“What’s wrong with Australia?”:
Why people who oppose war don’t act and why people support war and how to talk to both groups

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Talk delivered 7 Aug 04 to Women’s International League For Peace and Freedom, Queensland branch, Brisbane. For more details e-mail wrlouis@yahoo.com

Acknowledgements

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
School of Psychology, University of Queensland
Debbie Terry, Leda Blackwood, Ashley Heiner.

Outline of talk

- Passive opposition to war – why not act?
  - Mundane reasons
  - Alienation
  - How to talk to passivists!
- War support – why on earth?
  - Authoritarian values
  - Nationalism
  - Conservatism
  - How to talk to war supporters

Mobilizing for a peace rally in the Netherlands, 1980s

- Did not agree with goals (26%)
- Agreed with goals (74%)
  - Not aware of rally (15%)
  - Aware of rally (59%)
  - Did not intend to go (49%)
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  - Did not go (6%)
  - Attended rally (4%)

Klandermans & Oegema (1994)
People do activism (in general) because of:

1. Engagement:
   - Political interest
   - Political knowledge
   - Political efficacy
   - Concern about an issue

2. Resources:
   - Time
   - Money
   - Skills

3. Finding out opportunity to act:
   - Being recruited
   - Networks of friends & groups

Why stay an activist?

- It’s gratifying
  - Friends, peers → social support
  - Benefits like learning & skill development
- It’s working
  - Perceiving successes
  - Matching expectations
- It expresses important values & identities
- A stake in the work x no attractive alternatives

Beginning activists need it to “work”

- Immediate benefits important to beginners
- If Coalition is adamant, no point in rallying?
- Have to be careful about framing movement goals
  - opposition vs change - Stop the war vs Not in Our Name
- Fostering activist ID is important!

Peace Actions Study

- 62% women
- Aged 16-75 (avg 35)
- 62% group members
  - 45 groups in sample
- Declining activism over April – June 2003

Uncommitted: ● Committed: ▲
Expressing values can motivate action

- People who rejected hierarchical values more = more identified and more active
- People learn values & they change with reinforcement
And that means
- Vigilance about the media / political discourse
- A long term vision is to strengthen egalitarian values / socialization

Other identities / norms can reinforce or conflict:
- e.g., political affiliation
  - Affiliating w/ parties that strongly opposed war < - > peace activism
  - For e.g., Green supporters’ activism = more sustained
  And that means
  - Social group networks can reinforce activism

- e.g., Australian nationalism
  - Nationalism and peace activism unrelated in April
  - But Nationalists 2/3 as active in May and 1/2 as active in June!
  And that means
  - Different IDs can conflict
  - Fighting for the higher level IDs

Peace activism vs other activism – heartbreaking, abstract, future-oriented, universalist

- Responsibility
  - Commission > omission
- Issues in the public eye
- Costs > benefits
- Present > future
- Close > far
- Concrete & immediate effects and control

- The relative avoidance of positive peace work

Seething masses of impotent frustration?

- Personally, I'm not interested in the war. I think the reasons why America began this war are ridiculous, especially Australia’s involvement. I also wonder why protesters bother? What is 20000 people walking in the city going to do? Is it going to stop killing 1000s of kms away?
- It's full of crap with all due respect, politics are not good at all. It's all lies and deception. The protest is escalating instead of escalating & people tend to live on, so why bother. They had protest all over but the war goes on & about to end anyway
- ... No matter what people do - protest whatever - nothing is achieved by it. It is a waste of time and money!
- Personally I believe people become involved in activism because it is an excuse to rally without fully understanding situations surrounding political activity. ...
- The war has started - we can't change this now by rallying every Wednesday afternoon
- Those hippies should study more economics.
US intransigence and derogation of protestors

- Among activists, perceived US intransigence is associated with more positive eval of protestors
- Among passive opponents, perceived US intransigence is associated with less positive eval

**The US will pursue the war regardless of Australian views**

Distress and derogation of protestors

- Distress about war is common
  - "News of the war makes me feel bad" (5 items, alpha = .84); 74% agree
  - Supporters (n = 90): 60% / 4.77
  - Passive opponents (n = 76): 75% / 5.48
  - Activists (n = 74): 89% / 6.00

- For low distress, passive and active opponents equal
- For opponents highly distressed about war, passive opponents less positive to protestors than activists

Alienation

- Activists
  - More distressed about war
  - More pessimistic about intransigence of government and US
  - BUT
  - More positive to protestors
  - More likely to follow news
  - More likely to act

- Passive opponents
  - Motivated by perceived citizen impotence to tune out of news
  - Motivated by war distress and US intransigence to derogate protestors!

Key issues with passive war opponents

1. Ineffectiveness of guilt & fear as motivators
2. Importance of social rewards -> recruit friends / groups
3. Higher-level / umbrella IDs really important (because social groups bond internally and push apart externally)
4. Importance of effectiveness perceptions-> media focus
5. And -> care about framing goals as "Stop War" (vs "Take a stand")
6. Balance needs to bond / challenge w/ creating a safe space for conservatives – stress common values & goals
Mobilizing for a peace rally in the Netherlands, 1980s

**Militarism problem?**
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**War attitudes : Afghanistan**

**Study 1:**
- April-June 2002, 154 Australian UQ students
  - S: 66%
  - O: 33%
  - DK: 5%

**Study 2:**
- May 2002, 103 UQ students
  - S: 58%
  - O: 1%
  - SO: 16%
  - DK: 25%

**War attitudes : Iraq**

**Study 3:**
- March 24-April 7 2003, 350 Australian UQ students in POLSCI, HIST, and ECON
  - S: 38%
  - O: 56%
  - N: 6%

**Study 4:**
- March 27-April 8 '03, 149 students in SOCIO, RELN, and ECON
  - S: 36%
  - O: 58%
  - N: 6%

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**Predicting War Support**

- **Values:**
  - Authoritarian values
  - Social dominance
- **Group factors / National**
  - Australian identity / importance of being Australian
- **Group Factors / Political level**
  - Right-wing identity
  - Coalition affiliation

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**Authoritarian values**

“Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.”

**Support for Afghanistan**

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**Support for Iraq**

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Nationalism

Declining activism among committed peaceniks linked to nationalism

Key issues with war supporters

1. Ineffectiveness of arguing they are evil and stupid
2. Speak to authoritarians:
   - security (protection from evil), harsh justice (punishment of evil) key positive values
   - Appeal to authorities, long term danger
   - “What would you do...”
   - US can’t protect us from terrorism. Look at Bali. Solution is...
3. Speak to nationalists:
   - Strong sense of Australian uniqueness; anti-globalisation; isolationist
   - What is Australia’s real interest? What about costs of war & military while our health system needs funding?
   - What about Australia’s independence?
   - We join the US now, but can the US be trusted to remember its friends later?
   - Are big corporations with links to US having too much say in what happens to Australia?
4. Speak to conservatives/Coalition:
   - accountability, honesty, responsibility, mateship & integrity, “common man”
   - Who is taking responsibility for lies? Mistakes have to be admitted - Dishonesty is contemptible.
   - Who is accountable for innocent deaths? Why is 1 innocent death manslaughter and 20,000 collateral damage?
   - What is US interest? What is our true role as US friend? (Drunk mate at a bar analogy!)
5. Conservative role models essential. We should focus attention and memory on opponents who have spoken out against war. We should publicise their arguments.

News from February 2003:
Prominent Liberals are backing a nationwide advertising campaign and protest march in opposition to Mr Howard's strong support for the US on Iraq.

Led by former Liberal president John Valder, the “Liberals against war in Iraq” will urge conservative voters to demand an end to the war plans. A rally is planned for February 16.

Former Liberal frontbencher Peter Deakin said: “A war has to have a strong moral imperative and I don’t think I’ve seen the imperative here. I can’t see any reason ... except to please our American masters.”

Asked about unrest in his own party, Mr Howard said he was a “Liberal against war” who believed in preventing greater long-term danger and suffering by “taking steps now”.

War support is higher among Australian nationalists
5. Conservative role models essential. (cont’d)

- Shared identities and values build trust
- “I really respect John Valder, as the former president of the Liberal party you know, coming out against the war. Valder said....”
- Also, trust-building “but” where first acknowledge then attack.
- “No one would say I agree with John Howard on most things. But he said the only reason for war is to prevent greater long-term suffering. OK, what’s happening in Iraq now?”

6. Plan to have goals coopted by conservatives, convincing them (vs goal of marginalizing them)
   - Key role for non-partisan peace work
   - Need exit & face-saving strategies
   - Regardless of original reasons to go into Iraq, Saddam is gone now …
   - Natural to jump to focus on military response after 9/11. Now many AlQ dead, yet threat remains. New responses needed …