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When Culture Matters: Frame Resonance and Protests against Femicide in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico

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Abstract

Framing theory in social movements is an analytical tool for examining the symbols, slogans, and underlying messages that provide the public with a way to interpret, or frame, a movement resonant with the host culture. The questions I pursue: Looking at how frame resonance varies between movements on the same issue, is there a difference in the movement's success and failures based on use of different frames? Do frames matter? Using qualitative content analysis as a method and framing theory as an analytical perspective to guide the method, I examine the frames of five movement organizations protesting femicide in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Multiple datasets were triangulated to provide greater qualitative validity, along with a coding strategy that utilized grounded theory to allow for maximum control of coder bias. Organizations using frames with lower cultural resonance did not have success on the scale of the organization that used resonant frames, and in some cases caused conflict between local and international anti-femicide movements operating in Ciudad Juarez.

Keywords

Femicide, Content Analysis, Social Movements, Social Protest, Framing, Constant Comparison

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When Culture Matters: Frame Resonance and Protests against Femicide in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico

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Framing theory in social movements is an analytical tool for examining the symbols, slogans, and underlying messages that provide the public with a way to interpret, or frame, a movement resonant with the host culture. The questions I pursue: Looking at how frame resonance varies between movements on the same issue, is there a difference in the movement's success and failures based on use of different frames? Do frames matter? Using qualitative content analysis as a method and framing theory as an analytical perspective to guide the method, I examine the frames of five movement organizations protesting femicide in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Multiple datasets were triangulated to provide greater qualitative validity, along with a coding strategy that utilized grounded theory to allow for maximum control of coder bias. Organizations using frames with lower cultural resonance did not have success on the scale of the organization that used resonant frames, and in some cases caused conflict between local and international anti-femicide movements operating in Ciudad Juarez. Keywords: Femicide, Content Analysis, Social Movements, Social Protest, Framing, Constant Comparison

How important is frame resonance in social movement framings? Do resonant frames contribute to the success of a movement? When frames do not culturally resonate, does it make it more difficult for movements to be successful? How does one handle a research situation where there is no one dataset that answers your question? This study is unique because there are no existing studies of anti-femicide movement organizations' framings of issues in Ciudad Juarez. Using anti-femicide movements as a case study, I examine the framings of five different social movement organizations engaged in protesting the impunity and lack of investigation surrounding femicides in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Each organization used different framings. Did cultural resonance lead to movement effectiveness?

The term femicide (*feminicidio*) as it is used in Mexico, means killing women because they are women, and for no other reason. Ciudad Juarez is a compelling case study of the responses of social movement organizations to femicide. Femicide is not exclusive to Juarez, but Juarez was the first place that these types of killings occurred en masse. Approximately 470 women have been murdered in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, since 1993 (Ensalaco, 2006; Rodriguez, Montana, & Pulitzer, 2007, Washington Valdez, 2006). Many of the women killed lived in extremely poor conditions; they are poorest of the poor and lived in "colonias" which are makeshift shantytowns in the desert surrounding Ciudad Juarez. These colonias lack basic services such as water, sanitation, and electricity. The houses are made from scavenged materials. Many of the victims are young females ranging from 14 to 21 years of age and employed as maquiladora workers.

Often the victims of femicide were killed on their way to and from work shifts in American-owned factories called maquiladoras. In terms of economics, they worked for \$4/day in the factories. This is a poverty wage in Mexico, and it takes several people pooling their earnings to survive on such wages, as Ciudad Juarez is one of Mexico's more expensive cities in which to live (Hise, 2006). This was one of the bases for Nuestra Hijas de Regreso a Casa's call for compensation for the victims' families, as they had all lost a primary breadwinner.

Amnesty International (2004) reports that 130 of the over 470 femicides have included torture, mutilation, and rape. Bodies have been dumped in the desert and mass graves have been found (Rodriguez, Montana, & Pulitzer, 2007; Washington Valdez, 2006). Due to many intertwining factors, such as inefficient bureaucracy, corruption, patriarchy, and a legal culture of impunity, few people have been arrested, and there is uncertainty about the legitimacy of those arrests due to corruption. It has been demonstrated that Mexican police often obtained confessions utilizing unlawful tactics such as intimidation and torture (Rodriguez, Montana, & Pulitzer, 2007; Washington Valdez, 2006), and there are no convictions of credible suspects. Families of the murdered women complain that there are no competent investigations. The reason for the lack of competent investigations lies in the fear that the police have of narcotics traffickers who may be involved, and in some places police collude with them. The organizations that are protesting femicide are variously seeking competent investigations into the murders and compensation for the victims' families due to the Mexican government's failures to stop these abuses of human rights.

The literature surrounding the issues of femicides in Juarez is diverse, and accounts of the phenomenon do not always agree with one another. There have been controversies among activists in the U.S. and Mexico about how to define femicide and what services are needed to combat the problem. For example, some activists consider femicide to be the murder of any woman in Ciudad Juarez (L. Aguilar, personal communication, August 15, 2007), although the Mexican government does not consider a murder to be femicide unless there is a sexual component to the crime (Rodriguez, Montana, & Pulitzer, 2007). Families seeking compensation face obstacles in pressing claims for DNA testing to prove the victim's identity, and police corruption and the culture of impunity in Mexico is working against them (Washington Valdez, 2006).

The impunity situation in Ciudad Juarez provoked many citizens to join, organize, or create social movement organizations. The general goal of these movements is to address the impunity and lack of police and government action relating to femicide. The organizations use social movement framing to present their concerns and proposed solutions to the government and the public. The uses of framing by Ciudad Juarez activists is an unexplored topic in the literature. I looked at the different ways that these organizations go about framing to try to reach their goals. I looked for measures of movement success, comparing them to the different framings. Did different framings produce different levels of success? The study is of importance because it tests the usefulness of framing theory in a specific case study. The results found in the framing literature on other movements strongly suggest that framing is tied to social movement success (Liévanos, 2012; Perla, 2011). Qualitative researchers in social science, scholars of social movements, and activists doing international work will benefit from this analysis by seeing how culturally resonant frames account for greater movement success in this case study. It is also useful for demonstrating a multi-dataset and multi-method qualitative study, where most content analysis studies are quantitative and single-dataset.

One of the most important things that a social movement does is frame issues for its members, the public, and those with power who are their targets (Benford & Snow, 2000). Framing theory is an analytical perspective used by scholars of social movements. Framing theorists examine the symbols, slogans, and underlying messages that provide the public with a way to interpret, or frame, a movement. Frame resonance is the extent to which these messages positively resonate with the host culture. Specifically, framing refers to the words, symbols, and rhetorical strategies used by movements to communicate their message. I asked how these anti-femicide groups frame the issue of femicide. What are the consequences of their framings in terms of meeting social movement goals? A successful framing may contribute to the success of the social movement organization (SMO) in attaining their goals, or may

partially account for their failure. Therefore, frame analysis is central to understanding how SMOs succeed and fail.

Author Context

As an author, I have a keen interest in how visual images and words are used to frame social movement issues. I am drawn to the symbolism and multiple meanings often found in visual frames. My interest in femicide grew out of a research project involving interviewing Southern California Chicana artists about non-traditional images of the patron saint of Mexico, the Virgin of Guadalupe, which were appearing in galleries. While viewing these images, I noticed there were also exhibitions of art surrounding femicides and the protest of femicides. I noticed that certain art pieces emphasized certain themes in their symbols and others varied. This suggested different framings of femicide being represented in the paintings. I subsequently began researching the framing of femicide protests.

I was drawn to research the framing of femicide protests. The art and symbols used by anti-femicide protesters was striking. In researching further, I asked how visual culture and symbolism communicate a movement's messages to the public. What kinds of symbols and words were more effective than others? How did framings make the movement intelligible to the public? My aim is to assist feminist movements in being more effective in cross-cultural situations, and to encourage thinking about cultural issues when building cross-national social movement coalitions. I am interested in feminist issues such as violence against women. My doctoral research was on the Riot Grrrl feminist social movement, and I see this as a continuation of that effort to assist social movement actors by analyzing what goes into the success or failure of a movement. I also felt that anti-femicide protests were extremely important as human rights protests, and I wanted to help movement organizers make their efforts more effective.

Literature Review

Framing theory (Snow & Benford, 1988, 1992, 2000) concerns the "meaning work" of social movements that can determine whether a movement succeeds or fails. This analytical perspective is standard in the field of sociology, and while many researchers have used the framing perspective, there has been no refutation or controversy about the basic premise. A movement's use of frames has consequences. For example, the public perception of a social movement can help or hinder coalition building between movement organizations. Coalitions are often powerful for a movement to increase its strength and efficacy. A movement organization frames its messages for the public by use of symbols, slogans, manifestoes, speeches, and protest performances. Movement organizations disseminate the frames by participating in protests which receive local attention and media coverage, spreading their messaging (frames). Framing is the meaning and communication work of a social movement.

Framing theory is one of the largest and influential bodies of theory in the study of social movements (Benford & Snow 2000). Framing theory in sociology and the related field of political science has been used to examine a wide range of social movement dynamics. Frames have been found to have very real consequences for how the public thinks about, and decides to support or not support, a social movement issue. For example, in his study of American attitudes towards military intervention policy in Central America in the 1980s, Perla (2011) found that media framing of the policy as to "prevent losses" versus "to achieve gains" had an impact on public support of the policy as measured by opinion polls. When the media framed the policy as being "to prevent losses," members of the public were more likely to support the policy than they were when it was framed the other way.

The usefulness of framing theory extends to government policymaking. For example, in studying how the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency makes policy, Liévanos (2012) demonstrated that the way that environmental issues were framed contributed to their being adopted or not as policy by the agency. Framing theory has also found its applications in the field of psychology, where researchers have studied the psychological processes that occur when people respond to different framings of social issues (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997). They concluded that media framings, however unintentional, were psychologically powerful (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson). For the purposes of this study, however, I am most concerned with the framing literature in the area of frame resonance. Frame resonance has several positive impacts for a social movement.

One example is research on how frames create emotional resonance in order to strengthen group identity in a transgender movement organization (Schrock, Holden, & Reid, 2004). Group identity is important in a social movement because it unites the members and reduces the likelihood of membership loss. Another study on the American labor movement of the 1860s demonstrated that lack of frame resonance weakens a movement (Babb, 1996). The contemporary Promise Keeper movement was found to have strong organizational vitality as a result of the high frame resonance surrounding issues concerned with overcoming racism (Allen II, 2000). Organizational stability is important to the longevity of a movement. Frame resonance, then, is an important aspect when analyzing social movement success and failure.

Where do frames occur? Examples of frames include the slogans that appear on protest signs, websites, and newsletters. What slogans are used? What narrative do they create? What cultural values or ideas do they allude to? Framing can also be seen in what protestors wear. For example, one group protesting impunity dressed in all black, with black veils—in other words they were making a symbolic statement of being in mourning for the victims. The protestors were mourning not just the death of the victims but of the failure of the legal system to take the femicide issue seriously. Protestors' actions can also be symbolic framing, such as with anti-war groups who stage "die-ins" where they lay on the ground as if dead to protest the casualties of war.

Framing theory researchers divide frames into three types for analytical purposes: master frames, diagnostic frames, and motivational frames. Social movement actors use master frames to present their cause to participants, the media, and other audiences. Movement organizations use master frames to give the public the general idea of what the movement is about. For example, the slogan, "equal rights," was the master frame of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Signs, speeches, and activities centered on the discourse of equal rights. This communicated to the public that the main idea of the movement had to do with equal rights.

Diagnostic frames, on the other hand, explain what the movement's grievance is perceived to be (Snow & Benford, 1988, 1992, 2000). For example, in the Civil Rights movement, segregation was the grievance. The sit-ins at lunch counters were symbolic, diagnostic framings that showed the public what the problem was—that African Americans could not sit at the same lunch counter as Whites. Social movement actors use diagnostic frames to communicate to the public what the problem is.

Motivational frames specify what action should be taken (Gamson, 1992; Snow & Benford, 1988, 1992, 2000). The motivational frames for the Civil Rights movement were "end segregation" and "end racism." The diagnostic frames tell the public what the problems are. The motivational frame tells the public what specific actions they should be taking to solve the problem. For example, during the Civil Rights movement, some motivational frames involved encouraging lawmakers to pass the Voting Rights Act and other anti-racist legislation, some involved encouraging citizens to participate in African American voter registrations

drives, sit-ins, and protest events. Motivational frames tell the public and other actors what to do.

Another concept within framing theory is frame resonance which describes the extent to which the frame being utilized resonates with mainstream culture (Snow & Benford, 1992). If a frame resonates highly with existing cultural values, it is more likely to be favorably received by the public, making it more effective. The degree of resonance will affect the public's perception of how cohesive the movement is, which in turn may help or hinder their efforts to obtain support such as public participation, grants, and donations. For example, in the Civil Rights movement, "equal rights" was a frame that resonated well with American values. For example, America was founded on the idea that "all men are created equal," so the master frame of "equality" has a high cultural resonance. In this paper, I examine frame resonance for its congruence with the Mexican majority culture of the victims' families, who are in the lowest socioeconomic status in Mexico. Relevant cultural values in Mexico are justice and human rights. Therefore, I expected that frames of "justice" and "human rights" would have high cultural resonance.

In addition to frame resonance contributing to the success of a frame, an opposite process can also take place which weakens the power of the frame. If a framing is in conflict with a culture's dominant values, the movement actors are less likely to achieve public support. What resonates with one culture or audience may not resonate with another. For example, "socialism" is a frame that does not do well in American culture. Movements that seem to have "socialist" goals, like the Occupy Wall Street movement, not only have low resonance but also conflict with American's capitalist culture. This is a frame conflict, in that attempts to keep corporate money out of politics and redefine education as a public good free of loans come into conflict with capitalist ideals of profit. Frame conflict can also occur when the frames of different arms of a movement conflict with each other. For example, the moderate arm of Occupy emphasized changes through the legislative process, and the radical arm of the Occupy encouraged individuals to close their bank accounts and organize sit-ins at banks in protest of banking fraud and predatory lending practices (Writers for the 99%, 2011). To a member of the general public, these motivational frames are in conflict, and therefore the movement looks less cohesive, and where a movement seems to be "scattered," it will be less able to mobilize public support.

In conclusion, there are three factors that affect social movement success in framing their issues for the public: frames, frame resonance, and frame conflict. My purpose in this study is to analyze frame resonance with respect to femicide protests, and trace the issues that movements need to think about when designing their frames to increase movement success.

Methods

Data

This project involved multiple datasets: (a) an archive of newspaper clippings, letters, and flyers connected to the anti-femicide protests in Ciudad Juarez; (b) a collection of images from the web of protest actions; and (c) the websites of five anti-femicide organizations active in Ciudad Juarez during the period 1995-2007.

Dataset Details

This section gives more detail on what was contained in the datasets and how they were analyzed. I constantly moved back and forth between the datasets depending on the themes that were emerging. Where a pattern emerged in one dataset, I would look to see if it also emerged

in the other datasets. The dataset included social movement organization (SMO) websites, documents, mission statements, and news reports from both Spanish and English academic and news sources. These came primarily from the Ester Chavez Cano archive at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces. The archive includes approximately 300 newspaper clippings, reports, and documents related to the femicides in Ciudad Juarez covering the years 1995 to 2007. If an anti-femicide organization appeared in the archive, I included it in my analysis. The mission statements came from the organizations' websites. Photographs from the Google search provided additional images to code.

Archive items included letters, correspondence, and newspaper accounts of events related to femicide and protests about femicide. I examined the entire archive and made notes of which social movement organizations were active in femicide protests. Once I identified the five social movement organizations from their presence in the archive's news clippings, I searched for them on the web, leading to my second set of data, the mission statements, photos, and written material about protest activities found on organization websites. Additional photographic data was obtained by doing a Google Images search on the organization's name. Where the source of an image was available or recognizable, I traced it back to one of the five organizations where possible and included it in the dataset. I analyzed the following number of images generated by this activity for each social movement organization:

Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa: 25
Casa Amiga: 10
Mexico Solidarity Network: 12
Voces Sin Eco: 22
Mujeres de Negro: 17

I also used the archive to research newspaper accounts of how the crimes, investigations, and protests were framed in the stories. Within the stories, I noted how those interviewed framed their own messages, and how the author framed the issue in general. I tracked which messages were associated with which movement using a database. In terms of newspaper stories, flyers, and articles from the archive, I analyzed the following number of documents for each social movement organization:

Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa: 7
Casa Amiga: 24
Mexico Solidarity Network: 4
Voces Sin Eco: 6
Mujeres de Negro: 4

I also examined the websites of the five anti-femicide social movement organizations named in the archive for the period 2005 to 2007. Organization websites contained statements of purpose, goals, and described protest activities. The themes that emerged from these were coded using constant comparison (Charmaz 2006; Glaser & Strauss 1967). Many of the websites had not been changed much since the 1990s when I looked at them in 2007. I knew this because they reported on activities in the past using real-time language. The sites would update current events, but the main pages were consistent from 2005 to 2007. This research was done in 2007, but many of the sites had archives of past events going back to 1995. My method was to record the content of protests done by the five anti-Femicide organizations in Ciudad Juarez, noting the symbolism of the actions, appearance, slogans, and visual artifacts of each movement organization. I constantly moved between datasets as required by the triangulation method. As of the time of writing, the websites had changed substantially. I used

the websites, especially statements of purpose and photographs of protest material and events, to answer the question of what framings were being used.

I analyzed the websites of the following SMOs, because they were the most visible and active in Ciudad Juarez around the subject of femicide:

- Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (Let Our Daughters Return Home),
 - <http://nuestrashijasderegresoacasa.blogspot.com/>
- Voces Sin Eco (Voices without Echo)
 - This site is no longer on the web. Evidence of their existence in the past can be found at: <http://www.womenontheborder.org/Articles/no%20echo.htm>
- Mujeres de Negro (Women in Black, the international group)
 - The Mexican site is no longer on the web, though there are pages for their activities in other Latin American countries. The groups' past activities in Ciudad Juarez are documented in Wright, 2006.
- Mexico Solidarity Network
 - <http://www.mexicosolidarity.org/>
- Casa Amiga (Friend House battered women's shelter)
 - <http://www.casa-amiga.org.mx/>

Ethics

This project did not involve human subjects in any way, and only publicly available documents were used. No Institutional Review Board was available to me at the time the study was done, as I was an independent scholar. I ensured compliance by using no human subjects, no names, and only publicly available documents for the analysis.

Analysis

Coding and Analysis. Basing my analysis in the grounded theory work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Charmaz (2006), I examined the words used in a mission statement to identify themes that were of concern to that particular movement. Grounded theory provides a rationale for coding that involves letting the themes emerge from the data in an iterative process rather than imposing predetermined codes onto the dataset (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). If a mission statement repeatedly used the language and discourse associated with human rights, it was coded as having the theme of human rights. The difference between this and deductive ways of doing content analysis is that the researcher does not pre-determine the categories and then try to fit the data into them. This is a way of introducing objectivity into the coding process. Only when something becomes a pattern in the data does it become a code.

The process of coding is an iterative one, which involves moving back and forth between the datasets and the codes. As the patterns become clear, re-coding is necessary (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, on the first pass through the datasets, the use of concepts surrounding "justice" were apparent in the Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa data. The word appeared repeatedly on protest signs. In the written materials, there were also calls for reparations, which are a form of justice. These calls for reparations were coded under the "justice" theme on a second pass through the data. After finding all instances where "justice" was an underlying concept represented by different words or stories, like calls for reparations, a clear pattern emerged. "Justice" was an important theme in the data, and became a code.

The terms “frames,” “codes,” and “themes” are used interchangeably here; the themes that emerged from the data were given the indigenous code (for example, “justice”), and translated into the language of social movement theory, these represented frames.

Rigor. To arrive at the themes used to code the frames, I used a technique from grounded theory that is intended to reduce researcher bias in qualitative coding (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To reduce bias in coding, the researcher does not approach the dataset with a list of pre-determined codes, then trying to fit the data into the codes (Charmaz, 2006). Instead, the researcher examines the data closely, looking for patterns. When a theme emerges from the data, that theme is used as a coding category. Coding categories are adjusted through constant comparison of the coded data with new data until a comprehensive list of codes is produced (Charmaz, 2006). The themes coded in this dataset were justice, patriarchy, violence against women, impunity, and human rights. These themes were then treated as frames. To determine frame resonance, these themes were compared with Mexican culture, based on my knowledge checked by reference to scholarly work on Mexican culture (Merrell, 2003). Traditional Mexican values like reverence for family, staunch Catholicism, and traditional gender roles were the cultural features that played a large part in determining resonance. Where those features were present, the item was deemed to have cultural resonance. Lesser features of Mexican culture, like public familiarity with the discourse of human rights also indicated cultural resonance.

Information from all three data sources was combined in a process called triangulation. Triangulation is a way of increasing validity in qualitative research that involves looking at the level of agreement between different datasets (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2007). Where the agreement is high, we can be reasonably sure that we are measuring what we are intending to measure or find (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2007).

In this dataset, triangulation was used to identify which themes fit the analytical framing schema of master, diagnostic, and motivational frames for the five anti-femicide organizations. Where the photos sent the same message as the mission statements and archival newspaper stories, in other words when the three datasets agreed, I assigned the frame coding with confidence that it was reasonably accurate. For example, when the word “justice” appeared in protest signs, when calls for justice appeared in newspaper interviews and on website mission statements, the fact that all three data sources agreed was interpreted as a positive triangulation. Justice then became a theme which I used as a frame later. In grounded theory, one examines the data in an inductive process, guided by a theoretical interest, in this case in social movement framing (Charmaz, 2006). The themes that emerge after a first pass become the codes that are used to classify the rest of the data, in an iterative process (Charmaz, 2006). New codes may be added as new themes emerge, and previous data will be re-examined in this iterative process (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Since I used “indigenous codes,” or the group’s own words as descriptors, theme, code, and frame are identically described (Gordon, 2016). In other words, the themes that emerged were then used as codes for examining the datasets, and were then mapped onto the social movement theory schema of frames. The terms are used interchangeably; it simply represents a switch from the language of content analysis to the social movement literature’s language of frames.

I then consulted the frame schema to determine if the frame was a master, diagnostic, or motivational frame. Although this can be done quantitatively, when the dataset is small as this one was, statistical analyses are not appropriate. This was done qualitatively, by looking for whether the messages agreed. Specifically, I used triangulation to determine if the frames I had coded for master, diagnostic, and motivational frames agreed across datasets. I present results of this analysis and further examples of how things were coded in the Results section.

Example of Coding Process. For example, one dramatic piece of protest art is at the El Paso/Juarez border crossing, on the Juarez side. It is an 8-foot tall crucifix, painted pink,

with large iron nails fixing slips of paper with the names of each femicide victim to the cross. At the top of the cross, it read “Ni una mas,” which means “Not one more.” In analyzing the symbolism of this movement artifact, I noted that Mexico is a predominately Catholic country, so the symbolism of the cross would have high cultural resonance. That was coded in the database as an instance of high cultural resonance for the organization that erected the monument. Cultural resonance was determined by my knowledge of Mexican culture in corroboration with Merrell (2003), an academic book on the topic of Mexican culture. In addition, the implication that the victims were innocent sacrifices is seen in the use of the cross. The fact that the cross is pink communicates to the public that all the victims were female. Given the cultural context that holds family and women in high esteem, their murder represents an injustice. Together, these make a powerful master frame. I coded all of this as high cultural frame resonance for that organization. I also looked at the materials on the movement’s website and in the archive to see if these codes were repeated, and they were.

After determining what the themes, (used here interchangeably with the word, codes) which were to serve as frames, and how they culturally resonated, I then compared the frames to the analytical tools of framing theory. Which frames gave the overall message of the movement (master frames)? Which told the public what should be done (motivational frames)? Which ones told the public what the problem was (diagnostic frames)? The *motivational frame* of “Not one more” in the protest installation described above, and as “impunity” in the archive materials and on the website, shows the protestors telling the public that the murders must stop. Investigations must be done, perpetrators must be found. The slips of paper with the names of the victims represent a powerful *diagnostic frame*, communicating that “femicide is the problem.” Competing with the newspaper narrative that the victims were the problem because they led double lives as party girls and prostitutes, this diagnostic frame put the focus on femicide, not the victims, as the problem. The presence of protest signs concerning reparations and justice, used repeatedly in the data gave a *master frame* of “justice.” All instances of protest artifacts and symbolism were coded in this way.

Results

1. Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (May Our Daughters Return Home)

- Master frame: Injustice.
- Diagnostic frame: Impunity is the problem.
- Motivational frame: Force officials to investigate femicides; reparations; changes in maquilas.
- Frame resonance with Mexican culture: high

This organization focuses specifically on issues that were central to the victims’ families: lack of police investigation, impunity, and tortured confessions of innocent “perpetrators,” and misidentification of bodies (Nuestra Hijas de Regreso a Casa, n.d.). They also maintain a web site that chronicles news items about the femicides, gives a brief history of events, and pictures of marches and other actions. On their website they make claims to international human rights organizations and have brought two of the early cases of femicide before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in April 2009 (Nuestra Hijas de Regreso a Casa, n.d.). This human rights case was settled in favor of the victims’ families (Washington Valdez & Flores, 2009).

These activists focused on justice for the families of specific victims of femicide, rather than help for women in general (Rojas, 2005). Some of the mothers involved rejected the label of “activist” even as they engaged in acts of activism, framing their actions instead as the duty

of a mother towards her daughter in the search for justice (Hise, 2006). What looks like activism from the outside then, is not activism from the inside, or at least not always defined as such. Nevertheless, collective action does take place. These women organize marches and demonstrations in Ciudad Juarez.

They frame the issue as both individual and international, but the focus, or master frame is on injustice. This is readily seen in their protest actions, where they carry signs that say “Justice!”, which became their trademark. They organize victims’ families and their supporters. They are local to Juarez and are a single issue organization (Paterson, 2009).

Most of the protest photos from the organization *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* showed a single word, *justicia* (justice) under a picture of a femicide victim. The repetition of the frame of justice led me to assign “justice” to the master frame category. The organization’s mission statement stated: “. . .que nos permite salir de la impotencia al denunciar los hechos y exigir a las autoridades para que respondan a nuestra demanda de justicia” (Translation: “. . . [we have adopted an attitude] to stop being helpless to denounce these acts and demand the authorities respond to our demand for justice”). This sentiment was echoed elsewhere in archival materials. That justice should be done was a repeated theme, and the main message the movement wanted to communicate. An example from the archive, in a local Ciudad Juarez newspaper, a representative of the organization said, “We invite the public to contact to us to assist us in compiling the report required by the InterAmerican Court of Human Rights” (Felix, 2002). This shows that they are pursuing justice in the courts. In another archive article, a spokesperson says, “In the matter of femicide victims, we want to present our demands formally, in court” (Perez, 2002). For this organization, in their written materials and on their website, injustice is the overarching theme and master frame. In bringing cases before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, they are taking actions that seek justice, with the perpetrator being the Mexican authorities

In their mission statement and in other protest images, the words *no a la impunidad* (no to impunity) appeared frequently, with other statements that indicated that the impunity enjoyed by the murderers was the problem. I assigned this to the category diagnostic frame. In articles where they were quoted and in their mission statement on their website, a recurrent theme was the need for competent investigations and reparations for victims’ families from the Mexican government who failed to stop the murders. I assigned this to the motivational frame category.

The symbols used by this organization emphasized the innocence of the young women (the “virgin” ideal in Mexican culture, where the Virgin of Guadalupe is a national symbol), and traditional religion (the use of crosses as a ubiquitous protest symbol in a largely Catholic country). Frame resonance was measured by the alignment of the movement’s messages with traditional Mexican culture. Mexican culture emphasizes Catholicism, justice, human rights, family, and traditional gender and social roles (Merrell, 2003). Based on this, the emphasis on families (daughters), traditional gender symbolism, religion, and justice made the frames of this organization highly culturally resonant.

Their diagnostic frame is clear: the reason for the injustice is culture of impunity. This is evidenced in their signage and banners that proclaim, “Say no to Impunity.” In newspaper interviews they say that it is made clear to the women of Juarez that men can do whatever they want to women and nothing will be done about it by the authorities. In fact, one of the central problems in femicide is the lack of investigations.

They have several motivational frames. The most prominent is that the action needed is competent investigation of the femicides. Having lost family breadwinners, they have also sought, and in some cases received, reparations from the government for their loss, which include a 250 square-foot house and a small lump sum of money (*Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa*, n.d.). Reparations are an option when human rights are violated according to treaties to

which Mexico is signatory, and they have looked to human rights organizations for support. Since the diagnostic frame is “impunity,” it is logical that their motivational frame, which tells what action is needed, concerns actions like taking cases to international court, and mobilizing protestors to attend highly publicized meetings and protests at the offices of government officials.

In terms of frame resonance, this group uses the cultural symbolism of motherhood, daughters, and family to frame the victims in opposition to the government and police claims that the slain young women led “double lives” as drug addicts and party girls. This is an example of frame conflict, where competing frames are available in public discourse and stakeholders try to make their frame the most compelling to the public. Frame conflict can leave the public confused as to how to evaluate the social movement, decreasing movement efficacy.

In interviews in the film “On the Edge: Femicide in Ciudad Juarez” (Hise, 2006), members of this group also appeal to the Mexican norm of patronage, where an employer takes interest in workers’ welfare. Their motivational frames include not only claims against the state for not investigating the murders, but also claims towards the maquiladora (factory) owners regarding busses supplied as transportation for their workers. One of their motivational frames is that maquiladoras need to provide bus transportation all the way to the colonias so that women workers are not forced to wait for buses after midnight or at 4am in dangerous areas where women have been abducted.

In Mexican culture, the tradition of patronage is being violated by the American-run factory managers, who feel no such responsibility to their employees beyond the factory door or factory-sanctioned bus route. The motivational frame is therefore highly resonant with Mexican culture. The claimants perceive themselves to be reasonable and well within their rights to be pressing their claims, evidenced by documentary interviews with the protestors (Hise, 2006).

2. Voces Sin Eco (Voices Without Echo)

- Master Frame: Injustice
- Diagnostic Frame: Impunity
- Motivational Frame: Force investigation of femicides; reparations; changes in maquilas
- Frame resonance with Mexican culture: High

Another grassroots local organization called Voces Sin Eco (Voices Without Echo) was formed in 1999 (Fregoso, 2006). They are a nonprofit organization created by mothers, sisters, and some male family members of *maquiladora* femicide victims who were tortured, raped, and killed. This group was composed of low-income families who had no religious or political sponsorship. Voces Sin Eco utilized an unconventional method of performance art to get publicity for their murdered daughters’ claims for justice.

Voces Sin Eco was local to Juarez and it was a single issue protest group started in 1998, which disbanded three years later (Castañón Araly, 1999). An article in the Mexican newspaper *El Diario* quotes the members saying that they felt used by the press, and by another local SMO, Casa Amiga (n.d.) whose goals and frames conflicted with their own. Below is a summary of their framings, which are identical with the framings of *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa*, another grassroots group. Unlike *Nuestras Hijas*, however, Voces Sin Eco had limited success because the group was relatively short-lived.

In coding for themes in the archive, newspaper accounts of the group emphasized injustice, impunity, and reparations. The group, however, disbanded in 2003. It is unknown

whether other organizations absorbed their members. In photographs of protest actions, members wear black veils to symbolize mourning. They also painted phone poles near where victims disappeared pink with a black cross, using highly resonant symbolism. Pink is a symbol of traditional gender roles, and the cross is a highly potent religious symbol. The group also placed pink crosses with the names of victims in a field where bodies were found in a mass grave. This group repeatedly used pink and crosses to draw the public's attention to the crimes.

Voces sin Echo used attention-grabbing tactics to attract the press and capture the public imagination. They marched through the city in solemn processions, dressed and veiled in black, symbolic of mourning. They painted pink crosses on many light posts around the City of Juarez without requesting official permission. This was to remind the citizens of Juarez of the femicide victims, as the pink cross had become a well-known symbol of the femicides. Often, families would place a pink cross at the site where a femicide body was discovered in the desert, or along the road or at the last place in the city where a victim was seen. Also, in their homes and on the streets, mothers built altars with pictures, flowers and other items to pay tribute to their daughters' short lives. These actions attracted media attention and created an international awareness of injustice and impunity surrounding the femicides (Bejarano, 2002). This can be counted a success of this movement organization.

Victims' families in this organization tended to use a discourse of motherly suffering and a claim for justice to frame their demands for investigations into the murders, compensation, and an end to a culture of impunity (Fregoso, 2006). This was highly culturally resonant, given the cultural sanctity of family and motherhood in Mexican culture.

3. Mujeres de Negro (Women in Black)

- Master Frame: Western Feminist: Anti-patriarchy, anti-violence, anti-war
- Diagnostic frame: patriarchy
- Motivational frame: dismantle patriarchy
- Frame resonance:
 - Class based, appeals to an educated audience
 - Poor Catholic women: low to medium resonance

Mujeres de Negro (Women in Black) is an international organization that has several causes, primarily anti-war, and Ciudad Juarez is not listed as a cause on their web page at the time of writing (Mujeres de Negro n.d.). They are an umbrella group, headquartered in Spain, with informal chapters all around the world which have adopted their movement strategies. At the time this analysis was done, the Ciudad Juarez chapter of the organization did have a web page. They listed many feminist causes on their web page, and their modus operandi is to wear black and protest silently, holding signs that illustrate the issue being protested. An article from the archive describes them as "wearing their signature black suits and pink hats" (Salcedo, 2003). Their use of black recalls the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina who protested the government silence surrounding their children who were "disappeared" in the politically turbulent 1970s. This symbolism is well-known in Latin America, and its appeal to the sanctity of motherhood makes it highly culturally resonant. Their other frames, however, were not so resonant.

In using silence as a protest tactic, they accused the Mexican government of silence in a way that links, in the minds of the public, to the well-known human rights abuses in Argentina. There is also another small, local organization by the same name, which uses similar tactics, but who march carrying crosses and are indigenous to Juarez (Wright, 2005). For the

purposes of this paper I am using the international organization because they provide an example of cross national SMO activity.

In coding the website and images from the web, it became clear that the organization perceived patriarchy, which includes traditional gender roles, to be the underlying problem leading to femicide. For example, here is one bullet item from their list of aims on their website at the time: *“Impulsan la resistencia noviolenta de mujeres contra toda forma de control patriarcal a través de la imposición de uniformidad étnica”*

(Translation: “[Women in Black] lead women’s nonviolent resistance to every form of patriarchal control through the imposition of ethnic uniformity.” To expand on the translation, what is meant is that they will fight appeals to culture that bolster patriarchal control of women. They will not accept the answer, “this is the way we do things in Mexico,” in other words. Because Mexican culture is extremely patriarchal, this organization had lower cultural resonance. They were standing opposed to the dominant culture and values of Mexico, which emphasize traditional gender roles and the authority of men.

From the same website, their master frame was clearly not entirely focused on femicide: *“Crean espacios para que se escuchen las voces de las mujeres contra la guerra y para transformar su indignación en resistencia activa y noviolenta a la Guerra”*

(Translation: “[Women in Black] create spaces where the voices of women against war can be heard in order to transform their anger into active nonviolent resistance to war”). In other words, their main activity was concerned with the larger issue of pacifism, not femicide. This further limited the groups appeal to Mexican members; frames made a difference. The group did join other organizations in femicide protests in Juarez, but their cultural resonance was low, contributing to the group’s disbandment in Ciudad Juarez by 2010. The cultural resonance was low because the group was an arm of a movement started in Israel, and their discourse tended to be about international peace rather than concerns specifically regarding Mexico or femicide.

This international organization stands in contrast to the local organizations due to its explicit use of Western feminist discourse, including master frames of anti-patriarchy, anti-war, and a vocabulary that is associated with feminist activism. Their diagnostic frame differs radically from the frames of local grassroots organizations. On their website, they discuss patriarchy as being the main problem in cases of violence against women. They take a more theoretical turn in their representation to the public, who are not educated and generally unappreciative of concepts that challenge traditional gender roles.

This also affects their motivational frame, which is to dismantle patriarchy. This is very different from a simple claim for justice made in a specific case. This discourse may appear too radical to the traditional Mexican woman of low socioeconomic status and educational attainment. Therefore, I have characterized the frame resonance as low, using the local culture as the referent for resonance. It is perhaps for this reason that they were not major players in the Juarez SMO field, but they have had their tactics adopted by local groups. They tend to come to town for large events and otherwise be absent, in contrast to the grassroots groups. The cultural resonance of their symbology of the use of black, and of putting women out in the public sphere resonates with most Mexicans, but their ideological underpinnings and messaging do not.

4. Casa Amiga

- Master Frame: Violence Against Women
- Diagnostic Frame: Culture of violence against women
- Motivational Frame: Provide services for victims of family violence
- Resonance: Problematic relationship with victims’ families; medium resonance

- Frame expansion: Considers all murders of women to be femicides

Casa Amiga is the first battered women's shelter in Ciudad Juárez, started by Mexican human rights activist, Esther Chavez Cano in 1999. She had close ties to American activists, scholars, celebrity activists, and international human rights organizations. The organization is relatively well-funded. Chavez was very involved in a locally controversial V-Day march which is discussed later in this paper. Casa Amiga uses violence against women as the master frame in making their claims. They expand the definition of femicide to include any murder of any woman, including during domestic violence incidents (Casa Amiga, n.d.). This is called "frame expansion" in the literature. Below is a summary of their framings as evidenced by newspaper accounts, public statements, and signage:

From their website, the mission statement is "*Fomentar una cultura sin violencia basada en la equidad y el respeto a la integridad física, emocional, y sexual de las mujeres...*." (Translation: "[Casa Amiga wants to] create a culture without violence, based on equity and respect for women's physical, emotional, and sexual integrity." This is repeated in public statements, and is the group's master frame. While most Mexicans would agree with their goal, like Mujeres de Negro, Casa Amiga is not focusing specifically on femicide. They do keep public statistics on femicide, but their analysis of where femicide comes from is couched in the language of feminism, one that is unaccessible and perhaps unintelligible to ordinary working-class Mexicans. For example, from their website: "*El feminicidio es una reacción misógina de los hombres por la supremacía de género que les es asignada socialmente.*" [Translation: "Femicide is a misogynist reaction of men, because of the gender supremacy that society gives to them."]. The website emphasizes services for women who are victims of violence, and offered services to victims' families in terms of counseling.

Casa Amiga is controversial among victims' families in Juarez, some of whom feel that the organization has used the mothers' stories and pain for organizational fundraising without benefitting the victims' families. Instead of "justice," the master frame of Casa Amiga is violence against women, and that is the discourse that is used in on their web page and in their written materials. Their posters advertise a "safe space" for women who are victims of domestic violence. Their motivational frame reflects their master frame: what is needed is education, consciousness raising, and domestic violence resources in the community. This framing is in conflict with the justice framing of the organizations made up of victims' families. The frame resonance with local culture is medium for this reason. Frame conflict can confuse the public who are trying to figure out a movement's issues, and too much frame conflict between social movement organizations can lead to a general weakening of a movement's position in the public mind. This leads to decreased overall effectiveness at presenting a cohesive message.

5. Mexico Solidarity Network

- Master Frame: Human rights
- Diagnostic frame: Violence is the problem
- Motivational frames:
 - Grassroots organizing to pressure local and international officials
 - Appeals to international human rights organizations
 - Appeals to American and Mexican officials
- Resonance with Mexican culture: low to medium
 - Activists are cultural outsiders- low cultural resonance
 - Human rights frame resonance in particular is high

Mexico Solidarity Network is a U.S.-based organization with an office in Ciudad Juarez, and is affiliated with several U.S. universities. Mexico Solidarity Network offers study abroad programs focused on working with families of femicide victims. It participates in two other causes in Mexico. They work with Mexican universities and organizations to organize lectures, and academic conferences. In terms of social class, it is an elite organization. Because it is an elite, foreign organization made up primarily of American students and professors, the resonance with local culture is relatively low. Their messages tend to appeal to the educated elite, which is a small segment of Mexican society. It does, however, partner with and participate in protests with victims' families.

On the group's website, their mission statement is listed as "The Autonomous University of Social Movements (AUSM) is an alternative educational program focused on the study of social movements in Mexico, socialism in Cuba, and community organizing in Chicago." The activities listed on their web page include study abroad opportunities and news updates on human rights issues in Mexico. Like *Mujere de Negro*, femicide was not their main issue. The limitations for this organization is that they were outsiders, and the Mexican press used this to their advantage in trying to discredit the anti-femicide movement. According to archive materials, news reports accused protesters of being misled by outside agitators, which meant non-Mexican groups like the Mexico Solidarity Network.

While their frame of human rights does resonate with Mexican culture, their limited focus and outsider status limited their effectiveness. Their other frames did not directly involve femicide in the way that the grassroots Mexican groups did.

Mexico Solidarity Network uses a master frame of human rights, which resonates well in Mexico. They tend to do this discursively, rather than visually, in speeches and letters to officials. Mexicans are so used to the corruption in their government that many feel their only hope for justice is from an international organization, which is the reason for medium resonance. The diagnostic frame is that violence is the problem, in the context of human rights. Their motivational frame is grassroots organizing and building coalitions between foreign students and Mexican students and victims' organizations in order to influence local and national officials. Their cultural resonance is mixed, so I have rated them "low to medium."

Discussion: Movement Dynamics that Frames Reveal

Some social movements are more successful than others, and this paper is an exploration of how framing plays a role in movement success or failure in the case of femicide. Success is measured by a movement's ability to achieve their goals. The movement organizations described in this paper have the same general goal of raising public awareness of femicide and combatting impunity. As a general goal, consciousness-raising is relatively easier to achieve than more concrete goals seeking specific actions like police investigations, prosecutions, and reparations for victims' families. After examining the data, it is fair to say that all of the organizations examined did their part in raising public consciousness of the problem of femicide through protest actions. The difference comes in examining the specific, concrete actions.

Additionally, there are other dynamics considered in the study that reveal tensions within the overall anti-femicide movement; these concern tension between the grassroots and local and international elites, and the effects of frame conflict with the Mexican government. Frame analysis is also effective for teasing out these other issues in social movement dynamics.

Anti-femicide movement organizations also differed in their social movement goals, which are ideas of what should be done to ameliorate the impunity issue, and their framings reflected this. Some activists, like Casa Amiga (Friend House), focused on eliminating family violence, or general violence in the community as a whole. Others, like *Nuestras Hijas de*

Regreso a Casa (May Our Daughters Return Home) focus on seeking compensation for particular families who have lost their breadwinners (Rojas, 2005). The frames they used reflect these differences.

The Insider Advantage

In terms of securing investigations and reparations for victims' families, Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa stands out for their ability to achieve these aims in the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Simmons, 2006). This grassroots organization was the only one able to achieve such a concrete goal. It is also the organization, together with the short-lived Voces sin Eco, whose frames had the highest resonance with Mexican culture. Voces sin Eco achieved a goal of being allowed to view victims' bodies after autopsies had been performed, and got a better response than before the protests when they visited police offices. The original members may have joined other organizations after disbanding. Their framing processes are the same as those of Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa. These two grassroots organizations achieved important goals locally and internationally. This is an indicator of movement success, and frame analysis suggests that the resonance with local culture enjoyed by these grassroots groups plays an important part in their successes.

Outsiders, Elites, and Local Interactions

Local activists framed the efforts of American celebrities to bring international attention to the anti-femicide movement as co-optation, and felt that they were left out of important decision-making involving protest events. Similarly, local elites, like Casa Amiga activists, were seen by local grassroots protest organizations as competitors for support and funding, especially by victims' organizations, making the social movement field very complex. What can be learned from this is that frame competition can fragment a movement while at the same time allowing for the completion of discrete goals. Voces Sin Eco could not sustain its efforts in competition with other SMOs. The SMOs who used the frame of injustice tended to be comprised of the local poor population, and they have enlisted the help of elites to bring their concerns to the international human rights community. Local elites in Juarez have been able to coordinate across borders to bring in resources that benefit all women.

In terms of outsider elites, the U.S.-based Mexico Solidarity Network aims appeals directly to the Mexican officials, in English, and led a group of victims' mothers to a meeting with the governor of the State of Chihuahua (Hise, 2006). They build coalitions with insiders and outsiders, and bring much-needed resources to the activists in Juarez. Their frame resonance is mixed, but in filmed interactions at Mexican events they seem to be able to successfully form cross-border coalitions (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2007). Their framing reflects their outsider point of view, but their coalition-building can be seen as a movement success.

Casa Amiga was more of a local Mexican elite organization than a grassroots organization, and had more international ties, such as with American celebrities. They had goals that were directed towards helping all women (Swanger, 2007). In fact, Casa Amiga represented a competing frame within the femicide cause in Ciudad Juarez in its emphasis on eliminating all causes of violence against women. Casa Amiga's director was an experienced human rights activist, and had ties to elites in Mexico, the US, and in human rights organizations. Her mission was wider, and her coalitions are farther reaching than other local groups. Because she was from the privileged class, perhaps the mothers could not relate to her. Difficulties may also have arisen because their frames were more oriented towards local and international elites than to the everyday citizen. Their frames represented the insider views of

the local elites, who look to the international community for support. The major success of Casa Amiga was to secure funding to build the first battered women's shelter in Ciudad Juarez, and to raise consciousness about violence against women generally.

The success or failure of anti-femicide SMOs cannot be attributed to frames alone, but frames may affect the ease with which organizations are able to get the resources that they need. Where frames compete, coalition building is hindered. In analyzing social movement frames in this case study, I see a fragmented movement, especially between elites and the grassroots that would greatly benefit from aligning their frames and presenting a more united front to the Mexican government.

When Frames Do Not Resonate: The V-Day March

One reason that frames are important is that conflicting frames can cause a movement organization to fail in its efforts. A frame that does not resonate with the culture creates practical problems for movements, for example, it makes forming movement coalitions difficult. One example of this was the presence of Western feminists and their V-Day march. They were attempting to show support for the victims of femicide, but they ended up alienating the victims' families.

All of the femicide SMOs interact with the larger social movement environment of celebrities, government agencies, and the culture of impunity in Juarez. These elements came together on V-Day, itself a contested collective action with many participants from groups with differing agendas, claims, and frames. In the case of anti-femicide movements, there are both local and international SMOs involved, and their frame resonance with local culture becomes important. The 2006 V-Day march in Juarez, a bi-national effort spearheaded by celebrity figures Sally Field and Eve Ensler, provides an example of all these dynamics. Eve Ensler is the author of the (Western) feminist performance piece entitled "The Vagina Monologues," and during the course of the anti-impunity march, the middle-class organizers scheduled a performance of the Vagina Monologues. Each of the monologues deals with an aspect of the [feminine experience](#), touching on matters such as [sex](#), [love](#), [rape](#), [menstruation](#), [female genital mutilation](#), [masturbation](#), [birth](#), [orgasm](#), the various common names for the [vagina](#), or simply as a physical aspect of the body. A recurring theme throughout the piece is the vagina as a tool of female empowerment, and the ultimate embodiment of individuality (The Vagina Monologues, n.d.). This Western feminism did not resonate with Mexican culture; it was experienced by the poor, Catholic, uneducated residents of Juarez as crude because of the word "vagina."

Mexican women did not want the word "vagina," nor Western outsider feminists who made performances called "The Vagina Monologues" to be associated with their daughters who were victims of femicide. Mexican culture is very conservative about gender issues, and it is considered crude to use the word "vagina" in public. The subject matter of the play is taboo for most Mexicans. For example, Nuestras Hijas de Regreso A Casa (May Our Daughters Return Home) sent a letter to the organizers of the V-Day march specifying that the victims' families wanted no part of the Vagina Monologues performance, and would limit their participation in the V-Day march to the more culturally resonant activities of conventional protest (Wright, 2006). This can be seen as a coalition-building failure.

Counter-Framing at Work: Government Frame Competition

Movements also face counter-framing, which are efforts to dispute the movement's concerns. An example of this was the way government officials issued counter-frames of the femicide victims and protesters. Government officials engaged in framing of their own, and

contested the frames of both local and international protestors. They accomplished this framing discursively, through public statements that were then quoted in newspapers and other media. Examples of these framings were gathered from newspaper accounts and official statements. When the government constructs frames that are in opposition to a movement, public discourse becomes an important site of action in the struggle to control the meaning of a movement. Here are some examples of frames employed by the Mexican government.

- Foreign activists are meddlers
- Local activists are “defaming Juarez”
- Elite Mexican activists are using families’ misery for profit
- Femicide victims were leading a “double life,” and thus in some sense deserved what happened to them

The Mexican government acknowledged its own ineffectiveness at dealing with impunity, while at the same time undermining the criticism leveled at its ineffectiveness through newspaper articles and public statements. The SMOs in Juarez are indeed fighting their own government in an effort to get it to implement its own laws and human rights treaties. An examination of framing also highlights the efforts of those who would oppose social movements, within the discursive environment that molds and shapes movement framings, and reveals the complexities of movement dynamics which SMOs need to be aware of.

Conclusion

Femicide does not just occur in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. It is an international phenomenon with complex causes and responses. One response to the presence of femicide is the rise of social movement organizations. My concern in this study is to evaluate the reasons why these movements tend to succeed or fail, fully or partially, in their goals. While none of the movements in this study achieved full success (the ending of femicide), they did achieve partial goals (reparations, investigative changes, coalition-building, consciousness-raising). Their ability to achieve these goals was related to the cultural resonance of their movement frames. Frames emerging from those close to the victims mirrored Mexican cultural values, and those groups achieved more of their goals. In trying to determine the role that culture plays in this success or failure, frame analysis provides a window into the dynamics of making a movement relevant to the host culture. This study suggests that the more culturally relevant the framings, the greater chances a movement actor has of being successful. Frame analysis also reveals important movement dynamics that can lead future movements to examine the interactions between outsiders, local elites, and grassroots constituencies. It is also important to movements to consider government and other opposition views in constructing their frames. In conclusion, frame analysis can be valuable for both examining movement dynamics and accounting for movement successes and failures.

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