

## Dismantling Bias Conference Series

---

### Negotiating Allies and Alliances in Social Movements

Cynthia Wang

*Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, [scynthia.wang@kellogg.northwestern.edu](mailto:scynthia.wang@kellogg.northwestern.edu)*

Sara Soderstrom

*University of Michigan, [capasb@umich.edu](mailto:capasb@umich.edu)*

Jennifer Whitson

*UCLA Anderson School of Management, [jennifer.whitson@anderson.ucla.edu](mailto:jennifer.whitson@anderson.ucla.edu)*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgg>



Part of the [Communication Commons](#), [Human Resources Management Commons](#), [Organizational Behavior and Theory Commons](#), [Political Science Commons](#), [Psychology Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Wang, Cynthia; Soderstrom, Sara; and Whitson, Jennifer (2022) "Negotiating Allies and Alliances in Social Movements," Dismantling Bias Conference Series: Vol. 3 : Iss. 10, Article 6. Abstract of a paper presented at the Dismantling Bias event, organized by E. E. Kossek & T. J. Merriweather. Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN. Available at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgg/vol3/iss10/6>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

## **Negotiating Allies and Alliances in Social Movements**

Cynthia Wang

Dispute Resolution and Research Center and Management & Organization Department  
Kellogg School of Management  
Northwestern University  
e-mail: [scynthia.wang@kellogg.northwestern.edu](mailto:scynthia.wang@kellogg.northwestern.edu)

Sara Soderstrom

Organizational Studies and Program in the Environment  
University of Michigan  
[capasb@umich.edu](mailto:capasb@umich.edu)

Jennifer Whitson

UCLA Anderson School of Management  
University of California, Los Angeles  
email: [jennifer.whitson@anderson.ucla.edu](mailto:jennifer.whitson@anderson.ucla.edu)

## Abstract

Intergroup conflict fuels antipathy, prejudice, and can even incite violence (Allport, 1954). However, some types of intergroup conflict can also be productive, stimulating complex thinking that aids in decision-making (Lloyd et al., 2013) and encouraging social and organizational change (McDonnell et al., 2015). One potentially productive form of intergroup conflict is that of social movements, which mobilize people to take part in collective action in support of a cause (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; McDonnell et al., 2015). For activists within social movements to successfully instigate change, they need to secure organizational allies, or “potentially sympathetic employees affiliated with the target institution who might lend internal support to accomplishing movement goals” (Wang, Whitson, King, & Ramirez, 2021).

Recent work suggests that there are barriers to social movement activists gaining allies in the targeted institutions they hope to change (Wang et al. 2021), including the extreme political divide that currently exists within the United States (Finkel et al., 2021). Our work seeks to understand how activists can successfully negotiate in this political context to gain allies who lend support to their cause. While the goal of bringing about and managing change is universal (Jasper, 2014), the nuances in how social movement activists negotiate on behalf of their cause likely vary. From #MeToo, to #BlackLivesMatter, to #StopAsianHate, activists within social movements constantly negotiate with those within and outside of their movement, and while negotiations are a critical part of their tactical repertoire, negotiation strategies are not something that social movement scholars understand well.

Our central research goal is to increase understanding of how negotiation strategies function within social movements. Negotiation strategies represent “the way that people negotiate—the goal-directed behaviors they use to reach agreement” (Brett et al., 2017, p. 289). For example, a negotiator may choose to discuss several issues and propose several options simultaneously (Leonardelli et al., 2019), or ask their counterpart many questions about their interests (Malhotra & Bazerman, 2007). While these strategies have been shown to improve the outcomes in business deal-making contexts (e.g., when buyers and sellers seek to come to an agreement), negotiations in social movements possess a different and more complex set of characteristics.

First, we plan to compare and contrast how activists negotiate internally versus externally. Social movements are rife with internal negotiations. For example, activists much collectively decide on what negotiation issues they prioritize and what negotiation tactics they agree to utilize when attempting to build coalitions with potential allies. On the other hand, social movements also involve external negotiations with organizations and individuals whose goals are less aligned with those within the movement. While social movements can engender moral emotions (e.g., anger) that may make it easier for activists to use certain negotiation strategies to encourage internal participation (Jasper, 1997), these emotions may make it more difficult to have constructive conversations with potential allies within target institutions.

Second, we consider how negotiation strategies may vary for more contentious movement actions (e.g., boycotts, strikes, protests) vs. more collaborative movement actions (e.g., consulting with organizations who wish to change their policies, acting as a resource for those interested in change). The type of context may influence which negotiation strategies are seen as viable and how those strategies play out when applied. Activists in more contentious movement

actions may be better able to coalesce and organize themselves around key issues, forming stronger and more effective negotiating coalitions (Thompson et al., 2010). In contrast, activists in more collaborative movement actions may be more flexible in the negotiation strategies they use, taking into account more significantly the interests and goals of those they are negotiating with to increase the value and appeal of the offers they make.

To test our key research questions, we will collect twenty qualitative interviews with movement activists to develop our specific hypotheses. We will then conduct experiments to test our hypotheses. We will present our findings at the conference. We hope that our work will allow for a deeper understanding of activist strategy employment by evaluating the negotiation strategies activists use to negotiate internally and recruit allies at target organizations.

## Bibliography

### *Project Statement References*

- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Brett, J. M., Gunia, B. C., & Teucher, B. M. (2017). Culture and negotiation strategy: A framework for future research. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 31(4), 288-308. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2015.0195>
- Finkel, E. J., Bail, C. A., Cikara, M., Ditto, P. H., Iyengar, S., Klar, S., ... & Druckman, J. N. (2020). Political sectarianism in America. *Science*, 370(6516), 533-536.
- Gelfand, M. J., Raver, J. L., Nishii, L., Leslie, L. M., Lun, J., Lim, B. C., Duan, L., Almaliach, A., Ang, S., & Arnadottir, J. (2011). Differences between tight and loose cultures: A 33-nation study. *Science*, 332(6033), 1100-1104. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1197754>
- Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>
- Huffaker, D. A., Swaab, R., & Diermeier, D. (2011). The language of coalition formation in online multiparty negotiations. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 30(1), 66-81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927x10387102>
- Jasper, J. M. (1997). *The art of moral protest: Culture, biography, and creativity in social movements*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Jasper, J. M. (2014). *Protest: A cultural introduction to social movements*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Leonardelli, G. J., Gu, J., McRuer, G., Medvec, V. H., & Galinsky, A. D. (2019). Multiple equivalent simultaneous offers (MESOs) reduce the negotiator dilemma: How a choice of first offers increases economic and relational outcomes. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 152, 64-83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2019.01.007>
- Loyd, D. L., Wang, C. S., Phillips, K. W., & Lount Jr, R. B. (2013). Social category diversity promotes premeeting elaboration: The role of relationship focus. *Organization Science*, 24(3), 757-772. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1120.0761>
- Malhotra, D., & Bazerman, M. (2007). *Negotiation genius: How to overcome obstacles and achieve brilliant results at the bargaining table and beyond*. New York, NY: Bantam.
- McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1977). Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(6), 1212-1241. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2777934>

McDonnell, M.-H., King, B. G., & Soule, S. A. (2015). A dynamic process model of private politics: Activist targeting and corporate receptivity to social challenges. *American Sociological Review*, 80(3), 654-678. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122415581335>

Rowen, I. (2015). Inside Taiwan's Sunflower Movement: Twenty-four days in a student-occupied parliament, and the future of the region. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 74(1), 5-21.

Thompson, L. L., Wang, J., & Gunia, B. C. (2010). Negotiation. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 61(1), 491-515. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.093008.10045>

Wang C. S., Whitson, J. A., King, B., and Ramirez, R. (2021). Social movements, collective identity, and workplace allies: The labeling of gender equity policy changes. *Organization Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2021.1492>