

Tempered Radicalism and the Politics of Ambivalence and Change

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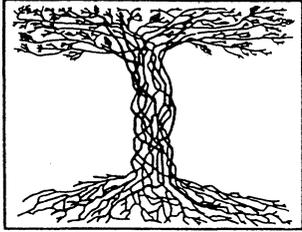
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# CROSSROADS

When I read the first draft of this manuscript it provided a genuine “aha” experience. I felt that “tempered radicalism” was a concept that had been waiting to be invented. Meyerson and Scully, in my view, have grasped an important idea and have written about it in a careful and an illuminating way. It’s one of those papers, I suspect, that some people will react to by thinking: “I wish I had written that!” Further, I can see others I know well in the field as fitting the description of the tempered radical, at least in some circumstances and at different times. The reviewers, while suggesting changes, as reviewers do, were also very taken with the paper. It is intellectually interesting, and evocative. It provides us with a perspective on organizational issues that is typically glossed. It opens an arena for organizational analysis that is missed in most theoretical frameworks.

Tempered radicals, Meyerson and Scully argue, are individuals who identify with and are committed to their organizations and also to a cause, community or ideology that is fundamentally different from, and possibly at odds with, the dominant culture of their organization. Their radicalism stimulates them to challenge the status quo. Their temperedness reflects the way they have been toughened by challenges, angered by what they see as injustices or ineffectiveness, and inclined to seek moderation in their interactions with members closer to the centre of organizational values and orientations.

The paper is a scholarly treatment of a complex concept. It is radical in its charge to us to see new possibilities in the study of organization. It is tempered, even hopeful, in its prescriptions for harnessing participants who are often on the margins of organizational life and who have much to offer to enrich and sustain positive change in organizations. It is a very appropriate contribution to Crossroads.

*Peter Frost*

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## Tempered Radicalism and the Politics of Ambivalence and Change

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## Abstract

"Tempered Radicals" are individuals who identify with and are committed to their organizations, and are also committed to a cause, community, or ideology that is fundamentally different from, and possibly at odds with the dominant culture of their organization. The ambivalent stance of these individuals creates a number of special challenges and opportunities. Based on interviews, conversations, personal reflections, and archival reports, this paper describes the special circumstances faced by tempered radicals and documents some of the strategies used by these individuals as they try to make change in their organizations and sustain their ambivalent identities.

*(Organizational Change; Organizational Activism; Women in Management; Minorities in Management; Ambivalence; Identity; Fit; Feminism in Organizations; Marginality)*

A woman executive can identify with feminist language that is far from commonplace in corporate life and challenges the very foundations of the corporation in which she holds office. She can also be loyal to her corporation, earnestly engaged by many of its practices and issues, and committed to a career in a traditional, male-dominated organization or profession. A male business school professor can hold an identity as a radical humanist and embrace values directly in contest with capitalist corporations. He can also be committed to his job in the business school and teach practices that, in effect, enforce the tenets of capitalist organizations. An African-American architect can identify with her ethnic community and be committed to creating a more equitable and healthy urban environment. She can also identify with a professional elite and be committed to an organization that perpetuates the decay of urban neighborhoods. These individuals do not easily fit within the dominant cultures of their organizations or professions. However, despite their lack of fit, or perhaps because of it, they can behave as committed and productive members and act as vital sources of resistance, alternative ideas, and transformation within their organizations.

These individuals must struggle continuously to handle the tension between personal and professional identities at odds with one another. This struggle may be invisible, but it is by no means rare. Women and members of minorities have become disheartened by feelings of fraudulence and loss as they try to fit into the dominant culture. Some leave the mainstream. Others silence their complaints and surrender their identities.

However, separatism and surrender are not the only options. While frustration may be inevitable, individuals can effect change, even radical change, and still enjoy fulfilling, productive, authentic careers. We write this paper about and for the people who work within mainstream organizations and professions and want also to transform them. We call these individuals "tempered radicals" and the process they enact "tempered radicalism."

We chose the name "tempered radical" deliberately to describe our protagonist. These individuals can be called "radicals" because they challenge the status quo, both through their intentional acts and also just by being who they are, people who do not fit perfectly. We chose the word "tempered" because of its multiple meanings. These people are tempered in the sense that they seek moderation ("temper blame with praise," *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 1975). In the language of physics, they are tempered in that they have become tougher by being alternately heated up and cooled down. They are also tempered in the sense that they have a temper: they are angered by the incongruities between their own values and beliefs about social justice and the values and beliefs they see enacted in their organizations. Temper can mean both "an outburst of rage" and "equanimity, composure," seemingly incongruous traits required by tempered radicals.

Tempered radicals experience tensions between the status quo and alternatives, which can fuel organizational transformation. While a great deal of attention has been devoted to issues of organizational "fit," change often comes from the margins of an organization, borne by those who do not fit well. Sources of change can give organizations welcomed vibrancy, but at the same time, the changes that the tempered radical encourages may threaten members who are vested in the status quo. Is this transformation "good for" the organization? The answer may change as standards of judgment change, for example, when an organization shifts from a stockholder to a stakeholder model. Many people ask us "what exactly" the tempered radical can change, and "how much." One dilemma for the tempered radical is that the nature and effectiveness of change actions is elusive, emergent, and difficult to gauge. The yardstick for change frequently changes metrics. In this paper, we will not focus on whether the tempered radical ultimately wins the battle for change, but rather on how she remains engaged in the dual project of working within the organization and working to change the organization. We focus on the individuals themselves, the perspectives they assume, the challenges they face, and the survival strategies they use. It

is important to understand these individuals as central figures in the battle for change because if they leave the organization, burn out, or become coopted, then they cannot contribute fully to the process of change from inside.

Writing this paper is an example of tempered radicalism. We discuss our own and others' radical identities and implicitly critique professional and bureaucratic institutions. We draw from formal interviews and dozens of informal conversations with tempered radicals, first-person accounts from related literatures, and descriptions of tempered radicals in the popular press. We experiment with modes of scholarship as we attempt to weave personal narrative into our paper. The content of our stories illustrates substantive dilemmas of tempered radicalism; the form of the stories, which makes our subjectivity explicit, is an example of tempered radicalism insofar as it pushes traditional notions of social science writing and draws inspiration from feminist approaches to scholarship (e.g., Krieger 1991, Reinhartz 1992).

The first section below paints a portrait of the tempered radical. The second and third sections discuss the advantages and the disadvantages of ambivalence as a cognitive and political stance. The last section describes some strategies used by tempered radicals to sustain their ambivalence and work for change.

## Tempered Radicalism: The Process and Practitioners

### Tempered Radicalism

Individuals come to work with varied values, beliefs, and commitments based on multiple identities and affiliations that become more and less salient in different circumstances; they have situational identities (Demo 1992, Gecas 1982). The tempered radical represents a special case in which the values and beliefs associated with a professional or organizational identity violate values and beliefs associated with personal, extra-organizational, and political sources of identity. In the tempered radical, both the professional and personal identities are strong and salient; they do not appear alternately for special situations. In most situations, the pull of each identity only makes the opposite identity all the more apparent, threatened, and painful.

Threats to personal identity and beliefs can engender feelings of fraudulence, misalignment (Culbert and McDonough 1980), and even passion and rage (hooks 1984). These feelings can bring about change. For the tempered radical alignment and change are flip sides of the same coin. When tempered radicals bring about

change, they reshape the context into one where it is a bit easier to sustain their radical identities. Untempered, this approach may alienate those in power and threaten the tempered radical's professional identity and status. The tempered radical may therefore cool-headedly play the game to get ahead, but does not want to get so caught up in the game that she violates or abandons her personal identity and beliefs. In this sense, tempered radicals must be simultaneously hot- and cool-headed. The heat fuels action and change; the coolness shapes the action and change into legitimate and viable forms.

### Who Are the Tempered Radicals?

This paper has been difficult and exciting for us to write because we view ourselves as tempered radicals, struggling to act in ways that are appropriate professionally and authentic personally and politically. Both of us are feminists and radical humanists; we strongly believe in eradicating gender, race, and class injustices. We are also both faculty members in business schools and members of a discipline known as "management," although we teach about a variety of stakeholders other than managers. Both of us identify with our profession and want to advance within it. Yet we also believe that the business schools in which we work reproduce certain inequalities systematically, if unintentionally. We find ourselves in the awkward position of trying to master the norms of our profession in order to advance and maintain a foothold inside important institutions, but also trying to resist and change the profession's imperative and focus. Often people keep such feelings to themselves lest they undermine their credibility. Tempered radicalism can be lonely and silent. Nonetheless, we have learned to articulate this experience, first by talking with each other, and then by talking with, interviewing, and reading about others who have influenced us deeply. In the words of one of them:

I've often felt that it's extremely difficult to be a critically oriented scholar within a business school and that I'd fit better someplace else on campus. Is it possible to talk about underlying values, assumptions, hopes and fears, and question the ultimate purposes of organizations when the dominant ethos is focused on the technical, the instrumentally rationale, and that defines values and purposes as outside the scope of "the problem." ... And finally, is it possible to be a feminist and live in a business school? Can I still be me and survive in this profession? I've asked myself these questions many times (Smircich 1986, p. 2).

Women of color in professional positions have articulated the tensions of tempered radicalism quite clearly,

perhaps because their history is marked by their struggle with multiple injustices (e.g., Bell 1990, Collins 1986, Gilkes 1982, hooks 1989). Bell (1990) found that Black women professionals face significant pressure to conform to professional standards and the dominant culture of the organization as well as to live up to expectations, values, and identities based in the Black community. They must also overcome stereotypes by passing extra tests of competence and loyalty at work. Sutton (1991) describes the tension she experiences each day as an African American architect:

With part of our selves, we work to achieve power and authority within the traditions of the dominant culture. We hoist each other toward personal success through an invincible network of friendship, economic support, mentoring, information exchange. . . . No matter how little we earn, we join the costly American Institute of Architects and make our presence felt in that organization.

With another part of our selves, we reject the competitive, elitist mentality of architectural design which differentiates professionals and clients, professors and practitioners, designers and builders, and builders and users. We reject this segmentation because it reflects the segmentation that exists in the larger society between men and women, rich and poor, young and old, colored and white (Sutton 1991, pp. 3–4).

For men of color who try to succeed within predominantly white institutions, the experience of tempered radicalism is “substantively as much a part of the minority professional in this country as baseball and apple pie” (African American law student). This same student argued:

Struggling to get ahead in white dominated society—while struggling desperately to maintain what little we were “allowed” to develop and espouse as a black identity—has been a mainstay of the very fabric of black culture for over a century.

Gay men and lesbians who work within traditional, heterosexual institutions also experience the tensions of tempered radicalism. They must gauge how much to disclose, how much to risk, how much to trust. Those who attempt to hide their sexual orientation from colleagues report feelings of fraudulence and shame, which get exacerbated when they are accused of selling out by their more “out” gay and lesbian peers. Because gay and lesbian professionals can choose to hide their source of difference, however painfully, they face, perhaps more than any group, constant decisions about the politics of identity.

The conflicting identities faced by white heterosexual men may not be as visible, predictable, or stressful as those faced by women of all colors, men of color, or

gay men and lesbians, but they certainly do exist. For example, a white man from the Boston area was coached by a colleague on how to lose his class-based accent, but was ambivalent about abandoning his working class origins precisely because he thought he could use his managerial position to lobby for working class employees during economic downturns. He also knew that adopting a higher class accent could help in that lobbying effort, and thus he experienced “status inconsistency” (Lenski 1954).

We speak in this paper about some of the shared experiences of tempered radicals. At the same time, we acknowledge that different groups experience different identity challenges. They undoubtedly respond with different strategies as well, using the distinctive types of insider knowledge they acquire. We hope that this paper encourages tempered radicals to share their experiences with one another and to add to the general strategies described here.

## The Advantages of Ambivalence

The dual nature of the tempered radical’s identity creates a state of enduring ambivalence. In this section we detail some of the advantages of ambivalence and challenge the predominant view that ambivalence is a temporary or pathological condition to resolve (e.g., Merton 1976). Weigert and Franks (1989) summarize the sociological understanding of ambivalence:

Insofar as ambivalence creates uncertainty and indecisiveness, it weakens that organized structure of understandings and emotional attachments through which we interpret and assimilate our environments (Marris 1975). . . . Clearly experienced emotion is an important cue to the formation of coherent inner identity (Hochschild 1983, p. 32). Without firm feelings of who we are, our actions are hesitant, halting, and incomplete (Weigert and Franks 1989, p. 205).

“Ambivalence” stems from the Latin *ambo* (both) and *valere* (to be strong) (Foy 1985); it can be tapped as a source of strength and vitality, not just confusion and reluctance. We suggest that individuals can remain ambivalent *and* quite clear about their attachments and identities. In contrast to compromise, ambivalence involves pure expression of both sides of a dualism; compromise seeks a middle ground which may lose the flavor of both sides. Cooptation—eventually espousing only the voice of tradition—might be averted by clever compromises, but might be better fended off by the clear oppositional voices retained in a posture of ambivalence. Because both parts of a duality are repre-

sented, ambivalent responses can be more responsive to equivocal situations than compromises (Weick 1979).

The tempered radical's ambivalence resembles the experiences of marginality and biculturalism, which others have described as a tenuous balance between two cultural worlds:

*A marginal person is one who lives on the boundary of two distinct cultures, one being more powerful than the other, but who does not have the ancestry, belief system, or social skills to be fully a member of the dominant cultural group (Park 1928, Stonequist 1937). (Bell 1990, p. 463.)*

Like marginal people, tempered radicals experience ambivalence in three interrelated forms, each of which has its own advantages. First, and most fundamentally, tempered radicals are "outsiders within." They can access the "knowledge and insight of the insider with the critical attitude of the outsider" (Stonequist 1937, p. 155). While insider status provides access to opportunities for change, outsider status provides the detachment to recognize that there even is an issue or problem to work on. Merton (1976) described a result of this dual cognitive posture as "detached concern," where one is both objective and subjective. We suggest that the tempered radical may also experience "passionate concern," which involves dual subjectivities. Memories of being outside of the center can become a source of creativity and transformation:

*Living as we did—on the edge—we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as the margin. We understood both . . . . Our survival depended on an ongoing public awareness of the separation between margin and center and an ongoing private acknowledgment that we were a necessary, vital part of that whole . . . . This sense of wholeness, impressed upon our consciousness by the structure of our daily lives, provided us with an oppositional world view—a mode of seeing unknown to most of our oppressors, that sustained us . . . . These statements identify marginality as much more than a site of deprivation; in fact, I was saying just the opposite, that it is a site of radical possibility, a space of resistance . . . . It offers one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternative new worlds (hooks 1984).*

Second, tempered radicals can act as critics of the status quo *and* as critics of untempered radical change. Stonequist (1937) praised marginals for being "acute and able critics." In Hasenfeld and Chesler (1989, p. 519), Chesler claims that his marginality (or the ambivalence inherent in his marginality) has allowed him to be critical of the status quo: to "break away from dominant professional symbols and myths to question

their validity, and to undertake innovative theory building and research. Being free of existing professional paradigms has enabled him to develop new bodies of knowledge now recognized as important to the profession." In interviews, others echoed the importance of remaining "independent." Tempered radicals may also critique a more radical approach to change. Tempered radicals have chosen to work for change from within organizations, although their career path may be as much a default, a playing out of the usual route through the education and career system, as an active political choice. In any case, because of their location, they may critique some forms of radical change for provoking fear, resistance, and backlash. Pamela Maraldo, president of Planned Parenthood, has stirred controversy among feminists by taking a tempered approach to the risks of being too radical:

*I don't believe in a strident, radical approach to things, because right away you lose many of your followers . . . . I think that "feminist" plays differently in different circles. Many people in mainstream America have vague, radical associations with the term. I do not, so I apply it easily and comfortably to myself. But I think that to present myself as a feminist would be to lose the attention early on of a lot of the important public . . . . Whatever we choose to call [feminism], the important thing is that it work (quoted in Warner 1993, p. 22).*

Third, in addition to being critics of the status quo and critics of radical change, tempered radicals can also be advocates for both. Their situation is therefore more complex than that of change agents who act strictly as critics of the status quo. As advocates for the status quo, tempered radicals earn the rewards and resources that come with commitment and (tempered) complicity, and these become their tools for change. Sutton (1991) envisions this dual posture:

*From this admittedly radicalized perspective, I imagine an alternative praxis of architecture that simultaneously embraces two seemingly contradictory missions. In this alternative approach we use our right hand to pry open the box so that more of us can get into it while using our left hand to get rid of the very box we are trying to get into (Sutton 1991, p. 3).*

Tempered radicals can and will be criticized by both radical and conservative observers. Radicals may suspect that tempered radicals' agendas are futile or retrogressive. Audre Lorde wrote, in words now famous among feminists, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Defenders of the status quo find ways to exclude suspected deviants from full entry into the institution. Jackall (1988, p. 54) quoted

two managers speaking candidly about invoking group conformity pressures to silence radical voices. One said, "You can indict a person by saying he's not a team player," and the other noted, "Someone who talks about team play is out to squash dissent." Faced with pulls toward more radical and conservative stances, and with voices of uncertainty in their own heads, tempered radicals must deal with the disadvantages of ambivalence discussed in the next section.

## The Challenges of Ambivalence

Despite the benefits of an ambivalent stance, a number of social and psychological forces work to persuade tempered radicals to forfeit one side of themselves or the other. Below we discuss pressures against an ambivalent stance. Most of these are forces of assimilation. We begin with a discussion of the painfulness of being seen as a hypocrite, of feeling isolated, and of being tempted to abandon the fight. We then tell a story of our own gradual cooptation from a feminist to a more mainstream research agenda. We identify from within this story several forces that can lead a tempered radical to resolve the inconsistency of her identities by trying to become an insider.

### Perceptions of Hypocrisy

Tempered radicals speak to multiple constituencies, which poses the problem that they will be seen as too radical for one and as too conservative for another. An even more complex problem for a tempered radical is receiving mixed feedback from within a single constituency, particularly one she thought she understood and represented. The headline on a front page article in the *London Herald Tribune*—"[Jesse] Jackson is a Symbol to Some U.K. Blacks and Sellout to Others"—speaks to this difficulty.

At the mention of the Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, they (a group of Black, working class "Brits") began, grudgingly at first, to show interest. "If he's gone that far," insisted one, "it must be because he's White inside." . . . "Listen, man" said a third (man), "A Black man running for president of the United States. It's important." In London's Black ghettos, Mr. Jackson is a curiosity, a symbol of success and to some, a sellout. It is the latter view, held by many of this generation of British-born Blacks, that is most worrying to those who believe, like Mr. Jackson, that the way to equality is to win power within the institution. . . . Yet few Black Britons seem to share Mr. Jackson's faith in the concept of pushing from within and some of these see him as a sellout (DeYoung 1988, p. 1).

That some Black, working class "Brits" viewed Jackson as a "sellout" while others viewed him as a sign of hope and change may, ironically, reflect his effectiveness as a tempered radical.

If the issue were only that some people see a tempered radical one way and others see her another way, then the tempered radical could simply manage these images separately and sequentially. Theories of managing multiple constituencies counsel letting each side see that which is most favorable to its interests (Goffman 1959). However, some people can see both images simultaneously. In this situation, tempered radicals may be accused of being hypocritical, that is, of trying to act in a situation like they are different from or better than who they in fact really are. "Liberals are particularly likely to be charged with [hypocrisy], because they are given to compromise" (Shklar 1984, p. 48). Some observers may be confused about who the tempered radical is or what she "really" stands for. Her activist friends may think she lets them take the heat from conservatives while she wins favor and the perquisites of being an insider. Her friends inside the organization may wonder if she is secretly more critical of them than she lets on.

The problem is that the tempered radical does not have a single identity that is "true" and another that is "staged." The ambiguity of having two identities may cause others to believe the tempered radical is strategically managing impressions and trying to win approval from two audiences. Once impression management is suspected, observers give less credibility to the person who appears inconsistent (Goffman 1969). Some of the tempered radicals we interviewed experienced significant stress from being labeled hypocritical or from worrying about such impressions. In the words of an anonymous tempered radical, "The worst is feeling like people who I care about think I am being fickle. I've been called a hypocrite. It stinks."

The social stigma of hypocrisy is painful. Combined with the psychological discomfort of dissonance (Bem 1972, Festinger 1964), it might drive a tempered radical to want to seek the relief of consistency and a more consonant identity. This adaptation would require forfeiting one side of her ambivalent stance or the other. We feel that most pressures point toward assimilation and surrendering the "outside" identity and commitments.

Though forces of assimilation are powerful, one tempered radical pointed out to us that we overemphasized how "easy" it was for a tempered radical to become coopted and end up fully an insider. She cautioned us that, for her and others, one of the main

challenges of a professional career was to be accepted as an insider at all. The insiders were insistent on seeing her as different and on treating her as such in a variety of obvious and subtle ways. The number of help books that try to teach women how to fit in (e.g., Harrigan 1977) attests to both the appeal of learning the rules of the game and the high hurdles to succeeding.

### Isolation

Perhaps a tempered radical can never go home to one community and identity or another. Tempered radicals are often lonely. A tempered radical may fear that affiliating too strongly with an identifiable group, either outside or inside the organization, may push her too close to one side and jeopardize her credibility with the other side. One tempered radical described her fear:

In my field (forestry), if you are seen with women you are viewed as unprofessional. Real professionals talk to men about forestry, not to women about recipes. So if you talk to other women you are seen as either a lesbian or not professional. [I am] terrified to be seen with a group of women.

Given this fear, some tempered radicals become vague about their identification with various coalitions in the hopes of not threatening their legitimacy and affiliation with insiders. The feeling of isolation may cause the tempered radical to look for acceptance and companionship in the organization. Some try to prove their loyalty by conforming, sometimes emphatically, to dominant patterns of behavior or by turning on members of their outside group (Kanter 1977).

Feelings of isolation may intensify as the tempered radical advances within the organization. Ironically, just as a tempered radical approaches a higher position from which she hopes to effect change, she experiences more intensely the feelings of isolation that could pull her away from her change agenda into a position of comfortable belonging. One feminist executive reported to us that once she had become well established in a conservative organization, the few women who had been her peers along the way had dropped out, been dismissed, or been completely assimilated into the mainstream. As a relatively high-status insider (with strong ambivalence), she was structurally and institutionally closer to the center of her work organization and profession and therefore felt even more distance between her professional and personal identities. Among peers, her gender still kept her distant from male colleagues perceived as more promising candi-

dates for further advancement. With respect to lower level employees, her high status created an awkward social and emotional distance. She hoped that junior employees with radical and idealistic beliefs would come talk to her, yet, because of her status, they did not assume she was like-minded or approachable. Because she did not advertise her outsider affinities, precisely so that she could be more effective, she experienced the pain of not being taken seriously by those whom she would have liked to reach.

### Pressures of Cooptation

A number of pressures push the tempered radical away from the "outsider" piece of her identity and more fully toward the "insider" piece. The remainder of this section describes in detail the ways in which compromises can lead to cooptation. Since we experienced a variety of these coopting mechanisms over the course of this project, we tell our story as an illustration.

We began what we now call the "tempered radical" project as graduate students with a concern about the problems of feminist executives and academics. We wondered where those with the radical voices heard in the 1960s and 1970s had gone to work in the 1980s and whether they had found ways to change institutions. We were warned by faculty members that asking questions about "radical" or "feminist" change within organizations was itself radical and risky, particularly for graduate students who had not established secure positions within the academic or business communities. In addition, our identification and emotional investment threatened our perceived legitimacy as "objective" researchers. We were advised to conceive of this problem, not as a problem for feminists or radicals, but as a more general problem: effecting change from within a system. This approach would allow us to detach ourselves and, most important, avoid being labeled "radicals"—or worse, "feminists"—so early in our careers.

The advice to detach ourselves and cast the problem in the more abstract and conceptual terms of the field seemed like a reasonable compromise and like an intellectual exercise from which we might learn. We planned to come back to the feminist executive as a special case after we had developed theory about the general case. We hoped we could avoid the two painful pulls we were beginning to study: being dismissed as radicals or indefinitely deferring our true interests.

As we searched for comparable change agents inside organizations, we were presented with an opportunity to study corporate ethics officers, who were charged with implementing possibly controversial ethics pro-

grams within corporations. Corporate ethics officers, unlike feminist executives, were accessible and easy to study. Ethics programs had recently been mandated and the ethics officers were negotiating immediate change, so we seized the moment. The research involved extensive traveling, interviewing, and data analysis. We found that the topic interested academic and nonacademic audiences and could easily attract research funding. When we were asked about our research interests, it became easier for us to talk about corporate ethics programs in a vividly illustrated, theoretically compelling, and not too provocative way than to talk about the touchy subject of feminist executives. No one suggested that we try another topic or bundle this study into another research package.

Our language, audience, and ultimately our research problem gradually changed. Our study took on a life of its own and resulted in several papers about corporate ethics programs in the defense industry. This story illustrates how compromises in (1) language, (2) timing, and (3) emotional expression can lead to cooptation. We discuss each of these in detail below.

Diverse literatures dealing with change recommend using insider language to package, "sell," or legitimate a change program (e.g., Alinsky 1972, Dutton and Ashford 1993). The use of insider language may be even more essential when proposed changes intervene at a deep level to challenge the assumptions and values of the organization (Frost and Egri 1991). Catchy specifics in the language of the status quo can catalyze cooptation. For example, as our study progressed, we talked more about "corporate ethics officers" in place of internal change agents and "defense industry ethics programs" in place of organizational change efforts. Our language shifted, in a direction and with a speed, that surprised us. To reflect our insider knowledge of the world of ethics programs in the defense industry, we spoke of "ethics hotlines," "fraud, waste, and abuse," and the "defense industry initiative." Before we knew it, the "feminist executive" had faded in our memories and was filed away for "future research."

The role of language in coopting participants has been vividly portrayed in Cohn's (1987) study of the world of defense intellectuals. In a world where men (almost exclusively) spend their days matter-of-factly strategizing about "limited nuclear war," "clean bombs," "counterforce exchanges," and "first strikes," Cohn assumed the role of participant observer to ask the question: "How could they talk this way?" To gain legitimacy in the system, she learned to speak the language of insiders. As Cohn learned the language, she became less shocked by the cold-bloodedness of

the talk, and eventually engaged by it:

The words are fun to say; they are racy, sexy, snappy . . . Part of the appeal was the power of entering the secret kingdom, being someone in the know . . . Few know, and those who do are powerful . . . When you speak it, you feel in control (Cohn 1987, p. 704).

The more proficient she became in the language, the easier it became to talk about nuclear war and the more difficult it became to speak as a critical outsider. As her language shifted to "defense-speak," the referent shifted from people to weapons. Human death became "collateral damage."

I found that the better I got at engaging in this (insider) discourse, the more impossible it became for me to express my own ideas, my own values. I could adapt the language and gain a wealth of new concepts and reasoning strategies—but at the same time the language gave me access to things I had been unable to speak about before, it radically excluded others. I could not use the language to express my concerns because it was physically impossible. This language does not allow certain questions to be asked or certain values to be expressed (Cohn 1987, p. 708).

Thus, the power of language was not in the ability to communicate technically, but rather in its capacity to rule out other forms of talk, thought, and identity.

The temptation to defer radical commitments adds another pressure toward cooptation, as we learned in our own experience. Our ethics officer study was intended as a short deferral, but we strayed from our original concern further and for longer than we planned. Early invitations to talk about this topic at conferences took us deeper into this line of research, which forced us to learn more, which led to more opportunities and papers, which generated more knowledge and questions to be researched. Such is the course of a "research stream." Compromise behaviors create environments that require more of the same behaviors (Weick 1979).

Like other compromise solutions, the strategy of deferring radical commitments until a foothold is established seems reasonable. From the tempered radical's perspective, it might seem less risky to advance more threatening agendas from a position of power and security. She might be tempted to wait and collect what Hollander (1958) calls "idiosyncrasy credits" by initially conforming to and exemplifying the organization's norms. Later, when she accumulates enough credibility, trust, and status, she would "spend" these credits to reshape organizational norms. However, this deferred radicalism may stall the change effort in two ways. First, when "later on" arrives, the tempered

radical may have lost sight of her initial convictions. Second, it may become impossible to tell when “the moment” has arrived to cash in credits. It is always tempting to wait until one has yet more formal power and security and can *really* effect change.

As individuals wait longer to disclose their identities and agendas and spend more time investing in their careers, it becomes more difficult to resist cooptation on material, psychological, and political grounds. Ferguson (1984) doubts that women can transform traditional bureaucracies from within them:

They (liberal feminists) hold out the hope that once women have made their way to the top, they will then change the rules: “When they get to be dealer—they can exercise their prerogative to change the rules of ‘dealer’s choice’” . . . . They see women as the hope for humanizing the work world and convincing men of the need for change. By their own analysis, this hope is absurd. After internalizing and acting on the rules of bureaucratic discourse for most of their adult lives, how many women (or men) will be able to change? After succeeding in the system by those rules, how many would be *willing* to change? (Ferguson 1984, pp. 192–193.)

In addition, it becomes difficult for the tempered radical to turn her back on, or even criticize, those who were part of her career success. Individuals confront extreme backlash and resentment when they suddenly speak out against injustice after years of quietly tolerating it. Anita Hill is a compelling recent example. Reactions are particularly severe if the people involved have succeeded in the system. They are asked: “If the system is so sexist, why has it treated you so justly and well?” “If you have been quiet in the past, what’s the motive for your sudden fuss?” Fear of such accusations cause many to silence their frustrations indefinitely.

Deferral poses one source of cooptation. Tempted radicals can also be coopted by the process of tempering their emotions to appear rational and cool-headed, to be “the reasonable feminist.” Hot-tempered emotion fuels a tempered radical’s desire and impetus for change, but this hot side of the emotional balancing act may often lose out to the cool organizational persona, particularly because real, spontaneous emotional expression is far from the norm in most organizational contexts (Mumby and Putnam 1992). Again, our project may be illustrative. We have tried to make this paper, in form and content, an expression of our own tempered radicalism. As such, we have struggled with the balance between making it legitimate for publication and making it true to the lived experience. As we read and re-read interview transcripts, we began to think of our allies and colleagues as “data.” In our

effort to get the paper published, part of the “balance,” we consistently have “over-tempered.” Our tempered radical began to appear as a highly rational strategist who at every turn attempts to reach a balance, appeal to multiple constituencies, and optimize impressions.

Many of our tempered radical colleagues complained that our description missed the essence of the experience: the heat, passion, torment, and temper that characterize the experience of being a tempered radical. Some argued that in our effort to construct a theory about tempered radicals, we overcategorized and overrationalized the phenomenon and, in doing so, unwittingly made our protagonist and paper complicit in maintaining traditional constraints. Other reviewers, however, complained that the paper lacked a coherent theoretical strategy, was not sufficiently grounded in a single literature, and was too inconsistent in its style. The interweaving of self-reflective narrative and theory in this paper represents our ambivalent and somewhat unsatisfying response to this problem. As we tried to satisfy some readers, we inevitably lost others. This very experience heated up the frustration of tempered radicalism for us.

### Emotional Burdens

As sociologists and psychologists remind us, ambivalence generates anger plus a variety of powerful, unpleasant emotions, which also contribute to the difficulty of sustaining this posture. Among others feelings, a tempered radical’s ambivalence may result in guilt and self doubt (Weigert and Franks 1989), which arise when people cannot live up to their own ideals (Goffman 1963). An assistant to the Chancellor of a major university revealed to us her continuing anguish:

There are qualified people who get turned down (for tenure) just because they are women. And my job is to make sure that doesn’t happen. Sometimes I feel like I have hit a grand slam, but my team was already behind by seven and so . . . there’s no victory for me and there’s no victory for her. There’s only the lingering feeling in both of our minds that I didn’t do it good enough. If I had just done a little more or done it a little better, done a little differently, played my cards a little better or viewed it from a slightly different angle or made a slightly different argument . . . . I find that it is impossible for me to suffer enough to absolve myself when we get done. It’s extremely difficult for someone to deal with that because my energy has nowhere to go. And so I find myself flagellating myself in most extraordinary and creative ways when the problems are institutional and it didn’t matter what I did . . . . The pressure I feel because I know the pain that they are in. I don’t sleep.

For those with a history of being outsiders, the self-doubt arising from ambivalence can be particularly debilitating, as illustrated in this depiction of Black students' experiences:

Students who strive to assimilate while covertly trying to remain engaged with Black experience suffer extreme frustration and psychological distress... Maintaining this separation is difficult, especially when these two contradictory longings converge and clash... On the surface, it may appear that he has coped with this situation, that he is fine, yet his psychological burden has intensified, the pain, confusion, and sense of betrayal a breeding ground for serious mental disturbance (hooks 1989, pp. 67–68).

One tempered radical says, "It is corrosive to constantly feel disrespected by the system... It has been a struggle for me to feel good about myself in the face of collegial disapproval and disrespect." Another interviewee admitted that she continually worked in an environment in which "people act as if I am not here." If sustenance for tempered radicals comes from artfully working the system to make changes, this feeling of being devalued can make them wonder whether they are effective and whether it is worth carrying on. Many choose not to and leave, including those who might be important contributors to the organization (Kolb and Williams 1993).

Several features of tempered radicalism can produce stress. Tempered radicals frequently experience role conflict and role ambiguity, which can lead to stress and strain (e.g., Kahn et al. 1964). The tedious rate at which change occurs further frustrates tempered radicals, many of whom report periodic battles with burnout. Because tempered radicals must learn to suppress or temper emotions at times or, worse, hide their identities, they may feel additional stress and frustration from "bottling it up" (Bell 1990, Coser 1979, Worden et al. 1985). As symbols of a marginalized cultural community, they may also worry about how their performance will affect others in their cultural group (hooks 1989; Kanter 1977).

We do not want to end this section on such a pessimistic note. In addition to the pain of loneliness, guilt, self-doubt, and shaky self-esteem, some tempered radicals also report feeling authentic as a result of having a "rather unorthodox, complex identity" (McIntosh 1989), and feeling encouraged by others who can relate to the complexity of their commitments (Gilkes 1982, hooks 1989). We turn now to a discussion of strategies that help tempered radicals effect change and simultaneously sustain their ambivalent identities despite the pressures described above.

## Strategies of Change and Ambivalence

In general, tempered radicals create change in two ways: through incremental, semi-strategic reforms and through spontaneous, sometimes unremarkable, expressions of authenticity that implicitly drive or even constitute change. In this section, we discuss two change-oriented strategies—small wins and local, spontaneous, authentic action—and discuss how they relate to change, with the additional benefit of sustaining tempered radicals' identities and purposes. The other two strategies we discuss—language styles and affiliations—work in the reverse fashion. They are directed at authentic identities, but also implicitly provoke and redefine change.

The process and politics of change in organizations has been addressed extensively in a variety of literatures, including work on radical change and community organizing (e.g., Alinsky 1972), innovation (e.g., Frost and Egri 1991, Kanter 1983), "championing" (e.g., Howell and Higgins 1990, Kanter 1983), upward influence (e.g., Kipnis et al. 1980, Mowday 1978), "issue selling" (Dutton and Ashford 1993), and impression management (e.g., Goffman 1959, Rafaeli and Sutton 1991). These literatures issue prescriptions that might be useful to the tempered radical as change agent. However, none of these literatures focuses on how problematic and painful identity politics are for the change agent, in part because they do not assume a change agent who is dissident with the organization's fundamental premises. Steering a course between assimilation and separatism is a central and defining issue for the tempered radical.

The tempered radical bears some semblance to the boundary spanner role described in the organizational literature (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, Scott 1984, Thompson 1967), who must bridge two organizations that have different goals and resources. The tempered radical is different from this classic boundary spanner in the important sense that part of her core identity is threatened by or threatening to the dominant coalition of either or both of the organizations. Even so, tempered radicals may usefully employ some of the strategies of traditional boundary spanners, such as buffering the core aspects of their function in the organization from their change agent role (tempered radicals may be found in roles that are not explicitly chartered to deal with change) or creating bridging strategies with critical external groups.

The change agents in the organizational literature generally do not have broader visions of change in mind. Although terms like "revolutionary" and "deep"

are sometimes used to describe change, those terms rarely refer to system change that challenges the embedded assumptions of the status quo (Alinsky (1972) and Frost and Egri (1991) are exceptions). In our review of strategies for tempered radicals, we refer occasionally to these literatures but also break with them.

### Small Wins

A small wins approach (Weick 1984, 1992) addresses several problematic aspects of tempered radicalism and seems to be a viable strategy for change and identity maintenance. First, small wins reduce large problems to a manageable size. Big, unwieldy problems produce anxiety, which limits people's capacities to think and act creatively (Weick 1984). A colleague created a small win recently when she convinced the dean of a business school to delay the start of the tenure clock until new recruits' dissertations were complete. (For a variety of systemic reasons, women begin jobs before completing dissertations more frequently than men). While this policy change goes only a short way toward ending gender-based discrimination, it is a tangible first step with potentially large ramifications.

Second, small wins can be experiments. They may uncover resources, information, allies, sources of resistance, and additional opportunities for change (Weick 1984). Small wins often snowball as they create opportunities and momentum for additional small wins. Weick argued that the real power of small wins as a strategy for social change comes in the capacity to gather and label retrospectively a series of relatively innocuous small wins into a bigger "package" that would have been too threatening to be prospectively adopted. For example, a multipronged work and family policy could have been envisioned in the 1970s but might have been too sharp a departure and perhaps even too radical a label to propose then. However, a gradual accretion of different aspects of the program—from flex-time to on-site child care—has resulted by the 1990s in many companies (almost a quarter of a representative national sample) having or discussing what are now labelled "work/family programs" (Osterman 1994). A series of small wins is "less likely to engage the organizational immune system against deep change" (Frost and Egri 1991, p. 242).

As experiments, small wins act as a system diagnostic. With relatively minor visibility, risk, and disruption, small wins can test the boundaries of an organization's capacity for change. Even "small losses" can be a source of discovery (Sitkin 1992). Alinsky (1972) warned

that reformers could miss change opportunities not only by "shooting too high" but also by "shooting too low." The tempered radical never really knows what too high means until she steps over the line or what too low means until she learns of opportunities lost. Moreover, the line between too much and too little is constantly shifting.

Third, a small wins approach encourages picking battles carefully. Tempered radicals possess a limited amount of emotional energy, and they have access to limited legitimacy, resources, and power. The Chancellor's assistant described this problem:

I have to choose very carefully when I'm going to go against the party line . . . . Like when there's a woman up for tenure and she's been turned down I'm the last person to comment before it goes to the Chancellor. I have to decide who to fight for. Because if every time a woman comes along who's been turned down I say, "Oh my God, what a horrible injustice" then I won't have any credibility with the Chancellor. So I have to take my shots carefully when it's close, because the Chancellor is a very choosy constituent.

Of course, often the tempered radical does not have a neat menu of battles from which to select rationally. To quell rage even temporarily in a way that feels inauthentic can be neither desirable nor possible. The tempered radicals we most admire are those who have been able to draw courage from their anger and sometimes pick battles with fierce drive and reckless abandon.

Fourth, small wins are therefore often driven by unexpected opportunities. To be poised to take advantage of opportunities, the tempered radical's vision of the specific course of change must be somewhat blurry. Relatively blurry vision and an opportunistic approach enable an activist to take advantage of available resources, shifting power alliances, lapsed resistance, heightened media attention, or lofty corporate rhetoric to advance a specific change (Alinsky 1972, Martin et al. 1990). We are reminded of a story told by one tempered radical of another. After receiving an invitation to a corporate Christmas party to which spouses and significant others were invited, a lesbian executive (who had not yet come out at work) informed her boss that she was going to bring her girlfriend. Her boss refused to accept this guest. Enraged, she took the issue (along with samples of corporate rhetoric about diversity) to the CEO, who welcomed her guest and "talked to" her boss. Born out of range and frustration, this woman's courageous act turned out to be a signifi-

cant intervention that produced real and symbolic change in the organization.

While a small wins approach can help a tempered radical push change while maintaining her identity, we should point to some risks associated with the small wins approach. First, tempered radicals in high positions may lose sight of the fact that, for lower level employees, some changes may be urgent, or the order of changes may matter a great deal. Although it may not matter in the long run which type of change comes first, employees may be desperate for child care solutions, but able to live quite easily without a policy about delayed partnership reviews.

Second, being driven solely by opportunity may mean that tempered radicals follow, rather than lead, change. They may achieve only those small wins that were there for the asking. Efforts that are too tentative or small may set a change process backwards by making people feel an issue is closed—"OK, we have a day care facility and have solved the 'work/family problem.'" Small wins may distract people from a more fundamental issue, provide a premature sense of completion, or steer a change effort off course.

Even taking these cautions into account, the small wins approach is attractive. Immediate action means that commitments are not being deferred. The accumulation of small wins changes the organizational landscape for later battles, as "outcomes of current political activity form the basis of the future deep structure of interaction" (Frost and Egri 1991, p. 282). Furthermore, as the organization gradually changes, the tempered radical's alignment struggles also shift. The only way for the tempered radical to locate the appropriate degree of resistance is to push continuously against the limits and keep the organization in flux. Smircich's notion of aligning as ongoing, local actions avoids reifying the organization and its limits:

There isn't really "an organization" out there that I am aligning myself to, rather my actions of aligning are doing organizing for myself and others . . . [The organization is not] some independent hard separate reality, imposing itself on us, somehow disconnected from the very patterns of activity from which it is constituted (Smircich 1986, pp. 6-7).

Because it involves continuous pushing, a small wins approach sustains the tension between what it means to be an insider and what it means to dissent.

In our discussions with tempered radicals, we have heard of few instances in which tempered radicals who "pushed too hard" were not given a "second chance," even if they did push beyond what was organizationally appropriate. If small wins are used as an experiment, then successive tactics can become bolder and better

attuned to the environment. An advantage for the tempered radical of being an insider is precisely to learn the dynamics of the local system and be able to act more confidently within it. As several tempered radicals have reminded us, enacting and celebrating small wins help sustain tempered radicals.

#### **Local, Spontaneous, Authentic Action**

A second way that change takes place—local, spontaneous, authentic action—is less strategic than small wins. It happens when tempered radicals directly express their beliefs, feelings, and identities. For example, a female surgeon explained how she changed her work environment by behaving more authentically. When she treated each member of her surgical team with respect and displayed compassion toward patients on her rounds, she demonstrated an alternative style of professional behavior. Her treatment of nurses in the operating room modeled new ways for the residents to behave toward nurses and may have helped alter the nurses' and residents' expectations of how teams share power and how surgeons should treat nurses. By acting in a way that was simply authentic, she created resistance to the authoritarian model that others on her team had taken for granted.

Acting authentically, as simple as it sounds, counteracts many of the disadvantages of sustaining ambivalence that we discussed earlier. The tempered radical who behaves authentically, even if this means inconsistently, may not feel dissonant. She and others may be able to accept her ambivalence as complexity (in the person and situation) rather than as insincerity or hypocrisy. The authenticity with which she behaves minimizes the possibility that she will experience feelings of fraudulence, self-doubt, or guilt.

#### **Language Styles**

Earlier we described how tempered radicals, forced to adopt the language of insiders to gain legitimacy, risk losing their outsider language and identity. In this section, we describe some strategies that can be used to counter the cooptive power of insider language. First, speaking in multiple languages and to multiple constituencies can help. While it is easy to imagine how one might speak different languages to different constituencies (e.g., academic to academic audiences, applied to applied audiences), it is harder to see how one might speak multiple languages to the same constituency. For example, some individuals choose to do "diversity work" because of their commitment to social justice, their identification with a marginalized group, and their insights into the dynamics of disadvantage and privilege. Those who work in corporations learn to

speaking the language of insiders: in this case, to talk about diversity in “bottom line” terms (e.g., recruitment and retention in a changing labor market, innovations born of diverse approaches, access to a broader customer base). However, tempered radicals may be most effective if they speak to each constituency in both languages. They do not channel their language so that business people hear only bottom line rationalizations, nor so that community organizers hear only the social justice reasons for proposed changes. Unexpected internal allies can be discovered in using the language of social justice inside the corporation.

The tempered radical might counter the cooptive power of insider language by using her insider knowledge and facility with the language to deconstruct it and then reconstruct alternative worlds. A few scholars in the management field have begun to deconstruct the traditional discourse in an attempt to expose assumptions, question what has been left unsaid, dislodge the hegemony of the traditional texts, and make room for alternative conceptions of organizing and management (e.g., Calás 1987, Calás and Smircich 1991, Gray 1994, Kilduff 1993, Martin 1990, Meyerson 1994). As a provocative illustration of this genre, Mumby and Putnam (1992) deconstructed the concept “bounded rationality” and then used this deconstruction to reconstruct organizing in terms of “bounded emotionality.”

A linguistic strategy that helps avoid cooptation by harnessing the dominant language is captured in the metaphor of jujitsu, a martial art in which the defender uses the energy of the attacker against itself. Tempered radicals can effect change by holding those in power to their own rhetoric and standards of fair play. In our study of corporate ethics officers, we observed this “linguistic jujitsu.” Lower level employees appropriated the language of ethics to bolster their claims for more ethical treatment. This tactic worked particularly well in those companies that defined ethics broadly in terms of “treating each other fairly, with dignity and respect.” Once such language was publicly espoused by management in ethics training sessions, employees could use it to push for more responsive and accessible grievance channels and other changes consistent with “fairness, dignity, and respect.” Managers’ fear of losing credibility persuaded them to be responsive to claims that invoked their own language (Scully and Meyerson 1993).

### **Affiliations**

Another approach tempered radicals may find helpful is to maintain affiliations with people who represent both sides of their identity. Almost all of the tempered

radicals we interviewed emphasized the importance of maintaining strong ties with individuals, communities, or groups outside of their organization. These outside affiliations act as sources of information, resources, emotional support, and, perhaps most important, empathy. Affiliations with communities, organizations, and people help mitigate against the difficult emotions associated with ambivalence. Affiliations help keep the tempered radical from suppressing her passion and rage and from acting in a way that makes her feel fraudulent or guilty. They keep her fluent in multiple languages.

The tempered radical’s understanding of oppression and injustice can only be preserved by continuing to identify with outsiders. Identifying as an outsider reminds her of her own privilege as an insider (Worden et al. 1985). Bell (1990, p. 463) argues that a Black woman professional can access her bicultural experience as a source of inner strength and empowerment, “giving her a feeling of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual wholeness.” Affiliations help tempered radicals guard against losing their ability to speak as outsiders. For example, hooks (1989) cautions Black women against losing sight of how their minds have been “colonized,” and furthermore, warns against viewing identity politics as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end. Ties to the community are part of “the struggle of memory against forgetting” (hooks 1989).

In our own experience as organizational scholars we have learned to treasure our outside affiliations. For example, our ties to women’s studies programs and women’s political organizations have served as sources of emotional and intellectual vitality. Our ties to friends and colleagues who are more radical in their approaches have sustained our ambivalent course by encouraging our commitments and nurturing our radical identities. We know two or three people who have taken more radical courses, and we try to imagine them reading our papers. Imagining as well as receiving their feedback helps us to sustain our commitments. Outside affiliations can also provide a sense of independence. One tempered radical claimed that his outside activities as an activist had become a crucial source of self-esteem when he felt alienated from his profession.

In addition to outside ties, connections to like-minded people inside the organization are a source of sustenance. Sometimes tempered radicals are hard to find precisely because their public personae are tempered. Reformers who think the system needs only minor changes and tempered radicals engaged in small wins en route to more massive changes may be difficult

sometimes to distinguish. However, sometimes tempered radicals find each other and can build coalitions. Some tempered radicals report that they experience joy and connection because they have a strong sense of community inside as well as outside the organization (e.g., Gilkes 1982, Worden et al. 1985). Even if membership and energy are in flux, there may be a collective momentum that outlives individuals' lulls. In a study of collective action inside organizations (Scully and Segal (in progress)), one member of a grassroots coalition reported its importance to her for maintaining organizational and personal attention to diversity issues:

[The diversity issue] tends to peak and valley. It's not consistent energy, even from the grassroots. I think it goes up and down. I think because of the grassroots efforts, it hasn't been dropped . . . . The grassroots efforts have been instrumental even during the lower periods in bringing it back up to a peak, so I don't think you can do without the grassroots efforts.

We have seen each other through peaks and valleys and benefited from our long-standing collaboration on this project and on projects that grew out of it. When one of us felt confused or pulled by the tension inherent in our ambivalent stance, the other could help redefine the tension in terms of excitement or challenge. We did "cooptation check-ins" by phone. When we listened to each other talk about our joint project, we could hear the other's, and sometimes our own, language. We could hear in each other the changes in how we described and thought about our project. We should admit, however, that despite our efforts to keep each other on course, we sometimes failed and became complicit in each other's "digression." Yet, we can without hesitation recommend collaborating with another of like heart and mind.

## Conclusion

This paper has focused on the tempered radical as an internal change agent quite different from those more commonly portrayed in the literature. Although tempered radicals face many of the same challenges, they also confront unique challenges associated with their ambivalent identities and their broader definition of ultimate change. This paper contributes to the literatures on change from within organizations by introducing a fundamentally different type of change agent than the protagonists of these other literatures. We hope that this paper also gives tempered radicals a kind of legitimacy, inspiration, and sense of community.

The labor of resistance may be divided among those who push for change from the inside, from the outside, and from the margin, each effort being essential to the others and to an overall movement of change. The importance of maintaining affiliations with colleagues and friends who are more and less radical than oneself may be crucial for tempered radicals, not only as a means to sustain their ambivalent course, but also as a way to make their struggles collective. Tempered radicals may be playing parts in movements bigger than themselves and their organizations. In the course of effecting change, they are helping prepare for bigger changes that more radical outsiders may be better positioned to advance. Tempered radicals can also support insiders who push for big changes from positions of power. Thinking in terms of a collaborative division of labor among activists helps resist the counterproductive tendency, particularly among liberals and radicals, to judge who is being the best and most true advocate for change.

Our effort to recognize tempered radicals comes at a crucial time. Those who do not neatly fit—mostly white women and people of color—have been fleeing mainstream organizations at a high and costly rate (Cox 1993). Some leave because they can no longer tolerate the seemingly glacial pace of change, others leave because they are tired of being devalued and isolated, and still others leave simply because they no longer have the energy to "play the game." This exodus has serious repercussions for organizations.

Tempered radicals represent a unique source of vitality, learning, and transformation. Particularly as organizations attempt to become more global, multicultural, and flexible, they must learn to nurture those organizational members that will push them through a continuous transformation process. As the tempered radical's own survival depends on transforming the organization to achieve alignment, so too the contemporary organization may well depend on aligning with new voices and players in a diverse, global environment.<sup>1</sup>

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**Endnote**

<sup>1</sup>Tempered radicals often cannot find each other. If you identify yourself as a tempered radical, and if you are interested in creating links among us and mobilizing isolated activists, please send email to either author (fmeyerson@gsb-peso.stanford.edu or scully@mit.edu).

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