A Rainbow Coalition or Separate Wavelengths? Negotiations Among Employee Network Groups

Maureen A. Scully

College of Management, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA, U.S.A.

Keywords
diversity, change, social movements, local activism.

Correspondence
Maureen A. Scully, College of Management, University of Massachusetts, 100 Morrissey Blvd., Boston, MA 02125-3393, U.S.A.; e-mail: maureen.scully@umb.edu.

Abstract

Employee network groups are increasingly common in the workplace, such as a women's network, an African American caucus, or a GLBT resource group. These groups may seem like natural allies for addressing inequality at work, particularly subtle forms of second generation discrimination. However, they often compete for attention, resources, and the limited political will of top managers to make changes. This article examines four cases in which employee groups were able to negotiate effective alliances across their own differences. They do so by reframing areas of shared interests, using and adapting social movement tactics, and reaching for outcomes with broader societal significance for equal economic opportunity.

The women's movement in the U.S. has long hoped to create ''shared sisterhood'' across women's many dimensions of social identity, including race, class, and sexual orientation. The lines of fissure in the movement are often more evident and storied than the alliances. Now these issues are playing out again in the workplace, with a wide range of employee network groups emerging to support employees who share a social identity (such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion) or life experience (such as caregiver or military veteran) that might pose barriers to inclusion and opportunity at work. These groups address subtle ''second generation'' (Sturm, 2001) gender issues that are deeply embedded in the structures and practices of organizations. The emerging challenge for the groups is to work together, across their differences, toward their shared interests in equal advancement opportunities that recognize a range of talents, workplace policies without subtly unequal impacts, and a culture of inclusivity. These groups may seem like natural allies, but they tend to operate in isolation or in competition with one another. This article examines instances when groups did collaborate on local remedies to embedded inequalities. In drawing lessons from the cases, I use negotiation theory, especially those elements informed by a theory of gender, in combination with social

Volume 2, Number 1, Pages 74–91

movement theory. Taken together, these theoretical approaches operate at the right level for understanding how emergent local tactics in the workplace draw upon and address broader organizational and societal issues of gender, diversity, inclusion, and opportunity.

Employee network groups are a good place to look to understand gender, diversity, and negotiations in the workplace. Employee network groups themselves generally come into being as a product of a negotiation process in the workplace. The groups' founders negotiate space and resources in the workplace so that the groups can provide support, ensure inclusion, and pursue opportunities for their members. The initial focus is on negotiating with members of the dominant identity groups in the organization. The next stage in the groups' development and effectiveness may hinge on the ability to negotiate connections among themselves. If they can do so, there will certainly be benefits for the employee groups, making their voices and actions stronger. There will also be benefits for organizations. The negotiations among employee groups model the kinds of cross-cultural collaboration increasingly needed in organizations characterized by team work and flexible reporting lines. Their efforts can provide examples of how to cooperate across differences to get work done in diverse workplaces.

I open with the idea of the ''rainbow coalition'' from the national political domain, which is often evoked by employee network group members as a metaphor and an aspiration. I describe the origins and aims of employee groups more fully. Then, I bring together social movement and negotiation theories to refine the concepts of interests, tactics, and outcomes for understanding the kind of locally grounded but broadly situated change that the employee groups seek in organizational settings.

Social movement theory has moved from a macro structural focus to greater inclusion of the micro dynamics of change (Scully & Segal, 2002). At the same time, negotiation theory is shifting its attention from the closed system of interpersonal bargaining to an ''open systems'' approach, which takes into account how resources from the social system affect particular negotiations and how the social system is itself a negotiated order (Bendersky & McGinn, 2008). Using concepts from the intersection of these theories, I interpret four instances in which employee groups came together to work across differences. These cases demonstrate a situated approach to gender and negotiations. They also offer lessons about the prospects for remedying embedded gender inequalities, where gender is understood ''simultaneously'' with race, class, and sexual orientation (Holvino, 2008). I close by considering whether the local wins of these emerging alliances can scale up to sustainable changes in structures and practices in organizations.

The Rainbow Coalition

In talking about alliances to address inequality in the workplace, employees often mention the image of a ''rainbow coalition.'' It is interesting that they import this idea, because it reflects both how they situate their efforts in a broader societal context and how they are struggling to put into words what they seek regarding workplace inclusivity. The rainbow coalition is a handy term, as a poetic turn of phrase that has

wide familiarity. The idea was popularized by Jesse Jackson's (1984) address to the Democratic Party convention. In his speech, he described the promise of working across differences (adding other metaphors, like that of the quilt). He also mentioned painful events of the time that had put different groups, such as African Americans and Jewish people in New York, into conflict. As a politicized term, the rainbow coalition captures both the promise of diversity and the need for negotiation across conflicts. He described the rainbow coalition in this way:

> America is not like a blanket—one piece of unbroken cloth, the same color, the same texture, the same size. America is more like a quilt—many patches, many pieces, many colors, many sizes, all woven and held together by a common thread. The White, the Hispanic, the Black, the Arab, the Jew, the woman, the Native American, the small farmer, the businessperson, the environmentalist, the peace activist, the young, the old, the lesbian, the gay and disabled make up the American quilt.
>
> Even in our fractured state, all of us count and fit somewhere. We have proven that we can survive without each other. But we have not proven that we can win and make progress without each other. We must come together.

The political aspirations for a rainbow coalition build on two assumptions. First, it is easy to assume that the different groups that have experienced oppression have not just a shared interest in making changes and pursuing social justice, but some empathy for the struggles of the other, and that they would be willing spokespersons for other groups' issues. Second, strength in numbers is a common reason to join forces, to increase the resource base and expand the collective impact; it is generally assumed that the groups are more effective by operating together than alone. These imagined benefits of empathic interests and strength in numbers motivate the case for joining forces, but are not as easy to access as assumed.

Employee Network Groups in the Workplace

Employee network groups—variously called caucuses, affinity groups, or employee resource groups—provide a gathering space within the workplace for employees who share a social identity. These groups trace their origin to the Black Caucus Group at Xerox Corporation in 1972 (Friedman & Deinard, 1991). The early formation of groups was a risky and political method of advocating for equal opportunities and equal pay. They were initiated in the grassroots and seemed threatening to managers. Early members were worried about speaking up to management about problems, making their minority status visible as they were trying to fit in, looking like they were not team players trustworthy for promotion, or being seen as trouble-makers (or worse, potential union activists or claimants in a lawsuit). Since then, network groups have proliferated in corporations and become a common tool for managing diversity that managers may initiate (Friedman & Craig, 2004). Their formation and charter follows an institutionalized path, often including mission statements, subgroups, and speaker series, all familiar in corporate settings (Scully & Creed, 2005). At the same time, there remain some risks to employees of speaking out for change at work.

The activities of the group begin with support: creating a venue for sharing common stories and shifting attributions from the individual to collective level (McAdam, 1988). The groups also provide professional development resources, such as mentoring or workshops, which are often their most visible and appreciated function (Friedman & Craig, 2004). In addition to personal support and professional growth, the groups may have agendas oriented toward deeper changes in the logics and practices that support inequality at work. These agendas generally remain "hidden transcripts" (Scott, 1990), shared only among group members who share a vision of change. In talking about their groups, these members use phrases redolent of social movement activism, such as "join forces" (as seen in an example below), "stir up a rebellion," and "tip the scales of power." They translate hidden aspirations for transformational change into visible projects rendered in acceptable corporate terms (Scully & Segal, 2002).

Sometimes groups find auspicious moments to raise their more political concerns. For example, as apartheid was dismantled in the mid-1990s, an African American group of employees worked with global operations in their company to include more blacks in management. A GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender) group persuaded the sales department to move its annual event out of a state that had voted against protections on the basis of sexual orientation. A group of black women debriefed Take Your Daughter to Work Day with managers, linking the evident scarcity of black girls at the event to the small numbers of black employees and noting that, without intervention, the patterns would continue in the next generation. These moments of political opportunity advance each group's broader goals.

The Challenge of Working Across Differences

Supporting other groups' auspicious moments has been challenging. Finding moments for courageous activism requires an intensity of emotional engagement that social movement theories are just beginning to appreciate (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2004) and that leaves little room for empathic engagement in others' struggles. Each group aims to highlight its distinctiveness to signal to organizational leaders that they will lose valuable perspectives and experiences if they do not address the challenges for this group by adjusting the exclusionary taken-for-granted status quo. A focus on distinctiveness overshadows a focus on collaboration and commonalities. There has been some push to integrate the groups formally, such as through diversity councils sponsored by human resource departments, but these efforts are often too structured to allow authentic engagement. More often, the structures and processes of the workplace play a role, subtly or overtly, in putting the groups into competition (Hurtado, 1989; Proudford, 1999). It has been difficult for group members to broach differences in these more formal, management-controlled settings, because they are still finding their own ways, among themselves, to negotiate differences. Approaches to cross-group alliances in the workplace, emphasizing taking risks to reach out, testing assumptions, and acknowledging different power bases, are emerging from years of social movement practices (Harris & Moritz, 2007).

The employee network groups initially seem like natural allies. Their members have experienced discrimination and express concern for social justice. Their founding rationales and purposes are similar. However, the alliance has not been easy. Groups import the historic and cultural tensions that have similarly bedeviled cross-identity alliances at the national level. The women's groups are wary of the GLBT groups, lest they be seen as not just feminists but lesbians. The African American groups fear that white women will divert the diversity agenda away from racism toward work/life balance. The longer-standing groups may feel that the arrival of the newer groups may dilute the discussion of discrimination and wonder whether some groups, such as older workers or Indians in engineering, really need protection and remedy. Meanwhile, the newer groups, such as Muslim groups that formed after 9/11, may feel that their issues are the most current, pressing, and least understood. There can easily be a descent into ''oppression Olympics'' (Gamson, 1995), with competing stories about who has faced a harder time at work. The rainbow coalition splinters.

The disconnection among the groups has two key aspects. First, the groups question each other's legitimate standing as an employee network group and wonder whether their issues warrant inclusion under the diversity umbrella. Second, the groups compete for senior management's attention, for corporate resources, and for an organization's limited political will to make changes—too many changes might seem like capitulation. The groups often cannot sort out the basis for either their strained relationship or their possible alliance.

Between Social Movements and Negotiations

Social movement theories have been used to inform local action in the workplace. Social movement theory is increasingly applied to phenomena like the rise of employee network groups. My research has examined how social movement aims, such as women's rights, civil rights, and gay rights, can be advanced inside workplace contexts; indeed, the workplace may be precisely where the quest for equal opportunity is most pertinent and most ably pursued by employees who know their local setting well (Scully & Segal, 2002). In the cases in this article, the local action requires bridging across differences, which requires negotiations. The groups have to discover and shape how their interests overlap, define tactics in which they can engage reciprocally and jointly, and achieve outcomes that are meaningful to both. Social movement theory avers the importance of interests, tactics, and outcomes. Negotiation theory has provided detailed specifics about interests and tactics, as well as ways to assess the outcomes achieved. Negotiation theorists, especially when looking through a gender lens, are increasingly interested in how negotiations are a tool for addressing the same macro societal issues of inequality that are the focus of social movement theories. This section draws on both theories to create an approach to interests, tactics, and outcomes that illuminates the troubled quest for a rainbow coalition. A focus on interests, tactics, and outcomes will aid in reading and interpreting the case studies presented after this exposition.

Interests

Social movement theory takes a structural approach to interests, determining them from the historic and socioeconomic position of a group. Researchers looking at new social movements view the rise of social identity-based activism as a departure from traditional interest-based politics, which characterize the labor movement (Larana, Johnston, & Gusfield, 1994). They raise concerns that identity-based social movements tend to fragment effort and divide attention and resources, focusing activism on gaining acceptance and inclusion and not on achieving shared outcomes. Labor unions once provided a way to integrate and sequence the concerns raised by different subgroups of members, so that the escalating demands of any individual subgroup did not overwhelm the capacity of a system to respond (Piore, 1995). Contemporary union organizers make efforts to bridge differences of race, ethnicity, and gender to mobilize an occupational group in the workplace (Kurtz, 2002). However, unions have diminished influence, and other structures for integrating social identity-based movements have not emerged. Employee network groups may funnel some of employees' expressed interest in forms of voice into useful channels (Freeman & Rogers, 1999) but away from the well-developed, integrative structures of a union (Hyde, 1993). Interest-based negotiations take an integrative view, urging each party to discover and reveal its root interests to reframe the stakes of the negotiation. Just as women sometimes negotiate for standing to engage a negotiation with a more powerful party (Kolb & Williams, 2000), less powerful or newer employee groups may negotiate for standing with a relatively more secure group, such as a women's group composed mainly of senior women.

Tactics

An understanding of strategy and tactics is essential for those with less power to advance a societally informed change effort in organizational settings (Levy & Scully, 2007). For example, those involved in tenants' rights work need a detailed understanding of how city hall regulates landlords (Alinsky, 1971). Cesar Chavez built the United Farm Workers by attending to targets and timing (Ganz, 2000). The capacity to exploit political opportunities is an aspect of social movement theory particularly applicable to organizational settings (Zald, Morrill, & Rao, 2005).

Negotiation studies have practical advice on tactics for women seeking standing and success in negotiation, particularly in patriarchal settings. Kolb and Williams (2000) identify a repertoire of turns that can pivot a situation away from reproduction of an unequal status quo, including interrupting the action, naming a challenge, reframing a question, correcting impressions, diverting attention from problems, refocusing on the underlying issue, and even moving physically. These tactics are grounded at the level of action of individual employee network group members, and are the kinds of strategies group members are likely to share with each other. The tactics aim to change the same problems that social movement activists care about, but are anchored at a different level than the broader strategies social movement theories address (Ganz, 2000). The tactics

focus on relationships between unequal parties rather than among historically oppressed groups with more subtle and shifting bases of status among themselves.

The negotiating tactics also occur within boundaries. With the exception of labor and management negotiations, negotiations are often construed as within a time frame and between individuals. They are one-round activities, with a set of inputs and outcomes, in a closed system. Negotiation theory can benefit from the more ''open systems'' perspective of organization theories, particularly those that import social movement ideas from the environment. At the same time, while organizations are depicted as ''negotiated orders,'' the specificity of tactics uncovered in bounded negotiations can inform what that means and looks like (Bendersky & McGinn, 2008). Bringing together social movements and negotiations perspectives, we can examine more fine-grained tactics than social movement theories typically address and more broadly situated issues than negotiation theories typically address.

Outcomes

Social movement theory focuses on broad societal outcomes and aims to retain a long view that does not mistake means for ends. However, most of the ''small wins'' outcomes in workplace settings look more like means than ends, even if they are significant to the local change agents (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). It is difficult to celebrate the importance of these wins and retain a long view. Assessing outcomes involves a messy toolkit of objective and subjective yardsticks. When employee network group members are pushed to address the question of what has changed, they mention very meaningful local wins. They stumble in trying to connect these wins to their original motivation to join a group to advance broader societal aims (Scully & Segal, 2002).

In studies of negotiation, the outcomes are focal and clearly measured. Whether each party realized its interests, individually or jointly, gives a grade to each negotiation. While negotiation studies do not lose track of outcomes, as studies of change processes can, there are limitations to the significance of the outcomes at hand. They are often quite bounded and not addressed to systemic change. Notably, research using a gender lens is increasingly asking whether broader outcomes for gender equity are achieved (Kolb, 2003).

Data Sources

This article draws on four sources from my previous and ongoing research on employee network groups. The four cases represent gender in its simultaneity with class, sexual orientation, race, or multiple social identities. The cases were selected as examples of sustained and purposive action toward creating cross-group connections. The first case comes from a study of many employee groups from several social identities in one high technology company, in 1993 through 1995 as such groups were emerging (Scully & Segal, 2002). The second case comes from a study of a GLBT social identity group as the group's social change tactics diffused across workplace settings in 24 organizations in 1996 through 1998 (Creed, Scully, & Austin, 2002). The third case comes from a set

of case studies collected in 1999 through 2001 for a research program and conference on working across differences and the chasms, bridges, or alliances that might form (Center for Gender in Organizations, 2001). The fourth case draws from an ongoing scan of the state of the field since 2001, which has taken off from its early days of political improvisation and become an institutionalized presence in many workplaces. The Appendix shows a sample of groups across industries. Of particular interest are the emerging caregiver groups, which the EEOC has recently recognized with new language defining their concerns. For each of the four cases, I give a brief introduction to the general issues pertinent to the case, relate the case details, and then discuss the lessons from the case.

Cases

Case 1. Discovering Interests Through Advocacy for Others: The Bonus for Secretaries

Introduction

Identity-based activism can involve discovering and testifying about one's own group's interests (Creed & Scully, 2000). It can also involve discovering and advocating for the interests of a less powerful subgroup or an ally group. Having some visible women in senior positions can signify a favorable context for selling gender issues (Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, & Miner-Rubino, 2002). The context is just a starting point; women interested in raising gender issues have to deal with rejection from expected allies or give offers of support to unlikely allies. They work across the status lines among women.

Case

At PineCo, a pseudonym for a high technology company, an employee group called Women@PineCo was formed by a white woman who was an administrative assistant (AA). She wanted to investigate career paths for women out of the AA position, paths that would recognize the skills developed in that job and break through a career plateau for women interested in advancing in high tech. She also hoped to advance other women's issues, such as getting more gynecological procedures covered in the company's health plan. She set up lunches in the company cafeteria for women to gather and share concerns. In forming the group, she tried to reach out to a group of senior executive women. She heard they had conducted focus groups to identify pressing issues for women in the company. However, she encountered a class divide among women when she took the risk of reaching out. As she explains:

> When I first heard about the focus group that was going on with [Senior VP Jane Smith's] group which was about 2 years ago, I emailed [Jane] and said, "Would you like to meet? Would you like to join forces? I think it would be great if we could all work together." No response. Tried again. "I'd really like to talk to you about the focus groups. I'd really like to find out more information about them. Did you get any of the responses back? Is it possible

> that I might be able to get a copy? Do you want to get together? I'd really like to get these two groups together.'' No response. And then finally I got maybe a week later or something that said, ''I just don't have the time.'' And it was actually kind of rude the way it was done. Maybe she just didn't want to be associated with us. There's definitely the pariah feeling that I've had about the group.

At the same time, in another division in PineCo, a group of women software engineers and midlevel project managers founded a women's group specific to their product area, Women of Wonderland (WOW). At their initial meetings, they frequently talked about the tenor of the software development meetings, in which several male programmers and managers dominated the discussion. The women found it difficult to champion their ideas in the meetings, amidst what they described as the ''shouting matches'' and the rush to critique each other to demonstrate superior technical ability. The women laughed when they realized that they all disliked how two of the programmers, who had attended a nearby elite university, banged their school rings on the table to make a point. They enjoyed getting together as women and not feeling alone in being intimidated by the development meetings. They were stuck in planning what to do about the tone of the meetings or in finding another issue to take on.

An opportunity for action arose when their division successfully shipped an upgrade of the Wonderland product, and members of the project received a bonus. An AA who had joined the WOW meetings pointed out that she and other AAs were not eligible for the bonus. The women in WOW discussed how they felt a ''kinship'' with the AAs, because they were mostly women and were being overlooked. They decided to use this opportunity to speak with the general managers of their division and of human resources, both men. At the meeting, the two top managers quickly replied that secretaries were supposed to be part of the bonus plan; it had just been a simple oversight that they would fix right away. The members of WOW later reported that were a little disappointed not to have had more of a chance to make their case before getting this quick disclaimer, but they also discussed how good it felt to have their first tangible ''win'' as a group. Some of them noted that it had helped them think about the connection between gender and invisibility in a new way.

Discussion

The professional women may have spent some political capital without evident gain. Achieving other's interests, an example of what Graham (1986) distinguishes as ''principled organizational dissent,'' may be overlooked or devalued as an outcome. However, a gender and negotiations perspective attends to how the quality of the relationship and the fairness in negotiations are achieved, even if that departs from seemingly optimal outcomes (Valley, Neale, & Mannix, 1995). Instead of seeing the AAs as ''other,'' the professional women related to them with an expanded sense of ''we as women.'' Their move reframes the polarized view of ''our interests'' or ''others' interests,'' a dichotomy that hampers alliance-building. Their outcome was a sharper understanding of how contributions and rewards were gendered in their workplace. This view later guided their efforts to make a ''culture shift'' in the tenor of the meetings. They joined forces with male colleagues who also saw the bravado in the meetings as gendered stereotypically male in an

unproductive way. An early member of WOW noted that tackling the culture of the meetings was the first issue that inspired them to keep meeting as women initially, but probably would not have been undertaken without the experience of the bonus issue.

Case 2. Enlarging the Scope of Attention: The Diversity Fair Passport Stamp

Introduction

Organizational life is sometimes seen as a contest for attention (Ocasio, 1998). In negotiations, the task for women in the shadow negotiation is to get to the table for a legitimate hearing of their issues (Kolb & Williams, 2000). Employee group members often report a sense of urgency in getting top management's attention, which can preclude their sharing any attention or space at the negotiating table with potential allies. A creative approach to a diversity event shows how employees enlarged the pool of attention.

Case

At a large media organization in the Midwest, the leaders of the growing array of employee groups were struggling to find a way to work constructively together. There had been tensions in the company over the formation of the most recent group, the GLBT group. Its leader had received threatening phone calls and had to be escorted to her car after work by company security guards. The group had taken the name EAGLES (Employee Association for Gays and Lesbians) and was challenged by a newly forming Native American employees group, which claimed that the eagle was historically a Native American symbol and did not want it made controversial by a controversial group. Leaders of the employee groups worried privately that these tensions were a distraction from conversations and policy changes regarding race, gender, and all forms of inequality.

The group leaders decided to plan a diversity event that was collaborative, fun, and educational. One of the champions of this process was a manager in the human resources group, a black lesbian woman over 40, who explained that she was an ambassador across race, gender, sexual orientation, and age issues. At the diversity fair that they envisioned, each group could have a booth with information about their social identity group, its heritage and traditions, and the special contributions it could bring to the workplace. The hope was that people could go to the fair and "safely take a risk" by talking across differences about issues not usually discussed, which would build a stronger and more collaborative workplace. All employees would be encouraged to attend; managers would be required to attend.

The organizers feared that managers might put in a brief appearance and visit the booths that were the most comfortable for them. They mentioned that, for example, the predominantly white male managers might visit the booth on women's issues and talk about work and family. GLBT group members expressed the concern that even managers who wanted to learn about GLBT issues at work would shun that booth for fear of being associated with it. The solution the group leaders devised was to create a "passport" and have attendees collect a stamp from every booth. People who collected every

booth's stamp could be entered into a drawing for prizes. The passport became a playful device, and visitors who felt awkward approaching a booth broke the ice by saying, "I'm here to get my stamp." Good conversations often followed. Managers showed their completely stamped passports to human resources as one metric for their involvement in diversity management. The diversity fair was well attended and each booth got lots of traffic. One attendee commented that, by visiting all the booths, she came away with a more systematic understanding of the patterns and themes across the issues. She noted commonalities in the struggles of African Americans and those in the GLBT group to have their talents taken seriously at work and saw how each movement was at a different stage in its life cycle.

Discussion

The solution of the passport stamp arose from taking the risk of sharing attention. In the end, it enlarged the scope of attention given to all the groups, as well as to their fundamental shared interests in diversity, inclusion, and change. Hearing themes across multiple booths actually strengthened the learning experience for participants, giving each social identity group a stronger outcome than if attendees had only visited their booth. The presence of someone who was already an ambassador across race, gender, and sexual orientation groups, because of her social identity, was pivotal for cross-group planning in the passport stamp case. Social identity groups seem stuck in silos, but social identities do not occur one at a time for individuals. By thinking not just about gender but about gender and the simultaneity of social identities (Holvino, 2008), more options for building alliances emerge.

Case 3. Trustworthy Actions Generate Trust: Promised Jobs and a Beer Boycott

Introduction

Employee groups are involved in local action, often marked by "experimentation" (Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2001). But experimentation with tactics involves the risk that a tactic might not deliver or might backfire. When the tactics involve relationship building, that risk additionally involves the loss of trust between groups that may already be wary of one another. Trust is good to have but hard to achieve; therefore it may be necessary to "bootstrap" (Sabel, 1995) into a state of trust with moves that beget new moves. In this case, activists experiment with one action that does not deliver for their potential ally and one that does, keeping their process transparent so that trust is not compromised. Acting as if trust is possible can generate a virtuous cycle of trusting (Blake-Beard et al., 2006).

Case

In the labor movement, GLBT efforts often grow out of women's or civil rights committees in a union. In the Service Employees International Union Local 509 in Boston, the Gay and Lesbian Concerns Committee grew out of the Women's Committee in the late 1980s. One of the first things the group negotiated was the conditions under which they

would meet. Members were concerned about harassment on the job if they were "out," so the group arranged it that no other groups could hold meetings in other rooms concurrently with theirs, and attendance increased.

From this committee in one union local, the group created a metropolitan area network of union-based GLBT activists, called Gay and Lesbian Labor Activist Network (GALLAN). To create visibility, their first public event was a fundraiser for a local community health center that had been active with AIDS and GLBT health issues. This health center was about to build a new building, and GALLAN negotiated with them to use union labor. This agreement met two of GALLAN's goals: first, it enabled them to create connections in the labor movement, particularly with the construction trade unions, and second, it enabled them to bring working class issues into the GLBT community and specifically to the attention of middle and upper middle class patrons of the health center. Unfortunately, the health center reneged on its promise, citing the higher price of union labor. The GALLAN members were angry and concerned about their emerging alliances. Fortunately, they had invited an ally from the Greater Boston Building Trades Council to join them in all their meetings with the health center, who was able to report to the construction union members that GALLAN had done all they could. What might have been a breach of trust was avoided.

Having gotten some visibility in the union movement as allies who could be relied upon, the group was contacted by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters for support in boycotting a local distributor of Miller beer. GALLAN mobilized its members to uphold and spread the boycott in gay bars across the area. In reciprocity, labor union members supported Pride events and reported learning more about the gay community. The Gay and Lesbian Concerns Committee was invited to be a standing committee of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO.

Discussion

In the "beer boycott" case, belonging to the labor movement provided a foundation of solidarity for discovering concrete shared interests. Differences across sexual orientation had almost fractured that solidarity, but the GLBT employee group sought specific avenues with clear economic significance to signal its interest in alliance. An unfulfilled promise, such as the construction jobs that did not materialize, might be a blow to trust. However, the transparency of activism work and their inclusion of allies in the process kept trust intact and even strengthened the relationship. In the shadow of the GLBT group's negotiation with the health center was a negotiation with their labor allies about what kind of activist partners they could be together. The creation of a formal place in the union structure was a valued outcome.

Case 4. Redefining the Landscape for Collaboration: A Separate Group for Caregivers

Introduction

Reframing is a skillful move in negotiations, particularly for moving away from stuck positions that reinforce a gendered workplace (Kolb & Williams, 2000). The case of the

emergence of separate caregiver groups shows a reframing of the employee groups' composition and purposes. Women's groups can now tackle issues beyond work/life balance and men can readily join caregiver groups. Reframing is also regarded in the social movements literature as a vital tool for building new constituencies and mobilizing (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). In this case, the frames that women's groups had created to explain the value to both employees and organizations of honoring care-giving work were ready for deployment by the new caregiver group. Space opens up for new frames for other gender work, including linking gender with race.

Case

A common tension between white women and black women is how prominent ''work/life balance'' issues should be on a gender agenda. White women often lead with this issue when forming women's groups. They lobby for flex time, for ''on ramps'' for women returning from extended maternity leave, and against starting meetings after 5 PM. Black women point to their long history of labor force participation and the lessons they have already drawn from their mothers and grandmothers about balancing work and family. They prefer to focus on economic issues such as equal pay and advancement opportunities for all women, specifically as means to advance their family's economic security. This disconnect between white and black women sometimes leads to distance at work (Bell & Nkomo, 2001). Separate groups for African American women have formed in many corporations. These provide needed space for black women when the women's group is dominated by white women and the African American group is dominated by men, mirroring the broader political landscape (Crenshaw, 1992). At the same time, it creates finer splintering in the panoply of diversity groups (Friedman, 1996). The challenges of integration became more pressing but remain stalled.

Creating new group boundaries and a division of labor regarding specific workplace issues might help with this stalemate. It is now easy to see the employee groups that a company has, as groups are often listed on company websites to enhance their reputation as a good employer and to attract diverse employees. In a scan of several workplaces, newly created, distinct groups for ''parents'' or ''caregivers'' are listed, some with a specific focus, like care-giving for the elderly, care-giving for disabled children, care-giving for cancer patients, or care-giving for oneself as a cancer survivor. At first, these groups stand out as having a different nature and basis than the historical groups based on social identities like race and gender. However, they are alike in having very specific complaints of how something in their identity and experience is hampering their participation at work, in unnecessary ways that could be addressed with simple remedies to work practices (like allowing dial-in to off-hours meetings). While a shared experience may not seem to qualify these groups to operate under the diversity umbrella, some of their members have argued that their constraints, for example on traveling or late meetings, impact their opportunities unduly. Many make elaborate arrangements to remain committed to work and bristle when their commitment to work is questioned, perhaps threatening an economic livelihood that is especially needed when health issues limit other family members from working. These groups may break the deadlock over where work/life issues belong. The groups' names invite women and men from all backgrounds

to join, finding common ground in a shared experience rather than a shared social identity.

Discussion

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission recently released guidelines addressed specifically to ''caregiver discrimination'' in response to a rise in complaints (Jackson, 2007). These EEOC guidelines support companies in adding caregiver groups to the menu of employee groups they sponsor. A separate and cross-identity space is named and created for caregivers. Perhaps now the women's groups, African American groups, and African American women's groups can focus on other issues, taking this issue out of the zone of contention. The new caregiver groups can facilitate alliances in two ways. First, they create a setting in which employees of different social identities can connect, including straight white men who have often felt left out of the employee groups' efforts. Second, they bracket a particular issue that was a source of contention, permitting other groups to work more directly on issues at the intersection of sexism and racism.

Conclusion and Implications

The cases show a range of ways in which shared interests and joint tactics emerged. These approaches are vital if second generation gender issues are to be addressed through sustainable local action in organizations rather than through regulatory oversight or legal action. The question remains whether the outcomes achieved through these approaches are local wins that stay local or can ''scale up'' to broader and more sustainable changes in structures and practices.

That the local wins were achieved by alliances, rather than by individuals or single groups acting alone, creates a capacity for future change. Capacity-building is a new focus of work on how institutional change advances social movement aims. The work of alliances requires uncovering common patterns of inequality and crafting more public methods of generating attention and support, rather than private behind-the-scenes deal-making that might benefit a single group but not the broader cause.

Sometimes the groups stumble onto the political opportunities for action. A more sustainable approach requires that they are not just reactive but develop their own theory of the roots of inequality in their organization. Then they can more purposively and proactively select local actions that will add up to systemic change. Individuals sometimes discover a theory of inequality through their work in employee groups (Segal, 1996), and there were glimmers of the allied groups tapping or discovering a systematic critique of the basis of inequality.

The groups need to work on how their alliances affect their joint relationship with those in power, managing the triad of group relations (Proudford, 1998). The cases showed the exercise of power in several instances: promised jobs are not delivered, politicized requests for a bonus are placated as a checklist item, or caregivers file complaints about persistent discrimination. As these problems and responses from the workplace system are experienced, the groups work on maintaining trust, joint learning, and

alliances. The future of their successes will lie in whether they can together speak back to lost economic opportunities, silenced inequality frames, and differential impacts at work. They appear to be building the foundation for scaling up their efforts toward larger aspirations, more sophisticated tactics, and more accountability from gatekeepers of the status quo. Their alliances will be a resource.

What are the implications of employee group alliances in the workplace for the rainbow coalition? In negotiating jointly for change, employee network groups import from the societal sphere some of the language, logic, and tactics of social movements. What do they export? Is the workplace a site in which changes will occur with societal ramifications, such as the expansion of economic opportunity for groups typically excluded from advancement in the workplace? The significance of employee network groups can only be assessed if outcomes, specifically broad societal outcomes, are kept in the dialogue.

References

Alinsky, S. (1971). *Rules for radicals: A practical primer for realistic radicals*. New York: Random House.

Bell, E. L., & Nkomo, S. M. (2001). *Our separate ways: Black and white women and the struggle for professional identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Bendersky, C., & McGinn, K. (2008). *Incompatible assumptions: Barriers to producing multidisciplinary knowledge*. HBS Working Paper No. 08-044. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School.

Blake-Beard, S., Fanning, K., Hunt, L., LaRoche, G., Porter, J. L., Proudford, K. L., et al. (2006). The ties that bind and separate Black and White women. In M. F. Karsten (Ed.), *Gender, race, and ethnicity in the workplace: Issues and challenges for today's organizations* (pp. 179–204). Westport, CT: Praeger/Greenwood.

Center for Gender in Organizations (2001). *Working with our differences: Chasms, bridges, alliances? Report of an international conference*. Boston, MA: Simmons School of Management.

Creed, W. E. D., & Scully, M. A. (2000). Songs of ourselves: Employees' deployment of social identity in workplace encounters. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *9*(4), 391–412.

Creed, W. E. D., Scully, M. A., & Austin, J. (2002). Clothes make the person: The tailoring of legitimating accounts and the social construction of identity. *Organization Science*, *13*(5), 475–496.

Crenshaw, K. (1992). Whose story is it, anyway?: Feminist and antiracist appropriations of Anita Hill. In T. Morrison (Ed.), *Race-ing justice, engendering power* (pp. 402–436). New York: Pantheon.

Dutton, J., Ashford, S., Lawrence, K., & Miner-Rubino, K. (2002). Red light, green light: Making sense of the organizational context for issue selling. *Organization Science*, *13*(4), 355–369.

Freeman, R. B., & Rogers, J. (1999). What do workers want? Voice, representation, and power in the American workplace. In S. Estreicher (Ed.), *Employee representation in the emerging workplace: Alternatives/supplements to collective bargaining* (pp. 3–31). Boston, MA: Kluwer Law International.

Friedman, R. A. (1996). Defining the scope and logic of minority and female network groups: Can separation enhance integration? *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, *14*, 307–349.

Friedman, R., & Craig, K. (2004). Predicting joining and participating in minority employee network groups. *Industrial Relations*, *43*(4), 793–816.

Friedman, R. A., & Deinard, C. (1991). *Black Caucus Groups at Xerox Corporation (A) and (B)*. Case no. 491-047 and 491-048. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing.

Gamson, W. A. (1995). Hiroshima, the Holocaust, and the politics of exclusion: 1994 Presidential address. *American Sociological Review*, *60*(1), 1–20.

Ganz, M. (2000). Resources and resourcefulness: Strategic capacity in the unionization of California agriculture, 1959–1966. *The American Journal of Sociology*, *105*(4), 1003–1063.

Goodwin, J., Jasper, J. M., & Polletta, F. (2004). Emotional dimensions of social movements. In D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, & H. Kriese (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 413–432). London: Blackwell.

Graham, J. (1986). Principled organizational dissent: A theoretical essay. In B. Staw & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 8, pp. 1–52). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Harris, C., & Moritz, A. (2007). Practices that support women allies learning across race. *The Diversity Factor*, *15*(4), 31–35.

Holvino, E. (2008). Intersections: The simultaneity of race, gender, and class in organization studies. *Gender, Work and Organization*, *15*(5), 968–993.

Hurtado, A. (1989). Relating to privilege: Seduction and rejection in the subordination of white women and women of color. *Signs*, *14*, 833–855.

Hyde, A. (1993). Employee caucus: A key institution in the emerging system of employment law. *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, *69*(1), 149–193.

Jackson, J. (1984). Speech to the Democratic Party National Convention. Retrieved October 20, 2007, from http://www.infoplease.com/t/hist/jackson-dnc1984.

Jackson, M. (2007). Working caregivers get a lift. *Boston Globe*, July 15.

Kolb, D. (2003). Negotiation: Overview. In R. J. Ely, E. G. Foldy, & M. A. Scully (Eds.), *Reader in gender, work, and organization* (pp. 101–106). London: Blackwell.

Kolb, D., & Williams, J. (2000). *The shadow negotiation: How women can master the hidden agendas that determine bargaining success*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Kurtz, S. (2002). *Workplace justice: Organizing multi-identity movements*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Laraña, E., Johnston, H., & Gusfield, J. (1994). *New social movements: From ideology to identity*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Levy, D., & Scully, M. (2007). The institutional entrepreneur as Modern Prince: The strategic face of power in contested fields. *Organization Studies*, *28*(7), 971–991.

McAdam, D. (1988). Micromobilization contexts and recruitment to activism. In B. Klandermans, H. Kriesi, & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *From structure to action: Comparing social movement research across cultures* (pp. 125–154). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Meyerson, D., & Scully, M. (1995). Tempered radicalism and the politics of ambivalence and change. *Organization Science*, *6*, 585–600.

Ocasio, W. (1998). Towards an attention-based view of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, *18*(S1), 187–206.

Piore, M. (1995). *Beyond individualism: How social demands of the new identity groups challenge American political and economic life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Proudford, K. L. (1998). Notes on the intra-group origins of inter-group conflict in organizations: Black-white relations as an exemplar. *Journal of Labor and Employment Law*, *1*(2), 615–637.

Proudford, K. L. (1999). The dynamics of stigmatizing difference. *Journal of Career Development*, *26*(1), 7–20.

Rapoport, R., Bailyn, L., Fletcher, J. K., & Pruitt, B. H. (2001). *Beyond work-family balance: Advancing gender equity and workplace performance*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Sabel, C. (1995). Bootstrapping reform: Rebuilding firms, the welfare state and unions. *Politics and Society*, *23*(1), 5–48.

Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the art of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Scully, M., & Creed, W. E. D. (2005). Subverting our stories of subversion. In G. F. Davis, D. McAdam, W. R. Scott, & M. N. Zald (Eds.), *Social movements and organization theory* (pp. 310–332). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Scully, M., & Segal, A. (2002). Passion with an umbrella: Grassroots activists in the work place. In M. Lounsbury & M. J. Ventresca (Eds.), *Research in the sociology of organizations* (Vol. 19, pp. 127–170). Oxford: JAI Press.

Segal, A. (1996). Flowering feminism: Consciousness raising at work. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *9*(5), 75–90.

Snow, D. A., Rochford, E. B., Worden, S. K., & Benford, R. D. (1986). Frame alignment processes, micromobilization and movement participation. *American Sociological Review*, *51*(4), 464–481.

Sturm, S. (2001). Second generation employment discrimination: A structural approach. *Columbia Law Review*, *101*(3), 458–568.

Valley, K. L., Neale, M. A., & Mannix, E. A. (1995). Friends, lovers, colleagues, strangers: The effects of relationships on the process and outcomes of dyadic negotiations. In R. J. Bies, R. Lewicki, & B. Sheppard (Eds.), *Research on negotiation in organizations* (Vol. 5, pp. 65–94). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Zald, M., Morrill, C., & Rao, H. (2005). The impact of social movements on organizations: Environment and responses. In G. F. Davis, D. McAdam, W. R. Scott, & M. N. Zald (Eds.), *Social movements and organizational theory* (pp. 253–279). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Appendix

Employee Network Groups: Snapshot From Different Industries in 2007

3M	Chubb	Ford	Novartis	Verizon
African American Society	Corporate:	Ford African-Ancestry Network	African American Leaders	Asian Pacific Employees for eXcellence (APEX)
China Club	Asian American Business Network	Ford Asian Indian Association	Asian American Affinity Group	Disabilities Issues Awareness Leaders (DIAL)
Disability Advisory Committee	Gay & Lesbian Employee Network	Ford Chinese Assoc.	Hispanic Leadership Network	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Employees and Their Allies (GLOBE)
Latino Resource Group	Minority Development Council	Ford Employees Dealing with DisAbilities	Military Affinity Group	Hispanic Support Organization
Native American Council	Women's Development Council	Ford Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or Transgender Employees	Empowering Women Impacting Novartis	National Jewish Cultural Resource Group
People Like Us (PLUS)	Local:	Ford Hispanic Network	Novartis Chinese Culture Club	Native American People of Verizon
South Asia Society	European Zone Diversity Council	Ford Interfaith Network	Women in Leadership	South-Asian Professionals Inspiring Cultural Enrichment (SPICE)
Team Austin	Latin American Zone Women's Council	Ford Parenting Network	Caregiver Affinity Group	Veteran's Advisory Board
Women's Leadership Network	Information Technology Minority Development Council	Ford Veterans Network Group	Cancer Hope	Women's Association of Verizon Employees (WAVE)
http://www.3m.com	http://www.chubb.com	Middle Eastern Community @ Ford	Working Parents Connection	http://www.verizon.com
		Professional Women's Network	Novartis People with Disabilities	
		http://www.ford.com	http://www.novartis.com	