

**Tempered Radicalism and the Politics of Ambivalence:  
Personal Alignment and Radical Change  
within Traditional Organizations\***

**Debra Meyerson\*\***

**School of Business, University of Michigan**

709

**Maureen Scully**

**Sloan School of Management, MIT**

**April 1993**

---

\* We wish to thank our colleagues, Mark Chesler, Jane Dutton, C.V. Harquail, Louise Parker, Anat Rafaeli, Karl Weick, and Janet Weiss, for the helpful comments they provided on an earlier draft of this paper. We also wish to thank the participants who attended our talk at the panel discussion on "Workplace, Women, and Gender" at the Center for Education of Women, University of Michigan for sharing their experiences and insights.

\*\* Please address correspondence to the first author at the following addresses: (Before Aug. 15, 1993) School of Business, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, (after Aug. 15, 1993) 18 Bennett Rd., Redwood City, CA 94062 (415) 366-2228.

**Tempered Radicalism and the Politics of Ambivalence:  
Personal Alignment and Radical Change  
within Traditional Organizations\***

**Working Paper #709**

**Debra Meyerson\*\***

**University of Michigan**

**and**

**Maureen Scully**

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology**

**\*We wish to thank our colleagues, Mark Chester, Jane Dutton, C. V. Harquail, Louise Parker, Anat Rafaeli, Karl Weick, and Janet Weiss, for the helpful comments they provided on an earlier draft of this paper. We also wish to thank the participants who attended our talk at the panel discussion on "Workplace, Women, and Gender" at the Center for Education of Women, University of Michigan for sharing their experiences and insights.**

**\*\*Please address correspondence to the first author at the following addresses: (Before Aug. 15, 1993) School of Business, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, (after Aug. 15, 1993) 18 Bennett Rd., Redwood City, CA 94062. (415) 366-2228.**

**COPYRIGHT 1993**

**University of Michigan**

**School of Business Administration**

**Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1234. Telephone: (313) 764-1366**

## **Tempered Radicalism and the Politics of Ambivalence:**

### **Personal Alignment and Radical Change within Traditional Organizations**

A woman executive can identify with other women who articulate their values in feminist language that is far from the common parlance of corporate life; 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 radical humanist working as a professor in a business school can read, identify with, and be committed to a set of beliefs and values directly in contest with and violated by some of the basic tenets of capitalist organizations; she can also be committed to a career in a business school, possibly teaching practices that enforce the tenets of capitalist organizations (Smircich, 1986). An African American feminist architect can identify with her African American community and/or with a feminist ideology; she can also be committed to a profession and work in an organization that threatens who she is and what she believes to be important in the design of the built environment. These individuals have in common an apparent identity conflict that does not admit easy balancing or resolution. They do not easily "fit" within the existing cultures of their organizations (Chatman, 1989). 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 balance the tension between personal and professional identities that are at odds with one another. However invisible, this struggle is by no means unique to rare organizational "misfits." While women and ethnic and racial minorities have made strides in inclusion into mainstream organizations, they continue to confront new struggles over the identity politics and consequences of inclusion (Kolb and Williams, 1993). For many, it appears that the costs are too high to bear or the struggle too insurmountable to overcome. Increasingly, women and members of minorities at all career stages have become disheartened by their own feelings of fraudulence and loss as they try to fit into the dominant culture and play by the rules of traditional corporations and professional organizations. Over the past decade, a growing

number of women and minorities-- many very "successful" -- have been exiting mainstream organizations to hang their own shingles and establish new rules and new games (Washer, 1993). Some who try to change their organizations (rather than themselves) report fear for their careers while others report frustration and impatience at the seemingly glacial pace in which change takes place. Still others surrender or attempt to silence their personal commitments and fit in until they acquire "enough" power to make big changes.

Clearly, however, separatism and surrender are not the only options available to women and others who do not easily "fit" within traditional organizations. While frustration may be inevitable, these individuals can affect change, even radical changes, from within traditional organizations and still enjoy fulfilling, productive, and authentic careers in these organizations. We write this paper about and for the individuals who choose to 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 intentionally but also just by being who they are. We settled on "tempered" because we like the multiple layers of meaning in this name. These organizational members are "tempered" in the sense that they seek moderation, such as in a bilingual use of the languages of the status quo and of an alternative world view. In physics terms, they are tempered, literally, in that they have become tougher by "being alternately heated up and cooled down (as with a metal that is tempered)." They are also "tempered" in the sense that they have a temper, they are angered by the incongruities they feel between their own values and beliefs about justice and morality and the values and beliefs they see enacted in their organization. They are moved by and even passionate about the possibility of correcting these injustices, but they are also tempered in the sense of being calm and balanced about advancing change. Temper can mean both "equanimity, composure" and "an outburst of rage," opposite traits both required by the Tempered Radical.

The process of Tempered Radicalism is simultaneous one of personal alignment (Culbert and McDonough, 1980) and organizational change. Tempered Radicalism involves personal alignment, because the activities of everyday work have to be aligned and realigned to enable individuals to act authentically with respect to their personal identity and beliefs (Smircich, 1986). It involves organizational change and resistance, because acting in a way that is authentic brings forth a challenge to the status quo. Tempered Radicalism therefore requires continual adjustment and does not reach an easy equilibrium. In this way, the process is distinct from approaches that sequentially suppress one identity or another or give in to one identity or another.

Tempered Radicals work in many places, but they are not always visible, even to one another. We wrote this paper to provide some illustration of a particular type of organizational member and change agent, as well as change process, and to give a name and identity to people who may think they are struggling alone. We also want to suggest in this paper the centrality of Tempered Radicals to the vitality and ongoing transformation of organizations.

This paper has been difficult and exciting for us to write because of our own identification with the process. In many ways we view ourselves as Tempered Radicals and have been struggling to act both appropriately and authentically in the positions in which we find ourselves. Both of us are feminists and radical humanists (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). We strongly believe in eradicating gender, race, and class injustices at the societal, institutional, organizational, and individual levels. We are also both professors in business schools and members of a profession best known as "management," although we teach about a variety of business stakeholders. We both identify with our respective organizations and profession, are committed to them, and want to pursue careers and advance within them. Yet we also believe that these hierarchical institutions are patriarchies and need to change. At the same time, we believe that our profession is instrumental in perpetuating these forms and constraining change.

To survive in our profession and organizations we must participate in and thus become complicit in forms and cultures we believe to be unjust, yet, at times, our complicity violates our sense of self and our commitment to feminist and inclusive principles. We find ourselves in the

awkward position of trying to act appropriately so that we uphold and advance within our profession. Simultaneously, we are trying to act authentically, and in the process, resist and change the profession. We feel this tension on a general level, in the ambivalent nature of our identities, as well as on a more specific level, in the way we behave everyday and in the ambivalent feelings and interpretations we make of our behaviors. bell hooks' description of her own experience as an African American feminist scholar captures the essence of this tension:

We must be willing to critically examine anew the tensions that arise when we simultaneously try to educate in such a way as to ensure the progression of a liberatory feminist movement and work to create a respected place for feminist scholarship within academic institutions. We must also examine the tensions that arise when we try to subvert while working to keep jobs, to be promoted, etc. These practical concerns are factors that influence and/or determine the type of scholarship deemed important. Often attempts to mediate or reconcile these tensions leads to frustration, despair, cooperation, complicity, or shifts in allegiance (hooks, 1989: 40).

In several ways our writing of this paper has been a process of alignment and resistance and thus represents a specific instance of Tempered Radicalism. In this paper we discuss our own and others' "radical" identities and commitments and implicitly wage a critique of professional and bureaucratic institutions. We experiment with modes of scholarship and ways of writing as we attempt to weave in personal narrative into our portrait. We draw from our own experiences, from formal interviews and dozens of informal conversations with other Tempered Radicals we could identify (they are, by definition, not a readily identified sample). We also rely on first person accounts from related literatures, for example, on the experience of marginality, and from journalistic descriptions of Tempered Radicals in the popular press. The content of our stories will illustrate the substantive dilemmas of Tempered Radicalism; the form of these stories, which makes explicit our subjectivities in this process, will itself be an act of Tempered Radicalism insofar as it resists and pushes traditional notions of social science writing and draws inspiration from feminist approaches to scholarship (e.g., Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Krieger, 1991; Rheinharz, 1992). In this way, some of the ideas we advance and forms of knowledge we rely on are intended to push the boundaries of what topics and types of knowledge are legitimate in our profession.

This paper proceeds as follows: We begin by describing in more detail the process and characteristics of Tempered Radicalism and provide some additional examples of Tempered Radicals. We then discuss the politics of ambivalence in which we describe first the advantages and second the disadvantages of an ambivalent stance. We end with a discussion of some of the strategies used by Tempered Radicals to sustain themselves and make recommendations aimed at aiding the survival and sanity of Tempered Radicals. We draw throughout from a variety of literatures, formal interviews, and years of conversations with people who have struggled, some more successfully than others, with their own Tempered Radicalism. Where it seems relevant, we weave in our personal accounts of and feelings associated with Tempered Radicalism.

### **Tempered Radicalism: The Process and the Practitioners**

#### **The Process**

To varying extents, individuals come to work with a set of values, beliefs, and commitments based on identities and affiliations outside of their profession and outside of their organization (Gecas, 1982; Goffman, 1969). Most individuals hold dual (or multiple) sources of identity that become more and less salient in different circumstances; they have situational identities (e.g., Demo, 1992). The Tempered Radical represents a special case in which the values and beliefs associated with her organizational and/or professional identity violate a set of values and beliefs associated with an external source of identity. This external source can be many things; it may be other activist organizations to which she<sup>1</sup> belongs or other literatures from which she draws a vision of alternatives. In the Tempered Radical, both the internal and external identities are strong and salient. They are not identities that can be brought out on special occasions in certain situations. Instead, in most situations, the pull of each identity only makes the opposite identity all the more apparent, threatened, and painful.

---

<sup>1</sup> With the use of the female pronoun, we are not suggesting that Tempered Radicals cannot be male. In fact, we might expect the pulls associated with Tempered Radicalism to be even more severe for men with radical commitments. Our use of the female pronoun reflects our effort to avoid the awkward s/he or other compromise constructions.

A sense of misalignment (Culbert and McDonough, 1980) and feelings of fraudulence (McIntosh, 1989) can occur when one's personal identity is threatened. Assaults on one's sense of self can engender passion, anger and rage (hooks, 1984). These feelings can fuel radical change if they can be sustained and channeled, rather than subdued. They can generate a drive and commitment in individuals to enact changes in the organization to bring it more in line with personal values and beliefs. Untempered, this approach will likely alienate those in power. The Tempered Radical does not want to alienate. To varying degrees, she may cool-headedly play the game to get ahead, but she does not want to get so caught up in the game that she violates or abandons her extra-organizational identity and beliefs. In this sense, Tempered Radicals must be simultaneously hot and cool-headed. The heat fuels action and change; the cool shapes the action and change to be legitimate and viable.

### **Who are the Tempered Radicals?**

As we have suggested, we might find Tempered Radicals in a variety of organizational and occupational positions. We first began thinking about the problem as it related to feminist executives, academics, and other professionals. Our concerns about feminist executives grew out of our own experiences in business schools and the experiences voiced by others who made us appreciate both the specificity and generality of our concerns. We were both mentored in graduate school by a woman who held radical and feminist beliefs that were deviant and threatening in the school in which she worked. She was able to sustain her feminist commitments, while she also was successful and upwardly mobile within her profession and organization. In 1986, Linda Smircich further piqued our interest and illustrated the phenomena as she bravely delivered a talk at the Academy of Management annual meetings called "Can a Radical Humanist Find Happiness in a



Business School?"<sup>2</sup> In this paper, Smircich discusses her own struggle with achieving "alignment" in a field to which she does not neatly "fit":

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: 2).

As we talked about this "problem" with colleagues, several revealed comparable struggles with ambivalent identities and dual cultural conditions. However, we found questions about this struggle better articulated than the answers.

Members of various ethnic and racial minorities who identify with or are committed to serving their own (and other) ethnic/racial communities and who are trying to advance within the dominant culture face tensions and challenges comparable to those faced by feminist executives and feminist scholars. Black women professionals (some who define themselves as feminists), perhaps because of the multiple sources of injustices they face, have been most articulate about the ambivalence they must enact (e.g., Bell, 1990; Collins, 1986; Gilkes, 1982; hooks, 1989; Sutton, 1991). For example, in her exploration of the "bicultural life experience" of career oriented Black women, Bell (1990) found that Black women face significant pressure to conform to professional standards and the dominant culture of the organization and also considerable pressure to live up to expectations, values, and identities based in the Black community. Moreover, Black professional women must contend with stereotypical images often by demonstrating special dimensions of competence and passing extra tests of loyalty, which can exacerbate the tension between different identities. Sharon Sutton (1991), an African American feminist architect describes the ambivalence she continually enacts:

---

<sup>2</sup> Smircich would not necessarily continue to represent herself as "radical humanist." She does, however, still consider herself to be firmly committed to and identified with feminism (and post structuralism).

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: 3-4).

As women of color have struggled with their ambivalence, so have men who belong to and identify with an ethnic or racial minority group, yet work in an institution that expects one to enact values of the dominant culture. Similar tensions seem to confront White men who work in and want to advance in a traditional corporate bureaucracy, yet who place social justice concerns over instrumental and material concerns. White male scholars who identify with and are radical in their beliefs and are committed to various social justice movements, may find themselves living with the ambivalence of a Tempered Radical. While the conflicting identities faced by these men may not be as visible, predictable, or stressful as the dualisms faced by women and members of ethnic and racial minority groups, there are numerous examples of men whose personal and corporate identities may nonetheless be in contest and who face challenge comparable to those experienced by other Tempered Radicals.

We should note that although we describe the Tempered Radical and Tempered Radicalism as general phenomena, we realize that Tempered Radicals with different identity challenges (e.g., White feminist executives versus African American architects), at different career stages, and in different contexts undoubtedly confront unique challenges and respond with different strategies. We will touch only briefly upon the differences among Tempered Radicals at various stages in their careers and will not attend to differences between types of Tempered Radicals or the contexts in which they work. These and other dimensions of difference are no doubt significant and will be explored in future works. We believe that, to varying extents, the general challenges and strategies we describe in this paper apply to a range of Tempered Radicals in different situations.

In general, regardless of the ideological or cultural basis of the difference between personal and organizational identities, Tempered Radicals do not, in a traditional sense, "fit" in their organizations. Yet their problem is not simply one of unequal access or inclusion into the mainstream. Nor is the consequence of lack of fit a simple problem of being uncommitted to or alienated from the mainstream (Caldwell, Chatman, and O'Reilly, 1990). The Tempered Radical's problem is that she is both alienated from and committed to the organization; she wants to be included in the organization but not be "of the organization" (Worden, Chesler, and Levin, 1985): an "outsider within." This ambivalent stance is a stance of resistance and it is from this form of resistance that particular forms of change occur. We now turn to a closer examination of the politics of ambivalence and resistance.

### **The Advantages of Ambivalence**

Given the paradoxes of modernity, there is little wrong, and perhaps a great deal right, with being ambivalent -- especially when there is so much to be ambivalent about. (Alan Wolfe, *Whose Keeper?*)

This section explores ambivalence as the Tempered Radical's personal and political stance. The sociological literature on ambivalence (e.g., Merton, 1957; Weigert and Franks, 1989) tends to view ambivalence either as a pathological condition to resolve, or simply as an uncomfortable state to endure:

Inssofar 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). Ambivalence makes it difficult to know what our attachments really are. Clearly experienced emotion is an important cue to the formation of coherent inner identity (Hochschild, 1983: 32). Without firm feelings of who we are, our actions are hesitant, halting, and incomplete (Weigert and Franks, 1989: 205).

In contrast to the reigning view of ambivalence as problematic, we argue that the state of ambivalence offers a number of advantages (summarized in Table 1). Moreover, ambivalence may simply be the most politically effective posture for individuals who embrace dual identities and commitments. Ambivalence does not necessarily make it difficult for individuals to know what their attachments are. It simply makes it difficult for them to know how to enact competing attachments without being dismissed, stigmatized, or misunderstood. Moreover, ambivalence can be a source of strength and

vitality, not just confusion and reluctance. "Ambivalence" stems from the Latin *ambo* (both) and *valere* (to be strong) (Foy, 1985).

Weick (1979) describes ambivalence as a stance which matches an equivocal situation with an equivocal response, which, in equivocal situations, is more adaptive than compromise solutions. Compromises represent composites that are acceptable to competing interests, but they lose pure expressions of either response and are therefore less adaptive than an ambivalent response. Compromise entails an "adjustment of opposing principles, in which part of each is given up; a laying open to danger, suspicion, or disrepute; as in a compromise of one's good name" (Websters Unabridged Dictionary, 1983). In contrast, ambivalence refers to simultaneity, for example, in "the simultaneous existence of conflicting emotions in one person toward another person or thing" (Websters, 1983). Neither part of the duality is reduced. Tempered Radicalism, by definition, involves maintaining, however precariously, dual identities and commitments.

Ambivalence may also be the most politically effective alternative. Individuals who leave the organization and become unambivalent outsiders cannot benefit from the power, resources, and experience that one acquires working within a system. In the end, individuals who take the unambivalent separatist course may not only forfeit the advantages of membership within a system, they may also be less effective in resisting and changing organizations. Overly strident messages threaten the status quo and drive those in power to become defensive and retrench into conservative postures (Staw, Sandelands, and Dutton, 1981). Thus, the more ambivalent, tempered posture may not only be more professionally rewarding, it may also be a more effective posture for change.

The Tempered Radical's ambivalent stance of both resisting and belonging to the organization resembles the experience of marginality and biculturalism, which others have described as a tenuous balance between two cultural worlds<sup>3</sup> (e.g., Stonequist, 1937).

---

<sup>3</sup> While the concepts of social marginality and biculturalism are conceptually close -- both assume membership in competing cultural groups -- the difference between the two is worth noting. Marginality assumes that one group is culturally dominant and has the power and influence to attract non-dominant members, while the subordinate group does not have such influence. Marginality also assumes that the dominant group has culturally been constructed as "normal" against which others appear deviant. Biculturalism does not assume such asymmetry; both

*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: 463).

Thus, marginality need not be predicated on structural subordination; one can be marginalized if one's personal identity, values or beliefs are devalued or deviant in the dominant culture. The distance between their own identities and values and those dominant in the organization suggests that Tempered Radicals, by definition, are marginal within their social context, even if they appear to be located structurally near the center. This possibility was pointed out by a Tempered Radical we interviewed -- a tenured, full, White male professor at a major west coast university -- who claimed to be marginalized within his academic department and the university. On the surface, it appeared that he had considerable resources, power, and status, however due to his radical beliefs, his nontraditional research, and his activist practice, he felt he possessed limited influence in his department.

Tempered Radicals experience ambivalence of three types. First, and most fundamentally, Tempered Radicals can act (and feel) as insiders and outsiders. They are, as one writer describes, "outsiders within" (hooks, 1984). Second, Tempered Radicals can act as critics of unequivocal commitment and critics of untempered radicalism. Third, they can act simultaneously as advocates of the status quo and advocates of change. In other words, Tempered Radicals can be both advocates and critics of the status quo and they can be advocates and critics of radical change. Their situation is therefore more complex than change agents who act as critics of the status quo and advocates for change.

**Insider and outsider.** Tempered Radicals, like marginal members, can access the "knowledge and insight of the insider with the critical attitude of the outsider" (Stonequist, 1937: 155). While insider status provides access to opportunities for change, the outsider status provides

---

dominant and subordinate groups possess reward, resources, and power and membership is desired in both. The bicultural experience is assumed to be a source of empowerment: "the resources coming from both cultural contexts affirm and nurture..." (Bell, 1990: 464). While this distinction is important, in many discussions of marginality (e.g., hooks), the distinction is blurred.

the distance and detachment that allows one to recognize those opportunities that might be taken for granted and overlooked if one was wholly an insider. This dual cognitive posture is a type of ambivalence that creates a "detached concern," where one is both objective and subjective (Merton, 1957). We suggest that the Tempered Radical may instead experience passionate concern, which involves dual subjectivities.

Researchers who describe the experience of marginality have brought to attention the advantages of this form of ambivalence. They explain that dual subjectivities enable marginals to remember their source of struggle -- their history and commitments outside the organization -- while at the same time learn how to engage their history and commitments inside the system as the fuel of transformation. The struggle to keep alive one's outsider subjectivity once one is an "insider" is particularly essential for members of identity groups that have historically been disenfranchised and may be all too eager to forget their past in favor of a less oppressive future. hooks argues that the memory of being "outside" of, and oppressed by, the center can be a powerful transformative force. While identifying with multiple constituencies may be a source of stress, it may also provide sustenance, information, knowledge, and creativity (Bell, 1990; Gilkes, 1982; hooks, 1989). In part, this is why Ziller (1973) found that marginal members of organizations tend to be more open-minded. From this position, one might more easily envision alternative possibilities:

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).

**Critics of the status quo and of radical change.** Stonequist (1937) praised marginals for being "acute and able critics" and Chesler has claimed that his marginality (or the ambivalence inherent in his marginality) has allowed him 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" (Hasenfeld and Chesler, 1989: 519). At the same time as they critique the status quo, Tempered Radicals may also critique a more radical approach to change. Tempered Radicals 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 generating fear and creating a backlash.

**Advocates of the status quo and of radical change.** Tempered Radicals may also act as advocates for the status quo; they can earn the rewards and resources that come with commitment and (tempered) complicity. They may also advocate for radical change of the status quo; they can use the rewards, resources, and information associated with membership to advance change. Sharon 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 (1991: 3).

This ambivalence pushes the individual and organization to adapt simultaneously.

### **Difficulties in Sustaining Dual Identities: Disadvantages of Ambivalence**

Despite the advantages of maintaining 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 various mechanisms that operate against ambivalence, most of which act in favor of assimilation (see Table 2). These mechanisms include: 1) pressures of inconsistency, including the stigma of hypocrisy and the psychological lure of consistency, 2) the lure of affiliation, 3) the coopting forces of a) language, b) temptation to defer, c) emotional control, and d) vicious cycles, and finally 4) the painful feelings associated with ambivalence and marginality.

### **Coping with Inconsistency**

The worst is feeling like people who I care about think I am being fickle. I've been called a hypocrite. It stinks (Anonymous Tempered Radical).

**Multiple images and the social stigma of hypocrisy.** The Tempered Radical, by definition, must respond to competing constituencies, project multiple purposes, and cope with multiple images. A front page article in London's Herald Tribune (DeYoung, 1988) on Jessie Jackson's 1988 U.S. presidential campaign illustrates the problems associated with public images resulting from the ambivalent political posture of Tempered Radicalism. Captured in the headline, "Jackson is a Symbol to Some U.K. Blacks and Sellout to Others," the article demonstrates the difficulty Jackson confronted in maintaining a clear image of himself, even within a seemingly single constituency.

At the mention of the Reverend Jessie 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 of 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.

That some working class "Brits" viewed Jackson as a "sellout," while others within the same constituency viewed him as a sign of hope and change, ironically, may reflect his effectiveness as a Tempered Radical. These competing views also reveal the Tempered Radical's challenge in sustaining a clear symbolic role, and thus the difficulty of communicating a clear and credible message with this ambivalent stance.

The possibility not mentioned in the article on Jackson, but implicit in the author's observations, is that some individuals saw both images of Jackson simultaneously. Such was the overwhelming view of Jackson when he endorsed Bill Clinton as the 1992 Democratic nominee: some labeled Jackson a "sell out," others viewed him as too radical to be influential in the party, and others who saw both sides accused him of being a chameleon, or worse, a *hypocrite*.

Tempered Radicals face similar problems managing their image within an organizational context. A Tempered Radical may come to symbolize the status quo or symbolize radical change and different constituencies would have different reactions to each of these images. Senior management,



for example, might be quick to dismiss the Tempered Radical if they see her as "one of those radicals," whereas others lower in the organization or outside of it who share the Tempered Radical's radical beliefs may see hope in her role as radical change agent. In any case, Tempered Radicals must worry about the impressions they create. The Black women professionals Bell (1990) interviewed claimed that their impression management work, or "cultural positioning," was essential to their survival in the two distinct cultural worlds:

The White world is where I feel at the most risk. I show my White side here, which means I must be more strategic, not as spontaneous. My White side is precise and accurate. Plus, I do not want to share events from my Black experience in the White world...

Furthermore, like Jackson, a Tempered Radical may convey dual images to important constituencies. A Tempered Radical may at times welcome the fact that constituencies see both sets of her commitments and identities. Her ability to be a trusted arbiter of competing views and make changes may rest, in part, on each side seeing her as understanding of both views. However, while dual images may occasionally be advantageous, theories of managing multiple constituencies suggest the importance of managing impressions so that each side sees that which is most favorable to their interests (Goffman, 1959). Dual images may make the Tempered Radical, like Jackson, appear "wishy washy," "political," or hypocritical (Foy, 1985). Some observers may be confused about who the Tempered Radical is or what she "really" stands for, as if such stands are univocal. The ambiguity may also cause suspicion and doubt in others who believe the Tempered Radical to be strategically managing impressions. Once impression management is suspected through the appearance of inconsistency, observers give less credibility to the person who appears inconsistent (Goffman, 1969). The dual images may also cause cynicism and distrust in others who believe the Tempered Radical to be hypocritical. Many assume that hypocrites pretend to be something they are not and therefore do not view these individuals as credible or trustworthy. Despite some academics' appreciation of the virtues of hypocrisy (e.g., March, 1976; Weick, 1979), Western society places great value on consistency and clarity, (Levine, 1985; March, 1976; Meyerson and Lewis, 1992) and exerts tremendous social pressure on those who would appear hypocritical. The

Tempered Radicals we have encountered claimed to experience significant stress from actually being labeled a hypocrite or from worrying about such impressions. They worry because, besides carrying the sting that they are being inauthentic, being known as a hypocrite would damage their credibility.

**Psychological lure of consistency.** Not only may Tempered Radicals suffer from the social stigma associated with inconsistent identities and commitments, they also must endure the psychological discomfort of dissonance. Individuals whose identities, beliefs, and/or behaviors are inconsistent with each other, experience a psychological drive to make them more internally consistent (Bem, 1972, Festinger, 1964).

Adaptation driven by a need for consistency can result in forfeiting one side of the ambivalent stance or the other. As we will discuss, most pressures point toward assimilation, where the individual surrenders or defers her extra-organizational identity and commitments. In this way, the social value of and psychological drive for consistency help to entrench the status quo. However, at times, the drive for consistency among competing sets of identities and commitments may generate a desire to behave more authentically with respect to her personal identity and commitments. This desire may result in her forfeiting her "insider" identity and ultimately separating from the organization to behave in a way that more purely reflects her "outsider" identity and commitments.

### **The Lure of Affiliation**

The position taken by Tempered Radical can be lonely. The Tempered Radical may fear that affiliating too closely with a cohort either outside or inside the organization may polarize her image toward one side and jeopardize her credibility and identification with the other side. One Tempered Radical described how this fear resulted in her isolation:

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 because you are not professional. [I am] terrified to be seen with a group of women.

Faced with this possibility, the Tempered Radical may be tempted to be ambiguous about her identification with and commitment to various coalitions in the hopes of not threatening her affiliation

with others. The disturbing result may be that no group takes the Tempered Radical seriously and that the Tempered Radical is left alone without the support of any coalition.

The feeling of isolation may cause the Tempered Radical to look for acceptance and companionship in the organization. She may try to gain acceptance by proving her loyalty and "like-mindedness" by conforming, sometimes emphatically, to dominant patterns of behavior or by turning on members of her own social identity group (Kanter, 1977). Feelings of isolation met with the possibility of affiliation can act as a strong assimilating force.

Some Tempered Radicals choose to separate and affiliate with outsiders who are more radical in response to this need for coalition and support. The feminist executive, for example, might be tempted to affiliate with other feminists and state unequivocally her beliefs and commitments. With a consistent set of beliefs and commitments, she can more easily identify with and be identified by others with similar beliefs. She can expect support from these others, attend conferences, send newsletters, and carry banners with them and generally expect more companionship from them than had she remained an ambivalent insider.

### **Forces of Assimilation: The Slippery Slope Between Compromise and Cooptation**

Another form of pressure away from ambivalence, one that we feel is the most slippery slope, is the pressure to assimilate through various means of compromise. The course of compromise, which we earlier distinguished from ambivalence, consistently seems to favor the status quo. The norm in American culture of reaching a compromise, of meeting in the middle, is extraordinarily deep and hard to resist, particularly to those who strive to achieve a "balance" and walk the middle course between conflicting identities and commitments. Below, we describe our own experience with this project to illustrate various ways in which perceived compromise can result in cooptation and assimilation.

We began what we now call the "Tempered Radical" project as graduate students with a concern about feminist executives and academics. We had a personal stake and an emotional commitment to this problem, but were not sure about how to study it. When we went to faculty members for suggestions on literatures and field sites we were warned that asking questions about

"radical" or "feminist" change within organizations was itself radical and risky, particularly for graduate students who have not established a secure position within the academic or business communities. Our identification and emotional investment in this problem represented additional threats to our perceived legitimacy. We were advised to conceive of this problem, not as a problem for feminists or radicals, but as a more general problem of making change from within a system. Our faculty advisors suggested that this approach would allow us to detach ourselves from the problem and, most importantly, help us not to be labeled "radicals," (or worse, "feminists,") so early in our careers. Moreover, if we immediately conducted an explicitly feminist study, we would risk being type cast and marginalized in a way that might reduce our opportunities to get a position of influence in a major university.

Our advisors' counsel to detach ourselves and cast the problem in more general terms seemed like a reasonable professional compromise. In general, we hoped we could avoid the polarized and unsatisfying options of being dismissed as a radical versus deferring our true interests for a long time or even indefinitely. We were convinced that this compromise was rational, so we deferred the feminist project and reformulated the research in more general theoretical terms.

We began to search for comparable change agents inside organizations. At this point, we were presented with an opportunity to study corporate ethics officers, who were charged with implementing possibly controversial ethics programs within corporations. "Corporate ethics officers" were an identifiable group of subjects who, unlike feminist executives, were accessible and easy to study. Corporate ethics officers and programs also represented a timely focus for our research because these programs had been recently mandated and therefore the ethics officers were negotiating immediate change. In its inception, this study was initiated as part of the process of gaining theoretical insight into feminist change agents, a means rather than an end in itself.

The study of corporate ethics officers soon absorbed much of our time and energy. The research involved extensive traveling, interviewing, and data analysis. We found that the topic interested academic and non-academic audiences and could readily attract research funding. When asked about our research interests, it became easier for us to talk about the phenomenon of corporate

ethics programs in a more rational, emotionally neutral, and theoretically compelling way than to talk about the problems of feminist executives. Our language, audience, and ultimately our problem gradually changed. Our study took on a life of its own and over the last several years resulted in several papers about corporate ethics programs in the defense industry. We both applied for academic jobs in business "ethics."

After several years of focusing on ethics, we finally returned to our original research concern about the feminist executive. Our first draft of this paper reflected our deliberate attempt to be Tempered Radicals. However, in our effort to reach a balance in the paper, we "over tempered." Our protagonist became a highly rational strategist who at every turn attempted to reach a balance, appeal to multiple constituencies, and optimize impressions. Many of our colleagues who read the draft complained that the theory and the protagonist were overly rational and that we had many more degrees of freedom in the content and writing of the paper than we had enacted. We had squeezed from the Tempered Radical as well as the paper all signs of heat, temper, or affect of any kind. Moreover, we had unwittingly made our protagonist and paper complicit in maintaining traditional constraints.

Our experience with this project illustrates several difficulties in sustaining the middle course of ambivalence through compromise-like solutions. These difficulties include problems of 1) language, 2) timing and the temptation to defer, 3) emotional control and rationality, and 4) vicious cycles. We discuss each of these mechanisms of assimilation below.

**Language.** Compromise can lead to cooptation when a Tempered Radical embraces the language of the status quo to package and legitimate her concerns. In our study, we initially adopted the relatively sanitized language of "organizational change" and "change agents" as a way to make our study more legitimate. Our example of a change agent gradually mutated from a "feminist executive" to a "corporate ethics officer." We were able, serendipitously, to study corporate ethics officers and the fine line they must walk between assertions of integrity and policies for wrongdoing. It is true that they offered us a chance to compare and contrast their situation to that of feminist executives. The latter were harder to find and to study, itself an important difference from ethics

officers who had an official and visible role as managers of stability and change. As our study progressed, we talked more about "ethics officers" in place of internal change agents and "ethics programs" in place of organizational change. Our language shifted to reflect our insider knowledge of the world of ethics programs in the defense industry as we spoke of "ethics hotlines," "ethics officers," "fraud, waste, and abuse," the "defense industry initiative." The working titles of our papers reflected and reinforced our gradual shift in focus, beginning with, "Feminist Executives and Ambivalent Images" and, after several others, to "De-coupling Law and Justice: Multiple Perspectives on Corporate Ethics Programs." We were not aware at the time of the direction and speed in which our language and thinking were moving.

The role of language in re-orienting mindsets and coopting participants has been vividly portrayed in Carol Cohn's (1987) study of the "world of defense intellectuals." As participant observer in a world where men (almost exclusively) spent their days matter-of-factly strategizing about "limited nuclear war," "clean bombs," "counterforce exchanges," and "first strikes," Cohn became fascinated with the question, "how could they talk this way?" To remain legitimate in the system, she learned to speak exclusively in the discourse of insiders. However, as Cohn learned the language, she noticed that she not only became less horrified by the cold-bloodedness of the talk, she became 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: 704).

The more proficient she became in the language, the easier it became to talk about nuclear war. While she remained an insider, Cohn's desire and ability to speak in two tongues and her capacity to think the thoughts of a critical outsider gradually faded. The language removed her from the reality of the referent. As her language shifted to "defense-speak," the referent shifted from concerns about people and humanity to concerns about weapons. Human death became "collateral damage." Once this fundamental linguistic shift occurred, she became unable to reflect her own values in her speech: 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 adopt 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: 708).

Thus, the power of language was not in the ability to communicate technically, but rather its transformative and exclusionary capacity to rule out other forms of talk, thought, and identity. Re-naming presumes re-conceptualizing.

The strategy of packaging a desired change in insider, legitimate language retains logic and appeal and has been widely recommended (e.g., Alinsky, 1972; Dutton and Ashford, forthcoming). For instance, some might counsel a feminist executive trying to generate interest in a corporate sponsored child care to couch her proposed change in financial, "bottom line" terms. She may frame her argument for child care in terms of the role child care can play in retaining female employees and improving morale and productivity. Although the executive might personally believe that child care is a valuable end in itself, an important aspect of a corporation's responsible participation in a social community, framing the issue in terms of the organization's valued ends (turnover and cost minimization) rather than her own valued end (corporate social responsibility) may be strategically more prudent. A risk with this corporate frame, however, is that gradually, the social responsibility arguments for child care might fade away as the more instrumental arguments become focal. She might succeed in getting child care established, but if it is established for only instrumental reasons, like reducing turnover, then it might be revoked if it does not prove to be instrumental. The dangers are that she and others may lose sight of the original social concerns and values underlying this issue, and moreover, the exclusive use of insider language to frame an issue might not bring about change that can last. Audre Lorde's well acclaimed statement, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" anticipated this tension.

**Timing and the temptation to defer radical commitments.** In an attempt to maintain an ambivalent stance, the Tempered Radical not only has to resist the assimilating forces of insider language, she must also be sensitive to issues of timing. In an effort to compromise and minimize damage to her career, the Tempered Radical might be tempted to defer her radical commitments until

she has gained sufficient legitimacy in the organization. Our experience with this project illustrates how such compromises related to timing can lead to cooptation. We were confronted with issues of timing when we were advised as graduate students not to study something as radical and risky as the feminist executive until some unknown time when we were more established in our career. We responded with a compromise by deferring our specific concerns about feminists and radicals and by making our immediate problem more general. However, as we became more knowledgeable about ethics and ethics programs, we became more focused on the specific topic and strayed from our original concern much further and for much longer than we had imagined. We believe that it was important that we had each other to push our return to our original concerns.

Like other compromise solutions, the strategy of deferring one's radical commitments until one has more power has been established as a reasonable approach to upward influence. One is less at risk and can therefore advance more threatening agendas from a position of power and security (e.g., Hollander, 1958). It may appear logical for the Tempered Radical may elect to collect what Hollander calls "idiosyncrasy credits" by initially conforming to and exemplifying the organization's norms. Later on in her career, when the Tempered Radical accumulates enough credibility, trust, and status, she can "spend" these credits to reshape organizational norms. However, this strategy entails two risks. First, when "later" on arrives, she may have lost sight of her initial convictions. Second, it may become impossible to tell when "the moment" has arrived to cash in one's credits. It can always be tempting to wait until one has more formal power and security and can really accomplish something greater.

The longer the Tempered Radical waits to disclose her agenda, and the longer she spends investing in her career, the more difficult it may be to resist cooptation on material, psychological, and political grounds. Radical theorists who choose to work outside of mainstream institutions argue that once an individual gets materially "sucked into the game," even if one has been playing as a means to radical ends, she will not be willing to risk losing such bureaucratic inducements as salaries, security, and status. Ferguson sees this among feminists in traditional bureaucracies:



Yet, 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 to '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: 192-193)

Once a person benefits from the rewards based on loyalty and complicity, it becomes extremely difficult to risk these benefits and turn her back on those who granted these rewards and privileges. This may apply most acutely to those who have been closely mentored by insiders.

In addition, as the Tempered Radical gains power and status as an insider in the organization, she risks becoming increasingly distant -- materially, politically, and emotionally -- from experiences of injustice and the communities and affiliations outside the organization with whom she had previously identified. It can become increasingly difficult for the Tempered Radical to act on the behalf of "others" on the outside because it becomes increasingly difficult to feel for or as an outsider (hooks, 1989). It is in this sense that hooks, speaking of Black women professionals, emphasized the importance of continually reminding and remembering one's roots and warned: "our struggle [is a struggle] of memory against forgetting."

It is not surprising, therefore, that there exists little evidence of people radically changing course (or staying true to their initial commitments) once they reach the top (Michels, 1962). Moreover, if an individual radically changes course late or mid-career, she may suffer the consequences of being viewed as "whishy washy" or hypocritical. Or, she may be accused of manipulating impressions. In any of these cases, the sincerity and credibility of the subject becomes suspect. This point is illustrated in the highly publicized case of a woman neurosurgeon at Stanford Medical School who suddenly and publicly spoke out against sexist practices on the part of individuals and the institution after years of silence. Some sought to undermine her by calling her motive suspect, because she appeared to be having a sudden change of heart. Many accused her of making a power play to be chair of her department; others claimed that she wanted attention. (Supporters saw action as brave and exemplary of principled dissent (Graham, 1986).

Individuals, most often women, confront extreme "backlash" and resentment when, after years of not being aware of, or quietly tolerating, sexism and other forms of injustice, they suddenly speak out against these injustices. Anita Hill is a compelling recent example. Reactions to these individuals become particularly severe if they have succeeded in the system. For instance, women who have risen in a professional bureaucracy who appear to experience a sudden awakening of a feminist consciousness when they speak up (a consciousness they may or may not have had all along) become easy targets of resentment, mistrust, and backlash against feminism. They experience accusations such as: "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?" "How can you condemn the very system that enables you to be heard?"

**Emotional control and rationality.** In addition to managing the timing of their actions, Tempered Radicals must "manage" or temper their emotions. In an effort to compromise and "be reasonable," the Tempered Radical might try to cool down and suppress her emotions in potentially heated situations. This emotional "tempering" becomes particularly crucial if she has opted to defer her radical stance until later in her career. Even if she opts for a more balanced, ambivalent course along the way, a Tempered Radical must be able to suppress anger and stay cool in potentially offensive situations. Or, at least she must choose which situations she will become passionate about and which she will temper her emotions. A danger is that the Tempered Radical becomes only "tempered," in the sense of temperate. Emotions fuel the Tempered Radical's flame.

Again, we refer to our experience to illustrate this dilemma. As we described, when we finally returned from ethics to our original concern about feminist executives and Tempered Radicals, we were concerned about making the problem of our protagonist theoretically compelling and publishable. As a result, our original draft of this paper as well as our protagonist became "highly rational and strategic." Yet passion and affect motivate our protagonist as well as our paper. Ironically, our effort to make our protagonist and paper more credible, by making them more rational, made them less so. Colleagues who reviewed an earlier draft of this paper complained that affect and passion were conspicuously absent.

We have struggled with how to make affect -- our own and the Tempered Radical's -- as prominent in this essay as it is in the nature of the problem we experience and attempt to describe. We fear we have failed, despite our awareness of this flaw. As we theorized about this topic over the years we have distanced ourselves from the affect and passion that motivated this project. As we read and re-read interview transcripts, we began to think of our colleagues as "data." As we tried to explain Tempered Radicals, we rationalized their behaviors. As we described the experiences of Tempered Radicals (including our own) in theoretical language, we lost the affect that seems so central to the experience. This problem naturally gets exacerbated in our attempts to "write up" our ideas. The language of theory distanced us from the experience (Sandelands and Drazin, 1989). We toyed with the possibility of writing this paper as a narrative, which is a rhetorical form that can remain closer to the experience and is rhetorically more capable of revealing feeling (Weick and Browning, 1986). Yet the possibility of a paper in pure narrative form did not seem professionally prudent. The interweaving of self-reflective narrative and theory in this paper represents our ambivalent response to this problem. The Tempered Radical faces similar problems in simultaneously retaining her heat, which keeps her engaged and fuels change, and tempering her heat, which allows her to seem rational and remain legitimate.

Issues of language, timing, and emotional control may be interrelated at times in some important ways. As we will discuss, Tempered Radicalism may be as much about how one acts and spontaneously reacts in everyday situations as it is about strategically designing interventions to reflect one's commitments. Does one, for example, react to and make explicit the racism of a colleague's comment or does one let the comment pass? Does one show how a practice of holding staff meetings at 4:30 discriminates against working parents (usually women) with children in day care or does one try to cope with the practice the best they can? Does the token woman in a group reveal the extent of her emotional hurt and anger when her boss continues to ignore her in favor of her male colleagues in meetings?

If the Tempered Radical reacts with harsh language too quickly, or appears rash or emotional, she is likely to be branded "one of those radicals," dismissed as being "politically

correct," or simply discounted for being "overly emotional" or "just too sensitive." If the Tempered Radical distances herself through abstract or sanitized language, is calculating and cool, and continues to suppress reactions and emotions, she may pass up important opportunities to shape policies, change colleagues' behaviors, and, in general, make a difference.

**Vicious cycles.** The final mechanism we describe in which compromise can lead to cooptation is through the process of vicious cycles. Again our experience can be illustrative. Although we knew little about ethics at the beginning of our field project, our data was sufficiently interesting to generate additional research opportunities. 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 on the topic and more questions to be researched. Such is the course of a "research stream." Compromise behaviors enact environments that require more of the same behaviors, and so forth (Weick, 1979).

Vicious cycles can also be enacted when Tempered Radicals try to compensate for their tendency to favor members of their outside identity group. For instance, Tempered Radicals in the teaching profession may become overly attentive to dominant members and inadvertently exaggerate the oppression of their own within the classroom (hooks, 1989). This tendency creates a vicious cycle where students who are typically outsiders come away "discouraged, confused, feeling devalued." The effect on the student's esteem can be particularly extreme because one of her own had been responsible for the devaluing behaviors. The Tempered Radical may unwittingly find herself ultimately rejected by her own and other "outsiders" with whom she identifies and embraced by, or a symbol to, "insiders" whom she wishes to resist.

### **Feelings Associated with Ambivalence**

As sociologists and psychologists remind us, ambivalence generates a variety of unpleasant emotions, which also contribute to the difficulty of sustaining this posture. Among other feelings, Tempered Radical's ambivalence may result in guilt and self doubt (Weigert and Franks, 1989). Guilt and self doubt arise when people cannot live up to their own identity ideals. Given that the Tempered Radical must live in two cultural worlds with two different standards of success and

morality, she cannot possibly live up to both or either cultural ideal. The Tempered Radical resembles Goffman's (1963) stigmatized individual who feels ambivalent and guilty because she cannot live up to the unrealistic identity standard she applies to herself. An Assistant to the Chancellor of a major university revealed to us the continuing anguish she suffers from not living up to her own, admittedly unrealistic, ideal as an advocate for women:

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 statement about Black students who struggle to remain committed to two distinct worlds and identities:

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: 67-68).

These feelings may ultimately lead the Tempered Radical to forfeit one side of her ambivalent identity or, worse, give up entirely. Hooks once again makes vivid the cost of this stance for Black women: For some of us, failure, failing, being failed began to look like a positive alternative, a way out, a solution. This was especially true for those students who felt they were suffering mentally, who felt that they would never be able to recover a sense of wholeness or well-being(hooks, 1989: 59).

Members of traditionally oppressed groups who attempt to resist full assimilation do not have a monopoly on these self deprecating feelings. As one of the Tempered Radicals who happens to be White and male, but ideologically deviant from the mainstream, revealed:

It is corrosive to constantly feel disrespected by the system, to live in an environment that is constantly sending messages of subtle disrespect. It is corrosive to my self esteem....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 efficacious and whether it is worth carrying on.

In addition to guilt and self doubt, several features of Tempered Radicalism can produce stress. First, Tempered Radicals frequently experience role conflict and role ambiguity which can lead to stress and strain (e.g., Kahn et al, 1964). Second, because Tempered Radicals must learn to suppress or temper emotions at times, they may feel additional stress and frustration from "bottling it up" (Bell, 1990; Coser, 1979; Worden et al, 1985). Third, the tedious rate in which change occurs further frustrates Tempered Radicals, many of whom report periodic battles against burnout. Fourth, because Tempered Radicals may become visible symbols of a marginalized cultural community, they may suffer additional anxiety about their performance as they worry about how it will affect others in their cultural group (hooks, 1989; Kanter, 1977).

We wish to re-emphasize one final set of emotions associated with of Tempered Radicalism. Individuals who challenge the status quo in some way that is unpopular, in general, risk being socially alienated and isolated. Virtually all of our interviewees mentioned that at one time or another, to varying degrees, they have felt isolated. Like the other undesirable feelings we discussed above, if severe, these feelings will make the ambivalent posture of Tempered Radicalism a difficult one to sustain (Kolb and Williams, 1993).

Ironically, the Tempered Radical's feeling of isolation may become even more acute as she advances and gains credibility as an insider, despite her success at sustaining an ambivalent stance. A feminist executive reported to us that once she had become well established in a conservative organization, the few other women in similar positions to whom she had previously looked to as social referents had by this time either dropped out, been dismissed, or been completely assimilated into the mainstream. As a relatively high status insider (with strong commitments as an outsider),

she was structurally and institutionally closer to the center of her work organization and profession, and therefore she felt more distance between her professional and personal identities. The distance between herself and her colleagues also became greater as her male colleagues in comparable organizational positions had become emblematic of success in the organization and profession. Furthermore, her high status position in the organization created more social and emotional distance between herself and the lower level participants and outsiders with whom she partially identified. She would have hoped that new employees with radical and idealistic ideas would come talk to her, yet because of her status, they did not assume she was like-minded.

In addition, individuals who have spent their careers as unambivalent "insiders" until they suddenly run up against barriers and injustices that had previously been invisible to them, or those who have a sudden crisis of identity, report intense feelings of isolation and alienation, but for different reasons. After years of professional climbing, some women (who, by virtue of their success, have become more threatening to powerful insiders) suddenly confront undeniable injustices, and others simply get fed up with the game or realize that the stakes with respect to personal authenticity have become too great. These individuals do not want to abandon their organizations or professions. Because most of their previous affiliations had been with insiders who do not share their ambivalent feelings and may not be able to understand their sudden change of heart and consciousness, these newly converted Tempered Radicals may suffer intense feelings of alienation and isolation.

We do not want to end this section on such a pessimistic note. In addition to feelings of isolation and alienation, some Tempered Radicals who have succeeded in maintaining their ambivalent course also report the joy and sense of connection from feeling a strong sense of community with groups and individuals inside as well as outside the organization (e.g., Gilkes, 1982; Worden, Levin, Chesler, 1985). This feeling of community, they report, can be tremendously fulfilling and sustaining. In addition to the pain of guilt, self doubt, and lowered self esteem, some Tempered Radicals also report positive, self affirming feelings of "authenticity" from having a "rather unorthodox, complex identity" (McIntosh, 1989) and uplifted and encouraged by others who

can relate and respond to the complexity of their commitments (Gilkes, 1982; hooks, 1989). In addition to the burden of stress, some Tempered Radicals also report the exhilaration, excitement, and pride they experience when they can transcend the dualities of their own contradictions to work inside their social worlds and also somehow change them (e.g., Ritchie, 1992). It is with the aim of finding ways to generate these positive feelings and minimize the negative ones that we now turn to a discussion of tactics that will help sustain the ambivalent posture of Tempered Radicalism.

### **Sustaining the Ambivalent Course of Tempered Radicalism**

Literature on a variety of topics, including, radical change and community organizing (e.g., Alinsky, 1972), "championing" (e.g., Howell and Higgins, 1990, Kanter, 1983), upward influence (e.g., Kipnis et al, 1980; Mowday, 1978), "issue selling" (Dutton and Ashford, forthcoming), and impression management (e.g., Goffman, 1959; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1991) all address tactics relevant to the effectiveness of Tempered Radical as change agent. However, none of these literatures (with the occasional exception of the first) are concerned with the problems of sustaining ambivalence and avoiding assimilation and separatism. Most of this work assumes that the change agent is, or hopes to be, central in the organization and fully assimilated. Although sometimes terms like "revolutionary" are used to describe change, the term typically refers to within-system innovation rather than change that somehow challenges the status quo. Thus, in our review of tactics that will help sustain Tempered Radicalism, we will refer only occasionally to these literatures and only to the extent they provide insight about affecting change *and* sustaining the stance of ambivalence. (Table 3 summarizes the tactics in relation to the pressures they address.).

#### **Small Wins**

Weick (1992) has argued that "wisdom" in the tumultuous 1990's may be reflected in the ability to know the difference between what can and cannot be changed and recommends "small wins" (Weick, 1984) as a way to accumulate and practice this wisdom. Weick's prescription may be particularly relevant for Tempered Radicals whose precarious stance of ambivalence may hinge on the ability to practice such wisdom. Specifically, a small wins approach makes sense for the Tempered Radical because small wins 1) rely on local, authentic, action, 2) work when visions of



change are blurry since they emphasize opportunism and improvisation, 3)are, by definition, small, but not trivial, and 4)test boundaries and constraints through action. Below, we relate each of these features of small wins to Tempered Radicalism and the specific pressures associated with ambivalence that they help to alleviate.

**Local, authentic action.** We previously argued that to achieve personal alignment, the Tempered Radical must advance policies, programs, and ideas which challenge and often bring about change in the status quo. A small wins strategy embraces the notion that change can occur as a result of small, local, *authentic*, everyday actions. For instance, Weick (1992) reports how, in the early stages of the Labor movement in Poland, organizers focused on delivering a *truthful*, slightly better today in small local ways (e.g., 10 people gather to hear an uncensored lecture on Polish history), rather than promising a big vision for a better tomorrow (Weick, 1992). They simply practiced, in small local ways, what they preached. These practices led to fundamental change. Yet the changes were, by themselves, not big enough to call attention to and threaten the legitimacy of the movement or its organizers in the early stages.

As a Tempered Radical, Peggy McIntosh (1989) has struggled with ways to remain authentic in a system that makes her feel fraudulent and finds her solutions in the way she enacts her choices and behaviors in her everyday work. McIntosh tries to create small wins through authentic actions in her teaching. For instance, rather than teaching "American Culture" strictly in the traditional mode of reviewing the presidents and most famous writers of a given period, McIntosh does this "straight version" in half the course. She then asks students what had been left out in this version of American culture. This method enables students to see various versions of history and to realize that each version is only a version that is naturally, but not accidentally, incomplete and biased. This relatively small innovation represents a more authentic form of teaching for her as well as an act of resistance with respect to the traditional canon.

By creating small wins in local authentic actions, the Tempered Radical can role model alternative behaviors and patterns of interaction in the organization at the same time she goes about fulfilling her routine commitments in the organization. Feminist professors, for instance, can

pedagogically mirror feminist principles of power sharing and cooperation in the classroom which itself is an important act of resistance. A female surgeon explained how she created pockets of resistance and alternative ways of being at work by behaving in her everyday actions in a way that is more authentic to her personal identity. When she treated each member of the surgical team with respect and displayed compassion towards patients, she demonstrated an alternative style of leadership and professional behavior. Her treatment of nurses in the operating room modeled alternative ways for the residents to behave toward nurses and may have altered the nurses' and residents' expectations of how teams share power and how surgeons should treat nurses as team members. By acting in a way that felt authentic, she created resistance to the authoritarian model that others took for granted and generated small changes in others' expectations and behaviors. These small changes could "snowball" into bigger consequences without calling into question her own practice and legitimacy.

Another Tempered Radical claimed that she made lasting impact by influencing the membership on committees she administered -- a small, everyday action that simply felt more authentic, but one with potentially big consequences. The small wins approach to change may not only be effective for this administrator, it may also be more prudent, particularly when issues attract attention:

I feel that your strategy ought to be that when the spotlight is on, you don't go for major substantial, you know, ideological goals. Go for the fixed agenda, institutionalize it so that you will always be there. And then over time you can incrementally go for your major goals. And so what I'm trying to do is build as much of this stuff into the way we do business, in terms of this committee, this office, how we deal with sexual harassment, how we deal with (Chancellor), and how we identify and deal with issues on campus.

Through small, local, authentic, often behind the scenes actions, individuals can be Tempered Radicals; they can remain true to their personal, more radical identities by enacting resistance and affecting change in the organization, while at the same time retain and even increase their legitimacy in the organization by simultaneously demonstrating their individuality and fulfilling their organizational commitments.

The local, authentic action orientation of small wins operates on several problematic aspects of Tempered Radicalism described earlier. First, because the Tempered Radical affects change in

small, local ways, the ambivalences and inconsistencies of her identities and commitments may not be perceptible. With reduced visibility of inconsistent behaviors comes reduced stress (Coser, 1979). A small wins approach, in general, works to reduce stress by scaling the scope of a problem down to something that seems 'doable'(Weick, 1984). Second, because she is behaving authentically, she may not feel as much dissonance or seem as counter-normative. She and others may be able to accept her ambivalence as complexity rather than as insincerity or hypocrisy. Third, the authenticity with which she behaves minimizes the possibility that she will experience feelings of fraudulence, self doubt, or guilt about not living up to personal ideals. Thus, she need not worry about appearing hypocritical or insincere.

**Blurry visions opportunism, and improvisation.** Small wins sometimes increase the possibility for additional small wins. Small wins uncover resources, information, potential allies, and sources of resistance (Weick, 1984). Small wins locate and create opportunities For this reason, a small wins approach prefers actions to be improvisational, visions of the future to be blurry, and strategies to be retrospective. Each of these features work in favor of Tempered Radicalism.

A Tempered Radical's desire for change is predicated on her ambivalent stance (to be aligned organizationally and personally, she needs to advance organizational change). Yet her vision of change may be no more concrete than the values and beliefs underlying the desire for change. Alinsky(1972) has advised that a "blurry vision" may be desirable for change agents working within the status quo on change that represents a challenge to the status quo. If the assumptions and interests underlying the change cut against the grain of the organization, the vision may be difficult or even risky to specify. Research on the rhetoric used by revolutionary leaders demonstrates that radical, alternative visions for the future are typically vague (Martin, Scully, & Levitt, 1990).

Blurry visions work in favor of a small wins approach, generally, and Tempered Radicalism, specifically. Blurry visions enable a Tempered Radical to improvise and wait for the right turn of events to resist or push for a change. If she focuses on the spirit of change, rather than on the details of a particular change, she can be ready to seize an opportunity. For example, a feminist executive

may have a blurry vision of a workplace that is more humanistic and family-friendly. Programs that advance child care, a shorter work week, or flexible career paths would all serve that vision and it may not matter which change comes first. In this way, the Tempered Radical can use the ambiguity of a blurry vision as a source of strategic flexibility (Eisenberg, 1984). A change agent who remains flexible and thinks opportunistically, rather than fixating on a single change can take strategic advantage of available resources, shifting power and alliances, lofty corporate rhetoric, lapsed resistance, or an exemplary case (to try a new policy). Blurry visions also allow change agents to build coalitions between constituencies with divergent interest (Levine, 1985; Meyerson & Lewis, 1992).

If opportunism drives the course of change, then the notion of a clear strategy, like the notion of clear vision, makes little sense for the Tempered Radical. Only after a series of small wins have been accomplished does it make sense to call attention to the change (if calling attention to the change does not jeopardize the Tempered Radical). Weick (1984) argues that the art of a small wins strategy lies in the ability to package and label a series of small wins effectively.

The opportunistic approach to change mitigates against some of the pressures toward assimilation in a few ways. It encourages the Tempered Radical to act immediately and continuously and thereby prevents her from deferring her radical commitments. This approach also allows emotions to be channeled toward small changes along the way, rather than build toward rage. This can help minimize stress. Moreover, recognizing and celebrating small wins helps keep the Tempered Radical on course by reminding her that she can make a difference.

The Tempered Radical should attend to a few cautions when allowing change to be driven by opportunism. First, Tempered Radicals may be located in fairly high level positions in their organizations. If they have become distant from lower level employees or others for whom they hope their change efforts might help, they have to worry that, to these others, the order of various changes might actually matter. For example, although it may not matter to the overall agenda which change comes first, some employees, particularly at lower levels, may be desperate for child care solutions, but can live quite easily without a policy about delayed partnership reviews. This

possibility points to the importance of finding ways to stay connected with those people and causes with whom the Tempered Radical at some level identifies. We will address this later.

Second, being driven solely by opportunism may mean that Tempered Radicals follow, not lead, change. They may only end up making those small wins that seem trivial, that were there for the asking, rather than pushing the limits of the possible. If they retreat whenever the issue they raise is too hot, then they do not push the organizational limits and may even help to solidify them. The next sections discuss the problems of triviality and organizational limits.

**Small but not trivial wins.** Although we have advised Tempered Radicals to think small and take a pragmatic, opportunist approach to change, we do not want to suggest that acts of resistance be too small or trivial. As we suggested earlier, efforts of resistance that are compromised by being too soft in language or small in scope may set a change process backwards. A small win might make people feel the issue is closed, distract people from a more fundamental issue, or steer a change effort off course. Acts of resistance that seem too small may also make the Tempered Radical feel frustrated because her efforts seem trivial. Alinsky (1972) warned that reformers could miss change opportunities not only by "shooting too high" but also by "shooting too low." The Tempered Radical must walk a fine line between "shooting too high" and "too low," but what makes this balance so precarious is that she never really knows what "too high" means until she steps over the line or what "too low" means until she learns of opportunities lost.

**Testing the boundaries.** The "line" between shooting too high and shooting too low is not fixed or stable. Perhaps the most effective way to learn the limits of what is organizationally acceptable at a given time, to a given constituency, is to test. In earlier versions of this paper, and perhaps this one, we have been accused of being overly cautious. The danger of not testing what is tolerable is that one becomes complicit in socially constructing the limitations in a way that not only does not push them outwards, but enacts and objectifies them in a more conservative position. Thus, the only way for the Tempered Radical to locate the appropriate degree of resistance is by pushing against the limit and to think of small wins as experiments that uncover resistance as well as support (Weick, 1984). This, in itself, will keep the organization in flux, push outward the

constraints, and surface limiting assumptions. 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. And thus alignment is not a state of being to be achieved, rather it's actions and events and moment and it's never resolved. ...This points toward a different way of conceptualizing organization: as moving patterns of aligning, dynamic, and shifting, and in tension and quite likely conflict. [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: 6-7).

For this reason, Tempered Radicals would be well advised to follow Michael Harrington's advise to work "just to the left of possible," and to be a bit daring in defining the boundaries of the possible. In our discussions with Tempered Radicals, we have heard of few instances in which the Tempered Radical who "pushed too hard" was not given a second chance. Most Tempered Radicals who had worked in the organization for at least a short time believed that they would be given a second chance, even if they did push beyond what was organizationally appropriate.<sup>4</sup> By continually pushing for small wins and slightly, but continually, pushing the boundaries, a Tempered Radical can avoid the temptation of deferring her radical commitments until she has more legitimacy.

### **Picking Battles**

Although we have argued that Tempered Radicals should be opportunistic in their behaviors and attempts at change, they need not be agnostic about which actions to take or which changes to advance. To some extent, Tempered Radicals must pick their battles judiciously. Tempered Radicals possess a limited amount of emotional energy and have access to limited legitimacy, resources, and power. Finding the right personal time with respect to one's stock of emotional and psychological energy may be every bit as important as finding the appropriate organizational opportunity (when the organization is politically ripe and resources are available) and professional moment (when one's career can best tolerate risk taking). Taking account of the symbolic repercussions of assuming

---

<sup>4</sup> The role of second chances in the Tempered Radical's calculus was first suggested in a discussion with Abigail Stewart and Sandra Harding. We thank them for this insight.

particular battles can also be important. The Chancellor's assistant described this problem and stressed the importance of choosing her battles carefully:

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.

Choosing battles might mean deciding when to speak up, when to visibly support a colleague, or when to publicly confront. These choices must, in part, be made with the intention of being able to use emotions and energy in a way that will further the Tempered Radical's career, with minimum damage to her sense of self and authenticity, or will enact her radical commitments with minimum damage to her career. At the same time, a rational choice of moment is not always possible. Sometimes when emotion compels a speaker, the person is more compelling. The reasoned choice of battles should not preclude the occasional spontaneous eruption of emotion.

### **Alternatives to Compromise in Language**

We have suggested that the tactics of small wins and picking battles will help alleviate some of the difficulties associated with ambivalence. We now suggest four alternative ways Tempered Radicals might respond to the problem of language: 1) speak multiple languages simultaneously, 2) transcend dualities, 3) deconstruct and then reconstruct the dominant discourse, and 4) use the dominant's language against itself.

**Speak multiple language simultaneously.** If one speaks in the dominant language of the insiders, it also helps to speak in the languages of outsiders. Speaking in multiple languages and to multiple constituencies can help counter-balance the coopting force of insider language. Chesler advocates and practices this approach, particularly in how he speaks of his action research on support for families of childhood cancer:

My work was directed at many different audiences.... Reaching these different audiences required the use of different language systems and different channels of dissemination... Thus, a given finding often was presented in different ways, through different media, to different audiences. Avenues I used included formal

print, speeches, workshops, informal memoranda, consultations, public or private altercations and advocacy arenas (Hasenfeld and Chesler, 1989: 514).

While speaking in multiple languages may appear to be an attractive approach, for reasons we have discussed earlier, actually maintaining a multilingual voice, while one voice is the insider, is not a simple challenge. We offer specific suggestions for maintaining multivocality in a subsequent section when we discuss issues of community allegiance.

Putting aside the general difficulty of multivocality, the Tempered Radical must not only speak in different languages to different audiences, she must at times speak to the same audience in different languages. For example, a Tempered Radical who teaches M.B.A. students reported her own struggle about how to sensitize students to the ways in which power arrangements and hidden assumptions provide disadvantages for some organizational members and taken-for-granted, almost invisible, advantages for others. Which language to use was not obvious. A lesson such as this might be framed as a class on "White privilege and power" or the "hegemony of patriarchal power." However, such a class would probably threaten most M.B.A.s and would not succeed in encouraging them to think critically. The same class talked about in the more legitimated language of "diversity" or "structural sources of discrimination in the workplace" would probably feel less threatening and may persuade them to question some of their assumptions about privilege and power. However, because this language may help gloss over some of the more controversial issues, the instructor may miss the opportunity to really challenge those students who hold more radical beliefs or who would be receptive to questioning their own beliefs about privilege and power. The possibility of enlightening a small minority (even at the cost of alienating the majority) may seem more worthwhile than the alternative of not offending anyone. For the Tempered Radical, the problem of language does not simply suggest finding the single "correct" language in which to package a message for a given audience; it may suggest the need to speak in multiple languages even to the same apparent constituency. In this case, the instructor might be well advised to discuss the issues from several theoretical perspectives.



**Transcend dualities.** Speaking in multiple tongues helps to counterbalance some of the coopting forces of language. However, this approach has several disadvantages, including those associated with hypocrisy and manipulative impression management. An alternative to speaking in distinct languages may be for the Tempered Radical to attempt to transcend her ambivalent postures through an embracing language that acknowledges the competing views and moves the conversation beyond them. This approach may work well in discussions that devolve into battles over dualities, such as discussions of affirmative action, where people get caught in debates about the need for correctives versus reverse discrimination, similarities versus differences (Williams, 1987). A more fruitful discussion might focus on the root of injustice and how a society should distribute opportunities. The debates over dualities often distract from root concerns.

Dualities can surface when theorists experience a tension between writing as academics and writing as spokespersons and narrators. Instead of perceiving a choice between being "theoretical" or not, which merely reinforces the limiting boundaries of traditional theory, this dichotomy can be challenged (e.g., Brown and Gilligan, 1992).

Often we simply passively accept the false dichotomy between the so called "theoretical" and the writing which appears to be more directly related to the experiential (hooks, 1989: 37)

Our attempt to write this paper in a way that incorporates our experiences in narrative form to inform and illuminate theory (and our self reflections have been informed and illuminated by theory) represents our own attempt to overcome the dualisms of experiential and theoretical, narrative and argumentative voices. We have tried to weave in our own and others' narratives to bring the reader closer to the experience, and to use theory to help make sense of these experiences.

Transcending dualistic language and thinking helps the Tempered Radical avoid cooptation and may prevent the stigma of hypocrisy. This approach assumes that tensions kept alive can provoke creative breakthroughs and growth (Gilkes, 1982) so long as the tensions avoid breaking down into destructive conflict. Emotional energy arising from tensions that are appropriately released and channeled can be tremendously constructive. By simultaneously acknowledging the

tensions and overcoming them, humor represents another effective way to cope with and transcend dualistic thinking (Cosser, 1979; Meyerson, 1990).

**Deconstruction and reconstruction.** A third means of countering the cooptive power of insider language is for the Tempered Radical to use her insider knowledge to deconstruct and then reconstruct the language. In her attempt to understand how to speak with defense intellectuals with the credibility of an insider without losing the critical perspective of the outsider, Cohn ultimately settles on a deconstructive/reconstructive project:

I believe that feminists and others who seek a more just and peaceful world, have a dual task before us -- a deconstructive project and a reconstructive project that are intimately linked. Our deconstructive task requires close attention to, and the dismantling of, techno-strategic discourse. The dominant voice of militarized masculinity and decontextualized rationality speaks so loudly in our culture, it will remain difficult for any other voice to be heard until that voice loses some of its power to define what we hear and how we name the world -- until that voice is delegitimated.

Our reconstructive task is a task of creating compelling alternative visions of possible futures, a task of recognizing and developing alternative conceptions of rationality, a task of creating rich and imaginative alternative voices -- diverse voices whose conversations with each other will invent those futures. (Cohn, 1987: 717-718).

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., Calas, 1987; Calas & Smircich, 1989; Martin, 1990; Mumby & Putnam, 1992). As a provocative illustration of this genre, Mumby and Putnam (1992) deconstruct the concept "bounded rationality." Deconstructing "bounded rationality" for its underlying assumptions provides the raw material for their reconstruction organizing under the assumptions of "bounded emotionality," which, if taken seriously, has profound implications for how we think about organizations and management. For instance, the notion that bounded rationality is premised on hierarchical goals and values helps one to envision an alternative organizing model based on an heterarchy of goals and values. The former "function in a linear and fixed way to provide a constant set of organizational outcomes that are not

easy to change" (Mumby & Putnam, 1992:475). The latter are flexible and subject to contextual relations that govern the order of the goals at any point in time.

While the deconstructive and reconstructive project represents an important and potentially powerful strategy for radical change, its utility to non-academic organizational members may be questionable. It therefore may be incumbent upon academics to partner with organizational members in this deconstructive and reconstructive effort. Otherwise, the privileged academic language of literary criticism may itself become a kind of exclusionary language that can coopt its practitioners (Moi, 1985).

**Jujitsu-using mainstream language against itself.** Another linguistic strategy which helps avoid the coopting force of language is captured in the metaphor of "jujitsu" -- a martial art in which the defender uses the energy of the attacker against itself. The Tempered Radical can attempt strategically to use the dominant inside language to challenge and resist what is dominant (Scully & Meyerson, 1993). Those who hold power in organizations can be bound to its own rhetoric for oppositional ends or they can be resisted with the use of their own linguistic devices.

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 this lofty rhetoric to make claims on management for more responsive and accessible grievance channels and for other changes consistent with "fairness, dignity, and respect." The fear of losing credibility and trust among employees or being labeled a hypocrite persuaded management to be particularly responsive to claims that invoked their own language about ethics.

The skill of effectively using mainstream language to make radical claims is further illustrated by Susan Faludi in her recent bestseller Backlash. Faludi, who had previously worked as a reporter for the Wall Street Journal employed her knowledge, skills, and credibility as a mainstream

journalist to make relatively radical claims about the contemporary backlash against feminism. Gloria Steinem praised Faludi's "jujitsu-like" method for its effectiveness and glory:

[The book's method] was "exactly right because it gained credibility within the world it was attacking. The book reminds me of a woman detective who wired herself and won her sexual harassment case. The guys taught her how to wire herself, and she did, and she caught them. It's a sweet victory, to win using their methods (Steinem quoted in Attinger, 1992).

This approach should heed the caution of Audre Lorde about using the "master's tools."

### **Keeping "Outsider" Status Alive**

In this section, we reassert the importance of maintaining outside ties and collaboration in order to nourish the "outsider" identity. In comparison, the insider identity is reinforced much more strongly and on a daily basis, by decisions as simple as what clothes to put on in the morning. Balance is needed.

**Outside ties.** With few exceptions, the Tempered Radicals we encountered emphasized the importance of maintaining strong ties with individuals, communities, or groups outside of their work organization or profession. These outside affiliations act as sources of information, resources, emotional support and, perhaps most important, empathy. To take one example, Bell argues that Black women professionals can access their bicultural experience as a source of inner strength empowerment:

The resources coming from both cultural contexts affirm and nurture a Black woman's inner resources, giving her a feeling of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual wholeness (Bell, 1990:463).

One of Bell's informants described how her bicultural experience provided the advantage of multiple sources of empathy:

In many ways, I think White people are deprived. There is a richness from our duality that they will never have. I can identify more with them than they can with me. I grew up in a world, and that world was a mixed world (1990:473).

The Tempered Radical's sense of marginality and feelings 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). As individuals lose their ability to speak as outsiders, as, for example, Black women, they lose sight of how their minds have been "colonized"

(hooks, 1989). To resist the mechanisms of assimilation, Tempered Radicals must maintain their affiliations with sympathetic outsiders (as well as sympathetic insiders) who can help keep alive their "outside" identity. It is in this sense that hooks (1989) warned against viewing identity politics as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end.

In our own limited experience as organizational scholars we have learned to treasure our outside affiliations that represent and nurture our differences and commitments. For example, our ties to women studies programs and women's political organizations have for us, as well as for other feminist scholars, served as sources of emotional and intellectual vitality. In addition, our ties to friends and colleagues who are more radical in their interests and 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 who we try to imagine as readers of our papers. Imagining as well as receiving their feedback helps us to sustain our commitments.

In addition to sustaining commitments and identities and providing empathy and support, outside affiliations can also provide a sense of independence. One Tempered Radical claimed that his outside activities as activist and consultant had become a crucial source of esteem and empowerment. Particularly during times when he felt most isolated and alienated from his profession, these activities and affiliations empowered him by providing him with material, social, and professional independence.

[These activities] have been psychologically useful. They give me another reference group which decreases my dependence on the system.

His independence has enabled him to endure his ambivalent stance and marginal status within his organization and profession.

Affiliations with communities, organizations or people help mitigate against many of the negative emotions associated with ambivalence discussed earlier. These affiliations can keep alive the Tempered Radical's identity as an outsider and maintain her agility to speak in multiple tongues. The Tempered Radical's multiple empathies will fuel her emotions and inhibit her from overly rationalizing and suppressing her passion and rage. These outside affiliations will also help prevent

the Tempered Radical from acting in a way that makes her feel fraudulent or guilty. Feelings of empowerment, growth, and self confidence can all be nurtured through these crucial outside affiliations.

Affiliations inside the organization with individuals who experience similar ambivalences, and with those who simply understand the ambivalence, can also be tremendously helpful. Friends and colleagues within our organizations have been invaluable allies and sources of emotional and political sustenance. These individuals have encouraged us, have helped us find our voice, and have informed us about professional limitations and the consequences of stepping over them. Friends and colleagues help in a variety of ways. As one of the more cynical Tempered Radicals we interviewed reported, "nobody can make things right, but we can keep each other whistling in the wind."

**Collaboration.** Whether it is in the service of some form of activism or in the process of writing a paper, collaborating with like-minded and like-hearted individuals can be a source of emotional and intellectual energy and growth. The collaboration between Hasenfeld and Chesler (1989), who for different reasons have assumed marginal positions in their academic departments, resulted in a number of unforeseen benefits. According to these authors, they were able to 1)"bounce ideas and self conceptions off one another to gain clarity," 2)provide each other with "help or a friendly push" to address non-traditional topics and personal issues in their article, 3) help one another "see differences in role conceptions and work foci" to sort out one another's unique strengths, and 4) "to articulate our joint interests" as a way to locate possible commonalities with others (1989:520).

Collaborators can also provide emotional support when the balancing act becomes frustrating or stressful. A team of Tempered Radicals described their ritual of passing chocolate around when things became overly frustrating. Members of this team also sustained each other by noticing each others' small victories and creating small celebrations around them.

We too have benefited in other ways from our long-standing collaboration on this and projects that "grew" out of this one. To the extent that each of us pursued other projects while we worked on this one, we were not totally consumed by our joint projects and we maintained distinct

interests and consciousnesses. When one of us felt confused or pulled by the tension inherent in our ambivalent stance, the other could help redefine the tension and turmoil in terms of excitement and challenge. 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 the other the change 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 others' "digression." While this possibility may be unavoidable at times, we can without hesitation recommend to Tempered Radicals the virtues of mutual growth, joy, and reduced stress that comes working with another of like heart and mind. More often than not, strong collaborations can help Tempered Radicals sustain their precarious stance of ambivalence.

### **Conclusion**

The importance of maintaining affiliations, colleagues, and friends who are more and less radical than oneself may be crucial, not only as a means for Tempered Radicals to sustain their ambivalent course, but also as a way to make their "struggles" collective ones. These struggles may be collective in the sense that they benefit from numbers and "movements," yet they may also be collective in the sense that Tempered Radicals may play parts in movements bigger than themselves and their organizations. To survive in their chosen domains and be true to their personal ideals, they must continually advance changes, even if they are small. In the course of these changes, Tempered Radicals might uncover opportunities and hidden allies and help prepare for bigger changes that more radical outsiders would be better poised to advance. Tempered Radicals can also be ready and able supporters for insiders who push for big changes from positions of power. In this way, 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 other and to an overall movement of change.

The Tempered Radical as change agent faces many of the same challenges confronted by other organizational change agents and this paper therefore shares concerns with literatures on upward influence, organizational change, issue selling, product championing, and incremental innovation. Like the agents of change in these other literatures, the Tempered Radical must be

concerned with politics, legitimacy, and risk management as she advances change. However, unlike these others, The Tempered Radical must balance her concerns about gaining enough legitimacy with concerns about being assimilated and coopted. Unlike the other internal change agents, the Tempered Radical must continually worry about keeping alive her ambivalence, remaining an outsider even as she advances within the organization, and remaining an insider even as she wages a radical critique of the organization. In this way, this paper contributes to the literatures on change from within organizations by introducing a new kind of change agent, a new set of challenges in making change, and a fundamentally different type of change agent than the protagonists of these other literatures. We also hope that this paper brings a kind of legitimacy, inspiration, and sense of community to Tempered Radicals.

The Tempered Radical faces many challenges specific to her ambivalent posture. However, as we discussed, she also enjoys many benefits from this critical, ambivalent stance. Some readers may react with suspicion to the Tempered Radical. However, from an organization's perspective, despite, and, and perhaps because of her lack of "fit," the Tempered Radical may represent a unique source of vitality, learning, and transformation to the organization. As her own survival depends on transforming the organization to achieve alignment, so too the contemporary organization may depend on achieving transformation to align with new voices and players in a diverse, global environment.



## References

- Alinsky, S.D. (1972). *Rules for radicals*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Attinger, J. (1992). Steinem: tying politics to the personal. *Time*, 55-57.
- Bell, E. L. (1990). The bicultural life experience of career-oriented black women. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 11, 459-477.
- Bem, D.J. (1972). Self-perception theory. In *Advances in experimental social psychology*, L. Berkowitz (Ed.), 6. NY: Academic.
- Brown, L.M. & Gilligan, C. (1992). *Meeting at the Crossroads*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Burrell, G. & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis: Elements of the sociology of corporate life*. London: Heinemann
- Calás, M.B. (1987). *Organizational science/fiction: The postmodern in the management disciplines*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Calás, M.B. & Smircich, L. (1989). Voicing seduction to silence leadership. *Organization Studies*, 12, 567-601.
- Caldwell, D.F., Chatman, J.A. & O'Reilly, C.A. (1990). Building organizational commitment: A multifirm study. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63, 245-261.
- Chatman, J.A. (1989). Improving interactional organizational research: A model of person-organization fit. Special issue: Theory development forum. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(3), 333-349.
- Chesler, M. (1971). Teacher training designs for improving instruction in interracial classrooms. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 7, 612-641.
- Cohn, C. (1987). Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 12(4), 687-718.
- Collins, P.H. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of black feminist thought. *Social Problems*, 33(6), 514-532.
- Coser, R.L. (1979). Structural ambivalence and patterned mechanisms of defense. In, *Training in ambiguity: Learning through doing in a mental hospital*. New York: Free Press.

- Culbert, S.A. & McDonough, J. (1980). The invisible war: pursuing self-interest at work. In *Organizational reality reports from the firing line*. J. Frost, V.F. Mitchell, W.R. Nord (Eds.). 202-211.
- Demo, D.H. (1992). The self-concept over time: research issues and directions. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18, 303-26.
- DeYoung, K. (1988). Jackson is symbol to some U.K. blacks and sellout to others. *Herald Tribune*, 1.
- Dill, B. (1979). The dialectics of black womanhood. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 4(3), 543-555.
- Dutton, J.E. & Ashford, S.J. (Forthcoming). Selling issues to top management. *Academy of Management Review*.
- Eisenberg, E.M. (1984). *Managing corporate culture*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Ferguson, K.E. (1984). *The feminist case against buréaucracy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Festinger, L. (1964). *Conflict, decision and dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Foy, N. (1985). Ambivalence, hypocrisy, and cynicism: Aids to organization change. *New Management*, 2(4), 49-53.
- Gecas, V. (1982). The self-concept. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 8, 1-33.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Goffman, E. (1969). *Strategic interaction*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Gilkes, C.T. (1982). Successful rebellious professionals: the black woman's professional identity and community commitment. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 6(3), 289-311.
- Graham, J. (1986). Principled organizational dissent. *Review of Organizational Behavior*, B. Staw & L.L. Cummings (eds). 5, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

- Hasenfeld, Y. & Chesler, M.A. (1989). Client empowerment in the human services: Personal and professional agenda. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 25(4), 499-521.
- Hochschild, A.R. (1983). *The managed heart*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hollander, E. (1958). Conformity, status, and idiosyncrasy credits. *Psychological Review*, 65, 117-127.
- hooks, b. (1988). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston: South End Press.
- hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory from margin to center*. Boston: South End Press.
- Howell, J.M. & Higgins, C.A. (1990). Champions of technological innovation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35(2), 317-341.
- Kahn, R., Wolfe, D. Quinn, D., Snoek, R. & Rosenthal, R. (1964). *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*. New York: Wiley.
- Kanter, R.M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kanter, R.M. (1983). *The change masters*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- Kipnis, D., Schmidt, S.M. & Wilkinson, I. (1980). Intraorganizational influence tactics: Explorations in getting one's way. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 65, 440-452.
- Kolb, D. & Williams, S. (1993, March). Professional women in conversation: Where have we been and where are we going? *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 2, 14-26.
- Krieger, S. (1991). *Social science and the self: Personal essays on an art form*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Levine, D. N. (1985). *The flight from ambiguity: Essays in social and cultural theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- March, J. (1976). The technology of foolishness. In J. March and J. Osen (Eds.), *Ambiguity and choice in organizations*. Bergen, Norway: Universitetsforlaget.
- Marris, P. (1975). *Loss and change*. Garden City, NY: Anchor.
- Martin, J. (1990). Deconstructing organizational taboos: The suppression of gender conflict in organizations. *Organization Science*, 1, 339-359.

- Martin, J., Scully, M. & Levitt, B. (1990). Injustice and legitimation of revolution: Damning the past, excusing the present, and neglecting the future. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 281-290.
- Mayo, C. Training for positive marginality.
- McIntosh, P. (1989). Feeling like a fraud: part two. Paper presented at the Stone Center, Wellesley, College, Wellesley, Mass., December, 1987.
- Merton, R.K. (1976). *Social ambivalence and other essays*. New York: Free Press.
- Meyerson, D. & Lewis, S. (1992). *Cultural tolerance of ambiguity and its organizational consequences*, Working paper, University of Michigan.
- Meyerson, D. (1990). Uncovering socially undesirable emotions: Experiences of ambiguity in organizations. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 33(3), 296-307.
- Michels, R. (1962). *Political parties: A sociological study of the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy*, New York: Free Press.
- Moi, T. (1985). *Sexual/textual politics: Feminist literary theory*. London: New York: Methuen.
- Mowday, R. (1978). The exercise of upward influence in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23, 137-156.
- Mumby, D.K. & Putnam, L.L. (1992). The Politics of emotion: A feminist reading of bounded rationality. *The Academy of Management Review*, 17(3), 465-486.
- Park, R.E. (1928). Human migration and the marginal man. *American Journal of Sociology*, 33, 881-893.
- Rafaeli, A. & Sutton, R.I. (1991). Emotional contrast strategies as means of social influence: Lessons from criminal interrogators and bill collectors. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34, 749-775.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ritchie, J.B. (1992, March). Creative people in organizations: Can they survive? *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 1, 5-8.
- Sandelands, L. & Drazin, R. (1989). On the language of organization theory. *Organization Studies*, 10(4), 457-477.

- Scully, M. & Meyerson, D. (Forthcoming). The separation of law and justice: Managing impressions of corporate ethics programs. *The Employees Rights and Responsibilities Journal*.
- Smircich, L. (1986). Can a radical humanist find happiness working in a business school? Prepared for a symposium in the Organization Development Division: *Alignment in the development of social science -- towards a new role for OD*, Academy of Management meetings, Chicago, August.
- Smith, P. (1976, February). Eight games the system plays, or how to psych out the bureaucracy. *Ms. Magazine*, 97-100.
- Staw, B.M., Sandelands, L.E., Dutton, J.E. (1981). Threat-rigidity effects in organizational behavior: A multi-level analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26, 501-524.
- Stonequist, E. (1937). *The marginal man*. New York: Russell and Russell.
- Sutton, S.E. (1991). *Finding our voice in a dominant key*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Michigan.
- Thomas, R.R. (1991). *Beyond race and gender: Unleashing the power of your total work force by managing diversity*. New York: American Management Association.
- Washer, P. (1993, March). Rebel with a cause. *Working Women*, 52-55.
- Weick, K.E. (1979). *The social psychology of organizing*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Weick, K.E. (1984). Small wins: Redefining the scale of social problems. *American Psychologist*, 40-49.
- Weick, K.E. & Browning, L. D. (1986). Argument and narration in organizational communication. *Journal of Management*, 12(2), 243-259.
- Weick, K.E. (1992). *Wisdom in the 90s: Adaptation through small wins*. Hale Lecture #4. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- Weigert, A. & Franks, D.D. (1989). Ambivalence: A touchstone of the modern temper. Frank, D. & McCarthy, E. (Eds.). *The Sociology of Emotions*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Williams, J.C. (1989). Deconstructing gender. *Michigan Law Review*, 87(4), 797-854.

Wolfe, A. (1989). *Whose keeper? Social science and moral obligation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Worden, O., Chesler, M. & Levin, G. (1985). Racism, sexism, and class elitism: Change agents' dilemmas in combatting oppression. In A. Sargent's (Ed.) *Beyond Sex Roles*, 2nd ed. St. Paul: West Publ. Co., 451-469.

Ziller, R.C. (1973). *The social self*. New York: Pergamon.

Table 1

Advantages of Ambivalence

<u>Nature of ambivalence</u>	<u>Advantages</u>
Insider <i>and</i> outsider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multiple subjectivities accessible</li><li>• Connections to outsider's struggle while posied to realize opportunities for change in aid of that struggle</li></ul>
Critic of the status quo <i>and</i> of radical change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased effectiveness as change agent</li><li>• Change enabled by questioning dominant system while also questioning extreme radicalism</li></ul>
Advocate of the status quo <i>and</i> of radical change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simultaneity rather than compromise</li><li>• Rewards and resources of membership harnessed to advance change</li></ul>

Table 2

Difficulties in Sustaining Dual Identities: The Disadvantages of Ambivalence

<u>Challenges of ambivalence</u>	<u>Pressures away from ambivalence in trying to resolve these challenges</u>
Coping with inconsistency	
Multiple images and the social stigma of hypocrisy	• Fear of being dismissed by one or both constituencies as sell-out or danger
Psychological lure of consistency	• Desire to respond to one rather than multiple constituencies and appear consistent in values and commitments
Lure of affiliation	• Need to belong fully to one group to combat alienation and isolation
Slippery slope from compromise to cooptation	
Language	• Appeal of the legitimacy, power, and ease of status quo language
Deferral	• Ease and inertia in waiting until better time to spend idiosyncrasy credits
Emotional control	• Desire to express temper freely and avoid the exhaustion of constantly suppressing frustration and anger
Vicious cycles	• Distraction of becoming overly attentive to dominant group while hiding devotion to own group
Feelings associated with ambivalence and marginality	• Need to relieve guilt, self-doubt, false identity, role conflict, loneliness



Table 3

Sustaining the Ambivalent Course of Tempered Radicalism

<u>Tactics of Tempered Radicalism</u>	<u>Benefits</u>
<b>Small wins</b>	
Local, authentic action	• Incremental change occurs and identity is preserved
Blurry visions, opportunism, and improvisation	• Creativity is born of readiness and openness
Small, but not trivial, wins	• Cooptation from too much pragmatism is avoided
Testing the boundaries	• Course is steered between shooting too high and shooting too low
<b>Picking battles</b>	• Judicious spending of credits enhances credibility for important battles
<b>Alternatives to compromise in language</b>	
Speak multiple languages simultaneously	• Listeners are encouraged to stay with the parts of the dialogue they understand
Transcend dualities	• False dualities are questioned and tensions overcome
Deconstruction and reconstruction	• Unstated assumptions are surfaced
Jujitsu – using mainstream language against itself	• Systems are pushed to live up to high moral tone of their own promises
<b>Keeping outsider status alive</b>	
Outside ties	• Sense of connectedness helps combat feelings of alienation and isolation
Collaboration	• Shared interests and alertness to cooptation help resist pressures away from ambivalence