SPECIAL FEATURE

CONTESTING THE RACIAL DIVISION OF LABOR FROM BELOW

Representation and Union Organizing Among African American and Immigrant Workers[1]

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Abstract

Popular discourse and academic scholarship both accent divisions between African American and immigrant workers. These debates most often focus on the question of job competition, positioning African Americans and immigrant workers as *a priori* adversaries in the labor market. We take a different tack. Drawing upon a case study of hotel workers in Chicago, we identify ways in which workers themselves challenge and bridge these divisions. Specifically, we reveal how union organizing activities, such as diverse committee representation and inclusion of diversity language in contracts, counter notions of intergroup competition in an effort to build common cause that affirms rather than denies differences. We argue that these activities represent political efforts on the part of workers to contest and even reshape the racial and ethnic division of labor, thereby revealing competition as a socially contingent and politically mediated process.

Keywords: Race, Immigration, Employment, Labor, Ethnic Competition

INTRODUCTION

In both popular discourse and academic debate, the relationship between African American and immigrant workers is predominantly characterized as competitive and contentious. A survey conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center (2006) found that 28% of all Americans think immigrants take native jobs. A Pew Research Survey (Morin 2008) captured the racial inflections of perceived competition: nearly half of all African Americans believe that immigrants reduce job opportunities for African American workers. Among Hispanics, 40% agreed. These survey responses reveal

Du Bois Review, 9:2 (2012) 395–417.
 1742-058X/12 $15.00
doi:10.1017/S1742058X12000215

widespread notions of competition among the very racial and ethnic groups most likely engaged in a jostle for jobs at the lower end of the labor market.

Academic scholarship is mixed on the question of how immigration affects African American workers, particularly with regard to wage and displacement effects. Lower-skilled African American workers are arguably at greatest risk of competition effects posed by immigrant workers given increasing job instability in the low-wage labor market (Bernhardt et al., 2001; Stone 2004) and contemporary discrimination in the form of employer "preferences" that continues to disadvantage African Americans (Kirschenman and Neckerman, 1991; Lim 2004; Pager 2007; Pager et al., 2009; Wilson 1996). Findings from wage studies range from no discernable wage effects (Card 1997, 2005, 2009) to significant negative effects (Borjas 2003; Murray et al., 2006). In general, studies find some evidence of displacement. Card (1997) found that immigrants lowered employment rates of both native-born workers and earlier immigrant cohorts. These effects, however, may be gendered. In a study of Chicago employment patterns, Parks (2010) found some evidence of displacement among African American men but little for women. Qualitative research reveals displacement across a number of industries with concentrations of low-wage and lower-skilled jobs, from hotels to manufacturing (Newman 1999; Waldinger 1992, 1997; Waters 1999). It is worth noting, however, that case studies often focus on industries where immigrant succession is evident and thereby select for competition.

In particular, social network explanations of the racial and ethnic division of labor accent competition. By these accounts, workers mobilize their racial and ethnic networks to access employment, recruiting and referring co-ethnics into jobs while simultaneously closing off these same resources from members of other groups (Royster 2003). Network recruiting along racial and ethnic lines thus facilitates racial and ethnic segregation in the labor market and shapes the contours of competition, both at the workplace and beyond. When resources are mobilized through racial and ethnic networks, competition among groups plays out as competition *for* jobs as well as competition *on* the job (Bobo 1983). Employers, of course, can benefit from both.

We do not dispute the operation or the effectiveness of network recruiting among workers in the formation of the racial and ethnic division of labor. Rather we elucidate alternative resources available to workers that can mediate racial and ethnic competition. In contrast to sociological accounts that emphasize socially embedded practices of homophily (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987), we point to *political activities* on the part of workers that explicitly disrupt racial and ethnic competition effects. Drawing upon an in-depth case study of unionized hotel workers in Chicago, we identify ways in which workers organize and create durable institutional practices that challenge and bridge racial, ethnic, and nativity divisions. Specifically, we reveal how union organizing activities such as diverse committee representation and inclusion of diversity language in contracts counter notions of intergroup competition in an effort to build common cause that affirms, rather than denies, differences. We argue that these activities represent political efforts on the part of workers themselves to contest and even reshape the racial and ethnic division of labor, thereby revealing competition as a socially contingent and politically mediated process.

BACKGROUND

The formation of the racial and ethnic division of labor is a multifaceted process. In part, workers are matched to jobs on the basis of skill, and a market wage set at the equilibrium of supply and demand. Yet even neoclassical economists have had to

proffer adjustments to this thin version of labor market operation in order to account for the uneven distribution of racial and ethnic groups across jobs for which skill differences do not explain. Becker (1957) has described the role, and inefficiency, of employer, employee, and customer "tastes for discrimination" that sort workers into jobs. Similarly, queuing theory posits the operation of employers' hiring queues and workers' job queues in generating the racial and ethnic division of labor (Waldinger 1996). The former describes employers' rankings of different workers—their "preferences" or discriminatory leanings—while the latter describes workers' preferential ordering of available jobs. The two queues work together to sort particular workers into specific jobs within the economic and demographic constraints of the local labor market.

Other nonmarket factors contribute as well, such as the geography of urban development, policy, and politics. The relative location of home and work continues to mediate the racial, ethnic, and immigrant division of labor, especially in light of the spatial legacy of racial residential segregation (Ellis et al., 2004; Massey and Denton, 1993; Stoll and Raphael, 2000). Policy, particularly through affirmative action and nondiscrimination laws, has at different times shaped the demographics of employment (Holzer and Neumark, 2006). No other example reveals this influence more strikingly than the public sector where women and workers of color, especially African Americans, have secured representative levels of employment (Bernhardt and Dresser, 2002; Katz et al., 2005; Parks 2010). Additionally, the ebb and flow of patronage politics, especially at the municipal level, contributes to the racial and ethnic composition of the public sector workforce (Eisinger 1982; Pinderhughes 1987).

Workers themselves also can shape and direct the racial and ethnic division of labor. Among sociologists, the most prominent example of such influence is the operation of workers' recruitment networks (Waldinger 1996; Waldinger and Lichter, 2003). Extending Granovetter's (1974) analysis of high-end professional jobs that highlighted the role of social contacts in connecting workers to jobs, sociologists have identified the highly effective use of social networks, especially among immigrants, to secure employment at the lower end of the labor market. The operation of these networks within racially and ethnically homogenous groups contributes significantly to the shape of the racial and ethnic division of labor by reproducing the homogeneity of the network within certain jobs at certain places (Parks 2004). Central to this research is the identification and explication of ethnic niches in the labor market—occupations or industries where particular racial and ethnic groups concentrate, gaining a disparate share of jobs (Model 1993).

As Waldinger and Lichter (2003) explain, the success of workers' networks in securing employment for their constituent members depends upon the boss's inclination to tap such networks. Employers often willingly do so for a number of reasons, but largely because making use of recommendations from current workers greatly reduces recruitment costs and risks associated with hiring in a context of limited information. Recruitment by word of mouth is costless, and workers will likely only vouch for applicants with good performance potential in order to preserve their good standing with the boss. Utilizing workers' networks may also yield lower training and monitoring costs. Current employees are more likely to provide on-the-job training to newcomers they know and to monitor their job performance to ensure that referred applicants reflect positively on them.

This informal, but highly effective, recruitment and vetting service that workers provide to employers forms the basis of occupational closure, an exclusionary mechanism further sharpening racial and ethnic segregation in the labor market (Massey

2007; Tilly 1999). As one group's network successfully links its members to employment resources, these resources become increasingly closed off from other groups—the downside of embeddedness. In a context of job scarcity, perceived hoarding of economic resources—in this case, jobs—sets the grounds for competition. The social processes that facilitate hoarding, such as racial and ethnic networks, set the boundaries of competition.

Yet there are limits to the operation of social capital in the labor market. Employers can impose limits on the extent to which ethnic networks take hold in the recruitment and referral process by bypassing employee referrals and bureaucratizing recruitment, screening, and hiring procedures. Beyond the employer, labor market institutions—the collection of laws, norms, and conventions that result from collective choice that alter individual action in the labor market (Boeri and van Ours, 2008)—exert significant limits on social capital. Public policies such as affirmative action and nondiscrimination laws formalize hiring processes that can disrupt or attenuate social capital flows (Brown et al., 2003). Other institutional forces bear upon labor market processes between the state and market. Credentialing and licensure requirements, for example, may be supported by law but often are instituted by professions as norms without legal backing.

Most often institutions regulate the labor supply of workers, ranging from the more macro effects of the penal system, the military, and higher education to the more micro influences of job training and union apprentice programs (Western and Beckett, 1999), but institutions may also influence the hiring process more directly. Job training organizations, for example, may secure placement spots from firms in return for providing free or highly subsidized training (O'Leary et al., 2004). In some cases, community organizations have been able to secure guaranteed placements from employers through direct negotiation, as manifest in some community benefits agreements (Parks and Warren, 2009). Unions, as we illustrate in our case study here, may legislate certain hiring practices through collective bargaining contracts.

Unions as a collective organization of workers provide an apt counterpoint to the sociologist's depiction of workers' more individualized influence on the labor market through *ad hoc* social networking. Unions, however, are often cited as a significant determinant of the racial and ethnic division of labor because of their social closure functions. Frequently, cases are drawn from the union building trades (e.g., construction unions) and their racially and ethnically homogeneous composition and socially, and racially, exclusive practices emphasized. Waldinger (1996), for example, discusses how African Americans were excluded from the construction industry in New York City, not because of skill deficiencies, but because of the power exercised by White-controlled unions to exclude Black workers from industry jobs. The construction industry's reliance on informal hiring and apprenticeship programs enabled the reproduction of a largely White ethnic workforce through resource hoarding: current union members passed on critical information about jobs and open apprentice positions, and how to get them, to co-ethnic friends and family. African American workers were largely excluded from this race-based system of social reciprocity, exchange, and exclusionary closure—and therefore from construction jobs in general.

Waldinger and Lichter (2003) point out that these characteristics of the building trades position them as textbook cases of exclusionary closure, "when ethnically distinctive insiders attempt to monopolize job opportunities for members of their core network" (p. 89). Yet the tendency to draw examples from the building trades and their racially exclusive network recruitment practices too narrowly construes the activities of most unions while overstating their ability to control the labor supply.

Because most unions exist in industries without formal apprenticeship credentialing, they lack the structural leverage that gives network recruitment among union construction workers such powerful influence over the labor supply. Additionally, the building trades' largely White ranks and long discriminatory historical record are now exceptional within the contemporary U.S. labor movement (Frymer 2008; Gould 1977; Hill 1985). The demographics of unionized workers, especially within the service sector, have changed dramatically over the past thirty years. Unionization rates are now highest among African American workers, followed by Latinos (Zipperer 2009).

But it is the core thrust of such arguments about *what unions do* that we address here. In examples such as Waldinger's (1996), unions are narrowly conceptualized as scaled-up aggregates of individual members' social networks. Exclusive emphasis on the social networking practices among union members obscures alternative ways in which unions can influence the racial and ethnic division of labor as collective institutions. Network recruitment occurs through the volition of individual union members who mobilize resources made available to them through their union membership. We treat this as a *de facto* course of social interaction that depends little upon the union as a mobilized collective entity and more upon its latent structural resources. Rather, our intent is to explicate the *political* activities of unions as a corrective to oversocialized versions of labor market processes. In fact, the case that we evaluate in this study illustrates actions taken on behalf of a union and its members that serve to limit the scope of social network recruitment.

In this study, we identify direct and indirect ways in which unions can influence the racial and ethnic division of labor beyond network recruitment among individual members. We identify *indirect* ways in which unions can influence the supply of labor through outreach activities and organizing campaigns. We also highlight internal union activities that bolster support among workers for diversity and build cross-racial and ethnic solidarity. Outside of apprenticeship programs, unions may *directly* influence racial and ethnic representation by legislating hiring practices through specific contract language, such as mandating diversity commitments from employers, implementing stronger nondiscrimination practices, and requiring direct outreach to underrepresented applicants.

By focusing on the political activities of unions as collective worker organizations, we present our case as a corrective to both oversocialized and narrowly economistic conceptions of economic action (Freeman and Medoff, 1984; Warren 2005). Unions are not merely aggregates of their members' social networks, nor are they merely bargaining agents exclusively focused on raising the wage rates of labor. We situate our case "between networks and bureaucracy" (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003, p. 91) by explicating the ways in which labor unions operate as collective institutions that mediate between the network recruitment of workers and the hiring practices of management. If networks reveal the informal influence workers have over the hiring process and bureaucracy the formal control of management, then unions illustrate how workers *as collective agents* mediate between the two in order to influence racial and ethnic representation on the shop floor. Significantly, we draw attention to the political nature of this mediation: workers must organize among themselves—and overcome racial and ethnic divisions in the process—in order to negotiate a set of demands with management. Union organizing can upset and redirect social closure processes that most frequently operate along lines of race and ethnicity. To borrow the terminology of Parkin (1979) deployed by Waldinger and Lichter (2003), workers must overcome racial and ethnic *exclusionary closure* in order to exert *usurpationary closure*, or collective power

over management. Revealing the role of *politics* in this process illustrates the importance of understanding labor markets as not purely economic or purely social mechanisms, but as contested terrains of sociopolitical action (Warren 2010; Zukin and DiMaggio, 1990).

CASE STUDY AND METHODS

We draw our case from Chicago, a city with a demographic mix seemingly well suited to incite competition. Blacks (35%), Whites (31%), and Latinos (28%) compose nearly equal shares of the population, and immigrants make up more than one-fifth of all residents.[2] Chicago continues to exhibit the population dynamics of its two core demographic legacies—it is yet, as ever, a city of immigrants and *the* Black Metropolis (as memorialized in classics such as Drake and Cayton (1993), and Thomas and Znaniecki (1918–1920)).

Despite a growing immigrant population, African American workers in Chicago continue to hold jobs in industries they are often thought to shun because of low wages and difficult working conditions—jobs often characterized as immigrant work. Parks (2010) found that among women, African American and immigrant workers increasingly found employment in the same Chicago industries between 1990 and 2000 absent displacement effects. Not only did the number of industries in which both African American and immigrant women concentrated increase, both groups were able to enlarge their shares of these workforces. Expanding employment opportunities, especially in fast-growing sectors such as home health care, and vacancies generated by departing native-born White workers made such workforce expansion possible for African American and immigrant women (Parks 2010).

The hospitality industry was among these industries, and presents a strategic analytic case as it represents one of the few industries in which all African Americans, both men and women, increased their share of employment during the very decade in which Chicago experienced its first population gain in fifty years due largely to immigration. By 2000, immigrants had increased their share of all hotel employment to 41% from 36% in 1990. But African Americans also increased their share to 23% in 2000 from 20% in 1990. Both groups were overrepresented in hotel employment in relation to their share of all jobs (Parks 2006).

Yet the hotel sector has become an oft-cited industry in the literature on Black and immigrant competition (Waldinger 1992). At the very least, the demographics of the Chicago hotel sector demonstrate that, contrary to some popular and scholarly discourse, native-born workers will take lower wage jobs in today's burgeoning service sector. Throughout the history of U.S. race relations—often antagonistic and invariably inequitable—African Americans have been left to fill jobs at the economy's bottom (Harris 1982). As the current Chicago racial and ethnic division of labor attests, they continue to do so.

Given that diversity rather than displacement characterizes employment trends within Chicago's early twenty-first-century hotel sector, we turn our attention to the ways in which these demographic dynamics play out on the ground at the workplace through a discussion of the organizing activities of Chicago's hotel union, Unite Here Local 1, whereby it attempts to bridge the racial and ethnic divides among its membership. Through identification of the ways in which the union seeks to address diversity in hiring, we illustrate how the racial and ethnic division of labor is negotiated from below through deliberate collective action on the part of workers themselves.

Our analysis details internal and external ways in which the union both responds to and influences the racial and ethnic division of labor within the hotel industry. The former consists of both organizational structure and practices, such as the institutionalization of explicit diversity positions and committees, the creation and mobilization of special diversity initiatives, and the incorporation of diversity principles in day-to-day activities such as the building and maintenance of workplace-based union committees. These internal structures and practices build solidaristic bonds within a workforce otherwise divided by race and ethnicity. Indeed, immigrant and African American workers are empowered to contest the racial and ethnic division of labor, as opposed to competing with each other as many theories presume. Such contestation or external influence manifests in the negotiation of diversity commitments in union contracts and the establishment of hospitality industry training programs targeting underrepresented groups. Drawing upon ethnographic observation and interviews with union leadership from 2001–2011, and analysis of union materials and documents (including membership communications, internal organizational literature, and contracts), we profile examples of all these methods in the following section.

Changes from Above

We begin with a brief account of actions taken by the international union. Unions operate within a federated structure with "locals" representing geographically based collective bargaining units and an "international" that serves as the central governing council for what are usually U.S.-based, and sometimes Canadian-based, locals. The degree of autonomy and self-governance among locals vis-à-vis their parent internationals can be very high, although an opposite trend of greater consolidation and centralization at the international level has been on the rise among a number of unions within the U.S. labor movement (Milkman 2005). This has been the case with Unite Here. With regard to the questions motivating our case study, Unite Here's International has adopted an explicit commitment to diversity issues that has filtered down to the local level with considerable, albeit not uniform, success.

Unite Here's adoption of diversity as an explicit union issue stems from necessity. Industries characterized by jobs with relatively low skill-barriers to entry, such as the hotel and food service industries represented by Unite Here, were poised to absorb the dynamic demographic changes wrought by increasing immigration flows over the last several decades. As the demographics of Unite Here's membership changed in most urban markets across the United States, the union was forced to address a new set of issues, concerns, and conflicts that arose from its increasingly immigrant membership. Yet in many cities, native-born workers, especially African Americans, remained employed in hotels and restaurants represented by Unite Here. Diversity had found the union, whether the union wanted it or not. What the union chose to do given these circumstances, however, is the story we partly describe in this article.

Unite Here was formed by a 2004 merger of two independent service-sector unions—UNITE (Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees) and HERE (Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees). Although the merger yielded some short-term rocky internal politics, leadership and union practices within the hospitality division—the HERE side of the union—have been relatively stable. A strong commitment to diversity issues within the hospitality division extends from before the merger to the current time period under study, a period under the consistent leadership of the current president of Unite Here, John Wilhelm.

Wilhelm began formulating and implementing an organizational and political program around diversity shortly after he was first elected president of the former HERE in 1998 (he later became the hospitality industry president of Unite Here in 2004 and president in 2009). Internally, HERE's membership ranks had come to be dominated by immigrant workers experiencing greater vulnerability on the job due to their immigration status, undocumented or not. These workers connected their employment experiences to a broad array of immigration concerns affecting not only themselves as workers, but their families and communities as well. Wilhelm and other union leaders recognized that addressing immigration issues was fundamental to both representing these workers on the job as well as responding to their issues as members of a democratic organization.

Yet increased attention to immigration also brought to the fore the threat of displacement faced by African Americans in the industry—what one union staffer called "the white elephant in the room."[3] This staffer went on to report:

> It was clear that in many cities that African Americans had been replaced by recent immigrants. In hotel after hotel after hotel, African Americans that had been in those jobs—that had become good jobs because of the union—were no longer there (Interview, Laura Hausen, May 2011).

African American members still constituted a disparate share of the union's membership—35% of Local 1's ranks (Warren 2005)—and were not hesitant in voicing their concerns about their declining numbers in the hotel industry. In tackling immigration issues, the union risked alienating one of their most politically active and engaged member constituencies.

In order to forestall divisiveness, union leaders made a deliberate decision to link the issues of immigration reform and African American employment under the rubric of diversity. Wilhelm laid out a formal program to expand the union's work on diversity at HERE's International Union Convention in 1999. Most visibly, this moment initiated a strong push forward on immigration-related activities, especially increased political mobilization calling for federal immigration reform. Yet, as one union staffer described, Wilhelm's initiative was guided by a simultaneous commitment to addressing "both the immigration crisis and the displacement of African Americans by immigrants" (Interview, Laura Hausen, May 2011). The Immigrant Workers Freedom Rides (an immigration reform advocacy project) and the African American Hiring Initiative were two of the first projects to emerge from the new diversity program. We discuss both in the following section.

Nearly a decade later, with Wilhelm's election to the presidency of Unite Here in 2009, the union instituted a number of organizational changes and reforms at the national level aimed at further bolstering Unite Here's diversity efforts. Chief among these was the creation of a new executive position, the General Vice President for Immigration, Civil Rights, and Diversity, one of the union's five general officers. Additionally, three executive board members were assigned to form an official "Diversity Committee." As Unite Here's own press copy announces, these organizational changes demonstrate "an institutionalized commitment to diversity" (Unite Here 2009). Significantly, these steps represent the codification and evolution of previous and ongoing activities at both the national and local level.

We now turn to the practices and policies engaged by Unite Here Local 1, the Chicago affiliate. It is important to note that, although an autonomous body, Local 1 shares Wilhelm's political commitment to diversity and has willingly engaged in many of the international's diversity initiatives. Demographically, its workforce is

among the most diverse of the Unite Here locals measured in terms of African American and immigrant representation. As a case, Local 1's practices and policies provide a strategic research site at which to observe how workers "manage" diversity at the worksite through their own forms of organization. Our case also reveals the ways in which experiences with diversity drawn from different locales get translated into new strategies in new places. In our case, the international union serves an important heuristic function as a clearinghouse for local efforts—efforts that are then honed and refined over time and adapted to new local contexts.

Union Diversity Practices

How unions and other democratic organizations structure themselves, particularly in an environment of members with diverse, and potentially conflicting, identities based on race, ethnicity, nativity, and gender is directly related to the organization's effectiveness, collective identity, and specific outcomes. These internal institutional rules, norms, practices, and structures can either enable or constrain workers' ability to challenge power relations, especially the racial and ethnic division of labor at the workplace. While some organizational structures and practices can lead to competition and conflict among a diverse membership, others can build solidarity between groups while ensuring that each subgroup's unique concerns are adequately represented. One specific outcome in the union context that illustrates whether there is conflict or solidarity among African American and immigrant workers specifically is a collective bargaining agreement between a union and employer specifying wages, benefits, and working conditions. In our case study, Unite Here Local 1 won unprecedented diversity language in its contract covering over 7,000 hotel workers in the city of Chicago, representing the specific concerns of its diverse membership. But how the union got to that outcome is a result of its unique and deliberate organizational structure, one in which the specific racial, ethnic, nativity, gender, and sexual identities of its workers are taken into account together with workers' job classifications and class identities.

One staff member explains the underlying organization's philosophy around the explicit recognition of racial, ethnic, and gender differences in this way, "The union really ought to be representative and it really ought to be widely representative of the real backbone of our union anyway, which is housekeeping, which is overwhelmingly female and overwhelmingly female of color" (Interview, Julie Smith, December 2002). For the union's leadership, marginalized women-of-color housekeepers, the lowest paid and most disadvantaged members of the union, are seen as a source of strength, not weakness ("the real backbone"). Union staff consciously creates internal structures intended to represent, lift up, and empower these workers and their multiple identities.

Unite Here Local 1 has not always been organized in such a way that recognizes explicitly the multiple identities of its members. In order to create a more democratic and representative union, since 1999 union staff have sought to "raise expectations" of members, "develop new leaders" through "building the committee," and show employers, politicians, community members—and themselves—that they are willing to "take it to the streets" and do whatever it takes to win better working conditions and standards in their industry and in local politics. Specific constraints—from the union's own history, to the broader political and economic context, employer opposition, and worker attitudes—are ubiquitous, even if their shape or contour differs depending on industry, union, and overall context. How political actors negotiate these organizational constraints, while redesigning existing institutional structures,

is important in assessing how successful they will be at representing all of their members and empowering them to contest the racial and ethnic division of labor.

With the arrival of new union leadership in late 1999, staff members engaged in *organizational redesign* as a method of restructuring the union to empower its diverse members and their diverse interests. This new leadership team first took control of what was a moribund and corrupt union with a broad mandate to change.[4] The new leadership rooted out the corruption by firing the old staff and allowing others to leave voluntarily, and brought in outside and diverse leaders, staff, and organizers. One example of this change is that over half of the full-time staff speaks Spanish, compared to none before. In addition, all of the union's membership meetings and publications are translated into Spanish, Bosnian, Polish, and Chinese to better accommodate and engage their multiethnic members in the life of the union.

Besides translating publications and membership meetings, another practice instituted by the new staff was to survey the membership to discover their specific concerns and issues—something the union had never done before. Staff then began to organize rank-and-file members and build a representative internal committee of worker-leaders to be active participants in the union. "Rank-and-file organizing committees" are internal leadership structures that some unions use to advance their many goals. For instance, instead of relying just on staff or elected leaders to talk to workers about their concerns and construct a collective identity, the most prominent method of most unions, some like Unite Here Local 1 train, and then rely on, an ever-growing volunteer "committee" of rank-and-file leaders to do these tasks. This has several effects: 1) workers are more likely to be honest with and trust co-workers compared to union staff; 2) it helps to develop new leaders and teach them political skills and capital which then empowers more members to engage in collective action in the workplace as well as other union functions such as political action; 3) it helps unions shift staff resources over to organizing and recruiting new workers. By training rank-and-file workplace leaders to handle shop-floor problems and issues themselves, it frees up valuable staff time to devote to organizing new members, and not "servicing" existing members; and 4) Finally, by encouraging high norms of participation and decision-making, these internally created leadership structures provide another mechanism of democratic accountability within organizations in addition to formal electoral rules.

Part of the goal of surveying the membership was to get information and assess the concerns of members, a key aspect in the process of building the organizing committee. The surveys were also used as an organizing tool to organize workers and recruit leaders. If workers could complete ten surveys of their co-workers, they passed a good test of having the raw materials of being leaders (Interview, Sam Donaldson, December 2002). In addition, this process of surveying what was ultimately a fifth of the membership (2500 completed surveys) also helped in mapping out the social and political networks of members. The survey included questions about church and political organizational membership. The resulting 250 churches listed later became a key basis of the union's outreach efforts to garner support from the religious and wider community in its various contract campaigns. The outcome was that the union took advantage of the internal resources its members bring to the workplace and union hall: the social, community, and political networks in which workers are embedded outside of the workplace (Kurtz 2002; Needleman 2003). Insofar as these networks are highly structured by patterns of racial and ethnic residential segregation, the ability of the union to engage in a process to discover and then utilize these significantly diverse networks is unusual.

The focus on developing a strong and large internal rank-and-file committee of leaders to take ownership of and some control over the union is an organizing model

that Unite Here has been developing, implementing, and perfecting for some time. And for the most part, it is an unusual model within the broader labor movement. Although the union did not achieve its goal of having a committee that represents 10% of the 14,000 workers (a leadership committee of 1400), during the height of its campaigns, it often recruits a rank-and-file organizing committee numbered in the hundreds (400–700). But it is one thing to build an internal rank-and-file organizing committee of worker-leaders, and quite another to deliberately build a *representative* committee of this magnitude. This approach to organizational redesign increases the likelihood that issues affecting a range of workers will get on the table and that the bargaining unit as a whole will actually win those issues at the contract table, and most important in this case, it increases the ties between African American and immigrant workers who are then empowered to contest the racial division of labor at work.

How exactly did the staff and leadership of the union build a representative—and by representative we mean by hotel, specific job classification, race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender, and sexual orientation—internal rank-and-file committee of over 500 workers from scratch in three years (1999–2002)? First, they planned a series of committee and member actions with several goals in mind: to educate the public about workers' plight, to educate members about their own conditions, and to begin to put pressure on the employers as an expression of the union's increasing strength. These actions, in addition to helping increase the organizational capacity of the union, also served to transform and raise the expectations of members about what they could possibly achieve. Second, and related to the building of an over-500-member representative rank-and-file leadership committee, was the establishment of a sixty-five-member rank-and-file negotiating committee among the "die-hards." Again, this committee was representative by job classification, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and sexual orientation. Upon its creation in 2000, this rank-and-file member negotiating committee—generally rare among unions in the American labor movement—marked the first time that rank-and-file workers had been involved in contract negotiations in this local union's history.

The volunteer 500-rank-and-file-member organizing committee highlights the role of organizational redesign. Under certain conditions, political organizations can be constructed in such a way as to recognize explicitly the multiple identities of members, structure the organization around these identities in a federated arrangement, take advantage of the existing social networks and relationships these subgroups of diverse workers have, and mobilize these groups of workers around a collective good, undercutting the potential problem of undermobilization (Kurtz 2002). This particular strategy of organizational redesign is not necessarily based on high-road political principles of democratic and equal representation, important and ideal as those are. Instead, it is based more on the pragmatic need to ensure every significant subgroup of workers is included and involved in the union, lest employers exploit the already existing racial and ethnic division of labor inherent in any heterogeneous workforce and union membership. To do this, the union had to "make it possible to have as many different people involved as possible" (Interview, Sam Donaldson, December 2002) which was the primary justification for language translation to facilitate the involvement of immigrant workers and the subsequent demands around ensuring that African American workers maintain a presence in the industry.

Marshall Ganz (2000) and Morris and Staggenborg (2002) argue that the most successful social-movement organizations are those with leadership teams that have what they call both "insiders" and "outsiders." The interaction of organizational outsiders who bring political skills and capital with insiders (e.g., members) with a

different set of resources expands the organization's capacity. A staff member, John Williams, described exactly how this interaction between inside and outside leaders worked as rank-and-file member-leaders learned to organize and mobilize their co-workers:

> The centerpiece [of the organizational redesign effort] was building the committee and developing new leaders through this process . . . the best way to train is to have them go out and watch them. Then have them watch you. And then really tightly monitor what they're doing. And each time they learn a new skill, you need to do the same thing over and over and over (Interview, December 2002).

This strategy is nothing new; it can be found in contemporary community organizing and in previous eras of union militancy (Ganz 2000; Sen 2003; Smock 2003; Warren 2010). As the staff member, John Williams, explained, "The model has been around a long time. When you look at the thirties . . . the CIO really had it. When unions stopped organizing, it went away" (Interview, December 2002). Linking the political skills leaders from outside the labor movement bring to union organizing, one of Voss and Sherman's (2000) respondents described how he learned to build committees from his experience as a community organizer:

> Yeah, that's where I learned to build committees, and what a committee does and how it functions . . . It really came from that training . . . you have to have committees because you don't have money. You can't pay staff . . . So getting people to do it themselves. Also, it's the philosophy of empowering people. That comes more from the community organizing than the labor movement, unfortunately (p. 330).

By taking a page from one of the most successful models of unionism in terms of the inclusion of workers of color and women (the CIO), and from community organizing models which rely more on the internal resources of their members, Unite Here has revived and adapted the model for use in a different yet contemporary context of a racialized and gendered global economy. When union staff member John Williams was asked by the authors about how the union deals with the potential problems that come with having a diverse and occupationally segregated workforce, he responded, "If we do our committee-building right, it takes care of itself. If we don't, then we are in deep shit in many ways" (Interview, December 2002).

The effects of building these large internal representative rank-and-file organizing committees go beyond workplace-specific contract campaigns or internal union politics. The bonds of solidarity and political capital that this diverse group of worker-leaders learn—talking to, organizing, and mobilizing their co-workers, neighbors, politicians, community, and religious leaders around issues of social justice—is transferable to other contexts and situations. For example, under its "member-avoidance program" before the union's transformation, the local never engaged rank-and-file members in political activity. Instead, relying on the routine tactics characteristic of the majority of U.S. unions, Local 1 contributed campaign funds and lobbied its political friends for favors. But the local's shift to a more engaged membership has had direct effects on Chicago politics, especially in Black and Latino neighborhoods. One key instance of this is that roughly forty Black union members get paid time off of work to conduct voter mobilization in African American wards during elections. An important political result of this was in 2004 when Unite Here

African-American members contributed directly to increasing turnout rates in several Black city council wards, contributing to the election of Barack Obama to the U.S. Senate.

Another example is the creation of solidaristic bonds between native-born African American and immigrant workers through internal political education like that conducted on the 2003 Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride (IWFR) buses. Foreshadowing the recent book by Isabel Wilkerson (2010), the union helped build bonds of solidarity between subgroups of its members by linking the *migration* histories of Black and immigrant workers. Through popular education activities implemented on the IWFR bus ride and the subsequent "Migration Oral History Project," African American and immigrant workers were encouraged to focus on their own family narratives of migration, uplifting the "push" and "pull" factors compelling their migration history.

Part of the process of organizational redesign and the empowerment of different subgroups of workers based on their race, ethnicity, nativity, and gender is the construction of a collective identity that workers then use to contest the racial and ethnic division of labor at work and at home. An important aspect of this political process is the use of particular frames to educate and convince members to take action. The fact that a union represents its multiracial, multiethnic workers and their multiple identities does not automatically translate into the framing of issues or even a broader collective identity in any one particular way. Unions and political organizations use a variety of strategies to build a collective identity and frame their demands, and the results of any particular strategy depend on a number of factors. Different strategies can unite or divide the membership; prevent or enable some issues to get onto the agenda; and mobilize or undermobilize specific internal and external resources (Kurtz 2002).

Throughout American political history, especially among social reform movements, activists have most often avoided explicit framing or discussion of issues deemed controversial such as race, class, gender, or sexuality, leaving these structures of inequality uncontested (Allen and Allen, 1974; Cohen 1999; Iton 2000). In the case of organized labor, labor historian Bruce Nelson (2000) describes how historians and organizers have seen "identity" issues as impediments to labor solidarity. He writes:

> There are, to be sure, numerous economic issues around which blacks and whites, and workers of every race and nationality, can unite. But too often scholars and labor activists have sought to envelop race in the language of class, the 'magic bullet' of broad-gauged social-democratic policy agendas, and the invocation of the 'common dreams' that allegedly animated progressive social movements before the emergence of 'identity politics'. These ideological formulas and programmatic blueprints seek to hide race because of its volatility and proven capacity to divide. But given the ways in which race is encoded in working-class identities and definitions of self, there can be no economistic cure for the malady that is 'whiteness' (p. 293).

This dilemma—of figuring out under what conditions identity and class or worker identities can strengthen rather than undermine each other—poses a significant challenge for organizers to which there are no easy panaceas or answers. It is the case that within diverse constituencies, the ways in which particular issues are constructed, especially around race and ethnicity, can, under some conditions, be divisive. It is also the case that when organizations ignore certain issues affecting the

most marginalized out of fear of their divisive impact, those populations often fail to be adequately represented and those structures of inequality are reinforced instead of contested (Cohen 1999; Strolovitch 2007). We also know that in the union context, employers have historically sought to emphasize divisive issues in efforts to divide the workforce by race and ethnicity and prevent collective action.

In the case of Local 1, the dominant frame used by union leaders to construct a collective identity and create solidaristic bonds among its members and across their differences is that of a singular "union" identity on the surface, but one which is constituted and laden with deeper meanings of the multiple identities and concerns of union members. Local 1 partly uses John Rawls' (1971) difference principle in efforts to build broad solidarity while also protecting its most vulnerable members. The thrust behind the difference principle is that a community emphasizes the least advantaged (or most disadvantaged) when agreeing to principles of justice. Time and time again, the leaders of Local 1 emphasize the need to fight for the least advantaged, linking their fate to the fate of the entire union. For example, the local's President would often say to rank-and-file organizing committee members in articulating the union's agenda, "If the most vulnerable aren't protected, the boss wins and we all lose" (Warren 2002). This is the most common frame used by leaders, staff, and members alike when advocating for issues affecting the union's most disadvantaged workers. We have heard this frame used time and again to advance the issues of immigrant workers, gay and lesbian workers, African American workers, and housekeepers who are overwhelming women of color (Warren 2001–2011). This strategy of constructing frames that emphasize difference-within-unity and the need to maintain solidarity across a diverse membership experiencing multiple inequalities is an example of the internal political process used to contest the racial and ethnic division of labor.

Bargaining Diversity

In 2006, Unite Here Local 1 in Chicago won unprecedented diversity language in its collective bargaining contracts, ensuring that hotel employers hire and retain African Americans. Albeit new, this language added to the broad and expansive nondiscrimination language the union won in previous contracts, as well as the broad scope of equity provisions the union had secured for its diverse workforce, such as domestic-partner benefits for its lesbian, gay, and transgendered members, gender equity in health-care coverage (e.g., contraceptive equity), and protections for its immigrant workforce (Warren 2005). Pragmatically, contract provisions targeted at African American workers became a concrete answer to what one union official at Unite Here Local 1 described as its most pressing diversity challenge: "How do we move forward on immigration issues without isolating our African American members?" (Interview, Amy Hall, 2011).

The diversity language comprises two parts: a commitment to a diverse workforce by the employer and a set of "affirmative steps" by which the employer will demonstrate a good-faith effort to fulfilling this commitment. Section 16, Part 1, titled "Commitment," from Unite Here Local 1's 2006 contract with hotel employers reads as follows:

> The Employer is committed to a diverse workforce, consistent with and practicing equal employment opportunity and engaging in affirmative efforts to maintain an environment that supports and encourages the contribution of all employees. The parties strive to achieve a workplace environment respectful of the diverse cultures of the workforce. The Employer and Union are proud of the

> diversity of the workforce, which includes a significant number of African-American employees, as well as those who have immigrated [*sic*] from various countries, and the benefits that diversity brings to the industry.[5]

As our informants described, the employers were by and large open to the inclusion of this language, but the concrete nature of the commitment was highly significant as both a policy and a political victory. The contractual commitment represents the formal adoption of union diversity goals by management and provides the union with a mechanism by which to hold employers accountable. Additionally, the language provides a means by which to hold employers accountable in their dealings with workers on a day-to-day basis, outside of formal grievance dealings and contract negotiations. In short, signing such a commitment shifts the tone and tenor of future interactions around race, immigration, and diversity, on the shop floor and beyond. Of course, by securing the diversity language, the union demonstrated that it could win on an issue of great concern to many of its members. By so doing, the union also provided its members with a means by which to hold the *union* accountable to the substantive realization of its diversity commitments and practices.

Section 16, Part 2, "Affirmative Steps," outlines a program of action centered on community outreach as the primary means by which to actualize the diversity commitment. The 2006 collective bargaining agreement states:

> The Employer with the cooperation of the Union will act in good faith to outreach to the community, including to the African-American community, in order to attract applicants who are part of underrepresented groups through a coordinated and strategic outreach program.

Specifically, the contract mandates that the union and the employer jointly develop "an annual strategic action-oriented outreach program" designed to accomplish the following:

1. Inform and educate members of underrepresented community about job and career opportunities with the Employer;
2. Establish contacts with diverse community groups and schools that serve underrepresented communities and seek to develop partnerships with them to enhance their knowledge of the Employer and jobs and career opportunities for community members with the Employer.

Lastly, the contract stipulates that results must be tracked and reported annually.[6]

The impetus behind this diversity contract language stems back to the African American Hiring Initiative created by local union leaders and the Executive Board of HERE in 2000 as part of Wilhelm's larger diversity program. The initial focus of the initiative was on targeted training programs to connect African Americans to hotel employment. Las Vegas provided a successful model. A program undertaken in the early 2000s by the Culinary Training Academy, a labor-management partnership that provides training for the hospitality industry, and the hotel union (Unite Here Local 226) had some success in bringing more African Americans into the hospitality industry by using high schools to recruit students, particularly young African American men, into training programs at the Culinary Training Academy.[7] Efforts replicating the Las Vegas model moved forward in Boston and Los Angeles. In Boston, an entire floor of the union hall, outfitted with a training kitchen and hotel rooms, was dedicated to providing training in partnership with hotel management.

In each city targeted by the African American Hiring Initiative, community outreach was key. In particular, the union recruited African-American ministers (sometimes working through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League) to inform them about the hiring initiative, training opportunities, and the pay and benefit levels of union hospitality jobs. Laura Hausen, an international staff member who worked on the African American Hiring Initiative for several years, relayed in a 2011 interview that much of her outreach work involved educating community members about the quality of union hotel jobs. "Hotel jobs are not viewed as good jobs in the Black community . . . so we needed to explain that these jobs could be good jobs." But community leaders were receptive and eager to move forward. This union staffer described finding "a tremendous hunger for these kinds of programs [in the Black community]." In an effort to further institutionalize and build upon these early efforts, local union leaders in a number of cities committed to fight for the inclusion of diversity language in their next contracts, all up for negotiation between 2005 and 2007. Such a step would help to further the union's efforts to attract and retain African American workers by formalizing the participatory efforts of hotel management as well as signaling a heightened level of commitment to its members. In addition to Chicago, the Boston and Los Angeles locals were successful in winning some form of diversity language in their 2006 contracts.

While the contracts are not identical, each secures a commitment to diversity from management and outlines affirmative steps centered on community outreach and targeted training. All contracts stipulate that a strategic program must be developed; they differ, however, in specifying how and by whom. The Chicago contract states simply that the union and the employer, "through the mutual commitment of time and resources" (Section 16.2.b), will design an annual strategic plan together. By contrast, the Boston contract specifies the creation of a "Citywide Diversity in the Hospitality Industry Taskforce" made up of hotel, union, and community representatives, the latter appointed by the mayor.[8] An Ombudsman is designated to facilitate the "consensus building process" of the Taskforce (Article 48, Section B.2) and is charged with additional tasks ranging from discussing "complaints by employment applicants about the Employer's hiring practices or decisions" to coordinating the analysis of hiring, promotion, and recruitment data provided by the hotels (Article 48, Section 7). The contract charges the taskforce to meet at least quarterly.

The Boston contract reveals the union's grasp of the complexity of the problem of increasing the employment of underrepresented groups, such as African Americans, as well as the complexity of labor market processes in general. Although the Boston contract pays heed to the supply side of the labor market—how to recruit and train eligible applicants—it goes the furthest of all contracts in addressing the most critical moment in shaping the racial and ethnic division of labor: hiring. Although the final hiring decision remains the right and privilege of the employer, the Boston contract's diversity provisions give union and community representatives a voice in the hiring process. As members of the taskforce, union and community representatives are able to "review and make recommendations to the Hotels regarding suggested amendments to the application and hiring procedures that may present obstacles to members of the African-American and broader diverse community members" (Article 48.5.b). While not guaranteed, this provision gives union and community representatives the opportunity to influence hiring procedures for the purpose of increasing diversity.

Perhaps most significantly, this mandate increases transparency around hiring practices and procedures. In order to comply with the "review and recommendation"

mandate of the taskforce, employers must identify, regularize, and report their procedures. Doing so helps to formalize the hiring process. Additionally, the task force institutionalizes a monitoring process, further reinforcing formalization. Past research indicates that transparency and formalization greatly reduce discriminatory practices (intentional or not) and are of the greatest benefit to African American applicants (Dobbin 2009; Holzer and Neumark, 2006). While the advisory nature of the taskforce protects employers' autonomy in hiring, its mere existence can potentially influence hiring procedures in ways that are beneficial to underrepresented applicants by simply opening up hiring practices and procedures to review.

In addition to the citywide task force, the Boston contract establishes a Hotel Diversity Committee at each hotel, with equal representation by labor and management, "to assess the success of the Hotel's hiring, promotion, and recruitment practices when compared with the benchmarks and recommendations of the Citywide Taskforce" (Article 48, Section 6.f). These local hotel committees locate monitoring closest to the point of hire, at specific worksites, while the taskforce serves to set benchmarks for the industry as a whole and coordinates outreach across the entire local labor market. Such a strategy guards against unevenness and laggard employers, even as it generates efficiencies of scale and mutuality—no one employer is expected to undertake community outreach or facility training on its own. But each hotel must attend to its own hiring practices. The Hotel Diversity Committee provides the union with a means to monitor these local practices, and the contract secures a pledge from each hotel "to negotiate in good faith with the union to correct any failures to follow the recommendations and benchmarks described by the Citywide Taskforce" (Article 48, Section 6.f). As research has unequivocally demonstrated, labor and employment violations are greatly reduced when workers have a voice in labor-management relations (Fine and Gordon, 2010). Workers, when enfranchised within a "backward-mapping" implementation process, provide invaluable on-the-ground knowledge necessary for successful monitoring and problem solving (Barenberg 2008; Elmore 1979–1980). Through the creation of these Hotel Diversity Committees, the Boston diversity language goes furthest in institutionalizing worker participation in the hiring process.

Notably, the Boston contract formalizes the participation of the city and the community in addressing the issue of employment diversity, especially the hiring and retention of African American workers. Institutionalizing the involvement of multiple stakeholders serves both political and pragmatic ends. Bringing outsiders into the issue expands the scope of conflict in an effort to build widespread support for the union's diversity goals that stretches beyond the shop floor (Schattschneider 1960). City and community participation helps to connect both the union and hotel management to a diverse set of resources and outreach venues. For example, the contract charges the taskforce to "work with existing Community job development and training programs that will assist Employers in identifying potential job applicants" (Article 48.5.c). Lastly, involving community representatives at the start helps to solidify "buy-in" through mutuality. Community outreach, then, becomes a bilateral process *with* the community rather than one driven *at* the community. Further, the requirement of community participation externalizes recruitment and outreach to actors most likely to identify underrepresented applicants.

Differences in the specific content of the diversity language among the Chicago, Boston, and Los Angeles contracts reflects differences in union density and negotiating power, past practices, and urban political regimes. Although we do not take these differences up as the analytical question of interest in this paper, we point to differences in contract language regarding training between Boston and

Chicago as a further illustration of locally contingent outcomes. In Boston, the union had already garnered management's participation in a labor-management training program—the Greater Boston Hotel Employees/Local 26 Education/Training Program—that the contract stipulates should be utilized "to further the efforts of the Taskforce" (Article 48.5.d). This training program also receives workforce development funding.

By contrast, no such training program exists in Chicago. Yet the Chicago local did win training language in its 2006 contract that serves as "placeholder language," as one Chicago union official described (Interview, Amy Hall, May 2011). The steps outlined are dependent upon a commitment from the Mayor's workforce development office to support a hospitality-industry training program. Section 67, "Training Fund," of the contract stipulates union and hotel participation in the creation and funding of such a program:

> As part of a "Hospitality Institute" that may be initiated by the City of Chicago, the Employer agrees to commit $.03 per hour through a Taft Hartley Fund or other appropriate vehicle. The Union and the Employer agree to work cooperatively with the City of Chicago and other interested parties to create a Hospitality Institute.

Although Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley once toured the Culinary Training Academy in Las Vegas and proclaimed it a model program, he never moved forward with plans to create a similar program in Chicago through a joint city-labor-management partnership.

Far from symbolic, the diversity language—even that which serves as placeholder language—included in these Unite Here contracts was hard-won. Negotiations were tense in a number of cities. The *Boston Globe* (2006) reported that "contract negotiations in Boston erupted in a heated exchange" (p. A12) on the issue of African American representation, specifically over the numbers of African Americans employed in the city's Starwood-operated hotels. As one union official told us, Chicago employers were initially uncomfortable with the diversity demands, but all agreed to the idea of diversity in principle (Interview, Amy Hall, May 2011). In Boston, as reported in the *Boston Globe* (2006), the hotel industry negotiator publicly stated that the Boston hotels "'are prepared to do whatever outreach is necessary'" (p. A12). At root, the diversity language makes hotel employers formally accountable to carry out this necessary outreach.

Unite Here's contract diversity language represents a significant way in which workers, beyond the confines of their own social networks, can shape and influence the racial and ethnic division of labor. By institutionalizing outreach efforts and the monitoring and review of hiring practices, the diversity provisions provide workers with some formal influence on hiring. Even without these provisions, workers can do much to shape the applicant pool and affect application and hiring procedures through word-of-mouth recruitment, coaching of acquaintances through the application process, and vouching for certain applicants to the boss (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003). Yet Unite Here's contract requirements formalize these processes in an effort to lessen information asymmetries that can exclude particular groups from gaining entry into employment. Significantly, the diversity language attempts to open the black box of hiring to workers through their union representation. In the case of Boston, the community also gains inclusion in the process. Ultimately, the contract diversity language provides workers with a formal accountability mechanism. While workers cannot demand specific hires, they can demand that employers

demonstrate good-faith efforts toward achieving diversity. Such leverage differs strikingly from workers' informal influence on the composition of the workforce achieved through their recruitment networks and other forms of social capital. This influence derives from workers' political capital, achieved through their explicit political mobilization as union members.

Recognizing Unite Here's contract diversity provisions as an outcome of politics reveals job competition as a socially contingent and politically mediated process. As a democratic organization, Unite Here must manage the multiple, seemingly competing, demands of its demographically diverse membership—one composed of significant numbers of African Americans and immigrants. A Local 1 official put it this way, "The question for the union is how do we defend one another's causes. How do we bridge the gap between these two [African American and immigrant] groups of workers? The diversity language was one way to demonstrate commitment to both" (Interview, Amy Hall, May 2011). In order to pursue protections for its immigrant members, the union needed to secure provisions for its African American workforce, and vice versa. Under the rubric of "diversity," the union sought to build common cause between two workforces with highly group-specific demands. This linkage of immigration and African American concerns requires constant negotiation and mobilization, but it reveals that competition is not a given among different groups dependent upon the same economic resources, such as jobs. It is politics, however, that makes the difference.

CONCLUSION

In 2006, the union representing hotel workers in Chicago—Unite Here Local 1—bargained and ratified a contract committing hotel employers to maintain and increase diversity in their workforces. Specifically, the contract calls for the formulation of a joint labor-management strategic plan detailing efforts to outreach to the African American community to increase the number of Black job applicants and, eventually, African American representation on the workforce. Diversity language was won the same year by the union's sister locals in Los Angeles and Boston. The latter contract went the furthest in specifying a comprehensive outreach plan, one that included not only management and labor, but also participation by the city and designated community organizations.

These labor agreements do not impose quotas, but they represent a significant step on the part of a union to address issues of racial and ethnic representation in employment directly. Significantly, the impetus for such language emerged from growing concerns facing an increasingly diverse union membership composed predominantly of African American and immigrant workers. As foreign-born union members pushed the union to engage an array of immigration issues from workplace protections related to documentation status to broad immigration reform, union leadership recognized the threat immigration posed to its African American members. Dwindling representation of African American workers in hotel jobs raised the fear of displacement. Relations between these two membership groups could easily tip toward division and competition.

Motivated in part by political ideal and in part by political pragmatism, the union's international leadership embarked on a number of diversity initiatives. Among these, the African American Hiring Initiative laid the groundwork for later policy victories at the bargaining table—specifically, the 2006 contract diversity language. Winning such policies at the bargaining table, however, required building support

among union members first. Internally, the union implemented institutional practices that challenge and bridge racial, ethnic, and nativity divisions on a daily basis. A commitment to building diverse committee representation among workers at each individual hotel sits at the center of this set of practices. Singular activities, such as African American and more recent immigrant workers sharing family migration histories as part of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Rides, serve to further develop cross-racial and ethnic relationships and bolster support among workers for diversity.

Taken together, these activities illustrate how workers *as collective agents* mediate between network and bureaucracy—between individual social capital and employer discretion—in order to influence racial and ethnic representation on the shop floor. Significantly, we draw attention to the political nature of this mediation: workers must organize among themselves—and overcome racial and ethnic divisions in the process—in order to negotiate a set of demands with management. In the case of Unite Here Local 1, union organizing activities work to counter notions of intergroup competition between African Americans and immigrants in order to build common cause that affirms, rather than denies, differences. This mobilization yielded efforts to contest and reshape the ethnic and racial division of labor on the grounds of diversity, thereby revealing competition as a socially contingent and politically mediated process.

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NOTES

1. We would like to acknowledge the willing participation of all our interview respondents as well as the members, staff, and leaders of Unite Here Local 1 who allowed us access as participant observers over a ten-year period. The names of all interviewees have been changed in order to grant anonymity. Authors are equal co-authors; names appear in alphabetical order.
2. Based on authors' calculations from the American Community Survey 2005–2007 3-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al., 2010). Whites and Blacks are non-Hispanic.
3. Thirty-five interviews were conducted with union staff by Dorian Warren and Virginia Parks from 2001–2011. We have changed their names to pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.
4. For more detail on this larger story of organizational change and transformation, see Warren (2005).
5. Collective bargaining agreement between UNITE HERE Local 1 and signatory Chicago hotel employers, August 2006. On file with authors.
6. These data were not available for our review as they are deemed confidential and for the express purpose of internal evaluation of outreach efforts.
7. This program was started by Steven Horsford, who currently serves as the Senate Majority Leader of the Nevada State Senate. Horsford also is the Chief Executive Officer of the Culinary Training Academy. Our union interviewee reports that Horsford was particularly concerned about young Black men entering gangs and their need for living-wage employment opportunities when he began the recruitment program (Interview, Laura Hausen, May 2011).
8. Collective bargaining agreement between UNITE HERE Local 26 and signatory Boston hotel employers, December 2006. On file with authors.

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