

# TEMPERED RADICALS AS INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AGENTS: THE CASE OF ADVANCING GENDER EQUITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

DEBRA MEYERSON AND MEGAN TOMPKINS\*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about sources of gender inequality within the workplace. Historically, research has focused on identifying the range of psychological, organizational, and legal processes that contribute to the reproduction of workplace inequality.<sup>1</sup> Among scholars of different disciplines, there is widespread agreement that these processes persist because they are embedded in and reinforced by everyday codes of behavior, knowledge structures, and belief systems that are taken for granted and therefore not held up to scrutiny.<sup>2</sup> In other words, gender inequities persist in workplaces because the processes that produce them are part of the normal and legitimate workings of contemporary institutions.

Institutional theory in organizational scholarship sheds light on how such practices, beliefs, and knowledge structures come to be taken for granted as legitimate and unassailable.<sup>3</sup> Yet, despite the potential for institutional theory to illuminate why processes that produce inequalities persist,

---

\* Debra Meyerson is Associate Professor of Education and (by courtesy) Organizational Behavior, Stanford University; Ph.D., Stanford University; M.S., B.S., Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Megan Tompkins is a Ph.D. candidate at Stanford University; Ed.M., Harvard University; B.A.H., Stanford University.

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Joan Acker, *Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations*, 4 GENDER & SOC'Y 139 (1990); THE DIFFERENCE "DIFFERENCE" MAKES: WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP (Deborah L. Rhode ed., 2003); Joanne Martin, *The Organization of Exclusion: Institutionalization of Sex Inequality, Gendered Faculty Jobs and Gendered Knowledge in Organizational Theory and Research*, 1 ORG. 401 (1994).

<sup>2</sup> See Susan Sturm, *Second Generation Employment Discrimination: A Structural Approach*, 101 COLUM. L. REV. 458 (2001); Robin J. Ely & Debra E. Meyerson, *Theories of Gender in Organizations: A New Approach to Organizational Analysis and Change*, in 22 RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR 103 (Barry M. Staw & Robert I. Sutton eds., 2000); Debra E. Meyerson & Deborah M. Kolb, *Moving out of the "Armchair": Developing a Framework to Bridge the Gap Between Feminist Theory and Practice*, 7 ORG. 553 (2000); RHONA RAPOPORT, LOTTE BAILYN, JOYCE K. FLETCHER & BETTYE H. PRUITT, BEYOND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE: ADVANCING GENDER EQUITY AND WORKPLACE PERFORMANCE (2002).

<sup>3</sup> See Paul J. DiMaggio & Walter W. Powell, *The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields*, 48 AM. SOC. REV. 147 (1983); John W. Meyer & Brian Rowan, *Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony*, 83 AM. J. SOC. 340 (1977); Elisabeth S. Clemens & James M. Cook, *Politics and Institutionalism: Explaining Durability and Change*, 25 ANN. REV. SOC. 441 (1999); THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM IN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS (Paul J. DiMaggio & Walter W. Powell eds., 1991).

research on the production (and disruption) of gender inequality does not build on the swelling body of scholarship within that tradition.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper, we attempt to bridge this gap by examining a particular change initiative aimed at advancing gender equity through the lens of institutional theory. Specifically, we draw on institutional theory and the first author's previous work on "tempered radicalism"<sup>5</sup> to comment on portions of Susan Sturm's analysis of the ADVANCE program at the University of Michigan, a major change initiative sponsored by the National Science Foundation ("NSF") for the purpose of advancing gender equity in science and engineering.<sup>6</sup> Among other contributions, Sturm's analysis highlights the role of *organizational catalysts*—individuals and groups who acted as key agents in an institutional change initiative at Michigan.<sup>7</sup> Here, we integrate Sturm's observations about the role of organizational catalysts with existing theory on institutions and institutional entrepreneurship to speculate further about the factors that contributed to the effectiveness of change agents in the Michigan effort. Building on insights from institutional theory, we suggest that the lead change agent in this case, the ADVANCE principal investigator, was effective, in part, because she was embedded in multiple institutional environments. This embeddedness allowed her to leverage her connection to university elites, sustain her legitimacy as both a scholar and activist, and maintain her critical consciousness and connection to distributed allies and leaders throughout the university. By illustrating why her multiplicity of ties and identities were critical to her effectiveness as a change agent, we contribute to existing research on organizational change aimed at gender equity as well as scholarship on tempered radicalism and change agency.

We begin by summarizing relevant concepts from institutional theory, including the challenges of initiating and sustaining change in highly institutionalized environments such as higher education. We then provide a brief overview of the NSF's ADVANCE initiative at the University of Michigan. Drawing on prior research, we analyze the positioning and strategies used by

---

<sup>4</sup> The few exceptions that we could find are reports of the diffusion of a set of now-standard employment policies and practices that occurred in response to anti-discrimination rulings in the courts. Institutional theory helped to explain these diffusion processes. Examples of these studies include: Frank Dobbin & John R. Sutton, *The Strength of a Weak State: The Rights Revolution and the Rise of Human Resources Management Divisions*, 104 AM. J. SOC. 441 (1998); Erin Kelly & Frank Dobbin, *Civil Rights Law at Work: Sex Discrimination and the Rise of Maternity Leave Policies*, 105 AM. J. SOC. 455 (1999); Lauren B. Edelman, Christopher Uggen & Howard S. Erlanger, *The Endogeneity of Legal Regulation: Grievance Procedures as Rational Myth*, 105 AM. J. SOC. 406 (1999).

<sup>5</sup> See Debra E. Meyerson & Maureen A. Scully, *Tempered Radicalism and the Politics of Ambivalence and Change*, 6 ORG. SCI. 585 (1995); DEBRA E. MEYERSON, *TEMPERED RADICALS: HOW PEOPLE USE DIFFERENCE TO INSPIRE CHANGE AT WORK* (2003).

<sup>6</sup> Susan Sturm, *The Architecture of Inclusion: Advancing Workplace Equity in Higher Education*, 29 HARV. J.L. & GENDER 247 (2006).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 287.

key organizational agents in the University of Michigan ADVANCE case and draw inferences about why and how these agents were effective within this context.

## II. INSTITUTIONS AND CHANGE

### A. *Institutions*

Historically, the neo-institutional approach to organizational studies has emphasized the range of cognitive, regulative, and normative processes that result in observable patterns of conformity and stability among institutions in the same environment.<sup>8</sup> A hallmark of this theoretical tradition is its emphasis on institutional processes that persist despite their deviation from the logic of efficiency.<sup>9</sup> In a seminal 1977 piece, Meyer and Rowan showed how organizations that exist in highly institutionalized environments, such as education, tend to adapt to ceremonial requirements of the environment based on a rationale of legitimacy or appropriateness rather than a rationale of organizational efficiency.<sup>10</sup> Structures such as the sorting of children into grades based on birthdates, the corresponding practice of social promotion, hour-long class periods, and five-day school weeks have come to be taken for granted as the way legitimate schools ought to organize themselves.<sup>11</sup> These structures and practices persist and diffuse—and resist fundamental change—not because they are necessarily the most effective means of organizing education, but because they conform to “rationalized myths” or taken-for-granted beliefs about how schools should be organized.<sup>12</sup> To secure legitimacy in their relevant environments, schools adopt these accepted institutional forms and become isomorphic with other schools.<sup>13</sup> The lack of deviation from the fundamental organizational forms by schools is evidence that institutional processes are powerful mechanisms of stability and conformity. Even organizations such as public charter and independent schools, which are liberated from some regulative constraints and created with an explicit mandate to experiment, still adhere to accepted norms in their organizational structures and forms.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM IN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS, *supra* note 3.

<sup>9</sup> Meyer & Rowan, *supra* note 3, at 355.

<sup>10</sup> See *id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 343.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* at 352–53.

<sup>14</sup> See DAVID TYACK & LARRY CUBAN, TINKERING TOWARD UTOPIA: A CENTURY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL REFORM (1995); LARRY CUBAN, THE BLACKBOARD AND THE BOTTOM LINE: WHY SCHOOLS CAN'T BE BUSINESSES (2004). These works document the striking lack of innovation and deviation from the traditional institutional form.

Similarly, universities operate in highly institutionalized environments,<sup>15</sup> such that many of the structures, rationales, and ceremonies that govern university life persist for reasons outside of their instrumental value. Professions or disciplines shape and constrain the nature and form of legitimate knowledge, careers are organized by discipline, and tenure preserves the sanctity of academic freedom. These forms endure partly because of their capacity to fulfill widely shared beliefs of how universities ought to operate, rather than their actual utility in serving the institution's primary objectives.<sup>16</sup> To transform a university is therefore a paradigmatic institutional change project that requires changing structures, understandings, and beliefs that have long been taken for granted as normal, neutral, and legitimate.

The persistence of structures and beliefs that result in gender inequities in higher education, as well as other workplaces, can be partly attributed to institutional processes that uphold the legitimacy and assumed neutrality of these arrangements.<sup>17</sup> It is often only when women begin to occupy, in greater numbers, jobs traditionally held by men that practices that were previously taken for granted as neutral are exposed as gendered in their effects.<sup>18</sup> For example, in academia, the tenure "up or out" system around which universities are structured requires aspiring academics to maximize their productivity during the same few years most will want to start families.<sup>19</sup> The tenure system, an artifact of a time when the professoriate was overwhelmingly male, was not likely designed intentionally to disadvantage women. Despite its clear gendered effects, the structure persists in part because it is so deeply rooted in the structures and beliefs of academic institutions.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, it is hard to imagine a research institution not structured around tenure. Similarly, in the corporate sector, women are disproportionately and subtly disadvantaged by beliefs and reinforcing reward structures that equate good leadership with decisiveness and invulnerability, or attribute commitment (and contribution) only to those who work endless hours, subordinate all other responsibilities to work, and travel at a moment's notice.<sup>21</sup> These and other seemingly neutral beliefs and corresponding prac-

---

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., Jeannette A. Colyvas & Walter W. Powell, *Roads to Institutionalization: The Remaking of Boundaries Between Public and Private Science*, 27 RES. ORG. BEHAV. 305 (2006).

<sup>16</sup> See Meyer & Rowan, *supra* note 3.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Ely & Meyerson, *supra* note 2; Sturm, *Second Generation Employment Discrimination: A Structural Approach*, *supra* note 2.

<sup>18</sup> See Ely & Meyerson, *supra* note 2.

<sup>19</sup> See Martin, *supra* note 1; Jerry Jacobs, *The Faculty Time Divide*, 19 Soc. F. 3 (2004).

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Frances A. Maher, *Gendered Futures in Higher Education: Critical Perspectives for Change*, 76 J. HIGHER EDUC. 114 (2005).

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., LOTTE BAILYN, *BREAKING THE MOLD: REDESIGNING WORK FOR PRODUCTIVE AND SATISFYING LIVES* (Cornell Univ. 2006) (1993); JOAN WILLIAMS, *UNBENDING GENDER: WHY FAMILY AND WORK CONFLICT AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT* (2000).

tices have come to be taken for granted as legitimate and are therefore highly resistant to change.<sup>22</sup>

### B. *Institutional Entrepreneurship and the Problem of Embedded Agency*

Although early research in institutional theory focused on processes that lead to the persistence and diffusion of institutional arrangements, research within the tradition is now more attentive to mechanisms of *deinstitutionalization* and change.<sup>23</sup> Early observations of institutional transformation tended to focus on changes triggered by exogenous shocks, such as the introduction of a new technology, government regulation, economic crisis, or new market entrants.<sup>24</sup> But more recent interest in institutional change has introduced questions about the role of individual and collective actors in initiating change endogenously, the qualities and skills they possess, and the challenges they face.<sup>25</sup> The term “institutional entrepreneurs” has been used to describe individual and collective actors who deliberately work to transform institutional arrangements to advance a set of interests.<sup>26</sup>

As others have noted, the concept of institutional entrepreneurship, which involves conscious, strategic actions by interest-driven actors<sup>27</sup> sug-

---

<sup>22</sup> See BAILYN, *supra* note 21.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., Christine Oliver, *The Antecedents of Deinstitutionalization*, 13 ORG. STUD. 563 (1992); THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM IN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS, *supra* note 3, at 267–92.

<sup>24</sup> See Alan D. Meyer, *Adapting to Environmental Jolts*, 27 ADMIN. SCI. Q. 515 (1982); THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM IN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS, *supra* note 3; Stephen R. Barley, *Technology as an Occasion for Structuring: Evidence from Observations of CT Scanners and the Social Order of Radiology Departments*, 31 ADMIN. SCI. Q. 78 (1986). For example, Barley revealed how the introduction of CT scanners in hospital radiology units created an opening for knowledgeable technicians to assert their superior expertise in ways that disrupted the traditional and taken-for-granted professional dominance of radiologists.

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., Neil Fligstein, *The Structural Transformation of American Industry: An Institutional Account of the Causes of Diversification in the Largest Firms, 1919–1979*, in THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM IN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS, *supra* note 3, at 311–36; Hayagreeva Rao, Philippe Monin & Rodolphe Durand, *Institutional Change in Toulouse: Nouvelle Cuisine as an Identity Movement in French Gastronomy*, 108 AM. J. SOC. 795 (2003); Clemens & Cook, *supra* note 3.

<sup>26</sup> The term was introduced by Paul DiMaggio, *Interest and Agency in Institutional Theory*, in INSTITUTIONAL PATTERNS AND ORGANIZATIONS: CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT 3–21 (Lynne G. Zucker ed., 1988). See also Steve Maguire, Cynthia Hardy & Thomas B. Lawrence, *Institutional Entrepreneurship in Emerging Fields: HIV/AIDS Treatment Advocacy in Canada*, 47 ACAD. MGMT. J. 657 (2004).

<sup>27</sup> Hayagreeva Rao, Calvin Morrill & Mayer N. Zald, *Power Plays: How Social Movements and Collective Action Create New Organizational Forms*, in 22 RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR 239, 240 (Barty M. Staw & Robert I. Sutton eds., 2000). For other treatments of institutional entrepreneurship, see Hokyung Hwang & Walter W. Powell, *Institutions and Entrepreneurship*, in HANDBOOK OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH. INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES 179–210 (Sharon A. Alvarez, Rajshree Agarwal & Olav Sorenson eds., 2005); Neil Fligstein, *Social Skill and Institutional Theory*, 40 AM. BEHAV. SCIENTIST 397–405 (1997).

gests a paradox confronted by those who take on this role.<sup>28</sup> Institutional entrepreneurs critique the institution and plan change while their actions and intentions are conditioned by the very institution they wish to change. The possibility of such a critical and strategic consciousness belies the very definition of institution.<sup>29</sup> The stability of institutions rests on their capacity to “constrain people’s capacity to *imagine* alternatives to existing arrangements.”<sup>30</sup> The quality of being taken for granted means that existing institutional arrangements are not held up to critical scrutiny; they are seen simply as the way things are.

Psychological research on cognitive schemata<sup>31</sup> reveals how institutional arrangements take on this quality. Schemata are cognitive models or representations of knowledge, ranging from abstract categories, such as “children,” to complex social phenomena, such as “institutions.”<sup>32</sup> Individuals process information based on institutionally sanctioned schemata—attending to, favoring, and recalling information that reinforces existing schemata, while ignoring, discounting, and forgetting information that is inconsistent with these cognitive models.<sup>33</sup> As such, institutional schemata are both the psychological byproducts and building blocks of social institutions.

At a macro-level, institutionally sanctioned schemata represent the knowledge structures and belief systems that justify and explain existing arrangements. Referred to as “institutional logics,” these internalized understandings and beliefs reinforce dominant understandings and cognitively preclude the possibility of seeing alternatives.<sup>34</sup> The more embedded an actor is in an institution, the greater her difficulty in “imagining alternatives.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, centrally located actors who have been most thoroughly socialized, have benefited most from existing arrangements, and have the most to lose from change, should be most embedded, and therefore have the

<sup>28</sup> Myeong-Gu Seo & W. E. Douglas Creed, *Institutional Contradictions, Praxis, and Institutional Change: A Dialectical Perspective*, 27 *ACAD. MGMT. REV.* 222, 226 (2002).

<sup>29</sup> See W. RICHARD SCOTT, *INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS* (2d ed. 2001).

<sup>30</sup> Paul DiMaggio, *Culture and Cognition*, 23 *ANN. REV. SOC.* 263, 268 (1997) (emphasis added).

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., Robert P. Abelson, *Psychological Status of the Script Concept*, 36 *AM. PSYCHOL.* 715 (1981); SUSAN T. FISKE & SHELLEY E. TAYLOR, *SOCIAL COGNITION* 98 (McGraw-Hill 1991) (1984).

<sup>32</sup> DiMaggio, *supra* note 30, at 263; Linton C. Freeman, A. Kimball Romney & Sue C. Freeman, *Cognitive Structure and Informant Accuracy*, 89 *AM. ANTHROPOLOGIST* 310 (1987).

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Abelson, *supra* note 31, at 715; FISKE & TAYLOR, *supra* note 31, at 98.

<sup>34</sup> See Roger Friedland & Robert R. Alford, *Bringing Society Back In: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions*, in *THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM IN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS* 232, 248 (Walter W. Powell & Paul J. DiMaggio eds., 1991) (explaining logics as the “taken for granted, resilient social prescriptions, sometimes encoded in laws, specifying the boundaries of a field, its rules of membership, and the role of identities and appropriate organizational forms of its constituent communities”).

<sup>35</sup> DiMaggio, *supra* note 30, at 268.

greatest difficulty in engaging in deliberative and critical cognitive processes.<sup>36</sup>

### C. *Overcoming the Paradox of Embedded Agency*

In addition to exogenous jolts that bring about change, research has shown that ongoing exposure to competing institutional logics can also trigger change.<sup>37</sup> The salience of a compelling alternative logic can dislodge the cognitive grip of a dominant logic by exposing the beliefs and understandings that were previously taken for granted and therefore not held up to critical scrutiny.<sup>38</sup> For example, the coexistence of managerial and professional logics in health care led eventually to a reorganization of how the sector was conceptualized and governed.<sup>39</sup> Although the sector initially operated under an association-centered framework, wherein health care quality was primarily determined by physician expertise, subsequent logics derived from state-centered and market-centered frameworks challenged the logic that justified the professional dominance of physicians and redefined health care quality in terms of public access and managerial efficiency, respectively.<sup>40</sup> Over time, these clashing logics were combined by strategic actors to produce new governance structures and organizational forms, resulting in significant changes in the institutional framework of health care.<sup>41</sup>

Accordingly, exposure to multiple institutions can loosen the cognitive embeddedness of actors and open the possibility of endogenous, interest-driven change.<sup>42</sup> Individuals and groups that are anchored in multiple and/or contradictory institutions are more likely to become conscious of gaps and shortfalls in existing arrangements and more motivated to challenge them. This notion is consistent with Gramsci's observations about cracks in a hegemonic order. Quoting Gramsci, Clemens and Cook argue, "Hegemony was continually challenged by the contradiction between two theoretical consciousnesses: 'one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed.'" <sup>43</sup> Thus, according to these au-

---

<sup>36</sup> See Clemens & Cook, *supra* note 3, at 449–52.

<sup>37</sup> See *id.* at 441; Seo & Creed, *supra* note 28, at 222.

<sup>38</sup> See W. RICHARD SCOTT, MARTIN RUEF, PETER J. MENDEL & CAROL A. CARONNA, INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS 340–44 (2000).

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> See Royston Greenwood & Roy Suddaby, *Institutional Entrepreneurship in Mature Fields: The Big Five Accounting Firms*, 49 ACAD. MGMT. J. 27 (2006); Clemens & Cook, *supra* note 3, at 441.

<sup>43</sup> See Clemens & Cook, *supra* note 3, at 449–50 (quoting ANTONIO GRAMSCI, SELECTIONS FROM THE PRISON NOTEBOOKS 333 (1971)).

thors, “the experience of multiple institutions (e.g., competing models of authority or exchange) can have similar consequences.”<sup>44</sup>

Since change flows from being embedded in and connected to multiple institutions, institutional entrepreneurship—or deliberate, interest-driven action—is most likely to be pursued by individuals or collectives where multiplicity and contradictions are most acute, such as when actors are disadvantaged by institutional arrangements or when they experience ongoing value conflicts.<sup>45</sup> Entrepreneurship is therefore most likely to emerge from the margins of organizations because actors are less aligned with and are disadvantaged by dominant interests, have less at stake when they challenge prevailing arrangements or experiment with new ones, and, importantly, are more likely to be exposed to institutional contradictions. Clemens illustrates this point in her compelling account of the influence of the women’s movement in the establishment of interest group politics as a legitimate form of political participation.<sup>46</sup> Actors who were centrally situated in the existing party system in the early 20th century had minimal success in creating new methods of engagement.<sup>47</sup> By contrast, women, who were politically organized but excluded from the mainstream political process, “showed the greatest innovation in refashioning models drawn from social clubs and business practices as the templates for novel forms of political engagement.”<sup>48</sup> According to Clemens, the political and social marginalization of women enabled them to recognize the limitations and misalignment of existing arrangements and to envision alternatives.<sup>49</sup>

While marginalization may loosen the institution’s hold and create the motivation for change, actors on the margin lack the authority to mandate or legitimate change and may lack the resources to mobilize a broad base of support for grass-roots transformation.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, marginalized agents tend to rely on incremental and subversive change tactics that range from subtle, identity-based moves to small, isolated acts to grass-roots coalition building.<sup>51</sup> Elsewhere, the first author has described tactics used by dispersed change agents under the general headings of “tempered radicalism”

<sup>44</sup> *Id.* at 450.

<sup>45</sup> See Clemens & Cook, *supra* note 3.

<sup>46</sup> See ELISABETH S. CLEMENS, *THE PEOPLE’S LOBBY: ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATION AND THE RISE OF INTEREST GROUP POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1890–1925* (1997).

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*

<sup>48</sup> See Clemens & Cook, *supra* note 3, at 459 (citing CLEMENS, *supra* note 46).

<sup>49</sup> CLEMENS, *supra* note 46, at 184–234.

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., W. E. Douglas Creed & Maureen A. Scully, *Songs of Ourselves: Employees’ Deployment of Social Identity in Workplace Encounters*, 9 J. MGMT. INQ. 391 (2000); Maureen Scully & Amy Segal, *Passion with an Umbrella: Grassroots Activists in the Workplace*, 19 SOC. STRUCTURE & ORG. REVISITED 125 (2002).

<sup>51</sup> See, e.g., Creed & Scully, *supra* note 50; MEYERSON, *supra* note 5; Calvin Morrill, Mayer N. Zald & Hayagreeva Rao, *Covert Political Conflict in Organizations: Challenges from Below*, 29 ANN. REV. SOC. 391 (2003); Karl E. Weick, *Small Wins: Redefining the Scale of Social Problems*, 39 AM. PSYCHOL. 40 (1984).



and everyday leadership.<sup>52</sup> Others have described similar subversive processes as “everyday feminism,”<sup>53</sup> “everyday anti-racism,”<sup>54</sup> “small wins,”<sup>55</sup> “piecemeal change,”<sup>56</sup> “covert conflict,”<sup>57</sup> and “disorganized co-action.”<sup>58</sup>

Each of these processes begins with interest-driven action by embedded individuals who, for different reasons, are marginalized within the institution they wish to change and are therefore exposed to contradictions between their interests or identities and the dominant logic.<sup>59</sup> Tempered radicals are a special class of actors embedded in multiple institutional contexts—tied both to their workplaces and to identity and/or interest-based communities associated with alternative logics.<sup>60</sup> Simultaneously insiders and outsiders, tempered radicals have been described as “individuals who identify with and are committed to their organizations, and are also committed to a cause, community, or ideology that is fundamentally different from, and possibly at odds with, the dominant culture of their organization[s].”<sup>61</sup> Examples of tempered radicals include feminists in the military, church, or academy,<sup>62</sup> environmentalists working for an oil company, members of racial minorities advancing racial equity in a predominantly white corporation, and advocates of fair trade and labor practices in a business school. By virtue of their dual commitments, identities, and networks, and thus their exposure to multiple logics, tempered radicals are typically able to maintain a critical consciousness.<sup>63</sup> However, a common criticism of tempered radicalism as a change strategy is that its small dispersed changes, often initiated at the margin, tend to remain at the margin if they fail to mobilize sufficient legitimacy, resources, and political support to coalesce into a collective movement.<sup>64</sup>

Susan Sturm’s account of the University of Michigan ADVANCE case profiles the role of the key agents in an institutional change program.<sup>65</sup> These agents, or “organizational catalysts” as Sturm calls them, are in many

<sup>52</sup> Meyerson & Scully, *supra* note 5, at 586; MEYERSON, *supra* note 5, at 3–18.

<sup>53</sup> Jane Mansbridge & Katherine Flaster, *The Cultural Politics of Everyday Discourse: The Case of “Male Chauvinist,”* 33 CRITICAL SOC. (forthcoming 2007).

<sup>54</sup> EVERYDAY ANTIRACISM: CONCRETE WAYS TO SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE THE RELEVANCE OF RACE IN SCHOOL (Mica Pollack ed., forthcoming 2008).

<sup>55</sup> See Weick, *supra* note 51.

<sup>56</sup> See Scully & Segal, *supra* note 50.

<sup>57</sup> See Morrill, Zald & Rao, *supra* note 51.

<sup>58</sup> See Joanne Martin & Debra Meyerson, *Women and Power: Conformity, Resistance, and Disorganized Coaction*, in POWER AND INFLUENCE IN ORGANIZATIONS 311 (Roderick M. Kramer & Margaret A. Neale eds., 1998).

<sup>59</sup> See Meyerson & Scully, *supra* note 5, at 586–89; MEYERSON, *supra* note 5, at 5–6.

<sup>60</sup> See Meyerson & Scully, *supra* note 5, at 586; MEYERSON, *supra* note 5, at 3–18.

<sup>61</sup> Meyerson & Scully, *supra* note 5, at 586.

<sup>62</sup> See, e.g., Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, *Stepsisters: Feminist Movement Activism in Different Institutional Spaces*, in THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT SOCIETY (David S. Meyer & Sidney Tarrow eds., 1998).

<sup>63</sup> See MEYERSON, *supra* note 5, at 3–18.

<sup>64</sup> See *id.* at 105–06; Martin & Meyerson, *supra* note 58, at 342–44.

<sup>65</sup> Sturm, *supra* note 6, at 247.

ways paradigmatic tempered radicals.<sup>66</sup> Like effective tempered radicals, they appear to have overcome the paradox of embedded agency. But unlike many tempered radicals, they also appear to have overcome the political liabilities of marginalization and were able to mobilize a broad base of support due to a variety of factors. After a brief summary of the case and its organizational catalysts, we explore some of the factors that enabled the key individuals to act as effective institutional entrepreneurs.

### III. NSF ADVANCE INITIATIVE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The ADVANCE initiative was instituted at the University of Michigan as part of a systemic change effort sponsored by the NSF to address the underrepresentation of women in academic science and engineering.<sup>67</sup> In 1985, Congress authorized the NSF to pursue initiatives to deliberately increase the numbers of women and minorities who entered careers in science and engineering, citing a “national interest” in building scientific capacity through more robust utilization of the available talent pool.<sup>68</sup> The NSF’s pursuit of this goal initially focused on funding professional development of individuals, by awarding fellowships and grants to women and minorities to further their careers and increase the pipeline of qualified participants in the field.<sup>69</sup>

In the early 1990s, however, this approach began to come under fire from opponents of affirmative action.<sup>70</sup> A lawsuit challenged the NSF’s fellowships for minority groups, arguing that their race-specific requirements violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>71</sup> During this period, a broader national context emerged regarding the appropriate use of affirmative action to increase diversity in academic environments.<sup>72</sup> Two landmark cases, *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger*, were filed in 1997 after the plaintiffs, white Michigan residents who had been denied admission to the University of Michigan’s Law School and undergraduate program, respectively, alleged that the schools’ admission programs gave preferential consideration to members of minority groups at the expense of white students with higher credentials.<sup>73</sup> After years of progressively escalating appeals, the two cases were ultimately heard by the United States Supreme Court, which held in favor of Gratz and against Grutter.<sup>74</sup> The *Gratz* decision effectively invalidated Michigan’s undergraduate admissions

---

<sup>66</sup> *Id.* at 287.

<sup>67</sup> *Id.* at 277.

<sup>68</sup> *Id.* at 273.

<sup>69</sup> *Id.*

<sup>70</sup> *Id.*

<sup>71</sup> *Id.*

<sup>72</sup> *Id.* at 253.

<sup>73</sup> *Id.*

<sup>74</sup> *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 244 (2003); *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003).

program for not being “narrowly tailored” enough in its pursuit of the “compelling interest” of a diverse student body.<sup>75</sup> The court stated that to be “narrowly tailored,” universities could not “insulat[e] each category of applicants with certain desired qualifications from competition with all other applicants.”<sup>76</sup> However, the Court upheld the Law School’s admission program in *Grutter* as using appropriate methods of furthering this “compelling interest.” Unlike the undergraduate program, which used a point-based system to reach designated racial percentages, the Law School’s program used race as one of several factors of consideration in a more comprehensive process designed to further student diversity and thus was not considered the kind of quota-based system deemed insufficiently tailored by the Court.<sup>77</sup> Although the *Gratz* and *Grutter* cases addressed race and not gender, the decisions underscored the related risks inherent in explicitly awarding research grants or fellowships to faculty members based on identity characteristics such as gender.

Inspired in part by threats of litigation in an environment resembling what Sturm describes as a “legal tightrope,”<sup>78</sup> the NSF began to focus on diversity as a foundation-wide mandate rather than specifically targeting underrepresented individuals, requiring that all NSF grants show evidence of potential to help “broaden the participation of underrepresented groups.”<sup>79</sup> The NSF also began a review of its funding, separating gender and race into two differentiated categories, which reflected an acknowledgement of the divergent challenges facing these groups: underrepresented minorities tended to lack any substantial presence in the academic pipeline, while women were represented at junior levels but failed to advance to senior levels.<sup>80</sup> As a result, the NSF designed ADVANCE to specifically address gender inequities.<sup>81</sup>

Simultaneously, a critical mass of research on systemic gender bias in academia began to contribute to a shift toward focusing on systemic gender bias as an institutional transformation project.<sup>82</sup> In 1999, two years after the *Gratz* and *Grutter* cases were filed, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (“MIT”) issued a *Report on the Status of Women Faculty in the School of Science*. The report, written by tenured faculty in the sciences at MIT, emphasized “institutional practices and culture as a significant cause of persistent inequality”<sup>83</sup> at MIT and exposed systemic gender bias in the form of inequitable pay and resources. MIT’s president announced the findings and

---

<sup>75</sup> *Gratz*, 539 U.S. at 275.

<sup>76</sup> *Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 334 (quoting *Regents of Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265, 315 (1978)).

<sup>77</sup> *Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 334.

<sup>78</sup> Sturm, *supra* note 6, at 312.

<sup>79</sup> *Id.*

<sup>80</sup> *Id.* at 274.

<sup>81</sup> *Id.*

<sup>82</sup> *Id.* at 276.

<sup>83</sup> *Id.*

publicly committed to leading change efforts to improve them.<sup>84</sup> The ADVANCE committee within NSF also reviewed a critical mass of gender research that emphasized the presence of hidden gender bias through institutionalized structures and norms within academia. This data, combined with the catalytic impact of the MIT report, led ADVANCE's working committee to decide to redirect its efforts from individual professional development to the institutionalized structures and practices that constrained gender equity, or the "systemic consequence of academic culture."<sup>85</sup> As a result, ADVANCE decided to pursue the transformation of academic environments through a core program, the Institutional Transformation Awards, to be granted to institutions that specifically aimed to "catalyze change that will transform academic environments in ways that enhance the participation and advancement of women in science."<sup>86</sup>

The first cycle of Institutional Transformation Awards was granted in 2001.<sup>87</sup> The grants were designed to provide support during a series of phases of an institutional change project, including data collection, analysis, implementation, and evaluation.<sup>88</sup> Grants were awarded to project proposals that explicitly aimed to undertake systemic institutional transformation plans that were guided by data analysis to identify specific areas of bias.<sup>89</sup> This data-driven focus reflected the NSF's commitment to scientific research and also resulted from the acknowledgement that data on gender equity issues were limited in their ability to inform change efforts.<sup>90</sup> The proposals also required the development of a conceptual framework, or theory of change, for transformation projects; evidence of an infrastructure to support the plan, including leadership and management procedures; ongoing program assessment; and sharing of best practices in order to contribute to a national dialogue on change efforts.<sup>91</sup>

The University of Michigan was granted one of nine initial Institutional Transformation Awards in the first round of ADVANCE funding. Michigan was a notable location due to the contentious backdrop of the *Gratz* and *Grutter* cases and the associated scrutiny that the university was subjected to nationally. Michigan had struggled with low numbers of women science faculty<sup>92</sup> despite an institutional commitment to rectifying the problem, and in 2001, two senior leaders from Michigan participated in a meeting organized by MIT's president following the release of MIT's report on women faculty.<sup>93</sup> These leaders were Michigan's President, Lee Bollinger, and its

---

<sup>84</sup> *Id.*

<sup>85</sup> *Id.*

<sup>86</sup> *Id.* at 252.

<sup>87</sup> *Id.* at 277.

<sup>88</sup> *Id.* at 277–79.

<sup>89</sup> *Id.* at 277.

<sup>90</sup> *Id.* at 279.

<sup>91</sup> *Id.*

<sup>92</sup> *Id.* at 282–83.

<sup>93</sup> *Id.* at 283.

Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Abigail Stewart, a tenured psychology professor. The meeting resulted in a public pronouncement holding the participating universities accountable for increasing the numbers of women in science.<sup>94</sup>

On the heels of the MIT meeting, President Bollinger established a high-level committee of administrators, including the provost, associate provost, deans of engineering, medicine, literature, science, and arts to investigate gender in science and engineering at Michigan.<sup>95</sup> This committee appointed Abigail Stewart to act as principal investigator for an NSF Institutional Transformation Award grant proposal.<sup>96</sup> Stewart subsequently convened an additional high-level team for the grant committee, including the associate provost and the deans of the three schools with the greatest numbers of science and engineering faculty, who were listed as co-principal investigators on the proposal.<sup>97</sup> This team later became the project's steering committee once Michigan had secured the five-year NSF award.<sup>98</sup> Sturm credits the committee design, which was composed of high-level elites, as a driver for the success and legitimacy of the initiative within the institution.<sup>99</sup> Yet it also reflected the broader architecture of the initiative, which emphasized distribution of responsibility among a variety of constituents and stakeholders, from gender experts to high-level administrators, in order to "provide[ ] change agents in different positions within the institution with the information, networks, and resources to maximize their legitimacy and impact."<sup>100</sup> The committee centered its authority in Abigail Stewart.<sup>101</sup> As principal investigator and "lead" change agent, Stewart was strategically positioned to marshal knowledge and connections in order to initiate a research-based strategic planning process to connect gender equity with the core concerns of the institution.<sup>102</sup>

Stewart led an effort to develop institutional interventions on a variety of levels. The steering committee canvassed studies of gender to identify dominant constraints on women's advancement in academia, educated themselves on the experiences of peer institutions, conducted a baseline campus climate survey to identify key areas of concern, and developed a series of responses with the involvement of multiple stakeholders.<sup>103</sup> One of their higher-profile efforts was the development of the Science and Technology Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence ("STRIDE") initiative, a faculty committee designed to include faculty in addressing issues of gender

---

<sup>94</sup> *Id.*

<sup>95</sup> *Id.*

<sup>96</sup> *Id.*

<sup>97</sup> *Id.* at 283–84.

<sup>98</sup> *Id.* at 284.

<sup>99</sup> *Id.* at 289.

<sup>100</sup> *Id.* at 286.

<sup>101</sup> *Id.* at 283.

<sup>102</sup> *Id.* at 289.

<sup>103</sup> *Id.* at 284.

bias. STRIDE recruited prominent Michigan scholars and educated them on the dynamics, causes of, and remedies for subtle gender bias,<sup>104</sup> thus providing a knowledge base on gender equity to those individuals with significant social and intellectual capital and positioning them to mobilize change. In turn, Sturm asserts, members of the STRIDE committee began to behave as organizational catalysts themselves, introducing discussions on gender into broader academic contexts and using their roles as respected scholars to help such discussions achieve legitimacy.<sup>105</sup>

The Michigan ADVANCE program has posted a quantitative increase in the number of tenure-track women faculty members hired during the first three years of the program, 2003–2006, in the colleges of Medicine, Engineering, and Literature, Sciences and the Arts (“LSA”), the three schools that comprise the greatest numbers of scientists and engineers at the university. During this time period, the percentage of women faculty in Medicine, Engineering and LSA constituted 34% of all new hires, compared to 14% for the time period 2001–2002, or the “pre-ADVANCE years.”<sup>106</sup> Nine women faculty were appointed to department chair positions during this time. In addition to the “significant progress”<sup>107</sup> of these hiring statistics, ADVANCE has also posted other benchmarks indicating gains, including the introduction of hiring workshops presented by the faculty STRIDE committee that 111 search committee chairs attended,<sup>108</sup> and 37 departmental requests for performances by ADVANCE’s sponsored theatrical group, which dramatizes issues of gender equity in the workplace as a means for initiating broader discussions among constituents.<sup>109</sup> ADVANCE’s Steering, Evaluation Advisory, Implementation Advisory, and STRIDE committees are comprised of approximately 45 senior scholars and administrators, both men and women, who are actively engaged in the institutionalization process.<sup>110</sup>

#### IV. ORGANIZATIONAL CATALYSTS AS INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURS

According to Sturm, a central component of the ADVANCE intervention was the placement of pivotal individuals at the center of its implementation strategy, including, but not limited to, the principal investigator. Sturm labeled individuals in these roles “organizational catalysts” because of “their core function of mobilizing change at the intersection of different systems.”<sup>111</sup> From an institutional perspective, these individual catalysts, par-

---

<sup>104</sup> *Id.* at 285.

<sup>105</sup> *Id.* at 288.

<sup>106</sup> NSF ADVANCE at the University of Michigan, Mar. 23, 2007, <http://www.umich.edu/~advproj/overview.pdf>.

<sup>107</sup> *Id.*

<sup>108</sup> *Id.*

<sup>109</sup> *Id.*

<sup>110</sup> *Id.*

<sup>111</sup> Sturm, *supra* note 6, at 287.

ticularly Stewart, behaved as institutional entrepreneurs in this effort. As such, they leveraged various sources of credibility and power to mobilize support for change and necessarily confronted the challenges of embedded agency.

Four features of the initiative at Michigan described by Sturm ensured that the key catalysts were politically well-positioned to leverage resources and advance change. First, the ADVANCE principal investigator was given formal responsibility, authority, and accountability for the initiative and was backed by the university's most senior administrators.<sup>112</sup> Second, at Michigan as well as other ADVANCE sites, the NSF required the principal investigator and co-principal investigator roles to be filled by accomplished scholars with administrative skills and experience within their respective universities.<sup>113</sup> This requirement ensured that pivotal agents had earned legitimacy based on the existing set of institutional standards. In this case, Stewart was a highly respected social scientist and experienced administrator who had established credibility and power among university elites. Third, framing the change initiative and the catalyst roles as research-driven provided an extra layer of legitimacy within a context that places a premium on scientific research. That is, the rationale for the initiative was backed by social science research on the nature of gender discrimination generally and on empirical research that documented mobility patterns and discrimination at Michigan. Fourth, the NSF's sponsorship of the initiative helped frame the project's objective as one of improving science (by helping to recruit and retain the best scientists).<sup>114</sup> The NSF's status as the preeminent standard-bearer of science helped to cement the legitimacy of the initiative and its agents. In sum, the change effort was led by powerful actors with the support of an elite institution that further legitimated the effort by reinforcing its framing as an effort to advance science—a core mission of the institution.

In her account, Sturm argues that an important role of organizational catalysts is maintaining institutional mindfulness,<sup>115</sup> which we interpret as recognizing, questioning, and challenging the taken-for-grantedness of institutional arrangements that produce gender inequities—and thus overcoming the constraints of embedded agency.<sup>116</sup> Yet Sturm is relatively silent about *how* pivotal agents maintain their critical consciousness while embedded in and conditioned by the institution they wish to change.<sup>117</sup> This is particularly problematic given the institutional centrality of the pivotal change agents. How have they escaped the cognitive constraints of embeddedness?

---

<sup>112</sup> *Id.* at 283–84.

<sup>113</sup> *Id.* at 289.

<sup>114</sup> David Snow, E. Burke Rochford Jr., Steven K. Worden & Robert D. Benford, *Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation*, 51 *AM. SOC. REV.* 464 (1986).

<sup>115</sup> Sturm, *supra* note 6, at 257.

<sup>116</sup> *Id.* at 293.

<sup>117</sup> *Id.* at 290–92.

Based on Sturm's descriptions and our additional analysis of archival reports, we suggest that it was the principal investigator's embeddedness in multiple institutions, *combined* with her institutional legitimacy, that enabled her to act as an effective institutional entrepreneur in this effort. In many respects, as someone who balanced competing commitments as an insider and outsider, Stewart fit the profile of a tempered radical—attempting to balance her critical consciousness with her efforts to maintain legitimacy within the very institution she was working to transform.

The proximity to three types of institutional contradictions contributed to the key catalyst's capacity to sustain her critical consciousness while building and leveraging her power to effect change. As Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, and an accomplished social psychologist, she was *structurally* embedded in and connected to multiple networks within and outside of the institution. Through her position as director of the university's core program on gender, she embodied the values of a feminist scholar and activist and was tied to other feminist scholars, students, staff, and administrators in various schools and disciplines throughout the university, as well as feminist academics and activists outside the university. By staying connected to feminists and those who were similarly under-served by the existing institutional constraints, Stewart was able to access and mobilize networks of like-minded actors throughout the university. This presumably meant that she could access grass-roots support, encourage and learn from local experimentation, and diffuse lessons throughout her multi-faceted network. She could also access knowledge and experiences dispersed throughout the university as well as outside of it. As an established social scientist and administrator, she represented and was connected to other senior faculty and administrators within the university and within her profession, and could use these ties to access resources, legitimacy, and high-level support. Through her multiple roles and her resulting familiarity with both mainstream academic and feminist logics and values, she acted as a structural bridge between distinct networks and used her legitimacy in the interstitial space to mobilize support, gather information, and advance institutional change.

In addition, by maintaining a dual consciousness and identity, Stewart confronted *cognitive and normative* contradictions. As a feminist scholar and activist and mainstream academic, she was at once an insider and an outsider, and embodied the tension of straddling the boundary. As a feminist scholar and activist, she was steeped in feminist research, epistemology, and politics and well-versed in feminist critiques of scientific knowledge, epistemology, and institutions. As a tenured social scientist at a leading research university, she represented and upheld the standards of an institution that esteems science and scientific methods and marginalizes feminist scholarship and epistemology. This dual identity likely meant that she was not only tethered to different networks, but also to competing logics, epistemologies, and knowledge bases, enabling her to understand dissonant institu-



tional logics and to connect underrepresented feminist interests to the central mission of the institution. Most important, her fluency in feminist scholarship undoubtedly ensured that she remained mindful of feminist critiques of existing institutional arrangements and the system of power that upholds them. From Sturm's account, it appears also that Stewart was able to share her knowledge base with other elites charged with advancing change, which likely helped to create and sustain mindfulness at a collective level.

Without these deep connections to the feminist community and an identity anchored in and defined by a competing institutional logic, it is unlikely that Stewart would have escaped the paradox of embeddedness and maintained the critical consciousness emblematic of effective institutional entrepreneurs. Like recent accounts of institutional entrepreneurship, research on tempered radicalism reinforces the importance of staying anchored in distinct communities or institutions to resist the cooptation pressures marginalized individuals face as they gain legitimacy in a dominant institution.<sup>118</sup>

As has been documented elsewhere, individuals who enter institutions as critical outsiders are often socialized to insider ways of speaking and thinking, resulting in a gradual erosion of their critical consciousness. This process of cooptation was illustrated in Carol Cohn's observations of her own experience studying the world of "defense intellectuals."<sup>119</sup> To gain acceptance into this world, Cohn learned to speak the language of defense intellectuals and eventually became engaged by it.<sup>120</sup> As her language shifted to "defense-speak," the referent shifted from people to weapons; human death became "collateral damage."<sup>121</sup> The more proficient she became in the language, the easier it became to talk about nuclear war and the more difficult it became to speak—and think—as critical outsider.<sup>122</sup>

Thus, Cohn's exclusive use of the institution's dominant language suppressed her critical consciousness.<sup>123</sup> In contrast, Stewart's fluency in and use of multiple institutional languages and logics may have been instrumental to her capacity to maintain the critical consciousness of an outsider. This critical consciousness, when applied to an institutional setting, translated into the institutional mindfulness that Sturm suggests was so critical to her effectiveness as an institutional change agent.

<sup>118</sup> See Meyerson & Scully, *supra* note 5.

<sup>119</sup> Carol Cohn, *Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals*, 12 SIGNS 687, 703–18 (1987).

<sup>120</sup> Meyerson & Scully, *supra* note 5, at 592.

<sup>121</sup> Cohn, *supra* note 119, at 708–09, *quoted in* Meyerson & Scully, *supra* note 5, at 592.

<sup>122</sup> *Id.* at 704, *quoted in* Meyerson & Scully, *supra* note 5, at 592.

<sup>123</sup> See Meyerson & Scully, *supra* note 5, at 592.

## V. DISCUSSION

In this Article, we have focused on the particular characteristics of Abigail Stewart's position as principal investigator and organizational catalyst in the ADVANCE institutional change effort. As principal investigator, Stewart was both a well-positioned and powerful academic and an interest-driven feminist scholar.<sup>124</sup> As an elite member of the university, she had legitimacy and access to material and symbolic resources that enabled her to launch and disseminate change initiatives. As a feminist scholar, she was structurally connected to networks of feminist allies inside and outside of the university and was cognitively and normatively anchored in feminist values, identity, and politics. As an organizational catalyst, she was legitimate, central, and powerful, but not highly embedded.

In addition to Stewart's role as an individual change agent, the dualities and contradictions she embodied, which we have argued are critical to the effectiveness of institutional agents, may have also been represented within various pivotal groups, particularly the ADVANCE steering committee. This group's status was derived from its composition of high-level elites,<sup>125</sup> which also conferred symbolic legitimacy on the project within the institution, while the committee's connection to the standard-bearing prestige of NSF ensured it unique legitimacy within the academic environment. The pivotal actors comprising the committee were at once well-connected and respected within the university, knowledgeable about its institutional history, and tied to disciplinary networks outside of the university. At the same time, the architecture of the ADVANCE initiative ensured the integration of feminist knowledge within various catalyst groups, which may have helped to create and sustain groups' collective mindfulness. As designed, the incorporation and valuing of feminist consciousness and knowledge into pivotal elite catalyst groups should loosen the embeddedness of these groups, enabling them to question and challenge the taken-for-grantedness of existing arrangements.

Thus, the architecture of the ADVANCE initiative as expressed in the elite status of its leaders ensured it the legitimacy necessary for transformation to occur, in addition to creating space for experimentation with different mobilizing efforts and diffusion of learning. At a supra-organizational level, the initiative's strong linkage to the NSF offered it more substantial legitimacy. The prestige and power of the NSF as a major academic funding organization, and the foundational value it places on scientific rigor, conferred legitimacy on the institutional intervention of ADVANCE, signaling that gender bias in academia deserved national recognition and significant resources, rather than simply relegating it to the less legitimate purview of feminists in gender studies departments. The NSF effectively tied the issue

---

<sup>124</sup> See Sturm, *supra* note 6, at 283–89.

<sup>125</sup> *Id.* at 289.

of gender equity to a core institutional mission and legitimated that mission while simultaneously holding the institution itself responsible for the change effort. In this process, the NSF's presence helped to proactively dismantle barriers to implementation that organizational catalysts might have otherwise faced. In addition, by mandating information sharing and the formation of learning communities around the ADVANCE efforts, the NSF facilitated linkages between institutional change agents and their counterparts at other institutions, thus further loosening their embeddedness and building a structure that helped to formulate and diffuse new knowledge.

Research on institutional entrepreneurship illuminates how individuals and groups exercise agency within institutionalized environments.<sup>126</sup> These analyses indicate that the constraints of institutional embeddedness can be overcome through exposure to contradiction and multiplicity in ideas, identities, networks, or frameworks. Research on tempered radicals supports this notion.<sup>127</sup> In turn, Abigail Stewart and her colleagues on the ADVANCE change effort appear to have overcome some of the challenges of embeddedness. As interest-driven agents of endogenous change, they were able to operate in multiple contexts and convene logics from both marginalized and legitimated discourses without excluding or devaluing any one constituency.

These insights have significant implications for institutions pursuing organizational change or transformation efforts. We have indicated that the background, networks, and affiliations of key actors matter in terms of creating architectures that legitimate and diffuse change processes. When organizational catalysts are anchored in multiple institutions with competing logics, they may be better positioned to access multiple networks and sustain dual consciousnesses and identities. Access to multiple networks enables central catalysts to support, learn from, and mobilize local and marginalized agents who are distributed throughout their institutions. Moreover, this dual embeddedness and proximity to competing logics may be necessary to pursue institutional legitimacy and innovation simultaneously. Recognition of the importance of this duality, and its incorporation into strategic decisions about appropriate leadership structures for change efforts, is a crucial insight drawn from institutional entrepreneurship that may contribute to the development of more effective processes of transformation within institutions addressing systemic gender bias.

This argument raises further questions about how individual critical consciousness extends to larger groups, such as the faculty in the STRIDE project. We have focused primarily on the role of the principal investigator as an organizational catalyst, but further examination of the role of the catalyst groups may shed additional light on the effective construction of institutional change projects. For example, how can groups be composed to maintain critical consciousness within the collective? How can feminist

---

<sup>126</sup> Seo & Creed, *supra* note 28, at 226.

<sup>127</sup> See Meyerson & Scully, *supra* note 5, at 592.

knowledge, or other marginalized forms of knowledge, be represented within groups to sustain the critical consciousness without being co-opted or silenced? Sturm suggests that institutional designs that couple gender concerns with primary institutional concerns enable women to feel more comfortable seeking changes.<sup>128</sup> But she says little about how catalyst groups function as collective agents and maintain dualities at a group level. The possibility of group as institutional change agent suggests intriguing possibilities for the design of change and points to an important topic for future research to address in greater depth.

---

<sup>128</sup> Sturm, *supra* note 6, at 310.