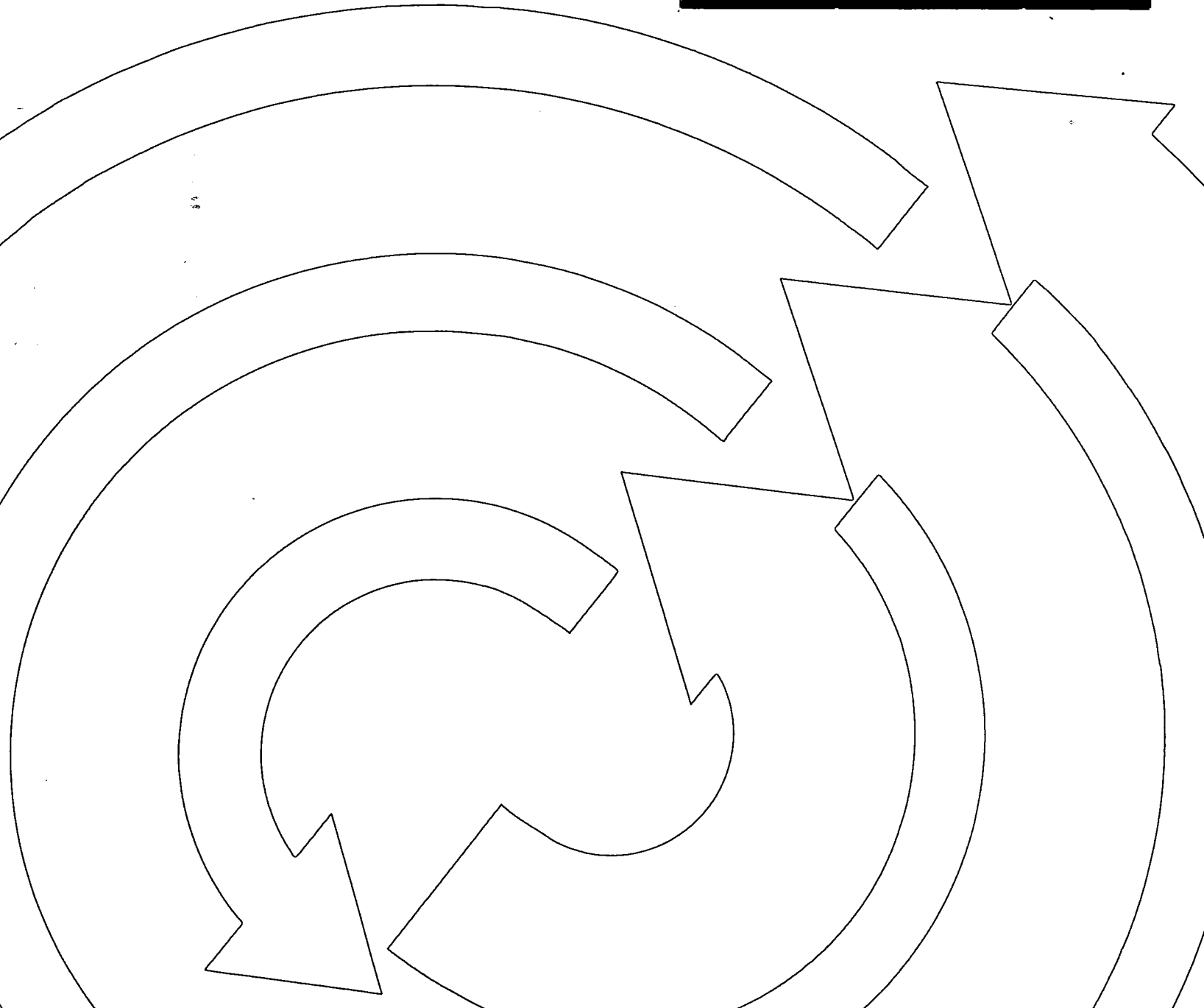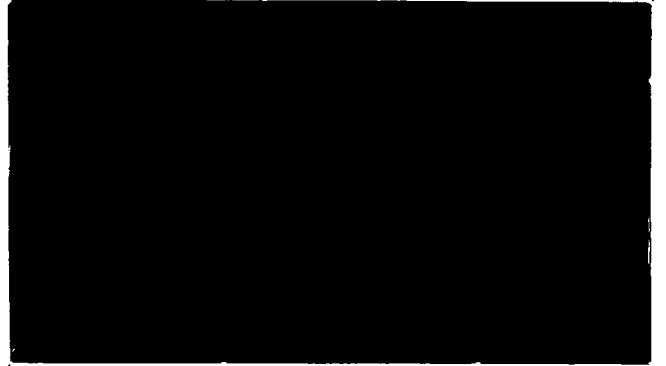# CRSO

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THE DIAG:
DIVERGING VIEWS OF A MEETING PLACE

Katherine Bischoping and
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CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
WORKING PAPER SERIES

THE DIAG: DIVERGING VIEWS OF A MEETING PLACE[1]

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The University of Michigan

THE DIAG: DIVERGING VIEWS OF A MEETING PLACE

Student groups at Midwest University present displays and activities at a central square called the Diag. In this article, ethnographic data collection and analysis methods are used to compare the frameworks group members and their audience use to interpret persuasion activities. The persuaders and audience have different goals in Diag use, emphasizing respectively its strategic and recreational qualities. Their beliefs about "good" persuasion also differ: the persuaders focus on their groups' concerns while audience members place more emphasis on impression management. Audience members frequently find persuasion activities ineffective, but persuaders are more positive. These differences can be explained in terms of the two groups' goals, cognitions, and attribution processes, all of which are the result of differing orientations towards the common space of the Diag.

THE DIAG: DIVERGING VIEWS OF A MEETING PLACE

The Diag is a large outdoor square located near major lecture halls and libraries at the center of the Midwest University campus. In the course of a typical day, a great deal of social interaction takes place here.

At 8:30 in the morning, the Diag is barely awake. A few students shuffle silently on their way to the day's first class. The Diag's surface has flyers taped to it; once in a while a passerby will stop and read them. Wooden buildings put up on the Diag by student groups display their slogans and, occasionally, their smashed-in sides testify to the presence of overnight vandals. By noon, heavy streams of students flow into the Diag. Some walk rapidly to class while others mill about in groups, or sit on the Diag's benches watching events. A political rally may occur one day; Reverend Joe may give a sermon the next. The action has slowed by late afternoon. Most events are over, but students are still passing through, or playing frisbee if the weather allows. Sometimes a charity bucket drive collector remains on the Diag, trying to raise as much money as possible from the diminishing crowds. On the ground, many of the flyers that were fresh in the morning have been stamped past recognition.

This description of a typical day on the Diag reveals that two distinct groups of people come there. One group -- which we will call persuaders -- is engaged in convincing others to support a cause by using flyers or buildings on the Diag, or by appearing in person at rallies or bucket drives. The other group consists of the audience.[1] We will explore how these two groups conceive of the Diag and Diag

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[1] While our analyses will use Goffman's (1959) dramaturgic framework of teams of performers staging performances for audiences, in the case of the Diag the use of this framework is more literal than metaphoric since there is actually a premeditated performance being put on.

activities, how they construe the concept of "good persuasion," and how they evaluate the effectiveness of persuasion events. An ethnographic approach will be used in an effort to appreciate persuasion from these two perspectives, and to understand how our research methods and assumptions are reflections of our own previous participation in the Diag setting. Thus, the Diag is a naturalistic setting for a study of awareness contexts. Our findings can be interpreted by using results from cognitive and attribution research and can ultimately be explained as the results of the different orientations which persuaders and audience members have towards the Diag.

Methods

Nine activist groups who staged events or had displays on the Diag were observed. They were selected purposively to represent the variety of methods being used on the Diag over a month-long observation period. Diag audience members were approached for brief interviews about their views on each group. For every persuasion effort, we attempted to obtain at least four audience members' responses to questions about noticing the persuaders, understanding their message, judging effectiveness, and the role of the Diag itself.[2] Further information about audience responses to Diag persuasion was collected in two undergraduate Sociology classroom sessions, in which students drew maps of the Diag and discussed it. One session had 22 respondents, the other had 20.

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[2]Audience members were also asked whether the information they provided could be shared anonymously with the groups they were commenting on. This allowed us to form a body of feedback to present each persuader we interviewed and elicit their reactions. In no case did any audience member who agreed to be interviewed decline to allow us to use their statements in this manner.

Eight of the nine persuader groups had members who agreed to participate in a one to two hour structured interview.[3] In total, 36 audience members were interviewed in 5 to 20 minute interviews about these persuader groups.   The participating groups were:

> Central America Committee - held a rally and presented a play representing firing squad deaths to protest American support of Central American governments

> Abortion Defense - held a rally to encourage participation in an abortion clinic defense against Operation Rescue

> Black Fraternity - conducted a bucket drive for an organization helping Black youth in the metropolitan area

> Homeless Aid - held a bucket drive to support services for homeless youth in the community

> Zionists - built a bus on the Diag to commemorate victims of a terrorist event in Israel

> Anti-Racist Coalition - built two shanties on the Diag representing the anti-apartheid movement and protesting racism in the United States

> Palestinians - built a shanty on the Diag to protest the Israeli occupation of Palestine

> Marxists - presented a display table of literature about the worker's movement and Marxism

The structured interviews had five topics. Persuaders were asked to state their goals and describe their methods, to assess their effectiveness and explain how they gauged it, and to answer directive questions about effectiveness, such as "Are you noticed?" or "How do people react?". Next, they were shown excerpts of the audience interviews and asked to comment on this feedback. Finally, persuaders

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[3]The groups that did not participate in the interview were a feminist organization whose clandestine activities (the identities of group members was purposely kept from public knowledge) included building a temporary structure on the Diag, a group of organizers of housing cooperatives who had gathered on the Diag to spend a lunch hour dancing, and a fledgling business that was advertising its clothing line by posting flyers on the Diag.

were asked questions about their decision-making process based on our observations on the Diag.

To compare audience members' and persuaders' perceptions of the Diag and the persuasion activities going on there, we selected statements from the interviews which addressed these topics. The responses used for each of the analyses are listed in Table 1. Inductive content analyses of the statements were then performed.

Table 1. Data sources for persuader and audience comparisons.

Comparison	Audience	Persuaders
Views of the Diag	Responses to "Come here often?"/ "Spend much time here?"	Responses to questions about methods
Beliefs About Effective Persuasion	Responses to all interview questions	Responses to questions about methods and decision-making, audience feedback
Assessments of Effectiveness	Responses to "Are they effective [at getting their message across]?"	Responses to "Are you effective?", "How do you judge this?", "Are you noticed?", statements made throughout about political awareness of audience members, responses to feedback

Goals and Views of Diag Use

Although some audience members were simply passing through the Diag on their way to classes, others came and stayed with a purpose in mind. They often mentioned that the Diag was a place to spend leisure time, commenting "It's

relaxing" and "I like sitting reading the paper." In addition, many audience members saw the Diag as a good place to socialize, saying "We're waiting for people" or "I stop and talk awhile."

Many audience members experienced persuasion attempts on the Diag as entertainment, saying "It's a fun way to kill some time once in a while if I've got absolutely nothing else to do" and "When I pass by and Reverend Joe really gets talking rubbish I like to listen and laugh." Other audience members took persuasion efforts more seriously -- such as a couple who brought their children to the Diag to explain the purpose of the shanties. Another audience member, who was attending school in another state, said, "Every time I get a chance to when I come home, I come hang out here. There's diversity."

The persuaders came to the Diag with the goals of addressing issues of domestic policy, such as homelessness and abortion rights, and foreign concerns, such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and apartheid. In comparison with the audience, the persuaders' views of the Diag were elaborately developed and intense. For example, the Anti-Racist Coalition member discussed the effects of the presence on the Diag of politically conservative displays put up by student groups, and university buildings on her group's message:

> To have reactionary constructions out [on the Diag] as well [as University buildings], to me, is a little redundant. I think it's a voice for the voiceless people and voiceless struggles, or struggles that have a voice that people don't want to listen to. And so I get upset when things get built up there ...which don't go along with the kinds of worries and analyses that go along with the anti-apartheid shanties.

While the audience saw the Diag as a place for leisure, persuaders often described it as a place for action, possessing strategic importance. For instance, the Homeless Aid persuader stated:

> We usually have two main areas on which we focus -- the [MU] campus and downtown. Both locations have a heavy amount of foot traffic so those are the best places to set up...On campus, we usually center on the Diag.

and commented on the Diag's drawbacks:

> The environment [the Diag] really restricts how much we can do in advertising ourself. That's why the objective is pretty much just to raise money.

The Central America Committee member gave a similar description of the advantages and disadvantages of the Diag, saying, "To hit the students, noon on the Diag, that's the place" but noting that the noontime crowds could make performances difficult to see.

Persuaders and their audience come to the Diag with differing orientations. While both groups frequent the same space, they differ in their expectations of the activities that they will participate in and in their conceptions of the significance of the persuasion activities. While this difference between the two groups would seem to be obvious, it is actually responsible for a nearly complete failure of communication.

The Meaning of "Good" Persuasion

<u>Comparing persuaders and the audience</u>

The persuaders' and audience members' beliefs about persuasion had four themes:

> 1. good persuasion addresses the persuader group's concerns -- it should remain true to the group's issues, conserve time and money, keep members involved, and strengthen ties with supportive groups.

> 2. good persuasion draws the attention of the audience -- groups should vary their methods or repeatedly use the same method, maintain a presence on the Diag, and be catchy.

> 3. good persuasion has effective message content -- the message should be personally relevant to audience members, clear, positive, and respond to the group's critics.

> 4. good persuasion involves favorable impression management (Goffman, 1959) -- the persuaders should appear to be open and pleasant, controlled and professional, trustworthy, and hard-working.

The numbers of persuader and audience interviews in which each of these beliefs were stated are given in Table 2. Because of the differences in the sample sizes and interview lengths for audience members and persuaders, the two groups' beliefs are best compared by using the difference between them in the rank each belief was given (the last column in Table 2). There are several striking differences between the two groups in the use and relative importance of these categories.

First, persuaders often cited virtues of methods that did not occur to the audience. For example, the Palestinian persuader explained how the painting on his shanty faithfully represented his group's beliefs, saying:

> In occupied Palestine now, graffiti is a common way of expressing messages and themes. With the occupying army there, you can't get a message drawn in neat lines. The shanty has the format of the graffiti in Palestine.

None of the audience members mentioned a belief in the value of being true to issues as a criterion for good or effective persuasion. In fact, one passerby was critical of the Palestinians for doing so, saying:

> It's asinine -- you put a shanty here, one there -- but nothing happens in Palestine. Fine, it's okay being aware, but what's the point of being bitter? If the cost of awareness is just being bitter and radical groups, then it's too high a cost.

In general, persuaders apparently considered their groups' concerns when evaluating the effectiveness of persuasion methods much more than did their audience.

The audience and persuaders showed smaller differences in their rankings of beliefs about effective message content or effective ways to draw audience attention. The one exception was that persuaders gave more emphasis than the audience to the value of using a variety of methods (such as posting flyers, holding rallies, and inviting lecturers). Combined with the persuaders' and audience's differing views of group concerns, these findings confirm the results of the analyses

Table 2. Frequencies and rank differences between persuaders and audience members in stating beliefs about persuasion, by belief.

	Number of Persuaders[a]	Number of Audience Interviews	Rank Difference[b]
Group concerns:			
be true to group issues	8	0	-12.5
conserve group resources	7	1	-6.0
keep members involved	6	0	-7.0
connect with other groups	6	0	-7.0
Audience attention:			
vary methods	8	1	-8.5
maintain group's presence	8	10	-0.5
be catchy	7	12	3.5
repeat a method	3	1	2.5
Message content:			
be relevant to audience	6	9	3.5
be clear	6	8	2.5
be positive	5	1	0.0
respond to critics	2	0	-0.5
Impression management:			
be open and pleasant	5	6	4.0
be controlled and professional	4	10	9.5
be trustworthy	1	2	7.0
make an effort	0	6	9.5

Notes:

[a] There were eight persuader interviews and thirty-one audience interviews (including the two class discussions).

[b] The rank difference was calculated by determining the rank of each belief for persuaders and for audience members (e.g., "be catchy" had rank 1 belief for audience members since more of them stated this belief than any other). When the ranks of two or more beliefs were the same, their mean rank was used. The rank difference was calculated as:

$$\text{Rank of Belief for Persuaders} - \text{Rank of Belief for Audience Members}$$

of audience members' and persuaders' views of the Diag. Unlike their audience, persuaders focus on strategic activities that occur behind the scene of the Diag, such as plans for varied approaches, strategies to conserve resources, and concerns about members' enjoyment of their work.

Second, the persuaders gave less weight than the audience to evaluations of impression management -- attempts or presumed attempts at creating a favorable reaction towards a group or its activities. The Marxist persuader dismissed the need for outreach and appeal, stating:

> Advertising isn't all that big a part of what we're about. If people are interested and come up, we'll talk and they'll learn about the workers' movement.

The audience members' evaluations frequently were based on appearances -- thus, the Marxist persuader was rejected by one passerby because he was not a student and might have "ulterior motives." The Zionist bus was admired more than the other Diag buildings because "It has more shape and style; it's like a piece of art." While black passersby evaluated the Black Fraternity bucketeers favorably, commenting on their fraternity affiliation, white audience members were negative -- one saying "They don't look like they're too interested in collecting money if they're just standing in the Diag -- usually people are more outgoing." The audience members' frequent references to beliefs about the form, rather than the content, of persuasive messages is consistent with their view of the Diag as a place for relaxation and entertainment. They are less interested in the political content of a display than its aesthetic or entertainment value.

Persuaders' belief conflicts

Persuaders often described conflicts that occurred between themes of beliefs about persuasion. The majority of these conflicts were between beliefs about the need to address group concerns, and beliefs about effective ways to draw audience attention, formulate messages, or manage appearances (Table 3).

Table 3. Numbers of conflicts persuaders mentioned between beliefs themes.

	Theme of belief			
	Group Concerns	Audience Attention	Message Content	Impression Management
Group Concerns	5	14	15	7
Audience Attention		0	3	1
Message Content			3	0
Impression Management				3

For example, the Anti-Racist Coalition member was typical in offsetting the goal of gaining visibility by using more shanties (audience attention) against the limits of group resources (group concerns):

> Considering how much damage the two on the Diag get, to do that successfully I'd be building all the time. I can't do that and be a successful student trying to graduate.

A second common area of conflict was the groups' desire to be true to their principles (group concerns), yet present a positive or appealing message (message content). Thus, when asked why aggressive images had been used in an Abortion Defense rally speech, a group member replied:

> We're an activist group. We support things with this title and our actions. It might scare people off, but abortion rights are hard-won.

In brief, the largest belief conflicts identified were between the frontstage public performances of the persuaders and the backstage group work that is not visible to the audience.

However, the distribution of the conflicts, summarized in Table 3, does not necessarily parallel the frequencies of conflicts arising when the persuader groups make decisions about methods. It is important to note that our observations were done while we were audience members, and before most of the interviews that

revealed the backstage life of the groups. Except in the sense that we were engaged in systematic research, our perspective was similar to that of the audience member who told us, "Once in a while I sit here and observe. I like to watch people." To some extent, the distributions are products of the puzzles that we observed and attempted to resolve in the persuader interviews. Therefore, the large proportion of conflicts that were identified between frontstage (audience attention, message content, and impression management) and backstage (group concerns) concerns may be interpreted as a reflection of the lack of knowledge that we, as audience members, had about persuaders.

Evaluating effectiveness

Of the persuaders, all but the Zionist were sure that their group was effective. However, audience members gave only Homeless Aid and the Zionists wholly positive evaluations. The other six groups received mixed or solely negative responses. The low association between the persuader and audience responses is further illustrated by the contrast between the Palestinian persuader's assertion that his poorly-evaluated shanty was "very effective" and the Zionist persuader's uncertainty about her group's effectiveness:

> I really don't know...It brought a lot of exposure to the group -- that's effective. It brought a lot of negative exposure to the group last year, that's not effective.

How can the differences between the persuaders' and the audience members' evaluations be explained?

Assumptions about the goals of persuasion

One answer lies in the difference between the criteria that our questions raised for evaluations of effectiveness by the audience members and the persuaders. Some audience members were asked an open question about effectiveness that paralleled the open question asked of the persuaders. Others

were asked more directly how effective a group was in "getting its message across." However, even when the persuaders were asked directive questions about this aspect of effectiveness (following the open question), they continued to make positive evaluations. Furthermore, if our question-wording inadvertently biased audience responses toward a judgment of the communication dimension of effectiveness, this may also reflect our bias, as audience members, toward this aspect of effectiveness.

Several of the persuaders made statements about their effectiveness that revealed assumptions about the goals of persuasion which differed from those of audience members. For example, one reason the Black Fraternity member felt his bucket drive was successful was that his group's approach "brightened up people's day." The Palestinian persuader mentioned that working on the shanty raised group morale. The Marxist persuader explained that audience feedback was irrelevant to his purposes, stating:

> We're the only movement that's been able to accurately project historic trends. No other theories can claim this, and to be effective, they would have to be able to.

These three persuaders, who were least effective in the audience's eyes, asserted their effectiveness by referring to goals that were independent of audience members' support for their groups. This explanation of the discrepancy in persuaders' and audience members' assessments of effectiveness is consistent with the findings in earlier sections -- these persuaders were focusing on their group's concerns for morale and accuracy, and thus they met a criterion of "good persuasion."

Persuader emphasis on the goal of gaining exposure

Often, persuaders assessed their effectiveness by considering the exposure their groups received. Thus, the Central America Committee member and the Zionist persuader used media coverage as an indicator of effectiveness. In a

seeming paradox, both the Anti-Racist Coalition and the Palestinian persuaders saw vandalism to their shanties as signs of effectiveness. The Palestinian explained:

> I extrapolate that vandalism means we are reaching an audience. It brings greater attention to the shanty. The combination of the shanty and vandalism [raises the question]: why are people reacting violently to a harmless construction if it is truly harmless?

Again, persuaders sometimes applied a standard of judgment that did not require a positive reaction from the audience -- rather, any reaction or any exposure that might encourage reaction, was taken as a sign of effectiveness.

The use of this standard is a reflection of the persuaders' beliefs about their audience's political awareness. Audience members were typically viewed as uninformed or unaware, and many persuaders used metaphors of a physical gap that revealed their characterizations of the differences between themselves and the audience (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). To describe their efforts on the Diag, persuaders used metaphors of reaching across the gap and "bringing the issue home," of lifting the audience toward awareness by "raising curiosity," and of attacking the audience's ignorance or apathy by "disturbing," "hitting," or "inundating" them. Often the persuaders attributed the existence of the awareness gap to social structural factors, such as the education system or the government. The Marxist exemplified this view, stating:

> Students here have been sheltered from the realities of class divisions in this country...I gave a lecture here once and had to stop in the middle and ask people what they had read and seen and it amounted to absolutely nothing.

Despite the emphasis several persuaders placed on social structure, they tended to feel that audience members exercised considerable agency -- five of the eight persuaders saw apathy as an expression of conscious choice.

The persuaders' depiction of audience members as agents afflicted by their social structure, who could be uplifted, moved, or forced across the gap of

ignorance by the persistent presence of persuaders, is consistent with the emphasis on exposure as an indicator of effective persuasion. According to this model, vandalism could be interpreted hopefully, as an expression of the vandals' agency, or as a means of provoking the unaware. Positive signs could be found in generally negative audience feedback -- thus, the Anti-Racist Coalition persuader's response to the comment "Free South Africa, but let's get rid of these rotten pieces of timber" was

> They know what it's about, "Free South Africa" and it makes them angry, very good. They're thinking about it. If they could just equate the anger that they have for the shanty to the anger we feel about the fact that apartheid even exists that would be helping. Maybe someday the person would get to that point. But they do know what the message is, you know.

The degree to which persuaders used both positive and negative exposure as a measure of effectiveness may depend on the goals and ideology of the persuader's group. Groups striving to inform or alert the audience seemed more likely to find silver linings in negative feedback, while groups seeking material support (in the form of bucket drive donations, or participants in an abortion clinic defense) tended not to do so. Unlike the left-wing Palestinian and Anti-Racist Coalition members, the Zionist did not consider vandalism to her group's construction to be a sign of effectiveness, suggesting that the political views of the persuaders may influence their interpretation.

Ambiguities in measuring effectiveness

Although the persuaders generally felt that they were effective, many of them also said that effectiveness was difficult to assess. Several persuaders gauged their effectiveness by making quantitative comparisons, as in the case of the Abortion Defense member who was asked about the impact of a Diag rally:

> I'd say it was very effective because we probably turned out 60 to 70 people [for an abortion clinic defense] instead of our usual 40 to 50. Also, our turnout for the training that night was larger than usual.

Similarly, when the Homeless Aid bucketeer was asked how he judged the effectiveness of his group's bucket drive, he replied:

> I guess by the amount of money we raise -- comparing that to what we raised in past drives. This drive was particularly successful. We raised $1,800 and that's a record high, I believe. Usually the amount is around $1,000 so I guess we did pretty well.

Despite their apparent precision, the quantitative estimates reveal a further ambiguity in the persuaders' judgments. Persuaders tended to cite standards by which their group appeared successful, as opposed to more demanding standards such as potential support from the community. This is illustrated by the contrast between an audience member who felt that the Central America Committee was ineffective because "A lot of people didn't go in the march who were in the crowd," and the response of the group member: "That's funny because we gained people in the march -- if anything, we picked people up on the way."

A similar use of relative, rather than absolute goals, is documented in Anspach's (1991) finding that mental health workers and clients scale their goals for client employment according to state economic constraints, rather than the set goal of their program. Both the persuaders and Anspach's research subjects may be motivated to make positive self-assessments -- otherwise, their activities would be wasteful or meaningless. This explanation is consistent with those of attribution theorists who assume that actors are motivated to preserve their self-esteem (Ross and Fletcher, 1985).

Measuring effectiveness with a biased audience sample

Other reasons for the differences between persuaders' and audience members' evaluations of effectiveness are based on the different information available to the two groups. For example, audience members judging the Black Fraternity's performance to be ineffective might change their judgements if they knew that the group had raised over $200 in their day on the Diag.

Information available to persuaders might also be susceptible to bias, particularly if persuaders used their conversations with audience members as a source of information about their effectiveness. For example, the Anti-Racist Coalition member supported her statement that the group was effective by referring to the response of audience members after vandalism to her group's shanty:

> When we go out and build, people will come up and say "Can I help?"
> -- people we wouldn't necessarily see at the meetings or don't have
> the time but will take the time...They'll get off their bikes and help
> build, and we'll talk to them about what's going on. I think that's
> very good.

When asked more specifically about audience reactions, persuaders described a range of responses -- including support shown by asking questions, saying encouraging words, or making donations, and hostility shown by crumpling up flyers, making snide comments, or vandalism. Despite this range, the sample of audience members with whom persuaders interact may respond more positively than the remainder. This could be because the audience members who choose to approach the persuaders are, by definition, more interested in their activities and viewpoints. In addition, audience members who disagree with or are indifferent to a persuader may avoid them or be reluctant to express their views. These two sources of bias in the sample of audience members who speak with persuaders are seen in the Central America Committee member's response when asked about her reactions to other persuaders on the Diag:

> I try to give money whenever I can because I know what it's like to
> stand there with a bucket. And if it's a group I support, I try to join
> in, to take what they have to give, to say encouraging words. I know
> how much it helps. [Interviewer: And if it's a group you don't agree
> with?] I just walk by and don't say anything.

Egocentric bias in assessments of effectiveness

In addition to using a sample of positive audience members as a source of information about effectiveness, persuaders often appeared to be unconsciously

using themselves as data sources from which typical audience members' views could be estimated. This approach is subject to "egocentric bias" (Ross and Sicoly, 1979) depending on the extent to which the persuaders' self-perceptions are unrepresentative of the perceptions of their audience. In part, it appears that differences between the persuaders' and audience members' assessments of effectiveness can be explained by this bias.

This can be seen most clearly by comparing the persuaders' responses to the question "Do people notice you on the Diag?" to statements made by audience members about whether they had noticed the persuaders. The persuaders' answers ranged from the moderately positive reply of the Homeless Aid bucketeer, "Not everyone gives and not everyone cares, but most see us even if they forget us in the next minute" to stronger statements, such as "yeah, definitely," and "everyone notices us," by other persuaders. In contrast, several audience members said that they had not noticed the persuaders who were active on the Diag.

This occurred particularly frequently for the Black Fraternity, whose activities went unnoticed by five of the six respondents interviewed. For example, one audience member, when asked "Did you notice those men collecting money?", replied "I didn't know they were collecting money." When shown this exchange, the Black Fraternity bucketeer disagreed with the audience member's comment:

> I mean that could have been for a split instance or an hour, I don't
> know. When I was out there I thought everyone noticed me. I
> screamed at the top of my lungs, flagged people in, waved the bucket.

This response suggests that participants in persuasion activities perceive them vividly and use this information, rather than the information available to audience members, to assess effectiveness.

A similar contrast was found between persuaders using constructions on the Diag and students who were asked to draw maps of the Diag showing all the

buildings on or near it. Of 39 students, 66% drew the Zionist bus.[4] When first asked whether her group's bus was noticed, the Zionist persuader said:

> I think so. I think people are pretty acclimated to it, like I notice the South African shanties every time I walk by. Just because they're there. So I think that unless you don't see it, I mean literally don't see it, then you have to acknowledge it. It's big and yellow, you know?

Her response to the percentage of students who drew the bus on their maps was:

> Really? I would have thought all of them would. It's funny, I guess people really do just zone through. I guess it's just because I wouldn't.

Like the Black Fraternity member, the Zionist was relying on information about her own perceptions of the Diag to make assumptions about audience members.

Conclusion

At first glance, persuasion on the Diag would seem to take place within what Glazer and Strauss (1964) termed an open awareness context -- one in which "each interactant is aware of the other's true identity and his own identity in the eyes of the other." Neither persuaders nor audience members seem to engage in acts of deception. Nevertheless, as we have seen, persuaders are largely unaware of how they appear in the eyes of their audience. Further, their attempts to assess their efforts are based on criteria which allow them to limit their actual interaction with audience members. A conversation between an audience member and a persuader might quickly reveal to both the perceptual gap which separates them. Such conversations, however, do not take place, and persuasion on the Diag must be considered to be a closed form of awareness context.

This is not to say that persuaders and audience members consciously go about avoiding one another; there is little evidence in our data that such behavior

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[4]39 of the 42 students asked to draw maps of the Diag did so.

occurs. It seems more likely that the very different orientations that the two groups have towards the common space of the Diag are at the root of the perceptual gap. Persuaders view the Diag as a stage for activism where views should be presented "effectively" -- using a diffuse definition of effectiveness in which accurate representation of issues and maintaining group members' involvement through good moral are included. Audience members, in contrast, see the Diag as a place for leisure and entertainment, and hold the belief that good persuasion entails good impression management. It is unlikely that persuaders would seek out the opinions of their audience on matters such as accurate representation or group morale since persuaders themselves would be in a better position to gauge such things. Audience members who might offer advice/criticism to persuaders would probably have something to say about impression management. Such an interaction would most likely be either dismissed by persuaders (as with the Marxist persuader who stated that "advertising isn't all that big a part of what we're about") or perhaps reinterpreted as a sign of persuader effectiveness (as with the Palestinian persuader who reinterpreted vandalism as a positive sign of effectiveness).

In some sense then, the "true" audience of persuaders' performances is not that group we have labeled "audience members" but rather persuaders themselves. As Goffman (1959) stated,

> A performer may be taken in by his own act, convinced at the moment that the impression of reality which he fosters is the one and only reality. In such cases the performer comes to be his own audience; he comes to be performer and observer of the same show.

Most of the persuader groups we interviewed, despite their insistence that they were trying to reach out to audience members, demonstrate in their criteria for evaluating effectiveness that they are more concerned with the opinions of members within their own group.

Different orientations towards the Diag also result in different anticipatory schemata (Neisser, 1976) for the two groups. Our experiences during the field period, in which our perspective shifted from that of audience members to that of persuaders, serve as an illustration of this phenomenon. Our systematic observation of Diag activities and events made changes to the Diag more apparent and interesting to us than they were to the groups of students that we interviewed. Thus, we quickly noted an episode of weekend vandalism, and tried to use it to enliven discussion with a class of students, only to find that none of them had noticed the event and few of them seemed to care.

Noting the perceptual differences between persuaders and audience members, however, this still leaves unanswered the question of why persuaders view the Diag differently than do audience members. Here, our arguments can only be speculative.

Persuaders, more so than audience members, can be viewed as teams of players working together to present an internally consistent view of reality. As Goffman (1959) has noted, "in staging a definition of the situation, it may be necessary for the several members of the team to be unanimous in the positions they take and secretive about the fact that these positions were not independently arrived at." This observation is consistent with what we observed on the Diag; for example, the Central America Committee sought to present a unified position with their play and were alarmed when we shared with them the fact that an audience member had suspected that there was, in their words, "latent sexism" in the group. This persuader was not alarmed that a *false* impression of the group had been projected (she agreed that such sexism did in fact exist) but rather that an audience member had seen beyond the unified show put on by the team of persuaders. This desire to present a unified show to an audience necessitates that individual persuaders agree on what is to be presented and why. Consensus is

built between members of the persuader group through a process of co-orientation (Scheff, 1967) which does indeed build group solidarity and consensus but, at the same time, it results in an orientation towards the Diag that distances persuaders from the perspective of their audience.

Because persuaders wish to present a unified front to observers on the Diag, they necessarily place a high value on group morale and being true to the cause they are representing. Their evaluations, therefore, are skewed from those of their audience members who do not view Diag activities as political activities so much as entertainment. The different orientations which persuaders and audience members have towards the Diag, together with the different requirements that these orientations place on these two groups of actors create the perceptual gap illustrated in our data.

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