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The Global Justice Movement's Use of "Jail Solidarity" as a Response to Police Repression and Arrest

An Ethnographic Study

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This article ethnographically analyzes the use of direct action, or "jail solidarity", behind bars, during mass protest episodes. The global justice movement has been the most recent inheritors of this historical tactic, and it has been utilized since the World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle. Unjust arrests are countered with noncooperation behind bars, to pressure for charges to be reduced or dropped. Ethnography is appropriate for obtaining information on this high-risk, concealed behavior. Based on fieldwork, participant observation, and in-depth interviewing, the perspectives, self-reflexivity, and sociolinguistic construction of jail solidarity is presented in the participants' own words.

Keywords: *direct action; social movements; activism; global justice; globalization*

We walked across a police line. We negotiated with the police. And we had a list of demands to bring to the IMF and the World Bank. We said to the police that we had a right to have our voice heard in the meetings and that we were planning on crossing the police barricades. [The police line] was violating our First Amendment rights.

Cedar (telephone interview, March 17, 2002)

On April 17, 2000, during protests against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank annual meetings, approximately 160 people were arrested. Some negotiated a symbolic line crossing with the police, while others throughout downtown Washington, D.C., were aggressively

surrounded and arrested. Both groups perceived and presented their arrests as a violation of their right to free speech and assembly and, therefore, continued their resistance inside the jail, until their charges were dropped. Their resistance included collective decision making to formulate demands, then followed by physical noncooperation: withholding names to defy processing and release procedures and impromptu annoyance tactics, such as singing badly. By withholding their names, the arrestees could not be processed in or out of jail and, therefore, could not be released through bail or personal recognizance. Other resistance tactics were employed as needed to achieve smaller demands—such as avoiding individual isolation or gaining lawyer access. This resistance collaborated their demands: identical reduced or dropped charges for everyone involved. This high-risk activism of “jail solidarity,” as utilized by the global justice movement is the topic of this article.

Jail Solidarity and the Ethnomethodological Approach

The importance of studying jail solidarity forcefully materialized to me one day—as I sat in the Washington, D.C., jail—surrounded by excited activists that continued to conduct consensus meetings and tally individual commitment til all hours of the night. Pressure was increasing, and with that, a rhetorical construction of individual allegiance and the heightened stakes was demanded and articulated. Although arrest often signifies the end of the protest episode, the global justice activists defined this stage as a heightened realm of conflict that could exemplify the connection between global injustice and the domestic repression of rights. Therefore, normative group pressure compelled individuals to participate, or signify their defection to the cause (Gleeson & Erben, 1976, p. 474). One hundred and fifty of us were participating in this act of jail solidarity—we were powerfully defying authority and attempting to reduce our charges—it was intoxicating. When we won our objectives, our sense of ability was amplified, and the tactic was centrally established. Months later, when I again found myself surrounded by Jane World Trade Organization (WTO) sisters (including some veterans from DC) in the Los Angeles jail, I decided to intensify my investigation of the jail solidarity tactic, its participants, and their self-reflexivity.

The current study, however, presented a research challenge. Studying comparatively clandestine experiences of subpopulations within social

movements—their motivation, personal experience, mobilization process, reframing of arrest as a protest tactic, and perceived success—are difficult to establish. Detailed information on these high-risk activities, as presented by the participants, is difficult to determine within the social movement literature. Ethnography presents a useful methodology for establishing the high-risk participants' self-understanding of their tactical selection and an ideological framework in which they place their experience. This experience has been a defiant voice in opposition to the often-derogatory protest images within the mass media—providing the contextual explanation of personal motives that counteract mainstream presentations (Freund, & Abrams 1976, p. 386). Although social movement literature and independent media often mention jail solidarity incidentally, this ethnographic study is able to supplement a “thick description” through participant self-reflexivity and rich, primary data.

This protest tactic is understood as an innovation, utilized during heightened protest cycles by the global justice movement since 1999. Because this emphasis is on the initial climax of protest cycles and tactical repertoire selection, the current study has drawn on the theories of Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly. Tarrow observed that the most disruptive tactics are most prominent at the initial stages of a protest cycle and the reaction of authorities radicalize and institutionalize the process (della Porta, 2002, p. 301). Charles Tilly (1994) argued that tactical innovations are created on the margins, during heightened moments of such protest cycles. Because the current study examines the interaction between police, criminal justice authorities, and the movement, the range of events rarely extend beyond these unconventional forms of mobilization and solidarity episodes (Koopmans & Rucht, 2002, p. 235).

I collected data at nine protests that transpired between 1999 and 2004: WTO (Seattle, November 30 to December, 3 1999), Republican National Convention (Philadelphia, July 31 to August 3, 2000), IMF/World Bank (Washington, DC, April 16-17, 2000), Democratic National Convention (DNC; Los Angeles, August 14-17, 2000), and the most recent Republican National Convention (New York City, August 29 to September 2, 2004). I was arrested and participated in jail solidarity at the IMF/World Bank (B. Y. Thompson, 2002a) and DNC (2000) protests. In addition, I worked on protest legal assistance with Just Cause Legal Collective at the School of the Americas (Ft. Benning, Georgia, November 2001); and I assisted the NYC People's Law Collective at the following protests: World Economic Forum (New York City, January 31 to February 4, 2002), A20 anti-Afghan war/Palestinian Solidarity (Washington, D.C., April 20-24, 2002), and

IMF/World Bank (Washington, D.C., September 27-29, 2002). Finally, 50 telephone and/or in-person, in-depth interviews were conducted with arrestees and legal workers on the topics of their cognitive shifts, participation, and narration of high-risk experience.

The Interview Process

Interviews began in September 2001, following four mass demonstrations and prior to the participant observation conducted with law collectives. Initial contacts had been established through my involvement, activist history, and connections. After each protest episode, a closed e-mail listserv was established for the arrestees so as to remain in contact and collaborate their subsequent court cases. The “call for interviews” was posted on each listserv, activist alert lists, and popular Web sites, such as *indymedia.org*. Law collective members were also notified and interviewed. When initiated, the snowballing, or word-of-mouth method, procured further interviewees. Kathleen M. Blee and Verta Taylor (2002) suggested that “sampling should strive for *completeness* ... adding new interviewees until the topic is saturated, that is, the interviews are garnering the same kinds of narratives and interpretations” (p. 100). Diversity of participant narratives was sought until this overlap was established (E. Weaver, telephone interview, June 8, 2002).

Interviews began by establishing informed consent, research parameters, and a self-introduction before proceeding to the preformulated list of open-ended questions. Each interview began with an informal discussion about personal activist experience, and they were able to ask clarifying questions on my status as participant and researcher. The participants choose their own pseudonym, and all information was kept under this assumed name (Jackson, 1990, p. 10). In addition, demographic information was recorded—age, occupation, education level, and race. The participants were marginally diverse but were overwhelmingly college-educated, White, and middle class—with an overrepresentation of “professional” activists that either worked for a social justice nonprofit or expended a great deal of volunteer time at one. David A. Snow (Snow, Zurcher, & Ekland-Olson, 1980) argued that activists often “share the kinds of demographic and social characteristics that allow them to follow their interests and/or engage in exploratory behavior” (p. 794). Because of the tight-knit membership and the particular social construction of a unifying political perception, *uniformity*, backed by sympathetic social relationships, becomes vital.

Findings on Race

This homogenizing process contributes to a startling and contentious White racial normativity within the movement, especially detectable within the subpopulation of high-risk participants. Race is a hot-button topic within the movement, and the employment of conversational analysis illustrates a discrepancy between official political rhetoric and the racial reality. Theories of conversational analysis have emerged as a form of ethnomethodological research that attempt to illustrate the ways in which conversation and coordinated action illuminate what is interactional or institutional about a given situation (Maynard & Clayman, 1991, p. 408). This methodology is advantageous in exposing whether this racial insensitivity has been developed through interpersonal or structural developments. Ethnomethodology studies the ways in which individuals define their own reality through the constructs of belief, language, and action. By examining these racial perspectives, often overlooked by other research, it becomes apparent that racial divisions being at the basic levels of individual interpretation and group reinforcement. The participants, who argue that by ignoring race, racism also disappears. The ways in which the participants construct their racial "reality" through linguistic representation illustrates how race is dealt with within the movement. Although Whites often possess the privilege of racial normativity, exemplified by its assumed nature, people of color do not share the luxury of being "nonraced." Some Whites are unable to name their racial identity, while excusing this lack by erasing other racialized groups as well (Lucal, 1996, p. 245). Two participants resisted White self-labeling, and justified their insistence:

B (author): So can you could provide some demographic information, age, race, occupation...

Annie: Okay, I'm 32, I'm an urban planner, I work as a planner, I just graduated last year and I've been working for a year and a half now and I love what I do. I don't like the whole race thing, I'm not buying it for one thing, I don't think there's any anthropological solid evidence for races, but ethnically I guess I'm Caucasian. But I could pick "other" or something. (Annie, personal interview, January 11, 2003)

And another example:

B: So if I could get some demographic info on you, like, age, race, or what you do or did for work?

Ruth Hunter: I will soon be 86, I'm 85. What else?

B: Race.

Ruth Hunter: Race? You really gonna use race?

B: I don't know, I'm just keeping a tally.

Ruth Hunter: I just came from a session this afternoon on race and I think the less we talk about it, I mean, the less we make a point saying this person is White and this person is Black, on written reports, the better. I should say, most of the protesters are, as you probably know, White and middle class. And then college kids. And they are White and middle class too. (Ruth Hunter, telephone interview, June 2, 2002)

Although a biological basis of race has been disputed through anthropological studies, the social construction and impact of racial differences remains. Of the nearly 99% Caucasian sample, several individuals resisted a White self-identification, such as those above. Gail Griffin (1998), a theorist of White privilege, argued that when Whites are asked to “contemplate their own Whiteness” there are three main responses: angry resistance, assuming an attack, avoidance and “digression into abstraction,” or blankness (p. 4). Colorblindness ignores structural racism and power dynamics inherent in racial divisions and allows Whites to erroneously assume that they have evolved beyond race—proclaiming that this ideology is “most beneficial to all people” (Hunter & Nettles, 1999, p. 386). Ignoring race is not equivalent to racial equality and continues White normativity—and although non-Whites may be portrayed as honorably on par with Whites as race is supposedly extinguished—this is ultimately never the case. Through this reflective analysis of the participants on “experience, truth, and reality,” the subsequent symbolic interactions can be contextualized within the larger framework of deficient organizational coalitioning across racial and class divisions (Pollner, 1991, p. 378).

Activists have attempted to rectify this distortion by organizing workshops on anti-White supremacy, and they often recognize the movement as White within public meetings, backhandedly alienating people of color that are present. These workshops discuss racism, the discrepancy between risk taking for Whites and people of color, and the racial dynamics of jail. A great deal of the conversation obsesses about their personal lives and resistance to racial dialogues, all while insisting on their antiracism. Racial insensitivity abounds: “During training practices, should those in the role of police act in an overtly racist manner to reflect the reality of the situation in the real world?” These workshops emphasize self-reflexivity and symbolic interactions—they espouse empty rhetoric on racist, institutional power structures. These gatherings allow Whites to remain central, underscore

their own self-understanding, and neglect the imperative listening to those underrepresented (Hunter & Nettles, 1999, p. 388).

When minorities are present, they are often treated in a tokenistic fashion, encouraged to be a representative for a certain working group (to exhibit the group's progressiveness) or simply as a person of color. Sometimes, these requests are blatant—at meetings, people of color are asked to speak to balance out constant White male vocal domination, or are encouraged to engage with the media to present a skewed vision of the movement. As a mixed-race, Chinese and White ethnographer, I have painfully experienced and witnessed this behavior firsthand. People of color, Asians, are discussed in such a generalized and overlooked manner that I scrunch down in my seat, embarrassed and self-conscious. Others approach and address me as if my ethnicity dragged me along to the protest, as if my ethnicity represents an issue with which my person might not be concerned. We are told that racial issues and people of color should be contained over there, or within this ideological discussion, ghettoized, but not universalized. In general, I am made uncomfortable, as if I do not belong within a group I consider “my people,” and my research world. Thus, I can understand why the movement repels people of color, and that such feelings would encourage disappearance. To examine this hypothesis further, I imagine a focus group comprising people of color that would be involved in the movement—but aren't; or that had been—but quit. With this population, the issue of racial exclusion could be skillful exhibited and perhaps, slowly rectified. Yet that occurrence is remote. I have discussed these issues at length with people of color who are involved in the movement, and some have expressed that this environment is alienating and insulting. Although White activists wonder why people of color are not involved, they rarely reach out in a concrete, lasting fashion, to coalition with organizations of color on their issues and terms—yet expect tokenistic representatives to communicate a false, multiracial movement composition. Although the workshops and discussions are a beginning, the extreme defensiveness under the surface of concern needs to be deflated before the movement can mend the racial rifts.

Ethnographic Ethical Hangover

When interviewing, observation, and textual research were completed, the immense task of converting such information into a presentable text

commenced. The presentation of ethnographic research attempts “to give the illusion that the same experiences would have been (and could be) sensed were the reader there” (Denzin, 1974, p. 276). Such is “the task of *methodology* to explicate methods of turning observations into explanations, data into theory” (Burawoy et al., 1991, p. 5). This task cultivates the apprehension that “there is no direct correspondence between the world as experienced and the world as conveyed in a text, any more than there is a direct correspondence between the observer and the observed” (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 8). In addition, social scientists always, implicitly or explicitly, “attribute a point of view . . . motives,” and therefore, the question becomes not one of avoiding this perspective, but accuracy (Becker, 1998, p. 14). While converting data into text and theoretical frameworks, ethnographers also face the danger of “adding too much structure, too much rationality, to ethnographic analysis” (Fleisher, 1995, p. 7). These obstacles are considered during the process of writing. Ultimately, this becomes the challenge for the ethnographer—to describe as accurately as possible the field under study.

Because of this potential discrepancy between experience and text, the ethnographer’s relationship with the research participants, and the potential conflict between the participants’ self-understanding versus their representation in the ethnographer’s text—an “ethical hangover” may develop. This would represent “a persistent sense of guilt or unease over what is viewed as a betrayal of the people under study” (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 28). This “ethical hangover” is augmented by the discrepancy between the idealized, official social movement rhetoric and the actual experiences of the participants. Within the global justice movement, the language is one of global self-determination, equality, fairness, nonhierarchy, antiracism, and so on. It represents solidarity with the third world and a defense of the local poor. However, this contrasts against the demographics of the U.S. movement and their lack of connection with organizations that represent people of color and the poor. The narratives presented by the interviewees’ resonate with a general consistency of worldview, political ideology, and understanding of the movement. This may develop from the self-selection of similar participants, patterns of introduction into the movement, or the ongoing induction process. Therefore, although the official rhetoric and reconstruction of the movement principles are presented as linguistic and cognitive constructions by participants, their contradictory actions and beliefs are presented as well, so that a more complete picture can be presented.

Jail Solidarity, Cognitive Shifts, and Self-Reflexivity

For this ethnographic research, questions such as “consciousness raising (as a reframing activity), building collective identity . . . and fostering collective solidarity through strong mobilizing frames” (Johnston, 2002, p. 75), and the “micro-level processes” are raised (Buechler 1993, p. 225). For jail solidarity to be implemented, certain processes have to ensue, though these processes can vary—but each has to create a sense of unified positioning and strength through solidarity. For example, law collectives, through their preprotest workshops, teach a sense of solidarity and how to operate in such a cooperative manner. In addition, through informative workshops and interpersonal relations, a construction of a particular set of political beliefs is developed through conversation and action.

In this particular case, arrest is a solidarity-constructing event, and the unjust charges promote a reframing process that creates a rallying point of which to protest. The unity creates a strength, which can contest the mighty force of the jail system. The jail system is dependant on prisoner submission, individualized, and demoralized, a dispirited acceptance of the terms of the institution—exemplified by such institutions as physical compliance, bail, and plea bargaining. Therefore, jail solidarity presents a real challenge to the authorities, especially when systematically unprepared for such resistance:

The leverage for solidarity arises because jails and courts, in order to run smoothly, rely on people to be passive and obedient. Jails expect prisoners to get in line and march where they're told. Courts expect defendants to sit quietly and give up their right to trial. Neither of these systems is set up to deal with large, organized groups of people who simply say, “No, I won't.” So when people non-cooperate and negotiate as a group, the authorities may be forced to agree to their demands. Of course, the demands have to be ones that the jail authorities or the prosecutor are capable of meeting. Jail/court solidarity will not bring about an end to nuclear weapons or corporate globalization. (Just Cause Law Collective, 2004, ¶ 3).

Resistance to authority and participating in jail solidarity can become an ideology reframing exercise in and of itself. Cognitive frames present a unifying and guiding force for individuals and the group (Benford, 1993a, p. 678; Johnston, 2002, p. 72) and the “micro-level processes” are raised (Buechler 1993, p. 225). F). “Interpretive frames” not only guide action but also define problematic condition, construct meaning, legitimate tactical evolution, and

procure recruits (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 615; Snow et al., 1980, p. 477). The arrestees become “signifying agents,” producing symbolic meaning of their protest issue (i.e., sweatshops) and their subsequent arrest and imprisonment (i.e., repressing dissent) to an audience (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 613; Giugni, 1998, p. 386). These messages are expressed through a “vocabulary of motive” reframing issues and conflicts within the ideology of the movement perception (Benford, 1993b, p. 200). Through group meetings and interactions with other activists, the participants quickly gain rhetorical devices that they can turn around and utilize with media or their acquaintances. This framing process also legitimized the utilization of jail solidarity, constructing the subgroup of the high-risk activists as sacrificial victims and pseudomartyrs. Interviewees often expressed this perspective for those that had suffered undue violence or their own injuries—presenting the expectation that speech and assembly rights would be protected by the state, and any shortcomings were violations of justice. The process of reframing is apparent during the cycle of the event, from the training, implementation of newly acquired ideas, and the presentation of such to an audience. Many interviewed protesters expressed their initial understanding of IMF policies as book learned or vague, whereas the experience of the protest increased their knowledge on particular issues, provided opportunities to meet individuals with personal experience, and gained their own personal understanding of state repression processes. This observation of framing development was evident through protester stories of their linear, narrative experience and as witnessed within the field of study.

High-Risk Activism and Personal Experience

Participants in high-risk activism and arrest actions become a self-selected minority or subculture within the larger movement. For them, a sense of honor and status may accompany a political arrest, uniting this group, establishing an elite, cutting-edge cadre (Benford, 1993b, p. 210; Francisco, 2005, p. 64; Jasper, 1997, p. 245; Oppenheimer, 1969, p. 66; F. Thompson, 1993, p. 58). The interviewees that choose such activities were often professional activists, retaining extensive experience, and those curious of the processes, while others were unexpectedly included. Those participating in the symbolic line crossing in Washington, D.C. (2000), were anxious for action of any kind as they waited in the rain for a negotiated process. The logistics and details of this action were included in protester

narratives—such as the experience of remaining in their wet clothes for lengthy periods of time, while some suffered hypothermia—the illustrative details that ethnography provides.

Francesca Polletta (1998) questioned how direct actionists establish these “movement identities on behalf of which people are willing to take high-risk action?” (p. 429). Escalating personal events often precede a resolution that can justify increased self-jeopardy (i.e., witnessing police brutality, friends committed to high-risk activism). Polletta stated that analyzing “movement narratives” can contribute to this understanding, which, she argues, is a “*mode of sociological analysis*” (pp. 419–420; see also, Franzosi, 1998, p. 519). It is this high-risk context, culture, and personal experience that the current study hopes to “thickly describe” (Geertz, 1973, p. 14).

Often these participants have personal resources that provide a more intellectualized, or book-learned sense of corporate globalization processes, rather than personalized experience of third-world degradation (Bookchin, 1971, p. 25; Habermas, 1968, p. 28; Melucci, 1989, p. 35). In addition, the resources available to them often dictate the length and quality of their participation (Melucci, 1989, p. 215). Many interviewees were able to take time off work, or travel great distances to participate, especially movement professionals that provide particular protest functions such as trainers and legal workers. Many participants, however, did not have further resources besides their ability to arrive, like the IWW train hoppers arriving in towns with free speech fights, ready to be arrested for the cause at the turn of the century. These global justice activists took advantage of free accommodations such as lodging on church floors with hundreds of others, and free Food Not Bombs meals. Others did have experiences with third-world poverty, if often from an outside, sheltered perspective. With family from India, Erin Fischer (telephone interview, March 18, 2002) was able to witness this social erosion, yet not live under its domination:

I'd gone to Kenya and had seen the impact of the IMF and World Bank policies directly. Also, my family's from India, one of the poorest states in India, which was very much effected by IMF policies. Because of those structural adjustment policies the education budget was cut by a third. Additionally, the water and air quality are being destroying.

For Agent 99 (personal interview, November 5, 2001), with her ironic, chosen code name, she was curious to learn more and thus found protest a beneficial learning arena:

I wanted to understand what was going on and felt so ignorant. The question of domestic and foreign policy was a mystery to me. And I felt that I learned more at the protest than anything I ever read. I knew I was against certain things but didn't completely understand the details. I wanted to experience jail and see what it was like. . . . I heard your stories [about jail solidarity in DC] and that made me really interested. I was just inspired by that whole thing. I wanted to just throw myself into it.

After her jail solidarity experience, Agent 99 considered it one of the most important for her personal development. Bert Klandermans (1992) discussed these "episodes of collective action have an enduring impact on the participants; their collective identities are formed and transformed" (p. 93). This "enlargement of personal identity" results in "fulfillment and realization of self" (Gamson, 1992, p. 56), enhancing the awareness that "individuals can affect their own destiny" and that of the social climate (Bookchin, 1971, p. 20). Mayer Zald (1992), aware of the importance of self-realization, called attention to the fact that resource mobilization approaches "do not deal well with enthusiasm, spontaneity, and conversion experiences, or with the link between public opinion climates and social movement mobilization and outcomes" (p. 329). This education on social and tactical issues, personal-social awareness, and enthusiasm for high-risk action is imperative for large-scale mobilization processes.

Mobilization Process

Often the initial mobilization process for high-risk activism begins at the preprotest workshops, presented on such topics as "jail solidarity," "know your rights," or on "direct action"—or participation in more comprehensive direct action training camps such as the Ruckus Society. Therefore, these locations provide a primary site for ethnographic observation. These meetings show the development of social organization: recruitment, social bonding, political cognitive development, and solidarity. In these instances, ethnomethodology, the representation of people in their usual settings, presents the ways in which the activists perceive themselves and their position in the world from their own perspective, without an external interpretive authority (Gleeson & Erben, 1976, p. 474). Basically, we can observe at these locations, how participants are brought into the fold. This was a crucial site for observing jail solidarity participant recruitment because these issues are much more forceful and necessary for those high-risk activists.

Johana Shull (telephone interview, November 9, 2001), an arrestee at the WTO protest, attended a “jail solidarity” workshop:

I went through a non-violence and jail solidarity training at the convergence in Seattle. I just knew that it works, I learned the feelings to expect when I was arrested and how to physically protect myself and my friends to a certain extent.

Not only were the participants at such workshops taught to consider arrest as a continuation of the protest but also the tactic spread between protesters, at other moments, such as on the police bus:

One of the things that happened on the buses, was that people who had done legal training with the legal collective, gave mini-legal trainings. So from not knowing anything, by the time I got to the processing place, I'd been a part of a mini-workshop on jail solidarity and a “know your rights” workshop. And also, because I'm Canadian, I questioned what I was going to do. And there was someone who even knew about immigration issues. And some of those people had been involved in the organizing but lots had been at workshops. I guess that's one direct benefit of having legal collectives do so much educational work. (S. Kerr, telephone interview, October 9, 2002)

The decision to participate in jail solidarity could also be decided after the initial arrest and maintained by rejuvenating, moving experiences. Although solidarity may be rhetorically encouraged at preprotest workshops, the actual strength of the experience cannot be estimated. The recounts of such moments were wrapped in nostalgia, reinterpreted through a self-reflexive new lens, one that had already recreated a more linear and correlative narrative. Sarah Kerr (telephone interview, October 9, 2002) described how symbols and actions heightened her sense of solidarity as she sat in the Seattle jail after her arrest at the WTO protests:

The people on the street were drumming and singing, and making a huge ring around the jail that we could see from our windows. It was the most inspiring and empowering thing—and that was their job. They were keeping us going. And our job was to sit there.

Solidarity can be maintained and strengthened under brutal circumstances, creating the need for unity against the exercised repression. Experiencing such extreme behavior can actually produce motives to participate “during and after participation” rather than beforehand (Benford, 1993b, p. 209; Polletta, 1998, p. 421). It also presents a clear binary opposition

between righteous activists and brutal police through the self-reflexive narrative, reinforcing the activists' political ideology, the aim of the story reinforcing a particular interpretation. Political and ideological discrepancies within the narrative are abandoned, and details that present the activists' position as unconvincing are not recounted as thoroughly. These experiences and cognitive constructions do the work of delegitimizing the authorities' use of force, which can then collectively "create corresponding forms of resistance" (Coutin, 1995, p. 538).

During the Republican National Convention (2000) in Philadelphia, the extreme brutality that transpired inside the jails legitimized violence and "other tactics that these individuals devise in response," and exposed the violence inherent within the practice of law (Coutin, 1995, p. 537). Many people were beaten, dragged naked, kicked, and slammed against walls and floors as the authorities attempted to regain control. Sumac (interview, April 1, 2002), an arrestee, described the environment:

The whole environment felt very brutal, not like you were in this space of the law, which is what you might think, because you're in its clutches. But you're in this space outside and beyond the law, where they can do anything they want to do to you with impunity. And there's nothing to protect you there. It was a feeling of extreme vulnerability. At one point, the officers had just sort of cursed us and said they would not try and communicate with us, basically, "you can go screw yourselves." That's when the collective stress hit. And one person started wailing, then another person, and another person. And eventually everyone was screaming at the top of their lungs, pounding the metal walls, stamping their feet, and like monkeys, climbing on the bars. It was this release of collective psychosis. And it was just unbelievable. And I just remember lying there, just hearing all this. It was like the negative "Om." . . . It was the cry of pain, frustration and anger.

The police's response after their abuse ignited the protesters' extreme frustration and despair. While they had previously conducted more disciplined resistance tactics—such as a hunger strike to achieve their goals of universal release—their inability to counteract the brutality subverted their insurgency. Other smaller instances of abuse could be remedied with equal resistance tactics. For example, during the IMF and World Bank protests in Washington, D.C., (2000), the group of arrestees rallied around a woman suffering from wrist pain because of the handcuffs:

She had a wrist problem and her wrists were bound. It was really painful for her. So we used solidarity tactics that we had learned in the training to

encourage the police to remove the wrist bindings. Some of the tactics that were more aggressive didn't work in that case. What ended up happening was, we kept bringing it up over and over again, through different people in the bus. And we just started singing these songs that they didn't like. We kept trying different ways of getting their attention and asking them to remove the wrist cuffs. And eventually they did do it. They loosened them for her. (E. Fischer, 2002)

Episodes such as these exemplify the violence that can transpire during conflicts between police and protesters. These episodes can provoke violent, unorganized resistance on the part of the protesters, or disciplined strategies matched to the demand. These encounters exemplify the violence inherent in state power and the ways in which it shapes protester reframing, motivation, and counterattack.

Such violent and excessive experiences legitimize the cognitive frameworks against authority that have been constructed through the entire process of the protest episode. In addition, for those unaccustomed to police brutality, it becomes a real world lesson that they might have otherwise only read about. The recounting of such narratives with the ethnographer presents an already interpreted account, reinforcing the political ideology, the ability for the participant to be intelligent and self-reflexive, and validity. This cathartic unloading can respond to negative, hegemonic definitions of the movement and its participants. As Freund and Abrams (1976) stated: "Ethnomethodology has been used as a way of validating, for instance, 'deviant experiences' and at least implicitly to criticize the 'falsified' versions of such groups that pass for objective assessments" (p. 386). Therefore, the experience of recounting climatic political moments not only provides a self-reflexive moment and the immediacy of the narrative but also legitimizes the importance of the person's experience and illuminates the overlooked phenomenon of particular details, which is the aim of ethnomethodological practices.

Conclusion

In the book *Ethnography at the Edge: Crime, Deviance, and Field Research*, the author describes methods of gaining access to, and capturing, observable movements of "deviant" behavior: crime, homeless living, addiction, and we can add, high-risk protest activities (Ferrell & Hamm, 1998). Ferrell provided methods of obtaining and analyzing this hidden

conduct and presented these subcultural examples of populations that he observed. Gaining access becomes the ethnographer's primary challenge. As Norman K. Denzin (1974) observed, "a naturalistic account . . . permit[s] entry into the closed worlds of the actor and [allows the ethnographer to] be lodged in those worlds..." (p. 274). Therefore, ethnomethodological practices provide an approach for the study of jail solidarity in that:

ethnomethodologists understand "realities" as constituted *for* members in the social activity of members as they directly experience the world and in the consequent effect this has on their intentionality and the consequent effect their intentionality has on the procedures of the world. (Gleeson & Erben, 1976, p. 477)

Such constituted meanings, whether correct or not, are necessary for the understanding of the research population. When access is gained, and trust is developing, thick descriptions of all aspects of the social movement and its activities can be collected. This is collected through the ethnographer's experience and reliance on sociolinguistic constructions of the participants. The current study relied on interviews with 50 participants, arrestees and legal workers, providing perspectives from both sides of the bars. Such information and details provides a description of the participants' motivation, important for demonstrating an understanding for those distanced and/or unsympathetic. A successful ethnographic study should transmit a sympathetic understanding of the actors and their motivation, regardless of the political orientation of the reader.

Another illuminating detail was the presentation of participants' demographic information and their racial self-understanding. Most participants were White, college educated, middle class, and had the luxury of participation, regardless if that meant their lodging was at the Sheraton or the local church floor. Many were younger, uncommitted, able to travel, unencumbered by financial responsibility for children or family, and not directly related to their protest issue at hand, except for their consumer connection. Because of this demographic information and its analysis, we can better understand how issues of racism and racial exclusion are fostered within the movement. I mentioned the ways in which people of color are left out, ignored, tokenized within the movement, and how this develops from individual "color-blind ideologies" that allows them to ignore race. These perceptions become normalized within the group, and the institutionalization of the process begins.

Like the rest of the movement, most of the jail solidarity participants were White, which provided a strong contrast to the population of the jails. This

moment developed, for them, a personal lesson in race and class dynamics—the privilege of the protesters against that of the impoverished and petty-charged general population was embarrassing. Yet this moment, like those of violence, neglect, and unconstitutionality, provided real-world experiences that could be correlated with their political beliefs and cognitions. These personal experiences and narrations, unlike statistical studies, provide an insight into the self-understanding of high-risk protesters that can endow descriptions unavailable to many. These details provide the “what more,” that Harold Garfinkel (1996) defined as the concern of ethnomethodology (p. 6).

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