CULTIVATING CONSENT, REAPING RESISTANCE: IDENTITY-BASED CONTROL AT A HIGH-END NATURAL FOODS STORE

Tricia McTague Missouri State University triciamctague@missouristate.edu

ABSTRACT

In this study, I examine managerial control and worker resistance at two upscale retail grocery stores that were parts of a national chain. Despite management's efforts to elicit worker consent by crafting an image of environmental responsibility and using team-based forms of employee ownership, workers at these two stores sought to unionize. Based on in-depth interviews with twenty former workers and organizers, I examine the conditions that led to the emergence and of the organizing drives. I argue that management used an identity-based control strategy that involved a bundling of team and "green" rhetoric, emotion-management rituals, and symbols of counter-cultural values. I show how this strategy elicited consent by affirming workers' self-conceptions, but then broke down when workers experienced contradictions between the company's democratic image and managerial behavior. Dissatisfaction stemming from these contradictions led to organizing campaigns, in which workers invoked the company's teamwork rhetoric and green rhetoric to legitimize their efforts. The environmentalist identities that were the initial basis for consent thus became the basis for challenging company policies and practices. This analysis poses important questions about broadly defining employee ownership, while keeping the integrity of the concept.

INTRODUCTION

Like other industries (Vallas 1999), the retail sales industry is increasingly bifurcated into low-end and high-end stores. Customers expect few and unenthusiastic interactions when they shop at big box and fast food restaurants, but have different expectations when buying at boutique shops (Williams 2006). In the latter case, workers are expected to cater to customers' desires. Upscale retail stores sell high-end products, but they also sell privilege. Thus, managers need workers to want to sell, despite the low pay, low prestige, and indignities that characterize grocery work (Tannock 2001). Such was the case at Green Grocer (GG, a pseudonym)—a corporate chain of high-end natural foods retail stores that claims to be socially and environmentally responsible. Despite these claims, workers at two stores sought to unionize.

Just as customers can feel like they are doing environmental good by shopping at GG,

workers can also think of themselves as environmental stewards by virtue of their employment in a green company. Likewise, workers and customers may enact their identity as good citizens by shopping at companies that claim to use teamwork, a form of employee ownership. Therein lies the potential for exploitation of environmentalist and democratic citizenship identities. Workers may be tolerant of managerial abuse, low pay, and affronts to their dignity if they feel they are contributing to greater conservation efforts or if their work has been defined by others as democratic. The seeking-out of workers with green and democratic identities, and the tying of these ethics to the company, may facilitate exploitation in the workplace. Moreover, if workers subscribe to management's definition of workplace decision-making as democratic and non-hierarchical, employment as a privilege, and low-level work as meaningful, then workers might be less likely to notice contradictions in what managers say about their values versus how managers act on them.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the workplace, managers often use identity making to align workers' identity with the company. However, it is important to remember that there is always room for something to go wrong. Workers can use these identity-making opportunities to reject, not affirm, the identities that managers are hawking. This highlights the process of negotiation in identity making—how people can reject the imposition of identity by dominant groups. In order to understand how workers (particularly low-level workers who compose the largest group of people in the organization) contribute to organizational culture and behavior, we can look to the negotiated order perspective (Strauss 1978; Fine 1984; Maines and Charlton 1985). This perspective proposes that social organization cannot be fully understood without examining the interactions of people inside them. Organization, in this view, is not possible without some negotiation

between organizational actors. Negotiation, whether implicit or explicit, occurs when rules and policies are vague or exclusive, when there are conflicts, when there is uncertainty, and when changes are introduced. Organizational actors then negotiate, meaning they "give and take, make bargains, stake claims, make counter-demands, and so forth" (Maines and Charlton 1985:278). When the structure changes, organizational actors might renew or revise these negotiations. In the workplace, top managers, local managers, and workers use sense-making tools from their cultural toolkits to understand structural changes and renegotiate work life. Thus, the negotiated order approach fits nicely with Edwards' (1979) conception of the workplace as contested terrain—the site of persistent struggles for control.

To understand how managers make use of cultural tools, I borrow the sociological social psychology concepts of identity, subcultural identity work, and identity making. By identity, I am referring to the meanings people give themselves and others. Identities are "indexes of the self" (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996) which are collectively created, used, and changed in interaction between people, rather than fixed or static personality traits that exist inside individuals. Even in the case of personal identity, individuals need others to interpret signifiers. Subcultural identity work refers to the work people do together to create the signs, codes, and rites of affirmation that become shared resources for identity making. As Schwalbe and Schrock point out, "identity making is simultaneously culture making" (p. 121) and identity making involves "purposes, strategies, and sometimes the overcoming of resistance" (p. 115).

METHODS

Originally, I planned to do <u>participant observation at a local Green Grocer store</u>. However, local managers never returned my letters, calls, and emails. <u>I devised a new plan to interview worker-organizers</u> (members of the union organizing committees) at two stores—one

in the Midwest and one in the Southwest. I chose to interview worker-organizers for several reasons. First and foremost, the names of worker-organizers were publicly available, as they were posted on the union website. Moreover, the IRB stipulated that I was not allowed to interview current employees, thereby ruling out anti-union workers and managers with strong loyalty to the company who were likely to remain employed at GG. No doubt, these workers would have had a different interpretation of the events that transpired during the unionizing efforts. Additionally, the company's refusal to answer my letters and return my phone calls had made it clear that they did not want managers to participate in my study.

Tracking down worker-organizers, and traveling across the country to interview them, was a challenge. Of the 21 people to whom I sent letters requesting an interview, I was able to get in touch with 17 worker-organizers. All 17 contacts agreed to be interviewed. My interview guide consisting of semi-structured questions and focused on people's work experiences and on what happened during the organizing drives. After each interview, I went home and wrote notes about rapport, unspoken data, emergent themes, and new parts of the story that I should explore in future interviews. I ended up with 20 interviews with former GG workers who lived in six different cities. I interviewed 13 members of the Midwest organizing committee, and 4 members of the Southwest organizing committee.

The interviews averaged two hours in length. All of the interviewees were white, consistent with the racial make-up of the regions in which the stores were located. The sample consisted of 7 women (2 of whom self-identified as lesbian), 11 men, and 2 female-to-male transgendered individuals. Ages ranged from 16 to 33 at the time of the organizing drives. Only

¹ Additionally, I conducted one preliminary interview with a former GG worker in the Southeast to test my interview guide. The last two interviews conducted were with former workers who had recently stopped working at a non-unionized GG store in the Southeast to get a sense of how the company's control project had evolved since the organizing drives were underway.

one male interviewee was married with children. The median age of interviewees was 23.2 While some started out as part-time employees, all but one of my interviewees worked full-time at some point during their tenure at GG. I also interviewed a professional union organizer who provided guidance and leadership at the beginning of the Midwest organizing drive. Most of the data in this study reflects the experiences of worker-organizers in the Midwest, which makes sense given the fact that this organizing effort was more successful, lasted longer, and had more committee members than the short-lived Southwest drive. In fact, Derek, a worker-organizer, commented that if I interviewed four people from the Southwest, then I had "probably talked to the entire organizing committee." Other data were drawn from newspaper articles, the company website, the Green Workers Unite website (including message boards and open letters from the organizing committee), worker-organizer resignation letters, the employee handbook, organizing materials (lists that chronicled where each worker stood on the issue, pamphlets, and copies of speeches given during rallies), and proposed union contracts.

All interviews were transcribed and coded line-by-line, as were fieldnotes and archival data. Gradually, after reading and re-reading the data, I began to identify emergent themes and moved from descriptive to analytic coding. I wrote analytic memos about the patterns I saw. Moving up a level of abstraction, I then wrote integrative memos to tease out the relationships between analytic codes. Because my initial interest in this subject was based in my own work experiences, I relied on reflective writing to identify similarities and differences between my experiences as a retail worker and those of worker-organizers.

CULTIVATING CONSENT: IDENTITY-BASED CONTROL AT GREEN GROCER

In the case of high-end service work, managers need more than basic consent. Not only

³ This interviewee was employed by a health service workers union, not the union that Midwest workers affiliated with.

² One worker was significantly older than the rest, skewing the mean to 25.

do they need workers to show up, they need them to believe in what they are selling. Managers need to convince workers to use their emotions and personalities to sell goods and services to their customers. This kind of work requires service workers to tap into intimate parts of themselves so that customers perceive sales interactions as authentic. Sociologists have consistently pointed out, however, that the capitalist context makes it difficult for workers to conjure genuine displays of emotion (Hochschild [1983] 2003). Managers at GG sought to hire workers who cared about the environment in hopes that they would extend that care to customers and loyalty to the company. On the GG website, managers posed the question, "Why work here?" and provided the answer: "Green Grocer is a Company That Walks Its Talk." According to its website:

We recruit the best people we can to become part of our team. We empower them to make their own decisions, creating a respectful workplace where people are treated fairly and are highly motivated to succeed. We look for people who are passionate about food (my emphasis). We also look for well-rounded human beings who will help build our locations into profitable and beneficial members of their communities.

Green Grocer thus offered job seekers an opportunity to do meaningful work that affirmed their green identities. GG's green rhetoric was thus alluring to potential employees because of the promise it held for making a difference and self-expression. Recruiting people who already cared about natural and organic foods, healthy eating, and veganism, made it easier to align worker identities with the identity of GG. Noticeably absent from these accounts of why they applied for jobs at GG is any mention of teamwork or the quality of the work environment. Instead, workers were lured by the promise of working for a company that appeared to embrace green values, youthful rebellion, and to allow freedom of expression through dress.

As an upscale grocery store, GG put a premium on customer service, as reflected in their core values: "We go to extraordinary lengths to satisfy and delight our customers. We want to

meet or exceed their expectations on every shopping trip. We want to serve our customers competently, efficiently, knowledgeably and with flair." To these ends, workers were required to watch videos that portrayed various customer service scenarios. These videos provided scripts for interacting with customers. Workers were further instructed to initiate friendly conversation, greet each customer with a smile, walk customers to the product, and drop whatever they were doing if asked a question. GG customers were quite demanding and had high expectations for customer service. George compared his experience with customers at GG to his interactions at his current workplace, a locally owned grocery store:

People don't come in that store, a family run store, with the same expectations they have going into GG, and I think the same would be true for a co-op. Whereas at Green Grocer they are constantly asking you questions. They constantly want you to be there for them. I mean, the people who shop at Green Grocer are not fun people to serve. They make you personally responsible, you know, if the cheese is not there. You know, like if the Gruyere from England isn't there, it's like, oh my god! The world comes to an end! And it's my fault, you know?

Other interviewees echoed George's assessment and described GG customers as exceedingly demanding, especially in contrast to other grocery stores and co-ops. Workers were expected to cater to customers and they frequently encountered challenges to their dignity. By using the rhetorical strategies described below, managers tried to compensate for the customer abuse, low status, and low pay, experienced by GG workers.

MANAGERIAL RHETORICS AT GREEN GROCER

Companies, groups, and individuals use rhetoric, or what C. Wright Mills (1940) calls *vocabularies of motive*, to convince themselves and others to accept their proposed version of the truth. Rhetoric includes spoken and written words that shape our understanding of existing social arrangements. Mills explains that vocabularies of motive are used in social situations as "cues and justifications for normative actions" (1940:906). Thus, rhetoric is an embodiment of

ideology. Rhetoric, then, in its broadest sense, is a strategy for persuading others to share a given definition of the situation. Mills also points out that stable vocabularies of motive are "unquestioned answer[s] to questions concerning social and lingual conduct...Institutional practices and their vocabularies of motive exercise control over delimited ranges of possible situations" (1940:907-911). In this way, rhetoric can guide behavior and color our understanding of past, present, and future action; however, rhetoric is not a failproof means of eliciting desired behaviors. While rhetorical strategies often go unchallenged, it is important to recognize that the acceptance and rejection of all or part of any rhetorical strategy is a social process—a negotiation. In other words, rhetoric is not unilaterally imposed or received.

Green Rhetoric

Reminiscent of past experiments with welfare capitalism, managers at Green Grocer put considerable effort into crafting a socially and environmentally responsible image for the company. Managers used a *green rhetoric* to fend off public criticism and to attract environmentally conscious customers and workers. The Green Planet philosophy, found on GG's website, demonstrated the company's desire to be perceived as an ethical company:

We believe companies, like individuals, must assume their share of responsibility as tenants of Planet Earth. On a global basis we actively support organic farming — the best method for promoting sustainable agriculture and protecting the environment and the farm workers. On a local basis, we are actively involved in our communities by supporting food banks, sponsoring neighborhood events, compensating our team members for community service work, and contributing at least five percent of total net profits to not-for-profit organizations... Our whole business is about making a difference — in the lives of our Team Members and the customers we serve, and in the communities and environments in which we operate.

The message is that GG is a different kind of company, one that cares about the environment, workers, and the community—a haven in the heartless world of profit maximization. By extension, people who shop and work at Green Grocer can be environmental stewards, too. To

shop and work at GG is to live out one's environmental values, and, just as important, a way to signify those values to others. In this way, the use of green rhetoric is a form of identity-making. Managers sought to affirm and align customer and worker identity with the company.

As such, green rhetoric is intended for public consumption, as was its predecessor, welfare capitalism. GG projected good citizenship by holding "community giving days" or "5% Days" several times throughout the year (where five percent of that day's net sales are donated to local organizations), sponsoring Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) fundraisers and local farm tours, and by donating to food banks. These events were advertised on a large chalkboard calendar, at the customer service desk, and on the GG website.

Green rhetoric also served to obscure the contradictions of consumption and citizenship as described by Johnston. GG provided "a seamless shopping experience where hybrid citizenconsumers can express ethical concerns by eating delicious prepared foods and beautifully-displayed produce in a fun shopping environment" (2008:250). GG presented customers with an opportunity to ease a troubled conscience without having to think about the contradictions of ethical consumption. For example, customers were not prompted to consider reducing their consumption or to think about how some cannot afford to save the world through shopping. Perhaps this is why GG's customers were willing to pay markedly higher prices. GG's image as a "more polished co-op" thus provided class-based affirmation to affluent customers.

Teamwork Rhetoric

Much like their human relations predecessors, GG managers used a *teamwork rhetoric* to convince workers that their work was meaningful and valued by the company. In other words, they wanted workers to feel that this wasn't just another grocery store. They wanted workers to feel like their work was special and important, despite low pay, low autonomy, and low status.

Again, like previous managerial projects, teams were portrayed as a means of harmonizing the interests of labor and capital. Team rhetoric was featured prominently on the GG website:

We Support Team Member Excellence and Happiness

Our success is also dependent upon the collective energy and intelligence of all our Team Members. In addition to receiving fair wages and benefits, belief in the value of our work and finding fulfillment from our jobs is a key reason we are part of Green Grocer... Achieving unity of vision about the future of our company, and building trust between Team Members is a goal at Green Grocer. At the same time diversity and individual differences are recognized and honored...We strive to build positive and healthy relationships among Team Members. "Us versus them" thinking has no place in our company. We believe that the best way to do this is to encourage participation and involvement at all levels of our business.

Managers thus sought to define their relationships with workers as non-hierarchical. Green Grocer differed from other retail stores—management wanted workers to believe—because it valued employee input and included workers in decision-making. This framing bears a striking resemblance to Edwards's description of company unions and their promise of workplace democracy. Workers were supposed to believe they could readily approach any manager with problems or suggestions for improving store operations. Managers further reinforced their rejection of antagonistic manager-worker relationships through the use of job titles. Workers at Green Grocer were not employees, they were Team Members. Likewise, the produce department was not called such. Instead, it was called the Produce Team. Managers were Team Leaders, store managers were Store Team Leaders, and so on. Not coincidentally, co-ops also use the language of membership and try to solve problems democratically.

GG management wanted workers to feel committed to GG because of the possibilities their jobs afforded for fun, self-development, and economic gain. The team rhetoric, then, claimed to value each worker as a person, not just as an employee. Workers in turn were supposed to feel lucky to be employed by such a company. Similarly, Laurie Graham (1995)

found that the team system, coupled with an extensive hiring process that included several rounds of written exams and performance tests, encouraged auto workers to feel like working at Subaru was a privilege.

All in all, the message sent by managers to workers and socially conscious customers was strikingly similar to those made during the periods of welfare capitalism, company unionism, and human relations. By bundling these rhetorics with charitable acts, Green Grocer presented itself as a benevolent company in which the interests of corporations, ethical consumers, and workers are harmonized. More specifically, the message sent was that GG is a great company that allows customers and workers to save the planet by shopping and working in a democratic, fun, and aesthetically pleasing environment. That is, GG was a place where the ideals of citizenship and consumption were made compatible, as were the interests of labor and capital.

CO-OPTING CO-OPS: VISUAL CUES

GG cultivated an organizational identity through green and team rhetorics. It also projected a green image by mimicking non-profit cooperative grocery stores. Not only did GG borrow words like "member," but it also appropriated symbols and signs from counter-cultural projects and reassembled them to attract the ethical consumer. Throughout a typical store, there are many visual cues that evoke the co-op image. Marketing and promotional signs are written on chalkboards in a fun, informal font. Brochures on GG's commitment to local farmers can be found in every department. Cardboard cutouts of smiling local farmers wearing overalls stand in front of product displays. An entire aisle of bulk bins, as found in co-ops, presents an opportunity for customers to buy food without extraneous packaging.

These visual cues, replicated throughout the chain's stores, are intended to attract both workers and customers. Workers in this study typically came to the store for the first time as

customers. Rebecca, a wine buyer at the Midwest store, described her first shopping experience at GG as "wonderful." She explained how the store layout and visual marketing strategies were inviting and reminiscent of cooperative grocery stores:

When I first shopped there, I thought it was wonderful. It's a really pleasant, kind of modern, but touchy-feely environment. I don't know, kind of clean. It has essentially that kind of earlier seventies vegetarian co-op feel, even though when you see the prices, it's not the same. You know, it kind of draws you in if that's the kind of stuff that you enjoy. They really did emphasize a lot of the individuality of that location. At that time, they were pushing things like, "Well, we sell locally made pasta and locally grown vegetables and that's what makes us different."

Visual cues not only attracted customers, but job seekers also noticed these symbols. Thus, managers used ethical rhetorics coupled with visual cues to juxtapose their grocery store with low-end, presumably less-ethical, national supermarket chains that carry cheap, generic mass-market, processed foods. Another visual cue came from workers' counter-cultural dress and self-presentation. In contrast to mainstream grocery stores, GG workers did not have to wear a company uniform. They were able to wear T-shirts and jeans or whatever they would normally wear. Thus, GG workers looked a lot like those you'd find in a co-op, complete with crazy-colored hair, piercings, tattoos, and gender blurring styles of dress. Workers themselves embodied counter-cultural themes found in co-ops and thus provided another visual cue that reminded customers of co-ops.

In the same way that individual and collective identities are defined in relation to an "other," companies also carve out organizational identities in relation to other organizations in their industry and in the wider economy (Strandgaard and Dobbin 2006). As such, GG's highend retailer role was defined in relation to mid-tier grocery stores like Harris Teeter and low-end food retailers like Food Lion. They also claimed to be a different kind of company in a broader sense by valuing the planet and people over profits. If the reference category here is other

national grocery chains, then GG indeed appeared to be more ethical. It is important, however, to keep in mind the full spectrum of employee ownership and compare GG against these standards and ethics. Alternative models of distributing food include worker-owned and member owned cooperative grocery stores, as well as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), community gardens, and local farmers' markets. These models, based in various social movements, provided the cultural resources that GG used to *signify* its ethicality. That is, GG relied on team-based employee ownership and environmentalism to cultivate an *image* of social and environmental responsibility that may or may not reflect workplace realities.

IDENTITY WORK THROUGH RITUAL

Teamwork is typically used in manufacturing firms where workers solve problems that arise in the production of a tangible commodity. Workers might rotate tasks, particularly the least desirable ones, or decide on rules for getting the job done. Retail is different. While workers do some strenuous physical labor (e.g., unloading delivery trucks, moving and stocking gallons of milk, standing on their feet all day), the primary production in retail is the emotional labor used to sell products. Management tries to extract genuine feelings and emotions from their employees, especially at high-end retail stores like Green Grocer. They want workers to voluntarily use their own personalities and emotions to build rapport with customers to increase spending. But how did managers get workers to buy in? What strategies did they use to get workers to believe in the company and want to sell its products?

At GG, managers used team and green rhetorics toward these ends. Managers gave these rhetorics emotional weight by using workplace rituals such as voting, team-builds, appreciations, food-tastings, and nutrition classes. These rituals were opportunities for identity-making, as described by Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock:

In this case one person takes the lead in creating not only an image of the organization but, more importantly, an image of the kind of people who belong to such an organization. This is an example of real identity-making: leaders telling members—who share an identity as members—what it is that their belonging signifies. (1996:121)

Rituals served to reinforce managers' definition of GG as democratic and environmentally responsible. By extension, these rituals encouraged workers to see themselves as environmental stewards and facilitated identification with and loyalty to the company.

Monthly store meetings and pre-shift team (departmental) meetings were identity-making opportunities. As workers described them, store meetings sounded a lot like religious revivals. During meetings, workers were required to participate in praising each other and the company, or, in their words, "talk about how GG is so great." According to Derek, managers "go around and have everybody say what they like most about Green Grocer." At each store meeting a worker was chosen as "team member of the month." Store meetings, and sometimes team meetings, ended with "appreciations," which are public recognitions for exceptional work. As Linda describes below, store meetings required considerable emotional labor, especially since the meetings took place early in the morning before shifts began, or late at night after an eighthour shift of trying to please demanding customers.

They [meetings] seemed so much like a camp. I mean not really like a church group, but we did all of the appreciations and everything. It [the appreciation ritual] was a thing at the end of the meeting, after the business was sort of done. Whoever was leading the meeting would ask if there were any appreciations. The idea is that you can stand up and say 'I want to thank Sarah for doing such a fantastic job on the bulk department yesterday. It looked great.' And then everybody claps and it would go on and could be anything from, like, somebody worked for somebody when they were sick to "We mopped the floor really well." (sarcastic tone). Or anything you could possibly think of, and yeah, then everybody clapped. And we usually did it at team meetings and at store meetings.

Attending to non-economic motives for work, managers used appreciation rituals to make workers feel that their work was appreciated and important. These rituals had the potential to

induce workers to see the company as the kind of place where everyone is valued and appreciated. Appreciations also obscured power differences between workers and managers.

GG occasionally held classes on the difference between conventional and natural foods, and why natural foods are better. In this way, managers imbued the products they sold with moral value. Again, these rituals reinforced managers' definition of work at GG as different and morally significant. By implication, workers and managers were part of a company that helped people live healthy lives by eating natural foods. Managers emphasized the similarity in values between the company as a whole, managers, and workers: we are all part of the same effort to protect the environment and improve people's health.

Food-tastings were another workplace ritual. During daily shift meetings, department managers treated workers to featured products. Managers opened a product, asked everyone to taste it, and then talked about it with team members. These practices allowed workers to learn about and experience new foods, which could come in handy during sales encounters.

George: ...it is kind of *infectious*, an environment where it's like, "Wow. There's this new product in the store." And Green Grocer has these great policies where you can actually open up a product and eat it, because you have to know what it tastes like. You know, you have to be able to recommend it to a customer. So GG would say, "Go open it up and eat it." Or a customer wants something, you know, *cares about something*, wants to know what its like, you know, open it up and eat it. So it's this atmosphere of like we support you if you *care* about the product. We'll let you eat whatever you want. And that encouraged this thinking, *this encouraged the attitude that you really care about your job too and everybody shares that*. Everybody's interested in what they are doing. Its like "Oooh, look at this new product."

Food tasting rituals had the potential to align workers' shared passion for natural foods with the company's purported environmental values. As a result, workers were able to sell products with sincerity and enthusiasm. In this way, workers' environmental ethic was co-opted. Their care and concern for the environment and customers' health was transformed into a profit-making strategy.

GG also held "team builds" that were supposed to encourage teamwork and solidarity. The idea was to get workers to work together to achieve a goal. On mandatory team-build days, workers took time away from their jobs to go on an outing with their teams, usually to do an outdoor activity. During team-builds, managers and workers were supposed to engage in an activity or solve a problem together, thus framing their relationship as non-hierarchical, a la Mayo and his disciples.

There were other practices and rituals, too. *Voting rituals*—in which workers voted on whether or not to allow new hires to join the team (department) after a probationary period—were another means by which workers were co-opted. Voting rituals, however, were primarily symbolic, since in practice new hires were rarely voted off the team. Additionally, the *Team Member Advisory Group* (TMAG) appeared to provide a voice for each worker. In practice, TMAG was essentially a company union. TMAG reps did not press for better wages or safety in the workplace, as real union stewards might. seemingly democratic practice was the "shared fate" incentive program called "labor *gain sharing* payouts," which are calculated as "sales per labor hour." If a department reached the sales goal (set by extra local managers) without using the entire labor budget, then the remainder of the labor allotment was divided among those workers.

In these ways, managers used rituals to reinforce their definition of the workplace as democratic and environmentally responsible. These strategies can also be seen as efforts to gain consent, infuse work with meaning, pre-empt unionization, and co-opt workers' environmental ethic to increase the bottom line. Management thus tried to give workers the impression that their work was important and that Green Grocer was different. They wanted to create an organizational culture in which caring, or the appearance of caring, was valued. Management

tried to show that they cared about workers, and, in turn, workers were supposed to show care for customers by going above and beyond normal expectations for sales floor service.

WORKER PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGERIAL RHETORIC

In the process of identity-making, there is always room for something to go wrong. The meanings that managers attach to rhetorics, symbols, and rituals do not always stick. Workers can reject the meanings proffered by managers. At Green Grocer, workers pushed back against managers' control projects. Workers who liked the sound of "teamwork" during hiring and orientation, soon came to see it as a gimmick that obscured the hierarchical relationship between managers and workers. In other words, workers' rejected managers' definition of the workplace as democratic. They also did not believe that management truly valued their work, or that managers and workers were on equal footing.

Workers knew how management defined their work, but did not always accept it. When workers realized that teamwork was more rhetoric than reality, they weren't seriously disappointed. They tended to brush it off or laugh it off, as did George and Kelly:

George: The biggest thing that made the team not-a-team was the lack of power to decide anything that happened on the job. Everybody kind of knew actually that it was bullshit. We had our fun with it too. I remember me and Frank actually- we had these team buttons where like you know it was "Team member" (says in a fake enthusiastic voice) and then you'd have your name. And our thing was that we were all interchangeable. So like Frank had a sticker with a name on it. And I was Forge and he was Gank. No, I was Gank and he was Forge. And we walked around like that forever and we would just switch buttons.

Kelly: (laughs) I think when I started I thought that the whole team idea was kind of smart and good and you know, if nothing else different, touchy. The team member thing is sort of a joke because you're not really a member of the team. You're employed by a company and so, you know, I think it was supposed to feel like a co-op or something, but it's very clear when you work there that you don't have ownership over much. I think it was more like, whatever, you can call me whatever you want (laughs) but I know that I'm just here to stock the shelves and go home. (laughs)

Kelly rejected managerial definitions of democracy at work. She suspected that the "member"

rhetoric was a managerial strategy for mimicking co-ops, whose primary users are called "member-owners." Because there was a real cooperative grocery store in this city, she and other workers had a point of reference. Also, instead of seeing themselves as part of the team, working side by side with management, they acknowledged their low status: "I'm just here to stock the shelves and go home." In other words, workers contrasted managerial claims with the real social relations of production. Other workers called the team rhetoric "pep talk," alluding to the emotional labor required during cheerleading-like rituals, and also dismissed teamwork as corporate hype. Thus solidarity-building rituals fell flat. Ironically, workers did end up experiencing teamwork, but they were careful to point out that it would have happened with or without the team rhetoric. Thus, it appears as though the workers I interviewed thought the team idea sounded good, but they weren't particularly excited about it. The idea of working at a store that uses teams was not the main draw.

Workers were more excited about the opportunity to work at store that was committed to environmentalism. After working there for a while, they began to see the team rhetoric as a gimmick. Because workers had low expectations for working in teams, they weren't significantly disappointed when they realized it was more rhetoric than reality. Despite managerial rhetoric and rituals that were supposed to elicit consent and identification with the company, the workers I spoke with rejected the teamwork ideology. These workers dismissed the team language as corporate hype, something they were likely to encounter in other retail jobs. Any positive expectations of teamwork at GG dissipated when the actual work began. The rejection of the team rhetoric by these workers illustrates the process by which people sometimes resist the way a situation is defined by powerful others.

CONTRADICTIONS EMERGE

For the most part, the workers I studied felt that GG walked its green talk, if not its team talk—at least until the company began to make some big changes that coincided with its expansion. Just prior to the organizing campaign, Green Grocer opened or acquired over 100 stores across the U.S., launched its own brand of products, and twice saw its stock split 2:1. GG began to enter into exclusive contracts with large-scale industrial organic producers. Company growth was attended by concerted efforts to standardize day-to-day operations in all of its stores.

As the company increased its market share, contradictions arose between the company's stated values and workplace practices. Workers began to experience a stretch-out, loss of autonomy, and increased pressure to sell products. That is, workers started to lose control over the labor process. What made this loss of control so painful for workers was that workers had internalized their roles as environmental stewards, but were now asked to participate in what they believed to be unsustainable practices. Managers issued the new directives, while workers had to carry them out. In addition to dealing with challenges to their green identities, workers also began to experience dissonance between managers' diversity and team rhetoric and their everyday workplace experiences.

Workers did not simply obey the new rules but actively negotiated them. The sociological implications of these negotiations are that studying organizational change must include the counter veiling actions of low-level workers in addition to managers' actions and ideologies. The production of workplace culture is a two-way street. Identity-making rituals and feel-good rhetoric would no longer be enough to smooth over contradictions and quell worker dissent. In fact, these identity-making and solidarity-building exercises served to highlight inconsistencies and provide opportunities for workers to resist individually at first, and then collectively.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE, MAKING A PROFIT

As GG grew and increased its market share, workers noticed a renewed emphasis on profit making, which coincided with increased use of team rhetoric and rituals. Prior to the company's expansion, workers found it easier to take seriously GG's philosophy of "making a difference," whereas after the changes, workers began to feel that their role was simply to help make a profit. The more managers invoked the team ethic, however, the less team-like the workplace felt to those who worked there.

Workers noticed more regional managers prowling their store. Workers began to experience greater pressure to sell products. As these pressures mounted, workers like Kelly began to feel inauthentic. It also became more difficult to brush off the team rhetoric and its inconsistence with workplace practice. Tension between control and resistance mounted, and workers grew increasingly suspicious of what they once considered a hokey, but benign teamwork rhetoric. Managers tried to make workers feel like they weren't team players if they did not push products on customers. Sociologists call this kind of peer pressure normative control, suggesting that it leads workers to consent to their own exploitation (Barker 1993, Kunda 1992; Graham 1995; Grenier 1988). In this view, the normative power of teamwork facilitates the internalization of managerial ideologies, as previously private and restricted parts of the self become available to employers. Workers thereby assume responsibility for disciplining themselves and, in some cases, police each other more harshly than management would otherwise (Barker 1993).

Yet, the workers I interviewed did not passively conform to normative pressures but instead actively negotiated, or resisted, their implementation. Kelly, for example, resisted normative control and refused to push customers to buy products they had not intended to buy.

Kelly: (interjects decisively) Never. I never (laughs)—it's just so not my style or my personality. I was just like if someone wants to buy salsa with their chips, they are going

to buy salsa with their chips and its not my job as a stocker to tell them that they should do that. There was always this sort of threat of like this secret shopper program, and so if your customer service wasn't good enough and you got a secret shopper it would reflect on you and the team and the whole deal. But I just could never care enough to make myself do that because I thought it was totally intrusive.

Despite the renewed emphasis on teamwork and increased pressure on average workers to increase the company's bottom line, the workers I spoke to did not concede to managers' demands. As their work lives became less satisfying, these experiences heightened the contradictions between rhetoric and reality.

As the company grew, and as departments succeeded in meeting ever increasing sales goals, there were more customers to deal with and more products to keep stocked. Despite these heavier demands, no new workers were hired in smaller departments. Buyers⁴ were ostensibly given considerable autonomy—but without adequate staffing. Buyers and workers in these subdepartments thus felt overworked, stressed out, and unable to take pride in their hurried work. As buyers experienced a stretch-out, the team rhetoric wore thin and the affirmation rituals could not compensate for overwork. Workers came to see the time spent in team meetings as time that could be spent catching up on work. Moreover, the promise of teamwork added insult to injury and served to highlight the gap between rhetoric and reality, making workers feel deceived.

These tensions came to a head when Derek, a dairy buyer, refused to go on a "team build"—group outings that were meant to build solidarity between workers and managers. ⁵ However, when workers returned to the store, they were confronted with a pile of work that had accumulated during the time spent on the team build. Derek refused to go on the next team build and was written up for "gross subordination." He explained:

So it's six o'clock in the morning and they decide they want to go around and have

⁴ It is important to note that buyers, who were responsible for ordering products and acted as assistant managers, were eligible to vote like regular low-level workers in union elections.

⁵ Team build activities usually included rafting, picking up litter, and running outdoor obstacle courses.

everybody say what they like most about Green Grocer. I—you know, here we are. We switched team leaders. They've been feeding me all this bullshit about they're going to do all this stuff and it never happened. And now they want to play this game where we're all going to do this happy feel good stuff. Which doesn't matter. You know, if you want to do something that matters, go help me stock the Dairy. Or you know, show me. Because this talking stuff hasn't worked for two and a half years at this point and frankly I don't think it's going to. So they get around to me and I'm you know, obviously fed up with it so I'm like, "Yeah, I'm not playing." Then they're like, "No really what do you—" and I'm like, "You know to play." So anyway we go out on the dock and they want to confront me and I'm like, "You know what, I don't want to do this right now. I'm obviously upset. You guys are *obviously* upset." And so then they just start going off on me and I'm like okay, you want it? Here it is. And I told them you know what had been bothering me straight up. Held nothing back.

While Derek wasn't keen on teamwork from the start, he had mostly ignored it or half-heartedly participated. But when his workload became intolerable, he couldn't bring himself to "play" along. Derek's use of the word "play" shows how he came to see team-based emotion management as a superficial performance, filled with "happy feel good" talk that clearly did not match his experience in Dairy. The open conflict between Derek and the Grocery managers shows how emotion management rituals can backfire when workers turn rituals into opportunities for resistance. The fact that this conflict took place in front of the entire Grocery team—upper managers and low-level employees alike—made it possible for others to question the sincerity of managerial motives, especially since Derek was held in high esteem by the workers he managed. He was known for being a hard worker and a fair manager. As such, his actions did not go unnoticed. A redefinition of the situation was emerging and this laid the groundwork for others to question the legitimacy of team rhetoric and ritual.

At the Midwest store, there was, perhaps, no greater cause of worker frustration than the apple wall. Produce workers lamented the impracticality of the apple wall—the result of top-down decision-making that essentially devalued workers' tacit skills. Before the changes mandated by upper managers, apples were displayed in bins so that workers could see exactly

what needed to be refilled. Customers could pick up, feel, smell, and knock to find that perfect apple. The new arrangement, designed by extra-local managers, required the stacking of apples into a slanted wall. Workers found this quite challenging—apples are not uniform and their waxy skin makes them hard to stack. When customers tried to pull an apple from the wall, others would tumble down. The rule at GG was that any food that touches the ground has to be thrown away. While the apples might not have looked as pretty under the old apple display, the system made sense for customers and workers alike. Here, the team rhetoric becomes problematic. If work were truly democratic, then there would be no apple wall. More importantly, the old arrangement minimized waste.

Jamie: It's a waste of time. *It's a waste of product*, you know [my emphasis]. And it's really frustrating to be working in the department and doing something and then the apple wall falls down. And you're like, "*Oh look let me throw out 10 pounds of organic apples* [my emphasis]. Super (sarcastically)." Yeah, so most of, like, three quarters of the workers hated the apple wall and wanted them to be bins like it was before. It always just seemed stupid and it was like, "It's the way we do it. It's the Green Grocer way." And it's like, if 75 % of the people here don't want it to be this way then can't our team, as a team, decide not to have—sorry, I'm like, "Argh! I hate the apple wall!"

Workers had internalized their role as environmental stewards as management intended, so when the company began to institute decidedly ungreen practices, workers noticed these inconsistencies. The repetition of these wasteful acts was tough to deal with, given workers' conservationist ethic. Not only were workers required to do the dirty work of throwing away food, they had to set up an entire wall only to see it topple down a few hours later.

The inherent contradictions of industrial organic surfaced as GG began making exclusive deals with giant organic processing firms. Each department had its own buyer whose responsibility was to place product orders. Despite the high turnover at GG, workers managed to sustain relationships with local farmers, and this was something they took pride in. Linda, the Produce buyer from the Midwest, explained her efforts to support local foods and local farmers.

She tried to maintain the relationships between GG and local farmers that her predecessor had worked hard to cultivate. About a month into Linda's tenure as Produce buyer, her manager asked her to buy more from the regional distribution center and buy less from local farmers:

Linda: The local farmers then would kind of base their planting amounts on what all of their different vendors were saying. So I tried to stick to that, but after I'd been doing it for a month, a month and a half, that's when Melanie suggested to me that I just go with the specials that the distribution center was giving us and don't worry about the local farmers. That's when I got pissed. That's when I was like, "What is going on here?" Because that is on the core values, right up front. You know, "We are dedicated to supporting our local farmers," and I was just told by the assistant store manager that I should stop ordering from these guys who had just planted specifically for us.

After trying to gently persuade Linda to buy from firms that had exclusive contracts with GG, her manager began to closely monitor her purchase orders. Linda thus experienced both a loss of autonomy and a challenge to her environmental ethic. Changes in buying practices created inconsistency with the company's stated values, her own morals and green identity, and a worker culture that valued local farmers and local foods. Despite teamwork rhetoric that claimed to provide workers with a voice—the open door, open communication policy—Linda had no say in buying decisions. She also now had to deal with unhappy customers who could no longer buy their favorite foods.

Workers were particularly unhappy with another policy change—the decision to stop allowing workers to buy discarded food for cheap. Organizers told me that this policy change hurt workers who depended on discarded food. Jamie explained:

When I started there, there was an area in the back of the store where product that was you know, if the cartons were really dented, products that were spoiled and couldn't be sold to customers could be sold to employees really cheap. They eventually took that away from us. So then not only couldn't we get stuff cheaper, which is really nice to be able to do because at 7 bucks an hour you can't really afford much at GG, but then all the product that was just past expiration or you know the product was fine but the packaging was damaged, we had to throw out and you know, for environmentally conscious people that was a really hard thing to be told we have to do. So that was another sort of—it felt very sort of hypocritical at that point.

Taking home "perfectly good food" for cheap was a huge relief to workers' budgets. Without the supplemental food, their food budgets were stretched thin. There was also a moral issue here: wastefulness was an affront to workers' green identities. This inconsistency was exasperated by GG claims to make natural healthy food more accessible for everyone. Not only that, but workers themselves had to do the dirty work of throwing away the food on a daily basis. On top of this, management cited stealing as the reason for the change in policy. They claimed that workers were stealing six-packs of beer placed at the bottom of paper bags and then covered with slightly damaged food from the cull. But workers knew that the company had already instituted this policy in their other stores. In other words, stealing at this particular store was not the reason for the policy change. Routine bag checks at the end of their shifts insulted workers and reinforced distinctions between managers and workers, despite GG's claim that "Us vs. Them thinking has no place at Green Grocer."

Workers framed the throwing away of food as wasteful and therefore unjust. They did this by talking to one another, which led to the common use of the phrase "perfectly good." Workers collectively framed the issue by talking about it behind the scenes and developing a shared language—a process that is similar to what Fantasia (1988) found in his study—that collective resistance was preceded by the creation of a shared definition of the situation. In this case, the changed food policy was the "trigger event."

UNDOING DIVERSITY

At the Midwest store, workers enjoyed a loose dress code that allowed them to wear just about whatever they wanted as long as it wasn't "skimpy or blatantly offensive," according to Jordie, a Grocery worker. As discussed earlier, the opportunity for self-expression was a major factor in youth workers' decisions to seek employment at GG. From management's standpoint,

counter-culture dress was perhaps another tool for invoking the slightly funky co-op image. Many workers were clothing associated with rebellion and adorned their bodies with tattoos, piercings, and crazy-colored hair. Then, as regional managers became more involved with everyday work life, a new dress code policy was issued at the Midwest store. As a high-end natural food retailer in the middle of expansion and standardization, it seems that GG tried to appeal to its new affluent customer base by tightening its dress code. The policy change seemed to reflect a desire to distance or differentiate the company from the co-ops they once emulated.

GG tried to capture the emerging interest in buying organic and natural foods by promising "exceptional customer service." Pink and black dreadlocks (Dori's hairstyle) and tattooed faces do not exactly conjure an image of deference and servitude. These are anti-authoritarian symbols that could make some customers uncomfortable. Workers suspected that the dress code changes were part of an effort to make them embody servitude. It thus seems that through the new dress code, managers asked workers to be employees first and people second. Workers did not acquiesce but instead resisted manager imposed-identities and asserted that they were more than just docile workers.

Jordie: They are trying to present an image of aren't we nice, white, clean cut, happy little workers and you know we're like, "No. We're the hippie freaks. Like (laughs) fuck off!" You know?

Workers saw the dress code as an issue of dignity and respect. They noticed that these changes contradicted company rhetoric about valuing diversity, individuality, and uniqueness.

For transgendered people and gender non-conformists, dress is an integral part of the performance of gender. To put restrictions on presentation is to threaten gender identity. Jordie was so offended by the new dress code that he came close to quitting, although later decided to stay so he could be part of the organizing drive. In his resignation letter to regional management,

Jordie wrote:

I don't think I could ever make you understand just how much the dress code issue hurt me. I have spent my life trying to like, or at least not hate, myself because of all of the many ways in which I am considered socially unacceptable and the constant rejection I feel from the world around me. My guess is that no one reading this letter and certainly no one who created that dress code knows what it is like not to have a gender identity that is recognized by your culture. So in a place where this freaky little trannyboydyke [sic] found friends and found people who almost understood and people who accepted, there suddenly was the threat of losing my job, my means of supporting myself, because of my social unacceptability. There was an all-store mandatory meeting in which we were officially told of the changes. I find it ironic that during this meeting I ran out crying because there stood my STL [store team leader] telling me and other valuable TMs [team members] that we were too socially unacceptable in our appearance to be worthy of employment with GG and at the same meeting, my team voted me an outstanding team member.

Here again, instead of compensating for dress code changes that made Jordie feel like an outsider, the identity-making rituals that took place during store meetings only served to highlight inconsistencies.

Jordie was not the only person to notice contradictions between managerial values and the new restrictive dress code. The dress code change was a clear indication that the company did not walk its talk regarding diversity and individuality. Moreover, managers exacerbated these tensions by imposing the new rules unilaterally, which underlined the lack of democratic decision-making at work. Workers were not allowed to participate in decisions about the dress code, despite the open-door policy and democratic rhetoric.

Kelly: And so I think early on my impression was that it was constant two-way communication. They would say that we could give them feedback on stuff even if they don't bring it up as an agenda point of a meeting. And they would be open to sitting down and having a conversation and hearing anything that we had to say about anything really. But then regional said, for instance, "We have this new dress code and this is how it's going to be now." And everyone said this is a perfect example of something that we're supposed to have the option to give feedback on. And they said, "Well, it doesn't really work like that. This is above us." They sort of just packed it up and said, "No this is the way that it's going to be." So I don't know if there's anything else that motivated so many people.

Workers thus tried to use the open-door policy to resolve the dress code and cull policy changes. This was the first time many workers had any direct interaction with upper management. Additionally, the storewide changes in the dress code policy marked the first time that workers tried to use teamwork to solve workplace problems. Workers' attempts to realize industrial democracy were rebuffed by managers, who were not willing to discuss these changes, other than to say that workers who did not comply would be written up or fired.

In this way, managers' use of coercive control in implementing the new dress code significantly contributed to the unraveling of the identity-based control program at GG. It laid bare the real power differences between workers, store managers, and corporate managers. Workers realized that managers could change the rules at whim and without their consent. They described managers' actions as constituting a "lack of respect" for workers. Managers' unwillingness to negotiate the policy further highlighted contradictions between what the company claimed to be and what it was. Workers saw the dress code issue as emblematic of these contradictions, thus it became the catalyst for collective resistance.

THE EMERGENCE OF COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE

Workers then launched a union organizing drive. Managers' first response to the organizing effort was to emphasize GG's image as a caring and democratically-run company. Toward these ends, they used tokens of appreciation, emotion-management rituals, and team rhetoric, and attempted to define the problem as easily solved by getting rid of the store manager. This case shows that there are limits to cultural control. Once company practices are shown to be inconsistent with stated values and collectively defined as unjust, then the foundation of consent is shaken. Symbolic gestures, previously seen as annoying yet harmless, are now interpreted as further evidence of duplicity. Not only did emotion management rituals fail, they made matters

worse. Managers' initial strategy, particularly their use of team rhetoric, backfired when workers co-opted the team rhetoric and used it to make the case for organizing.

Turning Rhetoric on Its Head

Much to managers' dismay, the kill-it-with-kindness strategy was not effective. Organizers saw through the team rhetoric and claims to care about workers. What's more, organizers countered with their own rhetoric. In an open letter posted on a website run by worker-organizers and dedicated to the unionizing effort, the organizing committee made its case:

Indeed, many of us enjoy our jobs and would like to continue working for the company. However, we want to make Green Grocer the kind of store it professes to be in its philosophy and core values. In our decision to unionize, we are upholding the shared company vision - not betraying it, as management might claim. We are empowering ourselves to become full and equal participants in determining the conditions in which we work.

Read GG's philosophy for yourself, and you will see that far from workers' unions being contrary to their philosophy, they fit perfectly. Only when workers have a legally-guaranteed voice in their work environment can they truly be happy and excel.

Changes directly affecting us are made without input from us. This stands in gross contrast to the Green Philosophy, which states: "Us versus Them thinking has no place in our company." Examples: dress codes, job descriptions, changes in discount policies, etc.

At-will employment and a huge turnover rate grant us no job security. How can we, as explained in the Green Grocer Philosophy, "believe in the value of our work and find fulfillment from our jobs," when we can be fired for any reason?

There is a lack of respect for us, as complaints or issues are handled with disrespect or simple denial. What about the "open book, open door, and open people practices?" Please.

We all have had experiences that prove that the "team" system is flawed and that we do not have control - as the "team" rhetoric implies.

The organizing committee at the Midwest store thus used the Green Grocer philosophy to make the case for unionizing. Organizers essentially turned company rhetoric on its head and pointed out the contradictions between what management said about team member happiness and actual labor practices. That is, they co-opted the company's team rhetoric to redefine the situation. They also offered their own definition of the situation—that unionizing was not antithetical to the GG mission but aligned with it.

Framing organizing as complementary to the GG philosophy was an important strategy, given the high organizational commitment of some workers and the intertwining of organizational identity with personal identity. Organizers recognized the potential for would-be supporters to take criticism of the company personally. Thus, instead of bashing the company with harsh criticism, they defined unionizing as consistent with the company's participatory and do-good image. Anyone who embraced the company's professed mission of self-empowerment should, according to the organizers' argument, also embrace the union. Moreover, the participatory way in which the organizing committee structured decision-making highlighted the absence of democracy at work. The committee constructed the union as a means of achieving real teamwork by playing off managers' claims of democratic decision-making. They contrasted the lack of workers' participation in the labor process with their own model of organizing. Through unionizing, workers could actually have a say in how work was organized.

The organizers' hijacking of team talk demonstrates that rhetoric is not unilaterally imposed or received. It shows how these strategies can backfire, thereby creating the potential for collective worker resistance. Thus, this case departs from other studies of cultural control (Kunda 1992; Graham 1995). Workers used managerial rhetoric not only to resolve internal conflicts and "get along" at work, but also to challenge the basis of managerial authority. As Edwards predicted, cultural control projects have weaknesses that workers can use to shift the struggle for control in their favor. Through unionizing, team and democratic ideals can be more

fully realized, which can further undermine managerial legitimacy.

Identity-Based Control Backfires

GG's fear-based approach to union busting did not fit with their image as a progressive and democratic company. Organizers told me that these overt means of dissuading workers from voting-in the union backfired in a major way during captive-audience meetings.

Dori: They had this meeting about what unions are, supposedly, and then the very last slide said, "Vote No." Apparently somebody in one of the meetings saw that slide, raised her hand and was like, "Well, thanks a lot for saying that. I certainly know that I'll be voting yes now, because you're telling me how to vote." And so they were like, "Oh, crap!" So then, of course, at the next meeting, that slide had been taken out. You know, there was a lot of bumbling around and not really knowing what to do. Those meetings really, I think overall, like either pissed people off or just made them feel really insulted.

Before the unionizing drive, managers put considerable effort into cultivating a progressive image for the company. Using team rhetoric, they defined the workplace as a place where workers were "empowered" and could "use their voice" to "have a say" in decision-making. Critical thinking and worker individuality were thereby encouraged. So when managers tried to combine this rhetoric with textbook union-busting, contradictions emerged. As Dori put it, "They bit themselves in the ass."

Managers were unprepared for workers to use their voice in this particular way—to question managerial definitions of the situation. Workers were encouraged to "make up their own minds," but only as long as they came to the same conclusion as managers. Thus, these data support Edwards's (1979) assertion that teamwork raises expectations for democracy at work—expectations that managers are unwilling to live up to. These contradictions provided an opening for impromptu resistance to take shape at captive audience meetings. Furthermore, workers' dissident reaction to the "Vote No" message shows how situations are jointly defined through interaction. The team rhetoric backfired when workers noticed contradictions between managers'

directive to vote against the union and their claims to value worker initiative and empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Green Grocer was largely successful in wooing socially and environmentally conscious customers and workers. GG provided customers with an opportunity to ease their troubled consciences without having to sacrifice privilege and convenience, or having to challenge the status quo through a radical social movement. The company presented youth a rare opportunity to find work that was meaningful and allowed for self-expression. By presenting themselves as a good company doing good things, those who shopped and worked at GG could also think of themselves as good people doing good things. GG provided a context where environmental identities could be affirmed on both sides of a market transaction. In affirming workers' identity through rhetoric, symbolic practices, and ritual, managers tried to solve the problem of consent. While team-based control fell flat, the affirmation of green identities gave managers a handle on workers' hearts and minds.

Managers hoped that care and concern for the environment would be extended to customers during sales interactions. But as the company grew, contradictions emerged. Managerial efforts to control workers through the teamwork rhetoric and emotion-management rituals sometimes backfired. The contradictions between what management said about teamwork and workers' material experiences were too great to ignore or reconcile. In many cases, rhetoric and rituals had the effect of highlighting workplace inequalities, rather than obscuring them. Workers then used the teamwork rhetoric to propel their union organizing efforts, in part by calling for GG to live up to its own purported standards.

Ironically, management's identity alignment project was perhaps too successful. Workers noticed when the company's words and deeds did not harmonize. Nor could they ignore

decidedly ungreen practices, such as wastefulness and the cessation of buying foods from local farmers. Instead of warding off unions and worker dissent, the team rhetoric highlighted inequality at work when workers tested the team system. As such, this case shows how workers negotiate the imposition and exploitation of identity and use identity-based control rituals to undermine control. This study also raises important questions about how to define employee ownership and the consequences of doing so.

REFERENCES

- Barker, James R. 1993. "Tightening the Iron Cage: Concertive Control in Self-Managing Teams." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 38: 408-437.
- Edwards, Richard C. 1979. Contested Terrain: The Transformation of Work in the Twentieth Century. New York: Basic Books.
- Fantasia, Rick. 1988. *Culture of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Fine, Gary Alan. 1984. "Negotiated orders and organizational cultures." *Annual Review of Sociology* 10:239-62.
- Getman, Julius G. 1999. The Betrayal of Local 14. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.
- Graham, Laurie. 1995. On the Line at Subaru-Isuzu: The Japanese Model and the American Worker. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.
- Grenier, Guillermo J. 1988. *Inhuman relations: Quality Circles and Anti-unionism in American Industry*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2003. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. 20th Anniversary Edition. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Kunda, Gideon. 1992. Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-tech Organization. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Maines, David R. and Joy C. Charlton. 1985. "The Negotiated Order Approach to the Analysis—of Social Organization." *Studies in Symbolic Interaction, Supplement 1*, 271-308.
- Mills, C. Wright. 1940. "Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive." *American Sociological Review* 5(6):904-913.
- Schwalbe, Michael L. and Douglas Mason-Schrock. 1996. "Identity Work as Group Process." *Advances in Group Processes* 13:113-147.
- Strandgaard Pedersen, Jesper and Frank Dobbin. 2006. "In Search of Identity and Legitimation." American Behavioral Scientist 49:897-907.
- Strauss, Anselm. 1978. Negotiations: Varieties, Contexts, Processes and Social Order. San Francisco, CA: Jersey-Bass.
- Tannock, Stuart. 2001. Youth at Work: The Unionized Fast-food and Grocery Workplace. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Vallas, Steven P. 2003a. "The Adventures of Managerial Hegemony: Ideology, Teams, and Worker Resistance." *Social Problems* 50(2):204-225.
- ——. 2003b. "Why Teamwork Fails: Obstacles to Workplace Change in Four Manufacturing Plants." *American Sociological Review* 68, 2 (April):223-50.
- Williams, Christine L. 2006. *Inside Toyland: Working, Shopping, and Social Inequality*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.