Animal Rights Struggles to Dominate the Public Moral Imagination through Sociological Warfare

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Many of the mediated activities of the contemporary animal rights movement are explained as "sociological warfare", which is intended to alter the public moral imagination regarding animals and their treatment. The difficulties of persuasion based on linear argument and data within the spectacular is highlighted as forcing liberation movements to communicate in methods that recognize the reality of the spectacular. The evolution of "sociological warfare" is traced through historical use of cultural artifacts in persuasive efforts, patterns within public diplomacy, psychological warfare, and public relations. The evolution of the spectacular as a concept and phenomena is established in order to clarify that this mediated milieu is increasingly the arena in which persuasive efforts occur and where counter-campaigns of a mediated and emotional type occur. The concept of "sociological warfare" supports Duncombe's (2007) contention that political Progressives must utilize the spectacular as an environment in which their messages must be expressed. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: <journal@transformativestudies.org> Website: http://www.transformativestudies.org ©2008 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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Introduction: Rationality meets Mediated Appeals

The animal rights and animal protectionist movements are Janus-faced entities that rely on rational and linear arguments based in medical and natural science and philosophy juxtaposed with emotional and often evocative images of animal suffering or intriguing visuals in order to attract attention to their cause. A perusal of the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) homepage illustrates this trend: a summary of a National Research Council Report stating "Animal Testing is Deeply Flawed" is juxtaposed with "PETA TV" episodes that include "Martha Stewart Renounces Fur" and "Whips, Lies, and Videotape" (about animals in circuses), and the opportunity to "Vote for the "World's Sexiest Vegetarian Celebrity (http://www.peta.org/)." As one of the largest animal rights organizations in the world (claiming more than a million members as of June 2007) PETA is a significant indicator of this phenomenon. This paper contends that the placement of scientific reports alongside popular culture-style media is not an aberration or poor judgment by PETA, but is emblematic of mediated conflicts within the "spectacular", constituting what will be termed "sociological warfare". In brief, the strategic placement of data and argument alongside popular cultural formations is a necessary exercise in attempting to negotiate the "spectacular" aspects of contemporary media and society in the hopes of altering the public moral imagination. While the primary substantive focus of this paper is the contemporary animal rights movement, the discussion of the necessity of mediated conflicts by liberation movements is more broadly applicable.

Duncombe (2007) contends that many of the modern liberation movements, such as the abolitionists, exemplified the Enlightenment-era characteristics of reliance on empiricism and linear, rational arguments as vehicles for claims-making (see Best, editor, 1995). For instance, Kean (1998) notes that the Victorian animal welfarists made claims advocating and justifying the protection of animals based in liberal Protestantism (who also attacked slavery and supported protections for children). Even after many of these liberation movements detached from their religiously-inspired origins for secular claims-making resources and platforms, such as science and human rights, the Enlightenment paradigm of linear argument and rational empiricism remained.

Reliance on providing evidence and sustained linear argumentation has produced undeniable successes for liberation movements, such as the dissemination of Sinclair's *The Jungle* leading to the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act. The contemporary animal rights movement is part of

this Enlightenment tradition, inspired by the utilitarian writings of Peter Singer in *Animal Rights* (1990) and Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983). Like other Enlightenment-based liberation endeavors, the contemporary animal rights movement has experienced successes in influencing legislation regarding animals, cultural perceptions (such as the precipitous decline of the consumption of fur garments in North America and Western Europe since the 1970s), it also exhibits the vulnerabilities exemplified by what Duncombe terms the "Enlightenment faith": "that somehow, if reasoning people have access to the Truth, the scales will fall from their eyes and they will see reality as it truly is and, of course, agree with us (Duncombe 2007: 7)". While Duncombe's eloquent and succinct formulation of the "Enlightenment faith" is directed generally at many Progressive political movements that take their cues from the Enlightenment, it is especially pertinent for the contemporary animal rights movement. Rooted in rational, linear argument and the utilization of scientific data, the contemporary animal rights movement is able to readily mobilize evidence fit for panel discussions, courtrooms, or genuine debates, but this approach is less able to defend itself against counterclaims and narratives that are factually weak and heavily mediated. For example, the Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF) has initiated a media campaign "PETA kills animals", which relies on television, radio, and print advertisements in an attempt to discredit PETA (this campaign is discussed below).

The contemporary animal rights movement is hardly alone in this dilemma. Simon (2006) contends that many large American food manufacturers have circumvented the scientifically-based arguments and advocacy produced by public health organizations, including the American Medical Association and the Harvard School of Public Health, which claim that many aspects of contemporary North Americans diets are dangerous for consumers, through employing Richard Berman and his "industry front group", the Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF). Simon states that the CCF relies primarily on intimidating opponents (through requesting financial records from nonprofit organizations which expends time and resources), challenging findings that threaten CCF and its patrons as "junk science", and through a sweeping defense of "consumer freedom" and "defending enjoyment" against the "food cops" that somehow seek to limit food consumption (Simon 2006: 46-51). CCF does not produce a canon of peer-reviewed scientific or medical data to defend "consumer freedom"; it utilizes emotional claims, fears (largely unwarranted) of intrusions into personal freedoms, and the defense of "consumer freedom".

Simon's account of the strategies of the CCF could be abstractly applied to many of the opponents of the contemporary animal rights movement (hereafter CARM): the utilization of emotionally-driven rhetoric, often in tandem with materials that are disseminated into mainstream media (press releases, compelling quotations, and so on) that are difficult to counter through scientific data and rational argument. In the case of the CARM, additional barriers to communication have included the classification of the Animal Liberation Front as a terrorist organization in the United States and Canada, thus further inhibiting direct communication between the ALF and the wider public (see Rosebraugh 2004). Therefore, it is not surprising that the CARM has evolved another strategy for disseminating its messages despite the milieu that is apparently unfavorable towards sustained and substantial argumentation.

This paper intends to demonstrate that many of the activities of the CARM can be framed as a form of "sociological warfare" that has emerged as a response to the increasing difficulties experienced in disseminating their claims and understandings regarding the treatment of animals. The primary goal of "sociological warfare" is to alter the public moral imagination regarding perceptions of the place of nonhuman animals within postindustrial societies. To achieve this goal, this paper will explain how the concept of "sociological warfare" is analytically useful for explaining many of the activities of the CARM within an increasingly mediated environment in which the primary site for addressing the public moral imagination is the "spectacular".

"Sociological warfare" can be explained through phenomena and practices that exemplify media portrayed or manipulated social problems and conflicts, including propaganda, public relations, psychological warfare, and Cold War public diplomacy. The term "sociological warfare" is intended to highlight the necessarily mediated persuasive efforts that animal rights activists and other liberation movements engage in that parallels state-based forms of persuasion like propaganda and psychological warfare, but also to emphasize that the ultimate goals of these efforts to offer an alternative vision of current social arrangements. "Psychological warfare" has historically been deployed by states to weaken the resolve of enemies to fight; "political warfare" generally refers to the deployment of economic and diplomatic pressures to weaken and isolate an enemy (including calling specific political ideologies and/or systems into question); "sociological warfare" refers to the deployment of data, argumentation, dissemination of cultural artifacts (including visual images) with the intention of altering the public moral

imagination regarding at least one aspect of social life. A discussion of the theoretical history of the "spectacular" attests to the evolving social scientific understanding of mediated environments as zones of both control and conflicts. The purpose of these sections is to emphasize that something akin to "sociological warfare" has transpired in different contexts for decades and that attempts to shape or alter the public moral imagination within the "spectacular" need to be understood as legitimate and potentially fruitful venues to alter public perceptions regarding animals and their treatment.

Mediated social problems

The blurring of boundaries between cultural manifestations (especially within popular culture) and other aspects of social life has accelerated with the increasing impact of visual media and entertainment on public perceptions of social issues. For example Glassner (1999) contends that the paradoxical growth in the American fear of criminal victimization during the 1990s, while measurable rates of violent crime were actually declining, is attributable to both disproportionate news coverage of the violent crime, politicians who actively inflamed public concerns about crime, and numerous popular culture media artifacts (such as television programs and films) which also emphasize violent crime. Glassner's argument is compelling for two reasons: it supports the importance of cultural variables as having explanatory significance outside of explicitly cultural settings, and it also suggests the importance of the "agenda setting" capacity of media (McCombs, 2004).

Glassner (1999) and McCombs (2004) are hardly alone in citing the capacity of media coverage to influence public opinion regarding specific social and/or political issues. Bob (2005) has cited the capacity (or inability) of social movements to utilize marketing strategies as being essential to explaining whether or not an event or phenomena (such as famine or genocide) comes to occupy a prominent position within public discourse; a position that may even lead nation-states to take action(s) advocated by the social movements. What is significant here is not simply that social movements or other advocates make factually compelling cases, but that these cases also become visually and emotionally compelling narratives for the public at large. A parallel case may be made regarding recent political advertising campaigns in the United States. Brader (2006) argues that the rise of televised political advertising has been accompanied with visually and emotionally compelling appeals that are often substantively weak or misleading: the

appeals that are visually or emotionally appealing command more attention within the public agenda. Gore (2007) has recently argued that the "marketplace of ideas" has been distorted by mediated emphases on "obsessive-compulsive news" (Gore 2007: 2-4).

Persuasion and Cultural Artifacts

The deployment of cultural artifacts to promote an ideological orientation or perspective is not a recent phenomenon. Cultural artifacts, such as maps, census reports, and designated historical items have been utilized to create and sustain nationalistic sentiments (Anderson 1991); Stout (2006) contends that nationalistic and moralistic emotions which contributed to the outbreak and the continuation of the American Civil War were generated through letters, sermons, and newspaper articles that stoked the public imagination and perceptions regarding the grounds for such a conflict and its likely outcome. Hochschild (2005) observes that British abolitionists deployed the autobiographies of freed slaves and images created by one of Josiah Wedgwood's craftsmen on everyday items like hatpins and cufflinks to generate and sustain support for the anti-slavery cause. Altheide (2002; 2006) argues that representations of terrorism within mass media (including news, popular cultural representations, and "hybrid" media forms that blur boundaries between information and entertainment) and through governmental agencies have served to intensify public anxiety regarding terrorism and crime. Durden (2006) discusses the photographs of Dorothea Lange taken during the Great Depression as a type of social performance created through emphasizing contrasts between groups in order to construct a visual narrative. Note that all of these examples – nationalist movements (and wars in defense of the nation), abolitionism, social control policies, and justification for the New Deal – created rational and linear arguments in favor of their respective causes in addition to creating compelling visual images and emotionally-laden narratives intended to both intellectually inform and emotionally move audiences.

Public relations practitioners have also utilized cultural artifacts in their persuasive efforts. Edward Bernays, arguably the progenitor of contemporary public relations, was highly innovative in his use of press releases to disseminate information on behalf of clients through mass media and other manipulation of mass media for "agenda setting" purposes. For example the "torches of freedom" event involved Bernays arranging a choreographed and photographed 1929 parade of glamorous women publicly smoking, giving the appearance that this was a genuine

and spontaneous expression of liberated women wielding their "torches of freedom"(and not to encourage women to smoke and therefore boost tobacco profits). The photographs of this "march" were published in many newspapers without any hint that this was a highly orchestrated event (Tye 1998: 28-31). More recently, the testimony of "Nayirah" has demonstrated the capacity of public relations firms to influence public opinion regarding events. On 10 October, 1990, "Nayirah" appeared before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, testifying that she had observed Iraqi soldiers removing Kuwaiti infants from hospital incubators when the Iraqi army invaded Kuwait. Reacting to the testimony, President George H.W. Bush stated that "he had seen it on CNN and that he was shocked at some of the things that he had heard (Jamieson and Waldman 2003:15-16)." This compelling narrative served to significantly weaken the position of anti-war protestors and the incubator incident was mentioned in floor debates about the war a total of twenty-two times (Jamieson and Waldman 2003: 18). Only after the American-led invasion of Kuwait was it discovered that "Nayirah" was the daughter of the Kuwaiti Ambassador to the United States, and that witnesses that testified before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus had been arranged by Gary Hymel of the Hill and Knowlton Public Relations firm. (Ewen 1996: 28-29).

Propaganda may also be considered alongside antagonistic efforts of persuasion. Lasswell(1958) makes the distinction between psychological and political warfare. Psychological warfare at its most elemental refers to the utilization of "…*the means of mass communication in order to destroy the enemy's will to fight* (Lasswell, in Daugherty and Janowitz 1958: 22) (italics in original)." Psychological warfare includes typical government propaganda (visual and written) as well as the "propaganda of the deed": "a term borrowed from social revolutionaries, which emphasized the importance of assassinating or the taking of emotionally significant cities or the importance of surprise and the cultivation of revolutionary aims against enemy governments (Lasswell, in Daugherty and Janowitz 1958: 23)." Lasswell argues that "political warfare" is a more inclusive term which "adds the important idea that all instruments of policy need to be properly correlated in the conduct of war (Lasswell, in Daugherty and Janowitz 1958: 24)." These instruments include diplomacy to divide internally and externally to separate an enemy from potential allies, and economic activities intended to weaken an opponent. Whereas the main target of psychological warfare is the "enemy's will to fight", the targets of Political warfare include "allies, neutrals and the

home audience" in support of the war effort (Lasswell, in Daugherty and Janowitz 1958: 24).

These terms are significant because they emphasize the importance of ideological variables within armed conflict between states, and these terms indicate the relative limitations of these concepts in addressing many of the activities of social movements, subcultures, and other non-state actors. While the activities of such actors may resemble psychological warfare in that they are intended to encourage an opponent to withdraw from a conflict or acquiesce, or political warfare in that they involve attempts to persuade third parties to join forces and/or abandon a former ally or to divest economic resources.

There are significant limitations to these terms when applied to non-state actors. Firstly, they are not necessarily part of an actual or potential armed conflict (as in the case of the Cold War). Secondly, non-state actors generally lack the communicative, economic, and other resources of states. Thirdly, non-state actors tend to have a significant difficulty regarding legitimacy. Unlike political or psychological warfare between states, where much of propaganda is targeted at either encouraging existing behavior (such as soldiers fighting) or emphasizing self-interest (encouraging enemy combatants to surrender or desert a cause depicted as unworthy or unjust), non-state actors must encourage outsiders of the legitimacy of their cause(s), often without the benefit of nationalism or other existing cultural or moral resources. Specific conflicts between non-state actors and others often are indicative of a much broader clash of world views. For example, a "fur-free Friday" protest by animal rights activist resembles psychological warfare in that the protest may weaken the intentions of both consumers and producers to possess or market fur garments and also emphasize a central claim of the animal rights movement: the killing of animals for their fur to be used in luxury goods is ethically indefensible. In sum, many non-state actors are advocating ideals and alternative visions of social life that are not paralleled by traditional manifestations of psychological warfare. Such protests and propaganda campaigns are not simply attempts to resolve one specific matter (such as the sale of fur garments), but are also advocating an alternative consciousness (Gusfield, 1981) towards many related issues which, if successfully implemented would dramatically alter the social landscape, these types of efforts are best understood as "sociological warfare" or efforts at cultural domination.

Nation-states have also deployed artistic and cultural artifacts and expressions in order to influence domestic and political audiences. With the creation of the Office of War Information (OWI) in 1942, and the

Smith-Mundt Act of 1948, the United States became actively involved in both wartime and peacetime efforts "…to promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries…(Snow 2002:38)." Osgood (2006) contends that Eisenhower came to understand the potential of propaganda and psychological warfare during World War II, and firmly believed in utilizing such efforts during his presidency, both to influence international audiences and reinforce domestic support. Caute (2005) argues that the Soviet Union also engaged in numerous campaigns of artistic promotion, both to emphasize Soviet superiority in specific artistic fields (like ballet), but also to imply that "pure" culture and civilization was preserved by socialism, but was degraded by the capitalist impulse for profit-making (the fact that these art forms evolved under feudalism or capitalism was ignored).

Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, the utilization of cultural forms intended for public influence has continued. Since the attacks of 11 September, the United States has engaged in "public diplomacy" in the hopes of altering the opinion of Muslim populations of the United States. Under the direction of Charlotte Beers (a former marketing executive) efforts employing commercial advertising strategies through mass media have been deployed, largely through the Shared Values Initiative (Fullerton and Kendrick 2006). Rather than directly addressing American policy in the Middle East, the commercials that were created for the Shared Values Initiative portrayed American Muslims as living in the United States as content and free to practice Islam. While of debatable success, the Shared Values Initiative demonstrates the continued willingness to utilize cultural artifacts in the hopes of crafting public opinion.

The common thread with these forms of propaganda and cultural artifacts utilized is to communicate complex ideologies (or ideological messages) to audiences in the hopes of influencing their moral imagination.

The spectacular: social control or zone of conflict?

The contemporary animal rights movement embodies two essential elements of modern liberation and reformists movements: a reliance on data and evidence to build arguments and the use of protests (including public rallies, petition and letter-writing campaigns, boycotts and dissemination of compelling visual images). As with many other such movements, both strategies have been effectively deployed by the CARM, as in the case of the Gennerelli head injury laboratory. Members

of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) penetrated the laboratory of Thomas Gennerelli at the University of Pennsylvania on 28 May 1984 and seized what they described in their press release as the "Watergate tapes of the animal rights movement": over 60 hours of videotape of Gennerelli's research (Finsen and Finsen 1994: 68). The videotapes that were seized were significant both because of their graphic nature (depicting the head injury research conducted in the laboratory on baboons) but also these research tapes documented several violations of the Federal Animal Welfare Act (significant because Gennerelli had received roughly one million dollars annually in federal grants to conduct this research) (Finsen and Finsen 1994: 68). The research tapes were compiled by PETA into a 30 minute documentary titled "Unnecessary Fuss"(the title was derived from a 1983 interview with Gennerelli in which he stated that he did not wish for his research to become public because it "might stir up all sorts of unnecessary fuss among those who are sensitive to these sorts of things") that was distributed to the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, segments of the documentary were aired on NBC's "Nightly News and the Cable News Network (CNN), and two screenings occurred on Capitol Hill (Finsen and Finsen 1994: 68). This publicity, combined with a campaign of civil disobedience by animal rights activists and congressional pressure, led to the closure of Gennerelli's head injury laboratory.

The case of "Unnecessary Fuss" reveals the capacity for conflict within the "spectacular" to be essential in explaining the success of a protest campaign. While the activities of the ALF and other protesting moral entrepreneurs (Becker 1963) practicing civil disobedience are essential in explaining the eventual closure of Gennerelli's laboratory, the invocation of public outrage and pity through mediated images of animal suffering is also critical: the broadcast of *Unnecessary Fuss* on NBC and CNN alongside newspaper coverage served to arouse public indignation well beyond the geographic range of the ALF action and the civil disobedience at the University of Pennsylvania and place pressure on elected officials to terminate Gennerelli's NIH funding. In sum, the success of this protest cannot be explained without addressing the spectacular.

In the *Society of the Spectacle* (1995), Debord contends that contemporary developed societies have become dominated by "the spectacle": unrelenting waves of visually compelling and engaging images and narratives whose sum effect is to pacify and captivate the public. Debord contends that "The spectacle is heir to all the weakness of the project of Western philosophy, which was an attempt to understand

activity by means of the categories of vision (Debord 1995: 17)". Rather than being a peripheral phenomena, the spectacle is a social relationship "between people that is mediated by images" and is the expression of the agenda of the dominant economic and social formations of the society the spectacle inhabits (Debord 2002: 12, 15). In sum, the spectacle maintains power relations within a society.

Returning to these concepts in *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, Debord reiterates that the "spectacular" remains "the autocratic reign of the market economy" and continues to dominate postindustrial societies having successfully "…spread itself to the point where it now permeates all reality (Debord 2002: 2, 9)." Three types of spectacular exist: the concentrated (found in overt dictatorships and built around cults of personality), the diffuse (originating in the United States and encouraging consumption) and most recently the integrated spectacle (emerging from Italy and France) that simultaneously supports the established political system and mass consumption (Debord 2002: 8-9). This integrated spectacle erodes historic memory and context, creating an "eternal present" and makes the communication of "news of what is genuinely important" very difficult (Debord 2002: 11-13). Despite the omnipresence of the "spectacular", Debord retained some hope that it could be overturned and that persons could escape its grasp and address concrete issues.

Like Debord, Boorstin (1987) argues that the rise of the media in the United States has obscured rather than clarified events and phenomena for Americans. Boorstin argues that "we have used our wealth, our literacy, our technology, and our progress, to create the thicket of unreality which stands between us and the facts of life (Boorstin 1987: 3)." The primary culprit in Boorstin's analysis is the increasing reliance of images within visual media and media that are increasingly become visual that is encouraging the "flood of pseudo-events" that distorts American perceptions of reality. For example, Boorstin cites Edward Bernays creating prestige for a hotel: Bernays orchestrates an event that celebrates the hotel's 30th anniversary that is attended by prominent persons and is widely publicized through mass media. While the event is not a pure fabrication, it is also an intentional creation, and not simply an event which occurs that is accurately represented through mass media. These "pseudo-events" not only obscure what are valid, noteworthy and important matters for the general public, but they also alter points of perception: "heroes" that performed "great deeds" are displaced by "celebrities" that are noteworthy for being noted, as opposed to performing discernable deeds. The saturation of images through mass

media has displaced ideals and has created many "unintelligible frontiers" (Boorstin 1987: 183-184).

Debord's "spectacular" and Boorstin's "images" and "pseudo-events" make three parallel hypotheses regards the impact of visually-saturated media on the wider society: the vulnerability to manufactured events and diluted standards upon which to measure those events; a general loss of historical memory and continuity, making prioritizing events and phenomena problematic; and the capacity for powerful actors and institutions to create compelling images and phenomena that sway and shape public opinion. While Boorstin does not assert that there is one "spectacular" which dominates American society (the primary focus of his analysis) he parallels Debord's claim that "pseudo-events" either distract or pacify the public, much as Debord espouses the "spectacular" does. Moreover, both theorists contend that there is an actual reality that can be grasped, if only the hold of the "spectacular" or "pseudo-events" could be weakened (and therefore weakening these entities takes on a high priority).

Edelman (1988) asserts that the "spectacle" not only shapes perceptions of reality, but that it and its respective audiences craft reality. Edelman rejects the basic assumptions of political science that informed citizens can and will impact politics in relation to their self-interest, and instead argues that political developments are "creations of the publics concerned with them (Edelman 1988:1-2)." Edelman challenges the assumption that there is one unchallenged reality that may be obscured or clarified, but rather that the perceptions of audiences and the language deployed by claimsmakers are essential in crafting the understanding of events articulated through mass media and political figures: "A social problem, a political enemy, or a leader is both an entity and a signifier with a range of meanings that vary in ways we can at least partly understand (Edelman 1988: 2)." In Edelman's model of the "spectacle", the "spectacle" is constructed by and with political leaders and institutions, journalists and news media, and perceptions of social problems and enemies. Despite the interactive qualities of Edelman's variant of the "spectacle", what "spectacles" that are manufactured generally reflect the interests of powerful entities and institutions:

> The privileged benefit more than the disadvantaged from spectacle construction…The meanings and the development itself are typically expressions and vivid reinforcements of the dominant ideology that justify extant inequalities. They divert attention from historical knowledge, social and economic analysis and unequal

benefits and suffering that might raise questions about prevailing ideology (Edelman 1988: 125).

Edelman's "spectacle" parallels McCombs conception of "agenda setting" by mass media (and indirectly by political leaders): the public/audience may not be informed what to think, but they will be influenced what they think about. The heuristic effect of political discourse and media coverage may be discernibly misleading, as in Glassner's (1999) account of how media representation and political discourse surrounding violent crime heightened American fear of crime, despite a measured decline in the violent crime rate; however many concerns are not open to such a rigorous analysis. For example, Edelman contends that those who characterize President Reagan as either a well-meaning leader or cruel corporate puppet have "…no way to establish the validity of any of these positions to the satisfaction of those who have a material or moral reason to hold a different view (Edelman 1988: 105)." This does not therefore establish that the spectacle is complete relativism where any perspective may gain credence, but it does posit that simply making claims or cases based on data and assuming that this will by itself create widespread agreement is unlikely. The successful spectacle relies in part on complementing the perspectives and assumptions of the audiences that it intersects with.

Kellner (2003) has continued the discussions of "the spectacular", supporting Debord's arguments about the ubiquity of the spectacle well outside of popular culture, as well as its distracting aspects (such as the prominence given to the OJ Simpson trial). For both Debord and Kellner, the spectacular is an entity that serves to bolster and maintain current economic and political arrangements through generating passivity with the general public. However, this account of the spectacular in the context of agenda setting raises a question: can the "spectacular" also become a zone for conflict and the transformation of public perception?

Kellner (2003) offers a broader view of the spectacular than Edelman, moving beyond the political spectacle to "megaspectacles" and "media spectacles": "those phenomena of media culture that embody contemporary society's basic values, serve to initiate individuals into its way of life, and dramatize its controversies and struggles, as well as its modes of conflict resolution (Kellner 2003: 2)." This "spectacular culture" stems from societal reliance on information and information technology (including the merging of technology and commerce into what Kellner terms "technocapitalism") and becomes nearly omnipresent:

> The spectacular society spreads its wares mainly through the cultural mechanisms of leisure and consumption, services and entertainment, ruled by the dictates of advertising and a commercialized media culture…a society of the spectacle involves a commodification of previously non-colonized sectors of social life and the extension of bureaucratic control to the realms of leisure, desire, and everyday life (Kellner 2003: 3).

Kellner's spectacular society comprises spectacles within mass media and entertainment (and "infotainment") as well as other commodities (such as McDonald's fast food), sports (such as the "cult" of celebrity athletes like Michael Jordan), justice (including "megaspectacles" like the O.J. Simpson trial), and even deeply informing presidential politics. Kellner asserts that the "narrative and cinematic spectacle that framed the presidency" reflects a mediated presidency and public expectations built on media to the degree that Presidents like LBJ, who was "a highly effective politician", but a "bad actor" and who experienced great difficulty in communicating his "storyline" ultimately failed as a president (Kellner 2003: 162).

Despite the vast scale of the spectacular society, Kellner rejects Debord's largely deterministic and unified vision of the spectacle, instead favoring "a plurality and heterogeneity of contesting spectacles in the contemporary moment and to see spectacle itself as a contested terrain…they give rise to conflicting meanings and effects, and constitute a field of domination and resistance (Kellner 2003: 11)."Kellner confirms Baudrillard's (1983) assertion that contemporary mass media creates virtual "simulacra" that are difficult to discern from reality, and the implosion of the public and private spheres (hence the increasing media concern with the personal lives of the noteworthy), but rejects Baudrillard's conclusion that any sort of transformative movements or activities are precluded by the spectacular (Kellner 2003: 20). In sum, Kellner's spectacle is nearly omnipresent, but fails to establish any sort of unitary domination, instead offering the potential for "contesting spectacles" to clash in establishing differing visions within the host society. Kellner does not explicitly discuss the capacity for non-state or non-economic actors (like businesses or public relations firms) to create or undermine spectacles, that possibility is clearly implicit in the analysis. Moreover, Kellner's conceptualization of the spectacular society suggests that those who seek to alter the public agenda in some fashion will necessarily be involved in conflicts within the spectacular.

From Spectacular to Freak Show

Halperin and Harris (2006) contend that the "Freak Show" has emerged within the spectacular society as the dominant form of political campaigning. They state that this term for a new form of presidential politics emerged out of "channel surfing during the Clinton years" as the Monica Lewinsky scandal unfolded on cable television, featuring "a collection of reporters and commentators from the Left and Right shouting at one another"; a "Freak Show" that "seemed to embody the spirit of the age (Halperin and Harris 2006: xxii)." Far from a regrettable sideshow and distraction from substantive political discourse, Halperin and Harris contend that the Freak Show has come to dominate American politics (and those who hope to seek the White House must realize that the Freak Show is the primary terrain that political conflict will occur).

The Freak Show style of politics emerged as the "Old Media" filters weakened (that stressed adherence to documented facts, substantial issues, and reliable sources), the Internet-based New Media ascended without coterminous concerns for objectivity or vetting sources (as in the case of Matt Drudge), and "old restraints in campaigns and public debate" have declined. Halperin and Harris contend that this new form of campaigning now emphasizes the destruction of credibility as well as electoral success: "The collapse of filters and the collapse of civility together have changed the purpose of politics. The goal now is not simply to win, but to persuade voters (and donors and viewers and readers) that an opponent lacks the character and credibility even to deserve a place in the contest (Halperin and Harris 2006: xxii, 5)." They also contend that "a signature of Freak Show politics is a fixation on personality and alleged hypocrisy. Another is the ease with which shrewd political operatives can manipulate the Freak Show's attention to hijack the public image of an opponent (Halperin and Harris 2006: 8)." As an example of this phenomena, Halperin and Harris cite the example of the fixation of conservative news media on presidential candidate Senator Kerry's hair (and who styled it) and the manipulation of Kerry's military service record into a liability. Halperin and Harris chart the evolution of a form of campaigning that emphasizes divisiveness, concentration on image and ruthless assaults on opponents that significantly truncates the capacity for dispassionate discourse: "the cumulative effect of these incentives and the actions they inspire is a political system constantly staggering toward the irrational (Halperin and Harris 2006: 30)."

Case studies in Sociological Warfare

Having laid the foundation for explaining the evolution of both the spectacular and the strategies for acting within the spectacular, it is appropriate to turn to examples of sociological warfare in order to begin considering the shapes of sociological warfare that may emerge in the near future.

Interpersonal and emotional claimsmaking

Tribe of Heart's *The Witness* (1999) follows Eddie Lama's autobiographical recollections of his transformation from an urbanite professional that had virtually no contact with animals into a committed anti-fur activist. The narrative of *The Witness* is largely Lama's own recollections of how he underwent a "change of perception" and came to be deeply concerned about the fur industry (interspersed with statements by employees of Lama's Brooklyn-based contracting firm about Lama's concern with animals that includes the presence of rescued cats in the firm's office). Lama's monologue is broken up with brief clips of undercover videos of slaughterhouses, fur farms, and fur-bearing animals trapped for their fur, which he cites as informing his expanding animal consciousness. The film concludes with Lama driving through New York City in a modified van from his contracting business with a large television screening footage of animals being killed for their fur. This final scene includes the emotional reactions of viewers to Lama's "faunavision" while Lama uses a loudspeaker to encourage those watching the videos to be compassionate and avoid fur garments. What makes *The Witness* an effective form of sociological warfare is that it unpretentiously encourages viewers to identify with Lama and his intellectual and moral journey, and to align themselves with his mission to expose others to the concealed reality of producing fur garments. In provoking a moral transformation in its viewers, *The Witness* is arguably an expression of status conflict, weakening the status of fur garments as luxurious or attractive (see Gusfield 1986).

Interpersonal and Morally Inverting Sociological Warfare

Shannon Keith's *Behind the Mask* (2006) provides a sympathetic portrayal of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) which serves to place the ALF within the liberation tradition of other modern social movements that engage in direct action (such as the Abolitionist and Civil Rights

movements). *Behind the Mask* is supported by Animal Rescue Media Education, which states that its mission is "…to eliminate the suffering of animals. This goal will be achieved through rescue of homeless animals and through educating the public of the vast extent of suffering animals endure in our society. Through its actions and words, ARME will advance the freedom of all animals (www.arme.tv)." Keith's interviews with several ALF members, who had been convicted of acts related to ALF actions, portray them as deeply committed to animal liberation, ethical (including a deep concern to not harm humans or non-human animals during the course of ALF direct actions), and expressing reasonable grievances regarding harm being done to animals.

Framing these activists as reasonable, intelligent, and ethical agents of social change in a long tradition of liberation movements serves to legitimate them and their activities and conversely to weaken the status of law enforcement, thus inverting the moral standing of the ALF as a "terrorist" organization and elevating the status of the ALF and its supporters as reasoned and committed activists. For example, one scene features John Feldmann (of the band *Goldfinger*) describing how he and his spouse had their home searched following their participation in an animal rights protest, juxtaposing the lawful political activities of a celebrity and his spouse with a draconian (and expensive) police overreaction. Keith inserts herself into this narrative of state repression by showing FBI surveillance records made of her that were obtained through the Freedom of Information act. The image of the articulate and attractive Keith reading from her own FBI surveillance records that were created because of her association with the ALF serves to erode the state-sponsored vision of the ALF as a domestic terrorist organization and the legitimacy of expending tax revenues to investigate these activists.

Conflicts within the spectacular

Implicit within the concept of sociological warfare is conflict between two or more parties that are attempting to alter the public moral imagination. The following are examples of ongoing campaigns and counter-campaigns of sociological warfare where emotional and intellectual claims and appeals are crafted for reception by audiences within the spectacular.

Premarin, PETA, and the ASPCA

The controversy over Premarin provides an instructive case study in sociological warfare. Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories produces Premarin, an

estrogen replacement therapy for menopausal and postmenopausal women. Premarin (a contraction of pregnant mare urine) is very profitable for Wyeth-Ayerst, generating $860-$930 million annually before 2002, with expectations of increasing profits as the baby boomer generation aged. As the contracted name indicates, Premarin was obtained from the urine of pregnant mares that are confined to small stalls, and approximately two-thirds of the foals died within a week of birth (the remaining foals were mostly sold for European and Japanese consumption) (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 341-342). Wyeth-Ayerst had been successful in maneuvering political opposition to the development and marketing of an artificial, generic competitor, despite the savings those health insurance providers and government programs would receive.

Animal rights and animal welfarist organizations opposed Premarin because of the conditions that mares were kept in and the fate of the foals that were the "by-product" of Premarin production. Their efforts to reduce and eliminate Premarin consumption included questioning the desirability of estrogen replacement (suggesting that menopause is a natural part of the life course and that hormone replacement might cause additional health problems), and emphasizing the reality of Premarin production: the suffering of the mares and foals from Premarin production and the distasteful fact that Premarin is created from urine. The International Generic Association promoted the anti-Premarin cause through providing information on its website and urging "horse lovers to wear purple ribbons (similar to the AIDS red ribbons) to let their protest be known", which included actor Billy Bob Thornton as he accepted his Oscar at the 1997 Academy Awards PETA was successful in recruiting several celebrities including Lesley Anne Down, Dame Judi Dench, and Gates McFadden for photographs holding signs stating "I'll never take Premarin!"; Tracey Ulmann's yellow-lipped face appeared on a PETA pamphlet that asked "What's in your estrogen drug?(Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 352-3)."

Premarin entered popular culture in episode 119 of the *Millennium* television series, when the protagonist Frank Black demonstrated shock learning how Premarin is produced (while hunting a killer who had been raised on a Premarin farm). These campaigns, plus health concerns raised about the health consequences of Premarin at its high dosage of estrogen, served to depress the sale of Premarin to the fourth-highest selling prescription drug in North America (down from first). In its effort to boost sales, Wyeth-Ayerst utilized a new advertising campaign in

popular women's magazines and featuring celebrities like Lauren Hutton and Patti LaBelle (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 353-354).

Consumer freedom and compassionate living: CCF and PETA

Since its formation in 1980 by Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco, PETA has become one of the most dominant and publicly noted animal rights organizations. Unsurprisingly, this notoriety has made PETA the target of efforts to weaken the status and the legitimacy of its stated goals. A case in point is the "PETA Kills Animals" campaign launched by The Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF). CCF states that its mission is to defend the capacity of consumers to consume as they like without interference:

> The Center for Consumer Freedom is a nonprofit coalition of restaurants, food companies, and consumers working together to promote personal responsibility and protect consumer choices. The growing cabal of "food cops," health care enforcers, militant activists, meddling bureaucrats, and violent radicals who think they know "what's best for you" are pushing against our basic freedoms. We're here to push back
> (http://www.consumerfreedom.com/about.cfm).

CCF defines consumer freedom as "…the right of adults and parents to choose what they eat, drink, and how they enjoy themselves (ibid)", and states that it is their mission to prevent interference with the pursuit of commoditized pleasure (no mention is made of enjoying public parks, religious spaces, or any activity that is not tied to purchase and consumption). The Center for Media & Democracy states that the CCF is the reorganized "Guest Choice Network", clandestinely first established in 1995 by Philip Morris to oppose restaurant smoking bans under the direction of Rick Berman (also see Simon 2006). Berman continues to lead CCF (which is part of his public relations firm) and has expanded its focus to include defending alcohol and tobacco consumption, and challenging recommendations altering the nutritional content of food (http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Center_for_Consumer_Freedom).

CCF promotes the "PETA kills Animals" campaign, which includes sources for "news" "press", television commercials and billboards that attempt to weaken PETA's standing as a defender of animals and as a supporter of dangerous terrorists. For example, the "print ads" at "PETA

Kills Animals" features seven images (four of which feature images of children) which accuse PETA of killing animals, supporting arsonists, opposing animal-based medical research, and attempting to contact children "…to spread destructive propaganda to kids about food and fur (http://www.petakillsanimals.com/index.cfm)." The corporate sponsorship of CCF is not mentioned in these print ads, nor are the broader ethical claims made by PETA addressed. "PETA Kills Animals" is not a debate within the marketplace of ideas; it is the creation of a spectacle intended to diminish the moral standing of PETA.

Conclusion: The Shapes of Sociological Warfare

The preceding has attempted to demonstrate the reality of the spectacular, and the necessity for liberation movements to recognize that campaigns of "sociological warfare" are a necessity for altering the public moral imagination. As Duncombe (2007) asserts, those involved in progressive politics (and by extension, liberation movements) may not celebrate the spectacular, but must realize that persuasive efforts must occur within it. The examples of *The Witness* and *Behind the Mask* suggest that making both emotional and intellectual claims and appeals are necessary means of reaching potential supporters. As Halperin and Harris (2006) suggest, the Freak Show aspect of the spectacular, emphasizing individuals and celebrity, has been harnessed by organizations such as PETA in order to broaden appeal and encourage audiences to then delve into more linear and informed discussions of animal issues. The examples of the Premarin and CCF controversies also suggest that counterattacks will occur within the spectacular and must also be challenged there.

This paper has attempted to support three propositions regarding the "spectacular" and its role in animal advocacy and liberation:

1. *The spectacular is a social scientific milieu that is worthy of study*. Advocates of the existence of the spectacular or image-driven society run the gamut from Baudrillard (1994), Boorstin (1987), Debord (1995; 2002), Edelman (1988), Kellner (2003), and De Zengotita (2005). While their analysis of its ontological status and behavior vary widely, these scholars all concur that the spectacular is real, and that it has discernable impact on the wider society.

2. *Efforts by social movements and other claimsmakers increasingly occur in the spectacular*. The importance of the existence of the spectacular is that many forms of advocacy, including animal liberation, occur within the spectacular. The spectacular is a social space where

advocates attempt to shape public perceptions regarding phenomena or practices involving animals, and where counter efforts occur.

Claimsmakers that can transmute their arguments, claims, understandings, moral vocabularies (Lowe 2006), and other understandings into forms recognizable within the spectacular are more likely to gain public attention and therefore engage in agenda setting (McCombs 2004). The film *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) provides a tremendous example of utilizing the spectacular to advantage. Despite the vast documentation of rising global temperatures and related phenomena (including melting glaciers, more powerful hurricanes, and increased periods of alternate flooding and drought), segments of the public and other claimsmakers state that the question of "climate change" (a term attributed to Republican pollster Frank Luntz) is still open and any action taken as a result (such as reducing the emission of "greenhouse gases") is unwarranted. *An Inconvenient Truth* serves to both bring many of the most compelling data to the film going public, but also provides deeply compelling visuals to reinforce these data. Halperin and Harris (2006) have pronounced that currently American presidential politics (and by extension, campaigns for other elected offices) is increasingly dominated by what they have termed the "Freak Show". Those candidates that are able to thrive in the Freak Show are those who are the most likely to be elected and capture the public imagination.

3. *Conflicts between claimsmakers within the spectacular are best understood as a form of sociological warfare*. This paper contends that the conflicts within the spectacular are best understood as "sociological warfare". Throughout the 20th century, nation-states have practiced "psychological warfare" in efforts to weaken the resolve of their opponents, "public diplomacy" to persuade members of other countries about the favorable standing of the nation engaged in the diplomacy, and even political warfare, intended to undermine the perception of another "political system" (e.g., Communism is inherently a flawed and immoral political system). The term "sociological warfare" simply conceptualizes the means by which the strategies and techniques found in propaganda, psychological warfare and the like are now being deployed by advocates and claimsmakers that are attempting to craft the public moral imagination regarding the perceptions of a more desirable or ethical social order.

Most importantly, the spectacular may be an ideal environment from which the creation of what Boltanski (1999) terms the "politics of pity" might emerge. Boltanski argues that for a "politics of pity" to emerge,

there must be two classes that have direct (encounters) or indirect (mediated) interactions so that the "fortunate" class may observe "the misery of the unfortunate" (Boltanski 1999: 5). In this conception of "the politics of pity", the "spectacle of real suffering" creates a demand for action on the part of the fortunate class through encouraging the spectators to become actively involved in alleviating the suffering they witness (Boltanski 1999: 23-24; 33-34) Through sociological warfare, the spectacular may become a zone of conflict where a politics of pity becomes possible: where the 'fortunate" may encounter mediated images and narratives of suffering and are moved to action so that questions of legality and or propriety become secondary to alleviating the "spectacle of real suffering".

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