

**UCLA**

**Theory and Research in Comparative Social Analysis**

**Title**

Embedded on the left: Aggressive media strategies and their organizational impact on the Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8m18r30r>

**Author**

Jamison, Angela

**Publication Date**

2005-01-20

*Embedded on the left:*  
**Aggressive media strategies and their organizational impact  
on the Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride**

Angela Jamison

DRAFT PRESENTED FEBRUARY, 2005, TO THE UCLA 237 WORKSHOP.  
DO NOT QUOTE OR CITE WITHOUT PERMISSION.

***Q: What do you think will be the effect of this Freedom Ride?***

***A: That will depend on what all of you do when you get home. Maybe you will come together and build a movement, or maybe this is all just a media stunt.***

*New York Times* Labor Reporter Steven Greenhouse taking activists' questions on a bus in New Mexico<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

During late summer, 2003, a Los Angeles union organizer named Luís convened a series of “mandatory media trainings” for the activists of the Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride. Crowded around formica-topped tables in an upper room of a former union headquarters on MacArthur Park, the grassroots organization members, workers and students—many still wearing maid, waitstaff or postal uniforms or carrying schoolbooks—translated the alternately Spanish and English instructions for each other, into English, Spanish and sometimes Mandarin. Standing at a whiteboard, Luís drilled the participants-in-training on the campaign’s four official talking points: family reunification, a path to citizenship, enforcement of the legal right to organize, and civil rights for all immigrants. Stressing the effectiveness of *strict* adherence to the talking points in interaction with journalists who would accompany the campaign, Luís made the same joke to each new group:

This method of talking to media is the same one, [trainers at the Washington workshop] told me, that *President Bush* and his press secretary use when they talk to the media. The only difference between us and them is: we’re not going to use it to *lie*.

At the end of September, 140 trained activists boarded three tour busses outside the headquarters of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. The scene was chaos: staff distributing identification tags printed with head shots and a paragraph-long invocation of each bearer’s constitutional right to remain silent, students faltering under the weight of luggage en route to the bus cargo bays, children kissing their parents goodbye. With the *LA Times* heralding their departure on its front page, the buses set out for Washington on two easterly routes with journalists from *National Public Radio*, the *New York Times*, *Common Cause*, *Pacifica*, and the *LA Weekly*. After 10 days of campaigning on the road, they would converge on Congress along with 750 more from nine other US cities. Along with presidential-style

---

<sup>1</sup> Paraphrase and story of activist-journalist role-reversal related by Carolina Bank-Muñoz.

talking points and “embedded reporters”—a campaign strategy re-introduced to US audiences with the siege of Baghdad six months before—the Ride featured a Public Relations specialist.

A cornerstone of HERE’s (the Hotel employees and Restaurant Employees Union—now UNITE-HERE) recent but long-term immigrant rights initiative and a dramatic example of organized labor’s efforts to foster broad coalitions with grassroots organizations<sup>2</sup>, this Freedom Ride brought together dozens of unions and other organizations, with organizational support from HERE. Using a Civil Rights theme common to labor’s efforts to remake itself since John J. Sweeny’s October 1995 election to the AFL-CIO presidency (Milkman 1998), organizers explicitly framed the “Freedom Ride” to link immigrant workers’ struggles to the Civil Rights legacy of mobilization against racial discrimination and eventual policy change.

For orchestrators, marches, rallies and Congressional lobbying of their campaign were meant *both* to bring publicity to immigration issues *and* to be an exercise in coalition-building across organizations characterized by varied missions and constituencies. Ideally, this coalition would make for a broad pro-immigrant lobby in eventual, national-level negotiations of immigration policy. To achieve the first of the two goals by controlling the messages, images and volume of news coverage, organizers implemented a media strategy. At the same time, they sought to foster cohesion among participants on the Ride, because they saw interpersonal unity as the basis for ongoing coalitions of the organizations riders “represented.”

The embedded reporters, talking points and Public Relations specialist were new strategic elements in both activists’ and organizers’ experiences. Taking for granted that increasing dynamicity and intensity of contemporary news media significantly impact social movements’ political and strategic calculus (Tarrow 1994), and following some social movements scholars contention that SMOs (social movement organizations) implement new strategies only *at some organizational cost* (Kruse 2001), this paper examines the Freedom Ride’s media strategy and how it fit—or did not—into the total strategy of this elaborately-planned and costly campaign. Did the movement “succeed” on its own terms?

I seek to answer this practical question in the light of social movements literature’s insights on organizational dynamics, interactions with mass media and matters of movement

---

<sup>2</sup> For 15 years, researchers and strategists (Moody 1990, Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004, Clawson 2003) have advocated unions’ partnering with grassroots organizations to foment a broad labor social movement. According to strategists (Bronfenbrenner and Juravich 1998, Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004), and in more optimistic analyses (Moody 1990, Milkman and Wong 2001, Clawson 2003), grassroots activists can bring to union campaigns not just numbers but increased dynamism, militancy and public support. In keeping with this strategy, some (e.g. Sharpe 2003) also call for increased focus on internal organizational equality (less reliance on hierarchy, more “bottom up” participation from activists).

strategy. In order to do this, I work from organizers' *own* definitions of movement success, which I set out in the third section of the paper. Organizers sought both to *foster* what they called "solidarity" among participants, and also to *portray* "solidarity" to journalists; and they understood these as separate objectives. I operationalize empirical standards for these two solidarities and, in the fourth section, apply them to the body of my ethnographic data. On the Ride, what did staff do in attempts to foster solidarity? How did staff tactics for using media contribute to, or inhibit, solidarity among participants? When did riders simply disregard staff directives and enact tactics of their own in dealing with mass media? In these cases, were the effects of riders' actions solidary? By answering these specific questions I seek a more general understanding of the conditions under which different movement strategies—*specific methods* in which organizers sought to 1) foster and 2) portray solidarity—worked according to plan, and the conditions under which they failed.

I find that the dynamics of staff/participant/journalist interactions were complex. Staff used a sophisticated strategy for managing participant/journalist interactions to achieve their goal of high-volume positive coverage, but this strategy conflicted with their goal of deepening their political coalition at the level of participants. Gathering media attention did bring dynamism and a sense of empowerment to staff and riders alike. And yet, riders evolved media strategies of their own which led not to the interpersonal unity organizers wanted, but rather to competition, acrimony and factionalization. In striving to present to mass media an image of impassioned unity around a common cause, organizers of the ride unintentionally helped foster profound disunity among riders: as riders interacted with journalists—who we may assume also had agendas of their own—they increasingly sought to individuate themselves as objects of attention as they competed for the spotlight. Ultimately they formed sub-groups vis-à-vis campaign staff, whose emphasis on portraying solidarity *to journalists* helped undermine the interpersonal solidarity they hoped would emerge among riders.

### **THE INTERNAL IMPACTS OF SMO STRATEGIES**

The Freedom Ride put to the test two recent prescriptions for innovation in labor activism: for union-community coalitions and enfranchised "bottom up" participation. But the SMO's freshest innovation was its aggressive use of mass media strategy of "embedding"<sup>3</sup> reporters with activists, training participants in a sophisticated public relations protocol based on White House-style "talking points," and using a Public Relations specialist to market the dramatic, high-risk event they manufactured. Though many students of "social movement

---

unionism” mention skillful use of mass media as crucial to future campaign successes (Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004, Milkman 1998, Milkman and Wong 2001, Sherman and Voss 2000), thus far specific dynamics of “skillful” use, or how it may feed back into SMO activism, have not been closely examined.

The elements of the media strategy may have been showcased and shown to be successful by presidential administration of the day, but embedded reporters, using talking points and Public Relations event-management was new to most of the Ride’s participants and planners, who were already well-seasoned activists by virtue of their membership in grassroots or student organizations or unions.<sup>4</sup> Though the campaign was planned over the two years preceding September, 2003, activists did not have experience integrating their time-honored protest tactics—marches, rallies, chanting, etc.—with the new tactics made necessary by the structural environment of political action.

Some students of social movement organizations have found that new tactics can lead to fragmentation of overall movement goals and organizational factionalization (Balser 1997, Kruse 2001). Organizational action becomes divided when different factions focus on differing—if not necessarily contrary—strategies (Balser 1997). In the broader literature on conflict within SMO’s, such factionalism is often a harbinger for organizational failure (Balser 1997; Morrill, Zald and Rao 2003; Gamson 1975).

Meanwhile a well-developed communications literature examines ways media frame and theme news content—both in the tradition of content analysis (Kruse 2001, Glynn et. al. 1999) and that of media effects research (Ansolabehere et al. 1993; Druckman n.d; Hallin 1994; Manheim and Albritton 1984). But the purpose of this paper is to analyze *internal* campaign dynamics of interaction with journalists, which is so far mostly unresearched in literature on social movements and SMOs (Balser 1997) as well as the large literature on union revitalization. An exception is Gitlin (1980), who analyzes media content on Students for a Democratic Society, but also considers effects of media coverage on movement participants themselves.<sup>5</sup> Second, some researchers have shown that movements may—as did Freedom Ride organizers—create newsworthy events to gain media access by catering to journalist practices (Gitlin 1980, Goldenberg 1975, Kruse 2001)—especially by staging “outrageous” events of a bizarre or violent nature (Tarrow 1998).

---

<sup>4</sup> In fact, HERE organizers asked that organizations send only their most dedicated, passionate and experienced social movements veterans to participate on the Ride.

<sup>5</sup> In Gitlin’s study, media focus on individual movement “leaders” caused alienation between these figures and others in the movement.

These professional practices of journalists include a tendency to rely on official, bureaucratic sources (Fishman 1973, Tuchman 1978) or at least those which require no extra “enterprise” to locate (Sigal 1973), commercial incentives to provide shocking or dramatic content (Schudson 2002), and a preference for “fresh” (Epstein 1973, Tuchman 1978) or, increasingly, “present tense” (Timberg 2002, Clayman 2004) events. We shall see how movement planners sought to control, and how participants interacted with, journalists who we may assume were acting on just these principles.

### METHODOLOGY<sup>6</sup>

During the Ride, I volunteered as an educational facilitator or “popular educator” for one of the three Los Angeles buses. This meant that I led workshops while we traveled—for example, a practice session on lobbying members of Congress, a critical discussion of migration to the US, and a participant-led historical discussion of cyclical conflicts over immigrant workers’ rights. These workshops spurred bus-wide conversations—for example about unionization fights at work, meeting extremely exploited chili-harvesters in El Paso, or the Appalachian white supremacists who threatened us with violence—I was often called on to interpret over the bus microphone for the approximately ten bus riders who were monolingual English speakers and the approximately fifteen who strongly preferred Spanish. Although I was not designated as one of the “bus leaders” and thus issued few directions on how riders should comport themselves, I was allowed access to the leaders’ protected itinerary, and thus announced “la agenda” for each stop along the route and ascertained upcoming stop information for riders who asked.

The data in this paper illustrate the experience of *one of the eighteen* IWFR bus routes, mostly restricted to *one of the two* buses on that route.<sup>7</sup> The Los Angeles course was broadly understood by staff and participants to be the most perilous, since for about 800 miles it passed within 200 miles of the US-Mexico border. This placed passengers within the jurisdiction of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Some of this research was supported by the UCLA Graduate Division’s Summer Research Mentorship Program, and some through summer employment at the UCLA Center for Labor Education and Research. During the summer employment, I helped design the workshop curriculum which other “popular educators” and I used on each bus. A QGE award from the UCLA Graduate division supported a related component of this research, focused on union-grassroots collaboration for “social movement unionism.”

<sup>7</sup> The third Los Angeles bus bisected the United States, carrying those who for their own reasons did not wish to approach the US-Mexico border.

<sup>8</sup> The Bush administration absorbed the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) into its Department of Homeland Security after 9/11/2001, renaming as “ICE” the agency better known to riders as *la migra*.

My understanding of the pre-history of the Ride and the planners' goals is also informed by extensive participant observation in Ride planning during summer 2003. This included several dozen hours on the Los Angeles IWFR steering committee as well as work on a sub-committee. I attended plenary meetings at Los Angeles' County Federation of Labor and a two-day session in Oakland, religious and political kick-off events, and three rider orientation sessions. I also participated in seven conference calls with IWFR planners and exchanged streams of e-mail with dozens of volunteers and paid staff who charted the logistical, educational and legal course of the Ride. This work, and my ongoing participation in political, social and ex-post fund-raising activities, builds the context for the present paper.

Most of the data in the present paper were gathered during the campaign itself, *en route* from Los Angeles to Washington, DC. I took fieldnotes in a notebook and on tape for nine days of near-continuous participant observation. These notes are my principal source material. They reflect the high level of access I was able to gain in various sub-circles of riders and staff, as well as the frequent intensity and shared qualities of experiences in which I too participated. In this text all staff, journalists and riders are pseudonymous, but some organizational affiliations are preserved to highlight the diversity in participants' backgrounds. The only true names given are those of public figures (e.g., Maria Elena Durazo).

I conducted in-depth interviews of 20-60 minutes with seventeen riders. We spoke on the bus, during meal stops, or while marching for rallies. I taped all but two of these interviews. Seven were conducted in Spanish, ten in English. Of the population of forty-two continuous riders on the bus, my selection of interview subjects was randomized only by the unrelenting chaos of strings of public events, rabble-rousing, seat-switching, mingling with occasional riders<sup>9</sup> and journalists, bathroom and gas stops, and bus-wide conversations mediated by microphone and air horn in two languages.<sup>10</sup> I directly incorporate little of the interviews here, but they do inform my interpretations of events and understandings of subjects themselves.

---

<sup>9</sup> Civil Rights and labor luminaries like Rev. James Lawson, Dolores Huerta, Antonio Villaraigosa and Sen. John Lewis rode along for short periods.

<sup>10</sup> The interviewees include: two students from cultural organizations, nine workers (eight union, one non-union), six workers from community organizations; ten Latinos or Latinas, two African-Americans, four Whites, one Filipina (including *White*, these are the designations Riders themselves used); four monolingual English speakers, seven who said they could operate in both English and Spanish, six who said they had some difficulty with English and strongly preferred Spanish; nine women, eight men; two confirmed US citizens, three citizens or permanent residents who shared that they once were undocumented (erased from the tapes and notes), two who volunteered to me that they were undocumented (erased), and ten who did not volunteer their legal status during the interview. On the advice of the National Lawyers Guild attorney traveling with us, I neither asked about nor mentally kept track of the immigration status of riders on the bus. I conducted three more interviews after the Ride with administrators integrally involved in early planning.



Spanish and English were used in roughly equal measures on the Ride, often as Spanglish. Any time someone spoke in a bus-wide conversation, she would either loosely interpret herself in the second language or ask a functionally-bilingual person to do so. I have translated some fieldnotes, quotations and interviews from Spanish and Spanglish for use in this paper, but in some cases where a person speaking English interjected Spanish words for emphasis, I leave their language untranslated.

### **PLANNERS' OBJECTIVES AND SOLIDARITY**

Solidarity, multiply understood, was campaign planners' criterion of success. During summer 2003 planning sessions, organizers most commonly described campaign goals as "solidarity-building" and "coalition-building," routinely rejecting goals of *immediate* policy change. In committee meetings, participants regularly spoke out in exhortation of the Ride's "solidarity effort" or "example of solidarity."<sup>11</sup> In this context, was "solidarity" any more than a word freighted with associations of amorphous unity and class struggle—a loosely ideological excuse for lack of focus? I now turn to analysis of campaign planners' ideas, showing them to be specific, detailed and unique. It is planners' *basic definitions* of solidarity which I then apply to my data aided by a sociological delineation of *empirical standards*.

In an interview, Maria Elena Durazo, President of HERE Local 11 in Los Angeles and "Chair" of the 501©3 organization (the "IWFR") which executed the Freedom Ride, described the Ride's goal as "nationally to wake up the consciousness [of a need for immigration reform] and act on that consciousness." Asked about the agenda of IWFR organizers, she gave specific examples of solidarity-building:

We did it to work together on immigration, which had never been done before.... We wanted to strengthen the labor movement. We also wanted new opportunities to build relationships with the usual allies [grassroots organizations]...on immigration. We knew that there weren't enough experiences we could point to that built trust.... We needed to build trust so that whatever concerned us could honestly and sincerely come out into the open with positive discussion.... For example, the issue of guest workers is a great concern to the labor movement, and sometimes of less concern to community based groups.

In this articulation, the thrust of the Ride was to "build relationships" and deepen coalitions through experiences of mutual trust. As I elaborate below, organizers also saw such experiences as containing a necessarily "bottom-up" or spontaneous dynamic. In describing *to*

---

<sup>11</sup> The paper does not ask whether solidarity-building is a useful goal for the campaign, but only breaks down what the concept does and does not include, and where solidarity-as-operationalized does and does not emerge.

*participants* the goals of the Ride, Durazo emphasized other aspects of solidarity: displayed, symbolic ones following from riders' recognition of mutual responsibility.

We have to believe in [the Ride] in our soul.... *Anything* we do could come out on TV or radio and the smallest possible thing could ruin it. So we have a *huge responsibility to portray unity!* We all are taking risks and have a responsibility to back each other up.... [On the last day of the campaign] we won't have a piece of legislation but we'll have *made an impression!*

This second species of unity is important specifically because of the continuous presence of journalists—those attuned even to “the smallest possible thing.” Solidarity here is not a quality which grows out of trust-building experiences; rather it is a thing to be “portrayed.” The first sense of solidarity refers to participants' interactions with each other; the second to what they display to journalists. Hereafter I distinguish the two as *interpersonal solidarity* and *portrayed solidarity*, respectively.

Now that it is clear what organizers wanted, where do we look amid empirical data to determine whether they got it? The sociological lexicon, where the word solidarity is well rooted<sup>12</sup>, provides much confusion with respect to conceptual demarcation and empirical standards. Solidarity, which always has something to do with problems of social order and group constitution, can be a variable (dependent or independent), a state of mind or emotions (Collins 1981), common emotional orientation toward an objectified group (Fararo and Doreian 1998), a symbolic representation (Gamson, Fireman and Rytina 1982) or affect (Heise 1998, Collins and Hanneman 1998), a property of social action<sup>13</sup> or of social structure<sup>14</sup>. Long after Durkheim's (1956 [1893]) complex discussion of the necessary conditions for mechanical and organic solidarities (e.g. similarity of members or functional social differentiation), which constitute the order of social wholes; and following from Marx's *solidarity as class consciousness* which dialectically both emerges from and enables active class conflict, generations of labor and class historians have understood solidarity as class consciousness, comprising dual elements of consciousness and collective action (Hanagan 1988, Tilly 1988, Fantasia 1995). Also conceptualizing *common interests* as a basis for solidarity, Hechter (1983, 1987a, 1987b) generated a surge of attention to the concept in a deductive framework. Whereas the much-discussed rational choice “solidarity problem” belongs to analysts, my own

---

<sup>12</sup> A search of the Sociological Abstracts database yields 3,915 article abstracts containing the term. (A small portion of these refers to the eponymous Polish social movement.)

<sup>13</sup> E.g., acts of goods-distribution (Hechter 1987) or emergent militancy in collective action (Fantasia 1988).

<sup>14</sup> Social structural accounts range from discussions of class constitution to network theories which take solidarity as expressed in networks with certain kinds of ties (Breiger and Roberts 1998, Chai and Hechter 1998).

conceptualization starts from campaign planners and is dedicated to the lived experiences, contingent rationalities and subjective choice-situations of actors.

These recent structural, deductive conceptions of solidarity take groups as given. Yet analysts' attribution of boundedness to an object of study can undercut analysis when individuals' postures toward a "group" are exactly what the analyst takes as problematic. In contrast, Fantasia (1988), in defining solidarity as an *emergent* property of *action* rather than a *structural* property of *constitution*, makes a different kind of purchase on solidarity in ethnographic data, where in *some* episodes, *some* people manifest solidarity. My operationalization of solidarity benefits from Fantasia's focus on strips of interaction. What I incorporate is not his metaphysic (i.e., that solidary evidences class consciousness), but his evidentiary criterion. Rather than stipulating a solidarity threshold for a given group or measuring individuals' "attitudes" in surveys or interviews, he argues that a micro level of analysis of interaction on the ground is necessary to identify where, when and how solidarity emerges in experience.

Informed by planners' understandings of solidarity and by sociologists, to what should I attune to find it in ethnographic data? Individuals make real and make known their solidarity through actions (including speech) that instantiate some kind of *union of interests, purposes or sympathies*.<sup>15</sup> So, solidary actions can be more or less strategic, purposive or affective qualities: they need not all look alike. But if interactions are scripted or directed by staff, I do not take them as evidence of *interpersonal solidarity* because as such they could just as easily evidence riders' compliance, even passivity. To paraphrase Durazo, planners were looking for solidarity-building through a *common, positive, sincere, trust-building, relationship-building experience: one to which they could point later as evidence of mutuality of participants' concerns*.

At the same time, organizers emphasized participants' *responsibility to portray unity* to mass media. For this second version of solidarity, evidentiary criteria can be simpler. Like the relational, experienced solidarity above, I also identify portrayed solidarity in riders' actions, working from Fantasia's position that solidarity is a characteristic of interaction identifiable at the micro level. But portrayed solidarity is also more specific, since it refers not broadly to riders' interactions with each other but to those in which some journalist was involved.

---

<sup>15</sup> Within these strictures, the Merriam-Webster definition of solidarity as *a union of interests, purposes or sympathies* is useful, encompassing different strategic, purposive and affective expressions of solidarity.

So what does portrayed solidarity look like? Planners conceptualized this second solidarity in a relatively simple way.<sup>16</sup> Returning to Durazo, we see a stress on the idea that even a small mistake could “ruin it,” and that aside from any frustration or discomfort riders might experience, they had a “huge responsibility to portray unity.” According to orchestrators’ hopes, riders would participate enthusiastically *together* in marches and rallies before the cameras, would articulate to reporters *common cause* through the four talking points, and would not show division or conflict in interactions with journalists.

Freedom Ride organizers did focus on a class which can be enumerated *in toto*: the approximately eighty riders on the two border-route busses. So, it would be simple to stipulate an empirical threshold of interpersonal connectivity to distinguish when “the group” was “in solidarity” and when “it” was not—despite being always, so to speak, in the same boat. But what was important about solidarity to Ride organizers was not that *all* participants gel for *all* time, but the momentary half-measures of solidarity. Solidarity in this context is contingent and specific: I look for *which* participants evidenced solidarity, *when*, *where*, and *how*. To contrast with this non-bounded solidarity, I see a “faction” not as partial solidarity within a given group, but as collectivities of two or more, conflictually forged *against* other people (riders or staff) on the campaign.

My distinction between interpersonal and portrayed solidarities attends to the strategies employed by staff, whose dual goals were that riders “soulfully experience” and “portray” unity. The distinction is not meant to map onto dichotomies such as instrumental/affective, subjective/objective, formal/substantive or authentic/contrived.<sup>17</sup> The first simply refers to relationship-building between campaign participants, the second to their purported interactions with journalists.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Organizers’ Goals: Fostering and Portraying Solidarity

Staff hoped riders would participate robustly in the campaign, both forging experiences they could “point to later as an example” of meaningful commonality, and “portraying unity” to journalists. This first of three sections elaborates how staff worked to 1) *enable interpersonal*

---

<sup>16</sup> While some have attempted to write dramaturgical theories of media and social movements (Benford and Hunt 1992, Manning 1996), and Gould (1999) has theorized *why* groups might want to project solidarity to other groups, these arguments do not aid my relatively simple operationalization of portrayed solidarity.

<sup>17</sup> I have no indication that staff or participants understood projected solidarity as inauthentic. As one rider said in an interview after I pressed him on this subject: “I think it’s... very truthful when we step off a bus and we’re chanting. And the fact that we have to get together inside the bus and get over the fact that we didn’t get into our suites on time last night and the fact that, you know, I got a bumpy mattress, you got a nice one, that doesn’t make the performance of our movement for well, a consuming public, any less truthful... any less real.”

*solidarity* and 2) *mandate portrayed solidarity*, showing they did *not* see solidary rider interactions as prerequisite to portrayed solidarity-for-journalists.

### ***Planning for the Ride***

Planners tried to structure the space on campaign buses so that solidarity among riders could emerge, but they stressed it could not be forced. Consistent with the robust participatory model staff sought to actualize, interpersonal solidarity would ultimately have to be participant led, or “bottom-up.” On a “popular education” committee designated to plan bus activities,<sup>18</sup> members compiled education modules and strategized how to foster interpersonal solidarity though 1) guiding activities that would lead to riders’ “bonding” and “getting to know each other fast” and 2) preempting rider conflicts.

The principle “solidarity-building” element was an immigration module which requested that participants share their or ancestors’ stories of migration to the US.<sup>19</sup> Planners reasoned this would help riders build mutual sympathies, in part because self-disclosing stories could build trust and encourage solidary relationships. When I facilitated this module on the Ride and participants demanded we spend several extra hours sharing personal histories, other staff enthused at the unscripted, “bottom-up” nature of that demand. “I thought that it showed a lot of commitment,” one commented. “They’re really making it theirs; it’s their agenda now,” said another.

In a two-day Oakland training session for the union and grassroots organizers and non-profit organization workers designated as “popular education” staff, two hours were spent anticipating barriers to interpersonal solidarity “on the bus.” Staff raised two concerns: environmental limitations and rider conflicts. They said a bus could “inhibit solidarity” because seat backs were high, cutting people off from each others’ voices, eye contact and physical interaction. Moreover, riders would face the same direction, possibly “just staring out the window all day.” Staff feared that during the dozens of campaign hours spent in transit, participants would “just be in their own worlds.” To re-structure the space as one where interpersonal connections could form, educators planned to pass a microphone among riders in bus-wide conversations, ask them to switch seats to get to know different seat-mates, and chant and sing songs collectively.

---

<sup>18</sup> Most topics selected for rider education were not explicitly designated “solidarity building” but elaborated the US history of Civil Rights struggle, strategies for lobbying Congress, and protocols for job safety. “We have hundreds of captive hours with these people on the way to DC,” Ray, the IWFR popular education coordinator, said in a committee conference call. “We may as well make it useful!”

<sup>19</sup> Planners—myself included—adapted the immigration module from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). It centered on a guided critical discussion of US immigration history conceptualized as a cycle of border openings and closings driven by the demands of US corporations for cheap labor.

Planners anticipated that riders of different organizational backgrounds, races, ethnicities, genders or religions might conflict, and that lack of sleep, chaos, irregular meals, or missing one's family might spark squabbles. (It was *not* suggested that the presence of journalists, TV cameras and documentarians on the campaign could be another factor.) In the second hour of their session on encouraging rider solidarity, they acted out how conflicts might arise, and best practices for quelling them.

Organizers saw encouraging interpersonal solidarity to arise through interaction as secondary to media-related goals. This was illustrated when the two agendas came into conflict on day six of the Ride. Three documentary filmmakers embedded with the campaign called the Washington office of the IWFR, to say that group conversations on the buses were preventing them from filming rider cameos. Their contact happened to be Ray, the HERE researcher coordinating—among other things—popular education. He immediately called Gabriela, lead staff for the route. The rumor then circulated among staff that Ray was “freaking out” because there was too much rider conversation and education, and too little filmmaking. Gabriela told staff to pause bus-wide conversation; thus was cancelled the discussion one rider had hoped to initiate about workplace organizing. All in all, from the point of view of Ride planners and staff, fostering interpersonal solidarity from the “bottom up” among participants was a crucial goal for which they developed concrete strategies from the beginning; yet when this goal came into conflict with getting the riders into the media—where they were trained to portray solidarity—ultimately the latter won out.

### ***Explaining Solidarity to Riders***

For planners, making the campaign media-intensive—through embedding journalists on buses, using talking points and relying on a Public Relations specialist for ultimate questions of media strategy—was integral to success on the public stage. The specialist—a former journalist named Lizette who was well connected to the city's Latino media—traveled the border route from Los Angeles to Washington and focused especially on publicizing what promised to be the most dramatic event of the entire Ride, a planned confrontation with ICE.

In advance of the campaign, riders were exhorted in occasional planning meetings and phone calls from an official “media trainer” to attend “mandatory media training.” This is where Luís, one of the principal staff for the US-Mexico border route, taught them about talking points and other strategies for interacting with journalists.

After rehearsing the talking points, Luís told riders to think of a part of their lives, “a story,” that illustrated one or more of them. Riders were told to share their stories clearly and

personally, always in connection with talking points. They were told to talk past journalists who sought to “distract from [their] own message,” and if journalists became insistent, to respond with equal insistence like this (as Lizette would reiterate in a training review): “I am a *Freedom Rider!* I chose to come on this ride for such and such reasons; I represent my organization which is so and so, and *this is my story!*” Riders were also instructed—in the mandatory training and repeatedly during the Ride—not to respond to journalists’ questions about documentation status, and never to volunteer such information to anyone from the media.

Before the campaign began, planners’ strategy was to control the media *message* by controlling the purported *messengers*, “mandat[ing]” they portray images of campaign solidarity. A great deal of effort was spent in media training—*much* more effort than was spent in organizing riders in any other way before the campaign. As summarized in this excerpt from my fieldnotes (9/21/03), the consistent message dispensed in media trainings and other preliminary rider meetings was:

First, every rider “represents” an organization—union, student, non-profit, grassroots—*as well as* all immigrants who “don’t have strength to come out of the shadows” of undocumented status or have “no opportunity to fight this battle.” But second, we are here together *as a group*. Third, *as a group* the best way we can represent our organizations and all immigrants is to express ourselves outwardly with the four talking points.

Staff strategy was to structure and control riders’ interactions with journalists—keeping their messages personalized and focused with the talking points. Under conditions in which riders were *trained* for interaction with journalists and mandated or obligated to obey, they hoped portrayed solidarity would emerge. But in addition, staff sought to combine this portrayed solidarity with interpersonal feeling and “energy”—elements of *interpersonal solidarity*—they wanted to enable.

Pairing portrayed and interpersonal solidarities, Luís opened a “mandatory meeting of all Freedom Riders” four days before departure by asking for “testimonies” from the previous weekend’s kick-off parade. Before calling on people, he said that the group especially wanted to hear from people who had seen the “great coverage” on Univisión. Recapping the conversation after five minutes of scattered comments about the parade’s hours-long delay, hot weather and enthusiastic, large crowd, Luís said:

So the *big picture* was we got a lot of support. It was in the media, and everyone [riders, their friends, families and co-workers] was happy about it. And there was a long wait at first and we got tired but people came back more energized than they went out.

Luís’ “big picture” was literally the picture that was seen on Univisión as well as the fact that marchers *had become* “energized.”<sup>20</sup> Marches and rallies were a principle arena in which planners hoped solidarity—both portrayed and interpersonal—would come about: they planned 26 of them for the first 12 days of the Ride. Continuing his remarks and urging riders to turn out for another pre-Ride rally, Luís said:

In this thing we’re representing LA, immigrants, everybody that cares about civil rights. So we *have* to be out there tomorrow at City Council because when we accepted as riders we made the commitment to be where we need to be.

Summarizing his and others’ reflections on the previous rally, Luís also drew on interpersonal and organizational obligations to try to ensure a high turnout—in another portrayal of solidarity—at the next day’s rally.

Later in the same meeting, as excerpted above, Durazo also stressed riders’ obligations to portray solidarity, bringing this together with interpersonally solidary “belie[f] in our soul.”

We have to believe in this in our soul. It is going to be difficult. We gotta live with each other and travel for 13 days together with discipline and patience. *Anything* we do could come out on TV or radio and the smallest possible thing could ruin it. The press is just *looking for juicy controversy!* They want to see what’s *wrong!* So we have a *huge responsibility to portray unity.* We all are taking risks and have a *responsibility* to back each other up.... When you put a lot out, you’ll *get* a lot out. On October fifth [the last day of the campaign] we won’t have a piece of legislation but we’ll have *made an impression!*

Durazo’s concern was both with the journalists riders would meet on the road, and those embedded with the campaign itself. She stressed the otherness of journalists and their desire to find controversy, not “unity,” among riders. But she also spoke of riders’ interactions just with each other, and the importance of soulful belief in the campaign—of riders’ dedication to the Ride in the transcendent core of their beings. Her exhortation to “put a lot out” echoes Luís’ lauding of high energy and calls for “a lot” of activity in support of the campaign. But neither Durazo nor Luís told riders to portray what they were actually feeling—indeed, organizers never gave that instruction. The “obligation” to “portray unity” and the talking points method were mandates for interacting with journalists, not each other. When it came to training activists, interpersonal solidarity was not a resource from which portrayed solidarity would be drawn: portraying solidarity was a task instituted forcefully from the start.

---

<sup>20</sup> In this strip of data, staff again speak about riders going through changes which engage or energize them, not about them being in a static or mandated state of interpersonal solidarity.



Recruiting again for the next day's rally, Gabriela closed the meeting excerpted above by reiterating the obligations of representative status: "Everybody is part of an organization and we need you out there representing them on the 20<sup>th</sup>!"

In Luis', Gabriela's and Durazo's words above, riders' "representative" status *obligated them to portray* unity to media. Staff articulated this link of representation and obligation to riders hundreds of times. But the idea of "representation" also came into staff discussions of interpersonal solidarities, as when organizers exhorted riders to be impassioned, "energized," and "live together with patience" as a result of their deep dedication to carrying their cause on behalf of others.

The fieldnotes and quoted excerpts from this particular meeting are consistent with all the Los Angeles planning meetings. They encapsulate staff's pre-planned ways of 1) training riders in a media strategy to portray unity of might and purpose and 2) attending somewhat to the purported importance of interacting with each other in solidarity. The solidarity organizers sought to portray to journalists was specific—not just a collection of people but an enthusiastic coalition in action. Attendance at rallies, expressive energy: these were aspects of solidarity-as-portrayed which from the "top-down" perspective of staff were necessary for campaign success, especially insofar as they would be projected via mass media. Staff exhorted portrayed solidarity by stressing "responsibility," "obligation" and riders' roles as representatives of their organizations and immigrants in general. But staff concerns around rider solidarity were not entirely cosmetic or directed toward public imagery. Emphasis on the needs for "patience," "discipline" and "soul" did attend to staff hopes that riders would get along together, generating "energy" and manifesting "dedication" to the Ride.

I had expected to find staff approaching media-portrayed solidarity as a resource to be drawn from riders' "bottom-up," interpersonal solidarities,<sup>21</sup> but this was not the case. Organizers did set environmental conditions in which they hoped riders would get to know and identify with one another, but never was this situated as a formula or prerequisite for media success. Rather, staff inoculated riders to the discomfort and difficulty the campaign would bring, placing the onus for media success in their hands by emphasizing their "responsibility to portray unity."

Thus when staff talked to riders about the media strategy of portrayed solidarity, they stressed obligations, constructing riders' role as "representative." But when exhorting interpersonal solidarity, they called for different elements in interaction: soul, patience,

---

<sup>21</sup> This would be consistent with resource-mobilization explanations in literature on social movements.

discipline—perhaps the basic components of the generalized mutual sympathies and “getting to know each other fast” that they discussed in staff-only sessions. In those scenarios, staff stressed that interpersonal solidarity could not be imposed: while they intensively trained and mandated that riders portray solidarity, they could only structure an environment for the “bottom-up” “bonding” of interpersonal solidarity and hope it would emerge.

### **On the Ground: What Riders Did vis-à-vis Staff**

Relative to the conditions that would arise when the campaign became media-intensive, the first three days were uneventful in interactions of staff, journalists and riders. When campaign activity was not intense and media presence not salient to riders, and before riders had developed media strategies of their own, participants followed staff mandates in interacting with journalists. At the same time, staff efforts to encourage interpersonal solidarity to emerge among participants met with some complications because many riders resisted staff control. Dramatic, high-risk confrontation with law enforcement officers, and civil disobedience by staff and riders, altered these conditions.

### ***Status-Quo***

From day one, staff led riders—according to plan—in daily recitals of the “four points.” Each morning, staff introduced themselves on the bus microphone and gave their roles as chant leader, popular educator, legal observer, etc. Since staff were the only people publicly differentiated from the rest, and since the corps of journalists out of Los Angeles was diverse in gender, age and race (thus there was no obvious journalist profile), it was sometimes unclear to riders who was a journalist and who was another rider. For example, when National Public Radio correspondent Mandalit del Barco arrived late to the send-off and had no place to park her car minutes before her bus departed, two riders dismissed her problem on the tacit assumption that she too was a rider: “She had the same information we did. She knew she was supposed to be here at six!”

As the bus traveled across California and Arizona, documentarians were constantly at work in ways no one else noticed. For example, on the way into Palm Springs, a filmmaker named Lily anchored a camera between two seat-backs and quietly conducted a cameo interview with a rider named Mayra, ignored by everyone else on the bus. Using talking points, Mayra briefly, undramatically answered questions:

**Lily:** What are you feeling?

**Mayra:** Sometimes tears come out of me (*me salen lágrimas*).

**Lily:** Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

**Mayra:** That’s all. I am going to miss my children. We’re on this campaign to fight for all families to be unified.

Outside Phoenix, another responded to a reporter's question of *why* she joined the Ride by pulling from her pocket a wrinkled scrap of paper and reading from it the four talking points.

As staff worked on “solidarity-building” and media strategy during the first three days, a discrepancy between union members’ and other riders’ dispositions towards “getting with the program” led to tension.<sup>22</sup> Those who chose seats at the front of the bus near staff were union members, while other riders sat at the middle or back. When 12 community activists from Tucson and Phoenix joined the Ride on day two, they were told to sit together on one of the two buses, and ended up behind the union members. In interactions at the back and middle of the bus some of these new riders and some from Los Angeles quickly generated resentment towards staff control or efforts to control riders and the bus environment. By day three, one Arizona participant had devised a cleverly obscene nickname for the bus chant leader and was circulating it among others even as those at the front of the bus—all union members—stayed more engaged with staff talk over the microphone from the front. At one point, a union member stood up and shunned those she said were “creating conflict back there.”

On Days two and three, staff focused training efforts on preparing riders to take part in a high-risk action plan devised by volunteer lawyers enlisted after the US-Mexico border route was set. Planners expected buses would be stopped by Immigration and Customs Enforcement along Arizona or Texas highways; and they were *certain* they would encounter ICE officers when they passed through the permanent immigration checkpoint at Sierra Blanca, in southwest Texas.<sup>23</sup> The action plan involved riders’ collectively asserting their rights to remain silent when any officer questioned them about their or another’s immigration status. As an act of defiance, and to ensure that riders all “stay with the program” if a tense situation should arise, staff planned that everyone would chant or sing traditional union or Civil Rights-era refrains.

The more instructions and training staff tried to impart in this vein and others, the more riders in the back and middle of the bus retaliated by whispering complaints, letting more riders

---

<sup>22</sup> This paper notes only this one way in which participation by riders who were union members differed from those who were not. This is because after the turning point in the campaign, I noted no differences in riders’ interpersonal or portrayed solidarities depending on their organizational background: it appeared the watershed event dissolved any difference in behaviors. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that in my interview data, subjects who are union members scarcely vary in how they describe motives for joining the campaign, expectations, and understandings of the risks involved. But for participants from other organizations, self-described motives, expectations and assessment of personal risk varied dramatically.

<sup>23</sup> As some staff told some riders during small conversations, the IWFR had sent press releases to the Department of Homeland Security and to the White House weeks in advance of the ride. The release informed officials that the campaign would be passing through ICE jurisdiction and included dates and specific details of the campaign. It described the Ride as a “peaceful campaign by immigrant workers and their allies,” and noted a campaign goal was “legalization,” signaling that undocumented people would be in the caravan. The release asked that the campaign be allowed to pass through ICE territory peacefully.

in on the obscene nickname, or looking out the window and ignoring staff entirely. On day three, as I explained to a participant that staff recognized all the riders as leaders themselves, but “came off a little strong at times” because they were trying to do a lot of coordination under stress, she signaled she understood my perspective by letting *me*, a staff member, in on the obscene nickname. “Do you know what we’re all calling her?” the woman asked. “I do *not* want to know,” I replied. She told me anyway.

In response to grumbling, rolled eyes and disregard from riders, staff urged riders to “bind together,” recall their “obligations,” and “stay strong.” Even as the riders at the back and middle of the bus begrudgingly consented to follow the action plan if necessary, they continued to criticize staff and details of the campaign to other participants, including some who preferred not to listen.

Around 2:00 am on the third night, one rider said, “I can’t believe they are just using us like this, like sacrificial lambs,” referring to the planners’ decision to stage a dramatic conflict by passing through an ICE security checkpoint. This came during an hour-long discussion in the corridors of our motel, during which I listened to various riders’ complaints of the “top-down,” “autocratic” organization of the campaign. Another rider, passing by, said, “We’re all leaders here, not just the people who ended up being staff. I mean everyone is here because they are leaders in their organization.”

By the morning of day four, it appeared to me that some riders would never accept staff attempts to control campaign action, other riders *would* follow directives, and cliques on the bus would deepen over time. Without any outside source of opposition, with little media attention, and with a stressful, uncomfortable schedule of travel and public demonstrations, it seemed that little interpersonal solidarity could be forged and participants would portray solidarity only insofar as they went through the motions of reciting the four points. As participants began to form factions, and as some distanced themselves from staff and disregarded their directives, a major event transformed riders’ relationships to each other, staff, and to the journalists who suddenly overwhelmed them.

### ***The Watershed***

Social movements seeking media access must stage increasingly outrageous events to make the news (Gitlin 1980, Kruse 2001, Tarrow 1998), thereby providing the shocking or dramatic content most likely to draw journalists away from official, bureaucratic sources (Fishman 1973, Schudson 2002, Tuchman 1978). On the Freedom Ride, organizers charted a route through about 800 miles of ICE jurisdiction and one permanent ICE checkstation, with

hours spent at the border's edge. Staff led participants in rehearsing a civil disobedience action plan, but made no guarantees that riders would not be detained, arrested or deported. High risk and drama, emotion-packed images and a story of injustice ensued in what one rider called "the passion play that made us *all* American citizens."<sup>24</sup>

At 7:30 the morning of day four, the buses pulled into the Sierra Blanca checkpoint and were boarded by ICE. Selectively, focusing on older women, officers demanded that individuals show identification and documentation. Excepting journalists, everyone refused to comply. Instead each held out a name tag printed with an invocation of her right to remain silent. After regrouping inside a low, beige portable building next to the highway, officers returned to the buses with dogs, ushering riders and staff alike—now singing in unison "We Shall Overcome" and many in wide-eyed tears—into cells inside. Each was separated from the rest and questioned, cajoled or mildly harassed. Many cried throughout the confrontation, but no one responded to officers. At around 10:30 officers released the detainees and ordered that most of them board the first bus; and they returned, stood cramped in the aisles while continuing to sing and cry. At 11:00 without explanation, officers ordered the buses to leave immediately. It was unclear if anyone had been left behind, or if they would be followed. "No one say a word!" Durazo, Gabriela and Luís each shouted as they drove several miles through the desert; everyone complied. They stopped at an exit and everyone stood between the two buses for a headcount in quiet shock. When Durazo shouted out that all were accounted for, staff, riders and most of the journalists broke into a sixty-minute euphoria of embraces, tears, some weeping and prayers of thanks. The interpersonal solidarity was total, and for once it coincided with an effective media portrayal.

All morning, Lizette had been on the phone with news agencies, often making the first contact with them so sourcing the story would require little "enterprise" (Sigal 1973). Univisión had been transmitting images. CNN picked up the footage. Yahoo News posted a headline. K-LOVE and other Los Angeles radio stations interrupted programming. And families at home called their riders only to find their phones turned off.

Back on bus, a rider who had spent days one through three rooted to at the extreme back grabbed the microphone as the vehicle began to move. Darrell, an employee at the Community Coalition in South Central Los Angeles, put his newfound interpersonal solidarity into simple words to which everyone—including the hired driver—clamorously agreed: "Ok folks. I just

---

<sup>24</sup> Increasingly after Sierra Blanca, riders and staff self-consciously used imagery and rhetoric themed around nationhood and citizenship when they interacted with journalists.

gotta say, that was the most realest experience I've ever had. I love you. Te quiero amigos.” Everyone shouted together in tearful responses; and almost everyone reached out to touch his arm or waist as he walked back to his seat. The buses pulled into a truckstop, remaining nearly an hour. Inside the desert outpost, riders and staff talked on their cellular phones; they held each other and swayed in the aisles of Route 66 shot glasses, Travis Tritt cassettes and cheap cowboy hats; and the ravenously ate tortilla chips and candybars. Around 2:00, everyone returned to the buses.

Filing in, someone used the phrase “emotionally drained.” Someone else said “hasta aqui” and, translating herself, “used up.” Darrell, who had been high-energy the last time he boarded, sighed loudly and collapsed at the back. It appeared everyone would sleep, but as the driver started the bus Oscar, a student from MeChA, stood up in the back. His voice was hoarse; and eight or 10 people called, “al frente!” Oscar walked to the front and switched on the microphone. He said his mother had heard from a neighbor that he was on Channel 34, crying and looking upset. “So she was worried. But I talked to her and told her it was all right, and that she should tell everyone I wasn't upset on the TV, 'cause I was happy.”

People cheered and sat up on their knees or leaned to the front of their seats, reaching into the aisles to touch each other and Oscar as he passed. An immigration law activist from Tucson stood up next and said, “Where I work they saw a news breakout on TV, shots of us crying and singing inside the bus. Everyone in the office started to cry for us out of fear.” Over the course of the next 30 minutes, about 20 more people stood up to relate stories of how coworkers, friends and family at home had learned of the detention. A succession of comments illustrates the critical arc of this conversation. Through this conversation, riders learned of the many ways in which their detention had been broadcast, and began to reflect on the “power of the press” and ways to harness it.

**Darrell:** My boss at my organization saw me on CNN – a 10 minute breaking news story. He left a message on my cell to see if he needed to send our lawyer out to Sierra Blanca....

**Sara:** I think the press helped us a lot. They interrupted programs with our story. Up until then most of the people did not understand but in this moment we have the power of the press and people *do* understand the movement and the cause that we are carrying!

**Socorro:** I wish we were held a little longer so people would have known more, because there would have been more media.

**Joseph:** It was really bad what we went through but at the same time it's good because of all the attention we're getting....

**Maria:** My MeChA chapter said we're all over Spanish radio and TV, so they were really worried about us. But English TV didn't show as much and my

brother said the NBC website just showed pictures of us still on the bus, which didn't tell the full story.

**Mayra:** Yes, but Spanish radio is going to play a really important role....

**Luisa:** My son left a message saying “Mamá yo te miré on TV, and I called Papí!” And my husband says we were on Rádio Cucuy and the Bogeyman<sup>25</sup> is announcing everything that happens to us and he's having a vigil for us tonight at Olvera Street<sup>26</sup> with the Mexican Federation!

**Patricia:** Look at all this! Now we have to spin it!

Riders acted in interpersonal solidarity over the course of this conversation, which grew increasingly critical and *individually strategic* with respect to media, and finally ended in cheers in response to Patricia's rallying cry to “spin” their experiences in the media. Riders did not discuss media coverage as an end in itself—an opportunity for abstract fame—but as mobilizing others' actions (as evidenced in the vigil or the dispatching of lawyers) and especially as a way to communicate with friends, family and co-workers. In this instance, all the images and stories which participants' families related, and which riders fed back to the bus, were *about* the riders as a collectivity. But during the entire conversation riders more commonly related that someone “saw me” than “saw us.” Even when media coverage related by those outside the movement back to riders focused on a collectivity—when portrayed solidarity was in turn projected in the news—riders were attuned to the individual coverage they received.

### **Summary**

Early in the Ride, staff efforts to inspire interpersonal solidarity were troubled. Rather than robustly participating, riders—especially those from non-union backgrounds—chafed at staff control. It appeared factions would coalesce. Meanwhile journalists were not salient to riders. Riders relied on media training, unaggressively answering only what they were asked. Their simultaneous compliance with the training and resistance of other staff directives may appear surprising, but most had little to no experience as interview subjects, so the training may have been simply a close-at-hand way for them to organize this interaction. Moreover, before the emergence of a cellular phone-aided loop of media feedback from people outside the movement, riders may have had little reason to care about journalists—or no personal goals they saw journalists as able to fulfill.

After a traumatic confrontation with ICE which immediately led to interpersonally solidary displays of love and commitment among all riders, sharing co-workers' and loved

---

<sup>25</sup> This is a famous radio host and syndicated Spanish language talk show. See Almendarez Coello (2003).

<sup>26</sup> This is an historic Los Angeles square significant to many riders as a symbolic center for the city's Chicano and Latino heritage.

ones' reports of media coverage inspired dynamic strategizing. When riders reflected together on media coverage as indicative of movement success, there was a charge of solidarity in their interactions. In coming days, as journalists turned their increasing number of microphones and cameras less to collective action dramas and more to personal stories, the way riders' interacted with each around journalists would become acrimonious.

### **After the Watershed: Dynamics of a Media-Intensive Campaign**

Traumatizing as they were to most riders, events at Sierra Blanca were planned. Staff and participants had been prepared. But while the confrontation with ICE generated the media coverage that planners wanted, the accelerated coverage in turn generated a dynamic of rider-journalist interaction which staff could not control. Through conversations with loved-ones, advice from Lizette, and interactions with journalists, riders evolved a variety of competitive media strategies. Twice or thrice-daily marches and rallies—meant as sites for symbolic displays of solidarity, provided opportunities for riders to detach (either alone or in factions) from other participants. In pursuing the media access each wanted for herself, activists offered journalists what they thought *they* wanted—dramatic images and themed content. Ironically, riders developed camaraderie with some journalists, and at times this competed with riders' attendance to staff directives.

### ***New Strategies***

In the hours and days after Sierra Blanca, media intensification entered into the participants' experiences in three ways. First, as the excerpted conversation indicated, riders connected to family, friends and co-workers in Los Angeles, Phoenix and Tucson via cellular phones.<sup>27</sup> Through the communications loop of phones and broadcast media, loved ones shared with riders news coverage of the Ride on CNN, Univisión, Telemundo, radio, internet and in newspapers. After the ICE confrontation, each participant had people “watching for them” in the media, keeping tabs on a travail riders saw as risky, dramatic and historic. In this way, riders developed non-trivial personal ends for making the news, over and above planners' strategy of portraying solidarity.

Second, though participants were mostly isolated from media content, physical indicators of media-intensification entered into the campaign itself. The morning after Sierra Blanca, a *La Opinión* reporter named Roberto appeared. The major Los Angeles Spanish-language daily had declined to embed a reporter despite entreaties from the IWFR, but as soon as ICE detention made the news Roberto flew to Austin for a rendezvous. On day six, two staff

---

<sup>27</sup> A “What to Bring” list distributed to Riders before departure included the item “cellular phone.”



legal observers received obscene phone calls, and rumors of violent threats flew around the buses. When they stopped for gas and several bought *The New York Times*, they saw the observers' phone numbers published in a photograph of campaign documents. Together staff and riders fumed at the carelessness, or malignancy, of the paper. At gas stops for the rest of the Ride, participants filed through newspaper racks, purchasing the occasional periodical with a Freedom Ride story. The campaign had, as many said, "gained a momentum" that was felt in the bigger crowds at twice- or thrice-daily rallies and in the "heroes' welcomes" riders received as they stepped off buses in towns across Texas, Tennessee and Virginia. Riders noted the growing number of supporters, in addition to the new cameras and aggressive reporters at each stop.

Third, Lizette's frequent journalist-interaction directives provided information both on increased media "success" of the movement and on new strategies which may have given riders strategic ideas of their own. Hours after the detention, she announced an updated strategy which cued up media's "fascination" with the riders' civil disobedience and set out a new way for riders to get their personal (and family) stories into the news.

I want you to know that the whole time you were in there [in detention] I was working the phones. For a while I lost coverage and when it came back I had 57 messages from media. When they [ICE] let us go, CNN, AP Photo and NBC were on the way—just a few miles away! The story they're telling isn't just that we got arrested but reactions of families at home. At first we couldn't get *el poder de la prensa*, but now we *do* have that power. The key so far is K-LOVE, WFWB, Rádio Unión, AP Los Angeles, Univisión, Telemundo: they are together with us because when you were arrested you acted in solidarity. It shows us that media saturation doesn't take journalist saturation! There can be just one image, like 9/11. And with you the image is that you went in and showed solidarity.

Here Lizette celebrated *both* interpersonal and portrayed aspects of riders' "solidarity" at Sierra Blanca. She combined elements of how journalists were using the campaign (to tell certain kinds of stories) and how the campaign was using journalists (for media saturation through repetition of a single image). She also implied that CNN, AP and NBC had frightened ICE into releasing riders. Indeed, in subsequent days, participants frequently credited media for "being on [their] side" when discussing the "power of the press." The morning of day five in San Antonio, Lizette reiterated:

The press is still just fascinated that [in the face of ICE interrogation] you stayed silent! So we want to keep the momentum. Monday [two days hence] we'll break your personal *testimonios* about Sierra Blanca because it's a slow news day. But today *the story* is you and your families. *Their reactions* to what

happened to us yesterday, because it's connected to our [talking] point of family reunification.

Staff still tried to control riders, and exhorted riders to in turn control journalists. But they also suggested it was important to give journalists content they wanted—to “fascinate” them. Open discussions of “spin” became common by day five. Lizette said on day six:

Your message should reflect that incredible things happen! Remember the four points and that you need to *control the message*! Always spin it our way! Yesterday they asked Juan if detention was like being a criminal and he told him *it was like slavery*! That's the kind of thing I mean.

As Lizette prescribed updated strategies for rider-media interaction, many riders devised new, outrageous tactics of their own. For staff, the end of participant-journalist relations was still portraying solidarity through positive collective action and stories unified around the four points. For participants vying for access, the objective was simpler: to make the news. Interacting with media, they remade staff strategies to both control journalists and give them what “fascinated” them. They rebuked journalists who asked about documentation status, but at the same time offered clearly themed stories and images.

Sometimes, participants acted cooperatively to create newsworthiness or to deepen a relationship with a certain journalist. Other times, participants acted alone in order to be *the one* a journalist would interview or photograph. When strange professionals with cameras and notebooks would ring a crowd at a rally, some riders made audacious moves to individualize themselves. For example on day five Mauricio, a college student and community activist, began shrouding himself in a US flag at rallies. The *Nashville Tennessean* printed a solemn photograph of him in the flag at a day seven rally, and a copy of the paper circulated on the bus the next morning.

The flag was Mauricio's; but campaign participants struggled over other photogenic tokens they could use to differentiate themselves in public.<sup>28</sup> More than anything else, they fought over a white canvas banner, about ten-by-three feet, printed in yellow and black: “Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride—Los Angeles.” Carrying the banner out of the bus was a five-person job, done by the same participants from the first day. But on day five in Dallas, as

---

<sup>28</sup> Participants sometimes ridiculed those who stood too much out of the crowd. Waiting to board the bus in Morristown, VA, one rider said to another in sarcasm, “I haven't seen Mauricio *and his flag* yet.” On day six, a rider 40 years his senior yelled at Mauricio as he was getting off the bus, saying, “You know, some people might find that a *really offensive* use of the flag, just to get people's attention like that!” This led four others into a loud argument about whether Mauricio was right to wear his flag as a “blanket.”

Another participant who shouted into a bull horn during marches and skipped around crowds leading chants and attracting attention (journalist and otherwise) was branded cruelly with a nickname. That this was done in malice was evident in the way those riders who used the name hid it from him and laughed about it together.

they chaotically exited the bus for a rally, a rider named Luisa said loudly to me, “They should share the banner!” Ignorant that this could be a sensitive media issue, I hollered, “Maybe some new people should carry the banner this time?” Shouting exploded as everyone insisted it was her turn. Riders stood in the aisles for 15 minutes exchanging complaints about unfairness and selfishness, while staff refused to disboard until they were “ready” to portray solidarity on the ground. Later, two riders told me<sup>29</sup> that Univisión had begun filming participants as they marched into rallies behind the banner, and according to their families at home those who carried it made TV news. Though staff insisted that riders rotate the banner and worked to organize a rotation, similar fights broke out again at Dallas and Nashville.

Staff efforts to control 1) riders’ interactions with each other around tokens of the Ride and 2) the images they portrayed to journalists often angered participants, reviving pre-Sierra Blanca resentments and eventually leading to rider rebellion against staff in favor of journalists. On day seven, as riders exited the buses to watch a film at the Nashville public library, the chant-leader Alicia announced, “Now don’t bring anything with you! Leave everything in the bus: flags, the banner. Just bring yourself!” A woman yelled, “Why doesn’t she just tell us *where in the hell we’re going* and let *us* figure it out from there?” Riders throughout the bus shouted and mumbled agreement and rolled their eyes at Alicia. Someone snapped her obscene nickname, not heard since Sierra Blanca.

On day nine, Lizette took another measure to control use of images, this time with more explanation to avoid charges of hardline leadership. She ultimately invoked riders’ purported commitment to the Freedom Ride:

I want to clarify the ideology of the movement! That you don’t carry flags of other nations. The reason I’m asking that you carry American flags is these people should see we want to be Americans so this is why we’re demonstrating.... The *idea* is we are *not less American* than anyone else—we’re *all* immigrants. I’m not saying this as some *dictadora*.... The movement is *mucho más grande* than us being Mexicans or from any other country. This is not a vacation, it’s a civil rights struggle and we’re not going to do it if we’re not together. There’s bus controversy and it’s a distraction.... I just urge you all to keep it together! You have to give of yourself. Bottom line is we *have to keep it together*.

Here Lizette addressed riders’ resistance to staff directives to portray solidarity, but also spoke about a lack of interpersonal solidarity on the bus—of riders’ need “to keep it together.” Gabriela had designated Lizette to make this announcement, after a conflictual staff meeting where lack of riders’ interpersonal solidarity and their chafing at staff leadership had been the

---

<sup>29</sup> I carried no cell phone and made only three short calls to loved ones during the campaign.

main topic of discussion. Her wording shows how staff saw the problem: riders' inability to "keep it together" interpersonally followed from bus conflict (not specifically from conflict over journalists' attention). Despite staff directives, riders continued to compete for media attention in the next days. A very sympathetic radio journalist embedded the campaign said in a day nine interview:

I think in our modern world a lot of this stuff is staged and we recreate reality all the time. There's a lot of just going through the motions in marches. But when was a march really successful? Well it's in what people felt. I've seen a lot of people withdrawing from marches and I think it's not good but the few people who *are* together are making it look good and having an effect. But I think that they need to work on focusing on *that* image.

For this journalist who had seen the whole campaign, riders' lack of interpersonal solidarity was obvious, and their showings of portrayed solidarity questionable. In contrast to what riders and to a degree staff thought media wanted, this journalist wanted to see *more* portrayed solidarity, not more individuation or personalized storylines.

As they "withdrew" from portraying solidarity, participants used not only physical markers to distinguish themselves but also devised ways to communicate themes or stories—probable media content in their estimation—to journalists. In Austin on day five, I left a rally outside a church and sat on a shaded sidewalk to write notes. Two journalists with notebooks and cameras stood in the same patch of shade, where supporters and some staff and riders would stand briefly to escape the intense sun. One journalist interviewed a staff person. Afterwards, two students edged their ways out of the rally and stood in front of the two journalists. Though this pair usually conversed in Spanish, they conversed loudly in English, discussing the drama of being detained. "Highly quotable," I describe the exchange in my notes, but the journalists did not respond. That night in a staff meeting, leaders chided other staff angrily for allowing riders to stray from the rally, mandating that such behavior be "reigned in" at all other rallies. But twelve staff had limited success enforcing that riders "keep in together" at events.

On day seven at a truckstop, I drank coffee with the documentary filmmaker Lily. She said, "Don't you think it's interesting how media savvy people are becoming?" I agreed, and she said that the previous day when she filmed riders in the Lorraine Motel,<sup>30</sup> two women looking at an exhibit noticed Lily's camera on them. Pointing to a photograph, one said to the

---

<sup>30</sup> The Lorraine Motel Museum is a Memphis Civil Rights memorial which occupies the building where Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4, 1968.

other, “Look, that’s just like they tried to arrest *us!*” Lily said she was stunned. “They were *doing the work for me,*” she said, “without a prompt or anything!”

### ***At Last, Militant Interpersonal “Solidarity”***

In two episodes near the end of the campaign, participants did bind together, showing a cohesive militancy in defiance of staff leaders (see comparable episodes in Fantasia 1988, Piven and Cloward 1979). Both mobilizations counteracted staff efforts to eject a journalist from the bus. In the first scenario, staff deemed a certain journalist could undermine riders’ interpersonal solidarity. In the second, more militant, scenario staff tried to move a journalist from one bus to another so he could cover different riders. Participants took action to keep the journalist on their own bus.

On the eighth day of the campaign, the day after white supremacists had demonstrated against us with violent threats, riders boarded the buses after a fragmentary Nashville rally. It was a short distance, staff said, to the church where they would eat lunch. I was the fifth or sixth person into the vehicle, leading a file of 12-15 riders and staff. I saw Mauricio was near the back, talking animatedly with a strange man with a TV camera emblazoned with “Channel 5.” Across the activity of people boarding the bus, I glared at Mauricio until he met my eyes, then forcefully shook my head and clenched my jaw at him. He shrugged, mouthed “I’m sorry! There was nothing I could do!”

When the bus began to move and everyone was seated, I walked back to Mauricio and snapped, “We don’t even know this person, and you just brought him on the bus?” He replied, “He just followed me on, I swear. He’s from TV though. It’s ok.” “Think about security!” I said, “You know we have received threats. And even if he *is* a journalist, we don’t know if he is a friend. This is *our space* and we can’t just bring anybody in it. He might need to get off, now.” Mauricio nodded, looked me in the eyes, said unapologetically, “I’m sorry. I never saw you angry like that.”

Meanwhile the man had taken an aisle seat near the front, his camera balanced prominently on a knee. I approached, put a clenched hand on his shoulder and said, “Sir, I need to know who you are and who you’re with.” All the riders in surrounding seats swiveled and craned their necks to watch. The man ignored the question, glancing out the window. “Sir, it’s really a problem for you to enter this bus without talking to somebody about it. What is your name and who are you with? Sir? I will stop this bus right now.” The man looked at me

nonchalantly, “I’m just with Channel 5; I’m a cameraman.” “Ok then,” I said sharply, looking him in the eyes.

During this exchange, a Nashville immigration rights activist had stood up at the front of the bus. He introduced himself and announced lunch would be with Rev. James Lawson, in the same church basement where Lawson trained Civil Rights-era activists in non-violent resistance, at that afterwards participants would have a bit of free time. Participants cheered in response to promises of food, Lawson<sup>31</sup> and unheard-of free time. A rider pulled my shirt and said, “Introduce the other new guy with the TV camera!”

I took the microphone. “Also we’re joined by someone else. Sir, I didn’t get your name?” The cameraman again looked out the window; and I repeated the question, my unwelcoming attitude apparent at least to those who had witnessed earlier exchanges with him and Mauricio. Finally, he said, “Charlie.” “Charlie!” the rider next to him shouted.

“This is Charlie. Nashville Channel 5.” Before the sentence was completed my words were drowned out by the cheers of riders on the bus—cheers twice as loud as they had been moments earlier. Participants leaned over to pat Charlie on the shoulders or touch his head, and within seconds their cheers of, “We love you!” transformed into a roaring chant: “Char-lie! Char-lie! Char-lie! Char-lie!”

After three or four minutes of the chanting, Charlie lifted the camera to his shoulder and began to record. The bus erupted. Seeing that riders, unified vis-à-vis my threats, had found a solution to the problem of the possibly hostile stranger on the bus, I joined them. With them simultaneously interacting in solidarity as a way of enlisting my support, and portraying solidarity (albeit with “Charlie” himself, not immigration reform, as their common cause), I had no other role to play.

Three days later, staff again tried to eject a journalist and riders reacted with unity and militancy.<sup>32</sup> The morning of day eleven, the campaign set out from Washington for a giant rally of the entire campaign at Liberty Park, New Jersey. Lizette, standing in the aisle in front of Roberto of *La Opinión*, insisted he change from one bus to the other. She said he needed to see other riders’ experiences, rather than only interviewing the riders on one bus. The caravan would not move, she said, until he did. Roberto objected, saying he should be able to do what

---

<sup>31</sup> The previous day at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, participants and staff had learned about long-time Civil Rights activist Lawson and the history Civil Rights activism and counter-activism in Tennessee.

<sup>32</sup> My reconstruction of this event depends on three first-hand tellings: by a documentary filmmaker who rode the bus, a member of the staff, and the woman who initiated the militancy. To see how news of the incident traveled to the other bus, I spoke with two members of the staff soon there after.

he wanted; and Lizette threatened to kick him off the Ride entirely, pointing out that the IWFR had paid some of his hotel expenses.

Riders nearby paid close attention to the exchange, passing information to others out of range. When two women towards the middle of the bus heard that Roberto was being forced to switch, and that money was being made an issue, they said to each other and those around them, “We have to protest!” Towards the middle of the bus, people began yelling, “Leave him alone!” “He’s one of us!” and “Roberto is a rider too!” Mayra said, “Maybe *we* should get off the bus!” Behind her, a documentary filmmaker switched on her camera and responded in a loud voice, “Yeah, maybe you should do a walk-out?” Riders at the middle of the bus quickly passed around the idea. As Lizette stood arguing with Roberto she was suddenly pushed aside when a clutch of riders, and then all of the others, disboarded.

Outside on the ground, Mayra turned around and yelled to the riders, “This isn’t fair what they’re doing! They want more money from Roberto and they want to kick him off the bus! We aren’t getting back on until they let him stay!” Weeks later in recounting the event, one of the riders said, “They were targeting him; they were persecuting him!”

A standoff ensued, with staff waiting inside the bus or negotiating with riders on the ground. A few riders had not understood initially that Roberto was being sent to the other bus, not away from the campaign entirely. But even after this was explained, they refused to return to the bus until it was promised that he would not be made to move. “He is with us! He is a *rider on our bus!*” was what participants said in response to staff as they stood outside in the chilly Washington morning, holding their ground.

After more than an hour during which they became increasingly late to the New Jersey rally, staff gave in. Perhaps emboldened by journalists’ presence, thirty-five riders had acted out against staff redistribution of media resources within the campaign, binding together in spontaneous militancy that far outdid their media and collective action trainings.

### ***Summary***

After detention at Sierra Blanca, staff found that riders had unplanned reactions to planned media-intensifying events. Many staff had assumed that dramatic media attention would simply boost the enthusiasm of the riders. In the more complicated actuality—following the first torrent of media coverage and subsequent reflection, and as the Public Relations specialist Lizette issued new directions to keep riders on message—many evolved strategies of their own. As riders developed autonomous dynamics of interaction with each other and new journalist strategies, staff attempts to control rider-journalist interactions began to meet with

complications under two sets of conditions. The *first* was where riders found themselves at marches and rallies—symbolic displays of solidarity from which they could detach themselves and try to get journalists’ attention—where varied individuation and factionalization tactics garnered mixed reactions from journalists. The *second* was where riders developed independent camaraderie with a journalist on the bus, vis-à-vis staff, generating only a limited interpersonal “solidarity” actively to reject staff directives.

### CONCLUSION

In one a national, union-led social movement organization, this study found organizers grappling with participants’ unplanned reactions to planned media-intensifying events. They had hoped that under conditions in which interpersonal barriers were removed and conflict evaded, and through trust-building conversations, interpersonal solidarity would emerge among participants. So that riders would also portray solidarity to journalists, planners conditioned them with media training and ongoing directives. The forging of strong relationships among participants was important to Ride planners, but they did not see it as prerequisite for media success. In other words, they did not see *interpersonal* (rider-rider) solidarity as a resource from which to draw *portrayed* (to journalists) solidarity. The elements of interpersonal solidarity in organizers’ conceptualizations were patience, discipline, trust, a sense of familiarity, and common commitment to a cause. For portrayed solidarity, they stressed riders’ obligations to make the campaign look good regardless of what they were feeling.

On the campaign, participants developed media savvy. This was likely the first-ever media access for most; and under conditions in which campaign drama was not intense and media presence not salient, they relied on their talking points and interacted compliantly, not aggressively, with journalists. After drama and media attention intensified, participants’ behavior in the context of journalists changed dramatically. Conversing via cellular phone with families and friends at home, and learning that they had been shown on Univisión carrying the IWFR banner or quoted in a “local” newspaper found online, they became attuned to their individual coverage. Because they wanted to be seen or read about by loved ones and co-workers, they developed personal ends for making the news, sometimes jettisoning the portrayed solidarity project which staff continued to try to enforce. It was not as if riders narcissistically craved individual moments of fame for fame’s sake—rather they glorified media’s ability to move those outside the movement (including ICE) into action and especially



focused on its ability to conduct information about their own experiences to *specific* people.<sup>33</sup> Since making the media could involve photographic or narrative cameos, the professional practices of journalists gave riders reason to individuate themselves to become newsworthy. If they did not isolate themselves, riders tended to factionalize, not to bind together in larger solidary collectivities. The camera's lens is only so wide.

I chose the most exceptional of the ten Freedom Ride routes: the segment that set up participants to play out a drama of confrontation with ICE which could easily have led to arrest and selective deportation. While riders on different routes did not act out together the same audacious civil disobedience, did not cry or sing together under the same conditions of encountering authority they deemed unjust, and in general were not traumatized in this specific way that generated interpersonal solidarity, media-intensiveness was mostly constant across the ten divisions of the campaign, with a spike in coverage across the board after Sierra Blanca.<sup>34</sup> Analysis of other routes of the Ride could show variation in portrayed and interpersonal solidarities: riders may have generated solidarities among themselves in any number of ways, absent the collective action trauma of confronting ICE. In interaction with journalists, they might have been less prone to portray solidarity absent an experience of collective trauma; *or* they might be less prone to fragment and bicker in vying for journalists' spotlight, if possible barriers of politeness or other inhibitions were not broken down by shared experiences. Differential construction of riders' risk might also have impacted their interaction with journalists on different routes: if riders' friends and families at home were not acutely concerned for their safety, they might attune less to details of media coverage and therefore not foment a telecommunications feedback loop. In short, comparison across branches of the movement might yield up any number of factors that conditioned riders' interpersonal experiences of and portrayals of solidarity.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> In the context of shared belief in the US-Mexico Border route's high risk, riders' loved ones may have used the media and cell-phone loop as a way to participate in or watch over the campaign. It is also possible that riders' loved ones saw them as "representative" in the ways staff had stressed; and watching "their" rider in the news became a celebration of status, political participation, or rights enfranchisement. Without phone transcripts or observations of riders' loved ones during the campaign, I can only speculate on such deeper explanations for the mechanism of personal feedback that led riders to vie for media attention.

<sup>34</sup> Number of newspaper stories is my imperfect proxy for internal involvement of mass media on the campaign. The IWFR archive of newspaper campaign coverage (which comprises stories in all major dailies) shows a spike in both national-level pieces and those on all the routes after the September 26 Sierra Blanca detention. At least in print media, Sierra Blanca generated attention for the entire campaign, not just the US-Mexico border segment.

<sup>35</sup> Just as journalists affected participants, so I imagine is journalists *were affected* by being embedded in the campaign. This is an instance where media content analysis—comparing embedded reporters' work with that of others—could be sociological, illuminating behaviors of journalists.

Grounding my conceptualizations of solidarity in organizers' understandings brought out contradictions in a movement that was undertaken, most abstractly, to "build solidarity." Without taking seriously organizers' conceptualizations, I would never have identified these internal tensions. Portrayed solidarity is not a trivial, superficial shadow of interpersonal solidarity; rather, it is a crucial component of the political calculus of this and any other contemporary campaign. Dissecting planners' goal of solidarity-building also encouraged me to abandon a formalistic definition of "group solidarity" whereby the totality of riders must meet some solidarity criterion in order for it to, definitionally, emerge. Rather, taking planners' ideas as my guide and submitting their solidarities to Fantasia's evidentiary criterion of identifiability in action, I conceptualized the two solidarities as emergent in *some* instances, among *some* participants, in *particular* ways. Thus I saw factions not as incomplete solidarities (as they are seen in some formalistic accounts), but as interactive collectivities *forged against* others on the campaign.

Inspection of this movement revealed that mass media crucially shaped its dynamics: from early planning, to organizers' continually updated strategies, to participants' experiences. The Ride's uses of telecommunications and modes of generating political power give some substance to a platitude: social structural conditions have changed since the Civil Rights-era Freedom Rides that the campaign invoked. At least in this environment, a movement's not illegitimate objective could be *only* to portray solidarity to media, not generate it among participants.<sup>36</sup> Contra the reporter who said what "really mattered" in a march was what people were *feeling*, not what they were doing, this paper shows how "just going through the motions" was important to movement strategists and also, most likely, for the greater mass mediated impact of the movement.

Though planners and analysts saw mass media use as strategically crucial to building public recognition and political might, it still worked awkwardly into the simultaneously top-down and bottom-up, coalition-building model they put into practice. Staff wanted interpersonal solidarity to emerge from the bottom up, but mandated that riders portray solidarity from the start. Both before media intensification (when riders chafed and factionalized due to top-down leadership) and after (when they resisted staff efforts to control their interactions with journalists), rider-staff interactions were often conflictual. Sierra Blanca's sensational civil disobedience generated interpersonal solidarities as well as the

---

<sup>36</sup> Remove media from the equation, and this calculus is consistent with Gould's (1999) theorization of the performative side of group solidarity, whereby group members demonstrate solidarity in order to communicate power and pre-empt attacks by other groups.

intended “media saturation,” but ongoing media-intensivity spurred an unsolidary dynamic in participants’ interactions because they competed for media spotlight. In striving to portray to mass media an image of impassioned unity around a common cause, organizers unintentionally helped foster disunity among participants.

For now, this study of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride illustrates extremely aggressive, creative tactics for media-use in an innovative social movement organization. In working to structure or control participants’ interactions with journalists, and to furnish participants with methods to, in turn, control journalists, campaign staff employed both established tactics like marches and rallies, and innovations like embedding journalists and working from personally-themed talking points.

The strategic media innovations of the Freedom Ride successfully generated reams and hours of movement reportage. Staff brought sophisticated strategies to the field; and riders learned a symbiotic press relationship whereby they gained publicity by furnishing journalists with dramatic, “present tense” content. Future campaigns may try to minimize tension between top-down leadership and bottom-up participation, but this study suggests that activists of all backgrounds can be brilliant at public relations: more top-down control could create an unmanageable amount of acrimony or rebellion and stifle a campaign’s tactics. Or worse, it could demobilize participants.

In the episodes I reviewed in this paper, participants—as factions or in a bloc—were frequently at odds with staff. Although much research on social movement organizations does not take members’ unity or cohesion as problematic, it may actually be unrealistic to envision a social movement organization where political tension disappears entirely (Morrill, Zald and Rao 2003). So, SMO staff could consider internal tension another way: as potentially productive where it generates passions among activists. Alternatively, staff could pragmatically take some blame from participants as a part of the job, while learning where exerting control over activists generates more problems than it solves.

Finally, while it facilitated analysis to parse data into interpersonal and portrayed solidarities to reflect planners’ distinct uses of the term and to make a practical distinction between interactions of participants and their interactions with journalists. Though I use “solidarity” in a simple manner, I hope not to strip the word of the general sociological and social problem which it articulates: collectivity in action.

In addition to discussing an interpersonal solidarity spurred by deep relationships and soulful commitment to a common cause, and portrayed solidarity motivated by simple

obligations, staff often repeated to riders that they “represented” their own organizations as well as undocumented immigrants generally. This was the closest they ever came to articulating what many sociologists consider a fundamental basis of solidarity: recognition of shared interests. Usually, talk of representation was used to solidify riders’ obligations to portray the movement well, perhaps on a tacit assumption that immigrant legalization was in all riders’ best interests in a concrete way. But as Durazo said, planners did not envision legislation as a campaign outcome: rather they were working to “*make an impression.*” The somewhat abstract nature of campaign goals—relationship building (interpersonal solidarity) for the sake of ongoing collaboration and impression making (portrayed solidarity) in the media—may explain why planners’ operative uses of “solidarity” were not more concretely instrumental in ways sociologists might expect.

Even if activists looked to the four talking points—family reunification, civil rights for all immigrants, a path to citizenship, and enforcement of the legal right to organize—they would have seen nothing immediate or concrete. What *was* concrete was the immediate strategy of interacting with journalists to have a specific effect. Considering that the movement strategy of portraying solidarity in such interactions was so easily supplanted by individuals’ strategies to portray their singular selves, on the level of the social movement organization perhaps more discussions of riders’ shared interests, and concrete goals linked to those interests, might have woven well into interpersonal and portrayed solidarities the Freedom Ride set out to make.

## REFERENCES

Almendarez Coello, Renan. 2003. *El Cucuy: En la Cumbre de la Pobreza*. New York: Rayo.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, Roy Behr, and Shanto Iyengar. 1993. *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age*. New York: MacMillan Publishing.

Argüelles Paz y Puente, Pancho. 2002a. “The Challenge of Building Strategic Alliances.” *The Ark* 15:19-21.

- Argüelles Paz y Puente, Pancho. 2002b. "Unions are from Mars, Community Groups are from Venus. Does That Mean We are All Aliens?" *The Ark* 20:24-27.
- Balser, Deborah B. 1997. "The Impact of Environmental Factors on Factionalism and Schism in Social Movement Organizations." *Social Forces* 76(1):199-228.
- Benford, Robert D. and Scott A. Hunt. 1992. "Dramaturgy and Social-Movements: The Social Construction and Communication of Power." *Sociological Inquiry* 62(1):36-55.
- Brecher, Jeremy and Tim Costello, eds. 1990. *Building Bridges: The Emerging Grassroots Coalition of Labor and Community*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Breiger, Ronald L. and John M. Roberts, Jr. 1998. "Solidarity and Social Networks." In *The Problem of Solidarity: Theories and Models*, edited by Patrick Doreian and Thomas Fararo. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers.
- Bronfenbrenner, Kate. 1997. "The Role of Union Strategies in NLRB Certification Elections." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 50(2):195-212.
- Bronfenbrenner, Kate, Sheldon Friedman, Richard W Hurd, Rudolph A Oswald, Ronald L. Seeber, eds. 1998. *Organizing to Win: New Research on Union Strategies*. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, Kate and Robert Hickey. 2004. "Changing to Organize: A National Assessment of Union Organizing Strategies." In *Rebuilding Labor: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement*, edited by Ruth Milkman and Kim Voss. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, Kate and Tom Juravich. 1998. "It Takes More than House Calls: Organizing to Win with a Comprehensive Union-Building Strategy." In *Organizing to Win: New Research on Union Strategies*, edited by Kate Bronfenbrenner, Sheldon Friedman, Richard W. Hurd, Rudolph A. Oswald, and Ronald L. Seeber. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, Kate and Tom Juravich. 2001 "The Evolution of Strategic and Coordinated Bargaining Campaigns in the 1990s." In *Rekindling the Movement: Labor's Quest for Relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Lowell Turner, Harry C. Katz and Richard W. Hurd. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Clawson, Dan. 2003. *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements*. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Clayman, Steve. 2004. "Arenas of interaction in the mediated public sphere." *Poetics* 32(1): 29-49.
- Coleman, James. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Collins, Randall. 1981. "On the Microfoundations of Macrosociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 86(5):984-1014.

- Collins, Randall and Robert Hanneman. 1998. "Modelling the Interaction Ritual Theory of Solidarity." In *The Problem of Solidarity: Theories and Models*, edited by Patrick Doreian and Thomas Fararo. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers.
- Druckman, James N. n.d. "The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence." *Political Behavior*, forthcoming.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1956 [1893]. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press.
- Epstein, Edward. 1973. *News from Nowhere*. New York: Random House.
- Fantasia, Rick. 1988. *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- . 1995. "From Class-Consciousness to Culture, Action, and Social-Organization." *Annual Review of Sociology* 21:269-287.
- Fararo, Thomas J. and Patrick Doreian. 1998. "The Theory of Solidarity: An Agenda of Problems." In *The Problem of Solidarity: Theories and Models*, edited by Patrick Doreian and Thomas Fararo. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers.
- Fishman, Mark. 1980. *Manufacturing the News*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Gamson, William A., Bruce Fireman and Steven Rytina. 1982. *Encounters with Unjust Authority*. Homewood, IL: The Dorsey Press.
- Gitlin, Todd. 1980. *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Glynn, Carroll J., Susan Herbst, Garrett J. O'Keefe, Robert Y. Shapiro. 1999. *Public Opinion*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Goldenberg, Edie. 1975. *Making the Papers: The Access of Resource-Poor Groups to the Metropolitan Press*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company.
- Gould, Roger V. 1999. "Collective Violence and Group Solidarity: Evidence from a Feuding Society." *American Sociological Review* 64(3):356-380.
- Hallin, Daniel C. 1994. *We Keep America on Top of the World: Television Journalism and the Public Sphere*. London and New York: Routledge Press.
- Hechter, Michael. 1983. *The Microfoundations of Macrosociology*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- . 1987a. "Nationalism as Group Solidarity." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 10(4).
- . 1987b. *Principles of Group Solidarity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

- Heise, David R. 1998. "Conditions for Empatheic Solidarity." In *The Problem of Solidarity: Theories and Models*, edited by Patrick Doreian and Thomas Fararo. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers.
- Kruse, Corwin. 2001. "The Movement and the Media: Framing the Debate over Animal Experimentation." *Political Communication* 18(1):67-87.
- Manheim, Jerol and Robert B. Albritton. 1984. "Changing National Images: International Public Relations and Media Agenda Setting." *American Political Science Review* 78:641-657.
- Manning, PK. 1996. "Dramaturgy, Politics and the Axial Media Event." *Sociological Quarterly* 37(2):261-278.
- Markovsky, Barry and Edward J. Lawler. 1994. "A New Theory of Group Solidarity." *Advances in Group Processes* 11:113-137.
- Milkman, Ruth. 1998. "The New Labor Movement: Possibilities and Limits." *Contemporary Sociology* 27(2):125-129.
- Milkman, Ruth and Kent Wong. 2000. "Organizing the Wicked City: The 1992 Southern California Drywall Strike." In *Organizing Immigrants: The Challenge for Unions in Contemporary California*, edited by Ruth Milkman. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- , 2001. "Organizing Immigrant Workers: Case Studies from Southern California." In *Rekindling the Movement: Labor's Quest for Relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Edited by Lowell Turner, Harry C. Katz and Richard W. Hurd. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Moody, Kim. 1990. "Building a Labor Movement for the 1990s: Cooperation and Concessions or Confrontation and Coalition." In *Building Bridges: The Emerging Grassroots Coalition of Labor and Community*, edited by Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Morrill, Calvin, Mayer Zald and Hayagreeva Rao. 2003. "Covert Political Conflict in Organizations: Challenges from Below." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29: 391-415.
- Needleman, Ruth. 1998. "Building Relationships for the Long Haul: Unions and Community-Based Groups Working Together to Organize Low-Wage Workers." In *Organizing to Win: New Research on Union Strategies*, edited by Kate Bronfenbrenner, Sheldon Friedman, Richard W Hurd, Rudolph A Oswald, and Ronald L. Seeber. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Piven, Frances Fox and Richard A. Cloward. 1979. *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Schudson, Michael. 2002. "The News Media as Political Institutions." *Annual Review of Political Science* 2002 (5): 249-69.
- Scipes, Kim. 1991. "Labor-Community Coalitions - Not all They're Cracked up to be." *Monthly Review* 43 (7):34-46.

- Sigal, Leon. 1973. *Reporters and Officials*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Sharpe, Theresa. 2004. "Union Democracy and Successful Campaigns: The Dynamics of Staff Authority and Worker Participation in an Organizing Union." In *Rebuilding Labor: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement*, edited by Ruth Milkman and Kim Voss. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Sherman, Rachel and Kim Voss. 2000. "'Organize or Die': Labor's New Tactics and Immigrant Workers." In *Organizing Immigrants: The Challenge for Unions in Contemporary California*, edited by Ruth Milkman. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Skvoretz, John. 1998. "Solidarity, Social Structure, and Social Control." In *The Problem of Solidarity: Theories and Models*, edited by Patrick Doreian and Thomas Fararo. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1998. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tilly, Charles. 1988. "Solidary Logics: Conclusions." *Theory and Society* 17(3):451-458.
- Timberg, Bernard. 2002. *Television Talk: a History of the TV Talk Show*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Tuchman, Gaye. 1978. *Making News: a Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press.
- Turner, L, H Katz and R Hurd, eds. 2001. *Rekindling the Movement: Labor's Quest for Relevance in the Twenty-First Century*. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Voss, Kim and Rachel Sherman. 2000. "Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Union Revitalization in the American Labor Movement." *American Journal of Sociology* 106(2):303-349.