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Manufacturing Affinity

The Fortification and Expression of Ties between Prison Officers and Crime Victims

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Since at least the 1960s, scholars have argued that public ceremonies serve important practical functions for groups and social movements: bolstering internal cohesion; expressing messages about power, group identity, etc.; and fortifying intergroup ties. This article analyzes ethnographic data on the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), the very successful and powerful labor union that represents prison officers in California. Specifically, it examines two public gatherings that the CCPOA purportedly organizes on behalf of crime victims. During these events, the CCPOA *manufactures affinity* with its main allies, punitive crime victims' groups which the union helped create, and communicates to various audiences that prison officers and crime victims have a *natural affinity* and are *natural allies*. By demonstrating that the CCPOA uses these events to fabricate (make "real") ties between itself and crime victims, this article contributes to our understanding of the practical uses of public ceremonies.

Keywords: *unions; prison; victims; ceremonies; politics*

For more than half a century, students of conventional politics and social movements have analyzed the origins, elements, and functions of organized gatherings—rituals, ceremonies, rallies, protests, mass meetings, etc.¹ Drawing on Emile Durkheim's analyses of religious rituals, scholars posit that spirited assemblies—which whip up participants' emotions and move people to feel part of a moral community—solidify and express common feelings, ideas, identities (a sense of "we"-ness), and goals. During animated gatherings, activists articulate strategies and inspire participants to work for "the cause." Extending Erving Goffman's dramaturgical model of human action (and interaction) to the political arena, analysts also argue that groups stage public performances to express conceptions of themselves to myriad audiences.

This article contributes to our understanding of the strategic uses of structured assemblies. Ethnographic data from my study of the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), the independent labor union that represents prison officers and other carceral workers in the Golden State, shows that during public assemblies, the CCPOA *manufactures* affinity with its main allies, punitive crime victims' groups, which the CCPOA effectively created. During these gatherings, the union not only tries to affirm and nurture its ties with these groups, but it also attempts to express to various audiences—crime victims' representatives, the media, politicians, and state officials—that prison officers and crime victims (especially victims of violent crime) have a *natural affinity*, and that the CCPOA and victims' groups are *natural allies*.

The first section of this article discusses the literature on the strategic uses of public assemblies. It claims that extant analyses do not attend to or adequately theorize the functions that gatherings play in fortifying and expressing the *symbolic compact* between groups that do not have a natural affinity. The second section discusses the methods and data used for this article, while the third section provides an overview of the self-styled “victims' rights movement,” which helps us locate CCPOA's crime-victim allies within the organizational fields of victims rights in California and the United States. This section also describes the origins of two crime-victims' organizations, Crime Victims United of California (CVUC) and the Doris Tate Crime Victims Bureau (CVB), which are the CCPOA's primary allies. The fourth section presents ethnographic renderings of two CCPOA-produced public gatherings, which serve similar but slightly different purposes. The final section concludes that public gatherings express groups' social cosmologies, emotional attachments, and aims; they also help manufacture and naturalize inter-group affinity.

The Strategic Uses of Gatherings

Without exception, analyses of organized assemblies draw on Durkheim's work on religious rituals. The French sociologist argued that “primitive” people felt the force of society (what they called “God”) when collectively participating in rites. As they acted out the rituals, they swelled with emotion and felt part of something bigger than themselves. Durkheim referred to this state of excitability as “collective effervescence.” During these gatherings, people affirmed their shared identities as members of a group (as opposed to those outside of the group) and conceptions of moral

and immoral (right and wrong). For Durkheim, ritual is an invaluable and necessary part of group life, for it helps define and regenerate the group:

There can be no society that does not experience the need at regular intervals to maintain and strengthen the collective feelings and ideas that provide its coherence and its distinct individuality. This moral remaking can be achieved *only* through meetings, assemblies, and congregations in which the individuals, pressing close to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments. (Durkheim 1995, 429; emphasis added)

Following Durkheim's lead, students of conventional and nonconventional politics argue that public gatherings are essential to the vitality of organizations, campaigns, and "movements." Whereas the French sociologist viewed rites and other collective activities as organic outgrowths of group life, contemporary scholars rightly describe gatherings as strategic devices that organizations, parties, unions, et al. use to achieve goals. Of course, collective activities such as protests periodically erupt spontaneously (as with the uprising in Los Angeles, California that followed the verdict in the trial of Rodney King in 1992). Meetings, assemblies, and congregations, however, are typically planned and have strategic aims regardless of whether their organizers articulate or are fully aware of the events' functions.

Scholars have theorized that public gatherings serve three general purposes: *internal cohesion*, *external expression*, and *intergroup solidarity*. In the first instance, state officials, union organizers, grassroots activists, party bureaucrats, and other organizers orchestrate gatherings to reinforce social, cognitive, and emotional ties among group members (Berezin 2001; Collins 2001; Edelman 1988; Gusfield and Michalowicz 1984; Jasper 1997). Protests, lively meetings, marches, etc. are tools that organizers use to enhance members' sense of shared identity and their common thoughts and feelings about each other, the social world, and the "rightness" of their cause. By engaging participants in action, labor strikes and other protests shape ("raise") and reinforce "consciousness" and prop up "cultures of solidarity" (Fantasia 1988; Nelson 1990). Echoing Durkheim, social movement scholar James Jasper states, "Protest is like religious ritual: it embodies our moral judgments, so that we can express [and experience] allegiance to moral visions through our actions" (1997, 13-14). In short, gatherings help activists keep groups together and marching toward collective goals.

A second function of public gatherings is to serve as means for external expression. This idea builds on Goffman's dramaturgical conception of human action, which contends that an individual's identity is produced

and performed in actual and imagined interactions with other people. An actor's presentation of self depends, in large part, on the situation or context (the "setting") and audience. The individual strives (not necessarily consciously) to convince the audience that his or her performance is "real."

When an individual plays a part, he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear (Goffman 1959, 17).

Extending the dramaturgical model from individuals to groups, scholars argue that public dramas tell stories to various audiences about groups' natures, goals, friends and enemies, etc. They help groups communicate conceptions of themselves that they want individuals, organizations, and institutions *external* to the group to believe. Report Benford and Scott Hunt argue that social movements stage performances to "construct and communicate their conceptions of power"—these performances dramatically demonstrate "who has and who lacks power, portrays how it is wielded, presents an alternative vision of power arrangements, and articulates how such transformations might be realized" (Benford and Hunt 1992, 50, 48).² In her comparative analysis of unions of janitors in the United States and South Korea, Jennifer Chun (2005) demonstrates that unions—in concert with members of local communities—produced public dramas that depicted their positions as moral and their opponents' positions as immoral. Through these "symbolic struggles" with employers, the relatively resource-poor unions gained "symbolic leverage" over their detractors and obtained concessions from them. In other words, the unions used public dramas to alter outsiders' perceptions of the labor struggle.

The third and least explored purpose, or rather outcome, of gatherings is inter-group solidarity. In her study on the nineteenth-century Irish Land Movement, Anne Kane (2001) claims that disparate groups with conflicting agendas—tenant farmers, clergy, and movement leaders—developed solidarity during public gatherings as they shared and experienced "emotional narratives," particularly stories of humiliation and shame. By collectively exploring and developing common experiences and feelings, groups that do not have well-established bonds (and even distrust and/or dislike each other) can develop affinity.

This article puts a twist on extant conceptualizations of public political dramas. Like Kane, I argue that collectivities attempt to forge and/or reinforce common bonds during rallies, inspired meetings, protests, and the

like. Furthermore, I claim that organizations *manufacture affinity* between groups in the minds of observers, so that politicians, journalists, bureaucrats, and even academics perceive that the groups have the same grievances, goals, and general worldviews. This function is particularly important to groups with whom the media, political establishment, and journalists do not automatically sympathize—such as prison officer and other unpopular labor unions. By constructing “natural affinity” with sympathetic groups, organizations that are less popular or have questionable motives can claim that they act on behalf of their sympathetic allies. In sum, public gatherings, if convincingly scripted and enacted, can reinforce and (mis)represent socially constituted ties between groups as “natural.”

Method and Data

I gathered the data for this article while conducting research for a larger project, which analyzes how and why the CCPOA became one of the most successful and powerful labor unions in California *and* the United States. The larger study also investigates the CCPOA's effects on criminal punishment policies and priorities in the Golden State. As part of this research, I conducted ethnographic research in various sites to observe the CCPOA “in action.” I attended several of the union's annual membership conventions, legislative hearings, workshops, rallies, and informal gatherings at CCPOA headquarters. By directly observing the union in these settings, I witnessed how CCPOA activists interacted with and presented the union to different audiences—e.g., other union activists, nonactivist CCPOA members, allied organizations, journalists, politicians, and state bureaucrats.

This article presents data from two CCPOA events, one semipublic and the other public. The first is a workshop, entitled “A Day in the Life, Correctional Officer/Inmate,” that the union conducted at the 2004 National Organization for Victims Assistance (NOVA) Conference. According to their materials, NOVA is a nonprofit organization that has “four purposes and accomplishments: national advocacy, direct services to victims, assistance to professional colleagues, membership activities and services.” NOVA “has some 4,500 agencies and individuals as active members, with an average of 1,500 in attendance at its annual conferences.” Political scientist Marie Gottschalk bills NOVA as “the nucleus of the victims’ movement,” and NOVA's annual conference as the “Mecca of the victim-rights movement” (Gottschalk 2006, 87-88). NOVA refers to its yearly gathering as a “family reunion” for “victim assistance and disaster professionals, survivors, and

grassroots groups lobbying for change, and others providing crisis intervention and support services” (NOVA 2005). The NOVA conference consists of plenary sessions, workshops conducted by diverse organizations and individuals, and social events. The NOVA conference and CCPOA’s workshop at the gathering are semipublic; they are open to registered participants of the conference, but not to the general public.

The second event I analyze is the “16th Annual Crime Victims March on the Capitol.” The CCPOA has sponsored and organized the Victims March each year since 1990. Although in this article I focus on the 2005 Victims March, I also conducted research at the 2003 and 2004 events. As I note below, the format, participants, and much of the content were similar all three years. Each year, about forty organizations and hundreds of individuals meet at the State Capitol in Sacramento (there is not an eponymous “march” to the statehouse) to distribute and gather information; hear speeches from crime victims and victims’ family members, politicians, and CCPOA officials; sing songs; and mourn victimized loved ones. Legislators and their staff members, state bureaucrats (e.g., Department of Corrections officials), and print and television journalists also attend the event. Because the Victims March is outdoors and open to the general public, curious passersby and ethnographically inclined researchers such as myself also mill around the event.

This article analyzes the NOVA workshop and Victims March because the focus of these events is CCPOA’s relationship with crime victims and their putative representatives. Although the two events have similar content, their respective structures, audiences, and goals differ. The workshop is a more formal presentation designed primarily to convince victims’ advocates that prison officers and victims have a natural affinity and need to work together to achieve supposedly common aims, as well as to elicit sympathy for prison officers and antipathy for prisoners and convicts’ purported benefactors. The Victims March is more a rally than a formal presentation and serves primarily to express the “natural affinity” between prison officers and crime victims to onlookers, particularly politicians and journalists. By analyzing the two gatherings, we see varying ways in which the CCPOA forges and communicates affinity with its central allies in different contexts.

At both events, I wrote extensive field notes. I also recorded CCPOA’s presentation at the NOVA workshop and the speeches at the Victims March. I took photographs at the Victims March, and a colleague videotaped the event at my request. I transcribed the audio recordings from the two events and studied the video footage of the Victims March. Using the varied

sources of ethnographic data, I reconstructed the settings, demographics, and general feel of both events. I coded the transcripts and field notes to identify dominant themes, narratives, and emotionally charged topics (the people, places, and things that “moved” the crowd). I not only examined *what* stories the presenters told, I also studied *how* they told them. Moreover, I investigated the audiences’ reactions to the stories, paying close attention to applause, silence, head nods, chuckles, scowls, and smiles. Ethnography is particularly suited to analyzing semipublic and public assemblies, such as these CCPOA-orchestrated events, as the analyst can see, hear, and feel (however partially) the power of the group. Participant observation allowed me to chronicle and analyze the shared understandings and experiences that comprise the affinity that CCPOA has cultivated with crime victims in the last twenty years.

The Origins of Affinity

Since its inception in 1982, the CCPOA has grown precipitously in strength and numbers. The CCPOA’s membership and financial coffers swelled along with the prison population in California during the 1980s and 1990s. The number of prisoners in the Golden State grew from roughly twenty thousand in 1980 to one hundred and sixty thousand in 2001. In the last two decades, California has added twenty-one prisons for a total of thirty-three (in addition to forty-one firefighting and conservation camps for low-security inmates). From 1982 to 2002, the CCPOA’s membership grew by about 600 percent (from five thousand to thirty-one thousand). Union members pay approximately \$60 per month in dues, while non-members pay an agency fee of \$40 per month, for a total of about \$22 million per year, 65 percent of which goes to operations, and 35 percent to political activities (Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice 2002, 11-4).

CCPOA has become a very successful union in little over two decades—a period of time in which the vast majority of unions in the United States lost members and clout at the bargaining table (Bronfenbrenner et. al. 1998; Lichtenstein 2002). Over 90 percent of prison officers in California are members of CCPOA. The CCPOA has negotiated stellar contracts that make prison officers among the best-compensated public employees in the state, if not the nation. The CCPOA’s latest contract stipulates that prison officers in California earn an average of \$65,000 and a maximum of \$73,000 per year before overtime and other incentives, which is more than

twice the national average for prison officers and more than the salary for assistant (and some associate) professors at the University of California.³ The CCPOA has spurred California politicians to thwart construction and operation of private prisons (which hire nonunion officers). It has also successfully campaigned for the passage of legislation that enhances the professionalism of prison officer work by increasing job training and standards, allowing prison officers to carry concealed weapons off-duty for personal protection (like other law enforcement employees), and certifying prison officers as “peace officers.”

Since the 1980s, the CCPOA has formed efficacious alliances with other law-enforcement organizations and community groups. The CCPOA recently established a political action committee called Native American Peace Officers (NAPO) with several Native American tribes in California that operate lucrative casinos. The CCPOA also formed a national coalition with other prison officer unions called Corrections USA (CUSA), which fights prison privatization throughout the country and advocates for federal legislation pertaining to prison officers. In addition, the union has established strong ties with groups that claim to represent crime victims.

The CCPOA’s alliances with crime victims’ organizations have benefited the union greatly. The victims’ groups help CCPOA achieve its goals from *outside its ranks*. They validate the union’s claims that prison officers are uniquely skilled professionals who work an extremely difficult and dangerous job, which CCPOA deems the “toughest beat in the state.” The victims’ organizations legitimate the union’s claims that CCPOA serves universal purposes (rather than its individual, pecuniary interests) via supporting crime victims and bolstering public safety.⁴ In addition, they provide *political cover* for the CCPOA by taking public positions on controversial policies related to crime and punishment, which the CCPOA sidesteps because it fears that public officials will label the union self-interested (Page 2007).

In the late 1980s, Don Novey, CCPOA President from 1982 until 2002, and fellow union officials decided to team up with crime victims’ advocates. Steve Fournier, a long-time CCPOA activist and retired prison officer, explains:

At one point in time—I believe it would be about 1987, ’88, somewhere in that area—Don [Novey] and I were . . . driving to Salinas, to Soledad—from Sacramento. And he says, “I just don’t understand what it is we’re doing wrong. We’ve got a foot in the door politically to where people will listen to us and respond to us, but nobody understands who we are and what we do. And we can’t get a break. We get bad press. We get treated badly. We get spit on by

other agencies . . . Who out there is our ally?" At that point in time I simply said, "Don, the only people out there that call us are the victims of the people that we're holding in custody. We need to embrace these folks." And of course, we went on to form the Doris Tate Crime Victims Bureau and Crime Victims United . . . Doris Tate goes after judges and DAs and helps victims. And they testify and lobby. And Crime Victims United is the political wing of the victim's movement. And most people have said that we're the puppet master. My exception to that is that I would rather be described as somebody that helps them find the direction. But the idea to go after the issues and the politicians is them. We just . . . I'm driving the car and they're telling me which turn to make.

Nina Ashford-Solarno, daughter of CVUC President Harriet Solarno, insists that Novey understood the potential payoffs for crime victims and prison officers of a partnership between CCPOA and victims' groups:

When we first formed this alliance between victims and correctional officers people were like, "What are you talking about?" Because they couldn't quite see it. But yet [Don] could see down the road the benefits of both. And it really has formed—between Crime Victims United and CCPOA it has formed a very strong bond that has been beneficial to the officers as well as to us. And I just think he has foresight that very few people have.

Novey and Harriet Solarno met in 1990 at a parole hearing for the man who murdered Solarno's daughter, Katina, in 1979. At that time, Mrs. Solarno was leading a small support group for victims in San Francisco called *Justice for Murder Victims/Vocal Foundation*. Solarno describes her initial contact with CCPOA:

[For the parole hearing] . . . we organized and we had two buses going to Vacaville, filled. And cars, which we had about three hundred people. We even had kids from her [Katina's] high school and her grammar school—in their parochial uniforms—saying no more crime and all that . . . And Vacaville prison didn't know what to do. They didn't know what hit them! I mean, this was never done! And we come up with our—and I planned an Italian barbeque, so we got all the requirements and permits for the barbeque. Now, Vacaville didn't know, but they didn't dare keep us out because the press was there! [Laughs]

. . . Well, this is where my first introduction to CCPOA. I get off of the bus and there's a man in a black jacket with the CCPOA, and he introduced himself to me. Told me his name. And he says he's representing the president, Don Novey . . .

. . . So I invited them all to the barbeque . . . And they came to the barbeque, they met the family. They mixed with us. They were so nice . . .

. . . I didn't know how super-nice they were. You know? They came. The president came down. Don Novey and all them came down. They were . . . They were so impressed with what I did, and he came over to me and says, "You don't know how much you did. To expose what victims go through and what they all do" . . . And we went to go pay the caterer and they [CCPOA] picked up the bill. They paid the bill . . .

. . . I was so appreciative. Well, then we got a phone call and [CCPOA] asked us if we would come up to Sacramento for a meeting. [They said], "The president, Don Novey [inaudible] would like to meet your entire family."

Solarno describes her first official meeting with Novey, which occurred in 1990 at CCPOA headquarters in Sacramento:

I said, "Do you want to help me?" . . . And he says, "What do you want?" And I said, "I want to be as powerful as you." You know? [Laughs] "Which I know I can't, but I would like to be. Because victims have no money. We have no membership." . . . When I told him I wanted to be that, he said—"Well, what do you mean?" And I said, "Well, Mr. Novey . . . just running a support group is not going to stop crime. We need legislators that are pro—public safety, whether they're Democrats or Republicans. We also need a lobbyist to be able to pass good legislation, because they [politicians] don't listen to us. They use us as a tool . . . And also, I want a foundation. I will not give up my trench work." That clinched it with Don. He said—"What do you mean by trench work?" I said, "I may come to Sacramento, but I will not give up my monthly support group, because these people need help. They all need help. They need help to know that the system is not on their side—and I want to prepare them for their trials, I want to prepare them for their paroles and everything." . . . And then I said, "I want a foundation, also—prevention for us is with children." I said, "When they [criminals] do heinous crimes you can have them. You can house them. And children is where we need to concentrate." . . . So that's what clinched it with Don. And he said, "Okay, we'll help you organize." And that's how in 1990 Crime Victims United was born. Don did it. I could not do this without CCPOA, because we didn't have the money to do it.

Shortly after meeting with Solarno, the CCPOA helped establish CVUC and CVB. CVUC's main function was political action: lobbying, endorsing electoral candidates, testifying at legislative hearings, and sponsoring and opposing legislation. CVB's primary duty was to monitor courts to ensure that judges treated victims fairly and did not give convicts lenient

sentences, and that district attorneys prosecuted serious offenders rather than negotiated plea-bargains. The union initially gave the organizations office space, lobbying staff, attorneys, and seed money (78 percent of CVB's and 84 percent of CVUC's initial funding) (Shapiro 1997, 13-14). Over time, the CCPOA continued to fund the victims' groups, albeit at a reduced rate. In 1998-2000, the officers' union gave \$163,670 to CVUC and \$267,250 to CVB. The CCPOA also continues to equip the organizations with staff (e.g., lobbyists and political consultants), and it provides CVUC with an office. CVB moved out of CCPOA's headquarters and into its own office in August 1999.

The CCPOA also gave the victims' groups lessons on how to play political "hardball" (Warren 2000, A1). Solarno claims that Don Novey "steered us in the right direction, opened the door, and taught us what to do. He educated us" (quoted in Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice 2002, III-16). She elaborates:

Well, he tells me about the games that go on. Now I can read through a lot of them, you know? He has taught us about that. He has taught us how to act when we have candidates. What kinds of questions to ask. Don't talk—let them talk. You know? . . . Let me show you how we interview. I mean, we're very credible. We send questionnaires out. We do it with sheriffs, district attorneys, judges, all the legislators and constitutional officers. All the way up to the top. We send out the questionnaires . . . We set appointments for interviews in Sacramento . . . So we interview them. We have their questionnaires. We're now savvy. I know . . . if their staff filled it out, or did they fill it out? I mean, we know . . . It's an education all on its own. You know? And things like that. Then we ask them all the questions. And then if we do endorse them, we campaign. If they're elected, we follow . . . we make a report card. You know, their voting record. Their voting record is with us . . . We don't drop them for political reasons. Your report card proved you deserve it. So he [Novey] taught us that. He taught us about legislation. Hey, you need to do your homework [on legislation] before it comes up [before legislative committees]. Things like that. We used to go up . . . We were used as tools to go up and speak in front of the Public Safety Committee . . . Sometimes we do have to speak . . . but we've already done our homework.

CVUC and CVB have become major political players in California since the early 1990s. Electoral candidates clamor for the organizations' endorsements. Lawmakers and state bureaucrats seek out their advice regarding policies and governmental appointments and attend and speak at the groups' events. Moreover, politicians have appointed the organizations' leaders to

state boards and commissions. For instance, in 2004, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger nominated Susan Fisher, former executive director of CVB, to serve on the Board of Prison Terms, the state agency that considers parole release for prisoners serving nonfixed sentences. In April 2006, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger created a cabinet position titled the Crime Victim Advocate to “serve as California’s lead advocate on state and federal policy impacting crime victims.” The Governor appointed Susan Fisher to the new position, thereby placing a CCPOA-aligned crime victims’ advocate in his inner circle.

State officials have also appointed Solarno to important positions. For example, in 1995, then Governor Pete Wilson appointed her to California’s Commission on Judicial Performance, an independent state agency that is responsible for investigating complaints of judicial misconduct and for disciplining judges. In 1994, Governor Wilson named Mrs. Solarno to a board overseeing the juvenile justice system in San Francisco, the city in which she lives (Shapiro 1997, 16). The Republican and Democratic parties have both invited Solarno to be a delegate at their national conventions.

Journalists have also designated CCPOA-aligned victims’ advocates as spokespersons for all crime victims. Print and television reporters produce *certain* crime victims’ advocates for quotes on important matters pertaining to prisons, sentencing laws, and victims’ issues. The major newspapers in California (*The Sacramento Bee*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *San Diego Union-Tribune*) include Solarno’s views (she is the most often cited representative of crime victims) in stories about parole reform, criminal justice bureaucracy, prison management, laws related to sex offenders and other “habitual” criminals, and the California Youth Authority.

Reporters seek out comments from Solarno because she often makes provocative and straightforward statements that clearly identify “us” and “them” and “good” and “evil.” Moreover, she and her counterparts are attractive to journalists because of their link to the “powerful prison guards’ union,” as reporters refer to the CCPOA. As Rodney Benson, Erik Neveu, and their colleagues demonstrate in a recent collection of essays on the journalistic field, reporters are increasingly pressed to produce sexy stories and “out scoop” each to attract as many consumers as possible (Benson and Neveu 2005). Journalists rarely seek out opinions of crime victims who do not share Solarno’s and her colleagues’ views (and are less apt to make stimulating statements and speak about criminals and victims in clear-cut,

black-and-white terms). Therefore, their stories suggest that the positions of Solarno and her counterparts are the positions of all crime victims.

By designating CCPOA-aligned crime victims as the voices of all victims, state bureaucrats, politicians, and journalists marginalize voices of victims who do not share the CCPOA's or their allies' views of crime and punishment. Other victims' groups favor conflict mediation and reconciliation between victims and offenders rather than harsh punishment and support treatment as a valid means of increasing public safety (e.g., The Justice and Reconciliation Project). These organizations lack sufficient resources to increase and mobilize their constituencies and publicize their messages, and so political actors and the press do not validate these groups through recognizing them publicly or heeding their advice.

The CCPOA, CVUC, and CVB are three of the most influential actors in the criminal justice arena today. Together, the groups have helped shape the penal landscape in California. They were major proponents of "Three Strikes and You're Out" and other mandatory-minimum sentencing laws. In 2006, the CCPOA and CVUC organized a coalition of victims and law enforcement groups, which played an instrumental role in defeating Proposition 66—a ballot initiative that would have made California's "Three Strikes" law less punitive and expansive. The union and its allies contributed greatly to the defeat of parole reform in California between 2003 and 2005. The organizations have sponsored legislation that ostensibly increases victims' rights (e.g., victim impact statements) and decreases prisoners' rights. Additionally, they have helped elect to public office self-proclaimed "victim-friendly" and "tough on crime" politicians, judges, and district attorneys (Page 2007).

This section shows that the relationships between the CCPOA and the respective victims' groups are the product of strategic considerations. Novey and his counterparts in CCPOA understood the potential benefits that an alliance between the union and punitive, politically motivated crime victims' groups could produce. They also dedicated considerable resources to manufacturing and nurturing relationships between the CCPOA and its allies. Since establishing ties with CVUC, CVB, and other like-minded victims groups (e.g., Parents of Murdered Children), the CCPOA has orchestrated numerous spirited gatherings to fortify and broadcast the unions' relationship with the groups, and crime victims more generally. In doing so, the union has announced loudly and often that the CCPOA has two main constituents: its members and victims of crime.

August 24, 2004: "A Day in the Life, Correctional Officer/Inmate"

It is day two of NOVA's 30th Annual National Organization for Victims Assistance Conference. I am excited for the CCPOA's workshop, "A Day in the Life, Correctional Officer/Inmate." What kind of "day" will the prison officers' union depict? I wonder. I walk into the rather large conference room and the artifacts strategically placed along the walls begin to answer my question. There is a "weapons board," which features homemade shanks, blowguns, and a sundry of other potentially dangerous objects. There are also pictures of injured and dead prison gang members, and poster boards that tell stories of officers assaulted by convicts. The artifacts suggest that it will be a volatile and dangerous "day in the life."

The five presenters, four men and one woman, wear suits. One of the men sports a flashy, patriotic necktie that is red, white, and blue and prominently features a dignified eagle. The officers introduce themselves and delve into their PowerPoint presentation. They seem eager and a bit nervous; this is the debut of the workshop. The lone female presenter, Angie, provides a cautionary tale about the content of the workshop⁵:

Before we start this hour we want to warn you that a lot of our pictures are graphic. And we will be telling you how the Department of Corrections operates. It is not necessarily what you want to hear if you are a victim. I don't know how many of you are victims in here, but it's not necessarily what you may want to hear. We treat the inmates in a humane order. And sometimes victims don't want to hear that. There are programs that we offer the inmates in the prisons . . . and sometimes victims don't want to hear that they [prisoners] are being offered programs. What we are going to give you is an insight into an inmate from the time he reaches the reception center. Once they are arrested they go to a state prison's reception center, and they are classified as to what prison they should go.

After discussing briefly convicts' entry into prisons, the workshop leaders tell the audience that officers are victims too. Prisoners assault an average of nine officers a day, they tell the crowd. One of the presenters makes a statement that we hear several times during the workshop: "Victimization doesn't stop on the streets." They tell us that managers for the California Department of Corrections (CDC), the public, and the press care little about the violence that officers suffer daily. The presenters claim that they and their coworkers understand the plight of crime victims because they work closely with convicts, and are victims too.

The crowd is into the presentation. People mutter “Mmm . . . Hmmm” and nod their heads affirmatively as the facilitators discuss inmates’ propensity for predation. The speakers repeatedly refer to prisons as “little towns” that are invisible to most of the public. Prisoners enjoy equal, if not more, amenities and services than do people outside of the walls. The provisions are *free* to boot. They use the metaphor of “little towns” to show that prisoners “have it good,” and prisons do little punishing. The workshop quickly turns into a discussion of the “good life,” rather than “a day in the life,” in prisons.

The list of “goodies” is extensive and offends the crowd. The officers describe each provision as equivalent to an amenity in the free world. The canteen is prisoners’ “7-11,” the warehouse their “Costco,” the mess hall their “restaurant,” and the yard their recreation center, complete with soccer fields and basketball courts. The prisoners also enjoy free laundry service. Prisoners have their own law libraries, serve as firefighters, and have access to a wide variety of educational opportunities, including college courses, Angie emphasizes. Inmates obtain all types of drugs, which are smuggled into the institutions by visitors and through the mail.

The officers get fired up when they talk about medical facilities in prisons. Angie begins:

[Pointing to the picture on the screen] Those are medical facilities, they [the prisoners] have dental . . . medical . . . It’s a complete facility . . . I don’t know if you heard or read . . . but we had one of our inmates receive a heart transplant. So we treat our, um, inmates very well. We were up in arms about the heart transplant. But what we were told was that we cannot deny that inmate . . . So we give them all the medical that they need to have, medical and dental.

Jim, the gentleman operating the PowerPoint presentation, excitedly jumps up from his seat and interjects:

The inmate who got the heart transplant didn’t live very long afterwards. And part of the reason is when you get a heart transplant, you have to take medication that allows your body to accept the heart. Well the guy didn’t take the medication, so he basically threw a million dollars away from the state. And I have a hard time with that because my father-in-law had a heart transplant, so I know what he went through, but it, you know, it just shows what [prisoners will] do, that money to them is just a number.

In addition to having access to quality medical care, prisoners enjoy extensive recreational activities. With a cheery sneer, Angie states while directing our attention to a slide, “This is the dayroom; this is where the

inmates come to play. Right there is the television. There's the telephones in that area . . . They sit and watch television. Most of the inmates have television in their room." A woman from Texas asks why prisoners are not required to watch the common televisions. Angie replies,

That would be nice. Because a lot of the times, they have more rights than the victim. And the only way you're going to change that is by your voices . . . As correctional staff, we have to furnish what we're told to furnish. And they're allowed to have television, and they're allowed to have CD players, DVD players, or tape players, and all we can do is check to make sure that the equipment that they're having sent in cannot be torn apart.

Another officer, who works in a youth institution, chimes in, "And in some areas, they provide them with cable or satellite television." Jim stands up and says,

And I'll say this real quick, a lot of the reasons, you heard how much it costs to house an inmate, a lot of that money comes from the courts. These guys have the ACLU and a lot of other advocacy groups for them. That's the reason the number's so high, because they go to court and the courts tell us what we have to give 'em.

Angie elaborates,

You know, inmates have rights . . . and like I said before, some of the things you hear you may not like, but it is the law and we do abide by what the law tells us. [Returning to the slide] This is a yard where they [prisoners] actually go out and play, and they have basketball courts, soccer fields [inaudible].

Before completing their virtual tour of prisons, the presenters discuss conjugal (or family) visits, which raises the collective blood pressure of the audience. Conjugal visitation, as the CCPOA knows, is the third rail for many crime victims and their representatives. Angie refers deliberately and a bit angrily to a picture of family visitation quarters:

You all probably know what that is . . . where they do their conjugal visits. Lifers do not get to go out there, but everyone else can apply to go out, they're given three nights [she adds under her breath] to make more babies.

A blind man in the front row jokes rather loudly, "I haven't had a conjugal visit in over a year and a half." The presenters and a few folks in the first couple of rows laugh uncomfortably.

Prisons differ from “little towns” because they are filled with violent, predatory convicts who routinely assault each other and officers. The presenters paint a picture of prisons that resembles Wild West movies. Angie looks up at the screen and says,

The victimization doesn't stop on the streets. The type of behavior that those individuals have on the streets continues inside prison. The next one [slide] is the manufactured weapons which we've included over here for you to look at. They [prisoners] are very talented at what they can do. If they'd have used those talents on the street, they might not of ended up in prison. They can make anything; they can make guns in prison. They can make what we call zip guns, and they can shoot us.

Doug, an officer in the California Youth Authority (CYA), points to the weapons board and states, “These weapons are hardly unusual. They are not the exception; they're very ordinary. We find 'em day in . . . they're all over the place.” The next slide depicts what happens to gang members who betray their comrades: bloody murder. We learn that “the prisoners in California control organized crime, behind the walls.” The officers tell us that inmates are skillful in “keistering” weapons (hiding weapons in their anuses).

The presenters show video footage from a riot at California State Prison, Pelican Bay, in 2000, which displays prisoners' violent nature and propensity to attack each other and officers. As prelude to the video, Angie states:

Staff get hurt a lot of times responding to the riots, because we get in their way. They don't look at us saying you're wearing green [the color of officers' uniforms] . . . if you're in their way, they will hit us, and they will stab you and kill you. They will also do that to make a name for themselves. If we have some youngster who wants to make a name for himself, they will do what's called a hit on staff, assault staff so they will come up in the ranks . . . they may be told to, they may have a drug deal that they, um, can't pay off their drug debt, so the person or the gang they owe the money to says, “Okay we want you to kill that staff member or we want you to kill that inmate, and that will help you pay off your drug debt.”

The video shows a tense and rather subdued prison yard that suddenly turns into a battleground between rival inmates. Angie explains,

That's stabbing, not hitting. That's one of those weapons [that we discussed earlier]. Believe it or not, a lot of these guys live. They live. You and I, we'd . . . We'd die! These guys can have numerous, numerous wounds, and they live.

Doug discusses prisoners' resistance to chemical agents:

What you can't see is . . . the residue that is in the air. But these inmates will fight through the most strong, repugnant chemical agent, and in most cases it doesn't deter 'em in the least. They'll continue their attacks regardless.

As the video concludes, Angie says,

As you can see, the victimization is still going on in there too. A lot of times in the press what we hear is correctional staff, well that's your job. No it's not our job. No it's not. Our job is to keep these inmates safe. Our job is to make sure that we're abiding by the law. Our job is not about getting beat up.

A new slide shows an officer with special equipment for handling crises. Angie makes another statement about chemical agents, "It only affects the staff more than it affects the inmates. [She jokes] Some inmates like that."

According to the presenters, jurists, legislators, and prison managers compromise officers' safety. For example, state officials, at the behest of legislators and prisoner rights' advocates, forced the CYA to remove cages that were used to contain obstreperous wards during educational instruction. Doug explains:

What we have here are blue cages . . . This unit has a maximum-security lock-up unit that I work on. These cages have recently been removed from the unit unfortunately. And I say unfortunately . . . these cages became a necessity; there became a need because of the level of violence that we had. Where inmates would attack each other, would attack us. Those cages were put in that place to provide them [the wards] with education. So regardless of the level of violence, we bring them out everyday, or would, put them inside here and a teacher will come down, and individually school the students, as they call them. The legislators, the department whoever deemed that this was cruel [he drags out the word "cruel"]. Nobody thought about safety, it was cruel.

A person asks about the size of the cages. Doug replies,

About three and a half by three and a half . . . more than adequate to do your schoolwork, more than adequate to read a book. They're not left in there for punishment; they're in there for usually no longer than forty-five minutes at a time . . . the time of a class. And again they're right there with a teacher, an individual tutor you might say, and they are taken out . . . and that [the cage] was cruel [he drags out "cruel" again].

People in the audience ask several times why prisoners have rights and receive quality provisions. They also wonder why officers' work environments are so unsafe. The answer: interventionist courts, pesky lawmakers, powerful prisoner rights' groups, and the press. When asked how to change the current situation, Jim states,

The problem is it's hard to change things when you have the courts that turn around and, and you'll have a judge . . . right now there's a judge overseeing Pelican Bay [prison] that basically he . . . he wants to be the warden of all of California state prisons.

A CCPOA activist in the audience talks about powerful "special interests" that clamor for inmates' rights (e.g., the ACLU and Prison Law Office). Angie responds, "The only way we're going to change is by voices getting together and speaking up and going and lobbying." Jim elaborates:

One of the problems we have in California, you know California is a very liberal state, is the press, um, they don't report the facts. You know if an inmate, uh . . . if there's a riot on the yard, they'll put in on TV. If we're assaulted, we give them press releases; we never see it in the paper unless it's critical [of the officers], and then they'll put it in, but the press doesn't report it, and that's part of the problem that we have in trying to educate the public.

A woman sitting directly behind me asks about the changes the officers would make if they had the power to implement policies. Angie responds, "I would start charging inmates for everything. I would charge them for their electric. I would charge them for everything—their food, hairbrushes . . . Our retired citizens, our victims, us as citizens have to pay for that." Doug states, "Criminals in California take everything for granted, just like little kids that are spoiled. Everything's handed to them on a silver platter, and that's what they expect." Angie concludes the session by re-emphasizing the need for political action:

The only way to change [the current situation] is through the voice of the victims . . . If you're from California and you're reading bad stuff about us in the news, this class I hope is giving some of the insight of what really goes on in the prison system, and what we're faced with on a daily basis.

She thanks the audience and encourages us to stop by the CCPOA's booth throughout the day. The crowd gives the presenters a warm ovation, and we slowly file out of the conference room.

April 12, 2005: "16th Annual Victims March on the Capitol"

The sponsors of the Victims March could not have wished for better weather. The sun is hot, but the scorching days of summer are still a month or two in the future. One of the two large white tents that sit in front of the steps of the State Capitol protects people sitting in rows of chairs from the Sacramento sun. The other tent provides cover to lines of tables on which representatives of organizations representing crime victims and governmental agencies have laid out materials to give to curious passersby. According to the brochure for the Victims March, about forty crime victims' organizations, in addition to CVUC and CVB, participate in the event. These include: Parents of Murdered Children, Parents of Murdered Victims, Family and Friends of Murder Victims, Citizens for Law and Order, Citizens Against Homicide, Justice for Murdered Children, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and Mothers Against Senseless Killings.

Posters with pictures of murder victims and their birth and death dates line the stage in front of the Capitol and walkways to the left and right of the large tents. Deep red wooden cutouts, which represent crime victims, stand motionless on the grass to the right of the tents. The crowd is diverse. Men and women of various ages, ethnicities, nationalities, and economic classes commingle, take literature from the tables, and stare at posters of victims. Some cry into sympathetic arms. Many participants wear shirts that display pictures of deceased family members and friends, and some construct minishrines to their departed loved ones. The pain, longing, and sadness are palpable.

I peruse the informational tables, grab literature, and talk with the volunteers. A CVUC representative hands me a two-sided piece of paper titled, "CVUC's Concerns with GRP 1." CVUC opposes Governor Schwarzenegger's proposed plan to reorganize the state's penal agencies and shift the focus of punishment in California from retribution and incapacitation to rehabilitation. A short paragraph on the front side of the flier explains CVUC's opposition to the Governor's plan [GRP 1]:

Rearranging the boxes on the organizational chart is, by itself, neither forward nor backward. However, the tone is ominous. In the 1960s and 1970s, we were deluded with the ideas that (1) our experts knew how to rehabilitate criminals, and (2) the same experts knew how to determine which criminals had been rehabilitated. Both suppositions were wrong, and a great many innocent people suffered from the crimes committed by the criminals released as a result.

The flier directs people at the march to take action:

The Governors [*sic*] Reorganization Plan (GRP 1) will be heard on Tuesday, April 12, 2005 in the Assembly Public Safety, Room 126 on the first floor, North side of the Capitol entrance on L. Street. It is URGENT that TODAY, You wear your photos, take your Victims Pictures, Etc. and visit the hearing. Just walking thru will let the committee know that we are watching them and are concerned with GRP 1. Please read the information on back as to what concerns CVUC has regarding GRP 1.

As CCPOA President Mike Jimenez approaches the podium, I find a place close to the stage and prepare to audiotape the speeches. One of CCPOA's public relations representatives hands me a press release. It contains President Jimenez's prepared remarks:

We know better than most the violent, predatory nature of these criminals—always looking for their next victim . . . We work with these criminals every day in California's prisons and youth facilities. We know the danger they pose to society.

The event follows a similar agenda as the previous two marches I attended. The Folsom Prison Honor Guard strides across the concrete stage and hoists the flags of the United States and state of California. The crowd then joins President Jimenez in reciting "The Pledge of Allegiance." A religious invocation follows "The Pledge."

The event starts rolling when Todd Spitzer, a handsome, young, and fiery Assemblyman (R-Orange), grips the podium and speaks with the passion and righteousness of a preacher.⁶ He tells the crowd that the penal system and legislature ignore the plights of victims:

. . . You are here today because you are not getting justice . . . You tell me, that as victims, the court system treated you with dignity and respect; you stand up if it did so. And you stand up and you tell me if when somebody was harmed in your family, you were treated as a victim. Or were you treated as a piece of evidence? The system talks all day long about protecting victims, but it does not today stand up for victims (loud applause).

Mr. Spitzer tells the crowd that it has a duty to change the system:

So what are we going to do about it? What responsibility do we have? All of you here today who have seen somebody convicted and sent to prison, what do you want to know? You want to know that that person stays in prison

(applause and shouts of “Yeah!”). And what do you want to know if you are here because justice hasn’t found the perpetrator? You want to know that the system hasn’t abandoned you . . . You have an absolute responsibility, an absolute obligation to make sure that this institution of the people [pointing to the state Capitol], for the people and by the people, for the people and by *you*, create a responsibility and accountability for those who are ruining our society by committing crimes. Stand up if you’re with me on this. Stand up.

He revs up a little more and concludes his speech by asking the people in the audience a series of questions. The crowd responds to each question with a resounding “Yes!”

Are we committed to stopping crime in this state?

Are we committed to solving unsolved murders and crime?

Are we committed to holding parolees *in prison* so they don’t continue to further victimize us?

And are we as a society willing to say once and for all that public safety *is* our number one commitment and we’ll put our money where our mouth is?

The Assemblyman’s energy, messages, and call and response technique fire up the crowd.

President Jimenez returns to the podium and introduces the keynote speaker, Marc Klaas. In the last twelve years, Klaas has become a celebrity of sorts within the law-and-order community. In October 1993, Richard Allen Davis, a repeat violent offender and parolee, abducted Klaas’s twelve-year-old daughter, Polly Hannah Klaas. From October until December, the press reported every detail of the massive search for Polly, who journalists dubbed “America’s Child.” In December 1993, countless people in California and other states mourned and expressed rage when Polly was found murdered. The media reported widely that the little girl’s abductor and murderer, Richard Allen Davis, was a repeat violent offender. Polly became the poster child for the campaign for “Three Strikes and You’re Out” in California, which, according to its proponents, was designed to incapacitate people like Allen Davis (Domanick 2004; Zimring, Hawkins, and Kamin 2001).

Marc Klaas and his father, Joe Klaas, became fervent proponents of “Three Strikes.” Joe Klaas eventually changed his position and became a vocal advocate for reforming “Three Strikes” (Domanick 2004). Marc Klaas continues to support “Three Strikes” in its current form and campaigned in 2004 to defeat Proposition 66, the ballot initiative designed to reform

“Three Strikes.” In 1994, Marc Klaas started a nonprofit organization called KlaasKids Foundation

to give meaning to the death of twelve-year-old kidnap and murder victim Polly Hannah Klaas and to create a legacy in her name that would be protective of children for generations to come. Conceived with an initial investment of \$2,000 the Foundation’s mission is to stop crimes against children. (Klaas 2005)

Klaas ambles to the podium, removes his jacket, rolls up his shirtsleeves, and tells the crowd, “It is time for us to get to work.” Seeming quite intense and a bit flustered, Klaas pushes aside his prepared remarks (or notes) and adlibs his address. He speaks with feverish anger:

This event today, ladies and gentleman, was supposed to start at 11 o’clock, but there is a very important piece of legislation that is being addressed right now. It is called GRP 1. It’s the reorganization plan. Apparently Governor Schwarzenegger wants to reorganize the entire criminal justice system. He wants to start talking about rehabilitation in the same breath that we talk about punishment. Ladies and gentleman that’s what we were doing in the 60s, the 70s, in the 80s, in the early 90s, when our relatives were being slaughtered with impunity, when we were the prisoners, when the bad guys were walking the streets, and lurking in the shadows, and taking us out one by one by one. Rehabilitation doesn’t work. You commit a violent crime, you’ve stepped over a line. You’re not going to be rehabilitated, you’re going to be punished.

Klaas pauses as the crowd applauds loudly and shouts indecipherable words of encouragement. He grips the podium and continues:

You’re not going to a halfway house, you’re going to be put in a forty-two square-foot cell. And you’re going to think about the crimes you committed, and you are going to serve a long time . . . They don’t need GEDs; what they need is a slap. They don’t need a program, they don’t need a law library, they don’t need a weight set, they don’t need TVs, they don’t need a computer. What they need is ten more years. What they need to do is understand what they have done, and take the punishment like the men they will never be . . . cowards, they’re the cowards they’ve always been and the men they will never be.

Raucous applause and shouts of “That’s right!” interrupt the speaker.

. . . There’s an effort in this building [points back to the Capitol] right now to not have law enforcement and victims on parole boards, but to have sociologists,

to have educators. You know what, we don't need sociologists to tell us what to do, we don't need educators to tell us [prisoners] need GEDs. What we need is people like you [points to the crowd], people like me, people who have been to the bottom of the well . . . people who understand the darkness and . . . realize that the light is out here [loud applause]. Ladies and gentleman, we don't need a reorganization plan, we need stricter sentences. We don't need a reorganization plan, we need to keep bad people where they can't do harm to good people. We're the good people, they're the bad people. Keep 'em in prison. Governor Schwarzenegger understand me, read my lips: no more victims, no more crime.

The crowd rewards Klaas with a ringing ovation. CCPOA President Jimenez returns to the podium and presents Klaas with a framed "No on 66" bumper sticker. Jimenez thanks the keynote speaker and tells him that he is a hero to victims and all proponents of law and order. After another ringing round of applause for Klaas, participants hug each other, shake hands, and pick up their signs and other belongings. I shoot a few final pictures, talk briefly with a couple of CCPOA activists, and return to my car for the familiar trek back to Oakland.

Moral Communication

Although the content of the NOVA workshop and Victims March was similar, as I discuss below, the events' respective structures and purposes differed somewhat. The NOVA workshop was semipublic in that all participants of the NOVA conference were welcome to attend it. The CCPOA facilitators anticipated that victims, victims' advocates, state functionaries (e.g., representatives from the Attorney General's Office and the Office of Victims Services), and possibly academics who specialize in "victimology" or similar disciplines would attend the event. The union activists did not expect politicians, journalists, or researchers (such as myself) to participate in the workshop. The event was structured to make and support several key arguments. The central claim was that prison officers and crime victims have a natural affinity based on suffering at the hands of criminals and callous lawmakers, bureaucrats, judges, journalists, and prisoners' rights advocates. The chief purpose of the NOVA workshop was to build alliances between prison officers (and their union) and crime victims' advocates and organizations. The facilitators of the workshop hoped that the attendees would spread the word regarding prison officers' and victims' common plights and goals.

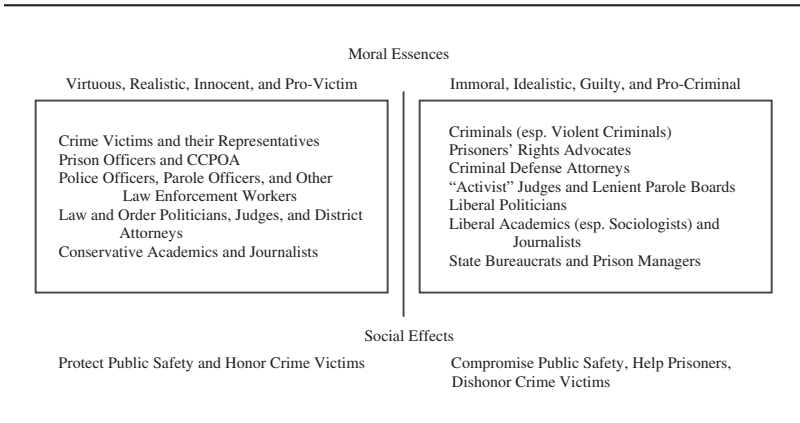
Whereas the NOVA workshop was semipublic, the Victims March was public. The main purpose of the Victims March was to broadcast CCPOA's commitment to victims and insist that its members feel victims' pain. The event was less about recruiting allies and strengthening inner-group ties (although it also served those purposes) and more about projecting the power of the alliance between the officers' union and victims' groups, as well as the inevitability of that alliance. In other words, the March (and those that came before it) was designed to show various audiences—especially politicians, state officials, and journalists—that the CCPOA and victims' groups represent a powerful collective force that is based on eternally shared issues, feelings, and goals.

Whereas the structures and purposes of the two events were slightly different, the speakers at the workshop and Victims March made similar assertions regarding the supposed naturalness of the ties that bind prison officers and crime victims. They repeatedly insisted that prison officers who work with the “predatory element” understand crime victims' plights. The speakers described the CCPOA as a dear friend of victims, and presented prison officers as heroes who keep convicted criminals behind bars and often suffer victimization at the hands of prisoners. Speakers at the events, the Victims March in particular, evoked images of the CCPOA as an avuncular benefactor of crime victims. In effect, the CCPOA and victims' representatives publicly validated each other's status as victims.

The messages that presenters at the public events communicated through speeches and symbols characterized two mutually exclusive, opposing moral universes divided by clear and solid *symbolic boundaries*.⁷ As characterized in figure 1, crime victims and their representatives, law-and-order public officials, strict district attorneys and judges, and self-proclaimed anticrime, punitive-minded cultural producers share a socially constructed symbolic space with crime victims and prison officers. On the other side of the symbolic divide are criminals (particularly violent criminals) and their ostensible supporters: criminal defense lawyers; pro-rehabilitation (and therefore pro-criminal) politicians, social workers, and academics; “activist” judges; prison managers who mistreat officers and coddle prisoners; and state bureaucrats.

The CCPOA and their allies have similar goals and worldviews, and favor like remedies to the “crime problem.” Crime victims (and their kin and kith) and law enforcement workers have particular and “true” knowledge about crime and punishment (as opposed to abstract academic theories), because they witness first- or second-hand the horrible effects of criminal behavior. As Marc Klaas told the audience at the Victims March,

Figure 1
Two Opposing Moral Universes



victims and their representatives are experts on issues of crime and punishment, and therefore should make and enforce penal policy, because they have “been to the bottom of the well” and “understand the darkness.”

For victims and their advocates inside and outside of law enforcement, swift and harsh penal sanctions (e.g., “Three Strikes,” boot camps for minors, “One Strike and You’re Out” laws and life-long electronic monitoring for sex offenders, and capital punishment) increase public safety by deterring, incapacitating, and killing self-interested, rational calculating criminogenic individuals (the dark “predatory element” that lurks in the shadows). The union and its allies paradoxically call for the state to expand and extend the reach of the penal apparatus at the same time that they encourage *mistrust* of state officials and traditional penal experts, such as prison administrators and social scientists.

Speakers at the NOVA workshop and Victims March described crime victims and their advocates as unquestionably innocent and worthy. They portrayed criminals (particularly violent criminals) as incontestably guilty and unworthy, and their representatives as morally bankrupt idealists who jeopardize public safety by promoting dangerous panaceas for crime and making excuses for criminals. The symbols at the events—flags, Pledge of Allegiance, invocation, Honor Guard—signified that the “good people” are righteous, do God’s work, and have a patriotic duty to fight the good fight.

By portraying two well-delineated and hostile opposing camps, the CCPOA and their allies promote a sense of belonging among their supporters and compatriots. The union and its collaborators also clearly identify “others” that threaten their interests, and thereby justify calls for “us” to band together and fight to obtain “our” objectives. The need to fight is paramount in the world portrayed in the public ceremonies in which the winners take all and zero-sum logic dominates. Zero-sum logic was ubiquitous in the NOVA workshop: the presenters offended the audiences’ sensibilities with images of cushy prisons filled with coddled prisoners who are childish, supernatural (they are immune to chemical agents and knife wounds), ungrateful, cunning, and predatory. Speakers at the Victims March also couched their remarks in the language of zero-sum. For example, Klaas and others argued that lawmakers and prisoners’ rights advocates should work on behalf of the victimized rather than the victimizer, as if it is impossible to help crime victims and convicted criminals simultaneously. The zero-sum logic makes sense because the CCPOA and its allies depict an oversimplified world in which groups of people constitute armies at war over the soul of society.⁸ It is self-evident that armies locked in heated battle do not and cannot understand each other or work toward similar goals. The quasi-military images at the events (e.g., the marching Honor Guard, battles on prison yards) highlighted the warlike relationship between the “good people” and the “bad people.”

In addition to revealing problems, the presenters at the two events clearly identified solutions. According to the CCPOA and crime victims, carping liberals develop long lists of grievances and rarely articulate convincing answers to the problems. The solutions they do provide are half-baked, ineffective, and generally harmful. For the organizers of the Victims March and NOVA workshop, political action is necessary to keep California on the right path. Victims need to “make their voices heard” at legislative hearings and in ballot boxes. They need to organize and support crime-victim and law-enforcement organizations, and inform politicians and journalists that they support retributive punishment (not rehabilitative treatment) for violent offenders.

The CCPOA and their coalition partners present many examples of the positive results wrought by political action: “Three Strikes” and other mandatory-minimum sentencing laws; victims-rights legislation (e.g., victim-impact statements); reductions of prisoners’ rights and provisions; and the election of victim-friendly, pro-public safety politicians, judges, and district attorneys. Both public events ended with emotional calls for crime victims and their supporters to raise their voices and lobby policymakers and journalists who shape collective representations of crime, criminals, punishment,

victims, and prison officers and other law enforcement workers. By becoming political actors who advocate for victims' rights and punitive sanctions for violent offenders, crime victims and their loved ones can ease their pain, save innocent people from suffering horrible crimes, and move toward "closure."

Conclusion: An Eternal Illusion

During the last thirty-plus years, students of labor and social movements have focused principally on resource mobilization, political opportunity structures, and framing (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Fantasia and Voss 2004). Consequently, the emotional, creative, and dramatic sides of union and other collective struggles have received insufficient attention. Along with a growing number of scholars, I contend that these cultural factors are central to movement formation (particularly recruitment) and success (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polleta 2001; Jasper 1997). In this article, I have attempted to invigorate and extend scholarly discussions about collective actors' strategic uses of public assemblies—demonstrations, marches, protests, mass celebrations, etc.

Extant analyses of the practical functions of public gatherings delineate varied and important ends these gatherings serve for groups. Like other scholars, I claim that assemblies, when skillfully scripted and staged, encourage internal cohesion, express messages to external audiences, and reflect and reinforce ties between groups. Based on my analysis of CCPOA's gatherings, I argue that assemblies also help groups manufacture affinity between themselves and other collectivities. As Kane (2001) suggests, lively gatherings can foster intergroup connections by communicating narratives of suffering, expressing common aims, and articulating paths of action. During assemblies, groups *also* manufacture affinity between themselves and other organizations in the minds of onlookers—particularly journalists, politicians, and state bureaucrats. They attempt to mask the labor that created the ties between the groups, so that people (mis)understand the affinity as "natural" and eternal. The CCPOA symbolically transforms a political tactic—forming alliances with victims' organizations that the union effectively created—into a historical given; it presents crime victims as a natural constituency of prison officers and CCPOA.

I am not proposing that organizations can create affinity between themselves and other groups simply by repeatedly and loudly announcing during organized assemblies that such affinity exists. The purported affinity must have empirical bases. As Bourdieu (1990, 138) argues, "symbolic efficacy

depends on the degree to which the vision proposed is founded in reality.” CCPOA’s claims regarding its relationship with crime victim groups ring true because of the *actual* links between the union and victims organizations. Since the early 1990s, CCPOA and its crime victim allies have collectively struggled to implement carceral policies, such as California’s notorious “Three Strikes and You’re Out.” Union officials have positions on the victim organizations’ governing boards. As mentioned earlier, CVUC and CVB receive funding and other resources from CCPOA. In short, the “natural affinity” between CCPOA and the victims’ groups is the product of intensive and expensive legwork. Therefore, CCPOA’s insistence that prison officers and punitive-oriented crime victims have an eternal bond now appears perfectly natural, as common sense.

Recent actions by the CCPOA bolster this claim. After becoming California’s governor in 2003, Arnold Schwarzenegger proposed policies to weaken public-sector labor unions in California. In response, the CCPOA formed alliances with other state worker unions. It also participated in mass rallies with labor organizations, in which CCPOA President Jimenez insisted that prison officers and other state employees, such as schoolteachers, were natural confederates. CCPOA’s critics in the press, legislature, and governor’s office, however, described the prison officers’ alliance with other unions as a naked political tactic, because the CCPOA (a militantly independent union) has historically defined itself in opposition to other state worker organizations, which are affiliated with the AFL-CIO. Because CCPOA did not have “real” ties with the other unions, insistence that CCPOA shares a natural bond with these groups rang hollow (Page 2007).

In sum, this article rejects popular conceptions of public gatherings as sideshows lacking analytical or political importance. Following the lead of Emile Durkheim and renowned theorists of political theater—most notably Murray Edelman and Joseph Gusfield—it insists that these organized productions accomplish (or are designed to accomplish) essential ends for labor unions, social movement organizations, and other strategic collective actors. In addition to eliciting emotions from participants that make people feel part of a moral community, these events do important symbolic work; they help constitute groups in the minds of friends, foes, and neutral onlookers. They are “actions of representation . . . meant to display and to throw into relief certain realities.” Their aim is “to exhibit a group, its size, its strength, its cohesiveness, to make it exist visibly” (Bourdieu 1990, 133).

This study encourages analysts to study the symbolic labor that collective actors conduct, particularly how groups employ public productions as *political tools* in classification efforts. Ethnographers are well suited to

re-focus attention on and make sense of theatrical performances in collective struggles, for we are trained to experience—to feel—the worlds we study, and to treat those feelings as analytically important social facts rather than impediments to objectivity. Moreover, ethnographers reflexively chronicle and analyze the constitutive elements of public presentations—rhetoric, props, structure (or “staging”), players, and movements. In other words, ethnographers are socialized to experience and examine the whole performance. By following this line of inquiry, we can further understand ways in which groups create themselves (both materially and symbolically) as they attempt to simultaneously change or reproduce the distribution of material sources, status hierarchies, and visions of and feelings about the social world.

Notes

1. Political scientists and sociologists (particularly sociologists who study social movements and culture) drew attention to the important, largely “symbolic” qualities of public assemblies. Edelman (1964) and Gusfield (1963), for example, were particularly interested in the “symbolic” or “expressive” nature and functions of political action, such as spectacles. Largely in response to Marxists, who tended to reduce politics to struggles over material goods, they argued that political practices communicated messages about group status and a host of other issues.

2. For Benford and Hunt, social movement organizations communicate notions of power to movement participants and outsiders (e.g., media, state, and counter-movements). I separate internal cohesion and external expression for analytical and clarity purposes. In reality, gatherings typically serve these functions simultaneously, as Benford and Hunt explain.

3. The requirements for prison officer employment are a high school degree or equivalent and sixteen weeks of training.

4. Students of public-sector unions astutely note that these unions must frame their pecuniary or particular interests in terms of the *public good*, for the taxpayers fund public employees’ salaries and benefits. State employee unions have to demonstrate that their members provide valuable public services and deserve raises, better training, etc. Unions that do not adequately frame their demands in moral terms risk being labeled “special interests” that harm the public good (Johnston 1994, 209). Political theorist and community organizer Saul Alinsky (1971) argues that all political actors—not just unions—must rationalize their actions and goals:

Moral rationalization is indispensable at all times of action whether to justify the selection or the use of ends or means. Machiavelli’s blindness to the necessity for moral clothing to all acts and motives—he said “politics has no relation to morals”—was his major weakness . . . All great leaders, including Churchill, Gandhi, Lincoln, and Jefferson, always invoked “moral principles” to cover naked self-interest in the clothing of “freedom,” “equality of mankind,” “a law higher than man-made law,” and so on. This even held under circumstances of national crises when it was universally assumed that the end justified any means. All effective actions require the passport of morality. Alinsky (1971, 43-44)

5. The names of the presenters are pseudonyms.

6. Assemblyman Spitzer, a former police officer and prosecutor, has become a dear friend of crime-victim and law-enforcement groups in California, as well as a major foe of Governor Schwarzenegger's attempts to reform parole in the Golden State. Spitzer's online biography claims that he helped defeat Proposition 66, and was instrumental in the campaign to pass Proposition 69, the "DNA Fingerprinting Initiative." CVUC named Assemblyman Spitzer "Legislator of the Year" in 2005 (Spitzer 2005).

7. Lamont and Molnár (2002, 168) define "symbolic boundaries" as

conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and event time and space . . . Symbolic boundaries . . . separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity [and difference] and group membership . . . They are an essential medium through which people acquire status and monopolize resources.

Symbolic boundaries reinforce material divisions between groupings of individuals. By delineating clear-cut symbolic boundaries between convicts and victims (and the "citizenry" in general), CCPOA officials and their allies promote policies and practices that exclude prisoners and ex-convicts from the body politic (Wacquant 2001).

8. Garland (2001); Zimring, Hawkins, and Kamin (2001); and Page (2004) note that interest groups, politicians, and media pundits increasingly define penal policy in terms of a zero-sum game between prisoners and crime victims. The logic of zero-sum is so entrenched today that a relatively recent scholarly book on "victims and victims' rights" states on its cover: "Defendants vs. Victims' Rights" (Faherty 1999). Before even opening the book, readers get the impression that the rights of defendants and rights of victims are mutually exclusive. Powerful organizations like CCPOA and its crime victim allies reinforce the zero-sum mentality through their public pronouncements and policy proposals.

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