Social Movement Studies

Insurgent Images: Genre Selection and Visual Frame Amplification in IWW Cartoon Art

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Insurgent Images: Genre Selection and Visual Frame Amplification in IWW Cartoon Art

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ABSTRACT *The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, aka 'Wobblies') developed a rich, extensive movement culture. Focusing on one genre – cartoons – within the Wobbly cultural arsenal, we extend social movement theory in two interrelated ways. First, by asking why Wobblies were attracted to cartoons as a key cultural form of insurgent media, we open the question of genre selection for social movement scholars. In this, Wobblies deployed cartoon art extensively because it was a form widely available in prevailing popular culture, corresponded well with IWW oppositional culture, and fitted nicely with production, circulation, and consumption considerations. Second, we ask what sort of work cartoons performed for this movement. We highlight the use of visual arts of protest as an important vehicle for extending movement framing work and develop the concept of visual frame amplification. Drawing on more than 300 IWW cartoons printed in the Industrial Worker between 1909 and 1913, we show that Wobblies used cartoons to amplify movement framing in ways that capitalized on the special features of the visual, in general, and cartoons, in particular, to (1) visually personify and concretize abstract ideas; (2) visually dramatize movement ideology, grievances, goals, and tactics; and (3) narrate features of struggle in a compact visual form. Visual caricature and parody provided additional cultural value-added that went beyond both the visual and framing to produce images that were at once uplifting, entertaining, and politically–culturally revolutionary in intent. In general, the cultural form through which movement framing is performed structures and generates genre-specific qualities not apprehended by framing theory or social movement scholarship generally.*

KEY WORDS: IWW, Wobblies, labor movement, cartoons, genre selection, visual frame amplification

Introduction

The most radical workers' movement in American history, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) produced a rich vein of oppositional culture (Rosemont, 2003; Thoburn, 2003; Buhle, 2005), one that included an extensive array of poetic genres. We focus on one of those genres – insurgent cartoons – with the goal of extending social movement theory into the visual arts of protest. We accomplish this extension in two interrelated ways. First, we open the issue of artistic genre or cultural form as a question for social movement

scholarship. Why does a movement produce and deploy a specific aesthetic form? In particular, we ask: why did the Wobblies produce cartoons as key vehicles for disseminating their oppositional culture? Social movement scholars are typically not sensitive to the question of genre and all too often speak of an undifferentiated 'framing' by movements without asking what sort of genre or cultural form is being used to frame the movement's message. This question goes beyond whether framing theory recognizes cartoons or visual arts more generally and whether researchers have analyzed visual arts – to the conceptual significance of genre and how a movement comes to choose a particular form to disseminate its ideas.

Genre is important, we maintain, because it structures the message and generates genre-specific properties – cultural demands, capacities, strengths and limitations – peculiar to it. Cartoon art is simply more conducive to depicting certain kinds of messages than say opera, street theater, speeches, the Internet, and other media. Moreover, in addition to special capacities, each form has its own demands and limitations that must be taken seriously by movement activists if it is to be effective.

The second purpose of this paper is to advance the relatively unexplored role of visual arts in social movement framing theory. While framing theorists have argued that their analytic tools can be applied beyond the spoken or written word, here we ask: how did the Wobblies use cartoons, or what sort of cultural work did the cartoons perform? Our conceptual innovation is 'visual frame amplification', the use of visual images to amplify key features of a social movements' framing work. Visual frame amplification supplements oral and written framing, thereby extending framing theory by attending to the unique attributes of visual images that make the case for a social movement's claims. Taking genre seriously makes it clear that visual frame amplification is shaped by the qualities of the cultural form used. We first address the question of why cartoons for the Wobblies and then draw on over 300 cartoons produced and distributed by members of the IWW from 1909 to 1913, and specify the role that these images played in aesthetically amplifying their framing of key issues over this period.

We argue that the visual amplification of social movement frames in cartoon form are significantly different from written or verbal frame construction because they: (1) add a pictorial dimension to the cultural repertoire through which movements frame their message; (2) expand access to the potential consumption of the movement's message; (3) can amplify the nature of injustice faced by the movement showing, if in caricatured form, what oppression looks like; (4) can amplify the potential power of the movement by drawing attention to agency; and finally (5) bring humor to meaning-making in the struggle – cartoons may capture features of characters and problems in exaggerated form driving home the point in entertaining yet forceful ways.

While studies that use the framing perspective have been successful in describing the ways in which social movement organizations (SMO) mobilize support, research has most often been implicitly cognitivist. The cognitive perspective, while important, may neglect or mute certain cultural messages and emotional appeals that SMOs make (Gamson, 1992; Ferree & Merrill, 2004; Polletta, 2006). Wobbly cartoon art certainly amplified aspects of the IWW frame but did so in a very expressive cultural form, one that goes beyond a narrow cognitive–instrumentalist assumption often operating in framing theory. The IWW makes a particularly compelling case study, since its history is rich with inspiring artistic productions, including painting, song, poetry, and theater along with cartoon art (Rosemont, 2003; Thoburn, 2003; Buhle, 2005).

In the following sections, we first discuss the significance of bringing genre and the visual arts into social movement framing theory, and distinguish between mainstream and movement media. Second, we set the *Industrial Worker* – a major Wobbly periodical and our key data source – in a historical context. Third, we discuss our data and methods. Fourth, we address the question of genre selection: why did the Wobblies use cartoons? Fifth, we address the question of content: how did the Wobblies use cartoons? Finally, we conclude with a discussion of insights and implications of this view of movement media genre within social movement studies.

Framing Theory and the Visual Arts of Protest

The social movement framing perspective emphasizes the work of movements in meaning construction, and how movements construct their messages (framing of injustice, how that injustice will be changed, and who will change it) matters (e.g. Snow *et al.*, 1986; Gamson, 1995). If a movement's frame does not resonate with the target audience, the movement is in trouble (e.g. Babb, 1996). In social movement frame theory, it is 'frame resonance' that conceptualizes the capacity of the collective action frame to engage its target audience. According to Valocchi (2005, p. 54): 'The key to framing is finding evocative cultural symbols that resonate with potential constituents and are capable of motivating them to collective action'. Frame alignment processes can help achieve the desired outcome (Snow *et al.*, 1986). If frames are to resonate with the intended audiences they need to possess: (a) *consistency*; (b) *cultural compatibility*; and (c) *relevance* (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

While the social movements literature has much to say about frames, most empirical work has considered verbal performances and written artifacts such as speeches, position statements, manifestos, and other similar works (e.g. Haydu, 1999; Benford & Snow, 2000; Noakes & Johnston, 2005). However, while visual arts of protest have received some attention (e.g. Adams, 2002; Reed, 2005; McCaughan, 2007; Isaac, 2008a; Halfmann & Young, 2010), they remain an understudied dimension of movement meaning-making. Gitlin (1980) and Ryan (1991, pp. 105–109) analyzed the role of visual images used by news media in shaping their framing of the movements or countermovements. Our concern is different because it rests with a challenging movement's use of visual imagery to amplify the framing of its message.

Of course a variety of different visual art genres have been used by movements – e.g. buttons, stickers, fliers, posters, murals and photographs, in addition to cartoons. The general commonality is *depiction* of a message in a visually compact form. These visual depictions are important because as Fyfe and Law (1988, p. 2) put it, 'social change is at once a change in the regime of re-representation'. Since movements are struggling to produce social change, the way in which they depict the status quo, injustices, an alternative future and the like is central to understanding the movement. What can be seen is, at least in part, a function of what visual languages, the visual arts, allow us to see (Fyfe & Law, 1988, p. 2) and this, we maintain, is critical to understanding frame resonance in social movement studies.

Recent scholarship has focused on cultural products of social movements such as music (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Roscigno & Danaher, 2004; Freeland, 2009; Roy, 2010); film, dramaturgy, poetry, painting, and new media (Reed, 2005); stage performance (Taylor *et al.*, 2004; Isaac, 2008a); narrative (Polletta, 2006); and literature (Isaac, 2008b, 2009).[1] Each of

these scholars reflects on the role that culture and cultural products have played in social movements, independent of their impacts on the political system or public policy. By casting an eye toward cultural production, these authors expand our view of how movements use and innovate within old and new genres, adding to movement's meaning-making and to the wider cultural stock. However, scholars have largely neglected genre selection – why movements select particular cultural forms to circulate their message and what genre might mean for the framing process, questions we return to below.

Among the visual arts, cartoons have not received the attention they deserve within movement contexts. But scholars have not totally ignored political cartoons (e.g. Gamson, 1992; Greenberg, 2002; Conners, 2005; Edwards & Ware, 2005; Olesen, 2007). Greenberg (2002) argues that cartoons can help scholars of social problems understand how issues are framed rhetorically. Cartoons help viewers organize and interpret their political and social environments. They offer condensed visual claims or mini-narratives about social issues; they provide a 'metalanguage' that draws on, and reinforces taken-for-granted social meanings (2002, p. 182). When used by challenging social movements, cartoons must also challenge those conventional meanings.

Movement Media and Mainstream Media

Movement media is both analytically and practically distinct from mainstream media. While several authors have used political cartoons, editorial cartoons, and 'image bites' from political coverage in their research (Gamson, 1992; Grabe & Bucy, 2009), relatively few have analyzed movement media as distinct from other forms (Bailey & McAtee, 2003). Within the social movement literature and among activists there is general recognition of the 'media dilemma', the knowledge that most movements need to rely on the mainstream media (e.g. press, TV, etc.) to get their message out to a wider public. However, should the mainstream news media pick up the movement's story, the movement loses control of its message, which is then prone to a variety of biases (see Gitlin, 1980).

To circumvent this mainstream media problem, movements have often produced their own alternative movement media. Underground newspapers, magazines, music, theater, poetry, and cartoons are all examples of such alternative movement media. Within any particular media genre, we need to distinguish between the mainstream and movement varieties – for example, mainstream or bourgeois political cartoons in contrast to Wobbly insurgent cartoons. In general, we expect movement media to be more: (a) oppositional and challenging to the system, authority, and cultural values and practices than mainstream media; and (b) likely a product of grassroots production as against the mainstream media which is produced by and within larger (typically for profit) organizations.

In addition, cartoons must draw on references or styles within a popular culture (Conners, 2005). To advance the movement's challenge, cartoon and other visual arts must also innovate in a way that allows the reader to envision an alternative social order and ways of getting there – a visual 'thinkability' (Edwards & Ware, 2005) of social relations as they are and how they might offer movements a valuable cultural weapon in the struggle for meaning-making. For instance, in a study of the poetics of union transgression and the role of visual media in protest strategy, Bailey and McAtee (2003) analyzed the visual, material culture of a union's sustained protest. These authors

discovered that, methodologically, 'the *image itself* allows us to explore an event that would be opaque to more conventional forms of analysis, and allows the exploration of the layering of culture and the unions' eclectic use of cultural practices' (2003, p. 37, emphasis in original). Thus, visual representations of a union's material culture (primarily through the collection of photographs, handbills, and other ephemera) are used to understand the richly textured meanings that union members made of their protest activity.

Wobbly cartoons were more oppositional than mainstream political cartoons. Wob drawings challenged in fundamental ways capitalism, conventional institutions, and trade unions. Mainstream political cartoons typically leave the taken-for-granted assumptions about the system intact in favor of play on the follies, foibles, and character flaws of particular persons in public life in ways that do not challenge, but may in fact reproduce systemic inequalities. Wobbly cartoons were grassroots cultural productions, drawn by IWW staff cartoonists or on the run by workers in the field. Regardless, both varieties of cartoonists were movement *aesthetic activists* (Isaac, 2009, p. 942). The images were movement-inspired and visually portrayed the everyday life of most marginal workers; these images were beholden to no power or authority and were designed only to carry the movement's message. The genre or form remained conventional; the content insurgent.

We demonstrate below that cartoons were used in three major ways to amplify IWW framing. First, the Wobblies ably deployed cartoon art to *personify and concretize abstract issues* for their target audience. Instead of speaking abstractly about capital or the capitalist system, cartoons depicted capital personified in the negatively caricatured capitalist, usually overweight, and over-dressed. Wobbly art was rich with characterizations of not only evil capitalists, but also of corrupt government officials, journalists, clergy, and others. By contrast, the drawn image of the IWW member was a powerful, moral, male image – depicting a 'virile syndicalism' (Shor, 1999).

Second, *dramatization* was a key part of IWW art. By dramatization we mean that the cartoon image could be used to illustrate a central Wobbly principle *in action*, not just as a static, abstract written or spoken principle. The visual sketch could also serve to *intensify* the message through the dramatization that might elicit greater emotion – fear, anger, humor – than a written frame. Intensification was often accomplished by means of exaggerated images, caricatures, and conflict in-action.

Finally, characters in dramatic action could be displayed *through visual narrative*, in a manner that would tell a compact story. The visual representation of people and events with symbolic significance would unfold a brief narrative produced through sequential frames (offering a dynamic element), which could invoke a particular moral that could be seen, a visually displayed story of good and evil. To visualize the moral order as it was and as it might be was a powerful tool for connecting with the workers, many of whom were recent immigrants, illiterate, or perhaps semi-literate at best. But more than just leveling access, the visual image yields immediate reception of elements in the image statement-making for a more rapid reception, one that can fix the receiver's attention (Perlmutter, 1994) and also facilitate short-term and long-term memory of the message beyond the written or spoken word alone (Grabe & Bucy, 2009).[2]

In the following sections we argue that movement cartoons engage in a particular type of framing – cartoon frame amplification, a form of visual frame amplification. Cartoons capture and visually amplify the essence of frames – they condense the struggle, highlighting selected events and actions, and help readers create meaning from these events. A focus on visual frame amplification through cartoons also broadens the framing

perspective, allowing practically all audiences, despite lack of education and/or literacy, to grasp the message of the movement and enjoy the critical parody. Importantly, the form/genre of visual protest arts produces its own genre-specific qualities in conjunction with the attempt to visually amplify the frame.

The *Industrial Worker* in Historical Context

The *Industrial Worker* (*IW*) was among many radical IWW periodicals published across the US during the early twentieth century, and except for a brief period of time between 1913 and 1916 it has been published continuously since 1909 (Miles, 1986). The *IW* was published monthly from January to September in 1906, and from January to June in 1907. During the period under study, *IW* was published weekly in Spokane from 18 March 1909 until 4 September 1913, except for a brief period when it was published from Seattle, between 5 February and 21 May 1910.[3]

The *IW* and *Solidarity* were 'the two principal and longest lasting weeklies' (Foner, 1965, p. 149). While *Solidarity* rarely published its circulation figures, the *IW* claimed a circulation of 3000–5000 (Foner, 1965). *IW* typically ran four-page issues every week during the period under study, except for May Day and special issues, which doubled in length. Local news items were usually printed with a by-line: for example, page three of the 1 April 1909 (vol. 1, no. 3) edition of the *IW* includes a piece entitled, 'Fat Preachers and Thin Workers' by future editor Frederick W. Heslewood. The article lambasts preachers who counsel patience in the face of oppression, distracting workers from the use of direct action and industrial solidarity in the fight for economic justice. Even in the early days of the paper, Wobbly writers clearly outlined their positions on free speech, religion, direct action, craft unions, and employment agents.

The period from 1909 to 1913 was among the most significant in the IWW's history. The Wobblies were part of a massive workers' struggle as mass production became more common in both indoor (e.g. textiles) and outdoor industries (e.g. timber). During these years, the Wobs were engaged in some of their most momentous actions: in lumber camps and towns of the Pacific Northwest, like Spokane, they engaged in 'free speech' struggles designed to overcome resistance to IWW organizing (Dubofsky, 1969, p. 173); they fought to organize timber workers in the west and south; carried out famous strikes in the textile mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts and Patterson, New Jersey (Dubofsky, 1969), the rubber shops of Akron, Ohio, on the Philadelphia docks and among New York City food and restaurant workers (Kimeldorf, 1999), and much more. The Wobblies were in step with the concerns of millions of American workers.

Data and Methods

The 328 cartoons that we examined all appeared in the *IW* published in Spokane from 18 March 1909 to 4 September 1913. Occasionally, a front-page cartoon was reprinted. We include these duplicates in the sample because they represent an editorial decision to accede to reader requests (each reprint includes the notation 'reprinted by request'). We did not include duplicates of very small, single-paneled column-heading cartoons, since these often contained single figures and no such annotation. Cartoons included in the study are primarily one or two panel images, although the work of Ernest Riebe's 'Mr. Block' typically run larger and contain at least six panels. We copied each of the 328 cartoons that

were printed in *IW, Volumes 1–2,* and *Volumes 3–5* (1970a, 1970b), the entire population of cartoons in the *IW*, for the purposes of our analysis.

Following Ball and Smith (1992) and Greenberg (2002), we analyzed each cartoon inductively. Ball and Smith focus on the role of the photograph in ethnographic fieldwork, and the uses of the photographs for illuminating hidden aspects of a culture. Although their perspective is useful for some images, cartoons are unlike photographs in many respects. First, cartoons are imaginaries. They seldom depict actual occurrences, yet they can strike at the heart of the matter. These authors do point out that photographs have a polysemic character; they are conditioned by cultural knowledge possessed by the viewer, and any given interpretation will not exhaust the image (Ball & Smith, 1992, p. 18). We think the same is true for the cartoons studied here. The lesson is that visual and textual representations of the world are always just that; representations, and thus viewpoints will differ. Perhaps an intersubjective understanding of the content of each image, whether 'real' like a photograph or 'imaginary' like a cartoon, is as close as we can get to understanding an image's intended meaning. But detailed knowledge of the movement is crucial in interpretation.

We proceeded by analytically reading each cartoon and creating a database that captured this information: original publication date, primary source, secondary source, author, title, a general description of content, a set of up to six themes, and miscellaneous notes. Because the analysis was inductive, we allowed themes to develop from the cartoons themselves and, importantly, wider knowledge of the movement. To allow the themes to emerge, we attended to the figures of labor and capital, as well as accompanying text, and labels affixed to the figures. The analysis aimed at extracting framing strategies that, while accurate, could retain the texture and energy of the image itself. The frames discovered, as well as the amplification strategies used, lead us to develop and refine our concept of cartoon frame amplification presented in the examples below. But first we consider the selection of the cartoons as a movement-specific form of cultural media.

Genre Selection: Why Wobblies Used Cartoons

Posing questions of genre selection within social movements is important because it is crucial for understanding internal movement culture and how that culture permeates and shapes the intended message. The cartoon was a favorite genre of Wobblies because: (1) it was readily available within prevailing popular culture; (2) the irreverent style and parody, so central to cartooning, fitted nicely with the Wobblies oppositional culture; and (3) elements of production, circulation, and consumption all combined to make the cartoon a widely used cultural form that could easily convey Wobbly counterculture.

Production

The world of modernism, the early birthplace of the IWW, marked a watershed in the shift to forms of commodified popular culture that did not require the years of labor needed for literacy (Denning, 1997, p. 40). Sound recordings, radio broadcasting, motion pictures, and the cartoon were all part of this shift in modernist popular culture. When the IWW was founded, the cartoon was a mainstay of the wider political repertoire (Buhle, 2005). Since the 1880s, the 'golden age of political cartoons' (Culbertson, 2008), line-drawing and cartoon art had been deployed to caricature collectivities and collective actions

(Isaac, 2008b), and social movements began to use visual images and cartoons during this period as well.

Wobbly cartoonists were mostly amateurs, although a few periodically earned income by drawing for the mainstream press, but all donated their artistic labor to the movement (Rosemont, 2003). Some worked more or less regularly for publications like the *IW*, but cartoons were submitted from the rank-and-file as well. For instance, we know that Joe Hill submitted cartoons to the *IW* and other IWW publications and that he also suggested ideas for others which he did not actually execute himself (Rosemont, 2003).

The IWW spawned its own mobile school of artists, including cartoonists. Inspiration for cartoons came from the movement itself with stylistic elements from professional editorial cartoonists across the political spectrum, daily newspaper funnies, and the artwork in *The Masses* (Rosemont, 2003; Buhle, 2005). The cartoon as movement media genre was a readily available popular culture form, rapidly executed with pen and paper, and inexpensive to produce. Such insurgent images were 'designed to jab, shock, and awaken the American wage-slave' much like Wobbly direct action tactics themselves (Rosemont, 2003, p. 170).

Circulation

As a visual genre, the cartoon facilitated not only ease of production, but also circulation. The cartoon (1) could be used in stand-alone format or as complementary with the written text, and (2) was highly portable and easily reproduced in multiple publications or converted into a hand-bill, poster form, or sheet music cover page (Kornbluh, 1964). The Wobbly newspaper cartoon 'flowed smoothly into the agitational poster or print (in miniature, postcard) and into the "silent agitator," the small sticker that by the 1920s IWW members and sympathizers began placing in various odd spots, from blank fence to bathroom stall' (Buhle, 2005, p. 638). The cartoon could also be drawn in the field and passed by hand among itinerant workers for entertainment and edification about the struggle.

Consumption

From a strategic point of view, the cartoon contains a variety of important features that facilitate consumption and comprehension by the working class in the early 1900s. The cartoon: (1) was compact and therefore a snapshot that was quickly apprehended, not requiring a heavy investment in reading; (2) enhanced accessibility to illiterate and semi-literate workers thus broadening the receipt of the message; (3) similar to movement songs, was concrete in imagery and facilitated a memory that standard texts often lack; (4) frequently involved humor and was entertaining while they delivered their message with an emotional appeal (Rosemont, 2003); (5) was engaging to the eye and would serve to attract the viewer; (6) offered visual representation of problems, grievances, identities, characterizations, worker victimization, worker agency, inspiration, and a visual image of an alternative future; and (7) would sometimes provide visual narrative in the longer multi-frame cartoons. The cartoon had the capacity to facilitate cultural resonance of the Wobbly message because it was an ideally suited movement media for reaching and engaging the target audience, especially the most marginal, vulnerable, and exploited industrial workers, oftentimes itinerant with low levels of literacy. The visual form

allowed these workers to actually see themselves, their exploiters, the problems they faced along with the efficacy of One Big Union as a possible solution to their plight. It could do all this quickly, cheaply, easily, and they could have fun both producing and consuming their cartoons, images designed to fan the flames of discontent and to grow the movement.

Wob cartoons certainly played an important role in the movement's framing work, in general, and frame amplification, in particular. But they did more. The intersection of framing intent with the particular characteristics of the genre produced movement artifacts with distinct capacities. These were humorous and informative movement visual media that operated as visual parody, a way of spinning an image or text so that it signifies something very different than the original with the intent of resonant radical demystification of power and existing social arrangements (Rosemont, 2003).

Content of the Form: How Wobblies Used Cartoons

The 317 cartoons that we readily classified as having a dominant message (11 could not be) were content-analyzed and organized by their most prominent frame content type and amplification type. Frame types refer to the communication of injustice, collective identity, or collective action, all three central to Gamson's (1995) frame analytic perspective. To those three we added a fourth category – utopian future – based on a theme in the data that did not easily fit within the other three categories. Our content analysis also pointed to three key amplification strategies appearing in the images: visual personification, visual dramatization, and visual narration (all discussed above). These four frame types and three amplification types are cross-classified to yield a 4 × 3 matrix containing 12 specific content-amplification combinations. This conceptual array and the empirical joint distribution of the 317 cartoons is shown in Table 1. Cartoons were assigned to a specific content-amplification cell in Table 1 based on their *dominant* themes. We are not claiming that content-amplification themes are unique and mutually exclusive, only that these form dominant tendencies. We describe below the four frame types and three amplification strategies by presenting four exemplary cartoons for the most frequent combinations.

Injustice Frames

The *IW* ran more cartoons highlighting the injustices suffered by workers than any other type of cartoon (47.3%). Common amplifications included: anti-institutional injustice

Table 1. Visual frame amplification in IWW cartoons, 1909–1913.

Frame	Amplification strategy			Total	Row total (%)
	Personify	Dramatize	Narrate		
Injustice	67	21	62	150	47
Collective identity	29	22	30	81	26
Collective action	19	38	11	68	21
Utopian vision	5	2	11	18	6
Total	120	83	114	317	
Column total (%)	38	26	36		

frames (cartoons that depict religious leaders, politicians, military officials, and judicial officials as corrupt, or allied with capitalists); worker as wage slave frames; frames that combined one or more of the injustice themes, or brought attention to the vastly unequal distribution of resources between the owners and the workers; oppression of workers by the police (often depicted as a tool of owners); the immorality of the rich; and finally, cartoons that expressed distrust in the 'mainstream' or capitalist press.

Image 1 provides an example of a personified injustice frame. This type of visual framing is distinguished by the way in which Wobbly members are personified as unjustly oppressed, often by a representative, also personified, of the military, police, or religious groups. These cartoons provide examples of the ways in which each capitalist-shaped institution blocks industrial unionism. In this image, the IWW is personified as a weak and malnourished man beaten by the club of the law held by an authority figure. The authority figure, in turn, is being encouraged in his efforts by the lumber trust in Aberdeen. Although this is 'The Master's Dream', it also vividly depicts what Wobblies faced during the northwestern free speech struggles and elsewhere during this period.

IWW leaders and members had a difficult time organizing chapters outside their factories and mines because of hostile institutions and they were also subject to a more
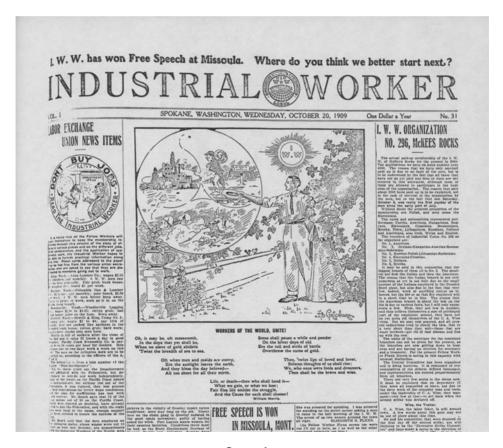

Image 1.

immediate crisis: decent pay, housing, and food. Several cartoons that appeared in the *IW* depicted these hardships faced by much if not all of the working class. Workers are frequently drawn as a gaunt hobo-type, often referred to as the 'Blanket Stiff' who tramped from town to town seeking employment. Even though the Blanket Stiff hobo is often conveyed as a solitary figure, his lifestyle was common, this depiction speaks to the collective identity that such workers shared, and the IWW attempted to use in recruiting them. The depiction of employment agents echoes Gamson's (1995) discussion of injustice frames, particularly effective when aimed directly at an identifiable actor's behavior. Visual characterization can lead to moral indignation and outrage, sparking greater commitment to collective action.

More generally, some cartoons show the full range and source of injustices faced by the labor. The famous pyramid of capitalist system is a prime example. Here, the cartoonist combines the images of workers, who support the system, owners, militia, religious leaders, politicians, and finally, capitalism, the system under which the rest of the figures operate. Importantly, workers hold the key position in this drawing – they work, feed, and basically support all other levels of the societal pyramid. As Gamson (1995) has indicated, injustice frames help their audiences understand exactly how they are aggrieved. Here, the cartoons of the IWW visually depict the station of workers *relative* to the owners, and highlight the ways in which labor is exploited.

Collective Identity Frames

One of the major tasks that SMOs have, especially in their early years, is articulating exactly how their constituency is different from others. SMOs must distinguish themselves from their competitors by establishing culturally constructed boundaries and sources of collective identity (Snow *et al.*, 1986). Many cartoons used what Gamson (1995) termed collective identity framing, a necessary precondition to collective action.

Wobblies were a group with an especially large tent. They sought to organize all workers, regardless of craft, race, ethnicity, or gender. Using the concept of collective identity, we found cartoons that centered on the concept of worker solidarity, often depicting groups of workers rallying together, or the need for such action, for poor working conditions and low wages to be abolished. Another type of collective identity frame image, the anti-craft union cartoons, depicts the many ways in which the craft union system artificially divides labor, making it easier for owners to exploit workers (see Image 2). This approach, championed by the American Federation of Labor (AFL), was organized along craft lines (e.g. machinists and switchmen) that created craft-specific solidarity and led to a fractionalized and weaker working class. Often, labor leaders such as Samuel Gompers are depicted cooperating with owners, 'selling out' the workers, and binding them to labor contracts, agreements the IWW opposed because they prohibited the use of direct actions such as the strike.

The workers, here with one voice, amplify their message – a demand for higher wages. They threaten a general strike. A tall, lean, and strong IWW lumberjack confronts the portly owner with his list of demands. Representing the lumberjack as taller and more powerful than the rotund lumber baron, the cartoonist implies that the lumberjack is in charge, and that collectively, all lumberjacks can dictate the terms of their employment to the 'masters'. The caption reinforces this point. Largely a male organization, the IWW
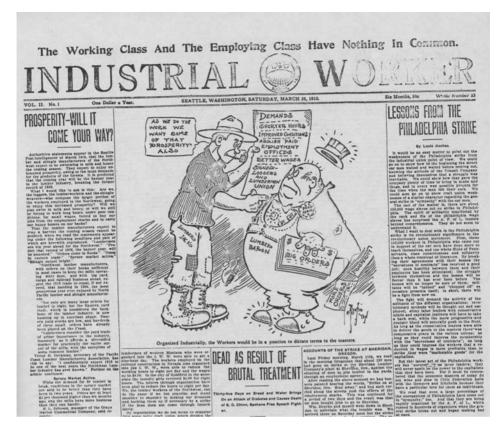
Image 2.

personified itself as tall, strong, and muscular, except when the frame turned to injustice. Thus, the IWW was flexible in its representation of the self, fitting medium to message (inequality personified, collective identity dramatized).

Collective Action Frames

Wobbly cartoons depicting collective action typically exude collective strength and direct action. Images of direct action usually advocate for the general strike, and sabotage of capitalist production, although other messages do appear. In Image 3 the general strike is amplified through the drama of violence, represented here by the quick fist of the general strike to personified capital's 'bread basket'. We understand this cartoon as an example of a collective action frame, the general strike dramatized, its effectiveness assured. The message here: we, the workers, can collectively fight to gain control of the means of production by hitting capital where it hurts – their profits. This visual sketch may serve to *intensify* the message through dramatization that might elicit stronger emotion than a written frame. By exaggerating the image, not linking it to any particular person or any particular owner, the message is visually amplified, material in form, and highly portable.

Image 3.

Utopian Future Frames

Utopian frames commonly depicted characters and scenes of a better life after industrial unionism, a better future with good wages, stable family life, and leisure opportunities for workers. Image 4 indicates that a new day of freedom is about to dawn. Of the 18 such cartoons that appeared in the *IW*, this represents one of the more utopian imaginaries. Here, the image depicts a well-dressed couple bidding farewell to the old days of blanket stiffs, military expeditions, and dangerous factory work, as a new (IWW) sun shines down on them. This cartoon is somewhat unusual in that it includes a poem urging the unity of all workers. The frame used here is a utopian one – making the case that the IWW's view of the future is the correct one, and promising better living conditions under the One Big Union.

Visual narrative framing strategies conveyed the message in a manner that would tell a story, as in the two-frame narrative shown in Image 4. The representation of people and events with symbolic significance would unfold a compact visual narrative which could
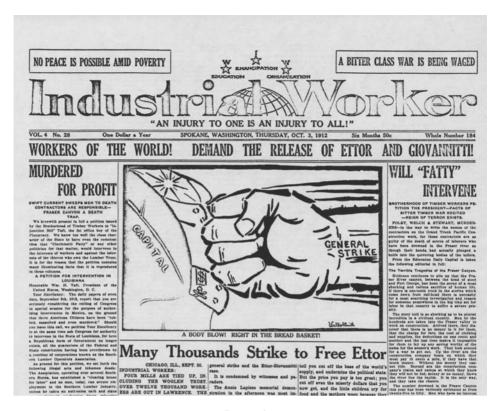
Image 4.

invoke a particular moral that could be seen, a visually displayed story of good and evil. To see or envision the moral order as it was and as it might be was a powerful tool for connecting with the workers. Moreover, the message would also be more likely remembered than the written or spoken word alone (Grabe & Bucy, 2009).

Discussion

We have illustrated the concept of 'visual frame amplification' as one important dimension of the visual arts of protest and demonstrated how it operates in one visual arts genre. Drawing on a selection of 328 cartoons published in the *IW* from 1909–1913, we analyzed the ways in which framing strategies were visually enhanced through personification, drama, and narrative. Thinking about frames in this way expands the idea of amplification in framing theory as it integrates one form of visual arts into movement cultural production.

Cartoons, such as those drawn by Wobblies, are able to carry movement meanings in ways that text-based framing theory cannot. Consistent with the findings of Reed (2005), Taylor *et al.* (2004) and others, we argue that attention to genre-specific visual frame amplification illustrates the ways in which visual framing differs in meaningful ways from verbal frames, but the particular form of visual art matters. Visual frames expand the range of forms through which social movements produce and circulate their messages. Visual framing may also expand the potential consumption of movement messages, making

difficult, abstract concepts more concrete, colorful and lively, and enhancing resonance. Visual framing amplifies the nature of oppression that workers face, dramatizing their plight in material ways, and showing readers what injustice looks like. Cartoons and other visual images also amplify the potential power of the collective worker by illustrating in many ways that workers have agency. Finally, cartoons such as these innovate by bringing humor to the construction of meaning in the struggle. These drawings capture the most important features of characters and problems, exaggerating them to drive home the point, often illustrating the foibles of the upper class while valorizing the potential power of collective labor. In short, Wobblies used cartoons as a political weapon, one that entertained while carrying serious political messages.

Cartoons, because of their visual and polysemic nature, invite commentary, discussion, and relatively quick identification of the important points within its frame(s). In this illustrated, attention-grabbing way, cartoons could serve to spark interest in the IWW among uninitiated observers. Wobbly artists translated their verbal messages visually, concretizing them, and condensing them into a literal frame. While acknowledging their complexity (Greenberg, 2002), we argue that cartoons are useful for social movements because they are *accessible* forms of media and because they can be quickly grasped without great literacy skills, a quality of substantial value for the Wobblies. Thus, cartoons can be used by social movements to spread their messages, their frames, in rapid fashion.

The effectiveness of cartoons for consciousness transformation and collective mobilization is, at present, unknown. It seems likely that readers of *IW* enjoyed the subversive nature of many images, and perhaps even longed for the utopias depicted in some cartoons. Current issues of the *IW* recognize the importance of cartoons, and often print 'vintage' cartoons in issues with contemporary renderings of labor's struggle.

Conclusion

Focusing on an understudied vehicle for movement framing has also allowed us to raise the important question of genre selection. Framing theory has not taken genre or cultural form seriously in terms of what it might mean for understanding framing and movement culture more generally. By doing so, new questions are posed for movement scholars, such as why do movements select the framing forms they do? In general, we argue that genre selection for movement framing is a function of: (a) availability of the form in popular culture; (b) compatibility of the form with movement culture; and (c) workability in production, circulation, and consumption terms. The Wobblies relied heavily on cartoon art because it was a familiar element in the prevailing popular culture that could be modified easily to reflect Wob countercultural messages in a colorful, fun, effective way, and was also easy to produce, circulate, and understand.

Although the sizable literature that was sparked by the framing perspective has focused on frames found in texts and allow for the visual arts contribution to movement framing, such visual media have been understudied. By taking depictions of social movements seriously, social movement scholars can ask new questions about how movements innovate with available forms, and how various aspects of visual culture help define a movement's messages. By looking at cartoons as well as other cultural forms, framing theorists may be able to reduce some of the tendency to see social movement frames in strictly rationalist ways. Cartoons are sometimes serious, sometimes ironic, and often engaging in ways that texts are not. Cartooning was as integral to Wobbly countercultural expression as were

their songs of rebellion. Both carried and amplified key elements of the IWW frame but they were also enjoyable activities, often performed for their own sake. They provided marginalized workers with something that offered hope and raised their spirits.

The purpose of this study was concept development – genre selection and visual frame amplification – so consequently there are empirical limitations in the breadth and depth of cartoon selection and time period chosen for the empirical analysis. Future research on the IWW might consider the ways in which race, ethnicity, and gender were depicted. Subsequent research could also compare the early cartoons of this movement with those that were printed in other Wob publications, or in IWW publications over time.

Our focus on the question of genre, and specifically genre selection, has broader implications for social movement studies. First, genre not only raises the question of selection, but also the range, even sequencing, of a genre repertoire used by different social movements and the social conditions that account for such variation. Second, scholars could examine the relationship between genre-specific movement media and its counterpart in the mainstream media as a way of further developing the dialogical character of aesthetic activism within specific genres. Finally, we need to know more about genre effects. For instance, what impact do various movement genres have on their target audience?

By taking aesthetic genres seriously, social movement scholars can expand their own analytic repertoire, taking advantage of the variety of cultural forms produced by creative SMOs such as the IWW. For a time, the Wobblies inspired and mobilized the poorest and most downtrodden working people of every race and group in America (Buhle, 2005, p. 635) and their cartoon art, with its visual amplification of Wob messages, was one of the ways in which they were able to capture hearts and minds while they engaged in a cultural practice that was capable of maintaining spirit and solidarity.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. There are also fine collections of political poster art (McQuiston, 1993; Aulich & Sylvestrova, 1999; Cushing & Drescher, 2009). However, these texts are compilations rather than systematic analyses.
2. Cognitive psychologists and advertising researchers have found that visual stimuli facilitates both short-term and long-term memory of communicated information (e.g. McKelvie & Demers, 1979; Salt & Donnenwerth-Nolan, 1981; Burns *et al.*, 1993).
3. Foner (1965, p. 182) writes: 'In all, eight successive editors of the *Industrial Worker* were jailed after getting out eight successive issues. Finally, the office of the paper was raided, and it was decided late in December 1909 to transfer the paper – masthead plates and all – to Seattle'.

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