

*“Future investigations into labor organizing campaigns will surely benefit from knowing that multiple strategies are invoked, that competing groups will use strategies invoked by the other group, and that a complex interplay of strategies and methods exists.”*

**RHETORICAL  
STRATEGIES IN  
UNION ORGANIZING**  
A Case of Labor Versus Management

TED M. BRIMEYER  
ANDREA V. EAKER  
ROBIN PATRIC CLAIR  
*Purdue University*

*AUTHORS' NOTE: The authors would like to thank the Management Communication Quarterly reviewers and the editor, Charles Conrad, for their helpful comments.*

*Management Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 1, August 2004 45-75  
DOI: 10.1177/0893318904265128  
© 2004 Sage Publications

*This study examines a union organizing campaign to assess the rhetorical strategies used by both union organizers and management. Bowers and Ochs's typology of agitation and control rhetoric is used to analyze these strategies. The union organizers relied on promulgation (e.g., sarcasm, co-opting company messages, and straightforward explanation), polarization, and solidification to gain worker support and later added specific forms of focusing on the issue, visualizing the future, making personal testimonials, using repetition, and having the last word. Management relied on counterpersuasion, which included diversion of attention, drawbacks of change, images of a negative future, education, sarcasm, and polarization to resist the organizing effort. The analysis underscored the importance of examining labor organizing campaigns from a rhetorical perspective. Future studies concerning organizing campaigns are discussed.*

**Keywords:** *labor; management; rhetoric; labor organizing; rhetorical strategies*

**T**he recent call for further rhetorical studies of union organizing (see Cloud, 2001) is more than justified by the current state of labor practices around the world. Changing economies at both the local and global levels have added to workers' problems in complicated and interconnected ways. Domestic workers who fight for improved working conditions often find themselves without jobs when their jobs are moved offshore. Offshore workers, who are faced with poor working environments, are often ill prepared to organize en masse (Applebaum & Bonacich, 2000). Both domestic and global workers face a frightening situation with respect to their rights as workers. Industrial and service workers continue to struggle with low wages (see Ehrenreich, 2001; Mishel, Bernstein, & Schmitt, 2001), unsafe working conditions (see Docherty & Rummel, 1999), and sweat-style management (see Esbenshade & Bonacich, 1999). Union organizing has been promoted as a solution to these problems. Because more attention is currently being paid to labor organizing, it seems crucial for communication scholars to investigate the rhetorical aspects of union organizing campaigns.

It has been argued that negotiating a better work life through unionizing will lead to improved working conditions for many workers. Union organizing, which has a lengthy and complex history in the United States (see Cohen, 1975), resulted in the 8-hour work day, minimum wage law, creation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and much more. Yet, economic conditions have made the minimum wage inadequate (Ehrenreich,

2001) and bureaucratic bungling has allowed businesses to sidestep safety regulations (Docherty & Rummel, 2000). Some workers' rights advocates have encouraged union organizing as the solution. Nevertheless, statistics indicate a decline in union membership.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO THE DECLINE OF UNION MEMBERSHIP

In spite of persistent and growing problems as well as the benefits that could be gained through union organizing, the percentage of union members in the United States has fallen (Farber & Western, 2001). Specifically, union membership declined 53% in the private sector from 1983 to 2002 (Bureau of National Affairs, 2002). Currently, unions cover less than 10% of the private sector labor force (Freeman & Rogers, 1999; Kleiner, 2001). Several factors have contributed to this decline, including government intervention, negative portrayal of unions by media, divisions among workers, strong resistance to unions by management, and underdeveloped and unsuccessful campaigns by union organizers. A brief overview of these contributing factors is provided in the following sections, and although each is important, we will highlight the last two: the relative strength or weakness of rhetorical campaigns by union organizers and the resistance with which these campaigns are met by management.

*Government intervention.* The government has played a significant role in the development and maintenance of labor unions, but government may also have added to the recent decline in union membership. First, the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 gave workers the right "to self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representations of their own choosing and to engage in other concerted activities for the purpose of . . . mutual protection" (Sec. 7). The act outlined unfair labor practices by employers that included interfering with employees' rights to organize and bargain collectively (Gould, 1986; National Labor Relations Act, Sec. 8). But the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, which included the establishment of what counted as unfair labor practices by unions (Gould, 1986), allowed

employers to run anti-union campaigns (Gross, 1995). Labor referred to the law as the "Slave Labor Act" because they saw it as reducing the power of unions (Goldfield, 1987). These congressional laws established the rights of employees and employers, but it is up to the executive branch to enforce the laws.

Recent presidential administrations have provided varied help to labor's cause. For instance, President Carter had a tentatively positive relationship with labor. During his tenure, a bill to speed up the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) processing of representative elections and unfair labor practice charges was passed in the House, but without strong presidential support, it fell two votes short in the Senate (Galenson, 1996). Although Carter's relationship with organized labor was lukewarm, it stood in stark contrast to President Reagan's relationship with unions.

President Reagan's tenure in office coincided with the largest decline in union membership ever (Farber & Western, 2001). He made his feelings toward organized labor clear when he decertified the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization in 1981. Reagan's nominations to the NLRB were antilabor, and Donald Dotson, his eventual appointee to chair the board, was charged by the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations with failing to enforce labor law (Galenson, 1996). Under Reagan's watch, the NLRB sided with employers in 60% of cases, whereas it had only done so 27% of the time under Ford's administration and 29% during Carter's administration (Galenson, 1996).

Following Reagan's lead, George Bush appointed Lynn Martin as labor secretary despite the objection of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (Galenson, 1996). Arguments were raised suggesting that the appointments made by Reagan and Bush to the NLRB allowed a large backlog of unfair labor practice charges to build up and created a board that ruled "for employers and against workers" ("Does the National Labor Relations Board Work for Labor?" 2001, p. 36).

Unions saw the Clinton victory of 1992 as an opportunity to advance labor's agenda, but it has been noted that Clinton did not live up to labor's expectations. When the Workplace Fairness Act failed to pass the Senate, Clinton was criticized for not pushing harder (Galenson, 1996). However, Clinton signed an executive order that would terminate government contracts of more than

\$100,000 if companies hired replacements for strikers (Galenson, 1996) and he initiated the Apparel Industry Partnership that developed into the current Fair Labor Association (Applebaum & Bonacich, 2000). Finally, Clinton appointed William Gould to the head of the NLRB. Under Gould's leadership the backlog of unfair labor practice charges was significantly reduced ("Does the National Labor Relations Board Work for Labor?" 2001).

Most recently, President George W. Bush has supported the ways of the previous Republican administrations. He invoked the Taft-Hartley Act to force dockworkers on the West Coast back to work when they were actually locked out by management ("George Bush, Union Basher?" 2002). Furthermore, he threatened to veto the Homeland Security Bill if it did not include provisions that would waive union protection and he denied representation for more than a thousand workers in the justice department due to national security (Strope, 2002).

Executive privilege has certainly played a role in the status of unions. Although the actions of these administrations influenced labor union size and strength, they explain only a small part of the whole story.

*Negative media portrayal of unions.* Positive public opinion of unions declined from 75% in the mid 1950s to roughly 55% in the mid 1980s (Schmidt, 1993). Researchers credit much of this decline in approval to the coverage of unions by the media (Clark, 1989; Puette, 1992; Schmidt, 1993). Much of the media's coverage of labor unions has often centered on negative aspects such as strikes, corruption, and greed (Clark, 1989; Schmidt, 1993). This negative coverage may have resulted in people receiving biased information that influenced their opinion of unions (Clark, 1989; Puette, 1992; Schmidt, 1993).

The negative depiction of unions is not restricted to the evening news or the business section of the daily paper but also appears in comics, movies, and television shows (Puette, 1992). Puette's (1992) analysis of media including movies, comics, and cartoons uncovers consistent bias against unions. Movies such as *Blue Collar* (French, 1978) depict labor leaders as corrupt. However, there are exceptions; movies such as *Norma Rae* (Asseyev & Rose, 1979) have pictured unions as the solution to workers' oppression.

Both of these films also offer glimpses into the tensions between rank-and-file workers.

*Division among workers.* Even if the political climate was conducive to union organizing and the media provided a positive image of unions, it is still possible for unions to face struggles, especially within the ranks. Dissension among workers can cause strife that can thwart union organizing attempts. Marxist theory suggests that capitalism pits the workers against each other in a struggle for jobs. This can lead to practices where the marginalized group members treat each other as inferior or undeserving, privileging or abandoning certain individuals or groups of individuals within a particular class or category, thereby aggravating tensions between marginalized groups (Clair, 1998). For example, Cockburn (1991) discusses problems of sexism within unions where male union leaders abandon women and their concerns. Cloud (1999) notes that these types of practices occur in relation to race and union organizing. Clair (1998) adds that these practices cross class, race, and gender. Although internal problems may hinder organizing, they may pale in comparison to the difficulties that management creates.

*Management resistance to union organizing.* In the 1940s, with the help of the Taft-Hartley Act, employers began to hire labor relations consultants to prevent workers from successfully organizing (Smith, 2003). The consultants train front-line supervisors to deliver messages about the dire effects of unions on the workforce (Freeman & Medoff, 1984; Levitt, 1993). These consultants often use deceptive tactics to persuade workers into voting against the union (Levitt, 1993). These tactics include *love letters* to employees promising change (Freeman & Medoff, 1984; Levitt, 1993), delaying the vote (Goldfield, 1987; Levitt, 1993), threatening shutdowns (Bronfenbrenner, 2000), and firing union organizers (Bronfenbrenner, Friedman, Hurd, Oswald, & Seeber, 1998). Some tactics, such as delaying the vote, may seem rather benign, but the longer the vote is delayed, the less likely the union's chances of winning the election (Goldfield, 1987). It is during the delay

that consultants are able to organize and execute their anti-union campaigns.

In an analysis of win rates in the retail grocery industry, Lawler (1984) found that management consultants had a statistically significant, although small impact on the outcome. But Lawler warns that the data may contain bias due to underreporting by management consultants. Many other studies also found significant impacts on election outcomes due to management consultants (see Bronfenbrenner & Juravich, 1998; Freeman & Medoff, 1984; Goldfield, 1987).

*Underdeveloped campaigns by unions.* Although many employers make concerted efforts to avoid unionization, unions also have a role to play in their own decline. For the most part, unions failed to organize the growing service, technical, and white-collar sectors of the economy (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1998) by focusing solely on the bread-and-butter issues of those already organized (Clawson & Clawson, 1999). But current American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations’ President John Sweeney stated that organizing would be a top priority (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1998). Studies indicate union tactics play a significant role in determining the outcome of an election (Bronfenbrenner, 1997; Bronfenbrenner & Juravich, 1998). In addition, recent studies show that roughly a third of workers would vote for a union if offered to them, and 82% of those voting yes believe their coworkers would also vote for a union shop (Freeman & Rogers, 1999). This indicates that there is a large pool of workers who would be receptive to organizing. Recent analyses of union organizing have focused on the successful strategies but have not addressed the use of rhetoric as a tool in organizing (see Bronfenbrenner et al., 1998; Cloud, 2001).

Farber (1989) notes that union leaders who wish to increase membership will have to “convince” nonunion workers that unions can be instrumental in making positive changes in their lives. Thus, the manner in which unions communicate their instrumentality is important. Furthermore, Farber suggests countering employer resistance to unions is an understudied phenomenon in the world of

labor organizing. This implies that the rhetorical messages that companies forward to their employees about unions also should be studied for their propensity to create negative images of unions. Thus, both union and corporate rhetoric are deserving of further attention.

## A RHETORICAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING UNION ORGANIZING

Most rhetorical studies concerned with labor have dealt with specific individuals such as Mother Jones (Hawse, 1999; Tonn, 1996) or groups such as the Knights of Labor (Stewart, 1991). They have not, by and large, focused on an organizing effort on the part of a contemporary labor union. Cloud (2001) identified the need for studies of organized labor, calling specifically for “a more traditional rhetorical occupation with the study of social movements, particularly labor [as a means of] understanding and transforming relations of power, both material and symbolic, in the workplace” (p. 270). The rhetoric of social movements may provide a theoretical base from which to study a contemporary organizing campaign.

Bowers and Ochs’s (1971) classification of social movements as an interplay between agitation and control rhetoric provides an excellent framework to explore both sides of an organizing campaign. They define rhetoric as “the rationale of instrumental, symbolic behavior” (p. 2) and write that their main concern is with messages generated by participants. Their view of social change centers on two types of rhetoric used in negotiating. First, agitation rhetoric is used by a group that has a grievance with no means of resolution inside the common constraints of society. Second, the establishment, or individuals who have legitimate power, usually uses control rhetoric to resist the change desired by the agitating group. This study examines the labor union’s rhetoric through use of the agitation typology and the employer’s rhetoric through the control typology. A more detailed review of these typologies appears as follows.



## RHETORIC OF AGITATION

There are nine different types of agitation strategies: petition of the establishment, promulgation, solidification, polarization, non-violent resistance, escalation and/or confrontation, Gandhi and guerrilla, guerrilla, and revolution (Bowers & Ochs, 1971). Although all of these tactics are worthy of further examination, our purposes are best served by focusing on three of these tactics: promulgation, solidification, and polarization. The tactics not examined in this case study focus more on physical types of confrontation between agitators and the establishment. They are therefore less conducive to examining the rhetorical devices used in textual messages.

Petition of the establishment by the agitator, although not a focus of the study, needs to be briefly addressed. Petition of the establishment refers to how the aggrieved group presents its case to the group in control through available channels. The controlling group often ignores or avoids the petition (Bowers & Ochs, 1971). After this occurs, the agitator, lacking avenues for change, proceeds with the other techniques of agitation.

Promulgation is an attempt to gain social support for the cause of the agitator. This can take a variety of shapes, including “informational picketing, erection of posters, and distribution of handbills and leaflets” (Bowers & Ochs, 1971, p. 17). Promulgation can also involve use of the mass media to spread the agitator’s message to as many individuals as possible. Bowers and Ochs (1971) caution that agitators seldom find the media unbiased, however, and that media portrayal may serve to harm their cause more than to help it. To avoid this, Bowers and Ochs suggest that agitators should choose to highlight individuals within their group who lend legitimacy to their cause and stage events that would be considered newsworthy.

Solidification refers to the “rhetorical processes by which an agitating group produces or reinforces the cohesiveness of its members” (Bowers & Ochs, 1971, p. 20). This is especially important for the agitating group because, as Simons (2001) writes, “business corporations may induce productivity through tangible rewards and punishments, [but] social movements, as voluntary collectives,

must rely on ideological and social commitments from their members” (p. 36). Bowers and Ochs (1971) write that this may be achieved through “plays, songs, slogans, expressive and esoteric symbols, and in-group publications” (p. 20). Identification, a process similar to solidification, has been examined extensively in prior research (Brock, 1980; Burke, 1945, 1966; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987; Conrad & Poole, 1998; Tompkins, Fisher, Infante, & Tompkins, 1975). Specifically, Conrad and Poole (1998) contend that employees can be encouraged to become connected to their organization to the extent that their “self-image depends on membership in the organization” (p. 214). One of the ways this may be achieved is by creating a “corporate ‘we’ between workers and the organization” (p. 215), which emphasizes the workers as being individual parts of a single cohesive unit. As such, strategies of identification can be included with strategies of solidification.

Polarization usually occurs after agitators have attracted a substantial following. Polarization involves the use of assertions that individuals who have not committed to the agitators are supporters of the establishment. Allegiance with the establishment carries with it the assumption that individuals are content with the current state of affairs. This forces individuals to make a choice between the two groups. Bowers and Ochs (1971) write that polarization occurs through either “flag issues” or “flag individuals,” that is, issues or people who “for one reason or another, are especially susceptible to the charges made against the establishment by the agitator’s ideology” (p. 27). These tactics negate the possibility of neutrality and underscore the importance of action; inactive individuals are counted as supporters of the establishment.

## **RHETORIC OF CONTROL**

Control rhetoric consists of four types: avoidance, suppression, adjustment, and capitulation. The final two types imply that the agitating faction has “won” because the strategies of adjustment and capitulation involve, in part, accepting that the change pro-

posed by agitators has been made. The two former strategies of avoidance and suppression are vital to active campaigns.

Avoidance involves a number of possible rhetorical strategies, including counterpersuasion, which is the most “common and often successful maneuver available to an establishment” (Bowers & Ochs, 1971, p. 41). Counterpersuasion involves the attempt to prove to agitators that they are wrong. Although this may not seem like avoidance, they sidestep issues rather than directly confront them. This may include an attempt to persuade employees that agitators are wrong without directly addressing the concerns. Another type of avoidance is evasion, which can be an effective means of sidestepping challenges by routing agitators through levels of red tape or bureaucratic procedures. Another avoidance tactic is secrecy with a rationale, meaning that the group in control willfully withholds information with the justification that the information is too sensitive to be shared. Finally, denial of means may remove the ability of the agitators to continue with their organizing, for instance, barring meetings on company property.

Bowers and Ochs (1971) write that suppression, the second type of control rhetoric, is a strategy that is seldom used by establishments until most of the avoidance tactics have failed. Whereas avoidance tactics usually “focus on changing or retarding the issues underlying the agitation, most of the suppression tactics seem to focus on weakening or removing the movement’s spokesperson” (p. 47). The first type of suppression rhetoric is harassment, which is designed to weaken the solidarity of the agitating group and is described by the authors as physical intimidation tactics aimed at the leaders of movements. The second type of suppression rhetoric is an overt denial of the agitator’s demands. The final two suppression tactics available to controlling groups are banishment and purgation, both of which involve forcible removal of agitating individuals from the establishment.

Following the call for more research to explore labor organizing via rhetorical methods, the previous framework was employed to assess the rhetorical strategies of a recent organizing effort. This particular case exemplifies the strategies used in a successful labor organizing campaign.

## A CASE STUDY OF UNION ORGANIZING

To assess current rhetorical strategies in union organizing and counterorganizing efforts, we implemented a case study approach. Responding to a news byline with a photograph and Web address of organizers in a monthly political magazine, the first author requested any and all documents the union organizer would be willing to share about the organizing events that occurred at Complete Grains Grocery Store.<sup>1</sup> The documents provided by the contact included materials created by Complete Grains management as well as by union organizers.

The documents included flyers, booklets, and small posters. Of the documents received, 22 had been created by the union organizers, 8 of which were created prior to management becoming aware of the organizing campaign. These documents are titled as follows:

- “The Complete Philosophy”
- “Why We Are Here”
- “What Unionizing Can Do for Us”
- “Past Attempts to Unionize Complete Grains”
- “Complete Grains Grocery’s Anti-Union Messages”
- “Complete Grains Grocery’s Anti-Union Campaign”
- “Frequently Asked Questions”
- “Do You Know.”

The other 14 documents were created after management launched its anti-union campaign and are titled as follows:

- “Union Information Summary”
- “Important Questions to Ask”
- “Think About This”
- “We Are the Union”
- “Corrections to Complete Grains’ Claims”
- “An Open Letter to Everyone Who Works at Complete Grains”
- “Why We Are Voting Yes” (a poster)
- “Do You Need a Union?”
- “Know Your Rights”
- “Why Organize”
- “What Could the United Grocery Workers Possibly Offer Me?”
- “The Facts About Local 9999”

- “To Complete Grains Workers, From Natural Foods United Grocery Workers Local 9999.”

The organizers also provided documents given to workers by Complete Grains management. They are titled as follows:

- “Dear Team Members”
- “What About ‘At Will’”
- “The FACTS About United Grocery Workers Local 9999” (booklet)
- “You Are Voting for Just One Thing” (booklet).

Although there are only four documents from management, two are rather lengthy; the booklets are 11 and 18 pages, respectively.

According to the Web site, the organizing effort began among the workers. No outside union organizers stirred the proverbial pot. Staff-level employees began discussing workplace issues after some policy changes were enforced without their approval or agreement. An inability to persuade management to alter its position fed further dialogue. Some of the workers formed an organizing committee and began to meet regularly. Upon discovering the high amount of interest in organizing, they began asking workers to sign union authorization cards. Due to workers’ fear of company resistance, these actions were undertaken without the knowledge of Complete Grains management. When management became aware of the organizing drive, they initiated an anti-union campaign. The following sections describe and analyze the rhetoric used in the organizing drive as well as the anti-union messages.

## UNION ORGANIZERS’ RHETORIC

Bowers and Ochs’s (1971) typology of agitator rhetoric includes a petition of the establishment, promulgation, solidification, and polarization. The organizers employed each strategy during the process of gaining support and galvanizing the workforce. The organizers’ Web site indicates that their attempts to petition management failed and that their recourse was to establish a union. In

the initial stages of the organizing drive, the workers used the rhetorical strategies of promulgation, solidification, and polarization.

## PROMULGATION

The union organizers created their initial messages to persuade workers to sign union authorization cards and to support the union. The organizers' strategies included revealing problems in the workplace that organizing could alleviate. Their early rhetoric included (a) sarcasm to reveal company hypocrisy, (b) co-opting company rhetoric, and (c) straightforward explanations of the benefits of organizing.

*Sarcasm.* On a flyer titled "The Complete Philosophy," the organizers cited nine quotes that the company espouses as their core values. These quotes focused on how the company values employees, accepts individuality, and creates a positive work environment. The organizers added, "Sounds good, doesn't it? If only it were true" at the bottom of the flyer. In the flyer titled "Why We Are Here," workers described four experiences that directly contradict Complete Grains's stated philosophy. Under each experience, the organizers sarcastically addressed failed company policy. For example, the workers pointed out, "There is a lack of respect for us, as complaints or issues are handled with disrespect or simple denial," to which the organizers responded, "What about the 'open book, open door, and open people practices?' Please." The workers used sarcasm to demonstrate that company rhetoric and practices are vastly different.

*Co-opting company messages.* Similar to the tactic of sarcasm, workers used company rhetoric to expose hypocrisy. In a flyer titled "Past attempts to Unionize Complete Grains," organizers pointed out that the company is anti-union based on quotes from the company founder and chief executive officer (CEO), a regional president, and the company's past actions against unions. However, this anti-union sentiment directly conflicts with the philosophy of the CEO who, according to the organizers, stated that "although team members are free to organize themselves, they do not need to,

because the team atmosphere alleviates any hierarchical issues.” The workers pointed out that their experiences “prove that the team system is ‘flawed’ and that we do not have as much control as the ‘team’ rhetoric implies.” The organizers used the statements of the CEO to suggest that his stated policies are not carried out through his actions. The CEO’s statement asserts respect for unions, but contrary messages suggest he is against them. The flyer calls attention to a dilemma of which to trust, words or actions? The organizers’ rhetorical strategy suggested that actions speak louder than words.

*Straightforward explanation.* When explaining the benefits of a union, the organizers used a straightforward rhetorical approach. In a flyer titled “What Unionizing Can Do for Us,” the organizers identified five benefits that come with organizing: (a) assurance that the company “will not have absolute power, we will have power in our numbers and especially with our union representation”; (b) assurance of pay equity because wages will be “based on other [city name] unionized grocery stores. . . [and] every worker. . . receives regularly scheduled fair pay increases, and seniority rights”; (c) establishment of job security because workers “will not be fired or disciplined without just cause [because] the union will protect your rights”; (d) the possibility of benefit plans “will be discussed as part of the contract”; and (e) “protection from all types of discrimination.” This straightforward approach stands in stark contrast to the sarcastic approach previously discussed. The union portrayed itself as not having to hide behind catchy but empty slogans. Through the trustworthiness of their messages, the union organizers hoped to gain the trust of the workers (see Botan & Frey, 1983, for a discussion of trustworthy union messages).

Another flyer titled “Frequently Asked Questions” helped to reinforce these messages by pointing out that “unions give workers a voice on the job about respect, safety, security, pay, benefits and other working conditions” and that a union would “give us a right to voice our opinions on our jobs and strive to make Complete Grains a better place to work.” Simply put, the organizers promised that a union would help create a more worker-friendly atmosphere at Complete Grains. The straightforward rhetorical approach portrayed the union as honest and empowering for the workers.

## POLARIZATION

Bowers and Ochs (1971) defined polarization as the assertion by the agitator that those not supporting the agitator support the establishment. Before the company became aware of the organizing effort, the union organizers tried to predict management's reactions and create a division on the union organizer's terms. In a flyer titled "Complete Grains' Anti-Union Campaign," organizers predicted that the company "may attack the union, spread rumors and lies, intimidate, promise improvements, and threaten negative consequences if we unionize." They warned that the company may try to be "manipulative. . . apologize, promise to treat us better and change policies. . . but as soon as people give up the idea of unionizing they will change everything back to the way it was." They also provided a list of company tactics that included (a) hiring "anti-union consultants," (b) mandatory store meetings, (c) creating an anti-union committee made up of workers, (d) love letters promising change, (e) and pressuring team leaders and/or supervisors to "spread anti-union messages." These messages act as preemptive rhetorical devices countering arguments before they ever appear and establish an us-versus-them mentality. These preemptive messages act as warnings to agitators regarding what they can expect from the control group. By predicting management's response, the organizers created a context in which the company and union represented polar opposites. However, no literature specifically stated or implied to workers that "either you are with us or against us." To the contrary, as will be shown later, some of the union organizers' rhetoric attempted to curtail polarization between workers and frontline supervisors.

## SOLIDIFICATION AND IDENTIFICATION

Bowers and Ochs (1971) defined solidification as attempts to create cohesion among members of the agitating group. To reinforce group cohesion, the organizers characterized themselves as underdogs and established moral foundations for their actions. The organizers pointed out,



No group of team members has tried hard enough, got far enough along in the organizing process to have made the news. We will be the first. We will pave the way for others to gain the respect, treatment, collective voice, and pay they deserve.

The characterization plays on the American ideology of supporting the underdog as well as the “few, the brave,” who go first, blazing trails and helping the disadvantaged gain the treatment they deserve. This ideal of assisting others also establishes moral foundations for the organizing campaign. The workers’ drive for a union was not an act of greed but an act of assisting others. Along with supporting the underdog, people want to be on the morally just side of any disagreement.

## MANAGEMENT RHETORIC

Bowers and Ochs’s (1971) typology of control rhetoric includes two different ways in which controlling parties attempt to counteract the agitators: avoidance and suppression. Of these two options, the most common type of rhetorical strategy found in textual messages in this case was counterpersuasion, a type of avoidance. In addition to counterpersuasion, examination of the messages revealed another tactic used by management that is not included in the typology proposed by Bowers and Ochs: education of readers. Following an explanation of these two types of messages, the ways in which management attempted to use agitators’ rhetoric is examined.

### COUNTERPERSUASION

The majority of the control rhetoric strategies found in the messages examined were strategies of counterpersuasion. Counterpersuasion refers to attempts of those in control to convince agitators that their suggested changes are not desirable alternatives. This case demonstrated three ways counterpersuasion was used by man-

agement: diversion of attention, drawbacks of change, and focus on a negative future.

*Diversion of attention.* Management made a continuous effort to direct employees' attention to issues other than the ones the union presented. Bowers and Ochs's (1971) offered an example of a child wanting to attend a county fair and throwing a tantrum to gain that end. In response to the tantrum, the parents offer a less costly alternative, such as attending a movie. Similarly, agitators' complaints about certain aspects of the working environment resulted in management's offering less costly alternatives, that is, describing existing programs that showed the company's advantage. For instance, in one communiqué, management wrote that "our gainsharing program, flexible benefits, 20% discount on all purchases, and 401K and stock purchase plan are just a few of the many compensation programs that make us a workplace of choice." This highlighting of specific benefits not mentioned by the union serves to direct the argument away from issues to which the union organizers are attempting to call attention and instead redirects the argument to issues in which the company excels.

When not redirecting attention, management attempts to highlight only select aspects of union messages. For instance, another text includes an excerpt from a union contract that is strategically manipulated by management. The following part of the excerpt was underlined: "Any employee who is delinquent in payment of union dues or service fees shall be terminated."<sup>2</sup> A caption comments on the previous excerpt, saying, "The union could force the company to fire you for failure to pay dues." However, the rest of the excerpt, which is not underlined, specifies that the employee will be terminated only from the union, not the company. By calling attention only to the part of the contract language that supported management's contention, management was diverting the attention of readers (i.e., the workers) away from the actual meaning of the contract.

*Drawbacks of change.* While agitators' rhetoric focused on the need to change the existing system, control rhetoric demonstrated

to readers (i.e., the workers) that changes to the current system are not desirable. In a flyer titled "What About 'at Will?'" management asserted that current procedures at the company include the "fair hearing procedure," which had overturned seven terminations. Another system in place was the "open door communications policy," which enabled employees to communicate with anyone in the company hierarchy. Management suggested that bringing in a union would jeopardize the current state of affairs. One flyer asserted that with a union, employees would have "the same or fewer benefits than you have now." Management portrayed the present as well-designed to meet the needs and desires of employees and further suggested that tampering with the system would result in a less satisfactory environment for employees.

*Negative future.* In addition to showing the drawbacks to changing the existing system, management also painted a picture of a negative future in the event that the union was voted in. In one text, management indicated that the presence of a union would result in an "us-versus-them" atmosphere. Another text asked what employees are "willing to risk at the bargaining table?" Other messages reminded workers that they could "lose benefits as well as gain them." An additional document stated that a contract would take a long time to negotiate and settle. Taken together, these messages indicated that unionization may lead to conflict and the loss of benefits at the expense of a lengthy and drawn out process.

Not only did management show that the future would change for the worse with union involvement, but also management's arguments were based on negation. Whereas union rhetoric pointed to affirmations of what employees would gain or what they were voting for, management arguments were summed up in two places as loss. In several flyers, the rhetoric stated, "You are not voting for: job security, different rules, different leadership, better benefits, better pay." By presenting the vote for organization as an action that does not represent a certain agenda, management focused on the absence of meaning in voting rather than its presence. This indicates that the act of voting itself held less meaning than union organizers attempted to assign it.

## EDUCATIONAL NATURE OF MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

In addition to counterpersuasion, management also sent the message to readers that employees should be educated by the information provided. For instance, one text suggested that employees “be informed” before they vote. A second set of flyers was titled “12 Facts You Should Know,” calling to mind a review of information for an exam. Similarly, another document stated “Think carefully. This is serious business. Get the facts.” Emphasis on the word “facts” in both locations underscores the validity of the information to be presented.

## MANAGEMENT’S USE OF AGITATION RHETORIC

In addition to rhetorical strategies noted by Bowers and Ochs (1971), management employed two of the strategies that were used by agitators. That agitator or control groups may use the rhetoric of the other party was not a possibility addressed by Bowers and Ochs; however, in this case, the management used two strategies that were also used by the agitator (i.e., sarcasm and polarization).

*Sarcasm.* After quoting or inserting a part of union rhetoric, management responded at times with sarcastic questions. For instance, in one flyer, management wrote that the company currently considers 24 or more hours a week full-time employment and then asked, “What does the union consider as full-time?” In another document, management asked readers “Who benefits from requiring . . . union membership as a condition of employment? Dues payments?” These quotes suggest that the union is clearly the benefactor of these practices, not the workers. Finally, in another flyer, management asked “how flexible is vacation scheduling now?” This question directly followed an excerpt of contract language that indicated that under union rule, employees would be required to schedule vacations with both their employer and their union.

*Polarization.* Management also attempted to polarize the positions of labor and management through the use of language such as

“us versus them” in a letter from management. However, their attempt to distance themselves from union organizers may have actually helped aid in the solidification of all employees into potential agitators. By using a phrase such as “us versus them,” group solidarity for the agitators may have been enhanced.

## UNION ORGANIZERS' RESPONSE TO MANAGEMENT'S COUNTERCAMPAIGN

After management began their countercampaign, the union organizers continued to use the rhetorical strategies of co-opting company messages and sarcasm. In addition, the organizers added the techniques of focusing on the issues, repetition, and testimonials.

*Co-opting and sarcasm.* In the “Open Letter,” the organizers reacted to management’s claim that Complete Grains is a great place to work based on published rankings by pointing out that “it is not up to *Fortune* magazine” to determine if Complete Grains is a great place to work, “it is up to the workers.” The organizers argued that the workers experience how the company treats them, not *Fortune* magazine. Although management relied on a “legitimate” source to validate their opinion, organizers claimed that the source was actually illegitimate.

The organizers also used sarcasm when refuting managerial claims about the union. The organizers corrected several claims that Complete Grains made about the union and asked, “If these are Complete Grains’ most convincing arguments against unionizing, and they aren’t true, what does that say about Complete Grains’ anti-union position?” To further challenge the company, a flyer was produced listing 10 questions that a worker could ask in a captive audience meeting (i.e., mandatory work meeting). The questions, although asking for factual information, could be viewed as a form of sarcasm. For example, questions to ask included, “Do you have a legal obligation to negotiate a contract with us if we don’t unionize?” and “Why won’t you allow the pro-union workers to present

their side at one of these meetings? I thought you wanted us to be as informed as possible?"

## FOCUSING ON THE ISSUES

The organizers did not allow management to divert attention from the workers' issues via management's attack on the supervisors' credibility. Specifically, management suggested that the workers' desire to organize reflected on the frontline supervisors' abilities to provide a harmonious workplace. Management was attempting to polarize staff and supervisors. However, the union organizers pointed out that "team leaders are simply following the decisions of corporate managers [and that] this is not a personal attack on your leadership skills." They attempted to show supervisors that the union would not harm their relationship despite what supervisors were told by upper management. This tactic prevented management from diverting the attention and making the supervisors the scapegoats. In addition and as mentioned earlier, this rhetorical move advances inclusiveness of the frontline supervisors; thus, the agitators were not always limited to the rhetoric of polarization.

## VISUALIZATIONS OF THE FUTURE

Although not a technique in the Bowers and Ochs's (1971) model, Stewart (1991) suggests that providing a vision of the future is crucial to union success. In this case, the organizers used the rhetoric of future success in two ways. First, they provided messages of an inevitable victory in several flyers with statements such as, "Once we vote to unionize," "When the majority of Complete Grains employees vote yes for union representation," and "When Complete Grain's workers win the election for representation." Second, they provided images of the benefits that would follow. In the flyers created after the company countercampaign, the organizers repeated that organizing a union was an attempt to improve working conditions for the benefit of all. They pointed out that "driving workers' intent to unionize is a deep desire to better the

workplace conditions,” “to improve the conditions for all workers,” and “to make Complete Grains. . . a better place to work.” The union would be an asset for the company because it would “increase employee morale and decrease turnover—essential components of managerial happiness. . . and all around store success.” The organizers’ rhetoric implied that a union would benefit the company, not divide it, suggesting that management’s animosity toward unions was misguided. Stewart (1991) argues that one of the reasons that the Knights of Labor disbanded is because the leaders failed to provide a positive vision of the future. Here, two visions are developed, one of inevitable victory and the other of the good life that will follow.

## TESTIMONIALS

A flyer containing testimonials from supervisors at Last Stop Grocery, a grocery store unionized by the same local, was distributed to workers. Last Stop Grocery supervisors pointed out that the union improved the relationships between workers and management. One supervisor stated, “To people considering going union: The benefits far outweigh any negatives. We’re with you all the way.” This reinforced the union’s claim that the union would help the company and that this particular union local would not create divisions between workers and supervisors.

The final flyer the organizers produced contained quarter-sized pictures of 53 Complete Grains’ workers who stated why they planned to vote for the union. One worker pointed out that “I want control of my working environment; currently I have none, regardless of what management is telling us.” Another added, “We need a real grievance procedure (especially about sexual harassment issues), fair wages, and better benefits.” This type of flyer is meant to “reinforce the cohesiveness” of the members (Bowers & Ochs, 1971, p. 36). The flyer also reinforced the previous concerns of the workers in the store and showed that workers were not afraid of the company. To those who were undecided on the issues, the union organizers attempted to show that there was nothing to fear. By identifying themselves through photographs, these workers demonstrated their commitment and desire to bring others to the cause.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE RHETORICAL CHOICES

Several implications may be drawn from this case study. Although it may seem somewhat oversimplified to categorize the rhetoric of campaigns into two major groupings, this case did indeed find some support for doing so. As suggested by Bowers and Ochs (1971), much of the rhetoric of agitation fit within the general categories of promulgation, solidification, and polarization, whereas the rhetoric of control fit primarily within the categories of counterpersuasion, deferring attention, focusing on future negative consequences, and maintaining the current state of harmony. With that said, in some cases, crossover strategies surfaced. Crossover strategies are rhetorical devices used by both groups. Some fell within the Bowers and Ochs (1971) typology, whereas others had not been previously pointed out. For example, although both groups talked about the future, management argued that a future with the union would be negative while the agitators used rhetoric of the future to project victory and paint a picture of a better work world. This example rests on a crossover strategy not listed by Bowers and Ochs. Another example shows how the counter group drew on a rhetoric supposedly meant for the other group. Polarization, as explained by Bowers and Ochs, is a strategy used by the agitator, but in this case, management also used polarization when they suggested that unionizing would create an "us-versus-them" atmosphere.

An important finding from this study that deserves further consideration is the existence of two types of overall strategies: messages and methods. For instance, the union organizers implemented several rhetorical strategies of both kinds. They include four message strategies and four method strategies related to implementing the messages. The four message strategies include the use of (a) sarcasm to reveal contradictions in the system, (b) co-optation to challenge management's rhetoric, (c) projections of a victorious and positive future, and (d) personal testimonials. The four method strategies include (a) taking the rhetorical lead, (b) preempting management's rhetoric, (c) repeating of messages, and (d) claiming the conclusion or having the last word. Both message



strategies and methodological strategies may be intertwined at times.

Turning to the first message strategy, we find that little research has been conducted on sarcasm as a rhetorical strategy. Yet, the union organizers used it repeatedly (i.e., a method strategy). Dry humor may have provided an edge for union organizers that management was unable to dispel. Referring to management's messages as "love letters" allowed organizers to demonstrate their sense of humor at management's expense. Management did indeed follow with a few sarcastic remarks, and the company president did initiate one rather stinging comment about unions in general.<sup>3</sup> But for the most part, management copied the organizers' style rather than the other way around, thereby allowing organizers the rhetorical lead (i.e., a method strategy).

Co-opting company messages at times invoked sarcasm and were also an often-repeated strategy. Thus, we see an overlap of both message and method strategies. For example, the open-door policy is portrayed by the organizers as "if you don't like it, you can leave," which is clearly sarcastic. But even beyond incorporating sarcasm, union organizers are able to co-opt this message by explaining that quitting "is not a form of worker empowerment or equality between management and workers—it is a form of control." Thus, they reverse the message of the open-door policy and then use its new sarcastic version to develop their own message of empowerment. Furthermore, they invoke this message on more than one occasion.

An example of co-optation as a message strategy alone surfaced in the document that read, "Indeed, as we read in last week's letter [from management] the workers of Complete Grains are what make the company great," yet Complete Grains relies on "worker apathy" to maintain what organizers considered high turnover, low wages, and poor working conditions. Here, the organizers develop a lengthy argument that co-opts management's message to their own use. And again, when management calls on testimony from *Fortune* magazine to prove their point that they are a great company for which to work, the organizers are quick to remind the workers that nobody asked workers if this is a great company.

Messages of inevitable victory and a promising future were not coupled with sarcasm by organizers, but they were repetitiously

presented in varied formats. Numerous examples, from a variety of flyers and e-mails, exist: "Once we vote to unionize," "Power will be shifted," "We will be the first," "After we win union recognition," and "Once we vote in our union." These messages may provide a sense of security concerning the outcome of the vote and the treatment workers will receive in the future. Stewart (1991) suggests that portraying the future as positive is important to achieving or sustaining a union. Management rarely painted a perfect picture of the future as long as the company remained union free. Instead, they usually provided negative images of what would happen if workers unionized.

Finally, although management used *Fortune* magazine as legitimating their position, they did not invoke personal testimonials. Union organizers, on the other hand, not only used personal testimonials but also invoked those testimonials as the last word shortly before the vote, once again implementing both method and message strategies. Having the last word provided the organizers with another display of dominance. Furthermore, personal testimonials, as suggested earlier, may have nurtured a sense of security and solidarity.

## CONCLUSION

Although a number of caveats need to be addressed concerning the case study selected for analysis, several important implications can be drawn from the review. First, with respect to the caveats, scholars and practitioners of organizational communication need to be aware that any analyses of texts, which are isolated from the context, may be incomplete. That is to say, without full knowledge of the history, geography, and sociopolitical surroundings, an analysis of what contributes to a successful union organizing campaign may be missing crucial contributing factors. For example, the location of the organization in general as well as the more specific cultural community may offer a general milieu supportive to union organizing that may not exist elsewhere. Other caveats for the scholar to keep in mind include that case studies are inherently plagued by their lack of generalizability, their constrictions histori-

cally, and their subject uniqueness. Suggesting a causal relationship between the use of specific rhetorical strategies and union success in organizing would not be possible without examination of contextual issues at the company, union, public perception of both entities, and the social climate of the surrounding area. Although we do not undertake such a contextual examination here, analysis of the rhetorical strategies used are important because of rhetoric's potential to influence the outcome of a union organizing campaign.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, a more specific caveat must be raised related to the texts. All of the rhetorical texts were gathered from one source, an employee who was also an organizer. It is possible we did not receive the complete texts (i.e., the organizer may have missed certain documents). In future studies, researchers should collect textual evidence from both organizers and management sources.

A third caveat to note is that the textual analysis undertaken here is not conducive to identifying several of the other control strategies suggested by Bowers and Ochs (1971). For instance, Bowers and Ochs discuss denial of means as a way for controlling parties to prevent agitators from obtaining necessary resources for their cause. Although such a denial may have occurred in the case of this company (e.g., the company forbidding union organizers to present information on company property), an examination of textual messages does not necessarily allow for identification of such practices. Such tactics are worthy of study, however, and should be recalled for future examinations of organizing campaigns.

As suggested earlier, communication scholars have understudied labor organizing and especially its rhetorical aspects. This case study is meant to fill in some of the gaps in the literature that have not addressed contemporary union organizing strategies. Relying on well-grounded rhetorical theories concerning campaign strategies, we found support for past assertions concerning agitator and control rhetoric as well as additional findings, such as employment of crossover strategies (i.e., both organizers and management drew from each other's arsenal of rhetorical strategies), varied message strategies (e.g., sarcasm, educational), different methodological strategies (e.g., use of preemptive rhetoric and repetition, claiming the rhetorical lead and the last word), and the intertwining of message and method strategies (e.g., repetition of victory messages).

This study suggests union organizing campaigns present fruitful ground for rhetorical scholars. Future investigations into labor organizing campaigns will surely benefit from knowing that multiple strategies are invoked, that competing groups will use strategies invoked by the other group, and that a complex interplay of strategies and methods exists. The possibilities for future studies include addressing the surrounding rhetorical and historical context and the interplay of textual messages with the contextual messages.

## NOTES

1. The name of the grocery stores and union are pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

2. Visually, the message looked like the following: *Any employee who is delinquent in payment of union dues or service fees shall be terminated within 10 days of notice from the union.*

3. Several years prior to the organizing drive, the company chief executive officer sarcastically compared having a unionized workforce to "having herpes."

4. Workers of Complete Grains voted 65 to 54 in favor of a union; however, the union was decertified in November 2003, 1 and a half years after the initial vote. For a union to be decertified, 30% of the workers need to sign a petition indicating they wish to vote for decertification. Workers who wish to decertify their union must wait for a year after the initial union certification vote (see the National Labor Relations Act, Sect. 9).

## REFERENCES

- Applebaum, R. P., & Bonacich, E. (2000, April 7). Choosing sides in the campaign against sweatshops: The key is enhancing the power of workers. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, pp. B4-B5.
- Asseyev, T., & Rose, A. (Producers). (1979). *Norma Rae*. [Motion picture]. 20th Century Fox: United States.
- Botan, C. H., & Frey, L. R. (1983). Do workers trust labor unions and their messages? *Communication Monographs*, 50, 233-244.
- Bowers, J. W., & Ochs, D. J. (1971). *The rhetoric of agitation and control*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

- Brock, B. L. (1980). Rhetorical criticism: A Burkeian approach. In B. L. Brock & R. Scott (Eds.), *Methods of rhetorical criticism* (2nd ed., pp. 348-356). Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, K. (1997). The role of union strategies in NLRB certification elections. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 50, 195-212.
- Bronfenbrenner, K. (2000). Raw power: Plant-closing threats and the threats to union organizing. *Multinational Monitor*, 21, 24-30.
- Bronfenbrenner, K., Friedman, S., Hurd, R. W., Oswald, R. A., & Seeber, R.L. (1998). Introduction. In K. Bronfenbrenner, S. Friedman, R. W. Hurd, R. A. Oswald, & R. L. Seeber (Eds.), *Organizing to win: New research on union strategies* (pp. 1-18). Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, K., & Juravich, T. (1998). It takes more than house calls: Organizing to win with a comprehensive union-building strategy. In K. Bronfenbrenner, S. Friedman, R. W. Hurd, R. A. Oswald, & R. L. Seeber (Eds.), *Organizing to win: New research on union strategies* (pp. 19-36). Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.
- Bureau of National Affairs. (2002). *Labor union membership by sector: 1983 to 2000*. Washington, DC: Congressional Informational Service.
- Burke, K. (1945). *A grammar of motives*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Burke, K. (1966). *Language as symbolic action: Essays on life, literature, and method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chency, G., & Tompkins, P. K. (1987). Coming to terms with organizational identification and commitment. *Central States Speech Journal*, 38, 1-15.
- Clair, R. P. (1998). *Organizing silence: A world of possibilities*. Albany: SUNY.
- Clark, P. (1989). Union image—building at the local level. *Labor Studies Journal*, 14, 48-68.
- Clawson, D., & Clawson, M. A. (1999). What has happened to the US labor movement? Union decline and renewal. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25, 95-119.
- Cloud, D. L. (1999). The null persona: Racialized rhetorics of silence in the uprising of '34. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 2, 177-209.
- Cloud, D. L. (2001). Laboring under the sign of the new: Cultural studies, organizational communication, and the fallacy of the new economy. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 15, 268-278.
- Cockburn, C. (1991). *In the way of women: Men's resistance to sex equality in organizations*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.
- Cohen, S. (1975). *Labor in the United States* (4th ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill.
- Conrad, C., & Poole, M. S. (1998). *Strategic organizational communication* (4th ed.). Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace.
- Docherty, N., & Rummel, D. (Producers). (1999). *A dangerous business*. [Frontline series]. Washington, DC: PBS Home Video.
- Does the national labor relations board work for labor? Interview with William Gould. (2001). *Working USA*, 4, 34-48.
- Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

- Esbenshade, J., & Bonachich, E. (1999, July/August). Can conduct codes and monitoring combat America's sweatshops? *Working USA*, pp. 21-33.
- Farber, H. S. (1989). Trends in worker demand for unionization. *AEA papers and proceedings*, 79, 166-171.
- Farber, H. S., & Western, B. (2001). Accounting for the decline of unions in the private sector, 1973-1998. *Journal of Labor Research*, 22, 459-485.
- Freeman, R. B., & Medoff, J. L. (1984). *What do unions do?* New York: Basic Books.
- Freeman, R., & Rogers, J. (1999). *What workers want*. Ithaca, NY: IRL Press.
- French, R. (Producer). (1978). *Blue Collar* [Motion picture]. TAT Communications Company: United States.
- Galenson, W. (1996). *The American labor movement, 1955-1995*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- George Bush, union-basher? (2002, October 12). *The Economist* [U.S Edition], pp. 26-27.
- Goldfield, M. (1987). *The decline of organized labor in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gould, W. B. (1986). *A primer on American labor law*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Gross, J. A. (1995). *Broken promises: The subversion of US labor relations policy, 1947-1994*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Hawse, M. L. (1999). *Mother Jones: The "miners' angel"* (Part 2). Retrieved September 20, 2003, from <http://www.suite101.com>
- Kleiner, M. (2001). Intensity of management resistance: Understanding the decline of unionization in the private sector. *Journal of Labor Research*, 22, 519-540.
- Lawler, J. J. (1984). The influence of management consultants on the outcome of union certification elections. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 38, 38-51.
- Levitt, M. (1993). *Confessions of a union buster*. New York: Crown.
- Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Schmitt, J. (2001). *The state of working America*. Ithaca, NY: IRL Press.
- National Labor Relations Act. (1935). Retrieved September 25, 2003, from <http://www.nlr.gov/nlr/legal/manuals/rulesact.pdf>
- Puette, W. J. (1992). *Through jaundiced eyes: How the media view organized labor*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.
- Schmidt, D. E. (1993). Public opinion and media coverage of labor unions. *Journal of Labor Research*, 14, 151-164.
- Simons, H. W. (2001). Requirement, problems, and strategies: A theory of persuasion for social movements. In C. E. Morris III & S. H. Browne (Eds.), *Readings on the rhetoric of social protest* (pp. 34-45). State College, PA: Strata.
- Smith, R. M. (2003). *From blackjacks to briefcases: A history of commercialized strikebreaking and unionbusting in the United States*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Stewart, C. J. (1991). The internal rhetoric of the Knights of Labor. *Communication Studies*, 42, 67-82.
- Strope, L. (2002, July 27). Bill's provisions upset unions. *Lafayette Journal and Courier*, p. A2.

- Tompkins, P. K., Fisher, J. Y., Infante, D. A., & Tompkins, E. L. (1975). Kenneth Burke and the inherent characteristics of formal organizations: A field study. *Speech Monographs*, 42, 135-142.
- Tonn, M. B. (1996). Militant motherhood: Labor's Mary Harris "Mother" Jones. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 82, 1-21.

*Ted M. Brimeyer is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Purdue University.*

*Andrea V. Eaker received her M. A. in Communication from Purdue University in 2004.*

*Robin Patric Clair is an associate professor in the Department of Communication at Purdue University.*