Under a Global Mask: Family Narratives and Local Memory in a Global Social Movement in Japan

Daishiro Nomiya
Sophia University, Japan

Abstract
The present paper examines motivational aspects of the global peace movement, using as a case the World Peace Now movement in Japan. This campaign, which has extensive international networks and synchronized actions with global “waves of protest”, is part of a global anti-war protest movement. Using data collected from interviews and a protest survey to gauge participation motives and attributed meanings to the participation, the paper argues that the campaign, despite its global outlook, is localized and historically idiosyncratic. Indifferent to the global, participants’ motives are drawn from personal experiences and family narratives, and localized collective memory of the past. The paper offers “surface interaction” as concept to understand current global social movements among movement organizations in different countries.

Keywords
global social movements, motives, narrative, collective memory

In recent years, Sociologists, Political Scientists, and Globalization scholars have discussed the nature of global activism. One enduring source of discussion in this regard relates to the degree of coherence of recent global social movements. Just how coherent are global social movements, and how globally integrated are they?

The question looms large as skeptics question the extent of global-ness with increasing regularity. Observers find ideologically discrete possibilities in the future orientation of global social movements. This is true not

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only of their ideological differences and inconsistencies, but also in their approach to conciliatory politics and in strategies.²

Despite such skepticism, many studies continue to emphasize the relevance of the global nature of social movements. As in the case of Zapatista struggle,³ many observe growing global connections across movement organizations residing in different parts of the world and increasing cross-national transmission of their messages. In fact, scholarly characterizations of global social movements remain diverse, so diverse as to have some researchers wonder whether today’s global movements are “a confluence of movements,” or “a collection of separate movements.”⁴

The existing literature on the integration and coherence of global social movements focuses on the structural factors that sustain global activism. Current research increasingly focuses on network building and the technologies that mediate movement organizations and collectivities. As a result, discussions on transnational communication across movement bodies and the emergence of overarching transnational civil organizations have proliferated.⁵ In contrast with the proliferation of a body of literature on the global structural merger of movements, comparatively little research investigates psychological and motivational aspects of global social movements. Certainly, there has been research to investigate ideology and thoughts of particular activist leaders of global movements and diffusion mechanisms of ideas.⁶ However, only a few research efforts have been made to date to investigate the global mentality of general participants constituting the majority of a global social action. Any effort to go beyond the realm of the particular individual becomes a challenge. An assessment of the mental dispositions of general participants in a global movement will have to embrace personal accounts and the movement sources from which the individuals are drawing. Personal accounts to highlight the meaning attribution of their action; Sources, even to a limited extent, to reconcile with existing categories of dispositions.

To cope with this difficulty, this paper uses multiple datasets that cover both individual and collective-level data, and attempts to grasp the moti-

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⁵) See, for instance della Porta et al. 2006; Diani and McAdam 2003; Moghadam 2000; Rucht 1999; Smith 1997.
⁶) For instance, McAdam and Rucht 1993; McDonald 2006; Olesen 2005.