

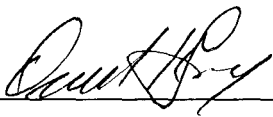
NEWS AS A POLITICAL RESOURCE?  
A CASE STUDY OF THE MEDIA STRATEGIES AND MEDIA  
REPRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN,  
1966-1980.

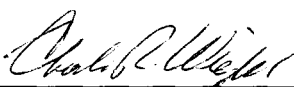
BERNADETTE BARKER-PLUMMER

A DISSERTATION  
IN  
COMMUNICATION

Presented To The Faculties Of The University Of  
Pennsylvania In Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirements  
For The Degree Of Doctor Of Philosophy

1997

  
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Supervisor Of Dissertation

  
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Graduate Group Chairperson

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**1997**

## Dedication

To Jim and Margaret Barker, and in memory of Margaret  
McGuire Collins.

## Acknowledgments

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First, I want to thank my advisor, Professor Oscar Gandy Jr. for his advice, his support and his thoughtful feedback and criticism throughout this project. Oscar has taught me many lessons, among them the value of critical work and the responsibility to choose important problems for study. But the lesson I have benefited from most is one he taught by example -- to trust and value my own voice. I hope to emulate with my own students, the unique blend of care, critique, and respect that Oscar brings to his relationships with his students.

I would also like to thank my dissertation committee members, George Gerbner, Klaus Krippendorff, and Larry Gross for their individual and collective wisdom. George Gerbner's ability to get to the heart of any mass communication problem, and his certainty that mass communication is a problem worth studying, has been inspirational to me since I first encountered his work. Klaus Krippendorff's ability, and his willingness, to start over and rethink a problem at any stage, has taught me that all knowledge is tentative and that the process of investigation is as important as the destination. My conversations with Klaus have influenced me in more ways than I can account for in citations. I thank Larry Gross for his kindness in stepping in to help me when I lost one of my advisors to retirement,

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NEWS AS A POLITICAL RESOURCE?  
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REPRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN,  
1966-1980.

Bernadette Barker-Plummer

Professor Oscar Gandy, Jr.

This dissertation is a case study of the historical interaction between the New York Times and The National Organization for Women, 1966-1980. It investigates whether commercial news media can be used as a political resource by social movement groups. Using archival and content analysis methods, the study investigates the development of media strategies by NOW and then assesses whether these strategies "succeeded," through an analysis of NOW's representation in the Times, over a 15 year period. The study found that news was a resource in some ways. Through resource investments in media work, a general strategy of reflexive appropriation of news conventions (media pragmatism), and the creation and maintenance of relationships with some key women reporters, NOW was able to produce some routine access to news over time. Despite some marginalizing coverage

in the early years, NOW's legitimacy as a source in the Times increased generally over 1966-1980. However this "success" had important limitations. NOW's news access and the legitimacy of its representation shifted depending on the kind of issue NOW was addressing and on the context in which the group was being judged. If NOW talked about more traditionally "public" issues (such as sex discrimination in employment), it was represented as a more legitimate source and its stories were more likely to be placed in the news sections. When the organization talked about "newer" issues or invoked more structural frames -- such as child care issues or structural "sexism" or patriarchy frames -- these stories would be placed in lifestyle or "women's page" sections and in the context of these stories, NOW's organizational legitimacy was likely to be questioned. I argue that these and other patterns in the NOW-Times relationship indicate a general "processing" of NOW's discourse by the Times through a public-private filter which worked to contain NOW's public communication and which makes news a contradictory resource for feminists.

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## Introduction and Overview

Social movements, especially the "new" social movements such as the women's, environmental, and peace movements, have come to be seen as important transformative agents in modern societies. As one of the few sources of both critical ideas and effective mobilization in contemporary societies, the new social movements (NSMs) have come to center stage as agents of social change (Habermas, 1981; Touraine, 1985; Giddens, 1987; Boggs, 1986; Eyerman and Jamison, 1991).

In particular, the women's or feminist movement has been credited with the potential to radically transform society. Feminism, it is said, has produced fundamental challenges to traditional or "old" political distinctions, (such as that between public and private concerns), and it has subtly, but radically, extended what can even legitimately be considered a "political" issue (Habermas, 1981; Offe, 1985; Van Zoonen, 1994).

However, we have very little information about how the new movements have (or will) achieve these transformative goals. How have the new movements produced new knowledge to challenge existing paradigms? How have they communicated these challenges? What are the concrete communication strategies involved in building and diffusing new political agendas or

identities? In particular, what role(s) do media play in 2  
the mass communication of new social movement  
discourses?

As the major source of political information for  
citizens in modern societies, news media are still one  
of the most critical bottlenecks in the distribution of  
new knowledge by and about emergent social movements.  
Whether (and how) the new movements can strategically  
produce access to news media, and what kinds of control  
(if any) they can exercise over the representation of  
their issues and identity must be key questions in any  
assessment of the transformative potential of the new  
movements.<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation is a case study of the  
relationship between one new social movement  
organization, The National Organization for Women (NOW),  
and news media. Through a close historical analysis of  
the experiences of NOW in interaction with media,  
followed by an analysis of the outcome of NOW's  
strategies in news content, the study asks whether  
commercial news media can be a resource in the  
mobilization and strategic effectivity of new social  
movements.

Some critical media observers (cf. Gitlin, 1980)  
have dismissed news as a political resource for social  
movements, saying that news, because of its commercial  
basis and its links to powerful groups in society, will

always tend to "marginalize" challenging voices. This approach to media-movement relationships -- what we might call a "strong hegemony" model -- has gained quite wide acceptance in critical media studies. It is also a model, despite its tendency to be disempowering, that is held by many movement activists as well.

But the strong hegemony model of media and social movements is long overdue for a theoretical overhaul. The position that news media will inevitably marginalize "real" criticism and incorporate all other kinds, is at once too deterministic to accommodate the day-to-day complexity of media-movement relationships (only two outcome categories for what is a complex historical engagement), and also too vague to be particularly helpful.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps most importantly the strong hegemony model obscures the reflexivity of movement strategists and the contradictory nature of news itself -- both of which, recent studies suggest, may be key to the use of news as a political resource by strategic movement sources (Ryan, 1991; Hackett, 1991; Barker-Plummer, 1995, 1996).

In this study I propose a new model for analyzing media-movement relations -- a dialogic model. A dialogic approach to media-movement interactions moves beyond a deterministic approach and allows us to see the media-movement relationship as two-way, shifting and reflexive. It treats news as a discursive resource --

that is a system of knowledge -- that can be strategically appropriated by movements, even though this appropriation may come with some unintended costs. A dialogic model sees movement strategists as reflexive agents, and both movement and media discourses as socially constructed and essentially overdetermined. A dialogical interaction may well end in marginalization for a movement, but in this framework that is an empirical not a theoretical question. In a dialogical framework media-movement relations are essentially indeterminate because the actors involved can learn about and use the structures that may have previously constrained their interactions (Giddens, 1984).

Not only does a dialogical approach to media-movement relations have more purchase on the empirical (messy and contradictory) reality of these interactions than a marginalization model, but it allows us to construct an ethical model of such relations in which we allow our subjects to be reflexive agents (not hopeless objects of media coverage) and in which we can account for any effects of our own communications about the process within the theory itself (Krippendorff, 1995, 1996).

The study is structured in two parts. First it investigates the development of NOW's media strategies, asking how NOW leaders understood news as a political resource, how they managed the organization's

relationship with news media, and what such symbolic work "cost" the movement -- both materially and ideologically -- over time. Second, the study then analyzes the outcome of the NOW-news interaction in news content. Through a content analysis of NOW's representation over time in *The New York Times*, the study assesses how well NOW was able to communicate its discourse "through" news media. The study tracks how news re-presented NOW's political agenda and its organizational legitimacy as a speaker for women's concerns. Overall the study ask what kinds of "success" NOW experienced in using news as a political resource, and what such success "cost" the organization.

The study draws on NOW's archived historical papers, on an original content analysis of the representation of NOW in the New York Times, 1966-1980, and on accounts of early feminist movement mobilizing by journalists and activists.

### **Movements and Media:**

#### **Mass Communicating New Knowledges**

Observers of the new social movements have tended to assume that the innovative content of new movement discourses will itself be transformative (cf. Habermas, 1981; Giddens, 1987), but the transformative potential of social movements is as likely to rest in their ability to strategically articulate, mass communicate,

and mobilize people around their ideas, as it is in ideas themselves. As Snow (1988) has pointed out, movements can have no effects at all until they reach and resonate with audiences, whether these are elite policy makers, grassroots activists or potential sympathizers.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of mass communication to the new social movements is especially clear. The goals of the new movements (such as the environmental, women's and peace movements) are themselves essentially communicative. Their aim is not to overthrow governments but to produce a revolution in meaning. They seek to persuade people to change behaviors, values, and identities through publicizing irrationalities or inequalities in society and by making available alternative sources of information for identity formation (Laraña and Johnson, 1994; Touraine, 1985; Eyerman and Jamison, 1991).

As producers of new knowledge and "framers" of social reality in new and challenging ways, the NSMs may be especially important strategic communicators early in the public opinion and public policy formation process -- that is in the making of "new" public issues. Fraser (1990, 1992), for example, has suggested that it is largely due to the communicative efforts of feminist groups that such issues as sexual harassment, domestic

violence, reproductive choice and child care have become 7  
"public" (and problematic) areas of social life at all.

However, we have no clear idea how these issues were "created" or communicated by movement groups. How did feminist groups identify, publicize and "make" sexual harassment a public issue? What communication and mass communication strategies did they use and how successful were these strategies? What role(s) did media play in this process of publicity?

A critical first step in understanding the communicative practices and potential of the new movements may be taken by focusing on their relationship with news media organizations. Just as other political actors in modern societies have discovered, movement strategists realize that news access, and especially legitimate access or "voice" in the news, is critical to being heard and taken seriously in the public sphere (Bonk, 1988; Bobo, Kendall and Max, 1991; Ryan, 1991). Before they can change society, and public or policy makers attitudes more generally, movement communicators have to successfully access and use news media.

News has both distributive and authoritative value for movements. It can help movements reach mass audiences they could not otherwise afford to reach -- and in doing so movements may be able to influence decision making on their issues. But access to news brings more than just visibility for sources. News

access -- especially routine and legitimate voice in the news -- is also associated with credibility and authority in American politics. Ericson et al. (1989) have suggested in fact that routine access to news in modern complex societies, where struggles over public policy and cultural practices often take place through news media, is a form of symbolic or cultural capital that is critically tied to other forms of social power.

As for-profit, capitalist organizations, interested in audience maximization and in serving advertising clients, news media are unlikely to be straightforward or easy targets for movement communications. In fact most of the routine tendencies of capitalist news media are indeed likely to work against the serious representation of movements. From the political positions of their owners, to the day-to-day collection of the "information subsidies" produced by state and corporate organizations, media routines, ideologies and practices are not predisposed towards the sympathetic diffusion of movement discourses. And as low resourced sources, usual outside the already-constituted "beats" that reflect institutional power, movement organizations are also likely to find it difficult to make themselves newsworthy.

However, news is more than simply a rationalized information product. It is also a complex, historically developed and professionally produced discourse or form

of knowledge (Van Dijk, 1988; Hartley, 1982; Altheide and Snow, 1979). As such, news may attain some relative autonomy from its economic base for a variety of reasons -- not least of which is the fact that its legitimacy as a form of knowledge for its practitioners and consumers depends at least on the appearance of such autonomy.

In fact, as Hallin (1992) has recently suggested, news media in the United States need to be understood as overdetermined institutions that produce contradictory and overdetermined texts. News organizations are at one and the same time driven by commercial, cultural and political forces. Such overdetermination does not preclude structure in news practices and discourses, rather it brings our attention to multiple structures. It challenges our ability to produce simple cause-effect relationships between forces and their outcomes, but does not deny that these forces may indeed have some structuring effects. In the case of news and movement interaction, the problem becomes one of identifying the structuring forces for both news and movements that reproduce and/or challenge hegemonic realities.

### **A Dialogical/Structurationist Framework**

Media-movement interactions are best understood as historically dialogical relationships. That is, they are interactive, reflexive and strategic relations which take place not only between individuals and

organizations day-to-day, but also, ultimately, between discourses (or systems of meaning) which influence each other historically.

Like other social agents, movement strategists and media workers are at the same time complex, knowledgeable and strategic agents, who have some autonomy to create the relationship in a unique way, and also, determined subjects acting out (or at least constrained by) the underlying "rules" and resources of their respective organizations' practices and discourses (Giddens, 1984). That is, movement strategists and media workers actively draw on their respective discourses but they are also produced by them. For example, journalists interacting with the feminist movement may, even as they seek to understand feminism on its own terms, bring to the interaction categories of analysis (such as the public/private divide of liberal politics) that constrains their ability to "see" the movement. This kind of constraint affects what they consider to be "real" news as much as any consciously learned criteria of "newsworthiness." But while they may draw reflexively on one set of constraints (i.e. be aware of and try to stretch the definitions of "newsworthiness" that they know), they are reproducing another at the same time.

To add to this complexity, both sets of agents are reflexive about their own and each others' discourses. That is, both media workers and feminists are able to

infer patterns and conventions (the rules) about their own and each others discourse, and to encode their communications within that framework in order to better work with or manipulate the other.<sup>4</sup> Giddens (1984) has called this kind of human activity "reflexive appropriation" of the rules of human actions and interactions, and he has suggested that it is exactly this kind of recognition and reflexive appropriation that complicates, and challenges, any deterministic model of social change.

In the case of feminism and news, then, not only are two discrete systems of meaning interacting historically (one processing the other in systematic ways), but the agents of each discourse may strategically learn and employ the "rules" of their own or each others' practice in the interaction. This kind of "reflexive appropriation of the rules" is most apparent, for example, in the centrality that some movement strategists attribute to learning about and using the "rules" of news (e.g. event-oriented, personality centered, individualistic, narratives) for their own purposes. But it is also the case that news itself has been changed as feminist journalists bring to it new categories of experience (such as sexual harassment or the category called "women's issues") and change that discourse too.

Seeing the media-movement relationship as dialogical does not preclude that it is an imbalanced interaction. It is likely that movements continue to "need" media more than media "need" movements. Neither does a dialogical relationship preclude that the outcome of media movement dialogs over time may indeed be something we might call "marginalization" or "incorporation." But such a framework does draw our attention to the likely complexity of such a process. For example, in a dialogical model, "incorporation" may be seen as the processing of one discourse systematically through the lens of another in ways that strip the original of key elements. But this processing may not always be the result of news categories being imposed, but (as is the case in this study) it can be the outcome of movement groups themselves using media conventions to package their ideas.

These multiple, reflexive interactions -- individual, organizational and historical-discursive -- make the media-movement relationship extremely complex and overdetermined. But such a model is likely to have more purchase on reality than more reductionist either/or frameworks. When we see movements and media engaged in dialogical struggle, instead of inquiring how a movement is "covered" by news, we ask: How do movement strategists and journalists interact? How have movement organizations understood news as a resource and

how have they experienced its constraints, both in terms 13  
of the "cost" of accessing news and in constraining  
their identity formation? What strategies have they  
developed to control their interactions with news media  
and how have those strategies fared in interaction with  
news media routines and processes? In short, what has  
worked and what hasn't?

As such a dialogical understanding may produce  
critical or strategic knowledge -- knowledge that may be  
used to produce change.

### **What Structures Dialogic Relations?**

#### **Resources, Strategies and Ideology**

In a dialogic framework, then, we expect the media-  
movement relationship to be two-way, reflexive and  
strategic, and the outcome of news-source interactions  
to be overdetermined. But it is still a critical  
question as to what factors delimit or enhance these  
interactions from the point of view of a movement  
organization. Giddens (1984) has noted that social power  
is implicated, and reproduced, in all interactions, but  
we still need to ask what aspects of interactions make  
them less or more likely to reproduce structures in  
hegemonic (i.e. as they were before) or challenging  
ways?

In the context of media-movement relations, this  
means that we are still left with questions about what

is likely to structure that relationship in ways that are useful for movement groups. For example, what resources or practices of movement groups are associated with successful interactions? And, what is "success" in this framework anyway?

In this study I identify and investigate three general factors that have a significant impact on the outcomes of media-movement relations: the role of resources (such as money, skills, competencies, organization and so on) in structuring the interaction for a movement organization, the role of reflexive strategies (for example, developing and using news conventions), and the role of ideology and identity factors, in NOW's ability to access and control its interactions with news.

I draw these three general structuring forces from a synthesis of three different but overlapping approaches to understanding news -- the political economic, sociological and ideological/hegemonic studies of news and its sources. First, from the political economic literature (cf. Gandy, 1982, 1989) I draw questions about the resources needed to access media. I argue that resources are fundamental to any successful interaction and in this study I investigate NOW's mobilization of resources generally, and try to determine what kinds of resources were most useful in producing successful dialogic relations with media. I

trace NOW's mobilization of members, staff and communicative competence over time and analyze how such resources were associated with media access.

From the sociological news literatures I draw questions about media access strategies. These studies (cf. Tuchman, 1980; Gans, 1980; Fishman, 1980) have emphasized the centrality of media routines and practices to understanding news. In source studies, such as this one, then, strategies that try to use and/or subvert these routines are likely to be important. In this study, I investigate NOW's development of media strategies across time, describing the group's shifting understanding of media and the concrete practices and strategies the organization developed to use access news and to control its representation within news content. In particular, I am concerned with investigating the practices and outcomes of what Giddens (1984) has called "reflexive strategizing" in which agents learn about and try to use the "rules" of systems and discourses which would previously have constrained them (in this case the "rules" of news, such as news conventions, routines and practices.)

Finally, from the critical ideological approach to news media (cf. Gitlin, 1980; Goldman and Rajagopal, 1991), I draw questions about the structuring properties of a group's ideology or identity. In this framework, it is the content of movements -- i.e. their ideas -- that

is seen to structure the media-movement relationship rather than the groups' resources or media strategies. Movements "success" (or usually failure) in this framework is seen to be more a result of what they are than what they do.

This view of a movement group's ideology/identity is very problematic however, because it tends to see identity as something pre-structured and independent of media relations. But a movement's identity is not a stable object. It is a construction that is constantly being reconstructed over time. In fact a movement's public identity (how it is perceived by most people -- including people who are part of the group or who may then join the group) is the result of interaction with media, not a precursor to it (van Zoonen, 1992).<sup>5</sup>

Still, it is important that we try to discover how a movement's identity at different times, and its interpretation by journalists, may influence its relationship to media. So in this study I compare some elements of NOW's "internal" identity with its media representation (which I am calling its public identity). For example, I ask what was NOW's "agenda" at different points and how was this re-presented by news. And, how was NOW's self-image as a spokesperson for all women re-presented by the Times.

I draw my construction of NOW's "internal" identity from its own records and documents and then compare this

construction to the Times construction of NOW. This is not a perfect solution -- neither of these identities are "authentic." Both are likely to be the result of strategic communication which will shift over time. But by comparing the representation of NOW in the records (internal newsletters, policy statements, minutes, etc.) over which its leaders at least had some control, with re-presentations of NOW's identity in news media, we may be able to map some patterns in the "processing" of NOW that may give us some leverage on the question of what role(s) NOW's varying (and strategically produced) identity played in its media relations.

These three traditions in news studies -- the political economic, sociological and ideological -- have often been set up in opposition to one another, each being presented at different times as "the " answer to the question of what determines news content. However, I argue here that news as a professional, commercial and cultural institution reflects the influences of all of these factors (Hallin, 1994). In a dialogic/structuration approach, the question becomes, not which one factor determines the outcome of any news interaction, but how and in what contexts do all of these factors interact and/or overlap to produce a complex outcome. Only empirical investigations that include all these factors for analysis can in fact sort out the overlapping roles of these determinants.<sup>6</sup>

## **What Constitutes Success?**

### **Assessing Outcomes in a Dialogical Framework**

It is difficult to assess the roles of these three factors, however, until we also have a working definition of success. In a general sense we can define success in this study as the relative ability of movements to use the rules of news as resources rather than constraints, but still, what outcomes would constitute successful strategic appropriation of news? How would we know if a movement has succeeded in reflexively appropriating news conventions? What are some measurements of communicative success? What constitutes a successful reflexive media strategy?

For example, what would constitute a successful interaction of NOW with the Times? Is it simply the case that being talked about is enough? As Ericson et al. (1989) have suggested there is a vast difference for sources in being *covered* by news (i.e. being talked about) and having routine news *voice* which they associate with a form of cultural capital in modern media saturated societies. What kind of treatment by news constitutes reasonable representations? Should NOW be represented in the same way that it would represent itself? And what should that representation cost the movement organization? Is access successful if it takes all of an organization's time and resources?

For the most part, source studies have avoided this question. Gitlin (1980), for example, in his important study of media and movements does not explicitly state what kind of representation of SDS would have been a "good" outcome for the group. Other news studies have (implicitly at least) equated success for sources with simply being mentioned or being quoted in news accounts (cf. Sigal, 1973; Gans, 1980; Barker-Plummer, 1989, etc.), though the relationship between being cited and controlling the representation of an issue is surely quite problematic.

More nuanced accounts of media content have suggested that source success can be seen in processes of "definitional authority" (cf. Hall, 1978) in which powerful sources define issues first and then others have to respond. But even these concepts have their problems. As Schlesinger (1990) notes, for example, the text-based (or "media-centric") idea of definitional authority suggested by Hall et al. (1978) may not be particularly helpful in assessing source success because it does not trace the process through which such authority is produced, but rather infers it from the already powerful social locations that these sources hold outside of media discourse.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed the difficulty of defining success within a dialogical or constructivist framework has led some researchers to abandon it as an overly "instrumental"

concept that has no place in a constructivist/dialogical 20  
framework of media in society (cf. Van Zoonen, 1992).  
But even in a dialogical framework we still need some  
indicators or assessments of whether what movements are  
doing is having useful outcomes, both for their own  
sake, and for the sake of developing useful models of  
media-movement interactions.

In this study I use a four tiered system of  
assessment of NOW's success: access, voice, placement  
and control. *Access* is simply a question of visibility.  
*Voice* refers to NOW's ability to be quoted -- i.e.  
being allowed to speak. *Placement* refers to the context  
of NOW's stories and the associated value of different  
news sections. *Control* refers to NOW's ability to  
maintain control of its organizational agenda and  
identity in its media representation. The measurement of  
control here is essentially comparative -- it attempts  
to gauge how much of NOW's own issue choice and framing  
came through into news content. It is assessed by  
comparing NOW's agendas and identity strategies with  
their media representation at key points.

These dimensions of success are analytically  
separable, and can, to some extent be understood,  
hierarchically. We can say for example that access is  
basic to all other levels, that voice is an additional  
level of successful interaction, and that legitimate  
representation or control of one's identity makes a

voice more credible and more likely to be listened to. 21

Control, over one's identity and one's agenda, is in this framework the ultimate "success" of strategic interaction. In reality of course, any one story might have overlapping and contradictory elements of all of these, and my aim is not to put these forward as definitive a-priori categories of success, but simply to use them to organize a discussion in which it will become clear that they are exploratory and inter-related concepts.

### **Design of the Study**

Understanding and assessing a dialogical relationship over time requires a willingness to move back and forth between perspectives and methods. In this study I draw on various sources of information (archival papers, historical accounts, news content) and use different types of analyses (historical, case study and content analysis) to deal with different aspects of these questions. Archival sources (such as NOW's historical archive at Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe and the Women and Media Archive at the University of Missouri) were invaluable resources in reconstructing NOW's media resource investments and media strategies. Secondary sources such as accounts and histories of the early movement (and its relationship to the press) by activists made it possible to expand the analysis of

movement media strategies beyond NOW and indeed to compare NOW's strategies with other movement groups. Memoirs and articles by journalists about covering the early movement were critical to understanding how the interaction was experienced from the news workers perspective. Finally, the study draws on an original content analysis of 377 stories about NOW in the New York Times in order to track the outcome of the interaction over time in at least one outlet.

#### **NOW as a Case Study Organization:**

##### **A Note on Generalizability**

Both NOW and the New York Times are key organizations in their respective sectors. NOW is arguably the most important organization in the second wave US women's movement. Though it has been seen as too "liberal" by some groups and too "radical" by others, there is widespread agreement in the US women's movement that NOW played a central role as the public voice of feminism for many years, and that even now, with the number of women's issue groups mushrooming, it is perceived as a central movement organization. As a recent history of the movement notes, "The fact is that if the National Organization for Women were to collapse and disappear, it would be taken as a signal of the end of this era of feminism, " (Carabillo, 1993, p. viii).

The New York Times also plays a central role in American political life where it is often presented (and accepted by professional journalists throughout the country) as the pre-eminent journal of record in the American media sector. The Times coverage of new movements and ideas is often the harbinger and active trend-setter for other mainstream media.

These two organizations are important in and of themselves, then, and their interaction may have some historical significance beyond any issues of generalizability. But of course, the investment of time and energy in a case study is usually made in the hope that inferences can be made from the experience of one organization to others, or that we can at least derive questions from this interaction that will be useful in addressing the experiences of other organizations.

From the perspective of generalizability, NOW is both a typical and an atypical movement organization. Like all movement organizations, NOW is staffed mostly by volunteers and by (badly) paid staff activists who work there for political rather than career reasons. It has multiple political goals at any one time and works on multiple fronts (such as legislative, educational and media). It is funded mostly by membership fees and often stretches its resources and staff to their limits -- working continuously in what one observer calls "crisis mode." Like other advocacy or movement organizations NOW

is often in the position of responding to, rather than initiating public issues and events, and compared to its perceived opponents in the political arena (such as the Pentagon or right wing research institutes) the organization is chronically under-financed. As such, then, NOW can be compared to many other under-financed and overburdened movement or advocacy organizations.

However, NOW is also untypical of other movement organizations in that it was, at least in the early years, perhaps better organized, more "professionally" managed and more focused on developing media as a resource than many other women's movement organizations. Many of its original members (as I describe more fully in chapter five) were already in communication related positions or had some contacts with the press in previous professional positions, so that the organization's early access to news media may not be typical of some other groups. Also, NOW was, and is, a predominantly middle class organization led by women who possessed high degrees of organizational skills and competence. These aspects may make NOW atypical. Many movement organizations are likely to be less media savvy and less able to call on such resources.

Perhaps the most compelling reason to choose NOW as a case study organization for understanding and assessing the possibilities of using news as a movement resource, though, is the fact that NOW sees itself, and

is positioned by others in the movement, as an essentially strategic and pragmatic organization. Spanning the boundary between more radical (and marginalized) organizations and mainstream media and political organizations, NOW is an organization of self-consciously "militant pragmatists" whose aim has always been to both enter and change the system. As such it is a compelling example of an organization which struggles constantly with the tensions of incorporation in relation to news and other political institutions. It is this self-consciously strategic and boundary spanning position that makes NOW an excellent organization to which to address strategic questions about news. For NOW the problem is no longer whether to use the "master's tools" (in this case media), but how and at what costs and in what contexts. Like many other contemporary social movement organizations, NOW leaders have developed strategies to work both within and outside of the dominant institutions.

At the least, we can draw from NOW's experience, questions about media and communications strategies which we can then address to other organizations in other historical contexts. At a time when social movement studies are moving towards communicative, constructivist and "consensus-mobilization" models of social movements and social change (cf. Klandermans, 1988; Melucci, 1989; Gamson, 1989), developing a

strategic understanding of news media as a symbolic resource (or not) in that process, can only enhance our general understanding of communication and social movements more generally.<sup>8</sup>

In the end, though, generalizability may be in the eye of the beholder, so I have included in the study (chapter four) a brief political profile of NOW as a movement organization so that readers can decide for themselves whether and how far to generalize from NOW's experiences in interaction with news media.

#### **Chapter Overview:**

#### **Chapter Two, Movements, Media and Social Change:**

**Towards A Dialogical Model** places the case study first within the literature of critical social movement/social change theory and then within news theories. The chapter reviews recent work on the communicative or "symbolic challenge" of the new social movements and argues that a dialogic understanding of media-movement relations is essential to our understanding of these processes.

#### **Chapter Three, Research Design and Methods,**

describes in detail the key research questions of the study, the data collected and drawn upon, and the measures and methods of analysis developed to answer these questions. As both an institutional analysis, drawing on NOW's historical records, and a content analysis of media outcomes of that interaction, the

chapter is broken into three parts, first describing the 27  
institutional analysis, then the content analysis and  
then the relationship between the two.

**Chapter Four, A Brief Political Profile of NOW:**

**Militant Pragmatists**, offers a brief historical profile of the National Organization for Women, the feminist organization that is the subject of the case study. I outline NOW's historical formation, describe its role in the US women's movement, and map its political agenda and identity shifts over time.

**Chapter Five, The Structuring Role of Resources:**

**The Political Economy of NOW's News Access**, focuses on questions of resources and media access. The chapter investigates what kinds of resources were important in producing media access, describes NOW's resource mobilization practices and relates those resources to its media access. I argue that the resource base of any organization is going to structure its ability to access media, and that particular kinds of resource (such as communicative competence, information, organization and money) are especially important. The chapter also notes, however, that there is no straight line between resource mobilization and media "success" -- rather resources make it possible to produce media strategies which produce access, thereby turning material resources into symbolic power.

**Possibilities and Constraints of Media Pragmatism,**

describes how NOW understood and developed media as a political "resource." The chapter describes how NOW developed media kits, appropriated news conventions into their own communications, and built relationships with key women journalists. This strategic approach to news was not always shared by other women's movement groups and in this chapter I also briefly describes the media strategies of other movement groups to contextualize NOW's media strategies within the women's movement as a whole. The chapter also draws on accounts of covering the movement produced by women journalists, and illustrates the dialogic relationship between news and feminism as it was manifested in the concrete relationships between feminists and journalists, who were both working within constrained organizational contexts. I argue that NOW's media strategies were an example of reflexive appropriation of news conventions, and as such they produced both particular kinds of success and limitations for the organization.

**Chapter Seven, News Outcomes 1: Patterns in Access, Voice and Agenda Control, 1966-1980,** describes and assesses patterns in NOW's news access and discusses the organization's ability to transfer its issue agendas to news. Defining "success" in terms of access, voice, placement and control, the chapter analyzes patterns in

the Times' processing of NOW's access and issues. I argue that NOW achieved some limited success in becoming "expert" sources, but that the Times systematically processed NOW's feminist agenda through a traditional liberal public-private framework.

**Chapter Eight: News Outcomes 2: Patterns in the Times' Processing of NOW's Identity, 1966-1980.** This chapter describes patterns in the Times treatment of NOW in terms of its organizational identity and its legitimacy as a "speaker" for women's issues over time. I argue that NOW did not undergo either a straightforward "marginalization" or "incorporation." Rather the organization, partly through its own efforts, and the efforts of sympathetic journalists (and through the general legitimating effects of longevity) became somewhat institutionalized as a source, but that legitimacy was limited in important ways by the topic of the stories and the context of NOW's coverage.

**Chapter Nine, News as a Political Resource? An Overdetermined Dialogical Model,** summarizes the study's findings about NOW's interaction with news media. It discusses the role(s) of resources, strategies and ideology in NOW's strategic mobilization of news and publicity as social movement resources, and discusses the generalizability of NOW's experience with news media to other social movement groups. Finally, the chapter discusses what, if anything, NOW's experience can

contribute to general news theories. I conclude that NOW's interaction with media, and the outcome of that interaction was in fact overdetermined by resource, strategy and ideological factors on both sides. As such, deterministic models (such as Gitlin's strong hegemony model, for example) are inadequate to explain these kind of interactions. I suggest that we need to develop an understanding of these interactions as dialogical interactions.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Movements do, of course, have access to other forms of mass communication. Self-published newsletters and newspapers, as well as electronic communication possibilities opened up by new computer networks (such as PeaceNet) may make a significant difference to movement mobilizing in the future. However, such channels are currently limited to internal movement communication -- that is they are written by and distributed to people already interested in or active in the movement. If we are to understand a movement's mass communication possibilities, that is its ability to influence ideologies, issues and identity formation processes at the societal level, then access to existing mass communication channels becomes central because that is how most people will, initially at least, hear about movements and their ideas.

<sup>2</sup> For example, how will we know "incorporation" when we see it? The "strong hegemony" model is discussed at more length in chapter two, but it is worth noting briefly here that the problem with the concept of "incorporation" as used by Gitlin (1980), for example, is that it presented as a self-evident category -- i.e. as a somehow already known and definable outcome of interaction -- rather than as a process that needs empirical description.

<sup>3</sup>This lack of focus on mobilization and communication processes is also typical of the older grand theories that put forward the working class as the central agent of social change, but did not investigate or elaborate how such mobilization would work. Ferree and Miller (1985) call this a classic confusion of a class in itself with a class for itself.

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<sup>4</sup> Journalists and activists may also be members and strategic users of many other discourses too, but here I am limiting the discussion to feminism and news.

<sup>5</sup> See chapter three for a more thorough discussion of the problems of identity as a predictor.

<sup>6</sup> See chapter three for more discussion of these factors. See also Barker-Plummer, B. (1993). From Gates to Dialog: Towards a Communication Model of the News-Source Relationship. Presented to the Political Communication Division, International Communication Association, Washington DC.

<sup>7</sup> Hall et al. (1978) attribute the definitional control of state sources in the news to their social location outside of the news, but they do not investigate the process through which this external location is translated into definitional control, so they cannot say how or why such "success" comes about. For example, what resources, practices, or strategies produced that definitional authority? Is it possible that other kinds of sources could also create definitional authority for themselves if they followed the same strategies? As Schlesinger (1991) and Miller (1993) have also noted, it is only through understanding the source strategies, of even very powerful sources, that we can understand how news access is related to power, and whether that access can be extended to more groups in society.

<sup>8</sup> For example, studies on the contemporary labor movement have stressed the emerging importance of a strategic understanding of communication and media strategies (cf. Ryan, 1992; Douglas, 1989), and activists and theorists of the peace movement have come to see media as a ground for struggle over public understandings rather than as a force for automatic exclusion (cf. Hackett, 1991, Bruck, 1992).

## **Chapter Two**

### **Movements, Media, and Social Change:**

#### **Towards a Dialogical Model**

The overdetermined nature of social life and social research has been well described in recent social theory, such that the analysis of any social institution or practice must be seen as part of a larger system of interconnected patterns in the structuration of resources, power and agency (Resnick and Wolfe, 1987; Kellner, 1990; Giddens, 1984). Even so, researchers have to start somewhere in their attempts to understand processes of social reproduction and change, and Resnick and Wolfe (1987) suggest that we deal with this complexity by choosing an "entry point" that offers opportunities to analyze how different forces in the system interact.

The "entry-point" of this study is the complex relationship between a social movement and news media. Social movements, especially the "new" social movements (NSMs) such as the women's, environmental, and peace movements, have come to be seen as the central transformative agents in modern societies, and as such to be critically implicated in processes of social change (Habermas, 1981; Giddens 1987; Touraine 1985). News media are also centrally implicated in processes of

social reproduction and change (Hall et al, 1978; Kellner, 1990, etc.) and form one of the most crucial bottle-necks in the communication of new knowledges. As such the media-movement nexus offers a rich entry point into understanding how new critical discourses emerge, how they are strategically articulated and mass communicated by movement organizations, and how they are processed for mass audiences by news organizations -- in short it allows us to investigate questions about the possibilities for social change through communication in mass mediated societies.

### **The Symbolic Challenge of the New Social Movements**

Social movements, especially the "new" social movements (NSMs) -- such as the women's, peace, and environmental movements -- have recently come to the fore in contemporary politics and in contemporary social theory as the central agents of social change in modern, complex societies. In the eyes of many political observers the new movements have taken the place of the working class as agents of change (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Habermas, 1981; Giddens, 1987; Offe, 1985; etc.) As Boggs (1986) has described them, the NSMs are the most important "emerging forms of radicalism in the west."

The contemporary emergence of the NSMs has been explained in a variety of ways, but most of these

accounts point to the new movements as arising in response to a general crisis of legitimacy in modern political institutions. Habermas (1981), for example, sees the new movements as the outcome of larger social contradictions which he describes as a "lifeworld/system world overlap" that has produced a general "legitimation crisis." In this framework the NSMs are involved in attempts to resist the increasing rationalization and technicizing of everyday life that is endemic in contemporary capitalist societies and to encourage and/or renew participatory democracy. Movements are thus centrally involved in the reclamation of the "civic" aspects of social life, in attempts to reclaim and extend the public sphere in resistance to the encroachments of the state and corporate spheres.

Boggs (1986, p. 223) has also noted the importance of this civic or democratizing aspect of the new movements. Though he is less sanguine than Habermas in his assessments of the likely success of the NSMs democratizing efforts, he notes that their potential is to radically reshape contemporary politics:

Popular movements linked to the demands of anti-nuclear activists, ecologists, urban communities, women, minorities and youth, correspond to changing economic realities, social and cultural forces, and political constellations that are only beginning to

coalesce and that, in time, promise to reshape class and social conflict. These new phenomena amount to an emergent social bloc that would revitalize civil society against incursions of the bureaucratic state, commodity production, the spiraling arms race -- against bourgeois hegemony in general (p.223).

By all accounts the new movements have challenged both traditional and critical models of social change (Touraine, 1985; Giddens, 1987). Part of the difficulty the NSM's pose comes from their much less tangible relations to concrete class bases than the "old" social movements such as the Labor Movement. Made up mostly of a particular fraction of the middle class (e.g. teachers, professionals, social workers, students, etc.), the new movements evince no simple relationship between their goals and their members' material or class base. In fact as Laraña et al. (1994) have noted the new movements have a disturbing tendency to "transcend class structure."

The new movements have been linked not to the moment of production in capitalist relations, as the labor movement had been, but rather to the moment of consumption. As Castells (1983, p. 320) has put it, "[new social movements] do not relate directly to the relationship of production, but to the relationships of

consumption, communication and power." This distinction 36  
as Rodriguez (1995, p. 10) notes, is crucial if we are  
to understand why the new movements are likely to affect  
society symbolically as much as materially:

If social class was a category constructed to  
explain conflict over material production, social  
movement is a category built to explore conflicts  
over the production of symbolic goods and  
social meanings.

The primary challenge of the new movements is best  
understood, then, as a symbolic challenge -- as a  
challenge to how we understand our relationships to each  
other and to our physical environments. The "success" of  
the NSMs is linked to the production and communication  
of new ideas or new identities.

This symbolic focus does not mean that the new  
movements are not interested in material issues. A key  
goal of the women's movement, for example, has been and  
will be, equitable distribution of wages and job  
opportunities across genders. Similarly the  
environmental movement's mobilization against  
destruction of the natural environment is often based in  
a political economic analysis of who benefits from such  
destruction and its "costs" to us all. But the key point  
remains that strategically the new movements for the

most part have envisioned their goals in communicative terms -- i.e. as the production of a new "consciousness" of gender, racial, ecological and other everyday relations. And they have tried to reach these goals through persuasion, education and publicity, rather than through violence, or challenges to production such as strikes or collective bargaining.<sup>1</sup>

The NSMs focus on identity and communication issues, coupled with their tendency to focus on the "politics of everyday life" -- such as issues of interpersonal relations, cultural identity and family relations -- rather than traditional political issues, has caused some observers to dismiss them as "extra-political" movements which are not important unless, or until, they interact critically with state institutions (Offe, 1985; Eder, 1985). But as Boggs (1986, p. 4) notes, the challenge of the NSMs is only partially aimed at traditional political arenas. For the most part the NSMs are as concerned to reach directly to publics as they are to persuade policy makers, and it is in this symbolic work, in which they seek to change general self-understandings and public knowledge that their central challenge lies:

...the fact that they [the new social movements] have nowhere overturned the status quo should not obscure their historical importance in posing new

issues, shaping consciousness, and opening new areas of political discourse. Indeed, many time-honored debates have already been fundamentally recast in both substance and tone.

### **Movements as Mass Communicators, Movements as Media**

It is this role as knowledge producers, and communicators of that new knowledge to other organizations and publics, that makes the new movements so central in contemporary explanations of social and ideological change. The NSMs are both the creators and the carriers of new knowledges, new identities, and essentially new ways of seeing and living social relations (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991; Touraine, 1985; Habermas, 1981). As Snow et al. (1988, p. 198) have described it, the new movements are key players in the "politics of signification:"

Movements function as carriers and transmitters of mobilizing beliefs and ideas ... they are also actively involved in the production of meaning for participants, antagonists and observers. Movements can thus be construed as functioning in part as signifying agents and, as such, are deeply embroiled, along with the media and the state, in what Stuart Hall (1982) has referred to as the "politics of signification."

Melucci (1985, p. 797) focuses on this communicative capacity of the new movements when he notes that the movements' challenge is essentially a "symbolic" or "prophetic" challenge because movements function as important sources of identity in society. Indeed, besides mass media, the NSMs may be one of the critical resources in modern societies from which citizens build identities. These "identity resources" are produced by social movements as they mobilize, and it is this knowledge production capacity that makes the new movements critically important. As Melucci (1985) notes, this understanding is one that envisions movements as a kind of media themselves.:

Actors in conflicts are increasingly temporary and their function is to reveal the stakes, to announce to society that a fundamental problem exists in a given area. They have a growing symbolic function; one can probably speak of a prophetic function. They are a kind of new media.

This "symbolic " function of the new movements is at the heart of their importance. It is in their mobilization of information (and consequently meanings and the possibilities for identity-building and the redefinition of social relations) that the new movements

produce challenges to the system. Like media they collect, process and disseminate information from which individuals can create new identities.

### **Movements and Strategic Communication**

For the most part, knowledge production by the NSMs is quite deliberate and strategic.<sup>2</sup> Indeed it is one of the distinguishing features of the new movements that they focus so centrally in their strategizing both on mobilizing information and on the process of publicity -- of making known publicly what they consider to be problematic (Fraser, 1992; McLaughlin, 1993). Despite quite small numbers (relatively speaking) of members for example, the environmental movement and the feminist movement have been prodigious producers of information, studies, new knowledges and new ways of knowing.

The women's movement has been particularly implicated in this process of making public areas of social life that had previously been seen as "private" or at least unproblematic. The now publicly accepted -- if contested -- political categories such as "sexism," "sexual harassment," "date rape," and so on, are the outcome of this process of publicizing that the women's movement has seen as so important to its success (cf. Fraser, 1992; McLaughlin, 1993).

It is also a key aspect of the new movements in fact that they are self-reflexive about their roles in

problematizing areas of social life and producing new identities. The US women's movement, for example, with its development of "consciousness raising" as a movement practice has created a practice in which both making "public" and the creation of new identities are central. Consciousness raising (CR) allows participants to bring to discursive consciousness areas of life that were previously experienced on a practical level, and then to rebuild identities based on that new recognition. For example, consciousness raising practices allowed women to realize the power embedded in traditional family roles and chores, in everyday language forms and modes of address, and in the commercial representation of women in popular culture (Koedt et al. 1973; Freeman, 1975).

At the social level, this problematizing role is also apparent as the women's movement works to communicate these insights and to "raise the consciousness" of society. Indeed it is one of the most profound effects of the women's movements of the United States and western Europe, that they have placed on the public agenda multiple "problems" or issues that previously had not even been seen as political. This "agenda," which includes issues such as reproductive rights, equal opportunity, sexual discrimination in education and employment, child care and family leave policies, and so on, is in fact the outcome of

continuous, self-reflexive publicizing by the movement of areas of social life that had previously been seen as either "private" or unproblematic. Most recently as Fraser (1992) has noted, we can also understand the struggle over Clarence Thomas's confirmation, and over sexual harassment issues more generally, as part of this process of bringing to social consciousness -- of bringing to publicity -- the embedded power relationships involved in workplace expressions of sexuality.

Such attempts at "publicizing" are of course not unproblematic or straightforward, and as Fraser (1992) notes, formidable forces can be arrayed to re-privatize or to re-inscribe gendered power lines around who has the right to decide what shall be made public. But it is an indication of the relative force of the women's movement's "symbolic challenge" that such "issues" are even on the public agenda at all.

This central focus in the feminist movement of making public and discursive , areas of life that had been previously experienced as private, is fundamentally reflexive process and is critical to understanding the real challenge of the NSMs. As Giddens (1984) has noted, the "structures" of modern society, far from existing outside of our lives and pressuring us from above, are in fact reproduced in interaction. We bring to bear on every interaction the embedded "rules" and

maldistributed "resources" of our social systems, and for the most part power relations are reproduced at the level of practical consciousness -- i.e. as non-discursive agency, through a kind of "going on" in the world (Giddens, 1984). One way to challenge such "going on" is to bring activities pursued at the level of practical consciousness to the level of discursive consciousness -- to make public -- the power, assumptions and history embedded in such interaction. Through their focus on publicizing previously "private" areas of social life the women's movement (and perhaps the NSMs in general) are involved in fundamentally self reflexive symbolic work. It is this reflexive production of emancipatory knowledge that is the real "challenge" of the NSMs. It is these kinds of reflexive appropriations of knowledge about everyday routines that make it possible for individuals to re-produce structures differently across time -- to produce change. The New Social Movements, through their reflexive production of knowledge about the power embedded in everyday life are critically important in producing such change (Giddens , 1987, p. 48):

Organizations and social movements, it might be argued, are the two ways in which reflexive appropriation of knowledge about the social world is mobilized in the modern world.

### **Movement Communication and Agenda-Building**

One of the key social arenas in which this strategic symbolic work of social movements takes place is that of public policy agenda-building. In the general symbolic struggles over what areas of social life will be subject to public debate, social movements may have emerged in the last few years as key players, especially at very early stages of problem formulation.<sup>3</sup>

As Kingdon (1984) and others have noted, public policy issues -- that is the issues or experiences that will be seen by policy makers as important and actionable -- are not self-evident in society. Rather, the particular list of problems and solutions that become central is the result of ongoing struggles and negotiations by interested political actors. The public "agenda" in this sense, is created through the interaction of various sets of political actors -- the executive branch, (especially the president and his staff, but also his political appointees), civil servants/bureaucrats, academics and researchers, media, and interest groups (Kingdon, 1984). According to Kingdon, this set of "players" takes part in various recurrent "stages" of policy development and each are more or less important at different stages. These stages are outlined as (1) setting the policy agenda (2) specifying alternatives from which a choice is made (3)

forcing an authoritative choice such as a vote or presidential enactment and (4) implementing the decision.

Kingdon's analysis is important in that it moves public policy analysis away from assumptions about the objective importance of some issues rather than others, pointing out how policy formation is in fact a fundamentally political struggle. His perspective opens up the policy process to include a variety of actors who may influence the outcome, whereas previously policy studies tended to focus on policy making as the domain of technicians. However, Kingdon's policy building model is also missing some crucial steps. Despite his focus on the inherently constructed nature of the policy agenda, Kingdon's model of policy building still begins with the selection by policy elites between a set of somehow self-evident "issues." (The first "stage" of the Kingdon model is one in which elites choose between available issues). But how did these "issues" get to be issues in the first place? How did there come to be a list of possible choices from which policy actors could choose? How were such areas problematized at all? Perhaps because he does not focus centrally on either media or movement organizations, Kingdon does not address these questions.

But surely the process of making concerns into issues is not trivial. The social, communicative, and

strategic creation of a social problem is in fact a significant part of the overall politics of signification. In this process -- the precursor to policy elite choices -- political actors take a social experience, or concern and make it a public issue. They select among experiences and work to strategically frame and construct a certain set of them as (a) problematic (b) public and (c) important.

In fact it is at this early stage in agenda building -- the "problem formulation" stage-- that social movements may be the most important players. The new movements, as observers have noted, are centrally involved in the production of new "problems." The issue of sexual harassment is an example of this phenomena. It is not that sexual harassment did not occur before the 1970s, but that it was not framed as a public problem before then. It was through the symbolic work of the feminist movement that sexual harassment became first problematized and then publicized, as a systemic problem.

This problematizing work is closely linked to what Goffman (1986 [1974]) and others have called framing in which the ways that events or issues are presented can significantly alter the ways that they are understood by audiences and policy makers (cf. Iyengar, 1991; Kahneman and Tversky, 1984). Framing can be either intuitive or strategic. In public policy agenda building it is likely

to be a process of strategically creating an interpretive framework that contextualizes information in specific ways and so encourages a particular interpretation by audiences (Gitlin, 1980; Gamson, 1992).

Movements are in fact significant producers of these frames at the societal level. Indeed it may be that framing and other "signwork" is the central activity of movements (Snow, 1988, p. 198):

We use the term framing to conceptualize this signifying work precisely because that is one of the things social movements do. They frame, or assign meaning to and interpret, relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists.

The importance of how an issue is framed cannot be overestimated in political struggles. Golding and Middleton (1982) and Iyengar (1991) have illustrated, for example, what a difference it makes to policy and public opinion whether poverty is understood as a structural or a personal problem. Similarly Hall et al. (1978) describe how "mugging" can be framed and reframed by authorities to bolster or challenge public images of

minority groups and to contribute to the abridgment of their civil liberties. Stone (1989, p. 282) has in fact suggested that this fundamentally symbolic work -- in which issues are identified, publicized and linked to other issues -- in at the heart of all policy agenda building:

Difficulties become "problems" -- human problems amenable to human intervention -- through narrative construction by interested groups in the policy arena. This making of problems, of causal stories, is the precursor to any agenda setting activities. Actors construct stories that explain the roots of a problem and its solutions and then tell that story [or sell it] to policy makers. The "winning" story is the one that becomes the standard explanation (p. 282).

The agenda building process, then is essentially a definitional struggle in which different groups produce their own (interested) narratives about what is important and what should be done by policy makers. Movements may play a central role in this process, especially at very early stages in which they are key framers of what areas of social life may be seen as problematic at all.

However, we are still very far from understanding how it is that this symbolic work, this problematizing and framing, is achieved (or not) on a day-to-day basis. For example, how do "movements" select aspects of social life for attention and how do they "make" them public issues? Is the process of problematizing an activity of movement leaders, or do movements collectively define problems? Are all movements equally capable of "making" public issues? What frames are likely to work and which do not? What skills, resources and contexts are necessary for this symbolic work to proceed? And, most critically for this study, where is mass media in this process? If movements "make" social problems through strategic framing, how is it that those frames come to be shared (or not) by others? Do media unproblematically transfer movement frames? Or are movement issues and frames transformed in important ways by mass media organizations and discourses?

### **Media Roles in Movement Communication:**

#### **News as a Resource in Agenda-Building**

The symbolic challenge of movements must in fact be located in their mass communication strategies. It is through their articulation and publication of knowledge -- either in their own media or through their interactions with established media institutions -- that movements are likely to be able to produce influence on

the public agenda or on individuals' understanding of issues. If we are to understand the potential symbolic challenge of the new movements, it is essential that we begin to focus on how social movements articulate and mass communicate their messages.

In this process of diffusion, movement interactions with commercial news media are critical. As the major source of political information for citizens in modern societies, news media are still one of the most critical bottlenecks in the distribution of new knowledges by and about emergent social movements. Whether (and how) the new movements can strategically produce access to news media, and what kinds of control (if any) they can exercise over the representation of their issues and identity must be key questions in any assessment of the transformative potential of the new movements.

In addition to its ability to deliver messages to large audiences regularly and cheaply (compared to sending communications directly to millions of people), news has also been shown to have significant and varied effects on audience perceptions of public issues, events and leaders. For example, news constructions of the world have been documented to "set peoples agendas" and tell them what is important (McCombs and Shaw, 1978; Iyengar and Kinder, 1987); to "prime" audiences interpretations and evaluations of political issues and candidates, to influence how people will "frame" (or

understand) social problems (cf. Iyengar, 1991; Gamson, 1992), and to "mainstream" peoples' political opinions (cf. Gerbner et al., 1980), and so on. As such, news access -- the ability to routinely speak and be heard from within news accounts of the world -- is a highly sought after symbolic resource in political life.

Gandy (1982, p. 198), for example, has argued convincingly for the importance of news as a political resource for corporations in the United States, who he suggests, are "subsidizing" public decision-making in their favor by providing information for journalists. As Gandy explains, "An information subsidy increases the demand for certain information by lowering its price to the consumer... The journalist's costs of producing news are reduced through a variety of techniques utilized by sources to manage the information market." In this framework, news is a political resource, then, because it allows successful news sources to influence the decision-making of audiences (Gandy, 1982, p. 198).

Besides subsidizing decision-making news access is also associated with a certain authority in public life. Because news discourse is a privileged form of knowledge in political life -- that is it is generally considered to be an authoritative version of reality -- access to news is also associated with high levels of cultural legitimacy. As such, news offers sources another form of power beyond the chance to distribute self-interested

information; it offers membership in a group of "knowers." It is this association with authority that, according to Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989, pp. 3-4), makes news a form of *cultural capital* for its regular sources:

News is a representation of authority. In the contemporary knowledge society news represents who are the authorized knowers and what are their authoritative versions of reality.... It indicates who is in possession of knowledge as "cultural capital," and thereby articulates who are members of the "new class" who derive their labor and property membership from the production, distribution and administration of knowledge.

In this knowledge/power framework, representation in news confers authority on the source, because news itself has come to hold a special place as an authoritative version of reality.

Access to news is a political resource for organizations, then, because it is a *modality* of power. News voice translates into legitimacy in the knowledge system for the speaker, and news' distributive capacity allows the speaker to communicate that knowledge widely, and so structure the public information environment. In

media-saturated societies, access to news is a key part 53  
of making one's "account count" in the public sphere .

It would seem to be a fundamental democratic question, then, to ask who is able to access news in order to speak to other citizens, how such access is produced strategically, and at what costs to organizations. But as Schlesinger (1991) has recently noted, with few exceptions (cf. Gandy, 1982; Ericson et al, 1989), media scholars have tended to take a very "media-centric" view of the newsmaking process and ignore the activities of sources. However, as Schlesinger (1991, p. 61) points out, it is only by studying sources, that we will tie the study of news back onto the study of communication and social power/social change more generally:

The key issue at the heart of the study of sources is that of the relations between the media and the exercise of political and ideological power, especially but not exclusively by central social institutions which seek to define and manage the flow of information in a contested field of discourse.

#### **News as a Social Movement Resource**

If the question of source strategies has been underdeveloped in media studies generally, work that

investigates how critical sources such as NSM s might access media, is especially rare though questions about the parameters of these relationships abound: For example, should social movements be thought of as sources in the same way that corporate or governmental sources are? What difference does it make when sources are challenging or critical? Or when they are under-resourced? Or they produce knowledge in forms that may not be immediately obvious to journalists? All of these are likely to be true of movement sources. Is news likely to be a form of cultural capital for social movements? And, if so, is it one that they can afford both materially and ideologically?

Gitlin (1980) has suggested that movements are untypical sources who will always be denied authoritative access but instead will be "covered" and marginalized. Based on his case study of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Gitlin (1980, p. 281) has argued forcefully that news will never adequately carry social movement discourses because of the economic, organizational, and ideological connections that news organizations and news discourses have to dominant power relations in society. Though movements will be attracted to commercial news media as a way of "getting the word out," Gitlin concludes that news media are likely to cover them and their concerns in ways that will be counter-productive to critical social change. He

argues that commercial media, through their professional 55  
"routines" and practices -- which are themselves  
embedded in capitalist and profit-oriented ideologies --  
will serve to "frame" critical social movements and  
their activities in trivializing or marginalizing ways.  
In this hegemonic model, news media are central players  
in the systematic suppression of critical voices:

....an opposition movement is caught in a  
fundamental and inescapable dilemma. If it stands  
outside the dominant realm of discourse, it is  
liable to be consigned to marginality and political  
irrelevance; its issues are domesticated, it's  
deeper challenge to the social order sealed off,  
trivialized and contained. If, on the other hand it  
plays by conventional political rules in order to  
acquire an image of credibility -- if, that is, its  
leaders are well-mannered, its actions well-  
ordered, and it's slogans specific and "reasonable"  
-- it is liable to be assimilated into the  
hegemonic political world view; it comes to be  
identified with narrow (if important) reform  
issues, and its oppositional edge is blunted (p.  
281).

But Gitlin's conclusions may be too much too soon.  
SDS was one, early, and relatively short-lived

organization whose own development of media strategies was quite limited. But more importantly, the reform or revolution dichotomy that Gitlin invokes here, in which movements must either be marginalized if they are radical, or incorporated if they are liberal, raises certain difficulties. It is an overly deterministic framework based on qualities of movements that are far from self-evident. For example, this approach begs the question of how we come to know what a movement "is" at all. As Melucci (1985, p. 792) has observed, though historians and observers often talk about "movements" as if they were already constituted entities, who act in coherent ways, in fact "movements" are social constructions that are created and maintained through communication practices across time. And one of the forces with which movements interact in forming identities, are media themselves. As Van Zoonen (1994) has suggested, it is not really a question of whether news covers a "given" (liberal or radical) social movement in a "true" way or not, but a question of how the various "identities," strategies and organizational practices of a movement interact with the complex, though structured, selection "rules" of news media to create particular outcomes.

Gitlin's radical/reformist framework, however, not only assumes that movements have some essential quality that can be used as a predictor (i.e. radical or

reformist) but it gives us only two "outcome" possibilities (trivialization or incorporation) for what is a complex, communicative interaction between two sets of organizations and discourses across time. Social change, especially ideological change, is never such an all or nothing process, and as more recent studies of movements have suggested a movement's identity (especially the new movements) are much more complex and contradictory than a reformist/revolutionary dichotomy would allow (cf. Melucci, 1989).

Perhaps the most limiting aspect of a closed hegemonic model such as Gitlin's, is that it seems to deny the ability of social movement actors to learn about and strategically use dominant systems and discourses -- in this case journalistic routines and practices -- as resources themselves.<sup>4</sup> Movements can, potentially at least, learn about news organizations' routines, practices and discursive logics, and take part in framing themselves.

Giddens (1984) has suggested that this kind of reflexivity -- the ability to access and discursively use the "rules" as resources -- is itself a fundamental aspect of human agency, and one that challenges deterministic explanations for human practices in many different circumstances. In the context of social movements this reflexivity and strategic use of

constraints may sometimes make news discourse a movement resource. 58

Ryan (1991) suggests, in fact, that it is through the strategic use of the very journalistic routines that Gitlin credits with destroying the student movement, that challenging groups can begin to strategically "frame" themselves in newsworthy and culturally resonant ways. In a study of how one local labor union repositioned itself in news media through strategic reframing of its issues from "special interest" to "justice," Ryan describes the day-to-day strategic communication practices, or "framing contests" that could become part of many movements communication strategies. She notes that although the relationship is a struggle, it is not a closed or hopeless one.

It is still of course an open question how successfully movements and other speakers of critical discourses can "use" media logics and conventions for their own purposes of course. What kind of effects is such use likely to have on a movements own discourse or identity? Is it possible to translate some ideas through news conventions and have them retain their integrity to some extent? Does reframing ideas for media mean essentially reframing them altogether?

Besides the reflexive strategies of movement actors is the complex and contradictory nature of news itself.

News organizations are riven with contradictions deriving from their need to respond to economic, political and professional forces. In fact as Hallin (1992) has suggested, we must see that news itself is overdetermined, making any simple processing of other discourses unlikely.

Gamson (1989), for example, has suggested that the particular way news represents political issues can be attributed to at least three different sets of factors: first, the strategic activities of sources; second, the activities of professional journalists within the routines of news organizations; and third, the cultural context in which some ideas and themes have more "resonance" than others, that is to say, the ideological content and context of news events. To this list we might also add the relative competition for access at any one time between sources (Schlesinger, 1992; Gandy, 1982); the economic imperatives of news organizations (such as their routine use of "information subsidies" and audience maximization techniques) which affect, both positively and negatively, the chances of movements to access news (Hallin, 1992; Gandy, 1982); and the relative influences of contextual shifts such as elite policy configurations that can make movements more or less "newsworthy."

This overdetermination does not deny the very systematic ways that news media can be seen to process

reality. Given the highly conventionalized style of news 60  
discourse (in which events are more important than  
processes, institutional elites are the most prominent  
sources, and the "beat" system which encourages the  
definition of news as information which emanates from  
government bureaucracies), it is quite likely that news  
will systematically recombine movement discourses and  
ideas in ways which conform to such conventions.  
However, none of these factors has sufficient  
determining force in all circumstances to make the  
construction of news stories inevitable. As Bruck (1989,  
p. 113) has noted, despite the general sense of  
ideological closure that critical news studies have  
often described, news is still an overdetermined and  
"leaky" ideological system:

Given the capitalistic, industrial, and  
bureaucratic structure of the news media's  
operation, the finding that the media reproduce the  
dominant ideology does not come as a surprise.  
Rather it means that the news media do perform  
their functional job. What is of interest then is  
how the media accomplish their reproductive labor,  
when they fail to do this, what alters this  
operational functioning, what opportunities for  
change exist, how these opportunities are  
differentially distributed, and what conclusions

can be drawn for alternative or oppositional practices and movements.

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### **Towards a Dialogical Model**

The media-movement relationship is perhaps best characterized as *dialogical* -- that is, as an interactive, reflexive, relationship that takes place over time. It is a relationship in which both media workers and movement strategists are knowledgeable, strategic agents, seeking to learn about and use each other's discourse. Such learning, and the incorporation of that knowledge into future interactions, can be seen as a form of *strategic interaction* (cf. Goffman, 1969; Habermas, 1984).

Giddens (1984) has outlined a general dialogical model for social relations that he calls a "structurationist" model that is useful here. In a structurationist framework the relationship between structure and agency in society is seen as dialectical. Structures are conceived as being both constraining and enabling and agency itself (activity that is perceived to be autonomous by actors) may in fact chronically reproduce power relations through unintended consequences. In a structurationist framework, change is produced through the reflexive appropriation of knowledge about the routines, rules and structures that are constraining actors' understandings and behaviors.

However, because the consequences of rules and routines are not always understood completely (because of both resource and competence deficiencies) such change is likely to be partial and contradictory.

A structurationist or dialogical approach to the media-movement relationship directs our attention to the aspects of that relationship that are highly structured -- news organizations do bring highly conventionalized categories and expectations to bear on social movement communication -- but it also highlights how these structures can be used reflexively to produce an indeterminate outcome. For example, if movement strategists learn about and use the conventions of liberal journalism in their own communications, the outcome of media-movement interactions is likely to be different than if they simply present their perspectives in their own frames and wait to be processed by news. In this context the question for movements becomes, not how will we be processed by media, but what can we say by using news languages, and how far can we stretch news conventions to say what we want. Because media-movements relationships play out over time, these incorporations of knowledge about previous behaviors and rules, can be mobilized in future strategies to produce different outcomes. As Giddens has illustrated, it is this kind of reflexivity that challenges any deterministic model.

Understanding the media-movement relationship as a dialogical one, then, opens up our understanding of media and movements from one of "coverage" -- in which news representations of social movements are (implicitly at least) compared to some ideal representation of reality -- into one in which two sets of actors are seen to be working within constraints to create and recreate different constructions of reality. Seeing the media-movement relationship as two-way does not preclude an imbalanced interaction, nor deny that one organization holds more power than the other. Dialogic interactions come with no guarantees. Oppositional social movements are always likely to be less well resourced than either news organizations or the other corporate or state sources with which they compete for a place in the media agenda. Becoming involved in interaction with news media at all, will certainly involve expenditures that movements can barely afford. And, perhaps most critically, it may also involve ideological costs. Framing a critical discourse successfully for news consumption may mean re-framing it in crucial ways. But to say that a relationship is difficult, complex, subtle, and unbalanced is not to say that its outcomes are inevitable. As Hackett (1991, p. 281) notes in his conclusion to a study of the Canadian press and peace movement, : "The press is not a level playing field, but sometimes it is possible, even

playing uphill, to score points, to win a match, and perhaps occasionally even to redefine the rules of the game."

When we see movements and media engaged in strategic interaction, or dialogical struggle, instead of inquiring how a movement is covered by the news organizations, we can ask: How do movement strategists and journalists interact? How have movement organizations understood their relationship with news media and how have they experienced its constraints? What strategies have they developed to control their interactions with news media and how have those strategies fared over time? In short, what has worked and what hasn't and why?

### **Assessing Interactions:**

#### **What structures dialog? What constitutes "success?"**

In a dialogic framework, then, news is seen as the overdetermined outcome of complex and reflexive interactions between sources and journalists in shifting political and resource contexts. The question for researchers becomes how to investigate and/or assess such a relationship. In a dialogic framework, for example, we need to ask, what factors structure or influence the dialog? What aspects of organizations and discourses make it more or less likely that sources will be "successful" in controlling a media dialog? Indeed,

what constitutes success? If we want to move beyond describing media-movement interactions, and into assessing them, these questions are fundamental.

In this study I identify and investigate three general factors that structure media-movement relations: resources (such as money, skills, competencies, organization, and so on), strategies (for example, developing and using news conventions, or building relationships with women reporters) and ideology/identity factors (that is the ideas, policies and self-presentations of the organization). These three factors have all been shown to be influential in structuring media interactions.<sup>5</sup> Gandy (1982; 1989), for example, has noted that source organizations' access to journalists is based in their ability to provide "information subsidies" for journalists, which itself is tied to their overall resource base. In this model news access -- and control over the representation of public issues -- is tied to the ability of actors to routinely provide information that journalist will use in their news stories. As Gandy (1989) notes, access to journalists (and influence over public debate) is not determined only by resources, but those organizations that are able to produce cheap, easy, reliable information for journalists have a better chance than others.

The question for social movement groups in interaction with media becomes whether they too can mobilize enough resources to provide "information subsidies" to journalists. In this study I investigate NOW's resource mobilization asking what resources seem to be important in gaining access to media. I also assess NOW's ability to mobilize these resources over time. I ask what kinds of human, financial, and information resources were used in producing NOW's level of media access.

Strategic sophistication, especially in negotiating the constraints of news practice and news discourses, is also likely to be a factor that structures news access for sources. As many studies have noted, news itself is the product of conventions and routines both at the level of practice (beats, institutional source use, and so on (cf. Gans, 1980; Fishman, 1989)) and at the discursive level where judgments of what kinds of issues and topics are newsworthy and the linguistic framing and construction of news stories is also highly conventionalized (van Dijk, 1988). How source organizations adopt and adapt to these conventions is likely to have a serious effect on their relative "success" in influencing news and through news, public debates. In this study, then, I investigate NOW's development of strategies through which the organization sought to control its interactions with news media. I

ask what kinds of strategies NOW developed to interact with and control its interactions with media, and whether these strategies were "successful" or not in allowing the group to control its identity and form its agenda.

Ideology and identity factors have also been shown to be important factors in predicting media interactions. Gitlin (1980), for example, focuses on ideology as a structuring factor in media interactions when he suggests that news will always incorporate "reformist" groups and marginalize "radical" groups. But this framework is very problematic. First, because it is difficult to tell at any one time what a movement group's ideology or identity is (the leaders of a group may hold a very different perception of its identity from its members, for example), and the relative autonomy or independence of movement groups' identity as a predictor is hard to justify. As Van Zoonen (1992) notes, a group's "public identity" is in fact often created in interaction with (or in anticipation of) news media itself.

Still, it is likely that a group's identity will structure its interaction with news media, in some ways. Even if identity/ideology does not directly predict access or representation, it may be that a group's political identity or ideological position will structure both its media strategies in some ways, and

its reception by journalists. Different political groups, for example, do take different strategic approaches to media and over time a group may change both its overall political identity and its media strategies as a consequence of that overall shift. In this study I deal with the problem of identity in a number of ways. First, I track how shifts in NOW's political identity (its aims, goals, agenda, leadership, and so on) affected its interactions with media. Second, the study compares NOW's media strategies to other groups in the women's movement, in order to contextualize its strategic choices within a movement wide framework. Third, in the assessment phase of the study, I track how these shifts in NOW's identity over time were represented in media content. This approach is essentially comparative and contextual; it involves comparing NOW's "internal" identity with its "public" (media) identity, in relation to its shifting media strategies. Of course none of these "identities" is more "true" than any other-- the internal recorded "identity" of NOW was as likely to be strategically produced as its "public" identity, even if for different purposes. And none of the various components of this identity structure (NOW identity, media identity for NOW, and media strategies) are static; all are shifting over time, in ways that make comparisons difficult. But it is only the kind of approach that looks at both discourses

and the strategic interactions between them that can begin to make sense of the structuring roles of identity/ideology, strategy and resources in explaining media access. In fact in this study I do not ultimately argue for the independent determining force of any one of the factors, but rather for a dialogic news model that would be able to account for all of them. <sup>6</sup>

### **Assessing Success in a Dialogic Framework:**

#### **Access, Voice and Control**

In a general sense we can define success in this study as the relative ability of movements to use the rules of news as resources rather than experience them as constraints. But this is somewhat vague. What empirical outcomes more specifically would constitute the success of particular media strategies? Should NOW be represented in the same way that they would represent themselves? And what should that representation cost the movement organization? Is news access successful if it takes all of an organization's time and resources?

In this study I use a four tiered system of assessment of NOW's "success" that involves three different kinds of success -- access, voice, placement and control. Access simply refers to the appearance and placement of stories about NOW. An appearance is the minimal requirement for voice in the public sphere. Voice refers to whether NOW is allowed to the extent to

which NOW is allowed to speak and under what circumstances. Voice is essential to the movement's ability to define events and issues in ways that would produce influence. *Placement* refers to the context of NOW's stories and the associated value of different news sections. *Control* in this study refers to the amount of control NOW strategists exercised over the presentation of their issue agenda and their organizational identity.<sup>7</sup>

These four dimensions of success, I would argue, can be assessed in most communicative interactions. In any conversation or debate for example, we seek first of all access or standing as a participant, then we seek a chance to contribute in our own voice, and we are usually also concerned with the context of our contribution (i.e. is it strategically placed so as to gain other peoples attention). We would also prefer that the debate or conversation be structured in ways that legitimate our positions and interests.

These dimensions of success are also analytically separable, and can be understood, hierarchically. We can say for example that access is basic to all other levels, that voice is an additional level of successful interaction, and that legitimate representation or control of one's identity makes a voice more credible and more likely to be listened to. Control, over one's identity and one's agenda -- communicative autonomy --

is in this framework the ultimate "success" of strategic interaction. 71

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

My aim in this study, then, is to both describe and assess NOW's relationship with news media within a dialogic framework. I have suggested that NOW's access to, and success in controlling, such a dialog is likely to be affected by shifts in resources, strategies and identity. Accordingly the study pursues answers to three main research questions:

(1) What did gaining routine access to news media cost NOW? (i.e. How did NOW's resources structure the dialog? What resources were important in making news access possible in the first place? How were resources associated with "success" in the interaction? Were resources a determining factor in creating a successful news dialog (as defined by access, voice and control)? If so, are the resources that structured NOW's access to media likely to be available to all social movement groups?

(2) What role(s) did NOW's communicative and media strategies play in structuring the dialog? (i.e. What strategies did NOW leaders develop to access and control media dialogs? How important was reflexive strategizing

-- i.e. knowledge of the "rules" of news -- to NOW's access and success? How did knowledge of the "rules" structure the dialog? Are these reflexive strategies likely to be available to all social movement groups?

(3) What role(s) did NOW's ideology/identity play in the in news access or news representation? (i.e. How did NOW's ideology and identity structure the dialog? How was the organization's identity re-presented by news? What can we tell from this "processing" pattern? Was NOW's identity (either internal or strategically produced public identity) a determinant in news access and control? How much does NOW's ideology explain the interaction?)

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Some new movement groups have organized boycotts of products, which is a strategy that in some ways mirrors a strike in that people withdraw their support -- but it is at the level of consumption, not production.

<sup>2</sup> Most empirical studies of social movements indicate that NSM members are quite self aware and reflexive about their communicative roles, so that theories that characterize the NSM as "carriers" or "functions" in society are to some extent denying this reflexivity. Unfortunately much of the NSM theory is written in this functionalist way.

<sup>3</sup> Zhongdang Pan made this connection for me between movement and policy building literatures, personal communication 1993.

<sup>4</sup> Gitlin's (1980) study does present SDS leaders as quite reflexive and subtle in their political analyses, and perhaps over time their media strategies and media representation would have developed differently. However, his conclusion in which he asserts that news media will always trivialize "real" opposition is quite clearly deterministic.

<sup>5</sup> These factors are drawn from a review of news source studies by the author that suggests that resources,

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strategies and ideologies are the key structuring factors in explaining access to news, Barker-Plummer, B. (1993). From Gates to Dialog: Towards a Communication Model of the News-Source Relationship. Paper presented to the Political Communication Division, ICA, Washington DC.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter three, methods, describes these analyses in more detail.

<sup>7</sup> These measures are described in more detail in chapter three, methods.

**Research Design and Methods:****Parallel Institutional and Content Analyses**

The NOW-news relationship is conceptualized as a dialogic relationship, that is as an interactive, reflexive, and complexly overdetermined relationship that takes place on multiple levels -- between journalists and activists, news and movement organizations, and feminist and news discourses. Investigating and assessing such a complex interaction involves choosing a particular entry-point from which to understand and assess the interaction. In this study I "cut into" the NOW-news interaction in a particular way: I investigate and assess the interaction from the point of view of NOW, as a news source and as a new social movement group. The study describes the development of NOW's media strategies over time and then assesses the success of these strategies through an analysis of their influence on news content. Studying the interaction from NOW's perspective (rather than that of journalists) not only expands our understanding of new social movement communications, but also adds to our understanding of newsmaking from the perspective of sources more generally.

**Parallel Institutional and Content Analyses**

The study involved both an institutional analysis of NOW (1966-1980) and a content analysis of the *New York Times* (1966-1980). The institutional analysis draws on NOW's records to characterize NOW's development of media strategies over time and to describe the role of resources, strategies and organizational identity in structuring NOW's media representation. The content analysis describes patterns in NOW's representation in, the *Times* and uses these patterns to assesses the relative "success" of NOW's media strategies. (Both of these analyses are described in more detail below.)

These two parts of the study were designed and executed in tandem, so that they would parallel one another as much as possible. Questions for the content analysis were derived from the institutional analysis, and both NOW's and the *Times'* discourses were analyzed in standardized ways (e.g. agendas and identity factors) in order to be able to compare NOW and the *Times'* representations of NOW and its issues and identity. For example, the content analysis tracks the gender of reporters who wrote NOW stories, because interaction with, and support of, women reporters was a central NOW strategy. And both the institutional and content analyses track how each discourse (NOW and news media) represent and rank women's issues.

Overall, the framework for assessing NOW's "success" 76 used in this study (and described in more detail below) has logical links to the organization's own intentions and activities. Because these are quite different kinds of organizations and discourses, these links are not always perfectly symmetrical. In some instances the content analysis has had to operationalize NOW's media goals in ways that are assessable in news content analysis. For example, it is relatively straightforward to track NOW's strategic interaction with women journalists by also tracking whether most stories are written by women reporters. But success in NOW's more general goal of becoming a serious public voice for women's issues, is not so readily assessed. In this study it is operationalized as a mix of access, voice (being quoted) and identity control over time in news content (see below for more description of the assessment framework).

Generally, though, the institutional and content analyses were designed to work together logically. NOW sought to access news in order to spread the word about feminism, to build an agenda for women's issues, and to build a legitimate public identity for itself as a serious spokesperson for women's issues in America. The study "tests" these goals in the news content. It tracks NOW's basic access to news across time, asks whether NOW was able to produce "voice" in media, and assesses

whether the organization was able to control either its 77  
identity (in terms of legitimacy) or the representation  
of its issues and concerns (in terms of agenda  
comparisons).

The institutional and content analysis are thus  
linked through a strategic conceptual framework which  
relates NOW's media goals to their outcomes in news  
content over time. By linking the institutional and  
content analyses levels and methods, this study crosses  
some traditional boundaries in media studies, which tends  
to produce either content analyses or institutional  
analyses. But I argue that it is only by linking these  
levels of analysis that we can begin to untangle the  
independent role(s) that news practices and conventions  
play in processing social change. Having access to both  
an institutional analysis (what NOW was saying about  
itself and its issues and how it was communicating these  
concerns) and to news content (what the *Times* was saying  
and doing) makes it possible to suggest which shifts in  
NOW's public agenda and identity were the results of  
NOW's own shifts in agendas, identity or strategy, and  
which were the results of the *Times*' "processing" of NOW.

As Bruck (1992, p. 142) notes, news discourses must  
be seen in relation to other discourses for both  
strategic and epistemological reasons. We have to be able  
to show both the discourses that news workers draw from,  
and the resulting outcome of news-source interactions,

before any inferences about news processing (or source success) is possible: 78

In news analysis, we need to make the analytical separation between the discourses the media produce and the discourses they use as material to build on, to process and deliver. We need to be interested in the structures of transformation.

The study also crosses some traditional boundaries in methodological terms. For example, it uses both quantitative techniques (e.g. quantitative content analyses and agenda-setting models to compare NOW and the *Times* agendas) and also more qualitative, interpretive methods (to describe and assess NOW's identity control strategies and their outcomes in news, for example).

This kind of methodological breadth is necessary in case study methodologies where the universe of relevant data is not imposed by the researcher, but is defined by the wide ranging activities of the research subject. This complexity (of multiple forms of data) is compounded in this study, however, by the different levels of media analysis involved, as well as by the overall conceptual framework of the study which seeks to untangle the role(s) of various factors -- resources, strategies and

ideology -- which have generally been studied through 79  
different research traditions.

Bringing these different levels, data forms and structural factors together in one study means also bringing together their different historical and logical "baggage" of definitions and measurement traditions. For example, questions of the structuring role(s) of resources in media access are addressed in a political-economic approach (using historical/critical, sometimes quantitative institutional analysis methods) and questions about ideology and representation are asked in a qualitative text-based analysis. Questions of "success" or "control" are addressed using available social science techniques such as ranked agenda comparisons, and quantitative content analysis techniques.

Overall, the case study is conceptually rather than methodologically driven. Rather than framing all questions in terms of one method, choices about how to measure various aspects of NOW's experience, were driven by both the research questions themselves (which were drawn from various research traditions) and the forms of data available to answer those questions. In the rest of this chapter I describe how these various questions, methods and levels of analyses come together to produce a comprehensive analysis of the media interactions of one new social movement organization.

Institutional analysis, as Gerbner (1973, p. 559) has described it, is a method of analysis that gets at the process of decision-making, the structuration of power roles, and the development of strategic actions and routines on the part of organizations in their production of knowledge or goods. In this part of the study I engaged in an historical institutional analysis of NOW in order to understand how a new social movement organization managed, day-to-day, the communication and media strategies that are so central to the symbolic challenge of the NSMs overall. What were the day-to-day-practices involved in the strategic articulation and mass communication of challenging ideas and identities? How do NSMs decide on issues, frames and problems to communicate to media? What resources and skills does such symbolic work take? How do NSM groups understand their communicative work? What role(s) do they see for media in the communication of new ideas? And how does their interaction with media work out day-to-day? How do NSM organizations negotiate their way into mass media channels? What are the constraints and possibilities of media as a resource for a new social movement organization?

**The Role(s) of Resources, Strategies and Identity**

Many different factors might be involved in, and influence, a movement organization's interaction with media. In this study I organize the discussion around three general factors that structure media-movement relations: resources (such as money, skills, competencies, organization, and so on), strategies (for example, making use of journalistic conventions, or building relationships with women reporters) and ideology/identity factors (that is the ideas, goals and self-presentations of the organization). These three factors are drawn from three different research traditions, but all of them have been shown to structure media interactions in important ways.<sup>1</sup>

Resources are likely to be critical in structuring a movement organization's media efforts. Gandy (1982), for example, has suggested that news access is "bought" day-to-day by corporations and bureaucratic government organizations through the production of information for journalists, which he calls "subsidizing" the news. Similarly, Ericson et al (1989), have noted that the journalist-source relationship is maintained day-to-day through the production, release, or holding back, of information and access to information by institutional sources.

The production of effective information subsidies is 82 clearly resource intensive. The question becomes whether movement organizations can become producers of such subsidies. Can social movement organizations mobilize the resources necessary to gain media access? What kind of resources are necessary to "subsidize" journalists? And are these likely to be available to most emergent political groups? In this study I look closely at questions of resources and organization. I ask how NOW's overall mobilization -- of staff, money and organization -- was associated with its development of media strategies, and ultimately with its voice in the public sphere.

The ability to develop successful strategies to negotiate media routines is also likely to be important in explaining movement success in media interactions. As multiple studies (cf. Gans, 1980; Tuchman, 1978; Fishman, 1980) have shown, news is the outcome of some very conventional and routinized practices on the part of journalists who tend to follow the same round of sources and institutions -- "beats" -- in the production of news, and to be guided by similar judgment patterns for "newsworthiness" in deciding how to respond to or frame stories (cf. Gans, 1980).

In any source study it is a fundamental question, then, how sources negotiate these conventions of news practice and news discourse. For example, will source

organizations become the "objects" of these practices -- i.e. be "covered" -- or can they develop strategies to negotiate, counteract or subvert these routines? Some critics have suggested that news, because of its own ideological basis in elite/ruling class interests, will always frame or define challengers in marginalizing ways (cf. Goldman and Rajagopal, 1991; Gitlin, 1980; Hall et al. 1978). However, more recent work (cf. Ryan, 1991; Hackett, 1991; Andersen, 1992) has begun to illustrate how some movement groups (e.g. labor union groups and peace movement groups) have managed to negotiate news framing practices successfully and thereby "re-frame" themselves.

The question of whether movement groups will be framed by media, then, or whether they will succeed in framing themselves is a critical question that can only be answered by investigating media strategies as well as media outcomes. In this study I track NOW's understanding of news media practices and conventions and its development of media strategies to counteract and negotiate this terrain. I ask how did NOW come to understand news practices and conventions? What kinds of strategies and techniques did NOW develop to interact with and control the effects of these journalistic conventions?

A group's ideology or identity is also likely to influence its relationship with news media. Some critical

researchers have in fact suggested that ideology (of both **84** news and sources) is the determining factor in interaction with news. Gitlin (1980), for example, has suggested that news will always marginalize some kinds of identities -- "radicals"-- and will incorporate others which he calls "reformists."

This view of ideology/identity as a predictor of media success/failure is problematic, however. Movement identities are not stable, taken for granted entities that can be determined and used as predictors. They are strategically produced social constructions, which may, in turn, be constructed in ways specifically to appeal to, or negotiate, media constraints. A group may well project an identity for itself or frame issues in ways that will appeal to media while still considering its long-term goals and identity as "radical." Ryan (1991), for example, notes how a labor movement group reframed its public identity from one of "special interests" to one of seeking a decent wage and human "dignity" while the group's policies and goals stayed the same. Movements and movement groups have no "authentic" identity, only the ones they create for themselves or which are created in interaction with other organizations and discourses.

Still, it is likely that a movement group's more general identity construction strategies (its political identity) at any one time will also influence its media strategies. So, in this study I investigate the role(s)

of NOW's identity in structuring its interaction with media in two ways: first, by tracking the relationship between NOW's more general political identity (i.e. its shifting construction of itself and its goals, aims and policies) and its media strategies,<sup>2</sup> and second, by comparing NOW media strategies to the media strategies of other women's movement groups with different overall identities. This approach carves out a place for "identity" in structuring media interactions, not as an independent and well defined predictor of media success (or failure) by itself, but as a factor that indicates NOW leaders' and members' perceptions of the organization and its goals at any particular time, and so is likely to also structure their development of strategies to communicate with news media.

To summarize, the institutional analysis of NOW asks:

(i) What resources and skills did NOW's media work involve? What kinds of resources did NOW leaders mobilize to produce access to news media? And are these resources likely to be available to all emergent groups? Overall, what are the costs of access to media for movement organizations?

(ii) How did NOW manage to produce access to media day-to-day? How did NOW understand news as a resource and what strategies did it to negotiate and control its

interactions with media? Did these routines and understandings shift significantly over time?

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(iii) What role did NOW's political identity -- that is its issue focus, goals, and self-perceptions and so on at different times -- play in structuring its media interactions? How did NOW's media strategies overall compare to other movement groups.

## **1.2 Data Collection**

The Institutional analysis drew mainly on NOW's historical materials which are archived at the Schlesinger Library for Women in History, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and secondarily on the Women, Media and Politics collection at the Ellis Library, University of Missouri-Columbia. The Schlesinger archive requires permission from NOW's Board for access and I would like to thank the National Organization for Women National Executive Board for its permission to access these papers. The Ellis paper are the personal papers of Kathy Bonk, NOW's media strategist for many years, and are open to the public.

The archival materials were used to provide information on NOW's resources, strategies, policies, and political identity creation over time. Documents used in the study included financial and budget papers, strategy and policy papers, and minutes of Board and Task Force meetings. They also included materials on press

strategies (such as notes on leaders' preparations for, 87  
and post-mortems of, interviews with journalists and talk  
show hosts), press releases sent at various points in  
time, advance publicity materials and strategy notes for  
NOW demonstrations and public events, memos, notes and  
strategy materials about various NOW campaigns  
(especially concerning the ERA campaign), congressional  
testimony, and various "public" documents such as  
leaflets, posters, brochures and so on. The availability  
of the day-to-day records of the short-lived NOW New York  
Public Information Office (1973-1975) were particularly  
invaluable resources, as were the early "media kits" and  
training manuals produced by the national office for  
volunteer workers in the local and state chapters.

These papers are of course only the records of NOW's  
day-to-day understandings, statements and practices and  
not direct observations of that process. But they are  
nevertheless a rich resource for understanding the NOW-  
news interaction over a long period of time, from the  
perspective of NOW itself.

### **1.3 Measurement and Definition Issues**

**1.31. Resources.** In this study I define resources  
widely to include income, membership, aspects of  
organization, skills, leadership, and communicative  
competence. Some of these resources can be easily  
quantified and measured and others cannot. For example, I

measure NOW's income and membership quantitatively but 88  
other attributes of the organization which are also  
critically important -- such as education and competence  
of leaders and availability of information and knowledge  
-- cannot be easily codified. Some resources are thus  
described and assessed descriptively while others are  
measured more objectively (see chapter five).

One of most important resources for NOW and other  
NSM groups is **membership**. Most income in NSM groups is  
derived from membership dues, and large membership  
numbers are also recognized as strategic assets in terms  
of perceived representativeness.

In this study NOW's membership (and relatedly its  
income) was ascertained from various different sources,  
tracked across time, and then correlated with NOW's media  
access. As the results indicate (see chapter five), there  
seems to be a clear relationship between general  
resources and media access. However, there are some  
important caveats in assessing the accuracy of NOW  
membership numbers. As other observers of social movement  
groups have also noted (cf. Knoke, 1989; Gamson, 1975;  
Zald and McCarthy, 1979) the actual documentable numbers  
of members of a social movement organization at any one  
time are very difficult to ascertain. First, because SMOs  
do not routinely keep excellent records, second because  
strategic "over-counting" is endemic, and third, because  
the meaning of "membership" itself is problematic. Some

groups, for example, count all people who have ever paid 89 membership dues, others routinely purge their rolls and drop all non active members every few months or weeks. NOW in general has had a policy to count only active, paid up members as members, but purging rolls is itself a resource intensive activity which may not have high priority in an action driven organization, and in any case such claims are difficult to verify. The personal data/membership forms of all NOW members that would be needed to reconstruct or verify membership claims are not available in the NOW archive. In fact such materials are unlikely to have been kept at all before computing technology made it easy to do so.

Wherever possible in this study I have tried to verify membership and income numbers across sources (e.g. by comparing numbers from NOW records with other historical studies when available). But even so there are still some missing years that I cannot account for (which do not seem to be available even to the national organization), and some sets of conflicting numbers for various years. When numbers conflict across sources my strategy has been to use NOW's own reported figures. When confronted with differing numbers from NOW, I used the highest reported figure. In general I have been less concerned with the absolute accuracy of the figures than with the fact that all reported figures trend in the same direction, which is to say generally increasing over the

time period reported here (1966-1980). Figure 3.1 (next 90 page) illustrates some of the different reported figures from NOW and other studies for membership across time from various sources, but indicates that they all follow the same general trend. Income figures also follow this curve closely because they are derived from membership dues for the most part.

**1.32 Strategies.** Media strategies in this study are defined as those practices, routines and understandings which organizations develop in order to control their interactions with media. These may take a number of forms -- for example, the development of traditional public relations skills or attempts to "educate" reporters may be media strategies. But conscious and deliberate exit from, and avoidance of, media may also be seen as a strategic response. To have media strategies, organizations must only show some evidence that their interactions with media have been considered and planned -- that is that they are goal oriented and intended to have some effects on media representations.

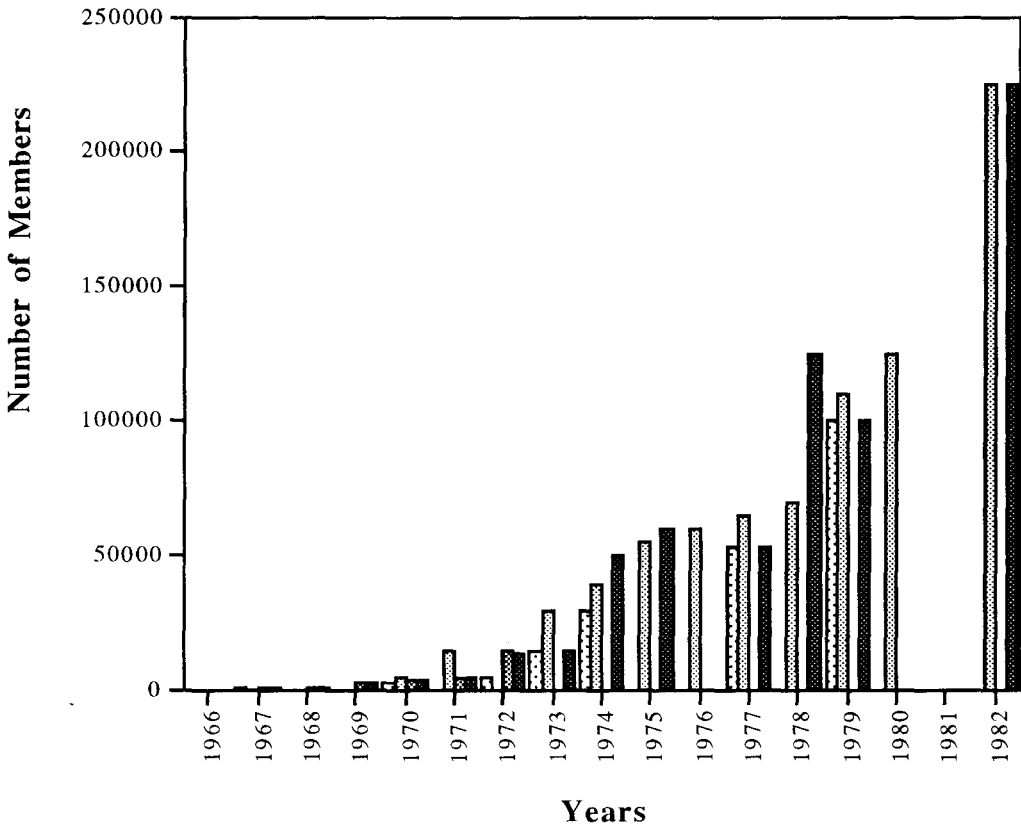
This study investigated NOW's media strategies over time through an analysis of its historical records. As I note in more detail below (section 1.5, Limitations), NOW's records are not indexed, so complete confidence in finding all relevant material is impossible. However, after a search and analysis of all materials in NOW's

archive (1966-1982) that were marked as being media, publicity or communications related (both generally and within various issue areas), and a search and analysis of the day-to-day records of the Public Information Office (1973-1975), the public relations task force, and other related task forces (e.g. media reform task forces, images of women task force, and so on), I have confidence that the search accessed most of the available papers relating to NOW's interactions with media over time. The documents for analysis included press releases for various events and activities as well as general background press materials on NOW as an organization and background materials on various issues and topics; public relations and media kits created by NOW leaders for training NOW chapters and national staff; letters, statements, and other press materials from the documents of the PIO (including letters exchanged with reporters, editors and TV producers); strategy notes for interviews and background notes and materials on reporters and media organizations; scrap books of news stories with some commentary and analysis; references to media strategies and media coverage in National Board minutes, and so on.

This range of materials from different time periods in the organization's history made it possible to reconstruct NOW's understandings of, and interactions with, media over time.

Figure 3.1

**NOW Membership Over Time  
Various Measures\***



\* These numbers were taken from NOW records, news reports and various secondary sources such as Klein, 1984; Boneparth, 1982; Carabillo et al., 1993, etc.

**1.33 Ideology/Identity.** Organizational identity is a complex concept involving aspects of a group's goals, ideas, political and cultural issues, historical development, perceived roles, and overall philosophy. NOW's identity/ideology is tracked in this study through analyzing the group's descriptions of itself and its goals at various times in NOW's own records. The study

drew on minutes of Board meetings; public statements of purpose and priorities (e.g. the 1968 Bill of Rights and the 1975 Manifesto of NOW); press materials; convention materials; legislative and commission related materials; policy statements; records of public speeches and internal debates, and so on. These materials made it possible to track major shifts in NOW's goals and self-perceptions over time, as well as to indicate at various points what NOW's issue priorities were (i.e. its agendas). This historical reconstruction of NOW's "internal identity" and policy agendas at various points in time was then compared to its representation (NOW's media or "public" identity) in the *Times* in order to assess NOW's relative "control" over its own legitimacy. (See content analysis below).

#### **1.4 Limitations of the Data,**

##### **Limits of the Institutional Analysis**

Some of the limitations inherent in this and other parts of the study are the result of limitations in the institutional data. NOW's records from 1966-1982 are available at the Schlesinger Library and can be accessed with permission from NOW's National Board. These records have been inventoried by a librarian and a master list details the contents of hundreds of boxes. However entries on this list are not always informative and the collection has not been indexed or categorized in any

systematic way.<sup>3</sup> In fact the contents of the boxes are 94  
still in much the same order they were when they arrived  
at the library -- that is, they are the results of NOW  
office staff emptying file cabinets into them.

Consequently the boxes contain loose papers, file  
folders, ring binders, and assorted materials that are  
organized sometimes by years, sometimes by theme or  
issue, sometimes by task force, sometimes by project,  
sometimes by leader's name, and so on.

This lack of sorting/indexing raises difficulties  
for the researcher, making it impossible to know if one  
has ever collected all relevant materials.<sup>4</sup> In this study  
for resource analysis purposes I searched out all  
materials marked as budget and membership. For policy and  
identity related questions I read and copied all national  
board meetings minutes, policy statements, convention  
materials, and general public statements about NOW at  
various times (from congressional testimonies and media  
"background" packages, and so on). For media strategies  
questions I collected all media and press related  
materials that were marked as being media or  
communications related within issue areas (e.g. press  
releases, public relations and media kits, press packages  
sent to reporters on various events and issues), and read  
all materials from the Public Information Office papers,  
and from task forces on public relations and so on.  
Overall I spent around two months in the Schlesinger

archive and a week in the Ellis library archive gathering 95 materials. But I cannot be certain that missing data (for example, missing membership figures for a few years in this period) are not somewhere in the archive, nor that important materials about press relations that were filed in non obvious ways (e.g. within one of the multiple task forces that I did not have time to investigate) are not excluded.

This lack of reliable sorting in the archive contributed to one particular critical difficulty for the study. As I indicate in the next section, a major aim of this study was to compare NOW and news discourses across time in terms of issues and issue agendas (i.e. ranked priorities of issues). This proved to be impossible to do systematically based on the evidence available in the archive. From the archive, no clear hierarchization (agenda) could be determined reliably for NOW issues at regular points in time. Partly this is because the organization itself is resolutely multi-issue, but partly it is a difficulty raised by the lack of confidence a researcher has in finding all relevant materials in the archive. For example, even if a reliable "unit" of analysis could be determined in order to construct NOW agendas year-by-year or month-by-month, the researcher could not be sure that a reliable or representative sample of materials containing this unit could be found.<sup>5</sup> Consequently in this study the agenda-

comparison aspects of the study are cut back and I rely 96  
on historical policy statements from NOW about its  
agenda and three public "agendas" (1968 Bill of Rights,  
Manifesto and 1989 Bill of Rights) which NOW put out at  
different points in its history as clear statements of  
priorities (see section 2.46 for more explanation).

## **II. THE CONTENT ANALYSIS: ASSESSING NOW'S "SUCCESS"**

In order to assess NOW's relative success in  
interaction with media the study also drew on an  
original content analysis of 377 stories about NOW or  
quoting NOW in the *New York Times*, 1966-1980. The  
content analysis was linked from the outset to the  
institutional analysis and so it sought to track  
elements of NOW's media construction that were  
especially relevant to the institutional analysis.

Because NOW's practices and discourse are  
structured in some different ways than news discourse,  
this paralleling is not always as elegant as it might  
be.<sup>6</sup> For example, it is possible to track NOW's  
strategic goals in terms of simple access - i.e. did  
they make it into the news at all -- but it is more  
difficult to operationalize and assess some of their  
other strategic goals in interactions with media. The  
issue of identity control is one of these areas. NOW  
sought to "control" its image in media, but there is  
little indication in the institutional materials that

the group had any systematic definition of what this 97  
would entail, and so a direct assessment of whether they  
"succeeded" in this goal needs to first provide an  
operationalizations of what such "control" would entail.

In this study I deal with this difficulty of direct  
comparisons between NOW and news by introducing a  
general, multi-dimensional framework for the analysis of  
NOW's "success" in interaction with news which has  
meaningful links, if not perfect symmetry, with many of  
NOW's aims and strategies (outlined in section 2.2  
below).

Overall, the content analysis seeks to map the  
outcomes of NOW media strategies, including its efforts  
to access media, to gain voice, to be represented  
legitimately and to build a women's issue news agenda.

### **2.1 The New York Times as a Case Study Organization**

This study only assessed NOW's "success" in one  
news outlet and so is consequently limited in its  
generalizability. As one newspaper the *Times* may make  
decisions differently from other papers, and certainly  
there would be different patterns of access of the study  
also included television news.<sup>7</sup>

However, if one has to choose one newspaper as a  
starting point for this kind of analysis, then the *New  
York Times* is a good choice for a number of reasons.  
First, the *New York Times* plays a central role in

American political life where it is often presented (and 98 accepted by professional journalists throughout the country) as the pre-eminent journal of record in the American media sector. As such, the *Times* coverage of new movements and ideas is often the harbinger and active trend-setter for other mainstream media responses. Secondly, the *Times* is the newspaper, with the *Washington Post*, that is read most frequently by policy makers and government leaders, the audience that NOW was often trying to reach. Finally, and most compelling, the *Times* was considered to be one of the most valued outlets by NOW leaders themselves. Success in accessing and controlling one's agenda in the *Times* was seen as success by NOW leaders.

## **2.2 Measures of Success: Access, Voice and Control**

The issue of "success" in source-news interactions, as in any kind of communicative interaction, is highly problematic. In this study I assess the relative "success" of NOW as a source around four different dimensions: *access, voice, placement, and control* (identity and agenda).

*Access*, simply refers to patterns in NOW's appearance in the news columns, and is the minimal requirement for voice in the public sphere.

*Voice* refers to whether NOW is allowed to speak for itself and in what circumstances. This ability to be

quoted in the news has often been seen as associated with 99 communicative power (cf. Sigal, 1973; Brown et al., 1987; Barker-Plummer, 1989). Brown et al. (1987), for example, have calculated the percentages of various types of quoted news sources and have argued that the over-representation of elite, official, male sources indicates the limits of diversity in political debate in the United States. However, the relationship between being cited and controlling the representation of one's organizational identity or issues is surely one that is quite problematic, which is why this study also includes placement and control measures.

*Placement* refers to the context of NOW's stories and the associated value of different news sections. Placement in news has long been seen to indicate relative importance -- front page issues are more important than other kinds, so placement patterns can be read as a measure of relative legitimacy assigned different kinds of stories by editors.

The fourth "level" of success for a source used here is *control*. Control refers to the ability of a participant in communication to be taken seriously as a legitimate speaker and to be able to introduce and define issues. Control is thus a measure of one's influence over the debate.

In this study I operationalize control in two ways. One aspect of control assessed here involves NOW's

agenda -- that is the range and ranking of its issues -- in news. This kind of influence is usually associated with the agenda-setting tradition. It is an assessment of relative influence over what other people will consider important and has been utilized in studies of media effects (cf. Weaver et al., 1988) and in a study of the influences of political candidates and parties on election news agendas (cf. Semetko et al, 1991). Hall et al. (1978) have also suggested that it is this ability to control the agenda -- to be the "primary definers" of public agendas -- which is the source of state and officials' symbolic success in using news media.

Agenda control is assessed here by comparing NOW's agenda at various points with the *Times* re-presentation of that agenda and judging how much control NOW maintained over its agenda. (See section 2.48 for detailed description of this analysis).

The second aspect of control that is assessed here -- identity control -- assesses how much control NOW was able to exercise over its organizational identity, especially in terms of legitimacy. This concept of "success" is one that is tied to the relative legitimacy of a speaker in the debate. Such perceived legitimacy is likely to be associated with a source organization's ability to frame, define, or control issues. Gitlin (1980), for example, seems to be invoking this kind of

success measure (or in his case, failure) when he notes 101  
that news framed SDS as an illegitimate political voice  
and so harmed the organization's ability to define issues  
or to be taken seriously by publics. Ericson et al.'s  
(1989) idea of serious news access as a form of cultural  
capital also involves the idea of successful news access  
as one that allows routine, serious representation that  
results in public legitimacy.

In this study I assess legitimacy and identity  
control through a qualitative analysis of NOW's framing  
in the *Times* which is compared to, and understood in the  
context of, NOW's legitimation strategies. (See section  
2.47 below for a detailed description of this analysis.)

These two dimensions of control are likely to be  
related, but they are not the same thing. A movement  
group's "success" at the level of control can potentially  
be different in these different dimensions. For example,  
a movement group can be marginalized as an organization  
but still have influence on media agendas. They can place  
their issues on the agenda without being taken seriously  
as the spokesperson for that issue.

These dimensions of success may be understood,  
hierarchically. We can say for example that access is  
basic to all other levels, that voice is an additional  
level of successful interaction, and that legitimate  
representation or control of one's identity makes a  
voice more credible and more likely to be listened to.

Control, over one's identity and one's agenda, is in 102  
this framework the ultimate "success" of strategic  
interaction.

### **2.3. Data Collection: The Sample**

The content analysis sample consisted of 377 stories from the *New York Times*, 1966-1980. This sample constitutes a *census* of all stories which are indexed under NOW, or which were cross referenced under NOW for the period 1966-1980 in that newspaper. This means that all stories (excluding letters to the editor) which were about NOW or in which NOW was mentioned, cited, or featured prominently, should be included. As a census of all NOW related stories we can infer from this sample that patterns indicated here are indicative of how NOW and its agenda are represented by the *Times* overall in the 15 year period.

This sample also has some serious limitations. As a census of all stories about NOW in the *New York Times* 1966-1980, it cannot account for stories in which NOW's *information* was used but in which the organization was not mentioned or quoted. This is a significant drawback because there are many scenarios in which journalists may have used NOW information without crediting NOW -- for example when they cite anonymous sources ("sources said"), invoke general sources ("women's groups have claimed"), or when they simply draw on this kind of press

material for background information. This may mean that 103  
the constituted sample underplays NOW's influence on  
women's issue agenda building beyond stories in which is  
features prominently.

The size of the news sample also may have been a  
drawback. Though this census sample contains all  
locatable stories about NOW in the *Times* over the 1966-  
1980 period, it still constitutes a modest amount of news  
material with which to analyze placement across multiple  
categories and agenda relations. With a sample this size  
analyses of particular traits over time are especially  
difficult to do because cells become very small. Most of  
the patterns in this study need to be retested on a  
bigger sample of stories about feminism, though how such  
stories would be located is a difficult question. One of  
the positive aspects of this sample, created as it is  
around NOW the organization, is that it does not prejudge  
which issues are feminist issues. A sampling procedure to  
create a larger sample for analysis would have to  
carefully consider how that sample would be constituted  
without prejudging which issues would be defined as  
feminist issues.

#### **2.4. Coding, Measurement and Analysis:**

##### **Operationalizing "Success"**

Each story was coded by one coder, and 20 percent of  
the stories (randomly selected, proportionally by years)

were then recoded by a second coder. Coder reliability 104 figures across these two coders are cited for each measure individually below. The average coder reliability figure for all measures reported here was .84.

Each of the four conceptual "levels" of success -- access, voice, placement and control -- were operationalized and measured in the following ways.

#### **2.41 Basic access**

**Measurement.** Basic access was measured in two ways. First through a simple count of the number of stories. Second, a count of paragraphs was also undertaken. The paragraph count gives a more nuanced account as it includes information about how much coverage NOW produced over time, as well as how many individuals stories.<sup>8</sup>

**Analysis.** Access measures (both stories and graphs) were plotted over time, to ascertain trends in NOW's access over time (see chapter seven). Access measures were also correlated with resource measures in order to investigate links between resources and access (see chapter five).<sup>9</sup>

#### **2.42 Access Strategies**

**Measurement.** Stories were also coded for access strategies -- that is each story was coded to determine what event, strategy or activity by either NOW or a journalist had occurred to produce the story, and these

patterns were then tracked over time and compared to NOW's activities. For example, the analysis asked, was the story the result of a public demonstration, protest or publicity gesture, or the result of journalist enterprise, such as an interview? Was the story initiated by NOW filing a law suit or was it coverage of a NOW conference?

The overall aim of such an analysis was to determine, if possible, how much of the news about NOW was produced through NOW's own action. In contrast how much was generated from journalist "enterprise," as well as to determine, if possible, which of NOW's communicative strategies were most likely to gain news coverage.<sup>10</sup>

Access strategy categories were:

(a) Public Events (which included marches, strikes, demonstrations, boycotts, anniversary or special occasion public events. When these were also accompanied by news conferences, the public event was coded as the source of the story).

(b) NOW Meeting/Routine Event This category included stories about NOW conferences, conventions or chapter meetings.

(c) Court-Related (Legal). This category included stories that were predominantly generated because NOW interacted with the court system.

(d) Legislature or Commission Context. This category included NOW's interactions with legislatures and commissions, both state and national.

(e) Journalist Enterprise. Any story in which it was not clear what the event, strategy or hook was, or that was clearly an interview or special feature, was coded as journalist enterprise. It is likely that some of the stories in the "journalist enterprise" category were also instigated by subsidies sent out by NOW, but unless a study or news conference was explicitly mentioned, the benefit of the doubt was given to journalist-enterprise.

(f) NOW Overt News Subsidy. This category include stories that seem to have been generated because of a NOW report, award or other "overt" subsidy. Note that this category does not account for NOW subsidies of news that do not mention or cite the organization, because this sample is compiled by collecting together all stories indexed and cross referenced under NOW.

(g) Other. This category contained stories generated in unusual contexts. This category made up about 5 percent of stories.

Often more than one origin for the story could be detected. For example, if a protest march was being reported and a news conference had also been convened by NOW to discuss the event. In these cases, policy was to code the "main" event that was taking place -- i.e. in

the case of a news conference accompanying an event, the 107 event was coded.

Coder agreement between two coders for this item was 75%. Coder reliability was .65.<sup>11</sup> Most of the disagreement encountered here was not in finding events/strategies that resulted in the story, but in agreement between coders as to which event or strategy was the most important -- i.e. choosing which event or strategy to code as the causal factor. Code sheets indicate that both coders were able to identify the same set of initiation or access strategies in the texts but they disagreed some of the time as to which news initiation strategy was the main event, and so which to code.

**Analysis.** Access Strategies were tracked over time to see which strategies had produced most coverage (chapter seven, 1.3), and then cross tabulated with (a) gender (b) placement and (c) voice in order to determine whether patterns in access strategies were related to other strategic factors. For example, the access strategy/gender cross tab sought to determine if NOW's strategic interaction with women reporters interacted with particular story initiation contexts (chapter seven, 1.2).

**Measures.** Because one of NOW's main strategies in interaction with news was to interact with and support women reporters, and because the topic of the news stories was feminist issues, the gender of writers was coded from bylines when it could be determined. About 2/3 of all stories could be identified this way. (140 of 377 stories did not have bylines.) Coder agreement on the gender of writers as indicated by bylines was 100% across a three-part option (male-female-unknown). Coder reliability was 1.0.

**Analysis.** The gender of writers was then tracked across time to determine patterns in coverage overall and was cross tabulated with (a) placement (b) access strategy (c) voice and (d) topic to indicate whether interactions with women reporters were also associated with other "success measures." For example, I wanted to know if women reporters' stories were also likely to be the stories generated in particular contexts -- were the NOW stories written by women reporters likely to be those initiated by journalist enterprise, for example? This might indicate the existence of a cadre of sympathetic reporters and/or of gendered patterns of assignments in the newspaper.

**Measures.** "Voice " was measured simply by coding whether or not the story directly quoted NOW. Give that all of these stories mentioned NOW, those in which NOW was not quoted were coded as NOW being "talked about."

Unfortunately the voice measure did not include coding for the number of times NOW was quoted, nor did it indicate whether they were "counter-quoted" by another source, though these would also have been good measures of voice and should be included in future studies. Coder reliability here was .98.

**Analysis.** Voice patterns were tracked across time to indicate what proportion of stories NOW was quoted in and what proportions they were talked about. Voice was also cross tabulated with (a) gender (b) placement and (c) access strategy to determine if voice for NOW was linked to story contexts, reporters gender or news placement (chapter seven, 2.1).

## 2.45 Issue/Topic

**Measures.** All stories were also coded in terms of the topics of the story. They were coded first for headline topic -- which is usually a good indication of the overall most important topic of the story. They were also coded in terms of issues mentioned (1-6 issues in this study). A comparison of frequencies of stories by topic indicated that headline and Issue 1 (first issue

mentioned) breakdowns were very similar. For the most part the analysis uses headline topics as indications of the general topic of the story. Coder reliability was .82.

**Analysis.** Topics of stories were first plotted overall (aggregate frequencies) to indicate general levels of attention by the *Times* to NOW issues (chapter seven, section 4.1).

Second, the story topics were plotted year-by year in order to see what aspects of NOW's discourse the *Times* found most important each year, thus constructing a news agenda for each year chapter seven, 4.2).

Stories categorized by topics was also cross tabulated with (a) placement (b) access strategy (c) gender and (d) voice in order to detect patterns in the *Times* handling of NOW stories depending on their topic (chapter seven, sections 3 and 4). This cross tab data would indicate of NOW stories were placed in different sections of the paper based on the topic of the story, and whether story topics were also related to reporters' gender, access strategy and so on. These measures would help explain the influence of NOW's identity/ideology on its representation.

## 2.46 Placement

**Measures.** The stories were also coded on their placement within the newspaper. Placement in newspapers

is allocated in terms of topics (TV stories in the TV 111  
section for example) but, placement is also an indication  
news sorting of events in terms of what is considered  
most important (and I argue here most "public" as opposed  
to "private" concerns.)

Categories in this coding were: Front Page, News  
Sections, Women's/Lifestyle Page, Regional Pages, and  
Other (e.g. TV pages, business pages, etc. Coder  
reliability was .74.

**Analysis.** First, stories' placement was tracked over  
time in order to ascertain if NOW "succeeded" in getting  
its ideas into the news sections or the front page, which  
is where they wanted to be placed. Placement was then  
cross tabulated with (a) topic (b) gender (c) access  
strategies and (d) voice in order to ascertain whether  
placement was linked to topic of the story, the gender of  
the reporter or the access strategy which initiated the  
story.

#### **2.47 Control Measures I: Agendas**

Besides access, voice and placement the study also  
tried to assess NOW's relative control in interaction  
with media along two dimensions -- agenda control and  
identity control. Agenda control measures compare NOW's  
agenda to the *Times*' representation of that agenda.  
Agenda control is seen to have occurred (i.e. NOW has  
been successful) if the *Times* representation of NOW in

terms of its range and ranking of issues resembles NOW's 112 own agendas at various times.

**Agenda Measures.** This use of agenda comparisons is somewhat different from most studies of agenda-setting which focus on the relationship between media and audiences. However the agenda-setting methodology has recently been extended to embrace a larger concern with the formation of media agendas themselves which is called "agenda building" (cf. Semetko et al, 1991). It is in this second context that I use the methodology in this study to compare NOW and news agendas -- to assess NOW's ability to control its own agenda in interaction with news media.

The move from media-to-audience agenda setting to organization-to-media agenda setting brings with it some problems for the agenda setting method of categorizing, ranking and correlating agendas. As Semetko et al. (1991) also note, the organizations and discourses that influence news agendas are often already formed and encoded in ways that are not easily compatible with news categories and forms. This makes the comparison between agendas at the institutional level a more complex process than that between news and audience agendas, where audience priorities are constructed through surveys that use the same terminology and categories as news itself. For example, Semetko et al. (1991) try to assess the influence of presidential candidates and parties in

Britain and the US in "setting" the news agenda during 113 elections, but they note with some frustration that the effort of making these discourses comparable is itself part of the problem.<sup>12</sup>

This difficulty in comparing two different forms of discourses was also apparent in this analysis. First there were problems with constructing reliable agendas for NOW at regular intervals. Not only is NOW's political identity at any one time usually resolutely multi-issue (see chapter four) but NOW's records are not organized in a systematic enough way to create reliable agendas for NOW for every year. Consequently the agenda control measures in the study are limited to three different NOW "agendas" -- the 1969 NOW Bill of Rights, the 1975 Manifesto and the 1989 Bill of Rights for the 21st Century -- which are clear statements of priorities by the organization. These agendas are then correlated with the *Times* agendas for the same years, and then for the next year.

Some adjustments had to be made to the news analysis also. For the most part the *Times* "agendas" were created conventionally, (i.e. by ranking issues in terms of the frequency of stories in particular categories) but some standardizing had to be done to make it possible to compare NOW and news agendas. For example, a key category of news stories had to be dropped during the ranked correlations because it had no logical equivalent in NOW

discourse. The largest category of news stories in the *Times* about NOW is the category of NOW/feminism which contains stories about NOW events and strategies rather than focusing on any particular issue. There is no equivalent category in NOW agendas (this is an artifact of news coverage) so that this category (and "other") had to be dropped in order to rank and correlate NOW and news stories. (Semetko et al (1991) also note that in their analysis of political parties and news agendas a large category of event/strategy oriented stories also had to be dropped from the analysis.) 114

The agenda correlations here also involved longer than customary time lags between agenda comparisons. The time lags used here -- in which NOW agendas are seen to influence the *Times'* representation of these agendas -- are yearly. NOW and the *Times'* agendas (for NOW) are correlated first in the same year, and then one and two years later.

This time lag is longer by far than agenda-setting usually allows -- lags usually range from a few weeks to a few months. But these time lags are reasonable in this particular context. Most agenda setting work is conducted during elections, whereas NOW's relationship with news is analyzed here as an ongoing interaction across 15 years. During elections news handlers are sending out materials daily and hourly, and new issues are put on the agenda every day. It makes sense to assess relationships between

news and audiences, and news and politicians, within the 115 short term in this framework. However NOW's interactions with news were much less frequent than this. They took place a few times a month usually and more often in times of crisis (this is an estimate from the number of available press releases and documented interactions with reporters) and new priorities were raised in the organization monthly and yearly (at conventions and board meetings), not daily. The NOW-news interaction was consequently one that was much slower and relationships between changes in one discourse and changes in the other are consequently likely to be spaced farther apart. It is this slowness that makes an over time analysis essential, and which makes year lags as used here reasonable responses to the limits of the data and the logic of the interaction. These changes in the agenda-setting techniques are important ones, however, and they place limits on how far results from this study can be understood in the larger agenda-setting context (see section 2.5, Limitations for more discussion of this problem).

The starting points for the time-lags involved here were chosen based on the availability of NOW agendas in these years -- 1968 and 1975. NOW's publication of agendas in these years coincided with key decision points in the organization. The Bill of Rights in 1968 was the founding document of NOW after the first two years as it

became institutionalized and set public goals for itself.<sup>116</sup> The Manifesto in 1975 was a public signal of significant change in NOW's direction as the new leaders took over the organization.

**Analysis.** The limited agenda comparisons done for the study, then, were (i) correlation of NOW's 1968, and 1975 agendas with the *Times*' agendas for the same years (1968 and 1975), (ii) correlation of NOW's 1968 agenda with the *Times* 1970 agenda (1969 had too few stories) and (iii) NOW's 1975 agenda with the *Times*' 1976 and 1977 agendas.

#### **2.47 Control Measures II: Identity Control**

As well as strategically accessing news media, and using that access to introduce new issues into public debate, NOW leaders wanted to create and maintain a public image for the organization itself as the serious "voice" for American women. Organizational legitimacy was seen to be essential in making other kinds of political activity possible. In this section of the analysis I assess the relative "success" of NOW's strategic control of its identity control and its attempts to build a legitimate identity for itself in the public sphere.

The study tracks NOW's representation in the *Times* and assesses that representation in the context of the organization's own shifting identities and strategies. NOW's "public" identity was thus compared to its

"internal" organizational identity, and its relative 117  
"success" is assessed in terms of that comparison.

**Measurement.** NOW's identity was tracked in the *Times* through a systematic qualitative/interpretive analysis of the language, descriptions, and frames used to construct the organization. Frames here refer to the ways in which information is organized and presented, in this case from information about NOW framed by reporters. Goffman (1986 [1974]) has describes a frame as a cognitive organizing device that "allows its user to locate, perceive, identify and, label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms." Underlying the concept of framing is the understanding that the way issues or groups are constructed can have serious consequences for how they will be perceived by individuals and policy makers (Kahnman and Tversky, 1984; Iyengar, 1991; Stallings, 1990; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989).

In the context of media studies, researchers have noted that one of the most important roles of news is in the ways that it frames new or emergent issues, events and organizations for audiences (cf. Gitlin 1980; Gamson, 1992; Ryan, 1991): Framing an organization in different ways in news may lead to its being perceived as more or less legitimate or credible by news readers. Ryan (1991, p.207), for example, identifies a number of ways in which media frames can legitimizes or delegitimize groups. She

notes that groups can be de-legitimized by being named in118 ways that they did not choose for themselves (such as "leftist" rather than democratic); by having their identity set off by quotes or qualifiers (such as "alleged" or "calling themselves"); by having their concerns trivialized (i.e. focusing on dress or mannerisms rather than content); or by being "balanced" by sources that are of quite different stature. Gitlin (1980. p. 27) offers a similar series of news framing "mechanisms" of delegitimation when he notes that coverage of SDS featured trivialization (making light of movement language, style, age and goals), polarization (emphasizing counter demonstrations and balancing the group with the ultra-right as equivalent "extremists"), emphasis on internal dissent, marginalization (showing demonstrators to be deviant or unrepresentative), and so on.

In this analysis I draw on Ryan (1991) and Gitlin's (1980) methodological insights in tracking the linguistic cues and frames for NOW that would indicate legitimacy (or not) in a particular story (e.g. polarization or being described in quotation marks), but I am also concerned with more macro patterns of shifts in news representations of NOW over time and in different contexts. Neither Gitlin (1980) nor Ryan (1991) followed media-movement relationships over long periods, and so consequently processes of struggle over legitimation that

may have taken place had the groups continued to interact<sup>119</sup> with media, or the researchers continued to observe, are missed. Gitlin (1980), for example, studied SDS's representation closely only over one year (1965-1966). He argues that studying early framing is the best way to see the emergence of media frames before they "harden" into place as common sense. But what if they do not harden at all but change in some other way? NOW's representation over time suggests that in fact early marginalization can move into later, if limited, legitimation. Because NOW is one of the few movement groups to continue to exist over time, we have a unique ability to see in its experiences with news media whether a marginalizing framing can in be turned around -- whether persistent efforts at reframing can be successful.

**Analysis.** NOW's "identity" as represented in the *Times* is compared to and assessed in the context of its own internal identity constructions and legitimation strategies. The organization's self-descriptions in its policy documents and public statements which was document in the institutional analysis is now compared its representation in the *Times*. For example, NOW leadership's general shift in 1975 in which they exercised less control over NOW's public image in 1975 and allowed more internal dissent to be publicly talked about is tracked to media content at that time, and the

representations are compared to NOW's identity strategies at that time.

### **2.5 Limitations of the Content Analysis**

Some of the limitations of the content analysis derive from the news sample, others from limitations in the operationalizations and measurements.

The sample drawn here constitutes a census of all stories about NOW in the *New York Times* 1966-1980 which means that it cannot account for stories in which NOW's *information* was used but in which the organization was not mentioned or quoted. As noted above this is a significant drawback because there are many scenarios in which journalists may have used NOW information without crediting NOW. The size of the news sample is also problematic, making it difficult to analyze trends over time adequately.

Limitations of the content analysis are also tied to problems of operationalization and measurement. Assessing "success" in interaction is problematic in any context, and this study is no exception. The framework of access, voice, placement and control offered here, and the measurements used to assess these concepts, are only exploratory and sketchy beginnings to what will be a long development process. I have drawn here also on some available measurement techniques (such as agenda setting

methods of rank order correlations) which seemed to be 121  
the best available for my purposes but which are  
stretched to their logical limits in this context.  
Changing the usual time lags in agenda setting, for  
example, even when it seems justified by the slow pace of  
NOW-news interaction, may significantly distance this  
analysis from others in that research tradition. Combined  
with the difficulties involved in standardizing movement  
and news discourses for comparisons overall, it may be  
that agenda setting techniques are not the most  
appropriate for this kind of analysis. Clearly more work  
needs to be done in operationalizing both agenda and  
identity control.

### **Chapter Summary**

The parallel institutional and content analyses  
research design here allows us to both track and assess  
the media strategies of a new social movement  
organization. The two-part logic of the study's design is  
essentially if we are to understand the role(s) of news  
in processing social movement discourses -- it is only by  
comparing news constructions to others that we can  
untangle roles for sources and roles for news.

Because this is a case study which seeks to  
understand the relative role played by several different  
kinds of factors (resources, strategies and ideology) it  
involved multiple methodologies. The study involves

interpretive text analysis to get at the complex multi-layered relationship that NOW built with news. Overall the study is conceptually driven, and it draws eclectically on methods and measurement techniques that seem to show promise in the various contexts addressed.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> These three factors are drawn from a review of the three major approaches to news studies -- political economic, sociological and ideological/hegemonic (Barker-Plummer, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> For example, in 1975 NOW's identity underwent a shift and so did its relationship to media. The Majority Caucus took over with a wider feminist agenda than leaders had had before, and their attitude towards media coverage of NOW was much less controlling than the previous leadership because they were concerned to present a diverse and welcoming identity for the organization rather than a carefully controlled and pre-censored one. Thus a shift in political identity generally also made for a shift in media strategies, and indeed shift in news coverage -- during this period (as I describe in chapter eight) news coverage of NOW became much more diverse, complex and critical.

<sup>3</sup> The master list lists items in the following ways "a manila folder marked ERA 1976" which is less than useful.

<sup>4</sup> Finding relevant materials is somewhat haphazard -- researchers have to simply order up boxes that, from their contents list, look like they might be useful.

<sup>5</sup> The "unit" of analysis in news agendas is usually the story. A possible "unit" in NOW papers might be a mention of an issue on the agenda for the national convention agenda, or national board meetings, but even these materials are not reliably available.

<sup>6</sup> This difficulty in comparing two different discourses is not unique to NOW. Recent studies that have tried to track the influence of institutions on media agendas in other contexts -- for example presidential candidates and political parties on news election agendas (cf. Semetko et al., 1991) have also noted the difficulty in paralleling these discourses adequately for comparison. See discussion later in section 2.46 which describes the agenda setting measures.

<sup>7</sup> Extensions to the study will include *Times* coverage up to 1995, and TV coverage 1966-1995.

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8 Paragraphs in the *Times* and other newspapers are on average about 3-5 sentences. This is a more convenient measurement than column inches for coders, and overall gives a reliable measure for comparative purposes.

9 Log measures of graphs, income and membership were also calculated so that income, membership and access could be charted together (chapter seven, 1.2)

10 Sigal (1973) is the source of this distinction between journalist enterprise and other kinds of stories, but it is vulnerable to criticism too because interview or features may also be instigated by information subsidies of some sort -- e.g., press kits that indicate leaders to interview, or suggestions by media strategists that prompt "features" and so on.

11 Coder agreement as a simple percentage was 75%. When calculated as a reliability figure, which takes into account patterns of expected (random) agreement, the figure moves down to .65.

12 In the end the Semetko et al. (1991) study compares issue ranking in candidate speeches in media to issue ranking in news reports about the election overall. This is problematic in terms of the relative lack of independence of these sources -- both are mediated -- but it is one way to produce standardized formats to compare.

**A Brief Political Profile of the National Organization  
for Women: Militant Pragmatists**

The National Organization *for* Women -- so called so that men could also be members -- was formed in 1966 by a group of women who were attending the Third National Conference of the State Commissions on the Status of Women. They had been dissatisfied with the way the conference was going for a few days. Most of their critical reports on women's status were being ignored and they felt that the conference was being "managed" to make the Administration look good while avoiding any definitive policy statements. Finally, after having their attempt to introduce a motion on enforcement of existing sex discrimination laws (such as Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act), denied, the group got together and formed the National Organization for Women. According to NOW's first president, Betty Friedan, (1976), they sat down together at a banquet table, wrote out NOW's name and mission on a cocktail napkin, each chipped in \$5 for a startup kitty and NOW was born (Friedan, 1976; Carden, 1974; Carabillo et al., 1993).<sup>1</sup>

From these early days of a handful of elite members and a few hundred dollars, NOW grew into the biggest and most important mass-based feminist organization in the

United States, and perhaps in the world. It now has a paying membership of 250,000 (and many non paying supporters), hundreds of chapters all over the United States, and a budget around ten million dollars. It has become the best known of all feminist organizations in the national policy arena, and its targeting by right wing politicians and movements as "the enemy" in many different campaigns suggests that it is also recognized by its enemies as a core organization of US political feminism.

#### **NOW in Movement Context**

NOW was formed in the midst of a burgeoning "movement" of women in the United States. This movement or "second wave" of feminist activity in the United States (the first had taken place around suffrage earlier in the century) comprised a loosely related set of individuals, texts and organizations, all focused in one way or another on challenging gender inequities and extending women's rights and roles in society. The movement ranged from small local groups of a few women engaged in consciousness raising to a national, mass based organization like NOW. The many different groups involved in the second wave -- from women's bookstores and clinics to Washington based research organizations -- shared few specific strategies or members but they did share a central focus on issues of gender inequality

and a sense of being part of a larger "movement" of feminism (Echols, 1989; Freeman, 1975; Koedt et al, 1973; Carden, 1974; Hole and Levine, 1971.)

Freeman (1975, p. 50), an activist and movement historian, has suggested that we can best understand the complexity of the second wave women's movement if we think of it as breaking down very generally into a "younger" and an "older" branch. In the "older" branch Freeman places national organizations, such as (NOW), National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), Women's Equity Action League (WEAL), and so on, which she sees as being concerned with political action in the public domain. In the "younger branch" Freeman places less structured, and more openly radical groups such as The Feminists, Redstockings, and so on.

Freeman's older/younger categorization focuses not on ideological differences (because all feminisms want to fundamentally restructure human relations) but rather notes that the "older" and "younger" branches of the movement had different kinds of organizational forms and tended to pursue similar goals through quite different strategies.

Other observers have preferred to see the movement breaking down along a radical-liberal dimension (cf. Echols, 1989), but as Freeman notes, this left-right spectrum has never worked very well for feminisms. These distinctions obscure as much as they reveal about

feminisms, almost all of which challenge in some ways the public-private underpinnings of both liberal and radical political discourses, and almost all of which, if instituted, would indeed have radical outcomes (Freeman, 1975, p. 49):

The terms "reformist" and "radical" by which the two branches are often designated are convenient and fit our preconceived notions about the nature of political activity, but they tell us little of relevance... Some groups often called "reformist" have a platform that would so completely change our society it would be unrecognizable. Other groups called "radical" concentrate on the traditional female concerns of love, sex, children, and interpersonal relationships (although with non-traditional views). The ideological complexity of the movement is too great to be categorized so simply. ... Structure and style rather than ideology more accurately differentiate the two branches, and even here there has been much borrowing on each side (p. 49).

Generally speaking, says Freeman, the differences between the older and younger branches were in style not substance. Both sets of groups were concerned about structural inequities in access to employment, education

and politics, but they chose different strategic paths to engage with these problems.

The "older" branch groups focused for the most part on legal and governmental strategies (for example challenging sex discrimination in the courts or pushing for EEO inclusion of gender discrimination). They also usually had more links to existing institutions and many of their leaders were already involved in "women's" politics in other ways before forming these groups. The women who formed NOW, for example, had been working on women's politics in various government departments, unions, businesses and universities for years before the formation of NOW and they had been talking for a long time about the need for an organization like NOW that could serve as an "independent voice" for women's issues in ways that they could not from within their own organizations (Friedan, 1976; Carabillo et al, 1993). This kind of connections to existing political forums made the "older" group quite different from the "younger" groups in terms of age, experience and expectations.

The younger branch groups were first of all mostly made up of younger women, and they were more loosely organized into a plethora of different, often local, groups. Their activities varied from consciousness-raising to political "zaps" and protests and who experimented with alternative forms of association. To

the younger groups, personal transformation was as important as public change and they tried to embody their politics in practice through problematizing issues of hierarchy, specialization, and routinization in their organizations. It was the younger groups for the most part who later set up many of the alternative feminist service organizations (such as clinics, magazines and bookstores).

### **Is there "a" NOW? Strategic Identity Creation**

NOW is a particularly difficult organization to classify. Even Freeman's classification of NOW as belonging to the "older" branch (because of its buréaucratic form and "insider" strategies) only holds true in the first few years of its existence and in fact may only ever have been true at the national level. At the local level NOW chapters did not always organize bureaucratically at all -- in fact many chapters bore more resemblance to younger movement consciousness raising groups than to national NOW with its Board and specialized roles. And after 1973-1975, even the national organization began to seem "younger." By that time most of the younger movement groups had disbanded or disappeared and many women flocked to NOW as one of the few viable forms of organized feminism. After 1975, NOW itself became a central site of struggle over what

US feminism would be. because it has changed its identity so much over the years.

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On a left-right spectrum NOW leaders and members have usually been left of center, but they have also quite often put gender issues (such as abortion rights) before traditional political distinctions and supported candidates from both Republican and Democratic parties who worked for these issues.

In terms of class issues, NOW has also shifted over time. NOW was founded by an upper middle class elite group, and it has never been an organization to whom class analysis was central, but it has developed over time a strong position on the rights and problems of poor women. NOW was one of the few national women's organizations to speak out, for example, on forced sterilization and more recently on welfare cuts and their devastating effects on poor women with children.

In fact, searching for "an" identity for NOW may itself be part of the problem. NOW's "public identity" has always been seen by its leaders as flexible. In the early years (1966-1973), for example, much of NOW's non-radical positioning had less to do with its members philosophies than with the short term political goals of its national leaders who were concerned that they be taken seriously by news and other political leaders (and so were concerned not to seem too radical) and who were constrained by the very real problem of maintaining the

support of the organizations (for example the traditional women's organizations and labor unions) that were still underwriting NOW financially.<sup>2</sup>

Over time NOW has encompassed both a radical commitment to long term social change, and a strategic pragmatism in the short term. This pragmatism is what makes it possible for NOW to take strategic action in the short term -- including framing itself as mainstream if necessary -- while maintaining a long term transformative vision. As Carden (1974) notes, this blend of radical intent and pragmatic strategies is often misunderstood as a lack of vision, when in fact it is a kind of "double vision" in which NOW members maintain their commitment to long term radical change but are good enough readers of the contemporary situation to realize that short term actions are more likely to succeed (Carden, 1974, p. 105):

NOW's approach to social problems is pragmatic. Ideally many NOW members would like to transform or even eliminate societal role expectations for women and men but they do not believe they can achieve this goal directly: instead, they work for change by exerting pressure on the existing social structure. This pragmatic approach (which is shared by other Women's Rights groups) is commonly misinterpreted. Many people believe that NOW and

similar groups want to modify the present society, 132  
not to restructure it (p. 105).

This kind of strategic pragmatism makes NOW hard to pin down on dualistic scales -- such as the radical or reformist scale -- because such scales assume an essential or "authentic" identity which is simply not the case for most movements or movement organizations. NOW's identity shifted over time because of leadership and membership shifts, historical changes and, perhaps most importantly changing strategies of self-presentation. Van Zoonen (1992, p. 6) notes that this kind of shifting is typical of social movement organizations. It is our frameworks that are wrong in trying to see movements as consistent, goal oriented identities when they are in fact (strategic) social constructions:

the collective identity of movements is never stable; it is a social construction, arising from symbolic negotiation within movements, as well as from interaction with their political and social environment.

If we have to apply a label to NOW's organizational philosophy, it is perhaps best characterized as being a kind of militant pragmatism that allows its members and

leaders to see themselves as revolutionaries -- and indeed to want radical societal changes in terms of gender identities -- but also be able to present themselves in strategically appropriate ways in the short term and to be able to engage in interaction with the existing (sexist) political system over specific issues.

A long-time NOW member and chronicler of the organization has called this position a "passion for the possible" and it is changes in what NOW's leaders and members consider to be "possible" in specific historical circumstances which caused shifts in NOW's identity and policy over time, rather than any change in the organization's commitment to, or desire for, radical social change.

### **NOW's Policy Agendas:**

#### **Core Issues and Agenda Expansion Over Time**

Over time, changing memberships and political contexts affected NOW's political agenda, but there have always been certain core areas that NOW has remained focused on throughout its history. For example, equal rights for women in all areas of social life and especially under the law has been a guiding principle for NOW since its founding. The NOW Statement of Purpose written in 1967 notes that NOW's central aim is to bring women into "truly equal partnership" with men.

This concern for equality took a number of directions over the years, the most obvious being ongoing organizational support for, and mobilization around, the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. NOW declared its support of the ERA in 1967 (and in so doing lost the support of its organized labor members) and the ERA remained a core NOW issue ever since. In the late 1970s , in the days leading up to the 1982 (extended) ratification deadline it was also an issue that brought in thousands of new members and at one point around a million dollars a month in contributions to support NOW's ERA work.

The defeat over the ERA, which failed to be ratified by its 1982 deadline, was a serious blow to the organization. NOW had invested huge amounts of money, skills and energy into the ratification battle and its failure caused serious loss of morale in the movement.

### **Sex Discrimination**

This core concern for equality was also manifested in NOW's other key legal area; sex discrimination. NOW and other feminists had been instrumental in getting "sex" added as a category to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and NOW worked to have it included in all civil rights legislation thereafter. Indeed NOW was one of the key political players in the "making" of sex discrimination as a legal category and as a political

issue at all. NOW members pressured and protested the EEOC to review sex discrimination in employment complaints when the Commission was reluctant to consider sex as a viable category at all. Over the years NOW has been a legal and moral resource (and litigant) for women suffering sex discrimination in employment all over the United States. The organization was instrumental, for example, in influencing the EEOC to file (and win) some of its biggest sex discrimination suits (such as the AT&T and US Steel settlements of the 1970s) in which women and minority employees were awarded millions of dollars back pay due to discrimination in hiring and promotions.

NOW's sex discrimination concerns also extended beyond employment to cover inequalities and sex discrimination in education (in schooling and teaching), in access to credit and insurance, and in sports and housing. NOW's pressure was important in the passing of the Equal Credit Act and its work on desegregating school sports, especially Little League, made them infamous in the early 1970s. NOW research and reports, along with the AAUW and EEOC on university hiring practices were also influential in promoting reform in university promotions and tenuring practices resulting in the tenuring of more women.

Two other essential issue areas that have remained among NOW's core concerns, though they have both evolved over time, are abortion rights and child care. NOW declared itself unambiguously in favor of reproductive freedom in 1967, (and again lost some of its board members). NOW's framing of abortion rights as "the rights of women to control their reproductive lives" was the first time that a feminist framework had been provided for access to abortion (Hole and Levine, 1971, p. 89):

NOW's position made it the first women's right organization to put the civil libertarian argument for abortion into clear feminist terms -- the right of a woman to control her body.

The long term dominance of this frame for abortion (which held until recent right wing counter-frames about the "rights" of fetuses) is an indication of how social movement communications can successfully influence public understandings.

**Child Care**

Child care was also a new and controversial issue when NOW first espoused it in 1966. When NOW first articulated the importance of accessible and affordable

child care centers as the right of working parents, Richard Nixon was declaring such centers to be communist plots. The development of affordable (preferably state funded) day care remains a key NOW concern, but 25 years later it has also made it ways into both the Democratic and Republican party platforms.

NOW's core concerns were codified in the 1968 "National Organization for Women Bill of Rights" which demanded:

- I. Equal Rights Constitutional Amendment
- II. Enforce Law Banning Sex Discrimination in Employment
- III. Maternity Leave Rights in Employment and in Social Security Benefits.
- IV. Tax Deduction for Home and Child Care Expenses for Working Parents
- V. Child Day Care Centers
- VI. Equal and Unsegregated Education
- VII. Equal Job Training Opportunities and Allowances for Women in Poverty
- VIII. The Right of Women to Control their Reproductive Lives

As is clear from both its title and language, the 1968 Bill of Rights was strategically articulated by its producers to link to the US Bill of Rights. This use of

constitutional language (of individual rights and equality) is something that NOW continued to do over time, though as we shall see, by 1989 the language of "rights" had been extended much further to include the "right" to a toxin free environment and a peaceful world order.<sup>3</sup>

### **Sexual Orientation**

One issue area that later became central to NOW but is conspicuously absent in NOW's first policy statements is that of sexual identity or sexual orientation. Though NOW leaders have often perceived themselves and the organization as being in the vanguard of the movement, and of "leading public opinion," they were slow to take on board issues of sexuality and lesbianism though these were important movement topics. Friedan, NOW's president from 1966-1970, is widely seen as the driving force behind the organization's avoidance of questions of sexual identity, despite the fact that it was a central part of the movement discourse more generally. Friedan (1976, p. 141) herself admits to wanting to "avoid" the issue, not because of personal feelings, but because of its controversial nature:

I didn't want that issue [lesbianism] even to surface and divide the organization, as it surely would have in 1970, and almost did, later.

Like many other internal conflicts in NOW, this one has some roots in NOW's ongoing concern with its "public" identity. National NOW leaders, (as I explain further in chapter six), were continuously concerned with how NOW was perceived by journalists and other traditional political institutions and this focus on external audiences often had containing consequences within the organization.

NOW's position on lesbianism and sexual orientation has changed dramatically since Friedan's early statements. A 1971 national conference resolution brought lesbian rights onto NOW's agenda and a 1975 resolution made the issue a priority for NOW. But for many feminists the legacy of NOW's initial rejection of lesbianism, and a lingering historical memory of an alleged "purge" of lesbian members, remains part of the organization's identity that NOW leadership has to respond to 20 years later. Patricia Ireland notes:

The perception [that NOW is unfriendly to lesbians] is clearly outdated, and it's not to deny history. But I think the history was greatly exaggerated by the pain that it caused.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout its history, NOW has retained its concern with discrimination in education, employment, economics, housing and sports. But from these initial topics has grown an expansive set of concerns that now include issues of racism, poverty, gay civil rights, welfare reform, media reform, violence, health and family relations. In fact by the 1990s, NOW was such a multi-issue organization that Patricia Ireland, NOW's president quipped that NOW is "your genuine full-service feminist organization."<sup>5</sup>

Some of this expansion in feminist concerns was the result of leadership and membership changes. By the mid 1970s many of the less centralized "younger" feminist groups had disappeared from public view. They had either institutionalized into service organizations (such as feminist women's clinics and rape counseling centers) or disbanded as members moved on to other projects. In any case by 1975, many of the "younger" feminists who were still interested in working in organized political feminism had joined NOW.

At the 1975 NOW National Conference, for example -- tellingly entitled "Out of the Mainstream and into the Revolution" -- almost the entire standing NOW Board was replaced by a "majority caucus" of younger, more militant, leaders, and NOW headed into a period in which

radical, long term goals were emphasized and the  
"mainstream" rejected:<sup>6</sup>

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The Majority Caucus believes that NOW should not identify as a mainstream organization... Because struggling solely for an equal place in the American mainstream ... means accepting whatever currently prevails in the mainstream as desirable, including an overvaluation of traditionally male jobs, activities and roles... [and it] prevents our using tactics that people in the mainstream don't like, such as street demonstrations, abrasive court actions and uncompromising pursuit of the issues.<sup>7</sup>

These new members and leaders brought with them a vision of feminism more expansive than NOW's early leaders, and they were much more likely to be associated with what Echols (1989) has called "cultural feminism" -- an articulation of feminism that focused on re-valoring women's "traditional" roles as much as (or rather than) integrating women into the traditionally masculine spheres.<sup>8</sup>

In NOW policy terms this changeover meant an expansion of NOW's concerns from the traditionally "political" to a wide range of issues, as well as a new focus on reaching out to women in "traditional" roles, such as homemakers and care professionals. Eleanor

Smeal, one of NOW's most dynamic leaders in this period, 142 defined herself as a "housewife" and urged NOW as a whole to develop strategies to reach out to women in traditional roles.<sup>9</sup>

New NOW task forces and committees began to be formed that covered a variety of feminist concerns as women began bringing feminist frameworks to bear on religion, media, child rearing and all aspects of life. The 1975-1977 NOW conference program, for example, offers insight into how broad a range of concerns were covered by the mid 1970s. The 1977 conference offered 132 workshops on more than 50 topics, which as well as the traditional workshops on ERA strategies, EEO compliance, child care and education, also included; lesbian custody strategies, feminist therapy, sexual harassment strategies, strategies for setting up and running battered women's centers, single parenting workshops, assertiveness training, and displaced homemaker rights among many others.

At the 1975 conference, not only were there a number of new topic areas introduced (such as women's history and household violence ), but new connections were made between topics (such as a workshop on racism and rape, and one on classism, racism, and sexism). "Old" topics were also reframed in more radical ways, such as the workshop on reproduction, which in 1975 focused on techniques for self examination and self-

abortion rather than on abortion legislation or medical reform.<sup>10</sup> 143

Some shifts in NOW's public identity and agenda over time were the results of changes in the political contexts and in its strategic choices. But much of the permeability of NOW agendas also came from the fact that NOW is a mass based organization, with hundreds of thousands of members all working on different projects. There are currently more than 700 NOW chapters around the country involved in a multitude of tasks from protests, law suits and lobbying to running clinics and child care centers. It is this grass roots base that has often been the impetus in changing NOW's direction and keeping the national organization from getting too much of an "inside the beltway" orientation. Having a dispersed base means that NOW's national leadership is directly accountable to the membership of the organization.<sup>11</sup> It is also NOW's existence as a mass based organization dispersed across the country that has made it possible for NOW to function simultaneously on so many different fronts.

Over the last 30 years NOW chapters and national leadership have taken on the government, the phone companies and the ad agencies. They have succeeded in changing national divorce and credit laws, as well as local newspaper advertising policies. They have influenced school reading lists and national prison

policies (in having gynecologists made available to women prisoners). NOW members have organized millions around the ERA and they have set up domestic violence centers that cater for a few families at a time. They have worked to end the involuntary sterilization of poor women and to end promotion discrimination in board rooms. They have influenced divorce law, credit law, abortion law, government contracting, school sports, local television hiring, Little League and rape laws. Over 30 years the organization has influenced the lives of thousands of women in hundreds of ways.<sup>12</sup>

### **NOW and the Future**

NOW's current political agenda reflects both the organization's core issues and their expansion into new areas. The (1989) "NOW Expanded Bill of Rights for the 21st Century," outlines NOW's priorities for the next century and it includes their ongoing concern with equality as well as their more general framework of interconnected inequalities. The NOW Expanded Bill of Rights demands:

1. the right to freedom from sex discrimination;
2. the right to freedom from race discrimination;
3. the right of all women to freedom from government interference in abortion, birth

- control and pregnancy and the right of indigent women to public funds for abortion, birth control and pregnancy services;
4. the right to freedom from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation;
  5. the right to freedom from discrimination based on religion, age, ongoing health condition, or a differently abled situation;
  6. the right to a decent standard of living, including adequate food, housing, health care and education;
  7. the right to clean air, clean water, safe toxic waste disposal and environmental protection; and
  8. the right to be free from violence, including freedom from the threat of nuclear war.

As the 1989 Bill of Rights illustrates, NOW's vision of feminism has expanded over time to include many more aspects of life and policy. The organization has made connections across issues and groups to include question of environmental degradation and poverty, race and health into its analyses. Women's "rights" in the 21st century, according to NOW, should include not only freedom from sex and race discrimination, but also freedom from a polluted environment and the right to live in a peaceful context. This is a long way from the

original NOW 1968 statement of purpose that wanted to bring women into the mainstream, and even more expansive than the 1975 "majority" caucus who wanted to bring NOW out of the mainstream. The 1989 Bill of Rights for the 21st Century has expanded NOW's feminist concerns to cover global ecological issues, education, war and peace, and the fundamental right to a "decent standard of living." The rhetoric of "rights" and "freedom" that NOW began with is still evident here, but it is a vision of "rights" far beyond the traditionally "public" or the traditionally "political." In fact should NOW be able to produce any of these "rights" it will indeed produce radical change.

As an organization NOW continues to be the central feminist organization in the US, and perhaps in the world. But by the 1990s NOW had also been joined by many other more specialized women's issue organizations in Washington, some of which are NOW offshoots. It is consequently involved day to day in coalition politics as much as single-handed projects. Beginning in 1985, for example, a Council of Presidents from the various women's groups formed. The Council in 1991 contained 40 groups representing 10 million members and drafted a "women's agenda." Together they adopted a set of policy priorities for legislative work. Boles (1991, p. 45) notes that this Council has tremendous potential:

Although not yet a formal coalition organization, 147  
several indicators of incipient  
institutionalization are present; regular meetings,  
organized media campaigns, annual conventions, paid  
consultants, and conferences with the president of  
the United States and congressional leaders.  
Significantly this new coalition agrees not only on  
legislative priorities but also on the essential,  
noncompromisable components of an acceptable bill  
in each policy area.

NOW's central role in this new political alliance  
structure is not uncontested. The organization's  
tendency not to compromise on core issues has sometimes  
made them unpopular, and their sense of their own  
historicity has garnered for them a reputation among  
some other groups for arrogance and insensitivity.  
Nowadays NOW far from being seen as "reformist" is often  
seen by its Washington colleagues as too militant and  
unbending. As an anonymous critic notes in a recent  
*Times* article:

They're ... positioned to be so outside that  
they're left with nothing but their anger. It's  
exhausting. I'm not that guilty. You're not that  
guilty.<sup>13</sup>

Other observers are willing to grant that NOW still 148 has a unique vanguardist role to play. The head of the AAUW, for example, is glad to note that NOW still take on the issues that are "harder to hear:"

This is how we learn as a society. You need both leaders and followers. NOW selects the issues that are harder to hear. They push the edge out and then an AAUW comes along and sounds reasonable.<sup>14</sup>

In any case, despite several dozen news articles that have predicted NOW's demise over the last 10 years, the organization is still working on various fronts for women's rights. And few people would disagree with Toni Carabillo that NOW is still not only a core organization of the US women's movement. but a symbol of its fates more generally. As she notes, NOW as an organization has never been alone in the movement but its fortunes have always been reflective of the movement as a whole. "The fact is," says Carabillo (1993, p. viii) "if the National Organization for Women were to collapse and disappear, it would be taken as a signal of the end of this era of feminism.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> These accounts differ in interpretations (e.g. some observers wonder just how spontaneous the formation was) but they converge on the facts.

<sup>2</sup> In the longer run these links had to be abandoned. Labor groups left NOW as it endorsed the ERA in 1968 and traditional women's groups withdrew their support on the

issue of abortion reform and NOW became more openly independent in its statements and policies over time.

<sup>3</sup> The permeability of "rights" language as a social movement resource in the United States is a very interesting question. Framing a movement's goals in these terms -- i.e. as "rights" -- has considerable resonance and power, but it also comes with the vulnerability to counter-framing along the same lines -- e.g. the "rights" of fetuses challenge the "rights" of women.

<sup>4</sup> *The Advocate*, December 17, 1991, p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> *The Advocate*, December 17, 1991, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> The "Out of the Mainstream" title was a deliberate reference to NOW's first public statement that it intended to bring women "into the mainstream" of political and social life in America. See NOW Statement of Purpose, 1966.

<sup>7</sup> NOW (1975). "Out of the Mainstream into the Revolution," booklet, produced by the Majority Caucus for 1975 National Conference. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>8</sup> Echols (1989) argues that "cultural feminism" became dominant in the younger movement by the mid 1970s, and that it was largely responsible for the de politicization of the "younger" (radical) branch of feminism which became much more "lifestyle" oriented and much less interested in interacting with traditional "politics."

<sup>9</sup> Smeal also had graduate training as a political scientist, so her choice to frame herself as a housewife was in fact a strategic choice.

<sup>10</sup> NOW (1975) NOW National Conference, Philadelphia, Forums and Workshops program. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>11</sup> Besides a national office, and local chapters, NOW at any one time also has a number of active "task forces" which combine national and local energies in specific topic areas. This three-tiered structure of national board, task forces, and chapters, was added to in the ERA mobilization effort of the 1970s and early 1980s when it became necessary for NOW to also have state level organizations. Policy within NOW is set each year by the national conference which is attended by local chapter members.

<sup>12</sup> NOW Task Force papers, NOW Collection, Schlesinger library. See also Maren Lockwood Carden. 1974. *The New Feminist Movement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

<sup>13</sup> *New York Times Magazine* March 1, 1992, p. 54.

<sup>14</sup> *New York Times Magazine*, March 1, 1992, p. 54.

## Chapter Five

### **The Structuring Role of Resources:**

#### **The Political Economy of NOW's News Access**

For modern feminists in America, the fight for political clout will need to be fought on the media battleground, but not without adequate money, resources and creative analysis -- Kathy Bonk, feminist media strategist.

For NOW, or any other social movement group to affect public consciousness or identities through mass communication, it must first be able to produce access to news media. As one of the major sources of political information for citizens, the commercial news media still constitute a significant part of the public sphere. However imperfect and distorted that sphere may be, it is in commercial media arenas that much of the civil debate about public policy and the legitimacy of cultural practices is conducted in the United States and western Europe (Garnham, 1986; Fraser, 1992; McLaughlin, 1993). If we are to understand the NSM's mass communication possibilities, that is their ability to influence ideologies, issues and identity formation processes at the societal level -- what Melucci (1989)

has called their symbolic challenge -- then we must understand their access to existing mass communication channels because that is how most people will hear about movements and their ideas.

So, how is such access produced? What resources and strategies are important to engaging in (and perhaps controlling) media dialogs? What are the "costs" of access to media for social movements in terms of material, strategic and organizational resources? And, are such resources likely to be available to all emerging social movement groups?

In this chapter I investigate the role(s) of resources in structuring NOW's access to news media. Drawing on the organization's own records, on patterns of news coverage, and on other historical accounts of the movement, I argue that three major types of resources were essential in NOW's media access, and may be important to all groups seeking such access. First, the professional communicative competence and institutional connections of NOW's leaders and strategists was critically important. To a large extent NOW's initial access to news (and so to the public sphere) was realized as a result of the elite, professional, educated (and connected) nature of its leaders. Second, NOW's ability to generate and maintain effective organizational forms -- in this case a dual structure of a centralized, hierarchical national

organization and decentralized, distributed chapters -- 152  
was also important in its ability to maintain relations  
with media. The centralized national form allowed NOW to  
act quickly and respond to reporters and editors  
concerns, and its localized distribution across the  
country in hundreds of different chapters allowed it to  
ground its claims to represent all American women.  
Third, NOW's ability to attract financial resources --  
to produce an ongoing budget for staff, technology,  
information gathering, and salaries was paramount to  
keeping the organization involved in media dialog. News  
source-work is highly resource-intensive and before  
issues of representation and control can even be  
considered, movement organizations must mobilize enough  
resources to fund information collection, communication  
and other organizational tasks. The chapter illustrates  
how each of these factors structured NOW's ability to  
dialog with news media day to day.

### **I. "Human Resources:" The Class and Professional Backgrounds of NOW's Leaders**

NOW's first "resource" in its interactions with  
news was the group of women and men who joined together  
to form NOW, and the skills, competence, political  
connections, and even personal self-esteem, that they  
brought with them.

Offe (1985), Eder (1985), and other new social movement (NSM) observers, have stressed the importance of the class base of the NSMs in understanding their characters and effectivity. The NSMs, according to Offe, are typically made up of educators, social workers, communications specialists and other fractions of the "new middle class." Indeed it is this anomalous class base of the NSMs that disturbs many of their critics, because it defies clear connections between the NSMs class base and their goals (Laraña, Johnson and Gusfield, 1994).

NOW's leadership in the early days (and still today) conformed closely to the typical NSM class base. NOW's first Executive and National Boards were drawn from among exactly that new class fraction that Offe suggests is typical -- educators, communications specialists, government administrators, social workers, and other professionals. The first NOW executive board, for example, was made up of seven university professors or administrators, five state and national labor unions officials, and four business executives. They were all highly educated and skilled in organization. Many were already part of an elite political network of administrators concerned with "women's issues" at the state and national level. Four of the group had served, or were serving on. state commissions on the Status of Women. Seven of the original group held Ph.D.'s, one was

an MD, and three were from religious vocations. One of the members was an ex-EEO commissioner, another was still working for the EEOC at the time of her election.<sup>1</sup> In later years the organization continued to be led by highly educated, and competent women, who were social scientists, lawyers, writers, and professional organizers.<sup>2</sup>

The professional and class background of NOW's early leaders was important in a number of ways. First, their associations with other established organizations meant that NOW leaders had access to organizational resources. Although Friedan (1979, p. 76), describes the beginning of NOW as one in which " Nobody ever gave us any money to start the movement... " the women and men who founded NOW were all connected in some way to other institutions and as such they had access to organizational resources not directly attributable to NOW. Resources such as telephones, support staff, mailing privileges, computer technologies, and so on, were available to the early board members through their professional lives. In fact in the first two years of NOW's existence much of its business was conducted out of the offices of the UAW in Chicago where Board Member Caroline Davis had her organizational base.<sup>3</sup>

Besides unions, government departments, corporations, and universities also contributed,

A lot of employers less sympathetic to women's cause than the leadership of U.A.W. would be surprised to know that their Xerox machines, mimeograph machines, and WATTS lines were doing NOW's work, as a result of that women's underground, in every office. It was the only way the work could get done; our treasury in those days seldom had more than several hundred dollars.

This dependence on other organizations in the beginning is a fundamental reason that NOW was able to mobilize at all, and it was these borrowed resources that made it possible specifically for the organization to produce communications about its identity and purpose. NOW's first press release announcing its formation was produced by Muriel Fox from her public relations firm, and much of the organizational work for NOW's first conference was supported by the UAW. In short this link to other organizations -- and access to their resources -- was crucial to NOW's ability both to form and to represent itself as an organization.<sup>4</sup>

Second, the educational, professional and class background of NOW's leaders gave them distinct communicative skills and competencies which they drew on

in their interactions with news media. All of the original board were college graduates, many had graduate degrees and some were in fact professional communications specialists. Muriel Fox, for example, at the time she was NOW's PR director was also a professional public relations specialist running her own company and Friedan was a professional writer.

As observers of media sources have noted, source work involves a high degree of communicative competence. Tasks include the collection and processing of information, the strategic framing of events and issues in creative ways, and writing up events and information into compelling "stories" or press releases for journalists (Ryan, 1991; Ericson et al, 1989). NOW leaders were able to draw on their personal "resources" of education and communicative skills to do this work.

A short transcript of NOW leaders in conversation with a reporter (1971) shows this kind of communicative competence at work with NOW leaders effectively re-framing a reporter's question:

**Reporter:** Do you feel that you are emasculating men in any way?

**Hernandez:** On the contrary, we feel that we are going to be humanizing men.

**Heide:** I think something should be said about the very term "emasculating" because implicit in the

word is a notion that for a man to be emasculated 157  
is to leave him in the position that women have  
always been in and that's very unacceptable. I'm  
speaking of this in the social sense of the term,  
the status. It's acceptable for women to be in that  
status, but not for men. I think that's very  
significant.<sup>5</sup>

Such competence -- what Gandy (1989, p. 109) has  
called "communications competence" or the "the ability  
to understand the world so as to act to change it" --  
is not a naturally occurring resource, but one that is  
socially and politically produced through access to  
education and training. It is therefore available to  
some social agents and not others. As movement activists  
with many years of higher education and professional  
training , NOW leaders had high levels of communicative  
competence.

As well as this specific communicative competence,  
NOW leaders also manifested a strong sense of personal  
efficacy and self esteem which made them consider social  
change to be possible. This sense of efficacy, or  
control in the world has been seen as a key structuring  
factor in activism of many kinds (cf. McAdam, 1986;  
Klandermanns, 1984; Gandy, 1991). However, as Bernstein  
(1971, p. 193) notes, it may also be education and class  
dependent.: "The class system has not only deeply marked

the distribution of knowledge in society. It has given differential access to the sense that the world is permeable." As educated members of the upper middle class NOW leaders has ample access to the intellectual and educational resources that produce both efficacy and communicative competence.

The professional/managerial backgrounds of the original leaders also meant that most of them had already had some contact with news media organizations and journalists in the past. They had encountered individual journalists before and has some understanding of journalistic norms and practices. As I describe in the next chapter, compared to the "younger" feminist groups they also had a sense of efficacy about media access that was unusually high.

In particular Betty Friedan, NOW's first president had extensive experience as a media spokesperson. Friedan's book "The Feminine Mystique" had become a best seller and she had been invited onto talk shows around the country, becoming something of a public figure. In choosing Friedan as the organization's figurehead, NOW leaders (including Friedan herself) hoped that her visibility and her audiences would translate into media visibility and members for the group. As an early member of NOW commented, Friedan had a ready-made "constituency" which they hoped would then join the organization: (Carabillo, 1993, p. 85):

Friedan was a public figure already and her name had national recognition value that would be a critical asset in attracting the attention of the media. She also came with a built-in constituency -- the hundreds of thousands of women who had already read her book and who would flock to hear her impassioned speeches.

Other members of NOW had also had extensive dealings with journalists in their capacities as PR professionals, union leaders or in managerial state positions. NOW leaders were used to thinking of news as a resource, and they transferred some of their expectation about media from their workplaces to NOW activities. In fact one observer of NOW in its early years noted that NOW had very little of anything except media skills (Freeman, 1975, p. 56):

Instead of organizational experience, what the early NOW members had was media experience, and it was here that their early efforts were aimed. They could create an appearance of activity but did not know how to organize the substance of it. As a result NOW often gave the impression of being larger than it actually was. It was highly successful in getting publicity, much less so in

bringing about concrete changes or organizing  
itself.<sup>6</sup>

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Overall, then NOW leaders brought professional, educational and communicative resource to the dialog with news. The NSM theorists suggest this may be typical of other "new" social movement group, but it is an open question as to whether such resources are available to all social movement organizations, especially those mobilizing outside of the "professional" classes, is an open question.<sup>7</sup>

## **II. Organization as a Resource:**

### **Bureaucracy, Centralization and Size**

Organization -- the ability to coordinate activities, communicate an identity, recruit members and achieve goals -- is itself a resource that is critical in the effectivity of social movements. The problem for social movement activists and theorists has been in deciding which organizational forms are best to achieve a movement's goals. Gamson (1975, p. 91-92), for example, has argued that a certain level of bureaucracy is associated with social movement organizations' success because it helps them to achieve "pattern maintenance" (that is readiness to act or react). Centralization, he argues, is also a resource because it minimizes the chances of conflict and factionalism over

organizational control. Overall, a degree of bureaucratization is likely to be successful for movement organization in Gamson's view because "imitating the form of one's antagonist eases the development of some sort of working relationship."

While centralization may make coordinated activity easier, however, it also leaves an organization open to more centralized damage, and Gerlach and Hines (1970) have concluded that some sort of decentralized structure makes survival over the long term more likely. These researchers and others (e.g. McAdam, 1986) also highlight the likelihood of decentralized organizations being able to recruit "affinity" groups -- that is people who already know each other. Most social movements have their roots in such pre-existing networks of social or political relationships. Morris (1984), for example, has described the fundamental importance of the southern church base for the Civil Rights Movement, and Evans (1979) has stressed the linkages between the women who organized the women's liberation movement alongside NOW. Indeed, as I have suggested above, NOW was also formed out of a preexisting network of women and men actively involved in women's politics.<sup>8</sup>

Decentralized and non-hierarchical groups have also been valued for their ability to increase members sense of equality and respect, and as such as being "practice" for a more egalitarian future. They are thus sometimes

seen to have a moral superiority over bureaucratic forms 162  
which are said to "mimic" oppressive power relations.  
The "younger" feminist movement groups, for example,  
often experimented with radically egalitarian forms  
where role specialization and individual leadership was  
avoided (Freeman, 1975; Echols, 1989). Generally these  
egalitarian forms are more successful at achieving their  
moral/ideological goals (that is allowing members to  
practice egalitarian ideals and to create a shared  
identity) than they are at producing action in the  
external environment. Freeman (1975) and Echols (1989),  
for example, note that the egalitarian forms of the  
younger feminist groups often resulted in inexperienced  
workers being assigned tasks (because role  
specialization was unfair) and so tasks would take more  
time. Egalitarian groups, however, maintained a strong  
commitment to radical political analysis and often  
produced some of the movement's most influential  
writings.

In NOW's case the organization's structure had  
elements of both a centralized, bureaucratic structure  
and a looser affinity group organization. At the  
national level NOW exhibited a high degree of  
centralization and role specialization -- key aspects of  
traditional bureaucratic forms -- but at the local level  
there was a much wider range of organizational forms for  
chapters. Chapters ranged in forms from highly

formalized local organizations to loose knit or radically egalitarian groups.<sup>9</sup>

The Executive and National Boards of NOW are the governing bodies who act on behalf of NOW, but they are constrained by priorities set by the national conference which is made up of grassroots members, so both parts of the organization have some control over its agenda.<sup>10</sup> Besides the national board and the local chapters, NOW also comprises a number of Task Forces which focus on particular topics. These task forces focus on many different issues and keep NOW functioning as a multi-issue organization working on many different fronts. Over time the number and range of task forces has increased.<sup>11</sup>

Though coordination problems have plagued the organization since its inception, generally both of these aspects of the organization -- its centralization and its distributed chapters -- have worked as resources for NOW in terms of its media access. The centralized, specialized and hierarchical aspects of the national organization have made it possible for the national leadership to act quickly and authoritatively and the distributed nature of the organization across the country has helped ground national NOW's claims to speak for all women.

As a centralized organization, with a visible formal Board and national office, NOW was able to

coordinate its media activities and to send coherent messages to media. Such coherence in message construction is important if movements' are to keep control of their own identity in media. Gitlin (1980, p. 137), for example, has noted how ambiguity about leadership roles and suspicion of centralized authority made it difficult for SDS leaders to control media coverage of the movement. When SDS leaders did take such spokesperson roles on, they were often criticized by regional members for usurping authority.

NOW leaders had no such qualms about speaking to media; indeed they felt that it was central to their role to be a voice for women in the public arena. And the structure of the organization -- with designated leaders and relatively clear lines of authority and accountability -- made it easy for a core group to become media spokespersons for the entire organization. In the early years of the organization this centralized control was quite extreme. As I describe further in chapter six, NOW's original leaders often misrepresented the internal diversity of the organization strategically in order to present a united front to media.

In general, though the clear sense of leadership and accountability worked out well for NOW in its relations with news media. Reporters had no trouble identifying who was in charge of particular topics, and national reporters could rely in being able to speak

directly to NOW's president.<sup>12</sup> NOW's bureaucratic organizational form meant that NOW kept Washington business hours (9-5) and could be relied upon to be available on deadlines. This ability to fit into news' "phase structures" has been seen to be important in determining which sources journalists will use most (Fishman, 1980; Tuchman, 1978).

An important side effect of this centralization and bureaucracy that also worked in NOW's favor was their ability to respond quickly to a breaking issues when necessary. As Gamson (1990) has noted, response time and the ability to act quickly may be even more important in news interaction than in interaction with other institutions . NOW's ability to respond quickly was tested in 1981, for example, when Sandra Day 'O Connor was nominated to the Supreme Court:

Within two hours after the President announced her appointment, local NOW activists were contacted in major media markets ... and briefed so that they could respond to the inordinate media attention that was focused on Judge O'Connor being the first woman nominated to the Supreme Court.<sup>13</sup>

In general, then, NOW's bureaucratic and centralized structure made them available to reporters, which made them more attractive sources. It was also an

important element in their own development of media strategies, speaking in one consistent and accountable "public" voice, making it more likely that reporters would listen.

Besides the professionalized and bureaucratic national office, though, NOW had a distributed structure of hundreds of local chapters. By 1977 NOW had more than 700 chapters around the country. This distributed base caused NOW coordination problems, but it also came with some benefits in the form of legitimation.

NOW often had problems of coordination and communication between the local and national organization. For example, local and national members often did not agree on each others' roles. NOW local chapters felt at times that they did not know what the national office was doing (in particular what it was doing with their dues) and that they did not get enough "help" from the national leadership in their local activities. At the national level, leaders expressed annoyance that the localities did not take a national view and that they seemed to expect national officers to work as administrators for the organization rather than as leaders with political vision (Carden, 1974).

In the mid 1970s this discontent came to a head in an extended dues-withholding protest where local chapters refused to pass on membership dues to the national organization. The withholding was accompanied

by an electoral push from the grass roots which unseated 167 almost the entire standing NOW Board over a two year period and replaced the leadership with members more sensitive to issues of internal democracy and local representation.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these difficulties, though, NOW's mass base was strategically useful in a number of ways. The mushrooming of the organization across the country, (and even across the Atlantic when some American women set up a Paris chapter), added to NOW's resources not only through an increase in membership dues but also in their credibility as a representative organization in the eyes of policy makers and journalists. In almost every news story about NOW analyzed in this case study, for example, the organization's size and its spread across the country are central to its definition. The descriptor phrase, "the largest feminist organization in the country with (so many) members and (so many) chapters" appeared in virtually every story in which NOW was cited.

This kind of legitimacy may be especially important to journalists when they are deciding whether or not to take a new organization seriously in the face of skeptical editors and supervisors. Simpson (1979), a reporter who covered the movement, for example, says she argued with her editors that the women's movement was an

important story simply in terms of size if nothing else.<sup>15</sup>

It's mass base made NOW a qualitatively different kind of organization to reporters. Whereas many of the "public interest" groups in Washington are not mass-based but leadership groups -- that is they are supported by contributions and grants and have a board and staff who act on behalf of an abstract "public" but who are not responsible to any concrete membership -- NOW's is directly democratic and represents women from all across the country. NOW's mass base and its geographical dispersion give it more legitimacy as a popular organization.

In terms of political strategy, this diversification has also been useful. The ERA mobilization in 1970s and the reproductive rights mobilization of the 1980s have each been led by NOW, among others, because NOW had a reach that goes beyond Washington to mobilize women across the country.

NOW's dual existence as both a centralized national organization and in flexible local chapters, also increased democracy within the organization by making leadership accountable to a mass base. In fact it may be this aspect of NOW's structure, through which leadership comes "up" from the localities (and so has a less "inside the beltway" orientation), that accounts for NOW's ability not to get more conservative with age, as

oligarchic theorists suggest, but in fact to extend their range of concerns and become more radical over time.<sup>16</sup>

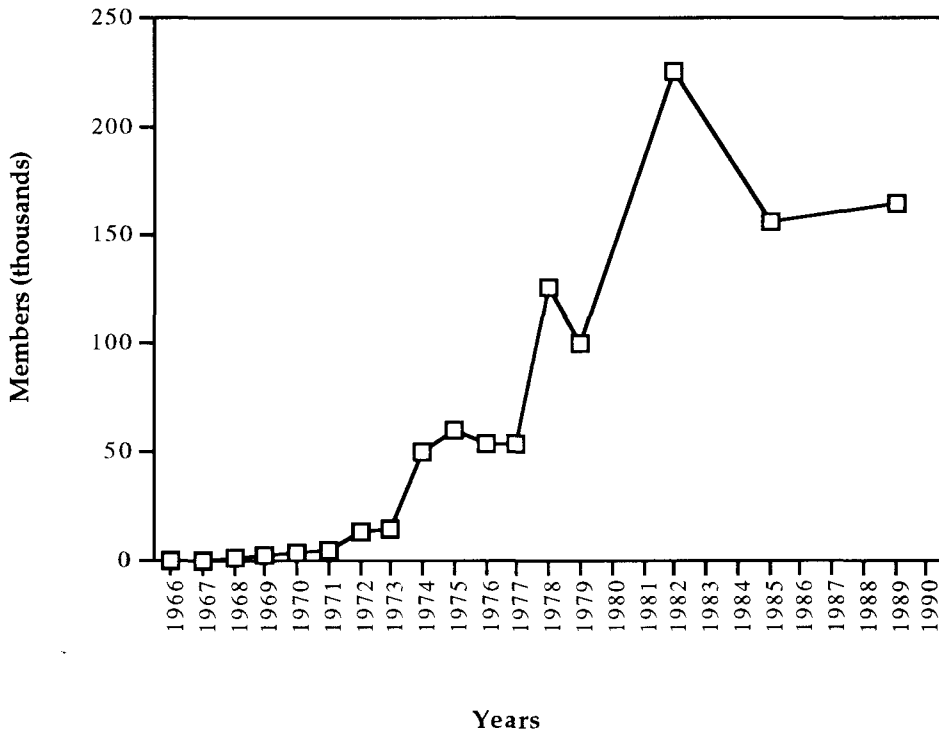
### **III. Material Resources:**

#### **Membership, Income and Media Access**

Besides the resources provided by NOW leaders' competence and education, and its ability to maintain an effective organizational form over time, a critical resource for NOW was financial. It is only by mobilizing at least some cash resources that movement organizations can then pay for other resources such as information, staff time, technologies, and so on.

NOW's main source of income was, and is, membership dues. Table 5.1 indicates the trends in NOW's membership numbers over time. In the first few years NOW's only income came from membership dues. Later, in the mid 1970s and early 1980s, NOW leaders began to use direct mail to ask for contributions from members and sympathetic bystanders in addition to membership dues and over time the percentage of NOW's funds made up from charitable contributions has increased.<sup>17</sup> By 1984 such contributions made up 30 percent of NOW's income of \$5,637,000 (64 percent still came from membership dues and 6 percent from sales of NOW products).<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 5.1**  
**NOW Membership Over Time**  
**(Thousands)**



In the late 1970s NOW also began to apply for foundation support and grants, usually to fund particular projects. Some grant money was forthcoming for special projects to NOW and its sister organization, NOWLDEF (National Organization for Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund).<sup>19</sup> But for the most part, feminist organizations have been less successful in getting foundation support than other civil rights organizations. The majority of NOW's income still comes from membership dues, making it a genuinely mass based

organization that has to be responsive to its membership 171  
base.

Over time NOW has grown exponentially. Except for a period of decline in the mid 1980s, available data on the organization's membership and income base, suggests a general upward trend over time. From an initial reported membership of 300 in 1966, NOW grew to 15,000 by 1973 and then to around 50, 000 by 1977. In 1979 some sources report as many as 100,000 members for NOW. By 1982 that figure was 225,000. After the ERA defeat in 1982, numbers dropped off to around 160,000 in 1985, but by 1992 NOW was reporting 275,000 members, making it by far the largest feminist organization in the world.

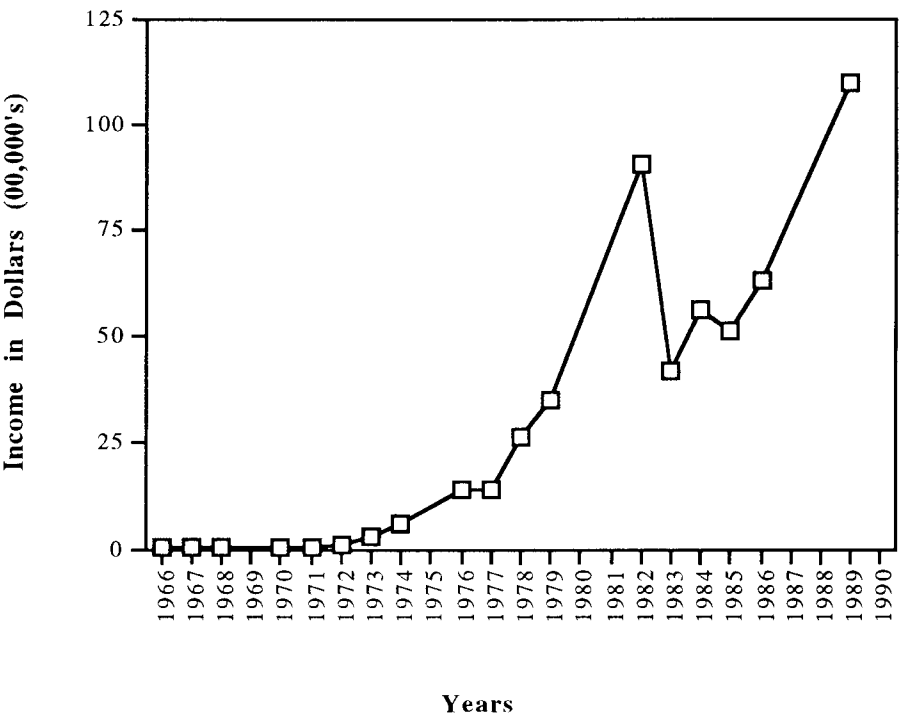
Because income for NOW is largely a result of membership dues, this meant that NOW's organizational income also grew rapidly over time. As Figures 5.1 and 5.2 indicate (next page), both NOW's membership and income have generally increased over time, with a few years of fall back in the mid 1980s. From an income of \$1500 in 1966, NOW's reported budget was over \$1 million by 1979. In 1978 the reported income for the organization was \$3.5 million, and in 1982, at the height of the ERA fight the organization took in around \$9 million. In 1989 the organization reported an \$11 million budget.

However, it is important that we treat these numbers cautiously. As other observers of social

movement groups have also noted (cf. Knoke, 1989; Gamson, 1975; Zald and McCarthy, 1979) the actual documentable numbers of members of a social movement organization at any one time are very difficult to ascertain. First, because SMOs do not routinely keep excellent records, second because strategic over counting is endemic, and third, because the meaning of "membership" itself is problematic. Some groups, for example, count all people who have ever paid membership dues, others routinely purge their rolls and drop all non active members every few months or weeks. NOW in general has had a policy to count only active, paid up members as members, but purging rolls is itself a resource intensive activity which may not have high priority in an action driven organization, and such claims are difficult to verify.<sup>20</sup>

Wherever possible in this study I have tried to verify membership and income numbers across sources (e.g. by comparing numbers gleaned from NOW records with other historical studies). But even so there are still some missing years that I cannot account for and which do not seem to be available even to the national organization. In short, these specific numbers must be seen as quite fragile, though the general trends they document are well supported across sources.

**Figure 5.2**  
**NOW Income Over Time (00,000's)**



**Membership, Income and Media Access**

Given that membership dues provided most of NOW's resources, it was also membership dues (and NOW's resulting income) that made NOW's news access possible. NOW's ability to research and process information for journalists, to write up press releases and backgrounders, and indeed to make themselves available as sources to journalists, was based in its ability to mobilize income

As we might expect, then, NOW's increases in membership and in income from 1966-1980 were also reflected in its access to news media. As Figure 5.3

indicates, there is a strong positive relationship between NOW's main resources -- membership and income -- and its amount of coverage in the *New York Times*.. As measured simply by the number of paragraphs devoted to NOW itself, or in which NOW was cited as a source, in the years 1966-1980, there is a clear relationship between NOW's media visibility and its membership numbers ( $r=.772$ ) and income ( $r=.752$ ).

**Figure 5.3**  
**NOW News Coverage by Income and Membership**

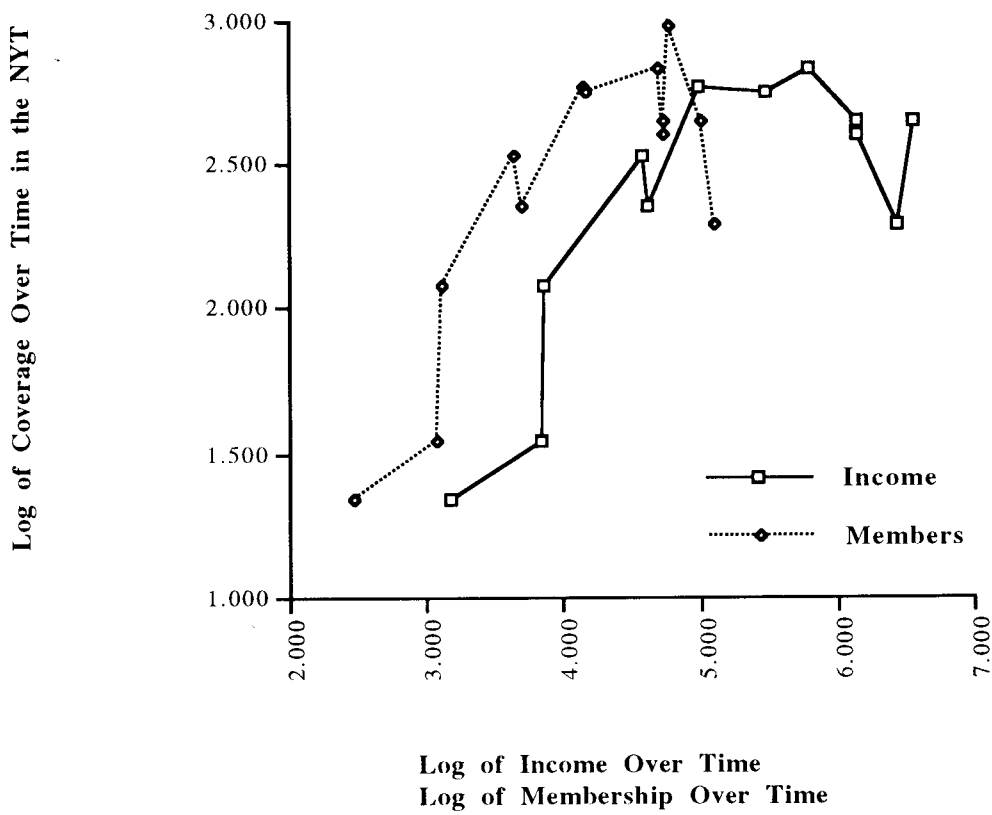


Table 5.1 summarizes these relationships between NOW's resources and media coverage over time, including statistical significance measures. The relationship between NOW's membership and their media coverage shows a significant correlation ( $r=.7772$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

**Table 5.1**  
**NOW Resource and Media Access Correlations**

	<b>Year</b>	<b>Log of Members</b>	<b>Log of Income</b>	<b>Log of Coverage</b>
<b>Year</b>	1.000	.9718**	.9869**	.6915
<b>Log Member†</b>		1.000	.9917**	.7772*
<b>Log Income†</b>			1.000	.7528

\*  $p< .01$     \*\* $p< .001$

†Membership, Income and Coverage were transformed into log values because all of these values were exponential over time. Transforming these data into log values redistributes values along the curve while retaining any relationship between two curves.<sup>21</sup>

The relationship indicated in Table 5.1 between NOW's resources (membership and income) and its coverage, could also, of course, be interpreted to flow the other way. The amount of coverage NOW achieved in media would also have helped to bring in members (and so income). Indeed after the first few years, NOW records themselves suggest that a significant percentage of NOW

members were attracted to the organization through hearing about it in the news.<sup>22</sup> What is also clear from NOW records, though, and from news content evidence (see chapter seven), is that much of NOW's early coverage was self-generated. So that even if news did increase NOW's membership, it did so only after the organization's initial investment.<sup>23</sup> From the beginning it was NOW's efforts at resource mobilization and active source work that produced the group's access to news media. In later years, some reporters would seek out the group proactively but for the most part the story of NOW's media access is one of self-directed activity on the part of NOW itself.

### **Summary and Discussion:**

#### **Resource Mobilization and Media Access**

Clearly for NOW, access to media was structured by its resource mobilization more generally. It was the income from membership that allowed the organization to spend money on media work. The class and professional background of NOW leaders, which translated into competence and media contacts, was also instrumental in allowing it to interact with media. NOW's organizational form, of centralization and also representation across the country in chapters, made it possible both to control communication to media and to be seen as representative by media.

That there should be a relationship between an organization's resources and its ability to access media is in some sense a rather unsurprising claim. But in fact it is one that is often obscured in both journalists' professional ideologies, and in studies about news-making, because it is a revelation that comes from studying sources and not journalists. Journalists themselves tend to stress the "news value" of sources or of events as a way of explaining news content. Or occasionally they admit to time pressures and chance. Since most of the studies of news focus on journalists themselves, they also tend to stress aspects of the *content* of source's messages, or of journalists routines or rationalizations.<sup>24</sup> But this general focus on journalists and on content has obscured our understanding of news as an institution whose relationships with other organizations are structured in a larger framework of resource s and power. Within this larger framework access to resources and skills structure whether it is possible for a source organization to produce "newsworthy" ideas.

This obscuring of the economic or material base of symbolic struggle is in fact quite common in knowledge production. As Bourdieu (1977, p. 183) has pointed out, it is in fact exactly this confusion that allows the knowledge/power relationship to remain hidden and the

legitimacy of certain discursive forms (such as news) to 178  
be maintained:

Symbolic capital, a transformed and thereby disguised form of physical "economic" capital, produces its proper effect inasmuch, and only inasmuch, as it conceals the fact that it originates in material forms of capital, which are also, in the last analysis, the source of its effects.

This model of media access -- in which NOW actively mobilized resources, and then was able to channel these resources into media visibility -- may be both good and bad for movement organizations. It improves on the strong hegemony model for movements in that it suggests that, to some extent at least, coverage of a movement group may be produced through its own efforts -- that is, coverage may be least partially on resources rather than ideology. However, as I have noted here, NOW's ability to mobilize resources, may not be true of most emergent political movement groups. For less savvy social movement organizations, these "costs" of access to news, and to voice in the public sphere, may be much harder to achieve.

This focus in resources is critical, then. Without such resources no interaction with media is possible at

all. As Curran and Gurevitch (1991, p. 19) have suggested, when it comes to symbolic power resources are determining not in the "last instance" but in the first:

This ... forces us to think of economic determination in a more flexible way. Instead of holding onto Marx's notion of determination in the last instance, with its implication that everything can eventually be related directly to economic forces, we can follow Stuart Hall in seeing determination as operating in the *first* instance. That is to say we can think of economic dynamics as defining the key features of the general environment within which communicative activity takes place, but not as a complete explanation of the nature of that activity.

The relationship between resources and symbolic success is not a straightforward one, however. Resources may make interaction possible, but they do not determine success in controlling the interaction. While they tell us about the general parameters of the relationship they do not help us to understand how it is that material resources can be translated into news voice. How did NOW use its resources to produce voice in the public sphere? What strategies did the organization develop day-to-day to produce news access? In short, how did NOW translate

material resources into symbolic power? I address these 180  
more sociological/strategic questions in the next  
chapter.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> NOW National Board Meeting Minutes, 1966. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library for Women in History, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass. The first Executive Board members were: Dr. Kathryn Clarenbach, professor; Betty Friedan, writer; Aileen Hernandez, member of EEOC; Richard Graham, former head of EEOC; Caroline Davis, union leader, AAUW. (Hernandez was elected subject to acceptance, as she was still working for EEOC. Davis later left over the ERA, which her union could not support). The first National Board members were also predominantly professionals, and disproportionately from university and religious backgrounds: Colleen Boland, Inez Casiano, Professor Carl Degler, Sister Mary Austin Doherty, Dr. Elizabeth Drews, Muriel Fox, Betty Furness, Dorothy Haener, Jane Hart, Dr. Anna Arnold Hedgeman, Phineas Indritz, Rev Dean Lewis, Inka O' Hanrahan, Grace Olivarez, Dr. Patricia Plante, Eve Purvis, Sister Mary Joel Read, Charlotte Roe, Dr. Alice Rossi, Dr. Vera Schletzer, Edna Schwartz.

<sup>2</sup> Aileen Hernandez (1970-1971) was a professional organizer with graduate work in government. Wilma Scott Heide (1971-1973) was a behavioral scientist. Karen De Crow (1974-1977) was a lawyer, lecturer and writer. Eleanor Smeal (1977-1982), though she framed herself as a housewife and was concerned with homemakers rights, was trained as a political scientist. Molly Yard (1987-1991) was a professional organizer educated at Swarthmore College, and current president, Patricia Ireland, is a lawyer.

<sup>3</sup> NOW Executive Board Meeting Minutes, 1967. NOW Collection and Friedan (1976).

<sup>4</sup> Social movement theorists have noted how new movements and movement groups are created from the ranks of older movements. Evans (1980) for example, traces the roots of the women's movement to women who worked in the civil rights movement and Hackett (1991) suggests that the environmental movement has its roots in the student New Left. But few observers have noted how this relationship is also resource dependent -- new groups are often formed using the resources of the old. In this case the labor movement had a hand in helping to produce the women's movement.

<sup>5</sup> NOW ACTS, September 7th, 1971.

6 Freeman, Jo. (1975), p. 56.

7 In fact it may be that the focus on communication by the NSMs is a side effect of the class and professional basis of their members rather than any profound change in movement political strategies generally. We need more comparative work on groups from other class bases and from other (non western, non post-industrial) societies before we can call the NSM move a general social movement shift towards "identity" politics and away from material concerns.

8 The debate about the best organizational form for social movements, or the best form for particular ends is a long and subtle one, and I am selecting from it freely here. For more discussion on hierarchy, centralization, and bureaucratization in social movements see: Gamson, William. (1990. [1975]) *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth., Gerlach, Luther and P. Hines. (1970) *People, Power and Change*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, Jo Freeman. (1975). *The Politics of Women's Liberation*. New York: Longman. For a discussion of how different theories valorize different social movement forms, see Cohen, Jean. (1985). Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements. *Social Research* 52(4): 663-716.

9 Chapters are made up of 10 people minimum and they should, formally at least, subscribe to by-laws and procedures set down by the national board. They each appoint a liaison to national NOW, and a designated treasurer. But beyond this they are relatively flexible according to the needs of the women involved. The larger metropolitan chapters usually being the most active. The New York chapter, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington and Pittsburgh, for example, have all been critical centers of NOW activity

10 The Executive Committee consists of a Chairperson, president, four regional directors, four vice presidents (legal, legislation, public relations and finance), a secretary, treasurer and a chairperson of the National Advisory Committee. The National Board consists of 25 elected members; and the 13 national executive officers. NOW started off with no paid staff, and has always maintained a healthy fear of becoming a staff dominated organization. But over time it has come to rely on a few key administrative staff, and from the mid 1970s has also paid key elected officials.

11 In 1974 for example there were around thirty different national task forces, in 1977 there were more than 50 task forces represented at the at the national conference. NOW task forces include women and the arts, child care, EEO compliance, credit, criminal justice,

education, broadcasting/FCC, fund raising, women and health, legislation, labor unions, marriage, divorce and family relations, minority women and women's rights, older women, image of women, public relation, women and religion, rape, reproduction and population, sexuality and lesbianism, women and sports, among others.

12 NOW Public Information Office papers, 1975.

13 NOWLDEF (1983). Media Project Report to the Muskiwinni Foundation. NOW Collection, Ellis Library, University of Columbia-Missouri.

14 The local chapters that withheld dues included Harrisburg, Los Angeles, and others. They were also, not coincidentally, the "home" chapters of board members involved in a leadership fight at the same time. NOW National Board Meeting minutes, April 5-6, 1975 .

15 Simpson, Peggy. (1979). "Covering the Women's Movement," pp. 19-23, *Nieman Reports*, Summer.

16 NOW has expanded its base of concern from limited sex discrimination goals to general feminist transformation of all aspects of social relations. Today they espouse a general feminist vision which includes concern with issues of gender, class, war and peace, as well as international connections between women. See for example, the NOW Expanded Bill of Rights for the 21st Century (1989) in which they espouse the right to freedom from sex discrimination and race discrimination; the right to reproductive freedom; freedom from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and from discrimination on the basis of age or health condition; the right to a decent standard of living including health, housing and education; the right to a clean and safe environment, and the right to live free from violence.

17 Such direct mailing to solicit funds is time consuming and expensive, but it has the advantage of bringing in one-time support which requires no further output (as opposed to memberships which cost the organization in support services such as mailing, newsletters, and so on). NOW had mixed success with direct mail campaigns in the 1970s. An early attempt to reach "homemakers" through women's magazines garnered a net loss. But another, narrower, "reproduction" attempt in 1974 brought in approximately \$158,000 in new membership dues over a number of "thrusts." In general the public relations staff became more knowledgeable and better at targeting as they learned from mistakes and also began to hire consultants. NOW (1974, November). PIO Report to the Board. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

18 NOW Budget records and Gelb and Palley (1987) pp. 42-43.

19 Grants were usually more easily granted to NOWLDEF because it was a designated tax-deductible (501c(4)) educational organization. NOW itself has 501c(3) tax status, a non profit but not tax deductible organization. NOW retains this status even though it may lose them some large donations because it is a "political" classification. Groups designated 501c(4) such as NOWLDEF are not allowed, for example, to endorse presidential candidates.

20 The personal data/membership forms of all NOW members that would be needed to verify membership claims are not available in the NOW archive. In fact such materials are unlikely to have been kept at all before computing technology became routinely used in the mid 1980s. The figures used here agree substantially with a recent fact-based "chronicle" of the women's movement Caraballo et al, 1993, *The Feminist Chronicles* and with other published sources.

21 Hartwig, F. and Dearing, B. (1979) *Exploratory Data Analysis*. Sage Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, Number 16, p.64

22 A 1974 NOW membership survey, for example, shows around 40 percent of members saying they first heard about NOW in the news. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

23 A regression analysis which might ordinarily clear up some of the causal questions, is not useful here because of the high degree of auto correlation -- all of these measures are increasing over time.

24 Sigal (1973), for example, makes inferences from news content about the institutional affiliations of news sources, but fails to make a connection to their resource base. Gans (1980) describes the news-source relationship as a dance but it is not one in which we see the source's steps. See Schlesinger (1990) also for an analysis of British news studies that have also ignored sources.

**NOW Media Strategies:****The Possibilities and Constraints of Media Pragmatism**

I thought all you had to do was carry a placard around, and people would listen. I've learned how to organize, how to raise funds, how to computerize things, how to use the media. We've become experts -- Ginny Foat, president, California NOW, 1982.

Clearly the ability to mobilize resources is essential to beginning and continuing a dialogue with media. And in particular, communicative competence, organizational maintenance, a large membership, and money seem to be especially important resources. But how are these resources translated into media voice? How did NOW translate membership, income and competence into news voice? How did NOW leaders understand and manage their relationship with media? What were the media strategies that they developed and how did these strategies contribute to the more general mobilization and goals of the organization and to its political identity?

While resource analysis sketches in the basic requirements of access it cannot tell us about the day-to-day management of that access. In this chapter I

describe how NOW leaders developed strategies to access news and to control their interactions with media day-to-day. I argue that overall NOW leaders developed and followed a general strategy of media pragmatism in which they sought to understand and strategically appropriate the conventions of news practices and news discourses -- to reflexively use the "rules" of news as resources (Giddens, 1984). They taught themselves and local NOW members to "think like journalists" in order to present the organization in ways that journalist would take seriously, and they spent considerable organizational skill and resources in the "care and feeding" of women journalists who were open to news about feminism.

However, this strategic appropriation of news conventions came at significant costs to the organization. As I illustrate throughout the chapter, NOW's media pragmatism, especially in the early years, came at considerable costs in time, skills, and ideological containment. Taking media conventions and practices seriously (and encoding them into NOW's communications) often meant that NOW leaders reframed, or contained the organization's internal ideological diversity in producing its "public identity." This becomes especially clear when NOW's media pragmatist approach is situated in larger movement context where it contrasts sharply with a very different approach to media taken by the "younger" feminist groups. In the

last part of the chapter I compare NOW's media pragmatism and its "costs" to the "media subversion" strategies of the younger movement groups in order to contextualize NOW strategies as reflexive, strategic choices with specific consequences.

### **NOW'S UNDERSTANDING OF NEWS**

From the beginning NOW leaders saw media, especially the national, elite, news media as a powerful movement resource. They wanted to use news media to mobilize new members and to tell the public about the movement:

Our major goals in press relations are threefold:

1. To build NOW and the movement by reaching and recruiting prospective adherents.
2. To win political and community support for our goals.
3. To give the general public an honest picture of the Feminist Movement.<sup>1</sup>

If these aims seem at first glance somewhat naive -- seeing the media as a route to an "honest" picture of the movement, for example -- they were not the result of inexperience or ignorance, but in fact the outcome of successful interactions with news media in the past. These early NOW leaders had generally had extensive

relations with reporters in the past, as spokespersons for their professional organizations. The NOW Board members who were not lawyers were often communications professionals, such as writers, public relations specialists or journalists.<sup>2</sup> They knew about media practices and used that knowledge to structure their communications with journalists. It may have been their success at being sources in the past that allowed NOW leaders to be optimistic about their chances with NOW and news.

This expertise with press relations was not distributed evenly throughout the organization, though, and one of the first strategies that NOW national leadership embarked on was the training of local chapters in media skills. They codified their knowledge and experience with media into "Media Kits" which were then distributed throughout the organization to local chapters. It is clear from the advice in these kits that national NOW leaders were quite sophisticated news analysts. The kits stressed knowing reporters routines, getting to know how local news organizations were structured, and learning about the criteria of "newsworthiness" -- similar "training" to that which journalists themselves might undergo.<sup>3</sup>

NOW Chapters were urged to find out about the deadlines of local papers and stations; to know what shifts had which reporters and editors working, and to

send material or call when "sympathetic" reporters were 188  
on the job. The kits also suggested that chapters should  
designate press representatives whose job it would be to  
get to know reporters and to coordinate media relations.  
In fact local activists are enjoined to envision  
themselves as journalists:

Think of yourself as a kind of editor. If a  
reporter uses something you said that seems silly  
or irrelevant and ignores the important comments,  
it's partly your fault. Why did you say it? Only  
say what you want used. This is especially true for  
television which generally runs only a minute of  
film for any particular story. Make them use what  
you think is important by refusing to answer  
questions on camera about anything else.<sup>4</sup>

The press kits also focused centrally on issues of  
"newsworthiness," and though they describe news values  
as highly unpredictable, they are also able to make some  
good generalizations. They suggest, for example, that  
chapters are more likely to be covered if they stage an  
"event," or if they interact with a legitimate  
institution already routinely covered, such as the  
legislature or courts:

The beginning of a survey of employment practices may or may not be news -- but the conclusion will be. A charge that some company discriminates against a woman may or may not be news -- but the announcement that an EEOC complaint has been filed will be. A speaker at a meeting will not be news - unless she or he is a well known personality. In the final analysis it's a trial and error game.<sup>5</sup>

### **IDENTITY CONTROL AND LEGITIMATION STRATEGIES**

The same media "savvy" that had made it possible for NOW to produce the media kits, made NOW leadership very sensitive to how journalists would represent their organization in the news. From the first days, news representation was a consideration for NOW leaders. The first NOW Board itself was chosen partly with media in mind. NOW strategists considered that having so many "professions" represented -- the original Board had seven Ph.D.'s, one MD and three religious vocations -- could only encourage journalists to take the organization seriously. They aimed to present themselves as a serious "civil rights" organization and to avoid the marginalizing treatment that seemed to be the fate of the student and women's liberation groups. They borrowed the rhetoric and moral authority of the Civil Rights Movement and called themselves "the NAACP for women:

There is no civil rights movement to speak for women, as there has been for Negroes and other victims of discrimination. The National Organization for Women must therefore begin to speak.<sup>6</sup>

NOW leaders saw themselves as creating a revolutionary organization, whose long term goal was to radically change society. But they were also centrally concerned with action and with devising ways to make change in the short term. This required being taken seriously by journalists and policy makers and NOW leaders were intent to control the organization's representation in news media as a part of this more general legitimacy battle.

NOW leaders tried to manage their relationships with media by controlling, both who could speak to media in NOW's name, as well as what they could talk about. They delegated media interactions to a few key leaders and they cautioned local chapters to be careful to keep "personal" and organizational statements separate in their interviews. In their interactions with journalists at the national level they would try to identify and avoid topics or frames that journalists might use to "sensationalize" the organization. Early casualties of this control were the issues of sexuality and

lesbianism. The 1968 press guidelines make clear that such topics are simply better avoided:

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NOW officers and representatives are urged to use careful good judgment when working with the news media... NOW spokesmen [sic] are urged to weigh seriously any statement which might be misunderstood or which might cause embarrassment to our organization (... ) we do know that questions involving the sexual and social relationships between men and women are especially sensitive and especially susceptible to ridicule by the press. Special caution must be observed in statements which go beyond official NOW policy in this area.<sup>7</sup>

NOW leaders also tried to control the context of their media appearances. One way to do this was by insisting that opponents and counter-debaters on talk shows were of the same "stature" as NOW sources -- that is national and representative of a mas based organization. As Karen De Crow, NOW's President from 1974-1977, expressed it, she did not want to waste her time debating false opposites or "nut types:"

It is my general policy, as national president of a national organization, to not appear with local nut-types, although I will appear with national

nut-types, like Phyllis Schlafly... I don't want to 192  
give equal time ... in such a manner.<sup>8</sup>

NOW's attempts to control media interactions, did not always come off, however, despite careful planning. At a 1973 conference for example, cameramen turned on their cameras only for resolutions on lesbianism, rape and prostitution, ignoring a multitude of other resolutions. NOW audience members were furious and demanded the complete removal of the cameras. Only an intervention by the V-P for public relations, Toni Carabillo, who appealed to members to have faith in the "truth" stopped the journalists from being thrown out:

We know what our own momentum is, and we know what we have overcome by way of biased coverage, and we know the truth has a way of prevailing<sup>9</sup>

### **The "Costs" of Identity Control Strategies**

This sensitivity to what reporters would find "sensational", however, also constrained what it was possible for NOW to talk about publicly. Issues of "sexual and social relationships," for example were surely at the heart of the feminist movement itself.

NOW spokespersons were also advised to avoid the use of other "hot" terms that would encourage media workers to classify them in de-legitimizing ways.

Friedan, for example, suggested that NOW sources simply 193  
avoid traditional political terms such as capitalism or  
socialism altogether:

In San Francisco I met with some of the younger,  
radical women... I told my NOW sisters -- and the  
young radicals too -- that we should stay away from  
issues of "capitalism" and "socialism." 10

This avoidance of "hot" political terms, was part  
of a quite deliberate attempt on NOW's part in the early  
years to differentiate NOW's identity from that of the  
more radical movement groups. Friedan had come to see  
the "younger" groups as engaged in what she considered  
"bedroom politics" which she thought de-legitimized the  
movement. She wanted to continue to present the  
organization as one concerned with "civil rights" and  
the more radical feminisms challenged the very ground  
of "civil" life.<sup>11</sup>

Though Friedan left the presidency of the  
organization in 1970, this media strategy of  
differentiating of NOW from the "younger" groups  
continued through the early 1970s. A 1973 letter to the  
Dick Cavett show, from NOW's Public Information Office,  
for example, outlined NOW's self-perceptions, and the  
identity it was trying to project. In this letter, for  
example, NOW national strategists distance themselves

from other feminists whom they indicate are the "real" bra burners -- a term that harmed the movement as a whole:

I would like to stress that the movement is hardly one with trivial or insignificant aims. I am sure you are all aware of the many inequities experienced by women in our society -- including discrimination in credit, employment, marriage and divorce, and in many other areas. You may not be aware, however, that the movement has grown from one symbolized by the myth of bra-burners to one made up of a large number of serious, dedicated women and men who are working hard to bring about change in our society for the benefit of both sexes.<sup>12</sup>

It was not until after 1975, when NOW leadership was taken over by a "majority caucus" with wider ranging interpretations of feminism that such differentiation strategies declined.<sup>13</sup>

Ericson et al. (1989) have argued that this kind of control by source organizations is common. Generally organizations seek to speak with one voice, and to minimize the appearance of any internal dissent or illegitimate practices in their interactions with journalists. They try to keep the "back" and "front"

areas of the organization distinct in their media interactions. "Back" areas are where the private, conflicted, and perhaps illegitimate, business of the organization takes place. "Front" areas are public and strategically monitored versions of the organization that are made available to reporters.<sup>14</sup>

But social movements may experience such rules differently than other kinds of organizations. Movements are usually more concerned with internal democracy and their identity is usually more shifting and multiple than other types of organizations. Both of these factors make a movement group's "public identity" more problematic to control -- or as early NOW leaders saw it to present as non-controversial -- than other kinds of organizations.

And in fact NOW leaders' strategic attempts to frame the organization as respectable and non-controversial did sometimes backfire and disconnect them from their membership and the rest of the movement. In her resignation from NOW in 1970, for example, Rita Mae Brown cited NOW's insensitivity to issues of sexuality because they were more concerned with avoiding controversy than accurately representing their constituency:

Lesbianism is the one word that can cause the Executive Committee a collective heart attack. This

issue is dismissed as unimportant, too dangerous to 196  
contemplate, divisive or whatever excuse could be  
dredged up from their repression. The prevailing  
attitude is ... "Suppose they (notice the word,  
they) flock to us in droves? How horrible. After  
all think of our image."<sup>15</sup>

Though NOW's position on lesbianism and sexual  
orientation has changed dramatically since Brown's  
resignation (a 1971 national conference resolution  
brought lesbian rights onto NOW's agenda and a 1975  
resolution made the issue a priority for NOW), over  
time, the organization's attempts to appear serious and  
not to be marginalized by media also made them  
compromise on other issues, and brought them criticism  
inside the women's movement. thirty years later, it is  
still this hostility to lesbian concerns and an alleged  
"purge" of lesbians from leadership positions because of  
public identify concerns, that haunts NOW today.<sup>16</sup>

### **1975, The Majority Caucus and New Identity Strategies**

In fact these attempts by early NOW leaders to  
"soft-pedal" feminism were also part of the more general  
critique of NOW leadership voiced by a new "Majority  
Caucus" that emerged in NOW in 1974-1975 and took over  
the organization from its original leaders.

The caucus comprised a group of mostly "younger," more radical, NOW leaders who built a platform on their commitment to a more open and democratic organization. For the first time in NOW's history in 1975 the national elections were bitterly challenged by a "slate" of candidates with a coherent manifesto and platform. Most of the caucus members were elected and they formed majorities in 1975 on both the NOW National and Executive Boards.

With the coming of new leadership and new attitudes to feminism, came some changes in public identity strategies too. The new Board's desire for more democratic and "upfront" leadership also extended to their approach to media. The tendency of earlier administration's to "soft pedal" particular issues with media was critiqued and the Majority Caucus suggested that NOW begin to loosen its identity control concerns with media, because avoiding issues publicly could translate into forgetting about them internally too:

Down playing some issues for tactical reasons is always a risky procedure. When we fail to articulate some of our goals we tend to drop them not only from our immediate demands but from our long term vision, It does not take much anxiety and circumspection to turn a multi-issued revolutionary movement into a one issue reform.<sup>17</sup>

After 1975, NOW's differentiation strategies, in which NOW's respectability had been played up at the expense of other movement groups, were also toned down. In this later period NOW's relationship to the rest of the movement was usually presented to media as one of "sisterhood" rather than as the respectable arm of the movement.

The new leadership's more democratic urge was reflected in a new emphasis on communicating beyond the national elite press and professional women to a more general audience. As part of a new campaign to public redefinition of housework as work and to reach homemakers with feminist messages, NOW began to interact with a wider range of media outlets including appeal to a wider range of women in which women's magazines and local newspapers became central targets. The "displaced homemaker" campaign was one of the first times feminist had reached out to women working at home and it signified a quite dramatic shift in NOW's public identity as one concerned mainly with women in the public workplace.<sup>18</sup>

#### **WOONG WOMEN REPORTERS:**

#### **BUILDING A WOMEN'S ISSUE "BEAT"**

Besides controlling the organization's identity in media, NOW strategists also had a more general aim in

their media strategies; to build a media agenda about emerging women's issues. Many of NOW's core issues in 1968 -- sex discrimination in employment and education, child care facilities for working women, reproductive freedom, and ERA ratification -- were for the most part still non-existent "issues" in the public policy domain. Before they could get the public to take this new set of "women's issues" seriously, NOW strategists decided they would have to get reporters to respond to them. So they set out to "educate" and "raise the consciousness" of a group of reporters to become interested and expert in a new domain they called "women's issues."

There was a small cadre of these kind of reporters, who from the early days recognized the importance of the movement. NOW media strategists identified these key reporters and then worked to keep them and others informed and educated on the legislative and legal progress of women's issues and of the movement's activities more generally. They sent these reporters information and research, set up one on one interviews with movement leaders, provided background analyses on policy issues, and even periodically took them to lunch.

In building relationships with particular journalists and providing information for them NOW was acting like sophisticated sources from other kinds of organizations. But NOW was faced with a more complex problem than other mainstream organizations: the women

reporters they were dealing with were also subject to sexism and a lack of professional legitimacy in their own organizations. Even when NOW had built relationships with women reporters in the elite press, and even when those reporters wrote stories about the movement and about women's politics, the writers could not be sure that unsympathetic or sexist editors would not cut the story or revoke the reporter's assignment.

Marilyn Goldstein, who wrote a series on the movement in its early days for *Newsday*, for example, remembers unsympathetic editors, one of whom cut out much of her explanatory material on the movement's origins or reasoning:

I wrote a series on women's rights and he told me "Get out there and find an authority who'll say this is all a crock of shit. I'm quoting to you. I wrote of how the women's movement parallels the black movement, and he pulled that all out. So when people say "A good series, Marilyn," I say, "If you really want to learn about the women's rights movement, look in my waste basket."<sup>19</sup>

Nan Robertson, for example, a long time *New York Times* journalist also recalls how editors failed to take feminism seriously. She recounts how two of the movement's strongest journalistic allies, Eileen

Shanahan and Grace Lichtenstein, both of the *Times*, had 201  
to relegate women's issues to evening work:

Like Shanahan she [Grace Lichtenstein] had been covering the burgeoning women's movement for two years. Like Eileen, she had to ask her uninterested male editors for permission to cover women's politics, and when she got permission, she often had to cover them in her spare time when her regular reporting was done.<sup>20</sup>

The early attempts by NOW and these reporters to build a women's issue beat, was often set back by lack of support and resources from media institutions, who could not "see" women's politics as news. Grace Lichtenstein, for example, a senior *Times* journalist noted that an issue like changing rape laws was not something that would get a male editor's attention:

There have been times when I found editors unaware of things happening, like the [changes in] the rape laws. Only women think in terms of rape laws; the men ... know about capital punishment.<sup>21</sup>

NOW's role here, then, was more important than that of the traditional source. In many instances it was the only source and had to be doubly reliable and useful to

reporters. But it also served as a source of moral and social support for women whose own "news judgment" was being questioned. Without the support of organizations like NOW, these women would not have been able to (or perhaps would not have thought of) writing about the movement at all. In fact the interaction between feminists and some women journalists was strong enough that a number of these women later went on to sue (and win against) their employer, *The New York Times* for discrimination in promotion, hiring and pay (Robertson, 1992).

#### **Advocate Journalists or Gendered Journalists?**

These women journalists did not necessarily consider themselves feminists. They noticed that they could "see" that feminism was newsworthy in a way that their male colleagues could not, but they attributed this to their news judgments and "professionalism" more than to any ideological factors. Peggy Simpson, for example, a reporter who covered the movement recalls that she was surprised when her editors could not see that feminism was news, but she did not attribute her own judgment to politics but to her news sense:

I thought of myself not as a feminist but as a reporter covering a good story that for some reason almost all of my male colleagues had ignored.<sup>22</sup>

Simpson and other women journalists covering the movement for the elite press saw themselves as acting like good journalists, and building up expertise the way journalists do -- by finding expert sources. But they were bringing their professional judgment to bear on information and sources that male reporters ignored, sources their editors simply didn't see as sources, and issues they could not see as issues.

Goldenberg (1978), has suggested that we might see these kind of reporters who are sympathetic to a particular view as "advocate" reporters. In a study of "resource-poor" groups access to newspapers in Boston, she noted that advocate reporters were essential resources for these groups access to newspapers. And, in NOW's case too, it is also true that a small group of reporters covered the organization and its issues persistently despite set-backs. But to consider these women "advocates" may be both too simple, and too media-centric. Much of their coverage of feminism was facilitated not by their own consciousness but by the information subsidy work of NOW and other feminist groups. Though these women reporters certainly played a part in making women's issue noticeable as stories, it is also true that without the proactive source strategies of organizations like NOW, it is doubtful if much of the early coverage of women's issues would have

been generated at all.<sup>23</sup> One reporter who covered the 204 movement, for example, recalls missing such information in her early coverage of the ERA and then changing her mind on the ERA when it became available to her. Without arguments and information from women's groups, she took on board, uncritically, the arguments of another legitimate source, in this case a state senator, who was anti-ERA:

At that time I had not reported on any major elements of the early women's liberation marches and had never met anyone who called herself a feminist. I did know a lobbyist from the Texas chapter of Business and Professional Women who was unsuccessfully trying to get a state Equal Rights Amendment passed. She never approached me, during my two terms covering the Texas Legislature, and I never called her, so a persuasive state senator easily convinced me that women would be in terrible straits if Texas protective labor laws and community property laws were altered by the ERA. 24

The ability of some women reporters to "see" that women's issue were newsworthy, when their male colleagues could not, is also more complex than any simple "advocate" status can account for. It is more likely to be the result of women reporters different

life experiences and socialization. As women they would 205  
have been exposed to sexual discrimination, sexual  
harassment, problems child care, and so on, that their  
male colleagues would not have experienced. This  
differential socialization does not then mean that all  
women reporters will see the world the same (and all  
differently from their male colleagues), but that  
gendered, racial and sexual identities (among others)  
will play a role in what seems important to a reporter  
even after professional socialization (Van Zoonen,  
1989).<sup>25</sup>

What is clear here is that these reporters did not  
consider themselves as either "advocates" or feminists  
but as reporters whose life experiences as women  
sensitized them to these new issues.<sup>26</sup> It was this  
sensitivity combined with the information support work  
of NOW and other feminist groups these women were then  
able to produce stories about the movement that would  
the influence public perceptions of what were previously  
considered "private" (or at least non problematic areas  
of life) into "public" issues. Whether or not feminists  
have been able to retain control of the framing of these  
issues, it is still an achievement to have "made" them  
issues. and this "making" was accomplished to a large  
extent through interaction with, and subsidizing of,  
women journalists.

## PACKETS, BRIEFINGS, AND THE NOW NEWS SERVICE:

NOW was able to play this supportive role because it invested so much time and resources in producing information. Indeed, as Melucci suggests is true of social movements more generally, in some ways NOW was itself a form of media. The organization researched, collected and processed information as a central organizational activity. Much of this effort went into education efforts within the movement. For example, NOW information staff produced kits, newsletters and the organization's newspaper, *Do It NOW* (later National NOW Times), but a large amount of such effort was focused on journalists -- into producing information subsidies for journalists (Gandy, 1982).

This subsidy work was especially apparent during the years 1973-1975 when NOW maintained a separate Public Information Office in New York. During its existence, the PIO built up for NOW an extensive network of "contacts" in news, talk shows, magazines, and special interest newsletters.<sup>27</sup> The office put out an average of 10 press releases a month in 1975, and organized numerous appearances for NOW leaders on radio and TV talk shows. They also monitored NOW's representation in media and maintained clipping files of NOW stories sent in from chapters across the country. In a survey of NOW national conference stories in July

1974, for example, chapters sent back clips to the PIO office from 12 different states.<sup>28</sup>

In an ambitious effort to reach out into the country beyond the national media, and as part of an emerging state-based ERA campaign, the PIO also set up one of NOW's first ongoing information subsidies, the NOW News Service. The NOW News Service was aimed at suburban news services who always needed material and who could reach women NOW could not reach in other ways:

The service would have a double purpose:

(a) to reach small city and rural areas and supply them with news of the ERA and other women's issues.

(b) to establish a climate for the organization of new NOW chapters.<sup>29</sup>

The first NOW News Service packet in 1973 contained an ERA feature story, a press release on NOW's August 26th strike, a feature on NOW's accomplishments, a brief history of the feminist movement and a question and answer column on ERA. It had a mailing list of about 500 news outlets. Future packets were similar, often including easy to use question and answer formats or ready to print editorial length pieces on the ERA or other women's policy concerns.

The NOW News Service succeeded in putting out a number of these packages and received good responses from regional news and women's page editors, such as this letter from a Sparks, Nevada editor:

I'd like to use some of this material and would like to see more of it. I was happy to have it you ... keep the news coming.<sup>30</sup>

Though the News service was curtailed for lack of resources and staff time after only a few publications, it was one of the first efforts by NOW to go beyond promoting coverage of particular events or activities, and to provide regular and ongoing information packages of background information on women's issues to news outlets. As such it was a harbinger of future NOW media strategies like the gender gap campaign which aimed to produce ongoing information about women's politics.<sup>31</sup>

### **From Identity Control to Symbolic Politics:**

#### **The Making of the "Gender Gap"**

By 1980 media strategies had become an integral part of NOW's overall political planning. Whereas in the early years, public relations personnel had sought to place stories about NOW's events or concerns, by the 1980s, the media campaigns were integral to the overall political strategies. Media plans began to be made with

political strategy, and NOW's knowledge production efforts began to be aimed more and more at reporters. Communication itself had largely become the organization's goal.

During the ERA Ratification Campaign, for example, especially in its last months, NOW threw enormous resources into a last minute "countdown" publicity campaign where the centrality of good media coverage to overall political success was seen as central. The fight over the ERA was a symbolic fight in the eyes of NOW leaders, and one that could ultimately only be won in the public media arena:

The future of the ERA in part depended upon the public's perception of the issue and the media's interpretation of the final months of the decade-long effort to ratify the Amendment... Press "strategies" became almost as important as the legislative and legal strategies. Legislative progress hinged on mobilizing public opinion and publicizing the views and votes of individual legislators.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps this move towards symbolic politics is most apparent in NOW's 1981 "Gender Gap" Campaign in which it becomes clear how the creation and diffusion of "new" issues is at the heart of social movement communication.

The "gender gap" was the name that NOW leaders coined for a for a significant and persistent difference they noticed in men's and women's voting patterns in the 1980 election. The "gap" showed women as less inclined to vote for Reagan than men. It was first noted by NOW's President Eleanor Smeal who was trained as a political scientist. Smeal noted the persistent difference in 1980 election poll results in a meeting in which the NOW leadership were discussing the future of the ERA ratification process., and NOW leaders set out to make the "gender gap" a household term. They reasoned, that if legislators could be convinced that women were a significant and distinct voting bloc, perhaps they could be persuaded to vote for the ERA. At this point in the ratification process, the ERA was being blocked by no more than a half dozen senators in a number states. <sup>33</sup>

Beginning with a *New York Times* article based on NOW's information, newspapers and TV stations around the country then picked up the idea of the gender gap.<sup>34</sup> Over a period of months, NOW leaders wrote op-ed pieces, distributed copies of gender gap stories from one outlet to another, and responded critically to reporters' questions about the gender gap. NOW hired political scientists to cross tabulate poll results by gender, and then sent out these "gender gap updates" to thousand of reporters.

The result of this continuous information work, according to NOW media strategist Kathy Bonk, was a months-long surge of coverage of the gender gap and women's voting and attitude patterns in news outlets throughout the country that brought attention to women as voters, and as voters with different agendas than men. After NOW stopped sending the updates, however, Bonk (1988) recalls that the coverage stopped. She suggests that the campaign did influence a few specialist reporters, but that, for the most part, once the "updates" stopped coming, the stories on women's politics also dried up:

A few key political reporters and columnists.... did spend time analyzing and monitoring women's voting patterns. They became more informed and better able to write accurately about the issue. Too many headline writers and reporters, however, covered the issue as a passing fad. When women's groups stopped "selling" the gender gap, reporters went on to the next fashionable issue. By 1986, gender differences in polling were rarely reported.<sup>35</sup>

Bonk assesses the effects of NOW communications in terms of the number of news stories it generated, but it is less clear, and harder to assess, how such ideas as

the "gender gap" affect peoples' thinking more generally. Melucci has called this more general effect of movement communication its "symbolic" effect in which public ideas are created or reformulated. The "Gender Gap Campaign" seems to be a good candidate for this more diffuse communicative effect. The term itself is still routinely used to talk about women and men as voters 15 years later. and its formulation may have changed journalists (and others) ways of seeing women more generally as an active and cohesive political voting bloc. By persuading news organizations to report polls broken down by gender, NOW may have ultimately changed how reporters and policy makers saw "women" as political agents more generally.

NOW leaders emerged from the ERA and gender gap campaigns more convinced than ever of the importance of media and information campaigns as part of a social movement group's work:

Good media coverage is crucial. If the media give the issues adequate play and stress the importance of registering and voting, profound social change is possible. Everything depends on making sure that women are fully informed on the critical issues and are encouraged to get out and vote.<sup>36</sup>

By the mid 1980s, NOW's media plan involved an ongoing, continual, strategic interaction with media over the construction of women's issues. NOW strategists saw their role as one in which they would produce information for media, monitor media content, and use that monitoring in the design of new information. And in the mid 1980s, with foundation support, NOW began a research project that would help them to connect with journalists more effectively. The organization compiled a data base of around 3000 media personnel around the country, and then undertook a year-long series of meetings with media personnel across the country to talk about the coverage of women's issues on an ongoing basis and to "establish positive working relationships within the industry."<sup>37</sup>

These meetings with industry professionals were the culmination of a media pragmatism that has from the beginning tried to form NOW into perfect media sources. By the mid 1980s media work was central to NOW's political work more generally.

### **Media Pragmatism vs. Media Subversion:**

#### **NOW Strategies in Movement Context**

The deliberateness and coherence of this media pragmatist orientation becomes clear when we see NOW's strategies in the wider movement context. NOW's general media pragmatism was quite different from the media

strategies employed by the "younger" feminist groups. These groups took a different approach to media -- one that can be characterized as media subversion rather than media pragmatism. Where NOW sought to use the media, the younger groups wanted to subvert its processes and convert its workers. They were likely to be hostile or difficult in their interactions with journalists because they saw news media as a major part of the problem in society, not the solution. As *off our backs* writers put it, in 1970, news was as sexist as other American institutions, so unlikely to be a resource:

A major misconception is the belief that the media will deal with us seriously and present a truthful picture of who we are. There is no reason to assume that the mass media are free of the sexism pervasive in all other American institutions. The mass media are primarily interested in lining their own pockets and assuring themselves of the continuance of their powerful position in society by kow-towing to the interests of the ruling class... In the end the mass media will capitulate rather than fight for the truth, for to meet the needs of the people and the demands of objective journalism would mean the end of the mass media in their present form.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to NOW's strategy of control and careful use of media conventions, the younger movement groups took an oppositional stance to media. Where NOW tried to support women journalists with information, the younger groups would either ban journalists from their events, or try to subvert media sourcing routines by insisting the journalists speak to all members of a group.

For the "younger" movement groups, media access was intertwined with more general issues of power and representation within their organizations. In their attempts to deconstruct patriarchal systems, younger movement groups (such as New York Radical Women, Redstockings, Women's Liberation) often equated bureaucratization or specialization with patriarchal forms of organization and refused to have either designated leaders, or spokespersons, preferring to have a "structureless" organization in which each individual would "speak for herself."<sup>39</sup>

Issues of who should or could speak FOR the movement has also been concerns for NOW. But in the younger movement these issues were part of larger debates about the nature of power in which the question of and who should be seen [if anybody] as leaders of the movement was recurrent. In this context delegating

individuals to act as sources for the media became much 216  
more problematic.

Whereas NOW had built into their organizational identity the role of spokesperson, the younger movement could not easily compromise on the issue. Central to their critique of patriarchal ways of knowing and representing others, was their belief in the importance of knowledge gained from personal experience. They had seen too often in the past how women had been spoken "about" and "for" by male voices. In particular they valued personal testimony or experiences of oppression that had not been able to be spoken before. The same search for authoritative sources that women journalists had been able to satisfy by talking to NOW, then, led journalists into trouble with the younger movement groups. As a women's liberation member said to reporter Sandie North when she tried to find a movement spokesperson:

Any woman working in the media can write about her own oppression as a woman, so why should the press need to talk to any of us?<sup>40</sup>

By asking reporters to listen to a wide variety of women, or indeed to listen to themselves, they were expressing a key tenet of their feminism, but it was not one that fit easily with news conventions.

The generally conflictual relations between the younger groups articulations of feminism and news discourse conventions manifested itself most clearly in one of the more radical movement's key strategies; they would speak only to women reporters. Starting at the 1968 Miss America protest, when women demonstrators from New York Radical Women (NYRW) simply refused to speak to male reporters or to answer them explaining, "Why should we talk with them? It's impossible for men to understand," this policy soon became an informal rule among many women's groups.

As a group who had chosen their name, The National Organization "for" Women, deliberately so that men could also be a part of ending sexism, NOW were unlikely to adopt such a policy. But the radical women's groups involved hoped that their separatist strategy would make it easier to deal with the press, (which would result in better coverage), and that it might also force the news media to hire more women journalists. They had seen how the Civil Rights Movement had forced editors to employ more African-American journalists and thought that they would do the same in order to cover the women's liberation movement.<sup>41</sup>

The younger groups seemed to believe that women reporters would somehow, naturally, be more sympathetic because they were women. But they failed to take onto

account that women reporters also followed the conventions and "logics" of news.

The "younger" branch's approach to media sometimes extended into outright hostility and violence against the press where women sabotaged equipment and confounded attempts to "cover" movement events because they were suspicious of how that coverage would turn out. Male reporters were often harassed and sometimes subjected to physical abuse, though, ironically, it didn't seem to cure them of their sexism:

"Get the pigs out!" was the rally cry for a contingent of women who last fall drove Doug Johnson, a WABC-TV correspondent away from a Women's Lib meeting. "One of the girls smashed my microphone. She was rabid, but she was a lovely little thing."<sup>42</sup>

This hostility to the press, sometimes deterred even sympathetic reporters. Marlene Sanders of ABC-TV remembers the radical movement as a very hard story to get, noting that covering the younger movement meant "fighting everybody, everywhere, all the time.... I am in real agreement with the Women's Liberation front and *they're* oppressing me."<sup>43</sup>

Some of these differences in media interactions and expectations between NOW and more radical groups may

have been due to the differences in background. Whereas 219  
NOW's early leaders had come from government  
administration, education and public relations, the  
women of the "younger" women's movement had gained their  
political experience in protest politics, such as the  
peace movement or student movements, and they had  
learned to be suspicious of the press in those contexts.  
Freeman (1975, p. 111), for example, notes that it was  
this background in student politics which made the  
younger feminists wary of the press:

Young feminists had been hostile to the press from  
the beginning -- significantly more so than other  
social movements. Some of this fear was traceable  
to inexperience as even those women with a  
political background had not done press work  
before. Much more derived from watching how  
inaccurately the press had reported the social  
movements and student protests in which they had  
previously been active.

Indeed Betty Friedan once suggested that an  
unspoken alliance between serious journalists and the  
"serious" women's movement had "saved" the movement from  
its own "excesses:"

The women in the media had already become quite an 220  
effective underground, protecting the movement from  
its own excesses in their coverage.<sup>44</sup>

In any case, NOW's pragmatism and strategic  
attempts to learn about and use news routines, were  
clearly not the only possible ways for feminists to  
interact with news media.

#### **CONCLUSION: THE CONSTRAINTS AND POSSIBILITIES OF MEDIA PRAGMATISM**

Over time NOW developed a more and more  
sophisticated version of media pragmatism. From early  
attempts to control the group's identity through taking  
media conventions into account, to a fully fledged  
research project to determine how best to interact with  
journalists, NOW has seen news as a potential movement  
resource and has set out to use it for mass  
communication purposes.

This media pragmatism, which was in direct contrast  
to the younger feminist groups' conflictual relationship  
with media, seems to have been "successful" enough, at  
least from the organization's own point of view, because  
they continued to develop and refine it over time. In  
the period described here, NOW leaders continued a  
general strategy of trying to "use" rather than subvert,  
ignore or avoid media interactions. And, day-to-day

NOW's reflexive appropriation of news conventions seems 221  
to have been a strategy which helped them to create and  
maintain relationships with reporters. As this chapter  
illustrates, NOW and other feminist groups were critical  
producers of information for the women journalists who  
first wrote about and publicized feminist political  
issues.

NOW's media pragmatist strategizing also came with  
some important constraints, however. Media access work  
diverted time, energy and skills that might have been  
used by NOW in other ways, thereby constraining NOW's  
other political activities. But perhaps more  
importantly, the media orientation of NOW from the  
beginning may have constrained its own articulations of  
feminism. NOW leaders, especially in the early years,  
were often more concerned with the organization's  
"public identity" than they were with its internal  
democracy. Early NOW leaders generally produced news  
access at the costs of the strategic avoidance of  
certain topics and frames -- some of which (such as  
questions of patriarchy and sexual identity) were  
essential to the movement's philosophy as a whole. Their  
focus on reporters' perceptions meant that they often  
mis-represented the organization -- for example,  
ignoring and erasing the contributions of lesbian  
members in the early years.

The conventions of news functioned for NOW both as 222 resources and as constraints. Speaking in "media logic" gained the attention of reporters -- and so access to the public sphere -- but it also meant restricting public communication about NOW's identity and political concerns. NOW's decision to encode its concerns in media-friendly ways -- "thinking like journalists" -- may in fact have meant that early NOW leaders thought less like feminists. Later in the organization's history this constraint of media strategizing became quite clear to NOW's leaders. As the new NOW leaders noted in their 1975 manifesto, keeping quiet strategically on some issues in public, means they are often also forgotten in private: "When we fail to articulate some of our goals, we tend to drop them not only from our immediate demands but from our long term vision."

News is a kind of resource for movement groups who want to use it, then, but like signification, or knowledge more generally, it is a resource whose strategic use requires that sources articulate their experiences within its terms. Speaking in news voices may constrain what it is possible to say. The question for social movement organizations (and source organizations more generally) is what those constraints might be at any particular time, and what, if anything, can be done to resist them.

By choosing to interact with news media on its own terms, and to "think like journalists," NOW strategists were able to produce some access, but it is a critical question whether the kind of access NOW was able to produce was in fact useful for the organization's overall goals. For example, did media pragmatism help NOW to mass communicate enough of its feminist concerns over time? Or was there always a significant difference between NOW's own identity and its public identity? Was NOW able to succeed in controlling its legitimacy as a speaker in news or did news "process" NOW in its own way despite the organization's efforts? 223

NOW leaders in the early years seemed to be willing to "pay" for news access by clamping down on internal dissent and by limiting the organization's identity. In later years, new leaders decided that it was more important to communicate a more inclusive vision of feminism and to risk being treated as an illegitimate speaker by media. But the relative "success" of these different degrees of media pragmatism may only be seen in an analysis of the outcomes of these strategic shifts -- that is in news content. In the next two chapters of the study, I look closely at NOW's re-presentation in news over time, and ask whether NOW's media pragmatism overall, and its various manifestations at different times, produced the kind of representations that NOW strategists intended.

1 NOW (1971). Press Handbook, p. 1. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library for Women in History, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass. Hereafter "NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library."

2 Besides Betty Friedan, who had interacted with journalists around her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, other members of the first NOW Board, for example, were administrators, professors, government and union leaders. See chapter six for a discussion of the background of NOW leaders.

3 NOW (1971) Press Handbook. NOW (1972) Communications Kit. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

4 NOW (1971) Press Handbook, p.10. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

5 NOW (1971). Press handbook, p. 5. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

6 NOW (1966 ). Statement of purpose. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

7 NOW (1968) Public Relations Guidelines for NOW Board Members and Chapters, p.1-2 . NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

8 Letter from Karen De Crow to Dian Terry, director of the public information office, February 6, 1975. NOW Collection Schlesinger Library.

9 *New York Times*, February 20, 1973, p. 38.

10 Friedan (1976). *It Changed My life. Organizing the Women's Movement for Equality*. New York: Random House, p. 138

11 Although the feminist movement has been credited with challenging the public/private divide of institutional politics, this was not always deliberate on their part. While many feminists did believe that the "personal is political" and organized around new issues such as child care, it is debatable how many of them had articulated this as a direct challenge to public/private categories of liberal politics. Friedan, for example, while she was able to extend her definition of politics to include child care and some other traditionally "private" issues could not extend into sexual politics or what she considered "bedroom politics."

12 Letter from Dian Terry to Dick Cavett Show, NBC TV, June 1973, Public Information Office papers, NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library

13 See chapter four for a description of the takeover by the majority caucus, a group of leaders more focused on internal democracy who came to national NOW from the city chapters.

14 Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989). *Negotiating Control. A Study of News Sources* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press). The writers borrow these

terms from Goffman who developed them in his analyses of interpersonal communication.

15 Cited in Phelan, Shane. (1989) *Identity Politics. Lesbian Feminism and the Limits of Community*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p. 38.

16 Patricia Ireland in a recent *Advocate* interview for example is forced again to deny that NOW is no longer anti-gay. *The Advocate*, December 17, 1991, p. 43.

17 NOW (1975). Majority Caucus manifesto and "slate" published for the 1975 National NOW Conference in Philadelphia. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

18 NOW (1976, January). Project Proposal for Displaced Homemaker Action Project, presented to the National Board, January 25, 26, 1976. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

19 Cited in North, Sandie. (1970) Reporting the Movement. *Atlantic Monthly*, March, p. 105.

20 Robertson, Nan, (1992). *The Girls in the Balcony. Women, Men and the New York Times*. New York: Random House, p. 15.

21 Cited in Tuchman, Gaye. (1978), *Making News. A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Basic Books, p. 143.

22 Simpson, Peggy. (1979). Covering the Women's Movement. *Nieman Reports*, Summer 1979, p. 21.

23 In the next chapter I conclude that around 70 percent of the stories about NOW in the *New York Times*, 1966-1980, were generated by proactive NOW media strategies rather than journalistic enterprise.

24 Simpson (1979), p. 21.

25 Van Zoonen (1989) conducted a small study of the professional socialization of feminist journalists and reported that they found it extremely difficult to retain their feminist commitment in internship and journalist training programs. This study is suggestive of the kinds of conflicts that exist for politically committed journalists, but it says less about how less explicit aspects of journalists' social identity (e.g. race, class, sexual orientation) structure journalistic choices. Clearly we need much more work in this area of social identity in journalism and other media professions. The women who covered NOW who are quoted here clearly had some affinity for "gendered" news topics, but it is not possible to tell from these brief stories (mostly printed memoirs), how they managed their conflicting identities and tasks day-to-day. A planned follow-up study to this one will interview the women journalists who covered feminism to enrich our understanding of their role in feminist agenda building.

26 Of course these journalists could be mis-reporting their own political affiliations in the "strategic ritual" of objectivity that Tuchman (1978) has described as so central to journalistic ideology. But I am reluctant in this study for ethical reasons to assume that journalists or activists are not reflexive agents just as researchers are, and for empirical reasons too, I think this explanation is too glib. As I indicate above, the relationship between the social identity of journalists -- that is their race, ethnicity and sexual orientation among other factors -- and their news judgments and practices has not been adequately addressed in news studies. Yet such questions are critical, not only in understanding media-movement interactions, but also in terms of changing demographics in media industries. It has largely been assumed, but not demonstrated, that changing media demographics will change media content. Such assumptions are problematic until we understand how social identity and professional socialization interact.

27 In the first quarter of 1974, for example, the PI office "placed" information about NOW, or facilitated a journalist's use of a NOW leader as a source, in two network news stories (NBC and CBS), five stories in the *Wall Street Journal*, six stories in the *Christian Science Monitor*, three stories distributed by AP, two stories in the *New York Times*, two stories in *Business Week*, two stories in *Time*, two stories in *Parade* magazine, and one story each in the *National Observer*, the *New York Daily News*, UPI, the *Jersey Journal*, Reuters, the *New York Sunday News*, the *Washington Star* syndicate, the *Chicago Daily News*, the *Los Angeles Times* syndicate, *New Human Resources Newsletter*, *Broadcast Magazine*, *US News and World Report*, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. NOW (1974, July.) Quarterly Report to the Board of the Public Information Office, July 1974. PIO papers, 1973-1975. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

28 No more than a rudimentary survey of these stories ever seems to have been performed though. They were simply tagged for location and listed, sometimes with general statements of "good coverage" attached. Even later, when NOW won grant money to monitor coverage of the ERA and the gender there is no indication that they ever analyzed it systematically.

29 NOW (n.d.) NOW National News Service Outline. PIO Papers, 1973-1975, NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

30 NOW (n.d.) Quarterly Report to the Board of the Public Information Office, PIO Papers, 1973-1975, NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

31 The Public Information Office in New York was one of the casualties of NOW's bitter internal wars of 1974-1975 and in the middle of 1975 the whole staff resigned. During its short existence it was staffed by one full time public relations professional, Dian Terry, who was supervised by the V-P for public relations and supported by some part time administrative staff and student interns. In the three years of its existence its budget grew from around \$20,000 to \$40,000. In 1975 the public information function reverted to the national office in DC. It is only during this period in fact that it is possible to even separate NOW's media and other communication work because they were all budgeted and organized together.

32 NOWLDEF (1981). Media Project Report to the Muskiwinni Foundation, p. 2. NOW Collection, Ellis Library, University of Columbia-Missouri, Missouri, Columbia. Hereafter, "NOW Collection, Ellis Library."

33 Kathy Bonk, NOW's FCC task force chair and media strategist for many years during the 1970s and early 80s, has documented this media campaign in Bonk, Kathy. 1988. "The Selling of the "Gender Gap": The Role of Organized Feminism," pp. 82-101, in Carol Mueller, (Ed.) *The Politics of the Gender Gap*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, but it is also documented in the Ellis Library papers.

34 In April, the NOW office reprinted the article ["Ronald Reagan has a Woman Problem," by Evans Witt in the National Journal] and shared it with dozens of reporters. By May, a new series of headlines began to appear: The Miami Herald: "Fewer Women Back Reagan": "Feminists Foresee Bloc Voting." The Washington Wire of the Wall Street Journal: "Reagan's Ratings Among Women Run Ten Points Lower Than Among Men"; "Attempts to Name More Women to High Posts Continue to Falter." The Atlanta Constitution: "Poll: Most Republicans Favor ERA, Reagan Receives Lower Ratings Among Women." The Christian Science Monitor: "Reagan's Standing With Women Still Shaky." Bonk (1988), p. 88

35 Bonk (1988), p. 99-100.

36 NOW (1984) Women's Media Project Proposal for funding. NOW Collection, Ellis Library.

37 NOWLDEF (1983), The NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund Media Project Report to the Muskiwinni Foundation, p.6. These meetings were funded by grants from foundation such as Muskiwinni, Markle, and Levi-Strauss, as well as a significant contribution by the United Church of Christ's Office of Communication, . NOW leaders met with managers from the major TV stations and newspapers in New York, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, Detroit, Miami, and Pittsburgh. They also increased their contact with producers and writers

of television fiction. In 1980-1981, for example, they were involved in consultation over scripts for *Taxi* (a sexual harassment episode), *Alice* (an episode on equal pay), and *The White Shadow* (on girls sports)

38 *off our backs* (1970), Statement of Purpose.

Reprinted in Maurine Beasley and Sheila Gibbons, (Eds.).

(1993) *A Documentary History of Women and Journalism*.

Washington DC: American University Press and Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press.

39 Joreen [Jo Freeman]. (1973). The Tyranny of Structurelessness, pp. 285-300, in Anne Koedt et al, *Radical Feminism*. New York: Quadrangle Books.

40 North, Sandie. (1970) Reporting the Movement. *Atlantic Monthly*, March, p. 105

41 Freeman (1975) *The Politics of Women's Liberation*. New York: Longman, p. 113.

42 North (1970), p. 105

43 Cited in North (1970). p. 106.

44 Friedan (1976), p. 139.

**News Outcomes 1:****Patterns in Access, Voice and Agenda Control, 1966-1980**

Over time NOW remained committed to a sophisticated and reflexive pragmatism in its interactions with news media. NOW leaders and strategists saw news as a resource and, especially in the early years, they were willing to impose some constraints on the organization's public communication in order to be taken seriously by journalists. Compared to the more radical "younger" groups, NOW's strategies were quite clearly media-friendly, and media conventions and practices were taken into account in most NOW communications. NOW leaders tried to use the "rules" of news -- that is the routine practices and discursive conventions -- in order to access news.

This reflexive media pragmatism had two main aims -- to use news media to build an agenda for women's issues, and to create a legitimate public identity for NOW itself. But how effective was NOW in accessing and using news? Was NOW able to produce routine news access? Did NOW's incorporation of news values into its own communications help to transfer its issue agenda to news? Did NOW leaders' attempts to control the organization's identity in interaction with journalists

result in a legitimate public identity? Overall, did NOW 230  
"succeed" in controlling its interaction with news media  
using media pragmatist strategies, or was the  
organization and its issues "processed" by news?

In the next two chapters I assess NOW's media  
strategies through an analysis of the outcome of these  
strategies in news content.<sup>1</sup> Chapter seven assesses the  
outcomes of NOW strategies in terms of agenda-building  
success -- it asks whether NOW was able to access news  
and transfer to news its agenda of women's issues. Using  
quantitative content analysis techniques and rank order  
correlations, it tracks NOW's access, voice, placement,  
and agenda control in the *Times*, asking whether, at  
these various levels of access, NOW "succeeded" (or not)  
in its interactions with news.

Chapter eight assesses NOW's "success" in terms of  
identity and legitimacy control. It draws on frame  
analysis techniques to track the *Times* representation of  
NOW and compares that representation to shifts in NOW's  
overall identity and media strategies. Both chapters  
draw on an original content analysis of 377 stories  
about NOW in the *New York Times* from 1966-1980.

Overall, I argue that NOW was relatively successful  
in accessing news, and in gaining some "voice" in the  
public sphere, but that at the level of both agenda and  
identity control, NOW was subject to some systematic  
processing by news media which limited this success.

Even as NOW reflexively appropriated news conventions and practices to gain access to news, the organization's discourse and identity were translated by the *Times* through a public/private framework in which issues that were framed in more traditionally "political" or legal terms (such as sex discrimination in employment) were placed in serious news categories, but "new" issues or issues that were framed in less conventional ways (such as child care or "sexism" frames) tended to be placed in lifestyle or "women's pages."

I argue that this "processing" of NOW by the *Times* is the outcome both of NOW leaders' own strategies (in which they took on some news values in their own communications and tried to seem legitimate by framing new issues in terms of old ones), but also of some deep discursive patterns in news discourse-- namely a public-private divide -- which NOW encountered (and incorporated) unintentionally. News shares this public-private divide with liberal discourses more generally, but it is a discursive categorization that may be inimical to feminisms. As feminist theorists have noted in recent years, the public-private categories of liberal politics , in which some aspects of life are designated "public" (and open to political debate and collective amelioration) and others are marked "private" or domestic (and no concern of the state's), are also gendered. It is the traditional elements of women's

lives, experiences and problems (for example, child care, sexual harassment and so on) that are usually consigned to the "private" and less legitimate areas of the liberal divide, and traditionally "male" experiences (such as work, economics, war and so on) that are seen as public issues (cf. Butler and Scott, 1992; Fraser, 1989; 1992; McLaughlin, 1993). Given that one of the key struggles of feminist politics overall has been to "make public" more of women's experiences (and so open them up to debate and political action), this conventional public-private processing of NOW's discourse by news is especially problematic, and perhaps marks some of the limits of both news and liberal discourses for carrying feminist politics.

These discursive constraints of news are not dealt with particularly well in NOW's media pragmatism, because unlike the "rules" of news that are accessible to NOW at the level of practice (e.g. the "beat" system and the event-orientation of news), these discursive patterns are much less visible day to day. It is these constraints, though, that may constitute the unintended consequences of engaging with news media for NOW.

#### **ASSESSING SOURCE "SUCCESS" IN NEWS AGENDA-BUILDING: ACCESS, VOICE, PLACEMENT AND CONTROL**

The issue of "success" in source-news interactions, as in any kind of communicative interaction, is highly

problematic. Indeed some observers have suggested that we should abandon the idea of success altogether as being too "instrumental" a concept in dialogical/constructivist approaches (Van Zoonen, 1992). However, I think it is important to recognize that dialogs are not only communicative (i.e. interactive, non linear and sometimes oriented towards understanding) but also often (and certainly in media-movement interactions) highly strategic.<sup>2</sup> As such, we still need ways to assess the relative outcomes of different kinds of interactive strategies, even when recognizing that these will be imperfect measures.

In this study I use a four-part framework for assessing NOW's success that assesses the organization's access patterns at four different levels: access, voice, placement, and control. Access, simply refers to NOW's appearance in the news columns, and is the minimal requirement for voice in the public sphere and "success" in interaction with news media. Voice refers to whether NOW is allowed to speak and in what circumstances, since voice is essential to the ability to define events and issues in ways that would produce influence.<sup>3</sup> Placement refers to where in the paper NOW stories were placed. Placement in news has long been seen to indicate relative importance -- front page issues are more important than other kinds, so placement patterns can be read as a measure of relative legitimacy assigned

different kinds of stories by editors. *Control*, refers to NOW's ability to retain control of its own agenda.<sup>4</sup> Issue control is assessed through a comparison of NOW's "agendas" to the *Times* representation of that agenda over time. This comparison indicates whether news coverage of NOW presented to the public the same set of issues that NOW was concerned with internally, and whether these issues were presented in the same "order" or ranking, where such ranking is read to indicate relative importance.<sup>5</sup>

These dimensions of success -- access, voice, placement and control -- are analytically separable, and can, to some extent be understood, hierarchically.<sup>6</sup> We can say for example that access is basic to all other levels, that voice is an additional level of successful interaction, and that legitimate representation or control of one's identity makes a voice more credible and more likely to be listened to. Control, over one's identity and one's agenda, is in this framework the ultimate "success" of strategic interaction. In reality of course, any one story might have overlapping and contradictory elements of all of these, and my aim is not to put these forward as definitive a-priori categories of success, but simply to use them to organize a discussion of the constraints and possibilities of NOW's access to news media.

### 1.1 Simple access

Simple access is the primary level of "success" for news sources. No other kinds of voice or control are possible without that access. And indeed basic access to the news columns was one of NOW's key communicative aims. NOW leaders wanted to become a "voice" for women's interests in the public debate over policy and culture but they could only do so by first getting the attention of reporters.

NOW was generally able to gain news access. As Figure 7.1 illustrates, NOW's access patterns -- simply measured in the number of stories in which NOW was mentioned or quoted in the *New York Times* -- show that the organization maintained some access to news at all times and in the first 10 years or so of NOW's existence that visibility increased dramatically over time.

After 1975 coverage (in number of stories) decreased and seems to have leveled off. This pattern indicates that NOW's representation in news may have reached a ceiling after the first ten years. During the same period NOW's resources in terms of membership and income also increased generally over time, showing less of a drop-off, however, than NOW's media visibility. Figure 7.2 illustrates how NOW's general access pattern paralleled its resource pattern in the first ten years or so, but then access drops off while income continues

to increase and membership drops off slightly. (All of these measurements are log values so that measurements on different scales can be compared).

236

Figure 7.1  
Coverage of NOW in New York Times, 1966-1980

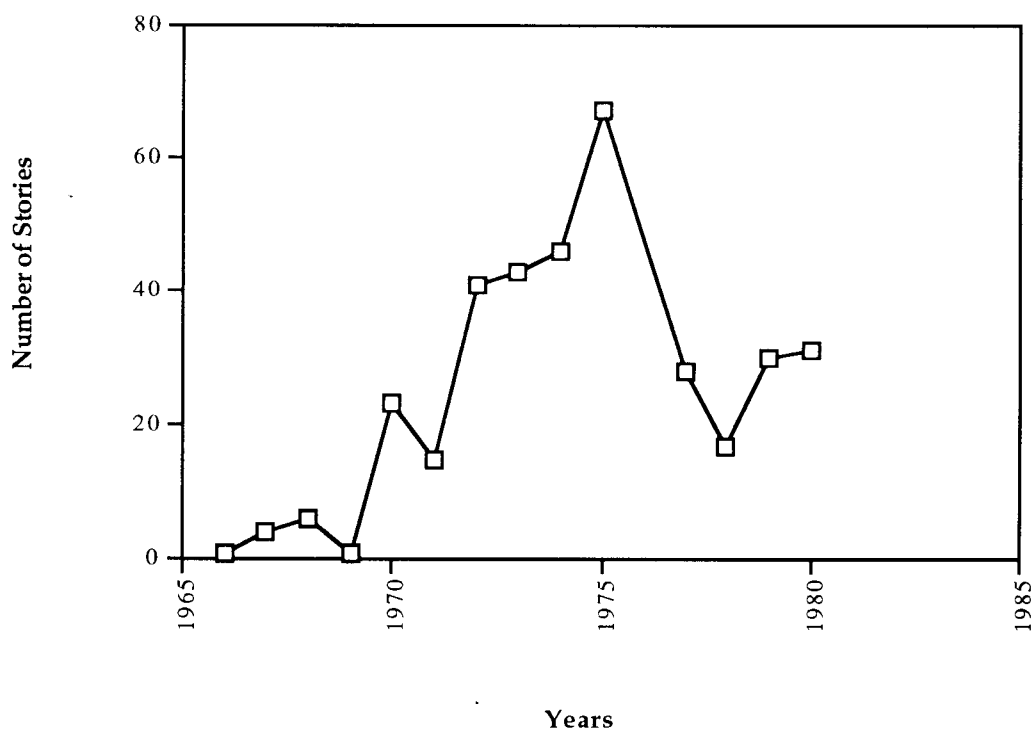
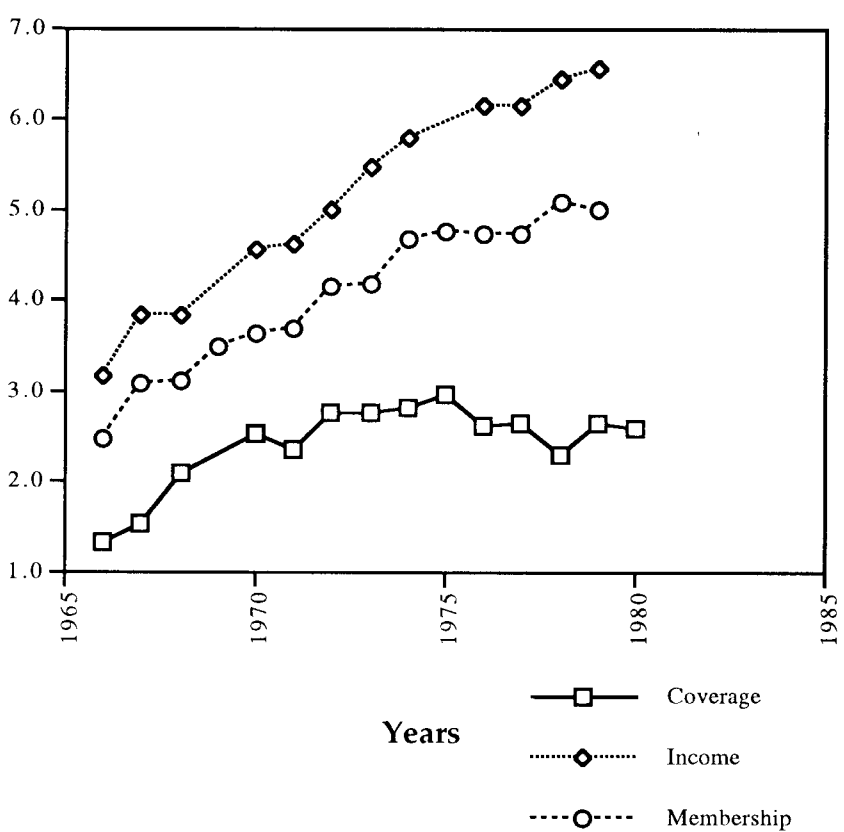


Figure 7.2  
NOW Coverage, Membership and Income Over Time, 1966-1980

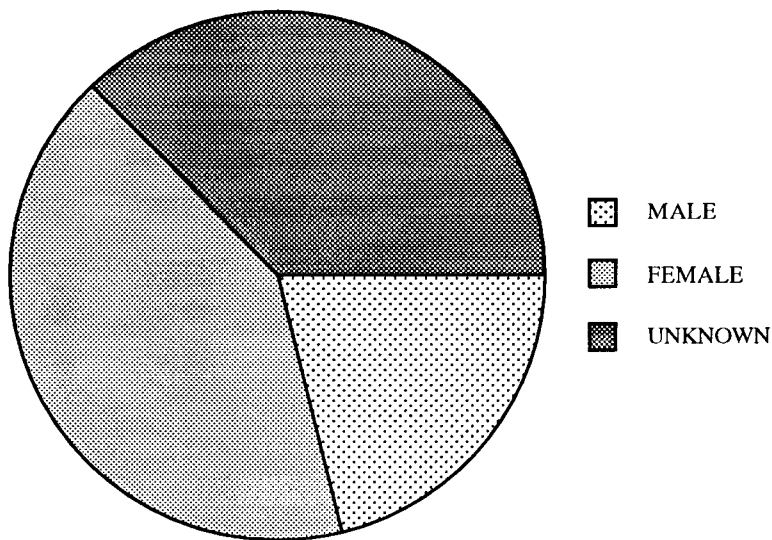


Such trends have to be interpreted with caution, of course, because it may be that this period of apparent leveling is merely a dip in a long term trend upwards.<sup>7</sup> But what is very clear is that NOW was able to access news at least minimally at all times and that access was higher overall in 1980 than it had been in 1966. The organization seems to have "succeeded," then, at this basic level of access.

One of NOW's key strategies in news interaction was their building of a network of sympathetic women reporters. Though NOW leaders manifested much less "essentialism" in their political ideology than the younger women's groups, they still thought that women reporters were more likely to respond to feminist information.<sup>8</sup>

And in fact most of NOW's coverage was produced by women writers. Whether as a result of NOW's deliberate targeting of women reporters, or because of their assignment by editors to cover women's politics because they were women, most of the coverage of NOW that could be identified by the writer's gender, was produced by women reporters.

As Figure 7.1 illustrates, of the stories that could be identified by gender, twice as many were written by women (42%) as by men (21%). If those stories that were unidentifiable -- because they carried no byline -- had similar proportions, then more than two thirds of the *Times* stories about NOW were written by women journalists.

**NOW STORIES BY REPORTER'S GENDER****1.3 Access and Source Strategies**

Not only did NOW's coverage increase over time (and generally in proportion to their resource base at least in the first 10 years) but an analysis of the origins of news stories about NOW, indicates that the majority of stories about NOW can in fact be seen to have been initiated by NOW itself.

Table 7.1 indicates a general breakdown of stories about NOW in the *Times* over the period 1966-1982 in terms of their origins -- that is the events or activities produced by NOW or a journalist which produced the news story. Again, because this content analysis can only code manifest events or strategies -- i.e. those that are mentioned or indicated by the

article -- instances in which NOW's strategic communication influenced stories in less visible ways are not accounted for.

For this analysis each of the 377 *New York Times* stories was coded to determine what event, strategy or activity by either NOW or a journalist had occurred to produce the story. For example, the analysis asked, was the story the result of a public demonstration, protest or publicity gesture, or the result of journalist enterprise, such as an interview?<sup>9</sup> Was it provoked by NOW filing a law suit or was it coverage of a NOW conference? The overall aim of such an analysis was to determine, if possible, how much of the news about NOW was produced through NOW's own resource and skill mobilization. In contrast how much was generated from journalist "enterprise," as well as to determine, if possible, which of NOW's communicative strategies were most likely to gain news coverage.<sup>10</sup>

As indicated in Table 7.1, most of the stories about NOW in the Times can be seen to be the result of NOW's own communication and political activities. Overall, NOW was responsible for initiating around 77 percent of its own coverage (see cumulative percentages in Table 7.1).

One of the largest shares of this was news stories produced from NOW's public activities, such as demonstrations, protests and marches (19.9 %). NOW's

overt news subsidy attempts -- where the organization held a press conference, announced the publication of a study, or actually wrote the piece themselves -- generated the second greatest number of stories (17.8%). Coverage of NOW's routine meetings such as annual conferences generated the next important category of source initiated stories (15.9%). Interactions with the courts (13.5%), commissions or legislatures (9.5 %) together accounted for around 20 percent more.

Journalist enterprise stories, such as those based in interviews or special features on the movement, accounted for 18 percent of stories. This group of journalist-generated stories may also, of course, have been generated behind the scenes by NOW information efforts, or these stories may have been instigated as responses to NOW's public activities -- all this analysis can conclude is that they were stories in which NOW events or press conferences did not seem to be the critical generators -- and which (by default) may have been generated by journalists or editors themselves. As an emergent movement with thousands of members (15,000 by 1973) NOW could be justified by sympathetic reporters to their editors as a genuine story.

We should be wary about seeing these categories as too distinct, however. The making of social change and the making of news were deeply intertwined for NOW. Though its public events such as marches were most

clearly aimed at media, all of NOW's political actions included media strategies. NOW strategists filed legal cases to publicize particular issues as well as to seek redress for a individual's injustice. They sent out notices, reminders and background materials for annual conferences. They organized conference sessions in ways that would attract journalists to the most central issues. They sent out copies of, and background information about, their legislative testimony. Though it is useful to see where news media paid most of its attention to NOW, (in this case when they took to the streets), then, any clear separation between media/non-media strategies is impossible to make.

**Table 7.1**  
**Origins of NOW Stories in The New York Times, 1966-1980**

Origins of Stories About NOW	Number of Stories	% Total Stories	Cumulative % Total Stories
NOW Public Events <sup>11</sup>	75	19.9	19.9
NOW News Subsidy <sup>12</sup>	67	17.8	37.7
NOW Meeting/Routine Event	60	15.9	53.6
Court Related	51	13.5	67.1
Legislature or Commission	36	9.5	76.6
Other/unknown	20	5.3	81.9
Journalist Enterprise <sup>13</sup>	68	18.0	100.0
Totals	377	100.0	100.0

What is clear here is that most of the coverage of NOW in the *Times* came as a result of NOW's own

strategic actions. Indeed, other than the stories produced through "journalist enterprise" (such as interviews and special features that are not overtly related to specific NOW activities) which account for only around 18 percent of stories about NOW, the bulk of *Times* stories can be said to be "NOW-generated" media coverage. In this framework NOW was responsible for initiating around 77 percent of its own coverage.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of access, then, NOW's appearance in the news seems to have been generated largely by the organization's own activities, and especially through their strategic interaction with women reporters.

## **II. VOICE PATTERNS**

### **2.1. Voice Over Time**

A second fundamental element of legitimate or credible representation is that a source be allowed to *speak*. Voice allows sources at least to attempt to control their own representation in media, and to set the agenda by framing issues and events in ways that they consider to be important. As Ericson et al. (1989) note, there is vast difference in being able to speak in news, and being spoken about. One implies agency and subjectivity, the other is associated with being objectified and marginalized.

Voice is no guarantee of control. Journalists can, and do, select freely from source statements, sometimes

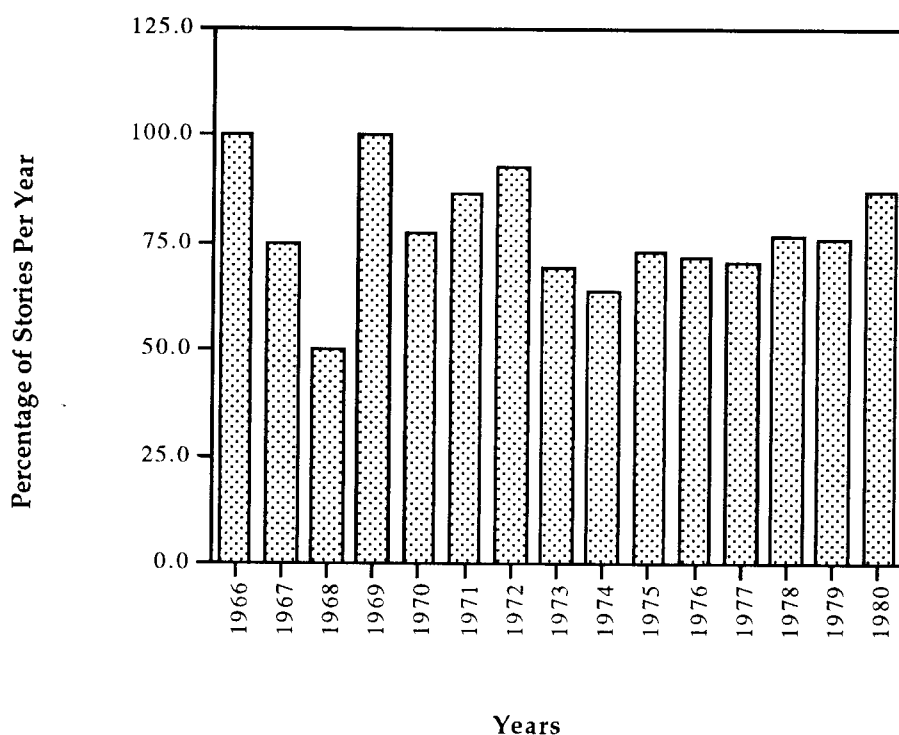
creating from them meanings not even considered by sources. But in general, because news is itself a discourse made up from other discourses, what a news story can say is constrained in important ways by what sources says.

Voice -- or being quoted as serious speakers for American women was fundamentally important to NOW. The organization invested significant resources and skills in becoming "experts" in various policy issues, and it was one of NOW strategists aims to get reporters to see NOW as the expert feminist organization and to become the feminist source in elite reporters' phone lists.<sup>15</sup> Overall NOW succeeded in becoming a voice in news. Over the period observed here NOW was much more likely than not to be quoted in stories. In the *Times* coverage of NOW, the organization was quoted in 75.3 percent of the total stories in which it appeared. It was talked about -- that is mentioned but not quoted -- in 24.7 percent of stories (N=377). As Figure 7.4 indicates, proportionally year-by-year NOW was always more likely to be quoted than not, with most years being around 70 percent success rate at being quoted. In general, the longer the news story, the more likely NOW was to be quoted.<sup>16</sup>

These figures represent only whether or not NOW was quoted in a story -- not how many times, or in what contexts (i.e. whether the organization was "counter-

quoted for example). As such they are not prima facie 245  
evidence for NOW's control or "success" in a news story,  
but certainly without voice such control is highly  
unlikely.

**Figure 7.4**  
**NOW Voice Over Time**  
**Percentage of Total Stories in which NOW was Quoted**



## **2.2 Voice and Access Strategies**

NOW was more likely to be quoted than not when covered, but there were patterns in its voice. As Table 7.2 indicates the organization was proportionally more likely to be given voice in public events, news conferences and coverage of NOW meetings than in the contexts of its interactions with the courts or

legislatures. In the context of its interactions with the courts, especially, NOW was about equally likely to be spoken about as quoted (51% of Court related stories show NOW being talked about.)

**Table 7.2**  
**NOW Voice by Story Origin in *The Times*, 1966-1980**

	NOW Public Event	NOW Info- Sub	NOW Meet- ing	Journ. Enter- prise	Courts	Legis- lature
NOW Talked About	17.3	20.9	13.3	25.0	51.0	22.2
NOW Quoted	82.7	79.1	86.7	75.0	49.0	77.8
N	75	67	60	68	51	36
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Chi Sq.: 26.308      DF :5      p=.00008      N=357<sup>17</sup>

**2.3. Voice and Gender**

NOW leaders' tendency to interact with women rather than men reporters, and their relative success at gaining access through that route, was no more likely, however, to increase the organization's "voice" in the news. As Table 7. 3 illustrates, there was no real difference in NOW's likelihood to be quoted (as opposed to talked about) whether the reporter was female or male.

**Table 7.3**  
**NOW Voice by Reporter's Gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Now Quoted</b>	<b>NOW   Talked About</b>
Female	32.5	37.8
Male	67.5	62.2
Totals %	100	100
(N)	(45)	(191)

(N= 236 because stories that could not be identified by gender were excluded.)

### **III. PLACEMENT**

Besides access and voice, the placement of a news story also carries messages about its general importance as a public, political topic. Within journalistic practice, importance is assigned to news events and issues on a sliding scale of importance; those accounts of events that are deemed most important are put "up front" and are framed in ways that make it clear to the reader/viewer that these have higher status in the opinion of news workers. Getting one's story on the front page, for example, is better than the second page, being in the national news sections is generally deemed to better than in the cultural sections, and being in the metropolitan section more important than the regional sections, and so on. This tendency to value what is most visible, and to make most visible that which is most valued, is well understood by both journalists and readers/viewers, and indeed to be transferable from news texts to readers in a process of salience transfer, or agenda-setting.

It seems reasonable, then, that one aspect of source "success" that we might note would be the level of visibility or prominence that sources' achieve. We may say, for example, that sources who consistently make it into the front pages are successful sources. NOW was like other sources in this respect, "making the papers," and especially "making the front page" were important markers of its own day- to-day influence. In general NOW leaders sought to make it into the "serious" news sections. Their media strategies (as described in chapter six) were focused on legitimating women's issues, by persuading reporters, editors and policy makers that women's issues (such as child care, sex discrimination, and violence, for example ) were in fact legitimate political concerns.

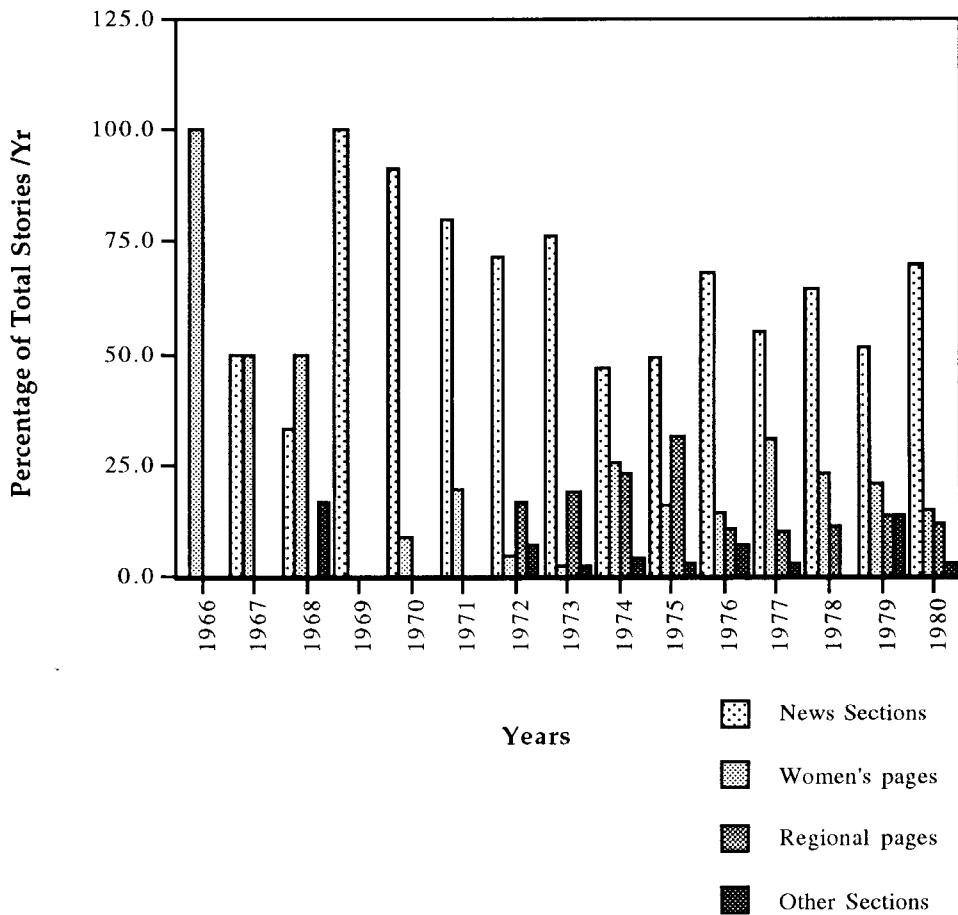
They were especially concerned that women's issues not be confined to the "ghetto" of women's pages, and they saw coverage in the news sections as "promotion:"

the press has been increasingly cooperative and responsive to covering NOW activities, and we seem to be moving out of the "women's page ghetto" and more into the regular news and feature sections of the news media.<sup>18</sup>

For the most part NOW achieved its news placement goals. Overall, in the 15 years of coverage analyzed in this study, NOW appeared in the news sections (that is in the front sections of the paper, including op-ed, and sections not designated for other purposes (e.g. business, TV or magazine)) 63 percent of the time, in the women's pages 16 percent of the time, in the regional sections 17 percent of the time and in other sections 4 percent of the time.

Patterns in that placement year-by-year indicate that NOW became more successful after the first few years in getting its stories into the news sections. As Figure 7.5 illustrates, in the first few years (1966-1968) most of NOW's stories were placed in the women's pages. By 1969, however, that trend had reversed and most of NOW's stories from 1969-1980 were placed in the news sections. For the 15 year period of this study, NOW stories remained predominantly in the news pages. The year-by-year percentages also indicate that regional pages became an outlet for NOW stories after 1972. "Regional" here means regional in terms of the neighborhoods around New York (such as the Long Island neighborhood section for example.) In the 1970s these sections were quite often accessed by local suburban NOW chapters -- perhaps following the guidelines from the "media kits."<sup>19</sup>

### NOW Stories by Newspaper Section Over Time



### 3.2 Placement and Gender:

#### NOW Stories and Women Journalists

NOW's strategic focus on the "front" of the paper and its focus on women reporters may have worked out to be contradictory strategies. Despite the fact that more than twice as many stories about NOW were written over time by women reporters than by men, male reporters stories were more likely than women's to be placed on

the front page and in the news sections more generally (Table 7.4 ). 251

NOW's focus on women reporter may have been successful at getting the organization into the newspaper overall, but because of gendered staffing practices -- i.e. women being assigned "feminine" topics and beats -- this strategy worked against other kinds of legitimacy, such as making the front pages. Ironically, a more successful strategy may have been to cultivate some male reporters who already had legitimate "news" beats.

**Table 7.4**  
**News Section (Prominence) by Gender of Reporter**

Newspaper Section	Male Reporter %	Female Reporter %
Front page	13.3	8.1
News/Editorial	62.7	49.3
Women's Page	8.0	30.4
Regional	16.0	12.2
Totals	100	100

Chi Sq.: 14.495      DF: 3      p=.002      N=223<sup>20</sup>

**3.3 Placement and Access Strategy**

NOW's access to the news pages rather than the women's page was also affected by the access strategy and context in which the story was generated. As Table 7.5 illustrates most of the news in both the front/news and women's pages came from public events such as protests. However, beyond this association, it is also

clear that interaction with already legitimated institutions such as the legislature or courts (themselves more likely to be beats staffed by men) was more likely to be defined as "news" material than "women's" material. A much higher percentage of news about NOW in the front pages than in the women's pages came from these interactions with the courts and legislatures. Note for example, that none of the stories generated by legislative activities ended up on the women's page, and only 3 percent of court related stories did.

Table 7.5  
NOW Strategy/Story Origin by Story Placement

Story Origin/ NOW Strategy	% Front Page	% News Section	% Women's Page	% Regional
Public Event	27.3	20.7	29.1	16.7
NOW Info Sub	13.6	23.2	10.9	10.0
NOW Routine	9.1	19.7	16.4	11.7
Journalist Enterprise	18.2	11.8	40.0	21.7
Court	18.2	15.3	3.6	20.0
Legislature	13.6	9.4	0.0	20.1
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

N=340<sup>21</sup>      chi square: 48.83      DF: 15      p =.00002

On the other hand, 40 percent of the women's page 253 was made up of journalist enterprise stories; that is interviews and profiles about feminism and NOW which almost never made it into the front of the paper. The women's pages had more than 40 percent of their coverage of NOW in this form, whereas the front pages had 18 percent and the news sections around 11 percent journalist enterprise stories.

When NOW makes the front page, then, it is often when they interact with one of the major institutions, coverage of which also constitute the major "beats" of elite journalism.<sup>22</sup> This outcome is again problematic regarding NOW's interaction with predominantly women reporters. If these access patterns are accurate, then NOW is more likely to gain legitimate (upfront) news access when it interacts with the major "beats." However these beats are likely to be staffed by men.

Access to the news sections and front pages of the *Times* is complexly overdetermined. Certainly it is conditioned by more factors than can be accounted for here. But it does seem clear from these patterns in NOW's placement, that a role can be carved out in this overall process for the interaction of gendered staffing patterns and gendered sourcing patterns. NOW leaders' strategy of interacting with women reporters, gains access, but because assignments themselves are also

gendered, these women do not have the most legitimate access themselves.

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### **3.4 Placement and Topic:**

#### **Public-Private News Spheres?**

A further layer of complexity is added to this interaction between gendered sources and gendered beats, when the aspect of gendered topics is also considered. Not only were NOW stories placed systematically by the *Times* in terms of the reporter's gender and strategy, but NOW news seems also to have been processed differently based on its topics.

As Table 7.6 illustrates, an overall pattern is detectable in which the *Times* placed those stories associated with more traditional political areas (such as electoral politics or economics) or those issues framed in terms of individual rights (e.g. sex discrimination) in the front section of the paper, and issues and frames that are less traditionally seen as political such as child care, discussions of "sexism" on the women's pages. More than 42% of NOW's front page stories are about sex discrimination. Additionally, 16% of front page stories are about equal rights, making more than half of NOW's front page stories from this category of topics that are framed in traditional "liberal" ways as matters of individual "rights" (as opposed to systemic and structural patriarchy for

example). On the other hand, most of the NOW stories placed on the women's page are about NOW as a women's organization or about feminism more generally (42%), or about sexism (18%) or family and child care issues (13%).

These patterns are by no means conclusive. But there is some evidence here to suggest that the *Times* placed NOW stories according to what feminists and NSM theorists have called a pervasive "public-private" divide that underlies liberal discourse more generally.

The public-private categorization is one in which some issues are seen as "public" (and important) and others are assigned to the category of "private" (less important). These categories have been critiqued as linked to, and derived from, the differential historical experiences and practices of men and women( cf. Fraser, 1992 ; Butler and Scott, 1992). Feminist theorists have noted that women's traditional experiences (of child care and domestic responsibilities) and more recently feminist concerns (such as sexual harassment, domestic violence and so on) are routinely consigned in liberal politics to the "private" (i.e. less important, not of public concern) half of this dichotomy.

**Table 7.6**  
**Topic of Stories on the Front Page, Women's Page and News Pages**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>% Front Page</b>	<b>% Women's Page</b>	<b>% News/ Ed</b>
NOW /Feminism	10.5	41.8	19.8
Sex Discrimination	42.0	5.5	24.4
Equal Rights	15.8	12.7	15.7
Elect. Politics	21.1	3.6	12.2
Sexism		18.1	15.3
Abortion/Contracept		5.5	5.1
Family/Child Care	5.3	12.7	2.5
Rape/Violence			4.1
Homosexuality	5.3		1.0
Totals %	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	19	55	197

The editorial process manifested here by the *Times*, in which some topics are consigned to the "front" and some to the "back" of the paper, seems to mirror this discursive breakdown quite closely, suggesting that news media may play a key role in reproducing the public-private border in public communication processes. As such news must be seen as a critical site for the negotiation and struggle over making more issues "public" that is at the heart of NSM challenges.

This public/private (front/back) patterning of news can be seen more clearly in Table 7.7. Table 7.7 indicates the relationship between placement and topic if we collapse the range of issues considered in table 7.6 into "public" and "private" categories. In this table stories about sex discrimination, equal rights, electoral, and rape stories are considered "public" and

stories about abortion, sexuality, sexism in images and 257  
relationships, and family/child care and to be  
"private." 23

As Table 7.7 indicates, the breakdown between  
"public" and "private" (as defined here) is clear across  
news and women's pages. The women's page is the only  
place in the paper which is predominantly made up of  
"private" issues (61 % of women's page stories are from  
the "private" category, as opposed to 11% of front page  
stories, or 35% in news sections more generally.)

**Table 7.7**  
**"Public" vs. "Private" Topics by News Section**

Topic Category	Front Page	News/Ed	Women's Page
public/ trad. political issues*	88.9	64.8	39.4
private/ new women's issues**	11.1	35.2	60.6
Totals (N)	100.0	100.0	100.0

N=254<sup>24</sup>    Chi Sq.: 13.25    DF :3    p =.004

\* The public category includes the following  
issues: sex discrimination, equality and the  
ERA, rape/violence, and electoral politics.  
\*\*The private category includes the following  
issues: abortion/contraception, sexuality,  
sexism in images and relationships,  
family/child care.

Given that one of the central goals of NOW (and of 258 the NSMs more generally) is to "make public" formerly private issues, this overall pattern in the *Times* -- in which more conventional (or conventionally framed) topics are treated more seriously as "public" and as news, while newer (gendered) topics such as child care are treated as less serious "women's" issues -- indicates that that goal is far from achieved, at least in news terms. In fact news seems to be simply reproducing the public-private boundaries of liberal politics in its placement of NOW news.

However, some important caveats are in order here. This aggregate pattern indicates only an static "snapshot" or aggregate analysis of what may be an ongoing struggle over placement. It would take systematic, close analysis of issue placement by news over time, in the context of issue framing by sources over time, to really track whether news media are indeed processing feminisms rigidly or whether there has in fact been movement from "private" (women's pages) to "public" (news sections) over time. In this study the numbers of stories overall (N=377 over 15 years and multiple topics) is too small to track any patterns accurately over time in a subset of issues, but a future study might take these suggestive patterns as a starting point and assess the communicative "success" of feminist

groups in "making public" formerly private issues, by tracking news placement of these issue over time.

The patterns that can be seen here, though, do indicate some support for Van Zoonen's (1992, p. 470) suggestion, that news is one of the key places where such struggles over "old" and "new" politics will play out, and that news is likely, in the short term at least (Van Zoonen studied Dutch news media's construction of feminism from 1968 to 1973) to tend to reproduce exactly those categories of public-private that feminism challenges:

The press has a preference for social, economic and legal issues. These themes are part of the "old" political paradigm of the welfare state, in which politics is thought to be about matters of material distribution... It is a new thing for women to claim their share of material resources, but that does not undermine the definition of politics per se. This only happens when the women's movement begins to expand the notion of politics into the area of daily and private lives. The press can only understand body politics, gender relations, sexual violence, etc. as part of a social psychological domain, not as politics.

The final measure of "success" for NOW in this chapter (issues of legitimacy and identity are dealt with in the next chapter) revolves around the organization's ability to successfully "transfer" its set of issues -- its political agenda -- to news media.

In this part of the analysis I draw on the methods of agenda-setting research to compare NOW's agenda at key points (1968 and 1975) with the *Times*' representation of that agenda in the year or two following. I argue that NOW's "success" at the level of agenda control can be indicated by the closeness of the relationship between these two NOW agendas: if the *Times* representation of NOW in terms of its range and ranking of issues resembles NOW's own agenda in the period before the *Times* representation, we can say that NOW was able to transfer its agenda to a lesser or greater degree.

This use of agenda comparisons (and rank order correlations) is somewhat unconventional. Traditional agenda-setting research has usually compared and correlated audience and media "agendas," but more recently the methodology has also begun to be used to track "agenda-building" processes at the institutional level -- to investigate how news agendas themselves are set. Semetko et al. (1991), for example, use agenda-setting's rank order correlation techniques to assess the influence of presidential candidates on news

agendas. This study follows that use of agenda-setting 261  
logic and methods and uses agenda comparisons to assess  
the influence of NOW as a source organization, on the  
*Times* representation of its own agenda.

This shift in levels of analysis for agenda-setting  
logics and techniques brings with it some limitations.  
For example, standardizing source and news discourses  
for comparisons is more difficult than standardizing  
audience and news discourses (audience agendas are  
usually constructed through surveys that use the same  
terms and categories of news, whereas source discourses  
are already constituted). And, because source-news  
relations take place (in this case especially) over  
longer periods, and less frequently, than news-audience  
interactions, the time lags are longer than usual in  
this analysis. However, this method may still allow us  
to indicate a level of "success" -- i.e. agenda control  
-- beyond those already assessed. (See Chapter  
Three/Methods for more discussion of these measurements  
and limitations).

There are two key questions addressed here in  
assessing NOW's agenda control. The first question  
concerns NOW's ability to have its range of issues  
represented. This is a question of whether NOW's overall  
public agenda appeared in the news or whether that  
agenda was selected from or significantly transformed in  
interaction by the *Times*. The second question involves

NOW's ability to transfer to news its sense of priorities -- that is the order or ranking of its issues. (It is this second measure has often been described as an "agenda-setting" or agenda building process (Weaver et al., 1981; Semetko et al., 1991). ) In this section I assess NOW's relative agenda control in terms of transferring its range of issues first, and then its ability to transfer its issue rankings.

#### **4.1 Agenda Selection:**

##### **Representing NOW's Range of Issues**

The first question in assessing NOW's relative agenda control, centers around its ability to transfer the entire range of its agenda to news. This means assessing whether the *Times* represented NOW's whole agenda or whether it selected in systematic ways from that agenda. It also means, however, noting that not all of NOW's issues were in fact strategically communicated to media. There may have been some issues at some times that NOW wanted to keep quiet, (issues of homosexuality in the early 1970s, for example), and I have tried to indicate in the analysis when silence by the *Times* is a success and when it is a failure of NOW's agenda control efforts.

Table 7.8 indicates an aggregate "agenda" for NOW in the *Times* 1966-1980. All 377 stories about NOW or cross referenced under NOW in the *Times*, were coded by

headline into these 12 categories (see chapter three, Methods, for more details). This breakdown, then, indicates both the overall range and the overall (aggregate, 1966-1980) ranking of NOW issues according to the *Times*.

Over time, most of the stories about NOW in the *Times* can be categorized as not being specific "issue" type stories at all, but stories more generally about NOW the organization, its events, strategies or members. As Table 7.8 illustrates, around 21 percent of these stories were about NOW/feminism events and strategies more generally and not about issues at all. This pattern is in line with studies of political news more generally -- where significant portions of news can be classified as event/strategy type rather than issue stories (cf. Semetko et al, 1991; Iyengar 1989). These stories sometimes also mention issues, but the stories themselves are not about these issues per se but about NOW or the movement. (We might say that these stories were about the "macro-issue," feminism itself, but for the most part they fall into what Iyengar (1987) and others have noted as event/strategy category rather than issue/thematic stories.)

Of the stories that focused on particular issues, sex discrimination was the most significant category. As Table 7.8 illustrates around 20 percent of total coverage of NOW was taken up by stories about sex

discrimination. Most of these concerned sex discrimination in employment (12.5%) though some were also about sex discrimination in credit and insurance (3.4%), in education (1.3%), in sports (1.1%) and in access to housing or public places (2.7%).

Equality issues, which includes general civil rights stories and stories about the Equal Rights Amendment, made up the next category of NOW news overall at 12.5% of all stories. This was followed by traditional politics at 10.6%. The category "traditional politics" refers here to NOW's involvement with political candidates, either endorsing or criticizing them, or in its efforts to encourage and support feminist candidates. Sexism in images, especially on TV and in children's books and cards was also an important topic in NOW's coverage by the *Times* and made up around 9.5% of stories.

Family issues (marriage, divorce and child care) were deemed less important by the *Times*, making up only 4.8% of stories. Sexism in relationships (such as sexual harassment and general discussions of gender roles and femininity) was also given low priority at 2.9% of stories. Perhaps most surprisingly in news coverage of NOW and feminism was the small number of stories about race or sexuality. Only 1.1% of stories could be classified as being mainly about race, and only 0.8 about homosexuality (three stories overall from a total

of 377 were clearly about homosexuality, though it may have been a secondary issue in other stories.) 265

These patterns mirror to some extent NOW's own issue concerns but with some significant omissions and shifts in salience. On the topic of sex discrimination, both NOW and news media made it a central topic of concern. As outlined in chapter four, NOW's agenda over time always included sex discrimination law and its enforcement as core concerns. In fact NOW was instrumental in making sex discrimination a political issue. NOW first publicized the term (following the civil rights term, "race discrimination") and throughout its history NOW leaders worked to have sex included as a category in all civil rights legislation. As the NOW Bill of Rights for the 21st Century indicates (Table 7.9) sex discrimination is scheduled to remain a priority issue for NOW into the 21st century.

The *Times* representation of NOW's agenda also focused centrally on another set of issues that was critical to NOW -- equality, civil rights and the ERA. Since its earliest programmatic statement of goals in the 1968 Bill of Rights for Women, NOW have been working towards passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. As Table 7.9 notes, the ERA was a key part of NOW's agenda in the early days and remained so through internal dissent and reorganization in the 1970s. In the 1979-1982 period, NOW were instrumental in having the ratification

deadline extended, and they devoted a minimum of 50 percent of their time and energies to ratification in 1980 and 1981.<sup>25</sup> The *Times*' reflection of the ERA as a key issue, then, is generally in line with NOW's own priorities.

However, there are also some important differences in NOW's and news' representation of NOW's feminism overall. On the issue of electoral politics, for example, the *Times* aggregate agenda gives a significant amount of attention to NOW's activities in terms of electoral politics. Given that NOW was not even involved in electoral politics at all in the early years -- it was not until the mid 1970s that the organization formed PACs and became active players in elections at the local, state and national levels -- this level of attention is disproportionate on news part.<sup>26</sup> That news about electoral politics makes up 10 percent of all coverage, then, suggests a priority on news' part that does not reflect NOW's over time.

There were also important differences in NOW and the *Times* relative amount of attention to issues of family/child care. In NOW policy statements over time, family and child care issues have been centrally important to the organization. And indeed three out of eight of NOW's originally publicized priorities in the NOW Bill of Rights 1968 were issues of child care (maternity leave, child care facilities and child care

tax deductions). But this kind of overall attention to family issues is nowhere present in the *Times* representation of NOW's agenda.

On the issue of sexism in images (in art, media, advertising and textbooks) NOW and news are also somewhat at odds. News coverage shows this category of issues to account for 9.5% of news stories, but sexism in images is not an issue that makes it into either NOW's Bills of Rights, the 1975 Manifesto or the Bill of Rights for the 21st Century (see table 7.9).

This is not to say, however, that NOW members and leaders did not work on the issue of sexism. Many local chapters of NOW indeed spent significant amounts of time monitoring and coding media to show patterns of sexism in TV and advertising and especially in children's programming and toys.<sup>27</sup> It may be that sexism in images and relationships did not make it into the Bills of Rights because it was more a chapter-level issue than a national organizational priority.

The areas of greatest discrepancy between NOW's and the *Times*' agendas at least in terms of stated goals, occurred in the areas of sexuality/lesbianism, minority and race issues and poverty/poor women. If we compare the *Times* attention to these issues to NOW's public agendas there is an important difference.

**Table 7.8**  
**Topics of NOW Stories in the *New York Times*, 1966-1980**

<b>Headline Topics</b>	<b>No. of Stories</b>	<b>Percent of Stories</b>
NOW/ feminism generally	79	21.0
Sex discrim in employment, education, credit, sports, etc.	77	20.4
ERA/equality and general civil rights	47	12.5
Electoral politics (women candidates and candidates on women's issues)	40	10.6
Sexism in Images (media, art, texts, etc.)	36	9.5
Abortion/Contraception	21	5.6
Family Issues (child care, divorce, alimony)	18	4.8
Rape/violence	12	3.2
Sexism in relationships	11	2.9
Religion	6	1.6
Race/ethnicity	4	1.1
Sexuality/Lesbian	3	0.8
Other, various <sup>28</sup>	23	6.1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As Table 7.9 lists, the NOW 1968 Bill of Rights for example has as one its concerns Poor women and job training, and the 1975 Caucus Manifesto also lists minority women and sexuality as key issues. As the NOW Bill of Rights for the 21st Century notes, these issues

have continued to be important to NOW, and have in fact 269  
 climbed up their agenda from the bottom to the top over  
 time, but they have remained unimportant in news stories  
 about NOW.

**Table 7.9**  
**NOW Agendas 1968, 1975 and 1989**

<b>1968 NOW Bill of Rights</b>	<b>1975 Majority Caucus Manifesto</b>	<b>NOW Bill of Rights for the 21st Century</b>
1. ERA	1. Abortion/ Reprod.Choice	1. Sex discrimination
2. Sex Discrimination in employment	2. Child Care	2. Race discrimination
3. Maternity Benefits	3. Economic Equality	3. Reproduction/ Abortion
4. Child Care Tax Deduction	4. Electoral Politics	4. Sexual orientation
5. Child Care Centers	5. ERA	5. Religious/ health/age discrimination
6. Equal Education	6. Minority Women	6. Right to decent living, housing, education
7. Poor Women, Job Training	7. Sexuality/ Sexual Orient	7. Clean Environment
8. Reproductive Control	8. Worksite Organizing	8. Freedom from violence and war

This disparity may indicate a significant  
 difference of priorities in NOW and the *Times*, but it is

also important to note that NOW's stated purpose and media activities may have not always have coincided perfectly. As a mostly voluntary organization, work in NOW tended to get done by those with a particular interest in that area. With few minority or working class members, task forces on minority and poverty issues may have been understaffed and underrepresented in the organization's day to day work. And in fact criticism of the organization over time as being unrepresentative racially or in class terms, may belie the symbolic importance NOW gave to these issues.

The question of sexuality is more difficult to untangle. The news silence on issues of sexuality in the context of NOW may not in fact be a failure for NOW but a "success" of its early media strategies. Though lesbianism and the social construction of sexuality were major issue in the movement generally, it was an issue that NOW strategists tried to silence in the early years of this time period (1966-1973). Though the organization later embraced sexual identity as a core issue (see 1975 and 1989 agendas) the early and significant efforts to minimize sexuality as a public issue may have succeeded in dissociating NOW from the issue publicly in this period. As Mannheim (1991) has suggested, keeping some issues invisible may also be seen as a successful outcome of strategic communication. In the early years NOW leaders tried to keep issues of sexuality quiet

because they thought that if the organization became labeled as a lesbian group it would lack credibility as a spokesperson for women more generally. In this case, then, media silence may have in fact been a strategic "success."

Overall, then, the *Times* reflected some of NOW's most pressing concerns in sex discrimination and the ERA, but there are significant differences in the relative priority that NOW and news attributed to other issues, especially issues of family/child care, sexuality and race.

## **4.2 Agenda Rankings Correlations:**

### **Did NOW Transfer Salience?**

This general indication that NOW was more successful at transferring some issues than others is reinforced when NOW and news agendas are ranked and compared at key points in time. Table 7. 10 illustrates the different rankings of issues in the two discourses (NOW and news) at key points in NOW's history, 1968 and 1975, and then in the *Times* agenda in the next year or so. (There were too few stories in 1969 to make it possible to compare NOW 1968 and the *Times* rankings for 1969, so 1970 is used instead here). The time lags in Table 7.10, of a year or two, are longer than usual, but (as I explain in more detail in chapter three), the NOW-

news relationship took place slowly over long periods of 272 time, so these time lags are logical in that context.

The measures of NOW's agenda were taken at key points in NOW's history from public documents stating the organization's priorities. NOW's 1968 issue agenda, for example, is constructed from The NOW Bill of Rights, 1968, which was an important early founding document of NOW. The NOW 1975 issue agenda is taken from the NOW Manifesto in 1975, which was a public signal of significant change in NOW's direction as the new leaders took over the organization. The *Times* agendas were created in the conventional way by ranking the number of stories under each topic heading for each year, leaving out the category of stories NOW/feminism generally which has no logical equivalent in NOW's discourse (see chapter three/Methods for more description of this process.)

NOW seems to have been more successful at transferring its sense of importance with some issues rather than others, and in some periods rather than others. For example (table 7.10) NOW's prioritizing of the ERA and employment discrimination highly in 1968, is reflected in the *Times* 1970 agenda, which also ranks these issues highly (employment is number one and ERA number two in both agendas).

**Table 7.10**  
**Rank Table (Comparing NOW and News Issue Ranks)<sup>29</sup>**

<b>Issues</b>	<b>NOW 19 68</b>	<b>NYT 1970</b>	<b>NOW 1975</b>	<b>NYT 1976</b>
ERA/Equal Rights	1	1	5	4.5
Employment (Sex Disc)	2	2	8	1.5
Family/Child care	3	8.5	2	4.5
Education (Sex Dis)	4	4	10	8.5
Economics (gen.)	5	8.5	3	8.5
Reproductive Issues	6	8.5	1	1.5
Rape/Violence	7	8.5	10	4.5
Homosexuality	9	8.5	7	8.5
Race	9	8.5	6	8.5
Traditional/Elect Politics	9	4	4	4.5
Sexism (Images and Relationships)	9	4	10	11

However, other issues, such as family and children, and education are ranked quite differently for the *Times* and NOW. NOW's 1968 agenda, for example ranks family/children type issues as its number three priority, whereas family/child care stories in the *Times* rank around eighth in an 11 item agenda. Similarly NOW's 1975 agenda ranks family/child care issues as a number 2 priority, while for the *Times* it is ranked at 4.5. The many ties in this rank order correlation complicate this kind of comparison of course, but it is clear that for NOW and news family/child care issues had quite different importance both in 1968 and in 1975.

A similar disparity may be seen in the NOW 1968 and *Times* 1970 lack of agreement over the issue category of Reproductive issues. NOW seems to have been unsuccessful

in the 1968-1970 periods in convincing the *Times* of the importance of abortion and contraception as important news issues (it is ranked as 6 in NOW agenda and 8.5 in the *Times*). By the mid 1970s, though there seems to be more agreement between the NOW and news rankings on reproductive issues. As Table 7.10 indicates they are now much more closely ranked at 1 and 1.5. On the issue of reproduction, NOW seems to have been more successful in transferring salience later in its career.

This sense of partial "success" for NOW in setting the *Times*' NOW agenda is reinforced by the rank correlation between NOW and the *Times* agendas. Table 7.11 indicates the correlations (Spearman's Rho) between these rankings. As the table indicates, the correlation coefficient for NOW's 1968 agenda with the *Times* 1970 agenda is .478 . And NOW's 1975 agenda is correlated with the *Times* 1976 agenda (for NOW stories) is .415, suggesting that there was agreement in about half of the rankings.

**Table 7.11**  
**Rank Correlations (Spearman's Rho) NOW and New York Times Agendas 1968 (1970) and 1975 (1976)**

	NYT 1970	NYT 1975
NOW 1968	.478	
NOW 1975		.415

This discrepancy in ranking indicates either a failure in NOW's news management that is issue-specific, or it indicates that the *Times* reacted to and "processed" different kinds of issues differently.

NOW did shift its media strategies over time (as chapter six illustrates) and the organization did strategically push or minimize some issues at different times (e.g. sexual identity was minimized in the early 1970s). But there is no evidence in NOW's institutional records that it failed to communicate about family/child care issues. In fact the institutional analysis suggests that this was one of NOW's key areas of concern from the beginning.

Given the evidence indicated above in terms of placement -- i.e. that news processed NOW in terms of a public-private divide in its issues -- it is more likely that this partial "success" in terms of rank orders, is also an indication of this public-private processing of NOW's discourse by news. The issues that NOW was able to transfer most effectively (i.e. to have ranked close to NOW's own ranking) were those issues that fit more easily into the traditionally "public" category (such as employment discrimination), and the issues that did not transfer their salience (such as family/child care ) are drawn from the traditionally "private" category of that dichotomy.

NOW was "successful," then, in some important ways in producing news access, and through news, a voice in the public debate over women's issues. But there were also important limitations to this access, which stemmed from gendered staffing patterns in news organizations, and underlying discursive categories in which news mirrors and invokes the public/private divide of liberal politics. In this sense new can be seen to "police" the public sphere and to be engaged in struggle over what will be seen as "public" alongside other social institutions.

To some extent NOW was successful in this struggle. Over time NOW was able to produce access to news. Throughout its existence it has some level of news presence. And NOW was mostly covered mostly in the news sections, which the organization considered to be more credible than the women's page. Much of this access was the result of the organization's own publicity efforts, rather than any "coverage" by enterprising journalists, and it cost them significantly in resources, skills and time. But it still indicates a level of accessibility that is important to note, that with resources, groups can produce some access.

NOW's strategic interaction with mostly women reporters was also a generally successful strategy in that most of the news about NOW was in fact authored by

women. However, this focus on women reporters was not unproblematic. As indicated in this chapter, women reporters, though they wrote most of the stories about NOW were less likely proportionally to have those stories placed on the front page. This pattern -- probably the result of gendered staffing patterns in the newspaper itself -- meant that NOW's access was limited in the same way that women reporters' access was.

Besides basic access, NOW was also able to gain some "voice" in news stories. Most of the time the organization was directly quoted rather than talked about, for example. This "voice" was most likely to be granted in feature type pieces which NOW generated itself and least likely in institutional (legal) contexts..

NOW also maintained some control over its issue agenda. On at least a few key issues -- such as the ERA and sex discrimination -- NOW and the *Times* had some agreement over importance. However there were also conspicuous discrepancies in NOW and the *Times* sense of priorities. The *Times* was relatively silent on issues such as family and child care, race, and economics (especially problems of poor women). It is possible that these issues did not receive the day-to-day attention of NOW as stated in its public statements -- though the institutional records do not indicate any strategic media interaction differences across these particular

issues (see chapter six for a description of NOW's media 278 strategies). It is most likely the case that this pattern -- like the patterning in placement and identity -- indicates that news sees some feminist issues as more important than others.

NOW managed to gain news access, then, but its placement and agenda control patterns suggest that not all of the issues in NOW's agenda were taken equally seriously by news editors. These patterns, I argue, reflect news' role in maintaining the liberal distinction between "public" and "private" issues which, unless challenged, works for the most part against feminism, which sets out to blur this distinction.

This "processing" by news may not necessarily have been a matter of deliberate practice by reporters or news organizations, but rather the result of embedded epistemological assumptions in news about what is important, which are then encoded in editorial judgments. One of these assumptions, which news discourse shares with liberalism more generally, is a set of expectations about what kinds of things will be seen as "public" issues (and therefore important) and which will be seen as "private" (and therefore less important). As feminist theorists have illustrated extensively in the last few years, these categories are also distinctively "gendered" -- it is women's lives and experiences that are usually consigned to the "private"

and less legitimate areas of politics (cf. Butler and Scott, 1992; Fraser, 1989; 1992; McLaughlin, 1993). News reproduces this male/public and female/private dichotomy by placing stories seen to be about "private" issues in the women's section of the paper and by ranking them overall as less important. It is instructive in this context to note that the *Times* (nor other papers) does not have a "men's" section. Rather men are assumed to be the readers of the news sections.

Given that one of the central aims of feminist politics (and indeed of the NSMs more generally) has been to extend the realm of issues that will be considered "public," this pattern -- in which news media may be seen to be "policing" the public-private border -- has important consequences for new social movement, and especially feminist groups, communication strategies. NOW's partial "success" as indicated in this chapter at the levels of access, voice and agenda control, suggests that feminist communications strategists may need to develop new ways of negotiating news beyond the level of reflexive appropriation of news practices and conventions. Strategists may need to engage with news at a deeper discursive level where news discourse categories (such as that of public-private) pose a greater threat to feminist mass communication efforts.

to access news and use it to build a women's issue agenda, but that access may have come with some serious and unintended consequences for NOW at the discursive level. NOW sought access to news to become a public voice for feminism, but news discourse in its processing of NOW issues, transformed NOW's agenda in significant way. NOW may have learned to "speak" news, but to some extent news also spoke NOW.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In this study I have been concerned mostly with NOW's media strategies, so I am using media content as the "outcome" against which to assess these strategies. Clearly this is only one way to assess new social movement communications. Assessing movement influences on legislative agendas, on public opinion polls, or on journalists attitudes would all also be reasonable ways of assessing movement communicative "success." All I argue here is that influencing media content is one important step in this larger process of public agenda-building. See chapter two for more discussion of media-movement interactions as part of a larger process of agenda building.

<sup>2</sup> See Jurgen Habermas (1984) *A Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1*. Boston: Beacon Press for a discussion of the differences between *strategic* and *communicative* styles. In this study I include only measures of strategic communication. For example, I have not included the communicative category of "understanding" as a category of success, since such a relationship would require that the participants sought understanding. Although NOW feminists did want journalists to understand their positions, and worked towards educating them, it is for instrumental purposes, i.e. so that journalists will spread the word. Understanding was not really a clear goal for the journalists either, who in fact shied away from being seen to sympathize with or understand the movement as a professional liability (see Tuchman, 1978, and chapter six of this study). Indeed journalistic ideologies of detachment and objectivity seem to be predisposed to strategic use of other discourses rather than efforts to understand them.

3 Voice is measured by NOW being quoted or having material attributed to them. See methods for more explanation of measurements and operationalizations.

4 Other source studies have variously defined successful news access (when they have defined it at all) as: (a) simply being mentioned (cf. Sigal, 1973; Brown et al, 1987; Barker-Plummer, 1989), (b) having "voice" -- defined as routine access and being quoted (cf. Ericson et al, 1989), (c) being a "primary definer" of issues and events (Hall et al. 1978), and (d) as being able to "subsidize" news stories through having one's (interested) information used (Gandy, 1982). Gitlin (1980) does not define what he would consider "success." See chapter three, methods, for more discussion about these measures.

5 More qualitative aspects of NOW's representation, such as legitimacy, are assessed in chapter eight within the assessment of NOW's identity control.

6 These dimensions of success -- access, voice, placement and control -- are commonly at work in most communicative interactions. In any conversation or debate for example, we seek first of all access or standing as a member, then we seek a chance to contribute in our own voice, and we are usually also concerned with the context or *placement*) of our contribution in terms of its legitimacy (is our topic first or second, for example). Finally we would usually prefer that the debate or conversation be structured in ways that legitimate our positions and interests -- i.e. that we can *control* the context, pace and direction of the conversation.

7 In fact data for the period 1980-1995 indicates that this is so, but nevertheless for the period under observation the trend levels off.

8 This is clear in NOW media strategy notes, where they often note that certain women reporters are more aware than others -- that their "consciousness" is raised. NOW collection, Schlesinger Library.

9 Sigal (1973) is the source of this distinction between journalist enterprise and other kinds of stories, but it is vulnerable to criticism too because interview or features may also be instigated by information subsidies of some sort -- e.g., press kits that indicate leaders to interview, or suggestions by media strategists that prompt "features" and so on).

10 Sometimes more than one origin for the story could be detected. For example, if a protest march was being reported and a news conference had also been convened by NOW to discuss the event. In these cases, policy was to code the "main" event that was taking place -- i.e. in the case of a news conference accompanying an event, the

event was coded. Consequently the category "overt information subsidies" which is made up of news conferences, announcements, and so on, is restricted to those news conferences and announcements that were themselves the main event. See chapter three for a discussion of coding and coder agreements for each question.

<sup>11</sup>Includes marches, strikes, demonstrations, boycotts, anniversary or special occasion public events. When these were also accompanied by news conferences, the public event was coded as the source of the story. News conferences that were themselves the main event were coded as "overt information subsidies."

<sup>12</sup> This category includes only overt or manifest subsidies such as news conferences, special reports or studies published by NOW, that were not accompanied by another event such as a protest, or legal filing.

<sup>13</sup> This category includes any story in which it was not clear what the event, strategy or hook was, or that was clearly an interview or special feature, was coded as journalist enterprise. It is likely that some of the stories in the "journalist enterprise" category were also instigated by subsidies sent out by NOW, but unless a study or news conference was explicitly mentioned, the benefit of the doubt was given to journalist-enterprise. Even coding only overt subsidies, though, shows them to be a significant source of stories.

<sup>14</sup> If we separate out legal and legislative strategies from "publicity" strategies as some others have tried to do, then the figure becomes closer to 50 percent of news being generated by NOW, still a substantial amount (see table 7.1). See for example, Sean Cassidy (1992) *The Environment and the Media: Two Strategies for Challenging Hegemony*. In Janet Wasko and Vincent Mosco (Eds.) *Democratic Communications in the Information Age*, pp. 159-197. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex. Cassidy distinguishes between *legal* and *publicity* strategies in the environmental movement, and attempts to compare them for results (with Greenpeace said to be following a publicity/direct action strategy and Friends of the Earth a legal strategy). This distinction, though is problematic with NOW, who followed both legal and publicity strategies, and to whom legal action was itself sometimes a publicity strategy. I suspect that a closer analysis of any organization's strategies, from the perspective of the group itself, would produce this overlap between what are analytical not empirical categories of strategies.

15 Records from the PIO for example, note that NOW media strategists spent considerable effort courting journalists and editors and making them aware of NOW's expertise as a source in many policy issue areas, trying as Dian Terry, NOW PI officer 1973-74, put it, to get them to put NOW in their Rolodexes. NOW collection, Schlesinger Library.

16 Pearson correlation between voice/NOW quoted and size of story in graphs is .9613,  $p < .001$ .

17  $N=357$  because "other" categories have been dropped.

18 NOW (1974, July), Quarterly Status Report, NOW Public Information Office. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library. Tuchman (1978, p. 146) states that the women's page was a "movement resource" because journalists thought so. But it is not at all clear that feminist activists agreed with this assessment. Tuchman and I treat some of the same issues in the coverage of feminism, but from different standpoints. She focuses generally on how journalists make news, and briefly on how they made new about feminism. I am concerned with how feminist strategists made news about the movement. This leads to some different perspectives.

19 Of course some of this placement is simply the logical outcome of there being more news pages than women's pages -- in any edition of the paper of course there is one women's page and one front page but multiple news pages. However, given that there was only one women's page, it is highly over-represented if NOW stories were being randomly distributed. A one-to-one comparison between the front page and the women's page, for example, was as follows: front page, 22 stories (5.8%), and women's page 59 stories (15.6%), or almost three times as many.

20  $N=223$  because 140 stories do not have bylines. A further 14 cases were dropped from the analysis from an "other" category -- i.e. various other sections of the paper (business, TV, etc.) which were too small to be significant.

21  $N=340$  because "other" categories have been dropped.

22 This relationship between strategy contexts and placement is well in line with more general news studies that suggests that much news is made up of reporters routine coverage of state institutions (cf. Sigal, 1973; Gans, 1980; Fishman, 1980, etc.)

23 These categorizations are of course arguable. The assignment of rape to the public category, for example, and abortion to private, can be debated. In either case the number of stories in these categories mean that it makes little difference to the overall patterns whether they are included or not.

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24 N=254 because non-issue categories (such as stories about NOW and feminism generally) have been omitted as have "other" news sections.

25 At the 1981 conference Eleanor Smeal, president of NOW, publicly committed at least half the organization's resources and staff time to the ERA Countdown Campaign.

26 Prior to the mid 1970s, in fact, NOW's tax status had restricted their activities in the traditional political arena. Whether NOW should be involved in traditional politics was one of the key issues in the 1975 organizational battle for control. The sitting NOW leadership in 1975 thought that NOW's involvement in electoral politics would eat up too much of the organization's time and energies.

27 Task Force on Image of Women papers. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

28 This category includes a number of topics with very few stories such as drugs, prostitution, and police surveillance.

29 Note that "other" categories and NOW/feminism categories have been dropped from the news agendas. There is no equivalent in NOW agendas for the 20 percent of news stories about NOW events/strategies. Note also that in order to compare NOW and news agendas NOW's 1968 agenda has been compressed -- the three agenda items about maternity leave and child care have been compressed into one child care item. (See chapter three/Methods for a discussion of the problems and limits of these methods).

**Legitimation Patterns:****The Times' Processing of NOW's Identity, 1966-1980**

Strategically accessing news media, and using that access to introduce new issues and frames into public debate, is at the heart of the "symbolic challenge" of NOW and other NSM groups. The relative success of this agenda-building, however, is likely to be influenced by a movement organization's identity as well as its issues or agenda. In particular a movement organization's perceived legitimacy as a political actor will influence whether its ideas will be communicated through news. As studies of journalists have noted, the perceived legitimacy of sources, as well as their reliability, is a strong determinant of how seriously (and routinely) journalists approach them or use their information (cf. Gans, 1980; Fishman, 1980).

Legitimacy is not only an attribute that is important in determining access to news media for source organizations. It is also a quality that can be produced and reproduced in interaction with news media. Serious and routine access to news media itself may produce (and reproduce) public legitimacy for source organizations. It is this quality of routine news access that Ericson et al. (1989) have called "voice" and which they see as

a fundamental form of "cultural capital" in mass mediated societies. Movement organizations, then, may use news to become legitimate public speakers.

In fact creating and maintaining such a legitimate identity in and through news was a key goal in NOW's media strategies. NOW leaders wanted to create and maintain a public image for the organization as the serious "voice" for American women and they tried to do so by controlling who could speak to journalists, what they could talk about, and how the organization would be rhetorically "placed" in regard to (and differentiated from) other movement groups.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter I track the outcome of NOW's legitimation strategies through a qualitative analysis of its representation over time in the *New York Times*, 1966-1980. I argue that, overall, NOW underwent a general legitimation process over the time period covered in this study (1966-1980), and so was to a certain extent "successful" in its attempts to become a legitimate public voice for women's issues. From a generally marginalizing representation in the early days, NOW' moved to a generally serious representation by 1980. This overall legitimation process was limited, however, and complicated, by another pattern of processing in which NOW's identity was processed through the discursive categories of news discourse. As with its agenda building efforts, NOW's organizational

legitimacy in news was related to the issue and movement 287  
context in which it was assessed. When NOW focused on  
more institutionalized or "traditional" political issues  
its legitimacy came under less scrutiny than when the  
organization took up a "new" women's issue. When NOW is  
compared to more radical groups it is also treated as a  
more legitimate organization, than it is when judged  
alone. This process is further complicated by the fact  
that the group of "institutionalized" issues itself  
changes over time due to NOW and others communication  
work.<sup>2</sup>

The chapter is organized around four overlapping  
"stages" in NOW's organizational re-presentation by  
news. First, an early period (1966-1970) of  
marginalization in which NOW was represented as odd,  
peculiar and generally illegitimate. Second, a period of  
complex and contradictory representation overall (1970-  
1974), in which NOW was presented sometimes as a  
legitimate speaker, and other times as a bizarre group  
making strange claims. The complexity in re-presentation  
during this period was the result of both issue  
contexts (i.e. depending on what it is NOW is talking  
about) and different movement context (i.e. depending on  
who NOW is being compared to). Third, is a 2 year period  
(1974-1976) in which NOW itself was undergoing an  
internal identity crisis. During this period news  
coverage was complex, contradictory and critical,

drawing some of that critique from the challenges being mounted inside NOW for national leadership. Fourth, (1976-1980), is a period in which NOW began to be accepted as serious (if sometimes incompetent) political player that was likely to be around for a long time. This period is characterized by stories that historicize NOW, talking about its long history as a spokesperson for women and noting that it was now an "insider" group in women's politics. However, even with this general legitimation there were important limitations invoked in terms of what were NOW's "real" issues and which were unreasonable demands in the eyes of journalists.

Overall, I suggest that, like agenda building, legitimation work by movement organizations takes place in a larger cultural context than just that of strategists and journalists. NOW's legitimation (or not) at particular times was influenced by the organization's own strategies, but it was also the outcome of a larger social debate over what would be considered "politics" in which NOW and the *Times* were only two of many players.

#### **ASSESSING LEGITIMACY AND IDENTITY CONTROL**

Legitimacy is a complex concept, which includes elements of credibility (is the group to be believed); expertise (is the group experienced or educated enough on a particular topic?); representativeness (who does it

stand for?), viability (will it be around for long?), authority (does it have any power?), and so on (cf. Shoemaker, 1982; Ericson et al, 1989).

These various dimensions of legitimacy are themselves referenced and presented by news media in a variety of overt and implicit ways. Ryan (1991, p.207), identifies a number of ways in which the media legitimizes or delegitimizes groups through its descriptions of them. For example, she notes that groups can be de-legitimized by being named in ways that they did not choose for themselves (such as "leftist" rather than democratic); by having their identity set off by quotes or qualifiers (such as "alleged" or "calling themselves"); by having their concerns trivialized (i.e. focusing on dress or mannerisms rather than content); or by being "balanced" by sources that are of quite different stature.

Gitlin (1980. p. 27) offers a similar series of news "mechanisms" of delegitimation when he notes that coverage of SDS featured trivialization (making light of movement language, style, age and goals), polarization (emphasizing counter demonstrations and balancing the group with the ultra-right as equivalent "extremists"), emphasis on internal dissent, marginalization (showing demonstrators to be deviant or unrepresentative), and so on.

In this chapter I assess NOW's legitimacy over time 290 by looking at the ways in which NOW the organization was described terms of its goals, its constituents, and its leaders at different stages in its history with news, and in the contexts of its own shifting media strategies. I draw on Ryan (1991) and Gitlin's (1980) methodological insights in tracking the linguistic cues and frames for NOW that would indicate legitimacy (or not) in a particular story (e.g. polarization or being described in quotation marks), but I am also concerned with more macro patterns of shifts in news representations of NOW over time and in different contexts.

Neither Gitlin (1980) nor Ryan (1991) followed media-movement relationships over long periods, and so consequently processes of struggle over legitimation that may have taken place had the groups continued to interact with media, or the researchers continued to observe, are missed. Gitlin (1980), for example, studied SDS's representation closely only over one year (1965-1966). He argues that studying early framing is the best way to see the emergence of media frames before they "harden" into place as common sense. But what if they do not harden at all but change in some other way? NOW's representation over time suggests that in fact early marginalization can move into later, if limited, legitimation. Because NOW is one of the few movement

groups to continue to exist over time, we have a unique 291  
ability to see in its experiences with news media  
whether a marginalizing representation can in fact be  
turned around and recreated. I argue here that NOW's  
persistence and longevity made it possible for the group  
to create and maintain over time a limited amount of  
legitimacy as a public voice for feminism.

### **I. EARLY PATTERNS OF MARGINALIZATION, 1966-1970**

In the first few years of its existence NOW was  
presented by the *Times* as a somewhat dubious  
organization. Between 1966-1970, despite quite  
sophisticated attempts by its leaders and media  
strategists to have NOW taken seriously as a civil  
rights organization parallel to the NAACP, NOW was  
mostly presented in this period as a marginal and  
strange group whose statements could not be taken at  
face value.

This deviant framing was achieved by journalists,  
through the liberal use of linguistic "distancing" cues  
such as qualifiers for NOW claims (e.g. "who call  
themselves," "which it termed"), quotation marks around  
such claims (e.g. seeking "equality for all women"),  
and talking about the organization rather than allowing  
it to speak for itself. Much of this skepticism seems to  
have been aimed at NOW's self-representation as a civil  
rights organization. Reporters in the early years were

not convinced that women needed a civil rights organization, and they resisted the overarching framework of "sex discrimination" as a description for women's experiences.

NOW was also routinely trivialized in this period by reporters focusing on NOW leaders' clothes, mannerisms and relative "femininity" rather than the content of their statements. Such issues were often brought into the story through the use of "everybody knows" kinds of statements in which journalists appeared simply to be referencing some of the stereotypes "out there" but in fact were recirculating them. Linguistic cues to sexist assumptions about women were also abundant in this period as NOW are seen to be "complaining" about inequality rather than "demanding" change, for example. News stories in this period also questioned both the competence of NOW's leaders and the breadth and representativeness of its membership.

### **1.1 "So-called," "Self-styled" and other Dubious Descriptors**

Early NOW coverage was characterized by these distancing mechanisms. For example, a 1967 story in which the *Times* reports on a NOW picket outside its own building (against gender-segregated want-ads) indicates how the liberal use of qualifiers ("what it considers,"

"such things as" ) can leave a reader skeptical about a 293  
group's motives:

Eight women and three men picketed the New York Times midtown classified advertisement office yesterday charging that the newspaper discriminated against women by labeling help wanted ads male and female. The pickets were members of an organization called National Organization for Women which was formed last November to fight what it considers discrimination against women in jobs and legislation... There are about 300 members, mostly women, in the New York state chapter, Mrs. Jean Faust, the chapter president said. The group has also campaigned for such things as Constitutional amendments that would outlaw sex discrimination and for the right of women to terminate unwanted pregnancies (New York Times, December 14, 1967, p. 56).

In this anonymous, nine-paragraph story NOW is given voice only once, and that is to claim a membership of 300. This claim is not questioned directly, but it stands in direct contrast to the reporter's note that "eight women and three men" were actually there. The story also resolutely avoids NOW's own frames for abortion rights at this time (such as "reproductive

freedom" or "reproductive control") and chooses an inflammatory one, "the right to end unwanted pregnancies." Four of the story's nine graphs are dedicated to giving the *Times* management voice through a long quote defending its policy.

A second example of this kind of hostile framing, in which NOW's claims are presented as somewhat dubious, occurred in 1968 when a writer on the women's page framed NOW as "self-styled militants":

The National Organization for Women (NOW), which consists of 2,000 self-styled militants fighting for "true equality for all women" had every intention of endorsing one or more male would-be candidates yesterday. But it couldn't because only two of the six men canvassed bothered to respond to its questionnaires (New York Times, May 7, 1968, p. 40.)

In this early story, the number of members attributed to the group by NOW itself is allowed to stand but NOW's goals of "true equality for all women" is given the added journalistic insurance of quotation marks. The story makes it clear that not only is the organization considered a non-player by the presidential candidates, but the writer herself also find them dubious enough to be "self-styled." In fact every

organization that interacts with a news organization is 295  
"self-styled" in that they describe themselves in  
strategic ways. But with organizations that journalists  
take seriously, the presented identity is taken at face  
value.

The general dubiousness with which the *Times*  
approached NOW's goals sometimes opened up into direct  
criticism of NOW leaders. In the same 1968 story, for  
example, NOW leader Betty Friedan is made to look quite  
ignorant:

Mrs. Friedan said NOW was protesting "extreme  
employment discrimination against women workers."  
She cited layoffs of women not based on seniority.  
She accused the union, *the name of which she did  
not know*, of "playing footsie with management." (New  
York Times, May 7, 1968, p. 40).

The point here is again one of journalistic  
selectivity. It is quite likely that Friedan did not  
recall a particular union, and may have been entirely  
ignorant on the matter. But it is highly irregular for  
writers in political stories to make direct references  
like this to their source's ignorance. Indeed, it is an  
indication of how little the writer valued NOW or  
Friedan as repeat sources that she would select this  
piece of information for the story.

## **1.2 Civil Rights vs. Being "Put Upon":**

### **Resistance to the "Sex Discrimination" Frame**

At this point in its early history NOW leaders were trying to present NOW as a civil rights organization. Friedan had said she wanted NOW to be seen as the "NAACP for women" and the language of rights, discrimination and sexism were all strategically produced by NOW leaders to parallel NOW and the women's movement with the NAACP and the Civil Rights Movement. However the frame of "sex discrimination" did not automatically go over well with journalists. Journalists were more likely to report seriously on NOW's more specific goals -- i.e. paid maternity leave and child care expenses -- but to balk at simply reporting the concept of sex discrimination outright. In most cases in the early days the idea of sex discrimination would be reported in quotation marks ("sex discrimination") or it would be attributed to NOW as a dubious concept (e.g. "what it terms sex discrimination").

This general skepticism about the overall seriousness of the movements, and indeed the need for a movement at all, came up frequently. News stories of the late 1960s emphasized the relative wealth and affluence of America and seemed to be puzzled that these women were feeling so "put upon." This article by Martha Weinman Lear in the *Times* magazine, for example, asks

over and over whether women really need such a  
"movement:"

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... when pink refrigerators abound, when women (51 percent of the population) hold unparalleled consumer power, when women control most of the corporate stocks, when women have ready access to higher education and to the professions, when millions of women are gainfully employed, when all the nation is telling American women, all the time that they are the most privileged female population on earth, the insistence on a civil rights movement does seem a trifle stubborn. (New York Times Magazine, March 10, 1968, p. 25.)

In this long and complex article, NOW and other feminists are allowed to express their positions, but still, the whole article is permeated by a general cynicism about the real need for a feminist organization.<sup>3</sup> As a large-type header (perhaps added by a less sympathetic editor) notes "women still feel put upon."

In any language of politics being "put upon" is hardly the same as having one's civil rights systematically denied. Yet throughout this period NOW is described as "complaining," about inequality, being on a "crusade" rather than mobilizing, being "stubborn"

rather than principled, and being "plaintive" in its demands for change. These terms not only trivialize the groups' political identity in a general way, but they also reference a system of gendered linguistic divisions in which men "demand" and women "complain," men are principled and women (and children) are "stubborn." These descriptors are part of a general ridiculing of NOW and other feminists in this period in which the fact that they are women, making demands about women's lives is an essential aspect of their marginalization.<sup>4</sup>

Some of this early resistance by reporters to the term "sex discrimination" may simply have been the result of coming into contact with unfamiliar terminology. "Sex discrimination" and sexism, were both very new terms in the late 1960s. But more likely the *Times* writers like the EEO itself, resisted the overall systematic and radical consequences that such a frame brought with it.

When they did include NOW's frame of "discrimination" in this period, it was almost always in quotes, as if it was not quite a believable description of women's experience. In a description of feminist positions for example, a *Times* story frames the feminists' terms as highly dubious:

Those here for example, are picketing such establishments as the Federal Equal Employment

Opportunities Commission ("unfair"), The New York Times ("discriminatory" want ad pages) and the Association of the Bar of New York (site of a hearing of the Governor's Committee on abortion Law)." (New York Times July 24, 1968, p. 19) 299

In later years (after 1970), and in the contexts of the larger women's movement, NOW's frame of "sex discrimination" came to be used without quotations and in fact the issues of sex discrimination in employment and education came to be seen as the "real" issues of feminism as opposed to the sexual or personal politics of the "younger" movement.

In general, though, in the first few years, even relatively neutral descriptions of NOW would use quotation marks around NOW's identity as if to make quite clear that this was not a judgment on the writer's part.

### **1.3 Femininity and Legitimacy: Trivialization Mechanisms**

This general framing as somewhat dubious was accompanied by a tendency to focus on the dress or appearance of NOW leaders -- in particular on their relative degree of "femininity." This focus on femininity and fashion was sometimes used to maintain legitimacy -- i.e. the fact that some NOW leaders were

also attractive was used as a way of enhancing the group's legitimacy by journalists. More often appearance made its way into stories in ways that diminished legitimacy -- as for example when journalists recirculated stereotypes such as "everybody knows the stereotype that feminists are ugly." In either case the focus on appearance -- whether to enhance or debunk NOW speakers -- was a trivializing mechanism.

In fact the very first story about NOW in the *New York Times* appeared on the Women's Page, days after the press conference on which it was reporting, and was placed between a recipe for Thanksgiving turkey and a story about Pierre Henri, hairdresser, returning to Saks Fifth Avenue. This first coverage of NOW, reporting on its founding, was a highly contradictory effort to both take NOW seriously and to fulfill the functions of a fashion and gossip story.

The story associates NOW and the women's movement with previous revolutionary movements (citing Marx's *Communist Manifesto*), outlines the organization's recent political activities of sending letters to the President and the EEOC, and yet also finds time to make note of Betty Friedan's "neat black suit" and her "ruby and sapphire parlor":

Although no one in the dim ruby and sapphire Victorian parlor actually got up and cried "Women

of the World, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains," that was the prevailing sentiment yesterday morning at the crowded press conference held by the newly formed National Organization for Women ... The Board of Directors urged President Johnson "to give top priority among legislative proposals for the next Congress to legislation that would give effective enforcement powers to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission... Speaking in a gravely alto from the depths of the large fur collar that trimmed her neat black suit, the ebullient author [Friedan] suggested that women today were "in relatively little position to influence or control major decisions. But she added, leaning forward in the lilac velvet Victorian chair and punching the air as if it was something palpable, "what women do have is the vote." (New York Times, November 22, 1966, p. 44.)

Some of this focus on clothes and manners was the result of news *genre* conflicts. In the early days most of NOW's stories were placed on the lifestyle/women's page where fashion, food, manners, and so on were the usual topics and so coverage of NOW was subject to the same kind of writing and processing as these articles.

But NOW also had a hand in this outcome. This first story about NOW was the result of a carefully

orchestrated press conference in which NOW strategists 302 showcased many of their most "respectable" leaders (such as vicars, nuns, professors and government officials). But they decided to hold the conference in Friedan's parlor because they believed that holding the conference in the home of a celebrity would be sufficiently different to get journalists attention. It did indeed, but it got the attention of the women's page editors and was "processed" as a celebrity woman story and placed on the women's page.

Another story from 1968, which also ran on the women's page, illustrates this confusion of politics and fashion also. It spends 18 paragraphs reporting on a talk by Florynce Kennedy on movement picketing strategies, but winds up by describing her clothes:

Miss Kennedy a civil rights lawyer and a counsel for H. Rap Brown the militant black power advocate socked it to a meeting held Thursday night to discuss strategy for picketing the Colgate-Palmolive Company ... Miss Kennedy who was dressed in a sleeveless gray wool overblouse and a white pleated skirt also wore a button that said "Jeanette Rankin brigade." (New York Times, August 24, 1968, p. 33)

NOW and other movement groups developed their own ways of dealing with this focus on appearance. The more radical groups and individuals confronted the issue directly. They articulated the cultural relationship between femininity and legitimacy as part of a larger sexist system and they tried to subvert expectations about female sexuality by appearing unkempt and by dressing in non-traditional ways (Echols, 1989). NOW, on the other hand, followed its usual strategy of trying to both use and transform cultural constraints. They selected someone from within their midst who was "photogenic" as a spokesperson, and then had that person talk about the politics of femininity. Ti-Grace Atkinson, for example, who was briefly the leader of New York NOW, was reportedly pushed forward by Betty Friedan because of her "refined" looks and her "untypical" feminist appearance was thought to have disarmed reporters.

In other stories, the physical appearance and sexuality of feminists was ushered in by a back door as writers used general statements of the "everybody knows" type to bring NOW leaders' lifestyles into focus. One writer noted in a 1968 story, for example, that stereotypes of feminists as "castrating crows in bloomers" were widespread and then goes on to determine whether this is the case in her story (New York Times Magazine, March 10, 1968, p. 57). Whether it is true or

not, she has inferred that the reader ought to be considering the possibility. Another "everybody knows" article in 1970 illustrates the convenience of these unnamed sources for bringing stereotypes into the story:

From its beginnings, the movement was widely regarded as somebody's idea of a bad joke. "A Lesbian plot" muttered some. "A group of frustrated old maids who need a good man," said others. (New York Times 1970, August 30, 1970, IV, p. 4)

Just who these "people" are of course is never discussed, and indeed this maintenance and circulation of stereotypes -- of what "everybody knows" -- is one of the (de)legitimation tools that journalists employ while at the same time seeming to be simply populist and to know the mind of the "average" person. The point here is one of *selectivity*. It is not the case that journalists repeat all stereotypes that they have ever heard off, only those that further the frame of their story.

Overall, then, in the first few years of NOW's interaction with news media, many of the classic indicators of marginalization -- from a focus on appearance (trivialization) to distance markers such as quotes or qualifiers -- NOW is routinely presented in this period as a source organization that cannot be taken at face value.

## II. 1970-1974 LIMITED LEGITIMATION AND CONTRADICTIONS

By 1970 some changes can be seen in NOW's legitimacy and between 1970 and 1974 NOW began to undergo a limited process of legitimation as a news source. For example, in this period NOW began to be described in its own terms, and quotes and qualifiers disappeared from the organization's goals and claims more generally. By 1974, for example, NOW was frequently described as simply the "oldest and largest feminist organization in the country."

This legitimation process was shifting and far from seamless. NOW's organizational legitimacy as a source depended on its issue context. Its organizational legitimacy was usually higher in this period when the story context was NOW's best known and (by now) most institutionalized political issues, such as the ERA, employment discrimination or educational discrimination. In other topic areas, especially those that touched on more radical or systemic analyses of discrimination or of a whole system of "sexism," they were just as likely to be ridiculed as respected.

The organization was also more likely to be taken seriously when it was being compared to more "radical" groups than when it was being assessed alone. In this

middle period NOW became the beneficiary of news' hostility to more radical feminisms.

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## **2.1 ERA, Sex Discrimination and Civil Rights:**

### **NOW's News Legitimation Contexts, 1970-1974**

In the 1970-1974 period NOW began to be taken more seriously in news stories. For example, in a 1970 report of a speech given by Betty Friedan, NOW is described in a very straightforward way as a national organization with thousands of members:

NOW which has about 35 national chapters with up to 100 members each, is the oldest and the largest of the women's groups ... Among its campaigns have been the demand for equal employment opportunities for women, day care centers, where mothers who want to go to work can leave their children, and the repeal of abortion laws. (New York Times, March 21, 1970, p. 21.)

The quotes that used to surround NOW's goals have been dropped and NOW's statements are taken at face value. Notice also here the much less inflammatory description of NOW's stand on abortion as seeking a "repeal of abortion laws" rather than "the right of women to terminate unwanted pregnancies."

This gradual change in the media coverage was recognized by NOW's 1970-1971 president Aileen Hernandez as one of the most significant changes to affect the organization:

Mrs. Hernandez, dressed in a coral and white wool ensemble with a matching scarf in her hair, was very definite when asked what she thought was NOW's greatest accomplishment. "The media no longer look at our movement with such great humor," she said firmly. "We used to get asked," Do you mean you want men to become playboy bunnies? Nobody asks things like that anymore." (New York Times, May 2, 1970)

Unfortunately she can't say the same for reporters descriptions of what women sources are wearing! This kind of commentary about women sources fashion judgment was becoming less frequent over time, but was still sometimes used, especially in stories like this one that appeared on the women's pages.

One key issue area in which NOW was treated as a serious source was in the context of the ERA. NOW's role in the legislative debate over the ERA was generally represented as serious and credible. The organization was talked about in this context as if it was a serious player , particularly by the *Times'* Eileen Shanahan.

Generally Shanahan (and a handful of other women reporters) took women's political groups and issues seriously in this period. These stories were not always uncritical, but they did talk about NOW and other women's groups as political actors (rather than as fashion plates or "crusaders"):

A group of major women's rights organizations announced today their consensus that a proposed substitute version of the equal rights amendment to the Constitution was inadequate. They thus killed for this year the last possibility of enactment of an amendment prohibiting governmental discrimination on the basis of sex ... The women's organizations said that the Bayh substitute would still permit many distinctions to be made on the basis of sex. (New York Times, November 12, 1970, p. 19.)

This story has a completely different tone than earlier stories in which NOW is quoted. In this story, in which women's organizations find legislation "unacceptable," they "kill" substitutions, and act as political agents. This is a far cry from "feeling put out" as earlier stories had termed NOW's positions. These stories treat "discrimination" as a known and well

understood term for experience, not as something that NOW is "alleging."

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Shanahan subsequently covered the Amendment and other aspects of women's politics, including stories about NOW conferences, and front page analyses of the landmark AT&T discrimination/affirmative action settlement in 1973. Whether for personal political reasons, or because of the context in which she came into contact with women's movement groups (i.e. as informed participants in a major legislative battle) Shanahan's representation of women's groups was quite different than previous coverage.<sup>5</sup> She simply treated them as straightforward news sources. Her stories on the ERA were dense, factual, and somewhat dry, legislative stories in which NOW and other women's movement groups were treated as informed sources. Shanahan legitimated women's politics by treating it as news.

On one occasion in 1975 Shanahan's sympathetic treatment of NOW became quite evident. When a Senate Labor Committee expedited an EEOC appointment too quickly for NOW to respond, Shanahan used NOW's "prepared testimony" as the basis for a story. Despite the fact that they had been unable to testify, NOW's material (statistics on the candidate's previous affirmative action commitments, his attitudes towards civil rights and so on) made it into the news anyway.<sup>6</sup>

Generally by the mid 1970s NOW had become an expert 310 source for journalists especially in areas of women's employment and sex discrimination law and policy. The organization is quoted alongside the NAACP in affirmative action stories, the AFSCME and other unions in economic stories, and with anti-discrimination groups generally in the front news sections of the paper.<sup>7</sup> NOW leaders routinely testified to the Civil Rights Commission of New York and other cities and to congressional and senate committees. And in 1974, the NOW president was invited to the White House as one of the "nation's best known" women's organizations. Clearly NOW had come to be seen as an important voice for women:

Notes from a feminist leader's calendar: "Friday -- meet with President Ford. Tell him how to better the lot of women... The first President of NOW to meet with a President of the United States, Miss De Crow said she hopes to have Mr. Ford's attention long enough to tell him the following: "I want to put a buzz in his head about running with a woman... I will push for the appointment of women federal judges, and I want a commitment that if he has an opportunity to appoint a Supreme Court justice he will name a woman. There should be an affirmative action program for the White House and its staff. It is essential that someone read all

the President's speeches and White House memos to make sure they have no sexist content. I want a commitment that if legislation is passed to chip away at the Supreme Court decision on abortion, that he would veto it. I want a commitment that he support any legislation that affects women and veto any that is anti-women. (New York Times, September 6, 1974)

Sometimes that seriousness extended into control over a story's frame. In a Congressional Hearing in 1974 for example, organized by Brooklyn Democrat, Shirley Chisholm, NOW and other women's groups responses were allowed to define the story from the outset:

Representatives from women's groups criticized today the Federal Government's record in fighting sex discrimination in educational programs and told a House subcommittee that special provisions against such discrimination should be included in pending vocational training legislation. (New York Times, April 22, 1974, p. 17)

This kind of access, which has been called that of a "primary definer" is rarely granted to those outside of institutional power circles. For NOW it is certainly

a far cry from "self-styled militants" who "allege" "discrimination."

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## **2.2 The Limits of Legitimation: "Private" Contexts**

At the same time as ERA coverage and front page stories on sex discrimination were portraying NOW as a credible source, its representation in other topic areas and on the women's page was much more contradictory and more prone to trivialization. A story in 1971, for example, reports on NOW's work on sex role stereotyping on school, toys and texts, and ridicules it as a ridiculous focus on "discrimination in the toddler set:"

Women's liberation in the nursery? No more pink for girls and blue for boys, dolls for girls and trucks for boys, sewing kits for girls and football helmets for boys? That's how it could be if some believers in the women's liberation credo have their way. Having already crusaded for equal treatment of the sexes in the professions, academe and the home -- as well as in children's books-- they're now turning their attention to the playpen... The New York chapter of the National Organization for Women, which just recently went before the New York City Board of Education with a study of discrimination against female students, teachers and principals in the public school system, is

turning its attention to discrimination in the toddler set. (New York Times, May 12, 1971, p. 38)

In this 1971 story, the idea of sex role stereotyping is pooh-poohed and feminism is described as a "credo," rather than a politics. The story's tone suggests that this is surely not a serious subject and that this time these women are just going too far.

In general, whenever new or untried issues were mentioned (especially those that aimed their critiques at the general system rather than specific legislative concerns) NOW was put back in the "peculiar" box. In fact the limits of NOW's legitimation become quite clear over time as we note that NOW was treated as a serious source only in those topic/issue areas that were most institutionalized and which best fitted existing models of political analysis.<sup>8</sup> Sex discrimination in employment, education and credit, for example, were issues that had developed legislative histories and institutional homes. However when NOW tried to bring feminist analyses "home" or to describe a more general system of "sexism" they were again ridiculed.

NOW's expansion of its concerns in the 1970s from early focus on legal remedies and sex discrimination in employment, to more general critiques of racism, ageism, and sexism, in all aspect of society, was presented in a

way that suggested the organization was losing its focus:

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NOW Expands the List of What It's For and What It's Against

The Houston Conference of the National Organization for Women... committed NOW's 700 chapters to increased action on behalf of "personhood" ... for older women, homemakers, nurses, volunteer workers, women in sports, "aggrieved women and children of divorce," women in poverty and even women in foreign countries. (New York Times, June 2, 1974, p. 18)

This distinction is again made quite clear in a 1970 report of a feminist address to the Rotarians. Issues such as equal pay are fine, but analyses that attack fundamental social and familial structures are outside of the game:

As individuals the audience left little room for doubt as to where they stood on the matter of women's liberation. It was generally agreed that equal pay for equal work and equal opportunities for both sexes were valid points, but both men and women appeared equally bewildered and at times openly hostile to other statements of principle.

### **2.3 Legitimation through Differentiation:**

#### **The Reasonable and the Radical**

This distinction in treatment between NOW's institutionalized issues and its newer issues, was also reflected in news during this period by another process of differentiation and contextualization in which NOW was compared to other movement groups. Generally NOW gained from this comparison. It was presented as the "reasonable" alternative to more "radical" feminisms.

In the early 1970s a number of radical feminist groups exploded onto the public scene and NOW began to seem quite respectable by comparison. Journalists writing about the movement started to make distinctions between what was reasonable feminism and what was not, and NOW, for the most part, was a beneficiary of this distinction. Even as the writer in this 1970 piece reports on the younger groups' criticisms of NOW, it is clear that the younger groups themselves are being presented as marginal:

The largest of the groups within the movement is the National Organization for Women ... NOW works for passage and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and lobbies for federally funded day care centers. Then there are the radical women's groups

who dismiss NOW and its sympathizers as "bourgeois." Most of these groups are small; they often have names of significance only to the initiate such as Boston's Bread and Roses and New York's Redstockings. Many of these seem less concerned with restructuring the law than with, so far as possible, revolutionizing the female -- in some cases quite literally. There are some radical women who have said that only the development of an artificial uterus will truly "liberate" women, for it will free them from the "oppression" of pregnancy and birth. (New York Times, August 28, 1970, p. 20.)

The quotation marks here around "liberate" and "oppression" are similar to those that used to surround NOW's claims to "sex discrimination," but in the context of the more radical groups NOW is presented as more legitimate.

Here we see one of the critical roles of journalists and news media in interacting with social movements -- as the first interpreters of movements for the public, journalists play a critical role in assessing the normality or deviance of new movements and new ideas for their audiences. In the coverage of feminism, journalists seemed to take on this task happily.<sup>9</sup> In the name of an anonymous "Ms. Average

American" they assessed NOW and other feminist groups in **317** terms of their relative "normality" and separated feminism into the "reasonable" and the unreasonable. These were then packaged for readers in the appropriate linguistic frames. In this 1970 article, for example, the writer does a brilliant job of separating out for readers what is sensible feminism (equal wages and educational access ) and what is not (consciousness raising). All of this is achieved by general references to (normal) American women, like Mrs. Betty Newcomb who are midwestern (of course), married (of course), mothers (of course), and so concerned with "real" problems:

But these are not the sort of theories that seem likely to produce much response from non-radical women, who are not so interested in restructuring the family as in getting the same wages as their male co-workers. Or like Mrs. Betty Newcomb of Muncie Ind., who is married, the mother of four sons and an English teacher at Ball State University, they are women who care less about "consciousness raising" than about persuading the

local school system to stop discouraging girls who 318  
want to enter such "masculine" fields as  
engineering. (New York Times, August 11, 1970,  
p. 20)

This differentiation work was not only performed by  
journalists, however. At the same time as this news  
story appeared, NOW's own media strategists were also  
working to differentiate NOW from the more radical  
groups and ideas of the movement. It was in 1970, for  
example, that NOW was accused of having "purged" the  
organization of its active lesbians, and throughout the  
early 1970s NOW's communications to journalists included  
"differentiation" strategies that would contrast NOW's  
stance to that of more radical groups. In a 1973 letter  
NOW's Public Information Office, for example, distanced  
themselves from other feminists whom they indicate were  
the "real" bra burners, whereas NOW was a group of  
"serious women and men" dedicated to change society  
"for the benefit of both sexes."<sup>10</sup>

Betty Friedan (who left NOW in 1970 and was  
involved in organizing the Women's Political Caucus),  
was also involved in fierce differentiation between  
different kinds of feminism and feminists at this point.  
In 1971, for example, she is quoted as saying that the  
younger feminists are unrealistic and chauvinistic (New  
York Times, March 23, 1971, p. 32). And in 1973 Friedan

wrote and had published in the *Times* magazine, a long, critical "memoir" of her time in the movement in which she attacked the younger movement groups relentlessly. In the memoir Friedan took swipes at many of the movement's most visible members such as Steinem, Abzug, Brownmiller calling them "infantillists" and even FBI infiltrators of the movement. This article, which is quite long and complex, represents quite significant access for a movement leader to the *Times* pages. Friedan's attacks on radical feminism garnered her much more space than anything she had ever said on liberal feminism's behalf (New York Times Magazine, March 3, 1973).

The radical feminist groups fought back against Friedan's attacks and this internal debate was then picked up and re-presented by the press, especially those statements by either "side" that were most dramatic or derogatory. The younger groups called Friedan "bourgeois" and outdated and she called them "chauvinists" and "infantilists":

Susan Brownmiller, a member of the New York Radical Feminists, said in a recent magazine article that to her colleagues "Friedan, the mother of the movement and the organization that recruited in her image are considered hopelessly bourgeois." (New York Times, March 23, 1971, p. 32)

News stories reported the claims of both "sides" in the dispute quite extensively, but in the end tended to side with Friedan or at least with more "reasonable" feminisms. A 1973 story, for example, reporting on the ongoing debate, sets the radical feminists up as "children" to Friedan's "mother." Thus a serious movement dispute about ideologies and strategies is reduced to pop psychology:

It was billed as a "speak-out of the feminist community" to rebut alarms sounded by Betty Friedan, concerning a possible takeover of the women's liberation movement by man-haters, lesbians and "pseudo radical infantilists," and infiltrators "trained by the FBI and CIA." It turned into a rather classic "kill the mother" fantasy-drama -- with Mrs. Friedan, the mother of women's liberation, described as outgrown by the daughters....(New York Times, March 8, 1973, p. 52.)

Overall news coverage of the differences and dissent in the movement in this critical 1970-1973 period, focused on the dramatic and personal rather than ideological or strategic differences between the groups. And generally, the *Times* writers came down on the side

of more "sensible" feminisms that fitted well within existing frameworks of rights and equality -- i.e. Friedan and NOW -- and against the more radical claims of the younger groups. NOW benefited from this differentiation, then, while other feminist groups were marginalized.

This differentiation process, while it tells us something important about news can also be seen at least partly as a "success" for NOW legitimization strategies, because these differentiation techniques were not only the result of news framing mechanisms but also the result of differentiation techniques on NOW's part. During this period (as I indicate in chapter six) NOW strategists also took the opportunity to differentiate NOW from the "younger" groups. In fact this may be one of the occasions when NOW's public identity strategies meshed almost perfectly with news processing: both NOW and news used the younger groups as a foil for "sensible" feminisms.

### **III. INTERNAL DISSENT, 1974-1976:**

#### **WHO DOES NOW REPRESENT?**

The third identifiable "stage" in NOW's representation in news, came during the 1974-1976 period when the organization itself was in internal turmoil. By the mid 1970's many of the "younger" feminist groups had disappeared from public view and women who were still

interested in working in organized political feminism had joined NOW. This new membership, combined with an ongoing tension between the grassroots chapters and the national leadership over internal democracy, NOW policy, and visions of feminism more generally, came to a head in the 1974-5 NOW elections for national leaders.

At the 1975 NOW National Conference almost the entire standing NOW Board was replaced by a "majority caucus" of younger, more militant, leaders, and NOW headed into a period in which radical, long term goals were emphasized and the "mainstream" rejected. In a platform entitled "Out of the Mainstream and Into the Revolution" new NOW leaders expanded NOW's range of public concerns and began to articulate a different, more diverse and generalized feminist identity:<sup>11</sup>

The news about NOW produced during this two year period (centering especially around 1975) encompassed a wider range of critique and more complex coverage than NOW's news representation had before. Perhaps because of the new openness of NOW leaders -- and so the availability to journalists of internal critiques to draw on -- the coverage during this period is complex, wide ranging, critical and, when taken as a whole, contradictory. As such it reflected the reality of NOW at this point. The organization was undergoing internal debate and struggle over future goals and leadership, and the usual tight control over media representations

of internal dissent were relaxed. Indeed, as I argue in 323 chapter six, one of the issues being contended in this internal struggle was the public identity of NOW and media's role in publicizing either a united front or a complex and inclusive image of NOW (see chapter six, Identity Control Strategies).

Central to this period of coverage was an ongoing debate in news about just who NOW's members were -- and indeed who feminist were overall. Sometimes the organization's diversity was stressed as in this 1974 story:

The women at the NOW convention seemed to represent all ages, ethnic groups and walks of life. There were white-haired women with canes, teen-aged girls with their mothers-- and even a sprinkling of men. (New York Times, September 8, 1974, p.58.)

A similar theme of "feminists are everybody" was also struck in this 1975 story about feminism in the "wild west:"

There were "the ladies who lunch," the ladies who ranch, youthful college students in Levi's and middle aged mothers in J.C. Penney pant suits. (New York Times, May 3, 1975, p. 36)

However this sense of NOW as encompassing all kinds 324  
of women came under attack too, and NOW was sometimes  
presented as being out of touch with the "average"  
woman. When NOW's 1975 "Alice Doesn't" Strike failed,  
the *Times* took NOW to task:

"Alice Doesn't," a nationwide strike called by the  
National Organization for Women, fizzled in much of  
the country yesterday because most Alice's did.  
They did what NOW had urged them not to do.  
They went to work, they did housework, they  
shopped, they cooked, and they cared for their  
children. "Alice did because she had to," said  
an editor for a Chicago publishing house who worked  
yesterday. "It shows how out of touch with the  
world the NOW people are to call something like a  
strike. It's ridiculous. Most women are in  
positions where if they don't go to work, they'd be  
fired." (New York Times, October 30, 1975, p. 44.)

The critique/conversation about who NOW represented  
and why continued into 1976. Often the news debate had  
resonances of the criticisms that the Majority Caucus  
itself had mounted at the national convention. In this  
story, for example, the writer mounts the same critique  
that many of the majority caucus had about NOW's need to

out to minority women, working class women and housewives:

NOW Still Growing -- But It's Still White and Middle Class...

The National Organization for Women is now in its 10th year and some of the more gloomy are expressing great reservations about its future. Its last national convention was followed by the formation of a significant splinter group. Criticism has been leveled from various quarters at the organization's alleged failure to reach or represent large segments of women in society. (New York Times, January 24, 1976, p. 20)

This critique was accompanied by a long story which quoted extensively working class and minority women who worked in neighborhood projects, and whom the reporter asked to say what was wrong with NOW. In this long article, NOW's class and race base is examined and critiqued in a way that had not been seen before:

For Working Class Women, Own Organization and Goals  
The women's movement ... is in her mind an amorphous middle class group involved in many things that don't touch her life and removed from the hopes, desires, fears and uncertainties of

most women. I feel the women's movement puts down women in general... especially immigrant women who have always worked. When these women get a chance to stay home a few years they are being told they are oppressed and that they are slaves...

Groups like the National Organization for Women "are talking about jobs for self fulfillment when people can't get jobs of any kind," Miss Noschese said. (New York Times, January 24, 1976, p. 20.)

This new (and critical) focus on NOW's goals and membership, is not really be seen a "failure" of news management, though, because at this time NOW leaders were quite deliberately expressing dissenting ideas and positions to journalists. As part of a new "openness" in its dealing with the press and with grassroots membership, the new Majority Caucus Leadership may have in fact provided much of the raw material for these critiques. The tendency of earlier administration's to "soft pedal" particular issues with media was critiqued by the Majority Caucus who wanted NOW to begin to be more "up front" with news media about the range of concerns and conflict in the organization as a whole:

Down playing some issues for tactical reasons is always a risky procedure. When we fail to

articulate some of our goals we tend to drop them 327  
not only from our immediate demands but from our  
long term vision, It does not take much anxiety and  
circumspection to turn a multi-issued revolutionary  
movement into a one issue reform.<sup>12</sup>

After 1975, NOW's differentiation strategies, in  
which NOW's respectability had been played up at the  
expense of other movement groups, were also adjusted. In  
this later period NOW's relationship to the rest of the  
movement was usually presented to media as one of  
"sisterhood" rather than as the respectable arm of the  
movement.

NOW is presented overall in this period as a highly  
contentious organization whose membership, leaders and  
agenda was in flux. However this was not a marginalizing  
representation. Although NOW does not come off  
particularly well in these debates -- being presented as  
an elitist, white, middle class organization which was  
only partly true -- it is a debate in which NOW's right  
to be the subject of such serious analysis is now taken  
for granted. This overt, serious weighing of NOW's  
goals, future and membership is a far cry from its early  
representation as somewhat dubious and "self-styled."

Though the organization did not always look good  
in this period, it is an indication of NOW's general  
increase in legitimacy that they are subject to this

level of strategic critique at all. Reporters usually save this kind of attention -- the "how well are they doing their job" frame -- for electoral candidates. NOW is seen during this period as a legitimate organization which should be doing a better job of representing all women. It was exactly this identity as a voice for women that NOW's early leaders had tried to produce, and which it had been hard to persuade journalists there was any need for.

#### **IV. 1976-1980, SOLIDIFYING LEGITIMACY, HISTORICIZING NOW**

In the mid and late 1970s NOW's identity in news stories became more and more normalized. Indeed the organization even began to be historicized as a respected pioneer of "hard won rights" and to be seen as a fixture in the political process. An unsigned (and therefore institutional) *Times* editorial in 1977, entitled "Feminism Then and NOW," caps this progression to respectability as the *Times* itself recognizes NOW's importance:

The quiet passage of the tenth anniversary of the National Organization for Women belies the profound change in America's consciousness generated by the women's movement. Initially feminist claims were jarring, even enraging... In a decade the country

has changed. The women's movement has unleashed a new literature, new social criticism, new talent. Few men would now be insensitive enough to sum up the movement's appeal the way one comedian did a few years ago: "Sure my wife joined the feminists. Why not? They all want somebody to help with the dishes." Solid gains in legislation, business, labor and government, clearly have been made. (New York Times, May 3, 1977, p. 40.)

This piece on Westchester NOW's reunion, for example, focuses on how feminism, and NOW membership has even been good for the health of the participants:

... feminism is doing what Lydia E. Pinkham -- the inventor of a patent medicine for "female ailments" -- and tranquilizers haven't been able to do; keeping us healthy, happy, busy, sober and married. (New York Times, June 26, xxii, p. 20.)

The hook for this institutionalizing of NOW was officially its tenth anniversary. But in fact the general process of legitimation had been building up for some years prior to its official declaration in this editorial.<sup>13</sup>

This general legitimation as a long-standing participant in social change did not mean that NOW was

treated uncritically. As I indicated in the previous section, NOW was routinely critiqued during this period for its imperfections in representing all women. And in this last period, NOW was also critiqued for its lack of sophistication as a "insider" player. Now that the *Times* had allowed NOW into the fold of serious civil rights organizations, it began to assess NOW's strategies, not as a social movement (i.e. as critical and/or radical) but as an "insider" who should know better than to be "unrealistic" or "extreme."

During this period, for example, NOW had begun to take more of a role in electoral politics. But as far as the *Time's* was concerned NOW was not very good at this kind of politics. When in 1979 NOW decided not to endorse Carter for renomination because of his dismal record on getting the ERA ratified, the *Times* subjected NOW leadership to a heavy dose of patronizing advice. Under a general heading of "The Complaints of the Women's Lobby," the editorial said:

We've held back comment on the rejection of President Carter's candidacy by the National Organization for Women. The nominating convention is eight months off and the election is 11 months off. Perhaps, we thought, there is a way out of that tightly painted corner, or an explanation. Alas, the ineptitude stands unrelieved, NOW should

try to get out of its corner even before the paint 331  
dries. (New York Times, December 19, 1979, p. 30)

The *Times* tone in this period is one of scolding a recalcitrant child. NOW is being criticized for holding onto its outsider tactics, when it is now in the game. But being critiqued as a player (or as a not very good player) is something quite different from being a dubious newcomer.

By 1981, as this editorial piece notes, the women's movement has come of age as far as news is concerned:

A Bad Time for Women?

A columnist reporting recently on an argument between two writers quoted the following dialogue:

He: "I am not here to argue with a feminist."

She: "I am not a feminist."

To him "feminist" seems to be a kind of dirty word. Judging by the response, it is to her as well. Why, we'd like to ask them. Do you really know what it means? Or do you really mean what you're saying? -- that someone who espouses, to cite Webster, "the theory of the political, social and economic equality of the sexes," isn't worth talking to? Still, being able to define feminism correctly is less important than being able to recognize the extraordinary growth of the women's movement. Since

November, new memberships in NOW have been running at approximately 9,000 to 10,000 monthly, two to three times the previous average. No fewer than 24 women's groups have, in a joint statement, assailed certain of the Reagan Administration's budget cuts. Another new coalition includes several public affairs law groups, and a similar organization is being formed for food and hunger issues. There are, of course, many other women who see themselves threatened, less by a new administration than by the new roles into which they are being urged, and by what they interpret as denigration of their old ones. It would be an error, then, to assume that females now constitute a political monolith. What is certain, however, is that faced with what they perceive as an alarming insensitivity to certain human issues, some women are mounting strong and increasingly structured protests. Only ten years ago such political channels were close to nonexistent; 15 years ago they were close to inconceivable. This may indeed be a bad time for women, but there is no longer any doubt that the women's movement is a remarkable revolution.

(New York Times 1981, June 1, p. 16)

This editorial piece is extraordinary for its "seal of approval" of NOW. But also for its alignment of the *Times* ("we") with feminism ("well, we would like to ask him why"), when in fact that had not always been the case at all. The editorial wipes out the *Times* own historical resistance to NOW, to feminism and to sex discrimination. Its own role in resisting "so-called equality" is erased and readers are now asked to stand with the *Times* on the side of sensible people and support the movement. It notes that "political channels" were closed to feminism 10 years ago, but fails to note that the *Times* itself was one of those channels.

This is an important development in NOW's public legitimation, and it must be seen as a "successful" outcome for NOW media strategists. If the *Times* is an indicator of journalism more generally, then, by 1981, NOW had become a publicly legitimate voice at least for equality feminism. But it is important to note also, that it is a particular version of the movement that is being centered here -- the *Times* supports a feminism that is about "political, social and economic equality."

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:**

##### **Conditional Legitimation for NOW**

In the early years, 1966-1970 NOW was generally trivialized in news through a combination of being treated as part of the fashion genre and through

distancing techniques and descriptions that trivialized 334  
the organization's political positions. In the 1970-1974  
period NOW began to be presented as a more legitimate  
source. But this legitimation was limited and  
complicated by news tendency to process NOW differently  
in different issue and movement contexts. In 1975, as  
part of a larger process of dissent in the organization,  
NOW's representativeness, and membership, came under  
serious critique, but I argue that this critique was not  
necessarily marginalizing, because it took NOW seriously  
as an organization trying to represent all women. By  
1980/1981, NOW seems to have become institutionalized in  
the eyes of the *Times* editors at least. The organization  
was still critiqued, but stories and editorials  
surrounding NOW's 10th anniversary indicate that it had  
come to be perceived as a "player" in national politics.

These patterns in NOW's representation reflect its  
own active control and strategizing to some extent, but  
the NOW-news relationship was also structured by  
discursive categories and assumptions that news brought  
to the interaction, and which may also stretch beyond  
news to the liberal political discursive context of both  
news and NOW. In the early years, for example, despite  
NOW's investment in media work and its attempts to  
retain tight control of the organization's in media, it  
was not represented as a legitimate news source. NOW  
suffered as an organization in this period from the

general "newness" of feminism to journalists, who responded by marginalizing and ridiculing NOW and its goals. In 1966 the idea of feminism and especially "sex discrimination" was a new and challenging frame for gender relations, and in the first few years of interaction with news, NOW's articulation of this frame was not taken seriously. As NOW and other groups continued to articulate sex discrimination and sexism frames over time, and as their efforts resulted in legislation and EEO compliance, news also began to take these frames for experience more seriously, and to drop quotes and qualifiers from its representation of NOW's goals. It is the persistence of these strategic communications over time, though, that seems to be key here.

In the 1970-1974 period when NOW was beginning to be taken more seriously, some of this legitimization process may be traced directly to the setting up of the Public Information Office and the systematic provision of information to journalists about women's issues. The information work NOW strategists did with women reporters (such as Shanahan) in making the ERA an issue seems to have succeeded here.

The differentiation process, through which NOW gained some legitimacy at the expense of the "younger" movement groups, was also influenced by NOW's strategies. As I indicate earlier in the chapter, it was

not only journalists who were involved in making distinctions between "reasonable" and "radical" feminisms. Some NOW strategists at this point also saw the rise of women's liberation groups as an opportunity to set NOW apart. In the long run, however, these kind of differentiation processes also worked against NOW itself. NOW was more likely to be seen as a serious news source only in specific issue areas such as the ERA or sex discrimination, which by the 1970s had a developed institutional and legislative history. When NOW moved to address newer or more radical feminist topics, however, its reception was less friendly, and some of the old marginalizing techniques that had been used in presenting NOW in the early years reappeared in these stories. News' preference for "old" politics and equality (rather than radical) feminism which NOW had been able to use strategically to gain legitimacy as a group (compared to the "younger" groups) was also brought to bear on NOW at the level of issues.

The question of whether NOW "succeeded" in its legitimation strategies, then, seems to be yes and no. Over time a general legitimation can be seen to have taken place in NOW's representation in the *Times*. But this legitimation had some important limitations. As in NOW's agenda-building activities, NOW's identity was processed within a discursive context of struggle over the boundaries of "legitimate" politics more generally,

and which in the context of feminist and NSM politics can be seen as a struggle over public-private boundaries (McLaughlin, 1993; Fraser, 1992).

Just as in agenda-building strategies and outcomes a pervasive public-private framework seems to be in place throughout NOW's interaction with the *Times* in this period. NOW's legitimation, for example, was more assured when it talked about traditional issues. But there was also some shifting of issues within the framework. Over time what news considered to be an illegitimate issue changed. In 1966, for example, the *Times* was less than friendly to sex discrimination as a frame for women's politics -- calling it "so-called discrimination" and asking if a women's movement was not somehow ridiculous. But by 1981 sex discrimination in employment, education and so on, had become the legitimate aspect of feminism in the eyes of the *Times* .

The NOW-news struggle, then, was both structured and shifting. It was the result of systematic processing by news conventions, but over time it was also influenced by NOW's strategies and by its ongoing strategic communication and political mobilization. The same sorting mechanism was always at work here in which news decided what was legitimate or not (or in this case what is "public" or not), but some "movement" took place from one category to the other as a result of NOW's strategic framing and articulation of issues. NOW was

able to "make" sex discrimination an issue, it was less 338  
able to make child care an issue, at least in this  
period.

NOW's legitimation in the public sphere was  
connected to its own strategic choices, then, in that  
without that strategic interaction on NOW and other  
feminist group's part, it is doubtful if any of the  
"movement" indicated in this chapter -- i.e. sex  
discrimination becoming legitimated as a frame -- would  
have taken place. But the NOW-news relationship was  
also part of a larger struggle over public-private  
politics that both constrained and enabled both  
journalists and activists, and in which NOW and news  
workers were only two of many players.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See chapter six for more discussion of NOW's identity  
control strategies.

<sup>2</sup> For example, as I note later in this chapter, "sex  
discrimination" started out as a radical frame for  
women's experiences of inequalities and was resisted for  
a while by journalists and policy makers, but by the mid  
1970s this was one of NOW's more institutionalized  
issues and "sexism" or child care were the areas in  
which it was taken less seriously.

<sup>3</sup> The context of the story is also highly contradictory  
-- the first serious magazine article on the movement in  
the *Times* and it is placed among ads for girdles and  
lingerie whose catch line is "My Wife and My Wallet are  
in Great Shape (Thanks to Soft Skin)."

<sup>4</sup> Gitlin (1980) has illustrated how SDS was marginalized  
by playing on its youth and flamboyance -- i.e. news  
legitimacy centered around age/experience vs.  
youth/inexperience dichotomies. In NOW's case the  
marginalization was gendered -- i.e. it centered around  
male/female legitimacy fault lines.

<sup>5</sup> Shanahan is widely credited with making the ERA a  
major story, after she was alerted to it by women's

rights activist, See Simpson (1979) and Robertson (1992).

<sup>6</sup> *New York Times*, Wednesday May 21, 1975, p.

<sup>7</sup> See for example, *New York Times*, January 19, 1973, for an analysis of the AT&T discrimination settlement where NOW and the NAACP, are key spokespersons, or December 15, 1972, p.69, a story on the SEC and discrimination in stock market firms in which NOW and the Presbyterian church are sources; or May 8, 1973 for responses by "social reform groups" to proposed budget cuts that includes NOW and the AFSCME.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting here again, though, that what constituted this group of "institutionalized" topics was itself the outcome of previous struggle. The relative legitimacy of sex discrimination by the 1970s was the result of previous years of strategic communication.

<sup>9</sup> Reporters' willingness to stand in for the "public" is problematic first, because of their general lack of representativeness of the population, and second, because of their general lack of reflexivity about the specificity of their own socio-cultural backgrounds. For example, the reporter quoted above assumes that because feminist groups names did not have any resonance for her, that they would not for anybody. But both Bread and Roses and Redstockings would have resonated for people familiar with labor or feminist history.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Dian Terry to Dick Cavett Show, NBC TV, June 1973, Public Information Office papers, NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library

<sup>11</sup> The "Out of the Mainstream" title was a deliberate reference to NOW's first public statement that it intended to bring women "into the mainstream" of political and social life in America. See NOW Statement of Purpose, 1966.

<sup>12</sup> NOW, 1975, Majority Caucus manifesto and "slate" published for the 1975 National NOW Conference in Philadelphia. NOW Collection, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>13</sup> In the same year (1977) three other stories also reflect on how attitudes have changed and how NOW has been a historical force; April 24, p. 26, March 25, p. B5, June 26, xxii, p. 20.

**News as a Political Resource?****An Overdetermined Dialogical Model**

NOW's access to news, and its ability to use news to build a women's issue agenda and a legitimate public identity -- its "success" as defined in this study -- was clearly overdetermined. The organization's own ability to understand and interact with news over time was structured by its available resources, its strategic choices, and its identity at different times. And the outcome of that interaction -- the representation of NOW and its agenda over time in news content -- was the result, not only of shifts in these structuring factors, but also of the underlying categories and discursive constraints of both news and feminist discourses.

The NOW-news interaction took place across multiple levels. It was, at the same time, an interaction between individuals (journalists and news workers), organizations, and, perhaps most complexly, between two discourses, news and feminism, which are substantially different system of knowledge. News, for example, owes much of its way of seeing the world to liberal, objectivist, philosophical underpinnings, which tend to assume a separation between public and private domains (van Zoonen, 1992; McDermott, 1994; Hackett, 1996).

Feminisms on the other hand, whether they are designated **341** liberal, radical or pragmatist, have often been said to be constructivist, experientially based system of knowledge whose participants are engaged in blurring or breaking down this public-private boundary which historically has served to marginalize women's experiences and concerns (Fraser, 1992; Butler and Scott, 1992).

Interactions at each of these levels (between individuals, organizations and discourses) affected and constrained the others, sometimes in contradictory ways. For example, journalists and activists drew on and reproduced the structures of their own discourses, but they were also affected by each other in interaction. Interactions with feminists meant that journalists introduced issues like sexual harassment and terms such as "sexism" and "sex discrimination" into news and so into public discourse. And clearly NOW was influenced by news ways of seeing the world, as it deliberately encoded media conventions into its communications in order to attract and maintain relationships with journalists.

The relative effects of these discourses on one another-- whether one transforms the other or whether there is fundamental disjuncture or agreement -- is as likely to structure the NOW-news interaction as day-to-day relationships between individuals. Indeed these two levels are inseparable -- it is through individuals'

interaction day to day that these different discourses 342  
are brought together, elaborated or transformed in  
interaction.

This complexity of multiple levels and multiple structuring factors means that NOW's relative "success" in the interaction has to be determined contextually within particular boundaries and trajectories, and at different levels. Different structuring factors are also likely to be more or less important at different levels of the interaction. In the rest of this chapter, then, I summarize and discuss some of the key relationship and structuring factors at different levels of this overdetermined interaction. First, I summarize the various (and overlapping) roles played by resources, strategies and identity in structuring NOW's media access possibilities. Then I summarize and assess patterns in the outcome of that interaction -- in news content. By analyzing patterns in the outcome of the NOW-news interaction (content analysis) in the context of information about NOW's shifting media strategies, agendas and identities (institutional analysis) it is possible to identify the roles played by news practices, conventions and discursive categories in structuring this interaction separately from the roles played by NOW strategies.

I argue overall that the press functioned as both a resource and a constraint in NOW's public communication.

While news access made it possible for NOW to communicate to larger publics, news media also brought to bear on NOW's discourse, its own discursive categories and structures. In particular, I argue here, it brought to bear a pervasive public-private dichotomy, which news shares with liberal politics more generally, and which is inimical to feminism.

The question for NOW, and other new social movement organizations, then, becomes less whether news media can be understood and used as a resource, but more strategically, how can the constraints and possibilities of news -- the structures of news -- be negotiated as a resource? As Giddens (1984) has noted, structure is both constraining and enabling. Structure can be oppressive when it is routinely reproduced through unreflective practice, but structures can also be enabling when the "rules" of a system are made accessible to the participants, who can then use them as resources. It is this reflexive appropriation of the "rules" of systems as resources which challenges deterministic models of social life.

NOW seems to have been only partially successful in negotiating the structures of news. The organization did manage to learn about and use some of the structures of news -- to reflexively appropriate some of the rules -- but there were also areas of news, especially at the deeper discursive levels, that were not accessible to

NOW strategists, and could not be incorporated into their strategic interactions. Generally NOW seems to have been more successful in learning about and using the structures of news at the level of practices and routines, than at the ideological or discursive level where it was constrained (and processed by) the discursive constraints of news.

### **The Structuring Role of Resources in News Access**

One of the most fundamental relationships that emerged in this study was that between resources and access to media. NOW's access to media was structured by its resource mobilization more generally. It was the income from membership that allowed the organization to spend money on media work. The class and professional background of NOW leaders, which translated into competence and media contacts, was also instrumental in allowing it to interact with media. NOW's organizational form, of centralization and also representation across the country in chapters, made it possible both to control communication to media and to be seen as representative by media.

Resources, especially information, competence and membership dollars are the first determining factors in NOW news access. Without such resources no interaction with media is possible at all. As Curran and Gurevitch (1991, p. 19) have suggested, when it comes to symbolic

power resources are determining not in the "last instance" but in the first.

The relationship between resources and symbolic success is not a straightforward one, however. Resources may make interaction possible, but they do not determine success in controlling the interaction. While they tell us about the general parameters of the relationship they do not help us to understand how it is that material resources can be translated into news voice. It is in strategic analysis that the answer to how resources are transformed into symbolic success can be found.

### **The Role of Reflexive Strategy**

Besides resources, NOW's strategic sophistication in interaction with news was a critical factor in structuring access. While resources made the interaction possible, it was NOW's development of a sophisticated media pragmatism which made continuous interaction with journalists possible. Over time NOW developed a more and more sophisticated version of its media pragmatism. From early attempts to control the group's identity through taking media conventions into account, to a fully fledged research project to determine how best to interact with journalists, NOW saw news as a potential movement resource and has set out to appropriate and use it for mass communication purposes.

This media pragmatism was somewhat contradictory as 346 a strategy however. It produced both access to news (and so to publics and the public agenda) and limitations in NOW's public communication. It was this pragmatism, for example, which allowed NOW to become a useful source for women reporters. But it was also media pragmatism which distorted NOW's identity in the first few years as NOW leaders avoided talking about subjects such as lesbianism.

Similarly NOW's strategy of finding and supporting sympathetic women reporters had both productive and limiting outcomes. As chapter seven illustrates, a large percentage of news stories about NOW were produced by women reporters, and in particular by a handful of recurring writers (e.g. Eileen Shanahan, Peggy Simpson, etc.) with whom NOW built relations over time. The significant resources NOW invested in becoming sources to these women reporters seems to have paid off in serious coverage.

However, this strategy of interacting with and supporting women reporters meant that the limited access women journalists had at this time to front page news and institutional beats also limited NOW's media access. As chapter seven illustrates, even though 2/3 of the stories were written by women, most of the front page NOW stories were written by men. It seems that gendered assignments and sexism within news organizations makes

women reporters less influential gateways into news for 347  
feminist sources at the same time as they are the  
journalist who may be most likely to pay attention to  
women's politics.

It may also be the case that NOW's media pragmatism contributed overall to its own "processing" by news media in terms of public-private categorizations. As I suggest above, incorporating the news "values" of journalists in order to get their attention, may have meant that NOW was also sometimes invoking a discursive system that was inimical to feminist discourses. Speaking in "media logic" gained the attention of reporters -- and so access to the public sphere -- but it also meant restricting public communication about NOW's identity and political concerns and may have meant that early NOW leaders thought less like feminists. In the early years, for example, NOW leaders often erased or ignored issues and concerns of NOW membership in an effort to appear "respectable" to news media and policy makers. For example, in the early years NOW leaders erased the organization's lesbian membership from its public identity, and in the 1970-1974 period NOW strategists were willing to publicly marginalize the younger movement groups in order to increase NOW's perceived news legitimacy as the "reasonable" arm of feminism. As a social movement organization with normative and philosophical goals, as well as strategic

aims, NOW's focus on its media identity may have cost it 348  
some legitimacy within the movement.

NOW's media pragmatism, then, was successful at producing access, but that access "cost" the organization in terms of ideological constraints in its public communication, and in the long run this media savvy may also have made it easier for news discourse to process NOW's discourse through its own discursive framework because NOW has already encoded news conventions into its own communications.

### **Ideology/Identity and Discursive Interaction**

NOW's organizational identity also structured its interactions with news media, but not in any straightforward or predictive way. Rather NOW's shifts in identity (e.g. its goals, leaders, or policies) over time, also affected its communication strategies, and it was shifts in these communication strategies as much as any identity shifts that usually resulted in changes in NOW's news legitimacy (the measure of identity "success" used here.)

In the early years, 1966-1970, for example, NOW was generally trivialized in news through a combination of being treated as part of the fashion genre ,and through distancing techniques and descriptions that trivialized the organization's political positions. This trivialization period ends around 1974, however, and NOW

begins to be seen as a legitimate speaker in news media 349

. This change in representation is not really the result of significant changes in NOW's identity though. Rather, it is the result of an intensification of communication efforts. The early 1970s to 1974 was a period of intense communicative activity on NOW's part, with the NOW PIO especially playing a role in increasing news visibility. It was also during this period that NOW strategists began systematically supporting women reporters and this information "subsidy" work seems to have succeeded here in making the ERA a public issue among other efforts.<sup>1</sup>

In 1975, again, shifts in NOW's representation were more tied to shifts in strategy than tied directly to identity questions. News representations of NOW in the 1974-1976 period, for example, showed NOW as a complex, contentious organization, but to a large extent this new public identity was the result of loosening of control over its public image by new NOW leaders. The organization did change its identity during this period, but it was the effects that this shift had on communication strategies that affected NOW's representation. The new majority leaders wanted a more open public identity for NOW that was inclusive, and they were willing to risk media ridicule for this purpose, so they changed NOW's media strategy from a careful, controlled public communication about NOW that sanitized the organization and stressed its respectable

elements, to a strategy that more accurately represented 350  
NOW's own internal diversity,

Clearly identity does play a role -- when we compare NOW to the "younger" feminist groups it becomes clear that a group's overall identity will structure its media interactions. But it is difficult to carve out an independent role for NOW's identity in structuring media access. Rather, NOW's identity structured its media strategies which affected its representations. Over time the relative legitimacy of NOW's public identity (the identity "success" measure used here) was the result, then, of news conventions and practices interacting with NOW's media strategies. There seems to be no strong independent determining role here for identity per se.

#### **News Outcomes: Successes and Limitations**

These structuring factors -- resources, strategies and identity -- help explain NOW's interaction patterns with media, but in order to understand the interaction -- and indeed to assess the relative "success" of NOW strategies in controlling the organization's identity or agenda -- we need to look also at the outcomes of the interaction in news content. It is only by looking at both NOW strategies and news content, that we can in fact separate out a role for news discourse structures in this interaction.

NOW was successful in some important ways in its interaction with news media. The organization was able to access news media and in doing so it helped to build a public agenda for "women's issues." As chapter seven illustrates, NOW was able to achieve basic access to news and to produce voice in the news most of the time. NOW leaders and strategists were quoted in news stories NOW more than half of the time. This kind of access and "voice" do not necessarily equate with NOW's control over its representation or its agenda, but they are both necessary, if not sufficient, conditions for such control.

With some important exceptions (such as homosexuality and poverty) news stories about NOW represented the range of its issues accurately. And indeed, the *Times* silence on the issue of homosexuality may have also been a kind of "success" for NOW, whose early leadership at least, found the topic too controversial and divisive to make it central to the organization's agenda.<sup>2</sup>

NOW was also able to transfer its sense of importance to news media with several issues, such as the ERA and sex discrimination in employment, though its ranking of other issues such as family/child care issues was less successful.

As chapter eight describes, NOW was also successful in building legitimacy for itself as a serious civil

rights organization, though this legitimacy was limited 352  
in important ways and it was only achieved over a long  
period of time. From an early period of marginalization  
(1966-1970) in which NOW and its goals were generally  
trivialized in news, NOW then underwent an overall  
legitimation beginning in the early 1970s. By 1980 the  
organization was seen as a serious political player and  
a champion of "hard won rights" by the *Times*. In this  
later period NOW's treatment was still often critical,  
but stories and editorials surrounding NOW's 10th  
anniversary indicate that it had come to be perceived as  
a "player" in national politics.

### **The Limits of Media Access**

Despite the considerable reflexive news skills  
developed by NOW strategists, the organization and its  
discourse were still "processed" in constraining ways by  
the *Times*. NOW's feminist discourse was quite  
systematically processed through a pervasive  
public/private framework that tended to legitimate (i.e.  
put up front as news) those subjects that could most  
easily be connected to liberal discourses (e.g. those  
traditionally associated with individual rights and  
state or public concerns) and to marginalize or de-  
politicize others by placing them in the context of  
traditional "feminine" or lifestyle contexts. This  
placement was not inevitable or determined -- for

example abortion stories, depending on their context (i.e. legal or protest) and their writer might be placed in different locations at different times-- but it was pervasive.

A similar process seems to have been in effect for NOW's organizational legitimacy. As chapter eight illustrates, after initially marginalizing representations, NOW then underwent a general legitimating process and began to be cited as the central feminist organization in American public life. This general increase in NOW's perceived legitimacy, however, was constrained by the issue and movement contexts in which NOW appeared. If NOW was being quoted in the context of its more institutionalized issues -- such as sex discrimination in employment, for example -- the organization was more likely to be treated seriously than if it was talking about sexism in children's toys.

NOW's increase in organizational legitimacy was also gained at the expense of other more "radical" groups in the movement. In the early 1970s especially, NOW became a strategic signifier of the acceptable boundaries of feminism, while the younger branch groups were credited with more "unreasonable" demands.<sup>3</sup>

This "processing" of NOW's identity or agenda was not itself static over time, however. As news processed NOW through its public-private framework the contents of these categories were themselves shifting over time.

What news considered an illegitimate issue in 1966 (e.g. 354 "so-called true equality for women") had become by 1981 the legitimate aspect of feminism in the eyes of the *Times*.

The NOW-news struggle was both structured and shifting. It was the result of systematic processing of NOW by news into legitimate/illegitimate categories. But it is also clear that some issues and frames move between these categories over time as a result of ongoing strategic communication.

#### **NEWS DISCOURSE AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES**

News functioned as both a resource and a constraint in NOW's public communication. While news access made it possible for NOW to communicate to larger publics, news media also brought to bear on NOW's discourse, its own discursive categories and structures. In particular, I argue here, it brought to bear a pervasive public-private dichotomy, which news shares with liberal politics more generally. In this framework, NOW's more "public" issues -- i.e. those that conformed to conventional news (and liberal political) judgments of importance (e.g. employment issues and the ERA), were highly ranked and placed in the news sections, More traditionally "private" issues (such as family/child care concerns) were ranked low (in agenda setting terms) and placed on women's pages. In filtering NOW's

discourse through this public-private framework, news was reproducing some of the very constraints that feminists had set out to negotiate in their attempts to "make public" formerly "private" (and gendered) issues whose lack of public attention has been a source of oppression for women (Fraser, 1992; Butler and Scott, 1992; McDermott, 1994).

The question for NOW, and other new social movement organizations, then, becomes less whether news can be understood and used as a resource, but more strategically, how can the constraints and possibilities of news -- the structures of news -- be negotiated as a resource? As Giddens (1984) has noted, structure is both constraining and enabling. Structure can be oppressive when it is routinely reproduced through unreflective practice, but structures can also be enabling when the "rules" of a system are made accessible to the participants, who can then use them as resources. It is this reflexive appropriation of the "rules" of systems as resources which challenges deterministic models of social life.

NOW seems to have been only partially successful in negotiating the structures of news. The organization did manage to learn about and use some of the structures of news -- to reflexively appropriate some of the rules -- but there were also areas of news, especially at the deeper discursive levels, that were not accessible to

NOW strategists, and could not be incorporated into their strategic interactions. Generally NOW seems to have been more successful in learning about and using the structures of news at the level of practices and routines, than at the ideological or discursive level. For example, NOW strategists learned about and used the event orientation of news, and they planned events in order to have a chance to talk about issues more generally. And NOW strategists learned about and used news convention in their "subsidizing" of women journalists. But the organization was less successful in negotiating the discursive constraints of news through which NOW's discourse was processed according to issues as public(important) or private (less important). These discursive constraints - which I argue here are manifested in public/private distinctions -- thus became constraining for NOW's public communication.<sup>4</sup>

Giddens (1984) suggests that we can understand structure as a combination of rules and resources; and it is by learning about and appropriating those rules and mobilizing resources that structures become enabling. But it is necessary first to bring knowledge of the rules (which are usually deeply embedded in routines and practices) to the surface for conscious appropriation. NOW seems to have managed to mobilize some resources and to learn about and use some of the rules involved in news structures. For example, the

organization appropriated some of the convention of news 357  
writing and news gathering. But NOW did not access the  
structures (or "rules") of news at the epistemological  
level. Yet it may be that it is these discursive level  
constraints of news structures that will be most  
critical to the NSMs. As many observers have noted, the  
symbolic challenge of the NSMs is often at exactly this  
level -- they challenge the parameters of debate and  
propose new ways of seeing or relations to one another  
and to the world (Boggs 1986; Laraña et al, 1994). If  
the NSMs are to try and mount this challenge through the  
use of news, it is important that they begin to access  
the constraints of news at the discursive level, and  
incorporate that knowledge into their media strategies.

### **News as an NSM Resource?**

News, is a resource, then, but like signification,  
or knowledge more generally, it is a resource whose  
strategic use requires that sources articulate their  
experiences within its terms. Like other forms of  
discourse, news is a system of meaning, one that comes  
with its own encoded and implicit assumptions about  
reality (Van Dijk, 1988; Hartley, 1982; McDermott,  
1995). Using that discourse constrains what it is  
possible to say. And it is only by understanding very  
well the rules of the discourse that its constraints can  
be negotiated or overcome.

Even as NOW leaders strategically and reflexively translated their concerns into "news-speak" the underlying categories of news discourse (such as that of public-private divides or legitimate and illegitimate "political" issues) were being invoked by both NOW strategists (as they invoked news conventions) and media workers to process NOW's feminism. This may not have been deliberate on the part of news workers. Rather, news processes feminism through the routine use of the editorial practices that embody these discursive categories. The editorial practice of sectioning the newspaper into "front" and "back" sections (with corresponding importance) and the "obviousness" to journalists of what constitutes real or "hard" news and what is "feature" or lifestyle material -- and so what belongs in each of these sections -- is one of the ways that news institutionalizes the public-private divide that feminist have noted underlies much liberal discourse (Fraser, 1990: McLaughlin, 1993).<sup>5</sup> In short, NOW leaders may have become as much "spoken by" news discourse as they were its speakers.

This kind of "processing" of movement discourses by news media is a result, not only of individual journalists and activists in interaction, or even of organizational relations, but of the interaction of different discourses at the epistemological level. When feminists and journalists interact they bring with them

two systems of meaning that are also in interaction.<sup>6</sup> These discourses may draw on fundamentally different ways of seeing the world.

News discursive categories and processing may not in themselves be fatal to movements -- if they can become known to strategists. Movement communications strategists have been adept at monitoring and appropriating aspects of news practices and conventions more generally -- such as learning about and manipulating sourcing practices, planning public "events" and incorporating newsworthiness judgments into their activities and communications. It may be that they can also find ways to incorporate and appropriate some of news' deeper discursive conventions too.

Bruck (1992) has called this approach to struggle for change one of the "active negotiation of constraints" in which the goal is to both recognize and work against the constraints of dominant discourses and practices. In this approach it may be unlikely that movements can abolish the mechanisms of discursive control that media and other dominant discourses use to contain meanings in the world in the short term, but they may through active and strategic, negotiation of these constraints move issues, ideas and identities from one category to the other and by doing so (eventually) undermine the categorization process itself.<sup>7</sup> In the case of NOW and other feminist groups this means ongoing

strategic communication to "move" formerly private (domestic, illegitimate) issues into the public (legitimate, political, open to collective amelioration) domain.

And, indeed, over time there is some evidence in this study, and in public shifts more generally, that feminist strategic communication has moved some issues and frames from one category to the other. When NOW first espoused the term "sex discrimination" in 1966, for example, the *Times* did not take it seriously, noting that a civil rights movement for women was somewhat ridiculous and presenting "sex discrimination" as a ridiculous claim to parallel women's inequality to race discrimination. But by 1980, sex discrimination (and the equality/rights framework to which it belongs) was seen by the *Times* editors as part of "hard won" and reasonable feminist agenda. Though NOW's (and other feminist groups) legitimation was limited, then, without such strategic interaction it is doubtful if any of this "movement" would have taken place at all.

This kind of "active negotiation of constraints" is likely to be successful, however, only if challengers come to accurately understand and challenge the embedded assumptions of news structures. In this study NOW was actively involved in the negotiation of constraints in the form of news practices and conventions, but it was also constrained by these conventions at another level.

While learning about and using the "rules" as resources 361  
at one level (practice and conventions) the group failed  
to see and anticipate the constraints of another level  
(epistemological). By becoming aware of such  
constraints, their active negotiation may be possible in  
the future.

Some groups will find this kind of strategic  
communication more difficult than others -- it requires  
resources, skills and the ability (and desire) to frame  
one's own discourse and identity in strategic ways. But  
it is here -- in the day-to-day strategic mobilization,  
articulation and communication of new knowledges by  
social movements -- as much as anywhere, that the  
possibilities and constraints of social change in  
complex, mediated societies are to be found.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Some of this increase in legitimacy may also, of course simply be the result of continuing to exist over time. Shoemaker (1982) has noted that perceived legitimacy is constituted partly through viability over time. But in any case, it was less a cataclysmic shift in NOW's identity that shifted its perceived legitimacy, but rather persistent and continuous communication efforts over time.

<sup>2</sup> Mannheim (1991) notes that silence can in fact be a successful outcome of strategic communication -- keeping some stories out of the press is sometimes as difficult as getting others in.

<sup>3</sup> NOW also played a role in this differentiation. In 1972/3, media strategists for NOW also began to use the younger groups radicalism as a way of increasing NOW's prestige, by differentiating NOW as the "serious" feminist group.

<sup>4</sup> There is no guarantee of course that knowing about rules will make it possible to change them, but certainly not being aware makes it unlikely that change can be attempted.

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<sup>5</sup> See chapter three for a discussion of the "publicizing" aspects of feminism which tries to extend public concern and state resources to formerly "private" issues and relations.

<sup>6</sup> They also bring with them multiple other discourses such as that of race, sexuality, class, and so on. But in this discussion I am limiting the complexity of journalist-strategist interactions to seeing them as agents of news and feminist discourses.

<sup>7</sup> If there is nothing left in the "illegitimate" category of the dichotomy, then the dichotomy itself fails to be useful.

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