is a sin against God and man. Several lines of argument, or packages, are used to support the morals frame. Most obvious is protecting the preborn. Since life begins at conception, abortion murders babies, which have the God-given right to life. Additionally, abortion paves the way to the next step, which is the degradation of human life and manifests in death advocacy (euthanasia) and eugenics. Abortion policy and technology (such as RU486) treats pregnancy as a disease rather than human life. As a consequence babies are ripped from the womb and the fetal tissue is sold for medical experimentation and poor minority women are often convinced to have abortions because they are not “fit” to have children (eugenics). In this sense, abortion is regarded as an attack on the American family and parental rights. Young women and the poor are often coerced into having abortions, and in high schools young girls are pushed to express themselves sexually as well as take birth control. These examples begin to expose the illegal activity of abortionists, who exploit women for profit, and even force abortions on women who are not pregnant or have changed their minds. Abortionists do not discuss the adoption alternative with women, nor do they assist women with the stress and guilt felt after the abortion. CWA also argues that public opinion supports their views that abortion should have some restrictions, especially regarding parental consent laws. The biggest problem that CWA faces is the unfair press. Liberal media unfairly frames events and gives press to “hysterical,” mudslinging, “pro-death” feminists, who promote valuelessness (feminist folly), and virtually ignore CWA actions. In sum, abortion is an American failure that violates Christian values, confuses moral and constitutional issues, uses tax dollars to subsidize abortion services, and degrades the parent child relationship. As such, the women of CWA serve as moral saviors, who place a high value on human life, fight for the preborn, and focus on instilling morality and character in their own children.

NOW Packages

NOW frames the abortion issue as one of rights. Women have the civil and constitutional right to control their bodies. Much like CWA, NOW uses several specific packages to support this line of argument. First and foremost, NOW advocates that there needs to be a focus on the woman and not the fetus. While the fetus is important, it is does not merit the exclusion of all other realities. As such the woman must have more rights than the fetus. In addition, criminalizing abortion will compromise the safety of women. Many women will seek back alley abortions, which will lead to a number of deaths. The criminalization of abortion, which is an attack on constitutional rights, may also lead to anarchy by American citizens who will not allow the government to compromise an individual’s right to control her body. NOW regards the current decisions restricting abortion
(such as the 1989 Webster decision) as an American failure by the government to protect the fundamental rights of women, especially those of the poor and women of color. This is particularly surprising since public opinion supports the right of women to choose. This sentiment is also echoed by the global feminist community, which fights for reproductive freedom on a global scale.

The biggest problem NOW faces are attacks by the so-called right-to-lifers, who are “Bible-spouting, religious fanatics” that engage in vigilante and terrorist acts. In addition, to bombing and torching clinics that provide contraceptive and infertility services in addition to abortion services and physically attacking clinic workers as well as patients, the anti-abortion terrorists engage in other morally bankrupt behavior including emotional manipulation, willful deception, vicious harassment, illegal acts, and blatant propaganda. In response, NOW calls for no compromises on the position of choice. The constitutional right to an abortion must be extended to all women regardless of age, color, and income level. In addition, NOW is increasingly successful at thwarting KKK-like organizations, such as Operation Rescue, attempts to disrupt and destroy safe and legal services (Operation bust). There is also a focus on NOW actions and the demystification of abortion through the use of scientific evidence, which proves that the fetus is not a human being. Once the fetus is seen as just that the abortion debate can be broadened to include abortfacients such as RU486.

CWA Interviews

I conducted several interviews with past and current CWA employees and volunteers. Although extensive notes were taken during the interviews, I was given permission to tape record only those interviews with Interview A. Interview A is an individual who currently works for CWA, Interview B is an individual who worked for CWA during the time periods under analysis, Interview C and Interview D are currently State Directors for CWA. The identities of all those interviewed are confidential.

Media Coverage Outcomes

As outlined in the literature review, there are several different components of success. Therefore, I make distinctions in the coding scheme (below). The categories are mutually exclusive and note one of the following: that the group is not mentioned in an article; the group is pictured but not mentioned by name; the group is mentioned by name, but does not have the opportunity to assert its position on abortion and/or the Supreme Court ruling; the organization is mentioned and their frame/packages are contained within the article (although opposing groups are also mentioned and/or have frames contained within the article); the organization is quoted meaning the group is given an opportunity to represent its views in its own voice (opposition is still present); or the group’s frame and packages are adopted in the article (meaning SMO officials are quoted, its positions and actions discussed, its frame and packages relayed without distortion, and there is not an oppositional view present in the article).
## Coding Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Outlet type</th>
<th>Outlet date</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Frame present

- **Rights (1)**
- **Morals (2)**

### Rights Components

- **Safety (1)**
- **Terrorism (2)**
- **Focus on women (3)**
- **Public Opinion (4)**
- **Moral Bankruptcy (5)**
- **American Failure (6)**
- **Demystification (7)**
- **No Compromise (8)**
- **Operation Bust (9)**
- **NOW Action (10)**
- **Anarchy (11)**
- **Global Sisterhood (12)**

### Morals Components

- **Preborn protect (1)**
- **Feminist folly (2)**
- **Illegal Activity (3)**
- **Next Step (4)**
- **Public Opinion (5)**
- **American Failure (6)**
- **CWA Action (7)**
- **Unfair Press (8)**
- **Attack parental right (9)**
- **Moral Saviors (10)**
- **After abortion (11)**
- **Adoption alternative (12)**

### NOW Impact

- **Not mentioned (1)**
- **Mentioned (2)**
- **Contained frame (3)**
- **Quoted (4)**
- **Adopts frame (5)**
- **List visual type**

### CWA Impact

- **Not mentioned (1)**
- **Mentioned (2)**
- **Contained frame (3)**
- **Quoted (4)**
- **Adopts framed (4)**

### Event Mentioned NOW

- **Event Mentioned CWA**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Metaphors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rally (1)</td>
<td>Rally (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstration (2)</td>
<td>Demonstration (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vigil (3)</td>
<td>Vigil (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention (5)</td>
<td>Convention (5)</td>
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<td>Court decision (6)</td>
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<td>None (7)</td>
<td>None (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (9)</td>
<td>Other (9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Event Mentioned CWA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Catch Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Rhetorical Strategy used</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Vigil (3)</td>
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<td>Convention (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Decision (6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>None (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### General Event Mentioned

- **Demonstration (2)**
- **Vigil (3)**
- **Lobbying (4)**
- **Convention (5)**
- **Court decision (6)**
- **None (7)**
- **Other (9)**
References


Noonan, Rita. 1997. Women Against the State: Political Opportunities and Collective Action Frames in Chile’s Transition to Democracy, in *Social Movements: Readings on Their Emergence, Mobilization, and Dynamics*, edited by Doug McAdam and David Snow. Los Angeles: Roxbury.


Endnotes

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1 Both organizations claim that membership numbers represent the number of individuals that have paid membership dues ($20.00 for each organization). However, as Gamson (1990) notes, membership numbers are often inflated in order to increase the legitimacy of the organization within the larger socio-political arena. The membership numbers obtained for NOW represent the numbers reported on organizational documents. CWA would not provide membership numbers and therefore I relied on the Encyclopedia of Associations. It is evident based on multiplication (20.00 * 250,000.00) that CWA either inflates its membership numbers, does not require individuals to pay the full fee to claim membership and count as members in the organization, or underreports/underestimates its budget in this source.

2 This parallels Gamson’s methodology (1992) which stresses the importance of organizational documents when studying the movement-media relationship. Frame dynamism over time, which may not be visible in mainstream media, is evident in organizational documents. In addition, I do not assume that NOW and CWA exclusively use the preferred packages I derived from the organizational documents. Since CWA and NOW both participate in coalitions on the abortion issue, undoubtedly each side shares a repertoire of preferred packages. Since I am examining two organizations, I do not capture this overlap.

3 Further information on methods is available upon request.

4 *Time* has a total circulation of 4,150,223 each month and *Newsweek* has a total circulation of 3,276,457 each month according to Consumer Magazine Advertising Source: The complete source for consumer magazine information 1998.

5 Dawn McCaffrey and Jennifer Keys use the term “polarization-vilification” in their article investigating how frame alignment processes are used by SMOs in response to a countermovement. They identify three rhetorical strategies used by the New York State NOW chapter in the abortion debate: polarization-vilification, frame debunking, and frame saving. Polarization-vilification establishes an “us versus them” dichotomy and characterizes the opposition as malevolent. Frame debunking describes a SMO’s attempt to discredit a competing ideological package while advancing its own. Frame saving refers to a SMO’s effort to “rescue” a challenged or denounced frame. Since the authors focused on mobilization efforts, it is necessary to expand the scope of “frame saving” to also include frame maintenance. I do not assume that the organization is necessarily responding to a challenge when it uses the frame saving strategy. Organizations also need to maintain or reinforce frames for them to remain viable for the constituency.