

**BUYING INTO THE BUSINESS CASE: A BONA FIDE GROUP STUDY OF
DIALECTICAL TENSIONS IN EMPLOYEE NETWORK GROUPS**

A Dissertation

by

JANE STUART BAKER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2009

Major Subject: Communication

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Linda Putnam
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ABSTRACT

Buying into the Business Case: A Bona Fide Group Study of Dialectical Tensions in
Employee Network Groups. (August 2009)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Linda Putnam

Objectives for managing diversity in organizations include reducing lawsuits, responding to changing employee demographics, enhancing image, attracting and retaining a variety of talent, reaching new customer bases, and improving group effectiveness. Diversity management also emphasizes strategies to help retain and promote minority members once they have been hired. One of these ways is through employee network groups. This research adopts a case approach to describing and comparing a Black and a Hispanic employee network group at a United States affiliate of the Fortune Global 100 energy corporation, Summit International. This study applies bona fide group theory and dialectics to examine the complex intergroup relationships that employee network groups have in their organizations. The study offers three key contributions to communication theory. In connection with dialectics, bona fide group theory helped to reveal the multiple units from which group tensions emerge and the complex decisions that group members must make in managing them. The application of bona fide group theory also revealed an unexpected finding: that the network groups

were engaged in concertive control with each other through interdependence with the organizational context. The bona fide group theory uncovered these processes because it revealed the norms and expectations that groups formed based on the corporate values regarding diversity.

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NOMENCLATURE

EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
GLBT	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender
SBNG	Summit Black Networking Group
SHEN	Summit Hispanic Employee Network

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
NOMENCLATURE.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Evolution of Organizational Diversity	3
II THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES	25
Formal and Informal Elements of Employee Network Groups	28
Dialectical Theory	41
The Bona Fide Group Perspective	51
Theoretical Focus of the Current Study	58
III METHOD.....	62
Study Design	62
Research Settings	64
Confidentiality.....	76
History of the Summit Black Networking Group	77
History of the Summit Hispanic Employee Network.....	81
Studying Race as a White Female Researcher	84
Data Analysis	87
Conclusion.....	91
IV RESEARCH FINDINGS: SBNG.....	93
Tensions between the Group and the Organization.....	96
Intragroup Tensions among SBNG Members	106

CHAPTER	Page
Group versus Individual Tensions.....	112
Conclusion.....	121
V RESEARCH FINDINGS: SHEN.....	123
Tensions at the Group-Individual and Intragroup Units	124
Tensions between the Group and the Organization.....	142
Comparison of SBNG and SHEN	144
Conclusion.....	146
VI A BONA FIDE GROUP PERSPECTIVE OF SBNG AND SHEN	148
Interdependence with Context.....	150
Stable yet Permeable Boundaries	163
Discussion	174
VII CONCLUSION	176
Dialectics	177
Bona Fide Group Theory.....	180
Practical Implications for Corporate Diversity Initiatives	189
Limitations	196
Future Research.....	197
Conclusion.....	199
REFERENCES.....	201
APPENDIX A	219
VITA	220

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	SBNG Members	71
2	SHEN Members	72
3	Diversity Office Representatives	73

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Organizational scholars have shown intense interest in issues of race and diversity over the past two decades (e.g., Allen, 2006; Kirby & Harter, 2001; Kossek & Zonia, 1994; Lau & Murningham, 1998; McKay & Avery, 2007; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Zane, 1994). It is fitting that diversity has emerged as a popular area of research given that the proportion of racial and ethnic minority employees in the American workforce has doubled since 1970 (Foner & Fredrickson, 2004). Moreover, scholars have cited the dire consequences that have resulted from the lack of attention to diversity by large, influential corporations (Ashcraft & Allen, 2003). For example, racist attitudes and talk by executives at Texaco during the 1990s sparked costly litigation and a “tarnished image” for the company (Brinson & Benoit, 1999, p. 483).

Despite the popularity of diversity as a topic of organizational significance, there is a striking dearth of organizational communication research in this area, especially with regards to racial diversity (Allen, 1995; Ashcraft & Allen, 2003). Allen (1995) presents a strong case for greater inclusion of race and diversity in organizational communication research by noting that most interracial interaction occurs in settings pertinent to organizational scholarship (e.g., client-provider, manager-employee, doctor-patient

This dissertation follows the style of *Management Communication Quarterly*.

relationships) and thus deserves greater attention. While organizational research is inattentive to all kinds of traditionally underrepresented groups, this study focuses on Black and Hispanic employees as minority employees working with dominant group members. With few exceptions, extant diversity literature by-and-large reflects a strong managerial bias since it grows out of a business context. A managerial bias refers to a focus on productivity, efficiency, control, leadership, and the bottom line. Grimes (2002) points out that this work is written by and for the dominant White male group and rarely problematizes privilege. Meanwhile, the glass ceiling continues to prevent many minorities from advancing past a certain level in their careers. The term, “glass ceiling,” which emerged in the popular media during the late 1970s, refers to an invisible obstacle that prevents women or people of color from progressing in their careers (Kephart & Schumacher, 2005). They can see the path to the top of the organization but the unseen barrier prevents their advancement. White men continue to dominate positions of power while minorities and White women are still underrepresented at upper levels (Smith, 2005). Thus, literature concerned with topics of productivity and control tends to ignore the concerns of minority group members in favor of managerial interests (Fine, 1995).

In addition, much of this work is not empirical but instead focuses on best practices or normative ideas for managing diversity (Cox, 1994; Ogbonna & Harris, 2006). Empirical research that addresses the concerns of minority employees is essential since they still enjoy fewer career opportunities than Whites (Conley & Yeung, 2005; Friedman & Krackhardt, 1997). A study of 100 Fortune 500 corporations conducted by

the Alliance for Board Diversity reveals that as recently as 2006, only about 28% of board member seats are held by minorities and women (New Alliance, 2008).

Affirmative action, which was introduced in the 1960s to address workplace inequalities, has evolved into a preference for diversity management as a way to benefit organizations. However, neither the diversity nor the affirmative action paradigms sufficiently challenge the status quo that prevails in the professional world. This chapter describes the evolution of affirmative action to tokenism, and then finally, to the diversity management paradigm. These approaches to diversity are criticized for their failure to eliminate systemic racism. Affirmative action fails because it focuses solely on equal opportunities in hiring while neglecting minority members once employed. Diversity management calls for changes in corporate attitudes toward multiculturalism and advocates diversity training. However, it also views diversity as a way to improve the company's bottom line and minimizes the value placed on multiculturalism as a moral imperative. In effect, current paradigms have not proved sufficient for improving the hiring, retention, and promotion of minority employees. Organizational scholars need to discover new solutions to the conceptual and practical puzzles that surround diversity in organizations.

The Evolution of Organizational Diversity

While organizational scholars have become increasingly intrigued by the puzzles that diversity presents, they remain divided over its exact meaning. Traditionally, discussions of diversity have revolved around demographic differences such as race, age,

gender, physical ability, sexual orientation, nationality, and religious affiliation, as well as other significant classifications (Ferdman, 1995). As the predominant paradigm has shifted from affirmative action to managing diversity, conversations have begun to examine diversity in terms of cognitive heuristics and perspectives that exist in conjunction with demographic differences (Page, 2007).

Although scholars approach the study of organizational diversity with varying agendas, they are generally interested in inequality and in ways that organizations can improve the inclusion of minority groups at all levels. Many scholars, such as Thomas and Ely (1996), focus on the advantages of a diverse workplace, arguing that diversity offers “varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different groups bring” (p. 80). To better understand the need for a new paradigm, this review examines the development of diversity through the lenses of affirmative action, tokenism, and diversity management.

Affirmative Action

Affirmative action as it is known today emerged during the late 1960s and 1970s as a legislatively driven method of achieving equal opportunity in the workplace (Swanger, 1994). Affirmative action policies usually target racial minorities and White women and consist of goals, timetables, and procedures for organizations to increase their representation (Konrad & Linnehan, 1999). Policies based on this legislation focus on remedial efforts to right past wrongs towards underrepresented groups so that these groups will have an advantage in hiring and promotion decisions. The term affirmative

action was first introduced when John F. Kennedy established the President's Committee on Employment Opportunity (Graham, 1992). Under President Lyndon Johnson's administration, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 then compelled businesses to provide applicants with equal access to employment opportunities (EEO). President Johnson also declared that affirmative action was required in conjunction with EEO code in order to ensure that businesses specifically sought out qualified women and minorities for employment (Kelly & Dobbin, 2001). In 1968, President Johnson sought to change workplace demographics by requiring companies with federal government contracts of \$50,000 or more per year to keep track of who was hired and to set quotas and timetables for increasing minority employees.

In the decades following the Civil Rights Movement, affirmative action policies have undoubtedly improved employment opportunities for minorities and White women, although the results differ among these groups. Some of the most substantial gains are found in the public sector. Steinberg (1995) found that during the 1970s, Black employees saw increased employment in government positions at double the rate of Whites. Herring and Collins (1995) compared diversity reports from organizations with affirmative action programs from those without them. Employees who worked in organizations with affirmative action policies reported greater numbers of minorities and White women in their companies as compared with those that did not. Blacks have also seen more gains than Asian Americans or Hispanics in the private sector (Rodgers & Spriggs, 1996).

Human resources management has changed corporate policies and procedures to realize these changes. Affirmative action policies largely direct hiring while providing limited focus on the retention and advancement of underrepresented employees. Areas of change include: 1) using valid criteria for all hiring decisions, 2) focusing recruiting efforts in areas likely to generate high numbers of women and minority candidates, 3) internal hiring, 4) holding managers accountable for the hiring choices they make, and 5) providing child care and transportation since women and minorities need these programs more often than White men (Konrad & Linneman, 1999).

Konrad and Linnehan (1999) and Stainback, Robinson, and Tomaskovic-Devey (2005) discovered that EEO legislation was effective only if accompanied by intense political pressure (i.e., monetary and rhetorical support) placed on firms to integrate minority members. The authors examined workplace segregation from the beginning of the Nixon administration in 1966 through the end of the Clinton presidency in 2000. Their findings revealed that rights legislation received varying levels of support by presidential administrations in the decades following its initial implementation.

During the 1970s, the Federal government generally enforced affirmative action and EEO policies (Stainback et al., 2005), although these policies were so vague that organizations initially took varied measures to ensure compliance, including hiring human resources experts to create systems designed to cover legal ground (Kelly & Dobbin, 2001). The Reagan and Bush administrations took a very conservative approach to civil rights and reduced funds to these programs (Wood, 1990). Yakura (1996) points out that the relaxed enforcement of Title VII during the Reagan and Bush

administrations resulted in reduced representation of minorities and women in the workplace.

The study by Stainback et al (2005) reveals that only when EEO/AA regulations were backed with political pressure and legal enforcement were changes in hiring and retention seen in significant ways. An example of the effects of rhetorical and monetary pressure surfaced during the Clinton administration. The Civil Rights Act of 1991 during the Clinton era reversed several rulings that had reduced the impact of Title VII. However, counter-rhetoric from a Republican Congress diminished the effect of this act (Stainback et al, 2005). Konrad and Linnehan (1999) thus argue that continued government support for affirmative action is thus necessary for the success of affirmative action. They advocate for consistency and enforcement of affirmative action legislation if there is to be maintenance and improvement of equal opportunities for minorities and White women.

Moreover, companies have lacked motivation to adopt diversity as a corporate value when their primary concern is legal compliance. Just as the famous melting pot paradigm presumes assimilation at the societal level, the affirmative action model is based on the belief that once individuals are brought into the organization, they will naturally assimilate (Swanger, 1994). Changes to hiring and promotion policy influence organizational entry but do not address difficulties that minority members face once employed. Affirmative action does not acknowledge the impact of diversity on an entire organization and therefore takes no steps to involve all organizational members. Important steps include educating employees about racism, intercultural training,

promoting diversity as a corporate value, and encouraging networking. These steps can improve the working environment and enhance opportunities for all types of employees. Although affirmative action has increased the hiring of diverse employees, it has not brought about retention and promotion (Gottfredson, 1992). Employees who do not receive opportunities for advancement are not satisfied and become more difficult to retain because they are open to alternative job offers (Friedman & Holtom, 2002).

Despite the noble intent of legal mandates, too often organizations treat affirmative action as “state-mandated discrimination based on race” (West & Fenstermaker, 2002, p. 548). Studies show that Whites hold more negative attitudes about affirmative action than minority groups (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 2000) and 40% believe that affirmative action will foster reverse discrimination (Sigelman & Welch, 1991). Whites often see affirmative action as a threat because they believe quotas have taken priority over quality. These negative attitudes often stem from mistaken beliefs surrounding affirmative action. Specifically, Kravitz and Platania (1993) found that many people do not realize that private organizations with affirmative action policies usually strive to hire the percentages of minorities and women that are proportional to the number of qualified members in the local population. Thus, the idea that organizations hire minorities and women at the expense of qualified applicants is often based on myth. Research shows that when employees are given specific descriptions of affirmative action plans, they are more likely to accept them. For example, Kravitz and Platania (1993) found that White employees were likely to accept affirmative action programs when they were told that there would be no strict quotas.

Firms may generate more support for affirmative action by communicating their specific policies and procedures to employees and outside stakeholders.

Standpoint theory, a method of reflective writing that reveals the insights of minority members, highlights the frustrations that non-dominant group members face because of negative attitudes about affirmative action. Allen (1996; 1998), for example, describes encounters in which colleagues have subtly implied or explicitly asserted that she was hired because she is African American and a woman. Such comments reveal repressive attitudes and that reify racial divisions in organizations.

Because affirmative action does emphasize quotas, employers may take a tokenistic approach to organizational diversity. Tokenism occurs when organizations treat one or a few members of a group as symbols of their entire group (Kanter, 1977). Kanter operationally defines token employees as those whose demographic group makes up less than 15% of an organization. Tokenism often results from ostensible efforts to comply with affirmative action policies combined with interest in actually increasing diversity. However, some organizational leaders express concerns that it is difficult to find qualified members of underrepresented groups because of a history of oppression and inequality of opportunity (Allen, 1996).

Tokenism can exacerbate differences in communication and generate an atmosphere in which token members are not as free to express ideas and opinions for fear of a hostile response by dominant group members (Kanter, 1977). Allen (1998) echoes this problem through her choice not to express negative emotions and disagreement for fear of being labeled a “loud Black woman” (p. 580). In this sense,

tokenism can discourage the appreciation of different cultures and ideas. When individuals feel pressured to assimilate, their personal values and culture seem compromised and set aside in the organizational context (Young, 1990). In addition, dominant group members often exaggerate cultural differences by telling racist or sexist jokes to protect boundaries (Baker, 1991).

Tokenism also results in increased performance expectations for minority employees, forcing them to represent their group whether they want to or not (Kanter, 1977). Allen (1996; 1998) addresses this concern by describing the troubling experience of having colleagues constantly ask her to sit on committees because she is Black. In addition, tokenism may lead to complacency toward future diversity efforts since meager attempts may only temporarily improve workplace opportunities. Daly (1985) eloquently summarizes this problem: “Tokenism does not change stereotypes or social systems but works to preserve them, since it dulls the revolutionary impulse” (p. 14).

At the macro level, the case of racism at Texaco further illustrates why affirmative action alone is not enough to solve problems related to diversity. This case reveals that executives made derogatory, audio-taped comments about African American employees, calling them “black jelly beans” “glued to the bottom of the jar” (Brinson & Benoit, 1999, p. 484). These discriminatory sentiments are troubling from an organizational standpoint because they disrespect difference, devalue variety, and reaffirm hegemonic norms. The Texaco case therefore exemplifies problems that arise when morality is removed from hiring decisions and replaced with legal motives.

While affirmative action has led to a stronger awareness of workplace inequality, its limitation lies in compliance that promotes reactive rather than proactive hiring. Instead of viewing diverse populations as an opportunity to make ethical choices, diversity becomes a defense against legal ramifications. Ultimately, affirmative action is based on a numerical definition of organizational inclusion that does not sufficiently encourage organizations to value minority group members for their unique perspectives or to hire minority members based on a moral imperative. Moreover, affirmative action fails to acknowledge how minority group members experience the workplace and communicate with dominant group members once they are hired. Thus, any effective diversity strategy must recognize communication as the primary tool through which minority group members make sense of their places in the organization.

Managing Diversity

Given the controversies surrounding affirmative action and the tendencies toward tokenism, the concept of “managing diversity” within the fields of management and human resources aims to address the politically charged paradigm of affirmative action. Although most scholars discuss diversity management as an alternative to affirmative action, Cox (1994) notes that affirmative action could be considered one method of managing diversity. Diversity management marks a shift away from paradigms such as fairness, access, and legitimacy toward the paradigms of effectiveness and innovation (Thomas and Ely, 1996). Scholars cite research showing that heterogeneous groups engender a variety of perspectives, therefore allowing them to produce creative solutions

to complex puzzles (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Therefore, diversity management relates to organizational benefits such as “productivity, efficiency, quality, and excellence” (Cobbs, 1994, p. 27).

The original idea behind managing diversity was that employee differences should be embraced as valuable resources in organizational life rather than being viewed as a deficiency (Swanger, 1994). Scholars such as Page (2007) have taken this argument to the extreme by embracing all differences as potentially valuable. For the most part, advocates of this paradigm note that diversity creates a dynamic and innovative working environment and that organizational leaders should harness these attributes in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders (Arredondo, 1996; Cox, 2001; Ely & Thomas, 1996; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Objectives for managing diversity include reducing lawsuits, responding to changing employee demographics, enhancing image, attracting and retaining a variety of talent, reaching new customer bases, and improving group effectiveness. To depict the ways in which diversity can be harnessed, scholars cite research showing that heterogeneous groups engender a variety of perspectives that provide creative solutions to complex puzzles (Cobbs, 1994; Robinson and Dechant, 1997). At the same time, failure to capitalize on the benefits of diversity can have numerous deleterious effects for the organization, such as turnover, absenteeism costs, lawsuits (Robinson & Dechant, 1997), decreased stock prices, a tarnished image, and the inability to attract talented employees (Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000). Bell and Berry (2007) urge organizational leaders to unearth ways that they can “reduce the negative and increase the positive outcomes of this diversity” (p. 24).

Diversity management also departs from affirmative action in fostering strategies to help retain and promote minority members once they have been hired. Much of the literature, however, employs model cases (Lamboley, 2006; Walker & Hanson, 1992) and best practices as ways to implement diversity management in organizations (Arredondo, 1996; Cox, 2001; Jackson & Holvino, 1996). Lobel (1999) charts a variety of possible diversity initiatives in the areas of career development, employee involvement, culture change, corporate communication, education, and outreach. Specific solutions include creating offices devoted to strategic diversity management, offering training for employees, launching programs for increasing the diversity of a firm's suppliers, and conducting employee needs assessments (Marquis, Lim, Scott, Harrell, & Kavanagh, 2007). Organizations also sponsor employee network groups as a way to include and retain minority employees (Arnold, 2006; Marquis et al, 2007; Zinni, 2005). Some findings exist regarding the impact of these programs, but as Lobel (1999) points out, research is limited.

While much of the literature on racial diversity suggests normative solutions and best practices, some organizational scholars envision a more theoretically grounded approach to identifying and understanding diversity. Empirical studies in management focus on the effects of diversity management on employee attitudes and achievement of strategic organizational goals. Communication research, in contrast, tends to examine how meanings of diversity are socially constructed through discourse.

Research reveals that diversity strategies have a number of effects on employee attitudes, including diversity training, and management accountability. Rynes and Rosen

(1995) examined employees' attitudes toward diversity before and after diversity training. They found that, prior to the training, only 9% believed diversity mattered but after the training, 73% viewed diversity as important. Adler (1983) and Alderfer (1992) discovered that employees who worked for organizations with diversity training programs held positive attitudes toward diversity. Research also suggests that when managers are held accountable for ensuring increased diversity in their work units, the organization is seen as effective in diversity management (Schreiber, Price, & Morrison, 1993).

In addition to attitudes about diversity, research sheds light on the impact of diversity strategies on strategic goals, such as increased profits and advancement of minorities and women. Kanter (1983) found that firms with progressive human resources policies saw greater profitability and Shrader, Blackburn, and Iles (1997) discovered that firms who spent time and resources to place women in management positions saw returns on their investments. Konrad and Linnehan (1999) examined the effects of diversity initiatives on employee advancement by first distinguishing "identity conscious" programs from those that were "identity blind." Identity conscious programs were those targeted specifically at minorities or women while identity blind agendas were not directed at certain groups. For example, training programs that were identity blind involved the participation of all managers while only minority or women managers participated in training that was identity conscious. The researchers found that identity conscious programs had a great impact on the promotion and retention of minorities and women whereas identity blind programs had virtually none. This finding suggests that

identity conscious programs generated greater awareness of diversity issues among all employees, including those who have the authority to advance careers. In addition, minorities and White women may view the attention they receive as an expression of support by the organization.

The research on team performance has generated mixed results. In some instances, diversity improves teamwork when members can generate a variety of viewpoints (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Jackson, 1991; Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003) and produce higher quality solutions (Jackson, May, & Whitney, 1995; McLeod, Lobel, & Cox, 1996). Other research suggests, however, that diversity in teams results in hostility and inefficiency (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998) or has very little effect at all (Curtis & Dreachslin, 2008). Still other studies indicate that the influence of diversity is mediated by the organizational context; for example, in highly competitive organizations, diversity decreases productivity (Kochan et al., 2003).

Roberson and Park (2007) found a curvilinear relationship between cultural diversity in firm leaders and organizational performance. Their research suggests that when several racial minority leaders are present in a firm, it prevents the organization from realizing diversity benefits. Mid-levels of diversification reflect a value in diversity and provide established and sophisticated programs to capitalize on a diverse workforce. However, when diversity in a firm's leadership is at its peak, differences of opinion may be too prevalent to make agreeable decisions.

In the communication field, several studies treat diversity as a socially constructed endeavor and analyze the discourse that surrounds general managerial

practices (Zanoni & Janssens, 2003) and decision-making about diversity requirements (Castor, 2005). In a study of Flemish managers' rhetorical constructions of diversity, Zanoni and Janssens (2003) found that the majority of participants discussed their relationships with migrant workers as "us" versus "them" (p. 62), as a group rather than as an individual, and as either lacking or as creating value. Castor (2005) studied university officials and their discourse surrounding an ethnic studies requirement. The dialogue revealed that they viewed the policy as an affirmation of diversity. However, the group experienced ambiguity and disagreement over what types of diversity should be included. For example, some felt that a Spanish course could count while others did not. In the end, the officials decided to define these categories at a later time, an action that revealed the slippery and ambiguous nature of diversity issues.

Despite the knowledge that diversity is necessary for fairness, the reduction of discrimination in organizations has a long and challenging road to travel. While early discussions of diversity primarily addressed discrimination, recent research on diversity recognizes the complexity and sophistication of these issues. Even though direct discrimination continues to be an issue, second-order conflicts regarding how to handle systemic racism have emerged in the literature (e.g., Friedman & Davidson, 2001; Mellinger, 2003).

Mellinger's (2003) study of the American Society of Newspaper Editors revealed that although editors espoused the value of diversity and increased the hiring of minorities, power and control remained in the hands of the White, male majority (p. 129). While a few minorities held positions of power in organizations, they were "stuck

on the lower and middle rungs” (p. 142). The author also noted that the framing of diversity as a demographic issue rather than an equity concern maintained the status quo and preserved the White majority interests.

These studies of diversity management also reveal the existence of first and second-order conflicts. The first-order level of conflict involves debate over the extent to which systemic racism actually exists and causes problems. The first-order conflict over diversity presents the greatest challenges to minority members since they face difficulty entering an organization or receiving a promotion. Equal employment opportunity law significantly reduced the problem of first-order diversity conflict since it eliminated choice by requiring organizations to take discrimination seriously. However, these laws led to further conflict at a second-order level. At the second-order level, members agree systemic racism exists and causes problems but they disagree on how to eliminate it. Conflicts at the second-order level also create new challenges for the dominant White male group as well since diversity initiatives require the sharing of power and resources with minority members.

Friedman and Davidson (2001) discuss how affirmative action creates second-order conflict. Under these guidelines, race is taken into account when hiring or making acceptance decisions. Now the dominant White male group is competing more fiercely with talented women and minorities and their opportunities are affected as a result. While laws and policies related to equal opportunities and affirmative action have provided a system with which to manage first-order conflicts, second-order conflict

remains ambiguous because of a lack of agreed-upon procedures and moral guidelines (Friedman & Davidson, 2001).

These examples point out the problems of simplistic thinking about complex issues. As Limaye (1994) asserts:

We need to go beyond knowledge and sensitivity because the issue of responding to or managing diversity is not merely a matter of knowing the right things and feeling the right sentiments on an individual level but of willingness by a group to share power on an institutional or organizational level (p. 361).

Criticisms of Diversity Management

Diversity management contains numerous flaws and fails to address many core problems that minorities and women still face. The prevailing problem with the literature in this area lies in the fact that much of it is written by White male scholars for the White male practitioners who continue to hold most positions of power. Grimes (2002) argues that most of the scholarship on diversity management either denies White privilege or recognize Whiteness but then re-centers it in ways that never change the status quo. Thus, the metaphor of managing diversity favors management at the expense of those persons whom it affects.

While authors occasionally address the organization's responsibility to value employees for the sake of fairness and empowerment (Cobbs, 1994; Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000), this practice serves organizational leaders and surfaces as a functional tool to protect against negative outcomes. For example, Dass and Parker (1999) assert that the decision for how an organization should manage diversity should be based in part on the degree to which it is experiencing pressure to diversify. This

recommendation implies an “as needed” approach, which fails to adopt multiculturalism and inclusiveness as organizational values thus, fails to change the status quo. Ultimately, any paradigm conceptualizing diversity as a business strategy does little to benefit minority employees and does not reveal the difficulties these employees face.

Noon (2007) suggests that while managing diversity aims to de-politicize the issue of race in organizations, the opposite occurs. He points out that the new paradigm simply favors the political interests of management rather than those of employees. By this logic, Limaye’s (1994) statement that diversity management requires the “willingness by a group to share power on an institutional or organizational level” (p. 361) carries the presumption that managing diversity naturally requires organizations to place a significant degree of trust in employees. Ironically, however, the idea that someone must manage diversity counters this notion completely. This paradigm also implies that ethical arguments for valuing diverse employees are insufficient and that an economic incentive is needed as well. Kirby and Harter (2001) summarize this tendency by noting that diversity management literature often refer to employees as “diversity opportunities” rather than as “diverse people” (p. 123). Because management research ultimately seeks to increase efficiency, productivity, and profits, scholarship in this field often focuses on functional goals instead of moral ones.

In addition, some scholars argue that there is little evidence to suggest that increasing racial diversity and implementing diversity training programs improve the bottom line (Awbrey, 2007; Curtis & Dreachslin, 2008). Jackson et al. (2003) also point out that many scholars wrongfully assume that cultural diversity naturally leads to

cognitive diversity; however, there is little evidence to support this belief. Many of the criticisms for the claims made for a positive relationship between diversity and organizational performance can be linked to the fact that diversity is not always clearly defined and that “diversity is itself diverse” (Klein & Harrison, 2007, p. 27). A synthesis of research on organizational diversity indicates that 89% of diversity research addresses differences in more visible traits such as ethnicity, sex, and age and that only 24% of all diversity studies attend to racial diversity specifically (Jackson et al, 2003).

Moreover, the abundance of normative ideas found in literature on diversity may contribute to the lack of conceptual clarity surrounding the term. For example, diversity is often treated as an individual difference (e.g., Page, 2007), which compartmentalizes race and ethnicity. This approach fails to recognize the history of racial oppression and thus trivializes it by treating it the same as any other identifying characteristic. Diversity is such a broad term that scholars often believe they are discussing the same concept when in fact, they are not. When the majority of published work promotes normative ideas, it is not as likely that concepts and terms will be concretely defined, thus creating a false sense that concepts are universal when in fact, readers may be interpreting the ideas very differently.

Most distressing of all, minority group members continue to see little improvement with regard to their hiring, retention, and promotion, despite the widespread application of diversity programs. While minorities have seen more gains in terms of their hiring, organizations are still not promoting them to the highest levels (Konrad & Linnehan, 1999). The BBC recently announced that despite increased

attention by human resources to diversity concerns, the company has rarely promoted minority employees into upper level positions. The media have criticized the BBC for failing to meet its targets to boost the number of minority employees in senior leadership positions and throughout the 20,000 member company (Vorster, 2008). As of 2008, only 10.8 percent of total employees and 4.8 percent of executives were ethnic minorities and these meager numbers were attributed to Human Resources taking the sole responsibility for bringing about change as well as the lack of attention paid by managers to developing minority employee talent (Phillips, 2008). The BBC has thus resolved to implement management-employee mentoring programs as a solution (Vorster, 2008).

In addition to the lack of mentoring, continued prejudice in the hiring process occurs because of glaring and illegal forms of prejudice, such as rejecting a female candidate because she is visibly pregnant. However, organizations also make more controversial hiring decisions based on statistical discrimination. Statistical discrimination occurs when hiring choices are based on empirical research regarding the productivity and risk of certain types of candidates. For example, a manager may avoid hiring a single mother because of evidence that this demographic is absent from work more frequently than mothers who are married (Baumle & Fossett, 2005). Baumle and Fossett (2005) explain that managers who hire by statistical discrimination are seeking to “hire only an employee who will be most productive and pose the least risk to the company” (p. 1251).

While hiring on the basis of statistics is discriminatory and disadvantages certain groups, evidence of risk remains an important consideration to many managers whose responsibilities include reducing costs and increasing benefits for the company. The paradigm of managing diversity supports an emphasis on reducing negative organizational effects and increasing positive outcomes of diversity. If strong evidence exists that a particular diversity hire is risky, risk aversion may trump any desire to hire, especially given the mixed effects of diversity on team performance. Unfortunately, this common practice does little to increase advantages for non-dominant group members. In light of inconclusive findings on diversity management, Lobel (1999) suggests that research examine relationships between specific diversity strategies and the initiatives that they are designed to target.

A few scholars have recognized this need and have produced research on the effects of formal networks on the careers of minority employees (Bierema, 2005; Friedman, 1996; Friedman & Craig, 2004; Friedman & Holtom, 2002; Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998; Helfgott, 2000). Employee network groups are “formally established groups of employees that get together for various activities” (Friedman, 1996, p. 406). These formal networks are recognized by organizational leaders but are initially formed by employees themselves on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. Ultimately, networks are designed to provide a catalyst for organizational change and for self-help (Friedman, 1999; Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998), although network groups do not generally prefer to be viewed as political forces driving radical change (Helfgott, 2000). Instead, their primary purposes are to improve careers

and build communities (Friedman & Holtom, 2002). While leaders support these groups in hopes that they will produce organizational benefits, network groups can also provide a venue for employees to seek out similar others for support as minority members of an organization.

The concept of employee network groups holds the potential for management and employees to work on diversity strategies together. Because network groups rely on voluntary participation by employees and support from management, they provide opportunities for scholars to understand how diversity initiatives are socially constructed. Examining network groups can help fill the current research gaps addressed in this chapter. This chapter has discussed the histories of the affirmative action and diversity management paradigms and associated research. Both of these paradigms attempt to increase the representation of diverse groups in organizations. Affirmative action attends to diversity through EEO laws and organizational hiring procedures. Its primary limitation lies in its inability to move organizational leaders past legal concerns and toward authentic concerns for diverse employees. Diversity management emphasizes the value that diversity can add through innovative thinking and a competitive edge. Similarly, its chief drawback is that it fails to value diverse members based on a moral imperative; rather, it continues to privilege a managerial perspective. Employee network groups have arisen within the diversity management movement and provide a venue for examining the perspectives of the minority members they represent. Moreover, they provide an opportunity to investigate the influence of diversity initiatives on the employees they are purported to aid.

The following chapter addresses employee network groups as a diversity strategy that merits greater research. The chapter delves into the findings regarding informal and formal networking, which provide a logical basis for the existence of employee network groups in organizations. Next, two theoretical perspectives are discussed as ways to address how these groups are socially constructed and how they are enabled and constrained through their organizational relationships and interrelationships. This chapter introduces dialectical theory as an approach to understanding how these groups manage tensions that are critical to their struggles as groups. Next, the chapter examines bona fide group theory and uses it as a macro-level for revealing the ways that groups are enabled and constrained through constructing boundaries and interdependence. In contrast to the diversity management literature that privileges Whiteness, this research emphasizes theories that highlight the perspectives of minority group members. Thus, examining employee network groups through a communicative lens can provide better understanding of the ways that these groups help or hinder diversity progress.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Over the last 20 years many diverse employees have turned to formal employee network groups to cope with the challenges they face in the workplace. Employee network groups, occasionally called affinity or diversity networks, help employees establish ties with similar others as well as connect with individuals in positions of power who might offer a helping hand in their careers. Employee network groups have proven popular not only among employees, but also with corporate leaders as ways to manage diversity. A 2007 report by the Human Rights Campaign Database estimates that 144 or 14.4% of the Fortune 1000 companies sponsored employee network groups (Employee, 2007). In 2005, a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management found that 145 or 29% of Fortune 500 companies sponsored employee network groups (Esen, 2005). While no data is available regarding the exact number of network groups based on race or ethnicity, 86% of Fortune 500 companies addressed race in their diversity practices (Esen, 2005). Another report indicates that the number of formally recognized LGBT networks in Fortune 1000 companies increased from 2 in 1980 to a total of 69 by 1998 (Raeburn, 2004). These trends suggest a broad and growing interest by employees and management in formal network groups (Zinni, Wright, & Julien, 2005).

Scholars have turned to network theory to learn how networks can improve career prospects for minorities and women. Network theory is really a multilevel,

interdisciplinary body of theories, some of which are more communicatively based than others. These theories have proven beneficial for investigating antecedents for joining network groups and for exploring the outcomes that employees receive from membership, but they are limited in examining the communication among members and identifying group efforts to forge change.

While these theories offer an explanation of the effects of networking on individual empowerment strategies, they fail to demonstrate the ways in which individuals organize to shape change at the mezzo group level. Also, while members of network groups are dedicated to supporting their members, these groups are also part of a strategic diversity effort by their organizations. Thus, these groups experience opposing tugs from managers who want work to get done, executives who want the groups to be part of strategic recruiting efforts, and diversity managers who want the groups to follow corporate policies.

From a communication perspective, network theory adopts a structural view of how connections between individuals are formed through the messages that are exchanged among them (Monge & Contractor, 2003). The extant studies on minority networks focus primarily on structural elements, such as centrality of an individual's position and the size of the network. In examining only structural elements, the sensemaking around diversity and the purposes and practices of these groups get lost. Employee network groups are symbols of diversity in organizations and members make sense of their purposes in ways that cannot be examined through the study of structure alone.

A final limitation of existing literature on employee network groups is a failure to address the presence of inherent contradictions among groups, their relationships and their contributions. Network groups face numerous tensions as their memberships consist of underrepresented employees working among dominant group members. They are enabled because of the organizational support they receive but that support also constrains them.

Dialectical theory provides a lens to address these contradictions because it acknowledges that contradictory needs permeate all relationships and that the ways in which these contradictions are managed can enable and constrain groups in achieving their goals. Because employee network groups exist to fulfill an organizational purpose, examining the tensions that arise in their relationships with other organizational entities is vital to understanding the representation of diverse employees at all organizational levels. Moreover, dialectical theory addresses how employees make sense of the contributions of network groups to organizational diversity initiatives. Therefore, this study applies bona fide group theory to examine the complex intergroup relationships that employee network groups have in their organizations. Bona fide group theory emphasizes a group's relationships with its environment and the ways that these relationships construct group boundaries.

The sections that follow present the body of knowledge gleaned from network research on diverse members in organizations. It points out the limitations of these approaches in explaining how communication constructs network communities and how members make sense of them. This chapter first reviews and critiques the theoretical

perspectives employed in extant network research. These network studies encompass three theoretical areas: 1) homophily and social identity, 2) social capital, and 3) social exchange. The chapter then sets forth dialectical theory and the bona fide group perspective as alternative models for uncovering the conflicting purposes that network groups serve in organizations and the ways that group boundaries and organizational context enable and constrain these groups. Ultimately, dialectical theory serves as a strong theoretical complement to bona fide group theory since it emphasizes contradictions in exacting group goals. Bona fide group theory also complements dialectical theory through its focus on boundaries and relationships with context, which reveal inherent tensions that group members must manage.

Formal and Informal Elements of Employee Network Groups

Emergent networks, also called informal or social networks, are made up of social ties that naturally arise in organizational settings (Monge & Contractor, 2003). By contrast, formal networks traditionally refer to the networks designated by legitimate organizational structures and the channels by which orders and information flow between managers and employees. Monge and Contractor (2003) note that scholars have largely turned away from formal network research because it has left many unanswered questions as to how communication actually flows in an organization. Information is frequently exchanged in unofficial ways, such as gossip, which generates informal ties and message patterns that cannot be studied by examining the legitimate structures. In exploring the ways in which networks actually function, it becomes clear

that employee network groups contain some elements of formal and emergent networks. Monge and Contractor (2003) assert that perhaps the distinctions between formal and informal networks are slowly becoming less critical. Perhaps the development of employee network groups is a reflection of current trends toward hybridity in network structures since they reflect characteristics of formal and emergent networks. It is useful to explore some of these characteristics before delving into the theories used to study network groups and the outcomes associated with them.

Employee network groups are formal in that they are deliberately planned and organized by the employees themselves as a way of accomplishing their trajectories (Friedman, 1999). Network groups seek professional advancement for their members, the opportunity to help organizations in their diversity efforts, and to create corporate awareness of the challenges group members face. To this end, members develop mission statements, elect officers, schedule board meetings, set agendas, plan events, and participate in charity work. Like many clubs and professional associations, well-organized network groups may charge annual dues from members, organize fund-raisers, and formally request funds from organizational leaders to finance efforts toward on-campus recruiting of diversity hires, college scholarships, and charity work (Friedman & Craig, 2004).

Network groups may form subcommittees dedicated to addressing the more specific interests of their members. Network group committees set goals related to the hiring, retention, and promotion of those they represent, although they do not view themselves as unions and therefore put minimal effort toward policy changes (Friedman

& Craig, 2004). Like informal networks, employee network groups provide a sense of community by connecting individuals in an organized way. Members support each other through social functions, such as potluck dinners and group anniversaries (Friedman, 1999).

Employee network groups also resemble formal networks in the ways that organizational leaders perceive them. While network groups are formed and maintained by the members themselves, they are officially recognized by their organizations (Friedman & Holtom, 2002). Executive leaders of a growing number of organizations politically and financially support network groups as a proven diversity management strategy and an alternative or complement to affirmative action (Employee, 2007). The most savvy and progressive organizations house diversity offices as separate entities or as part of human resources programs dedicated to hiring and managing a diverse array of employees (Etom, 2005; Lamboley, 2006). Diversity officers guide employee network groups in their strategy, marketing, and community efforts, while simultaneously having no legitimate authority over them (Friedman & Holtom, 2002). Diversity offices usually enforce policies that require network groups to open membership to all employees, have some formal structure, and produce a mission statement (Friedman & Craig, 2004).

Research to date has focused on antecedents to joining network groups, the benefits and consequences associated with them, and who benefits from their services. Scholars have largely employed theories of social identity and homophily, social capital, and social exchange to study networks. Many extant studies rely on several theories as a framework for research. The sections that follow describe each theory as well as the

specific findings regarding minority networks that each theory yields. Each of these theories is also critiqued for their limitations in providing a communication based understanding of network groups.

Social Identity and Homophily

The theory of social identity forms the foundation for extensive network research (Ibarra, 1995; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998; McGuire, 2000). Social identity examines the ways in which people form network ties based on homophily or similarity. Homophilous characteristics that draw people together include demographic traits such as race, ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, sexual orientation, political preferences, alumni affiliations, or shared hobbies. Social identity theory predicts that since individuals gravitate to those who are like them, their social networks are based largely on the extent to which they can locate similar others with whom to connect. Much research that examines homophily as a basis for network formation asserts that minorities may experience fewer social ties in organizations and ultimately fewer opportunities (Ibarra, 1995; McGuire, 2000; Mehra et al., 1998). Scholars make this prediction because they acknowledge the role that an individual's status plays in the effectiveness of social networking.

Mehra et al. (1998) specify that minorities are less likely to form instrumental ties than Whites since Whites tend to have more positions of power and greater centrality in an organization. Because of the tendency to form relationships with similar others, minorities are more likely to be found at the margins of a social network than

Whites, since the dominant group members are central in the network (Mehra et al., 1998). Because minority employees are typically concentrated in the lower to mid-levels of a company, their informal networks consist of a greater percentage of lower-status members than those of White employees (McGuire, 2000). As a consequence of having lower-status connections, minority employees are less likely to have access to instrumental resources such as information and decision-making power. This body of research is based on a “deficit hypothesis” – that minority members lack knowledge that will help them to navigate the politics of the White corporate world (Ibarra, 1995, p. 677).

McGuire (2000) found that Black employees who held upper management positions reported receiving significant information, decision-making power, and mentoring from their networks, but these benefits were similar to those reported by lower level White employees. This discrepancy supports the deficit hypothesis, indicating that Black employees must serve in higher positions in order to receive the same benefits as lower status Whites. The problem with the deficit hypothesis is that solutions to diversity concerns revolve around assimilation of minority employees, adopting characteristics and values of the dominant group, and minimizing their differences in order to improve the quality of their social capital. Since network groups are usually formed on the basis of homophily, scholars also question whether these groups help employees create ties with non-minority groups, and especially whether those ties have enough social capital themselves to provide links to upper levels of the organization (Bierema, 2005; Helfgott, 2002).

In contrast to findings that homophilous ties produced a social deficit for minorities, research by Ibarra (1995) supported the goal of maintaining a balance between an employee's ethnic identity and adapting to the dominant culture when necessary for career advancement and job satisfaction. Ibarra (1995) found that employees tended to be happier when they developed social network ties with dominant group members but also maintained a strong ethnic identity. This study also revealed that minority employees who were considered by supervisors to have high advancement potential had more homophilous network ties than employees who had low advancement potential (Ibarra, 1995).

The deficit hypothesis and Ibarra's (1995) balance approach mark an important distinction in research on diversity in that the balance approach provides a more culturally sensitive way of examining network communication and sensemaking. However, the need to maintain a sense of ethnic identity while also relating to those in power reveals contradictory pulls that are in tension with one another. The recognition that employees need to locate similar others in their organizations suggests that networking should not be strictly an individual concern; rather, management has the responsibility to support this endeavor. The fact that this managerial responsibility is missing from the homophily and social identity research reveals its primary weakness. This research presents networking as an individual pursuit while neglecting the importance of group organizing and the ways in which management can enable and constrain these networks.

One way that managers support the need to develop homophilous ties is by sponsoring employee-driven formal network groups. Employee network groups provide an official way for similar employees to meet and to take group action that can generate deeper understanding and acceptance of minorities. Ibarra's (1995) findings indicate that network groups allow employees to make a large number of homophilous connections in an organized way. This research project seeks to fill the current gap by examining the groupness of diversity group members through formal network groups.

Social Capital Theory

Unlike social identity and homophily, social capital focuses on how groups gain influence in organizations. Scholars address structural influences such as hierarchical position, demographics of work environment, and location of resources to study how networks form and then influence outcomes (McGuire, 2000). They may also measure variables such as an employee's centrality in a network, the number of others to whom an individual is linked, the frequency of communication between members, and the directions that messages flow as these are linked to social influence (Brass, 1995). This research centers on emergent network structures as ways to gain social capital (McGuire, 2000; McGuire, 2002). Studies of networks and social capital do not privilege communication as central to network formation but rather test structural variables such as status in the company; access to resources; personal characteristics such as race, age, and tenure; or cognitive states such as identification with ethnic group.

Studies of emergent networks and social capital are certainly beneficial for identifying the discrepancies between networks of minority group members and those of Whites. Like research that adopts social identity theory, however, these studies present organizational inclusion, access to resources, and career success as individual concerns while failing to acknowledge the powerful role that groups can play. Organizing with similar others can serve as a catalyst to improve advancement potential of constituents, achieve recognition and awareness of differences and stereotypes, and privilege place and voice in the workplace.

Theories of social capital encompass a broad array of representations but focus on the ways that social relationships help an individual acquire benefits. Some theories of social capital argue that structural elements such as network size and location of network ties determine benefits (Seibert, Kramer, & Liden, 2001). Other perspectives of social capital maintain that the quality of relationships matters the most in social influence (Coleman, 1988). Diversity studies that examine social capital as a basis for network formation often focus on between-group differences, such as contrasts between the ways that Black and White employees form networks and the extent to which each group benefits from its networks (McGuire, 2000; McGuire, 2002). Studies of networking and social capital theory reveal a number of outcomes for minority employees. While social ties generally deepen employees' connections to their jobs and organizations, these informal relations do not benefit minority employees to the same degree that they do White employees (McGuire, 2000; McGuire, 2002).

First, several studies demonstrate that employee network groups reduce barriers to organizational inclusion for Black employees (Friedman & Holtom, 2002; Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998), Asian and Hispanic employees (Friedman and Craig, 2004) women (Friedman, 1996, Friedman, 1999), and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered employees (Githens & Aragon, 2009). Networks generate large numbers of ties and broaden minority employees' social capital (Friedman, 1996).

While it is undoubtedly valuable to understand how social structures can lead to success and failure in the workplace, social capital theory ignores the importance that sensemaking can have on networking relationships. This lens for exploring networks stands at odds with a meaning-centered view since much of the network research in organizations privileges structures rather than messages or communicative processes. Moreover, studies that privilege networking as the primary theoretical concern are promoting individual empowerment while ignoring the impact that organized groups can have on improving the workplace for their members.

Social Exchange Theory

Network studies also embrace social exchange as a theoretical lens for examining antecedents and outcomes of group membership for individuals. Social exchange theory posits that individuals join network groups based on perceived rewards and costs (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Most studies based on social exchange theory uncover ways that employee network groups benefit participants (Friedman, 1996; Friedman, 1999; Friedman & Craig, 2004; Friedman & Holtom, 2002).

Networks afford members opportunities to relax and be themselves in settings that bring members of their communities together (Friedman & Holtom, 2002). Other benefits for network members include greater information and insight about the company due to increased mentoring and broadened network range (Friedman et al., 1998). Connections with in-group members are also associated with feelings of integration (Friedman, 1996) and increased mentoring and peer support (Friedman, 1996).

Friedman and Holtom (2002) suggest that members' perceptions of rewards, rather than actual rewards, ultimately determine their satisfaction with the network group. These researchers did not examine whether membership could be linked directly to career advancement, but employees reported high levels of career optimism attributed to mentoring through network group membership. Network group satisfaction has thus been linked to greater social embeddedness and reduced turnover intentions compared with dissatisfaction (Friedman & Holtom, 2002).

Research also shows that perceptions of benefits vary according to an employee's status in the company. Minority employees in management positions receive the most rewards from network groups since relationship building is a primary function and necessity of management roles (Friedman & Craig, 2004). Indeed, non-exempt or salaried employees most frequently join in anticipation of these benefits (Helfgott, 2000). Members who have a high percentage of high status managers in their network group are especially likely to report reduced turnover intentions (Friedman & Holtom, 2002). Evidence also indicates that managers who are members of network groups are

less likely to leave the organization than lower status members (Friedman & Holtom, 2002). Since an organization's vision for these groups is to develop leaders, the focus on higher-ranking minorities and women also seems logical from a strategic planning perspective. However, many employees with leadership potential may go unnoticed because they have structured schedules that require them to remain in their job during the workday. For example, receptionists who must be available to answer a phone or technicians who must turn a valve at specific intervals, cannot access networking opportunities as easily as managers who have work flexibility.

In addition to rewards, Friedman and Craig (2004) note that African American, Hispanic, and Asian employees also express concerns about organizational backlash and are very aware of the potential costs that network membership can accrue. For example, employees in Friedman and Holtom's (2002) study were concerned that management might disapprove of the group and associate membership in the group with union organizing. However, this concern over backlash can be outweighed by rewards that members receive, such as increased mentoring.

Another danger can emerge when management treats employee network groups as tokens that improve corporate image and ignore the employees themselves. Some research indicates that despite the intentions of network group members to promote increased hiring, retention, and promotion of their constituents, these formal groups at times may foster unintended consequences, such as isolation from the dominant culture or failure to achieve group goals.

Moreover, employees can suffer when their organizations do not support the groups that they claim to sponsor (Bierema, 2005). One case study of a women's network group in a Fortune 500 company reveals this dilemma through the unintended consequences that resulted from the group's activities (Bierema, 2005). While the women's network clearly provided a sense of community for its members, it also unintentionally preserved the patriarchy of the organization. Members expressed fear for what their managers and male colleagues would think and say about the group. One woman revealed that her supervisor always wanted to know what the members were discussing and planning in network meetings. Male colleagues also maintained patriarchy by joking that the network was merely a club for "male bashing" and "recipe exchanging" (p. 214), thereby discounting the intended purpose of the group. While Bierema's (2005) study specifically addresses a women's network, her findings hold implications for networks formed on the basis of race as well.

Fear of backlash, tokenistic treatment, and lack of support can all emerge as potential costs to network groups in organizations. The theory of social exchange is insufficient to examine the ways that network groups' relationships with management enable and constrain group processes and how groups cope with their constraints. By focusing attention on outcomes of relationships rather than the communication itself, scholars and practitioners fail to understand how communication between groups and key players in the organization can prevent members from gaining expected rewards.

In sum, formal network groups provide a rich context for studying the inclusion of minority employees in organizations. However, the existing research is inconclusive

for the following reasons: 1) studies have looked solely at network groups as venues for individual goal attainment rather than at the ways they organize to achieve collective success; 2) research places primary emphasis on structural elements such as network centrality and size of networks while neglecting the sensemaking necessary to understand these groups; 3) research fails to recognize conflicts between the goals of members for network groups and the goals of management; and 4) studies do not examine how groups are simultaneously enabled and constrained through group practices, management's initiatives, and the management of group tensions.

While most research focuses on antecedents to joining groups or outcomes of membership, Bierema's (2005) study suggests that employee network groups can also provide a rich arena for examining how organizational members make sense of the competing needs they face. In this case, women needed to connect with other women in the company but at the same time they did not want to alienate themselves from their male colleagues. Dialectical theory provides a lens for uncovering ways in which the management of such tensions can enable and constrain network groups, especially how they make sense of contradictory goals for their networks and those of management.

Bierema's (2005) interpretive study addresses how communication constitutes organizational reality in ways that previous network studies that examine outcomes ignore. This work moves the research closer to what communication theorists have termed the bona fide group perspective, which is another lens for studying network groups that this study employs. Bona fide group theory addresses a group's context through exploring how its boundaries are constructed and its interdependent

relationships are negotiated. In addition, bona fide group theory allows for investigating the ways that groups are enabled and constrained through their immediate contexts. Because this framework also emphasizes a number of group communication elements, it treats a network group as more than a resource for individuals to draw on, but as one that shapes group identities around diversity issues. Thus, the theories of dialectics and bona fide groups are used to investigate the interplay between group and corporate goals, sensemaking about group contributions to diversity, the multiple relationships among groups, and different organizational arrangements.

The sections that follow set up a rationale for using dialectical theory and the bona fide group perspective to examine the enabling and constraining features of minority networks. The research questions that fall out of these theoretical frameworks set up a case comparison of a Black and a Hispanic network group in a large international corporation. The proceeding sections describe the two theories as they relate to network groups and minority member issues.

Dialectical Theory

Dialectical theory refers to a variety of different conceptual approaches that rely on contradictions as a useful way to understand the world. Hegel (1969), Marx (1961), and Bakhtin (1981) have been highly influential in developing theories of dialectics within Western thought. A founder of German Idealism, Hegel (1969) conceived of dialectics as tensions that result from opposing ideas. A Hegelian dialectic consists of a thesis and antithesis, which inevitably reach a synthesis that resolves the dialectic.

However, this resolution only produces a new thesis which implies an antithesis and the dialectical process continues (Gadamer, 1982).

Hegel's student, Marx (1961), disagreed that the origins of human history were rooted in material events. While the Hegelian dialectic is ideological, Marx (1961) viewed the dialectic as material. Marx (1961) theorized dialectics as economic relationships to the means of production, thus leading to *dialectical materialism*. In Marx's (1961) view, the ideological thesis, antithesis, and synthesis were replaced by different classes in society. Gradual changes in the relationship between classes resulted in instability among them and revolution erupted. Synthesis was reached when this revolution brought forth a new social order. Like Hegel (1969), Marx (1961) believed that this synthesis became the new thesis, or a new class, which would then necessitate its own antithetical class. The revolutionary process would repeat until eventually, synthesis would constitute a classless society. At that point, the dialectical process reached its finality (Norman & Sayers, 1980).

Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) conceptualization of dialectics departs from Hegel (1969) and Marx (1961) in the sense that he viewed dialectics as composed of centripetal and centrifugal forces in an ongoing dialogue between parties. The centripetal forces brought parties together while centrifugal forces separated them. In his dialogic view, Bakhtin argued that synthesis was never reached but rather, that the poles of the dialectic were constantly being negotiated.

This study adopts Bakhtin's (1981) dialectical perspective that was popularized in communication scholarship by Baxter and Montgomery (1996), who applied this

theory to interpersonal relationships. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) argue that dialectical tensions are a necessary part of human relationships and the ways in which partners manage them determines the nature of relationships. Much of the organizational research on dialectics has adopted the lens of Bakhtin (1981) and Baxter and Montgomery (1996). Thus, it is useful to examine the ways in which these studies elucidate dialectics in organizations.

Dialectics in Organizational and Group Research

Dialectical theory is increasingly featured in organizational research as well as interpersonal communication. Organizational scholars have turned to the study of contradiction as a way to draw attention to the non-rational behavior that frequently occurs in organizations as well as the non-linear patterns that result from it (Benson, 1977; Blau & Scott, 1962; Clegg, 2002). Trethewey and Ashcraft (2004) effectively summarize the position taken in this research by stating, “A tension-centered approach begins with the premise that organizations are conflicted sites of human activity” (p. 82). These tensions often reflect the divergent goals of employees and management (Bierema, 2005; Githens & Aragon, 2009). As demonstrated in Bierema’s (2005) study of a women’s network group, employees may pursue membership because of social identity needs while management supports network groups as forms of control of minority employees. Moreover, employees may promote the corporate discourse of diversity as a value but continue to place their own group at the forefront of their goals (Githens & Aragon, 2009). For example, a Black, Hispanic, or GLBT network may be

interested in promoting employees of their own particular groups in the organization while management is more interested in diversity in its entirety.

The most frequent dialectical tensions to emerge in organizational literature include autonomy versus connection, stability versus change, and control versus resistance (Putnam & Boys, 2006). Studies of autonomy and connection in organizations are based on the premise that individuals rely on others to accomplish tasks but that they also desire opportunities for autonomous decision making (Jameson, 2004). Studies of stability versus change are frequently associated with nontraditional organizations such as cooperatives (Harter & Krone, 2001) or mergers and acquisitions (Pepper & Larson, 2006). Worker owned cooperatives favor democratic processes and thus face competition with their mainstream counterparts, which adopt top-down practices. As cooperatives face pressures to conform to mainstream practices, they experience tension between the need to remain stable and the need to change. On the one hand, they want to remain true to their missions and values; but on the other hand, they want to survive. During mergers and acquisitions, organizations face downsizing, restructuring, and the merging of organizational cultures. The tension between stability and change emerges as leaders make decisions about the future as workers negotiate their roles in a transformed company.

Research that emphasizes control versus resistance typically focuses on struggles between organizational leaders and members (Mumby, 2005), although these studies may also emphasize a leader's desire to implement new technologies and member resistance to these innovations (Jian, 2007). Collinson (2005) and Mumby (2005) echo

Putnam and Boys' (2006) emphasis on control and resistance as a dominant tension that appears in studies of leadership. In particular, they note the role that critical studies play in problematizing the power and control that organizational leaders assert. However, they argue for a dialectical view that combines control and resistance in the same study. Collinson (2005) and Mumby (2005) both criticize extant literature for assuming that leaders are luring hapless followers or that followers are exerting forms of resistance without acknowledging the legitimate power held by organizational leaders. Other dialectics that have been applied to leadership include masculinity versus femininity and dissent versus consent (Collinson, 2005).

In addition to research that addresses the tensions between autonomy and connection, stability and change, and control versus resistance, some research also focuses on tensions that minority employees face. Hopson and Orbe's (2007) analysis of the dialectical tensions experienced by Black men in organizations is especially relevant to the current study. The authors point to tensions evident in fiction and non-fiction books that reflect the dialectical experiences of Black men. Several of the tensions are particularly significant to the experiences of minority employees in the white-collar, corporate contexts. The rational-irrational tension reflects a vacillation between concepts of acceptable versus unacceptable behavior. Because of extreme injustices that Blacks in American society have endured, they may experience a need to compare the extreme and blatant forms of racism with the more subtle forms that typically exist today. Hopson and Orbe (2007) discuss the tendency of Black members to rationalize the irrational discriminatory behavior of Whites. This pattern may represent a coping

mechanism as Black members seek to fit in. The tendency to rationalize may occur when a subtly prejudiced comment is made. This comment may be ignored by rationalizing that the meaning did not come through as intended. To interpret the comment rationally by taking it at face value would be, in another sense, irrational because it would cause pain. Excusing the comment appears irrational because it denies the truth, yet it is rational because it avoids discomfort. This kind of rationalizing of racist statements may occur in an organization when minority members are trying to gain acceptance and to feel that they belong. This tension is related to inclusion versus exclusion. By brushing off the behavior as insignificant, the employee can maintain a sense of inclusion with the dominant group.

Inclusion versus opposition represents the conflicting desires to assimilate into White social structures while maintaining separation and independence (Hopson & Orbe, 2007). This dialectic constitutes a central concern for employee network groups that promotes a particular group by setting their members apart, while at the same time, creating opportunities for them to assimilate into the dominant culture. Members may experience a desire to join a network on the basis of homophily with the goal of connecting to similar others. However, like the women in Bierema's (2005) study, they may also realize that by connecting with similar others, they draw attention to themselves as different from the White male group. Moreover, if minority members oppose the dominant group, management has the power to refuse political and material support for them. The inclusion versus opposition tension relates to the autonomy-connection dialectic in the sense that autonomy may be desirable because it enables

those who are similar to gather together, but the alienation it may cause from the dominant group could hinder the collective power of the group.

Coping versus suffering refers to the mental exhaustion faced by Black members in attempting to achieve success in organizations (Hopson & Orbe, 2007). As the authors explain, Black members experience unique stresses when working in an organization, ones that lead to a balancing act between suffering and merely coping. For example, when employees feel exhausted by political pressures at work, they may cope by recognizing that they are fortunate to have jobs, even if the jobs are stressful.

Finally, running versus staying is a fight or flight response to the stresses created from the other dialectics. Members of employee network groups, for example, may be engaging in a “fight” reaction while employees who decide not to participate or to leave the organization are invoking a “flight” response. This tension is related to a choice between integrating and separating. When employees choose the “fight” response of joining a network, they align with their company in a certain respect since the company is sponsoring the group. The “flight” response of avoiding the group or leaving the company is related to separating since employees are choosing to disassociate from the organization. The contradictions that minority group members face lead to two questions regarding the tensions that network groups might experience:

RQ 1: What dialectical tensions do employee network groups face?

RQ 2: What differences exist in the tensions between the experiences of the Black and Hispanic networks? The next section sets the stage for additional research questions by detailing the ways in which groups manage tensions.

Management of Dialectical Tensions

Organizational scholars point to a number of ways in which members respond to the dialectical tugs they experience and these responses are similar to those discovered in interpersonal research (Jameson, 2004). Other studies examine sensemaking as a way of managing tensions (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004; Tracy, 2004). The following section synthesizes ways that previous research focuses on the management of organizational tensions.

Selection is the tendency to pay attention to one pole and neglect the other. Seo, Putnam, and Bartunek (2004) note that selection may also emerge as “reluctant coexistence” in which both poles are acknowledged but are placed in a cold war with one another in which one is always seen to be the more desirable of the two (p. 200). In Jameson’s (2004) study of anesthetists and anesthesiologists’ struggles over their autonomy and connection to one another, she draws attention to the ways in which these members discursively selected particular facework strategies to manage the dialectic. Through narrative analysis of interview data, Jameson discovered that some employees managed their autonomy and connection through selecting mutual face supporting behaviors, such as providing explanations, while others added to the tension by selecting face threatening behaviors such as devaluing the other’s knowledge. Extant research

suggests that network groups are likely to favor selection and to opt for a common pole when organizational structures make one choice seem obvious or easiest (Tracy, 2004). This way of managing tensions may emerge in the current study since network groups are bound by corporate policies that dictate how the groups form and function.

Source splitting is a term coined by Tracy (2004, p. 130) and occurs in group or organizational settings when tensions are divided among members so that the members split their attention between the two different poles. Jameson's study reflects how, in a large, loosely coupled group like a formal network, members may diverge in their chosen poles. Source splitting may signal a lack of communication between group leaders and members or different interests among members.

Separation or vacillation involves the recognition that both poles of a dichotomy exist but only one of the poles is favored in a given situation. This vacillation to one side or the other might occur because of topical or temporal separation. Some issues or points in time may resonate with one dialectical tug, while others correspond with the opposite pole. This choice may prove a useful way for network groups to manage dialectics since their needs might be met by attending to one pole and then the other.

Integration results in a combination of both poles simultaneously by way of neutralization or forced merger (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004). Neutralization involves compromising between the two to the extent that both poles are acknowledged and legitimized but neither is given the attention it deserves for healthy organizational relationships. Conversely, forced merger combines the poles in ways that cancel out the

positive effects of both sides. Integration could pose harm to groups if members do not fully embrace the benefits of the groups or take responsibility for maintaining them.

Finally, *transcendence* is closest to the Hegelian and Marxist notions of synthesis. Transcendence occurs when the dichotomies are reframed so that the original dialectic is no longer present. Transcendence can be useful in handling tensions that may arise between network and job responsibilities. For example, if members view participation in the network as vital to their success in the job, they may receive more benefits from participating than if they view the network as a responsibility added onto existing duties.

The current research draws from the methods of dialectic management in previous research. It is expected that network groups will manage the tensions they face in similar ways. The various options for managing tensions prompt two additional research questions:

RQ 3: What differences exist in the ways that the two groups manage dialectical tensions at four relational units: the group and the organization, the group and other network groups, the intragroup unit, and the group and individual members?

RQ 4: How do these differences ultimately enable or constrain the groups in their goal achievement?

The Bona Fide Group Perspective

The bona fide group perspective shifts the focus from individual members to group identity. This perspective sheds light on the ways in which groups and larger organizations manage their relationships (Putnam & Stohl, 1990) and the ways that network group goals are enabled and constrained. Two fundamental characteristics of groups – permeable boundaries and interdependence with context – are explicated and discussed in light of existing studies on bona fide groups and their relevance to network groups.

The premise of bona fide group theory is that groups and their organizational contexts exist in an interdependent relationship. To study this relationship, advocates of the bona fide group perspective challenge the traditional study of zero-history groups in laboratory settings and instead contend that group communication is best researched *in situ*. Scholars use the bona fide group perspective to examine ways in which groups negotiate stable yet permeable boundaries and interdependence with their surrounding contexts (Putnam & Stohl, 1990). Thus, the bona fide group perspective does not view groups as self-contained, but rather intertwined with their environments in complex ways.

Stable yet Permeable Boundaries

The characteristic, stable yet permeable boundaries, refers to the ways that group membership is constructed and managed as well as how outsiders access and influence group formation. Putnam and Stohl (1996) outline four ways in which group members

negotiate boundaries: 1) multiple group memberships and conflicting role identities, 2) representative roles, 3) changes in group membership and 4) group identity formation.

First, the theory contends that group boundaries are permeable in that members of one group are also members of other groups and therefore experience conflicting role identities (Putnam & Stohl, 1996). Putnam and Stohl (1996) mention that affiliations based on gender, race, religion, and occupation can affect group interaction. These multiple memberships can profoundly influence the frames that group members bring to the group and how members interact with each other. In the case of a minority network group, members come from a wide array of departments, occupations, work teams, and social and family situations, which likely influences intragroup interactions.

Multiple memberships also generate role conflicts for employees (Putnam, 2003). For example, members of network groups must balance the needs and priorities of their jobs with their roles as network group members. A member who has a lower status position in a company may take on a more dominant, managerial role in a network group, which may be uncomfortable for members who are higher in occupational status.

A second way that boundaries are negotiable is through the representative or boundary spanning roles that members play (Putnam & Stohl, 1996). Because of multiple group memberships, bona fide group members become implicit representatives of other groups, departments, levels of an organization, or other network groups. As bona fide group members, these employees can provide insight into the workings of many departments and levels of a company as well as other network groups to which they belong. These representative roles can generate awareness of various issues taking

place in different departments and teams that might be of interest to a network group. For example, a member of a Hispanic network group who also works with a human resources team could enlighten other members about actions and policies related to hiring and promotion.

Putnam and Stohl (1996) note that occasionally a member might act as a linking pin or as a gatekeeper between groups and mediate the relationship between the two units. In some cases, a diversity officer or human resources representative may serve as a communication medium between a network group and company executives. The gatekeeper may regulate the communication that is exchanged between the group and the executive level, which can affect the working relationships between the two units. Certain members of network groups may also act as linking pins between organizational leaders and the members at large. Understanding how linking pins produce meanings for network groups can reveal ways in which they function in organizations.

The third element of permeable boundaries stems from fluctuations in group membership. Changing membership can generate permeability; as new members enter, they bring a whole new set of connections and sensemaking. They also place responsibility on existing members to incorporate ideas that new members bring; thus boundaries become porous. However, boundaries are also stable in that recurring patterns of interaction and newcomer socialization serve to perpetuate expectations for group interaction and therefore reify group boundaries (Putnam & Stohl, 1990).

In addition, network groups are unlike traditional work teams in which achieving group goals are the primary issues for team members. Rather, participation in the

network group is constrained because members have full-time jobs that must take precedence over network group functions. As a result, members may restrict participation during the times of year in which they are the busiest in their jobs. In addition, the times and locations for events determine who can and cannot actively participate. For example, employees working at a plant on one side of town cannot leave their work for several hours to hear a speaker at the downtown branch of a company.

Finally, group identity is managed through boundaries. Boundaries must be permeable enough that groups can adapt to change yet stable enough that they maintain a sense of purpose and cohesion for completion of tasks and achievement of goals. Group identity may become apparent through shared fantasies (Bormann, 1975) or comparisons between group actions and the organization as a whole. Fluctuating group boundaries lead to the following research questions:

RQ 5: How do members construct group boundaries in ways that enable or constrain efforts to attain diversity goals?

RQ 6: In what ways does the permeability of group boundaries affect the groups' related dialectical tensions and management of goals?

Interdependence with Context

A key element of bona fide groups, interdependence with relevant context, has implications for the way that diversity is socially constructed in organizations and ultimately, how the relationship between race and power in organizations is exacted.

Interdependence with context refers to a reciprocal relationship between a group and its environment (Stohl & Putnam, 2003). Putnam (2003) notes that interdependence consists of the following four elements: 1) coordinated actions among groups, 2) intergroup communication, 3) jurisdiction and autonomy of the group, and 4) sensemaking of intergroup relationships. These elements are intertwined since communication among groups can influence a group's jurisdiction which, in turn, can influence future communication and so on.

Interdependence with organizational context offers a particularly useful lens for examining the value of employee networks for the diversity missions in organizations. Network groups have certain key goals related to the hiring, retention, and promotion of their constituents. These goals may be similar to the business strategies of organizational leaders. However, the goals of executives and network groups are bound to diverge, given that the executive levels of organizations still consist mainly of protecting the corporate environment. Therefore, it seems particularly important to explore the ways that network groups manage interdependence with their organizational contexts.

First, a group coordinates its activities and actions with other groups, which tightens or loosens its interdependence (Putnam, 2003). Tight and loose coupling is important to the internal dynamics as well. Since members of a network group are also members of departments and hierarchical levels, they may interact on a relatively infrequent basis, such as once per month; hence, they may be more loosely coupled than a highly coordinated surgical team (Lammers & Krikorian, 1997). A study of a

temporary marathon group also reveals the impact of loose coupling that may relate to a study on employee network groups. Many marathon group members did not “feel like much of a team” (Kramer, 2005, p. 263), yet they still believed they received benefits from membership, such as motivation and improved health. These findings demonstrate the fluidity of groups by depicting how communication can still function at one level to help members accomplish goals without serving to create meaningful, lasting connections between them. It also exemplifies how a loosely coupled group can develop structure, coordinated actions, and achievement of identifiable, group-related outcomes (Kramer, 2005). Bona fide group theory also states that interdependence is negotiated through intergroup communication. This element addresses the ways in which groups interface that, in turn, influence their interdependence with each another. The need to manage various intergroup relationships to achieve goals leads to the following research question:

RQ 7: How do network groups communicate and coordinate their activities with other network groups and organizational units?

Next, interdependence is influenced by the ways in which the group is autonomous or dependent on other units. Autonomy and jurisdiction relate to the ways that a group negotiates control over its goals and missions, especially for access to time, space, resources, and freedom from policy constraints. Constraints regarding group autonomy and jurisdiction lead to another research question:

RQ 8: How do network groups make sense of their autonomy, jurisdiction, and intergroup relations in the organizational context?

Finally, when groups make sense of their intergroup relations, they influence levels of interdependence between units. Sensemaking is a way of examining past experiences for expectations about the future. Many savvy companies view employee network groups as a way to advertise their commitment to diversity and they rely on successful and well-organized networks to enhance their reputations as inclusive corporations (Esen, 2005; Githens & Aragon, 2009; Lamboley, 2006). A company may be less likely to promote a network if membership is declining, in-fighting exists within the group, or if the group has not accomplished any quantifiable goals. How network groups make sense of these events and their reliance on other network groups, business units, or organizational levels, can impact their survival. The term “sensemaking” in this study refers to how group members reason about and explain their network groups. This sensemaking leads to the following research questions:

RQ 9: How do members of network groups make sense of their contributions to the diversity mission of the organizations?

The contradictions that may arise through interdependent relationships lead to two final research questions:

RQ 10: How does interdependence with the organization's context enable and constrain the network groups in enacting diversity goals?

RQ 11: In what ways does a group's interdependence with its organizational context affect the management of related dialectical tensions? These questions are explored through research outlined in the following chapter.

Theoretical Focus of the Current Study

Research on employee network groups suggest numerous contradictions – for example, the push-pull between membership and outsider status, between the trajectory that is best for the group and the one that is best for the organization, as well as the tug between network responsibilities and job duties. Dialectical theory provides a fitting method for identifying the specific choice points that network groups face in their efforts to create an environment that is more accepting of diverse members.

The view of dialectics adopted in this study reflects that of Bakhtin (1970) and Baxter and Montgomery (1992). Organizational relationships are dialogic and a synthesis among polar opposites is not inevitable because forces that contradict one another are interdependent but in opposition with each other. Trethewey and Ashcraft (2004) documented the scarcity of research that investigates organizational members' actual experiences in struggling with dialectical tensions and the management of them. The dialectical approach adopted in this study works hand in hand with the bona fide group perspective, which examines how organizational members and groups are

interdependent. The literature on diversity management and employee network groups reveals a mutual reliance between non-dominant group members, who seek greater opportunities, and organizational leaders, who wish to capitalize on the benefits of a diverse workforce.

The bona fide group elements of permeable boundaries and interdependence with context are relevant to studying employee network groups as well. Boundaries are defined and redefined as members come and go, bring new roles and connections to the group, and communicate a group identity in relation to other groups. These boundaries have a profound impact on how a group views its purpose for its broader diversity mission. Permeability allows a group to adapt to change, whereas stability allows a group to remain focused on its mission.

Interdependence between network groups and their organizational context is an important avenue to explore given that the success or failure of these groups is dependent in large part on the ways in which this relationship is negotiated (Lamboley, 2006). Groups that are highly interdependent are tightly coupled with their environments and need each other to achieve their missions whereas groups that are more independent are loosely coupled (Putnam, 2003). Moreover, while companies have an incentive to support network groups by offering resources, space, and time for group events and projects, they also need for employees to accomplish job assignments. Ultimately, the relationship between a network group and its immediate context can determine what diversity really means in the organization and the extent to which it is a valued priority. Bona fide group theory provides a starting point for understanding the

underlying variables that groups care about and that are important to their success. What is still missing is an understanding of the specific types of choices that are relevant to enabling and constraining a group.

It should not be presumed that this interdependence is balanced equally between management and employee network groups. Bierema's (2005) study, for example, revealed that the women's network group seemed to exist entirely at the mercy of organizational leaders. However, if diversity is to produce any positive outcomes in organizations, leaders must take seriously the efforts of its members to bring important contributions to the table. Organizational members must also realize the ways in which decisions are bound by social structures as well as by their efforts to influence these structures. For these reasons, dialectical theory and the bona fide group perspective serve as lenses for revealing the importance of a group's role and its effort to bring equality to those it serves.

The following chapter describes the methodology used in this study. This research adopts a case approach to describing and comparing a Black and a Hispanic employee network group at a Fortune Global 100 corporation. This study approach allows the researcher to unpack the bona fide group elements as well as the dialectical tensions that particular groups experience and manage. Included in the chapter is a description of the organization and the network groups, followed by a rationale for using a case study method. The data collection process is next described; particularly the in-depth interviews, observations of network activities, and use of corporate documents. Following the segment on data collection is a self-reflection of my responsibilities and

experiences as a researcher who is White and a woman. This moment of reflexivity grounds this work in how my own perspective shapes the process. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the use of thematic category analysis and the constant comparison method to locate dialectical tensions, identify enabling and constraining elements, and analyze them in relation to the eight bona fide group characteristics.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Study Design

The design for this research project was anchored in interpretive epistemology, which is founded on the belief that meanings are socially constructed through communication and specific to the community and the individuals that produce them. Because social phenomena are so distinct from natural processes, interpretivists value an approach to communication scholarship that allows them to preserve the complexity of real life. This perspective also implies the need for the scholar to examine *in situ* the inner circle of actors who are helping to create the reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miller, 2002). This research employed a pair of case studies that required the use of multiple data sources. The primary data for this study was derived from in-depth interviews with members of the Black and Hispanic network groups at the United States affiliate of a Fortune Global 100 energy corporation.

In applying the interpretive stance to dialectical analysis, Baxter and Montgomery (1998) note that scholars disagree in the extent to which they value uncovering dialectical tensions *in situ* or unearthing the nature of contradictions across time and space. These differing ontologies regarding organizational contradiction have produced a variety of epistemological approaches to examining tensions. Some investigations have employed empirical methods for observing contradictions that specific individuals and groups experience. Tracy (2004), for example, used formal

interviews and participant observation to understand the experiences of actual organizational members and then conducted her analysis of the data using a grounded approach.

Others, such as Hopson and Orbe (2007) and Collinson (2004), have drawn from existing literature using textual analysis to draw conclusions regarding overarching tensions that seem present across organizational contexts. Still other research has assumed the existence of specific dialectical tensions *a priori* and then probed the ways in which organizational members manage them. Jameson (2004), for example, looked at management of tensions as discursively carried out through speech acts – specifically, facework.

This study relies on discovering the ways in which bona fide group characteristics enable and constrain network groups through the specific dialectical tensions that are unearthed in the interviews shared with group members in this context; thus, it focuses on tensions that emerged naturally from the particular network groups under analysis. These cases presented a need for this specificity since on the surface, the corporation appeared to be a model for diversity practices. Yet, members expressed underlying tensions that existed within various internal and external relational units: intragroup relationships between members, the relationship between the group and the individual member, relationships between network and Summit leadership, and intergroup relationships between network groups.

The sections that follow describe the research settings, participants, data collection, maintenance of confidentiality, and data analysis. In this chapter, I discuss

my reflections as a White, female researcher who is addressing race and diversity in organizational scholarship. I then discuss the interpretive techniques of dialectics and bona fide group theory as methods. All of these choices were especially relevant when considering that interdependence with organizational context was of particular theoretical concern.

Research Settings

To find participants for my study, I used a combination of three sampling techniques – purposeful, snowball, and strategic sampling – to determine which company to examine, which network groups I would like to approach, as well as who within those groups would be most valuable to interview. Initially, I used a purposeful sampling strategy to decide which company and network groups I would investigate. Schwandt (1997) states that the purposeful sampling allows “sites or cases to be chosen because there may be good reason to believe that ‘what goes on there’ is critical to understanding some process or concept” (p. 128). I first decided to study an oil company since this industry has received scholarly and media attention because of hiring and promotion policies, practices, and attitudes. Oil companies have recently faced political pressure to make policies more inclusive towards diverse employees. Some organizations have also received fines for racial discrimination in their hiring practices.

This case study research took place at the United States affiliate of the Fortune Global 100 energy corporation, Summit International. Summit’s history revealed a corporation that consistently anticipated and responded to consumer trends, the political

atmosphere, economic peaks and valleys, competition with other companies, and pressures from interest groups. A British merchant founded the original company in the late 1800s as a venture for trading spices and textiles. A few years later, the company began exporting oil from Russia and formed a merger with another oil company in 1907 to become Summit International with headquarters in Europe. After World War II, Summit expanded its oil exploration to Africa and South America and by the 1960s had established its offices in countries on six continents. Summit responded to the oil crisis of 1973 by developing businesses for coal, metals, biofuels, and briefly nuclear power.

At the time of this study, Summit International had over 100,000 employees worldwide, including approximately 22,000 within the United States. Its United States offices were concentrated around a Southwestern metropolitan area. Summit employees worked for five different organizations, or “business units,” owned by the corporation. These business units consisted of Downstream, Exploration and Production, Gas and Power, Global Solutions, International, and Trading. Within each business unit were smaller businesses, usually in the form of limited partnerships. For example, Downstream consisted of Chemical, Manufacturing, and Retail businesses, which were housed in separate buildings or campuses spread across the entire metropolitan area. Trading, Global Solutions, and some of the Downstream divisions were located in the city’s downtown business district. The Manufacturing division of Downstream was located at the East Side Plant, a 1500-acre refinery and petrochemical facility.

Like many prominent oil companies, Summit had come under scrutiny by environmentalists and humanitarians over the years for its treatment of the natural

environment and the nations with which it conducted business. This political and legal pressure led Summit to implement environmental policies in its operations and to place emphasis on positive relations between the company, the governments, and the people of the nations it entered.

As the highly politicized Texaco scandal in the 1990s tarnished the oil industry's image (Brinson & Benoit, 1999), Summit began to scrutinize its own diversity policies and practices. In addition, Summit International was seeking structural changes that would allow the company to reach new markets with greater agility. These two concerns led United States Summit executives to hold a two-day conference in 1996 to generate dialogue about diversity and its impact on business. The conference resulted in the creation of a Diversity Office that would coordinate with Human Resources to direct the company's recruiting of minority employees and women. The company also created a supplier diversity program, whereby it could increase its partnerships with women- and minority-owned businesses. Finally, Summit officially recognized and financially sponsored five employee network groups. Summit leaders in Europe also began to address diversity, although gender – not race – was of primary concern. Summit was a particularly valuable site for a case study of diversity practices since the company had sponsored official network groups and created a structure to support them.

After identifying Summit, I learned about the network groups by visiting the company's website and by contacting one of the Diversity Mangers. The network groups established in the United States included a Black network, a Hispanic network, an Asian Pacific network, a Women's network, a GLBT network, and a network for

Generation Y employees. In addition to these six official networks, there were also two additional branches of the Black network group with separate leadership in refineries several hours away from Summit's main offices. There was also a small network of White men that several participants mentioned, although this network was not officially recognized by the company. The group was called "White Men as Full Diversity Partners" and the participants who mentioned this group said that they believed its members sincerely supported diversity efforts at Summit. Finally, a Women of Color inter-network was formed as part of the Women's Employee Network, which consisted of women representatives from the Hispanic, Black, and Asian Pacific networks. The Women of Color inter-network, which was only two years old at the time of the study, had been founded by a diversity officer to address issues faced by minority women that were not also experienced by White women.

The Diversity Officer put me in touch with network group leaders for the Summit Black Networking Group (SBNG) and the Summit Hispanic Employee Network (SHEN). I chose to work with these networks because they fit previously established criteria for network groups: they were recognized by their institutions, had a formal structure and mission statement, and were open to all employees (although the majority of members and all officers identified with the specific ethnic group represented). In addition, these groups boasted some of the highest membership rates in the company as SBNG had about 600 members and SHEN included approximately 800 employees. I also found that the infrastructure of the two groups was well established and organized so that I could generate meaningful data for my study. SBNG was the first group to be

officially recognized by Summit, and soon SHEN followed suit. Both networks had been formally organized since the mid-1990s and had experienced substantial growth and change since their grassroots beginnings. Throughout the study, I use the terms “Black” and “Hispanic” because these were the identifiers originally used by founders of the two groups and the descriptors adopted by current members.

Participants

Negotiating access to a site requires that a researcher rely on many contacts for assistance. Consistent with Lindlof and Taylor’s (2002) guidance, I spoke with network group leaders prior to obtaining IRB approval so that the board would recognize the project as a legitimate study supported by the intended participants. However, I still needed to negotiate access with other network members individually as well as acquire permission by security personnel to visit the various work locations for my interviews and observations. Kahn and Mann (1969) term this process “contingent acceptance decisions,” because researchers must often pass gatekeepers at multiple levels in order to access all members of a community (p. 72).

Once the IRB granted approval for my study, I was then able to begin carefully approaching members of the network groups before collecting data. To gain access to additional participants for my study, I used the snowball sampling method by asking network group leaders to provide me with new contacts so that I could reach my desired goal of 15 interview participants per network group. As each person I interviewed connected me with more members, these new members were then able to suggest

additional participants for my study. It was necessary to use a snowball method in this case to make as many connections within the networks as possible. The reasons for this are twofold. First, although they have a formal structure, network group members do not communicate and see each other on a daily basis, as would other types of groups within organizations. This meant that each member might only personally know a few other members – at least, only a few for whom they felt comfortable giving out contact information. Second, the groups were prohibited from soliciting members about issues outside the realm of Summit, so leaders did not feel comfortable sending out mass emails to hundreds of members soliciting participation in my study.

In addition to snowball sampling, I employed strategic sampling to make my participant selection more deliberate (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). I conducted 30 interviews in total, all of whom were active members of SHEN or SBNG. Two of these members were also Diversity Officers. One of these was Diversity Manager for the West Side location and the other was Diversity Director for Summit U. S., which was an executive position. The remaining 28 interviews were evenly split between SBNG and SHEN, with 14 from each group.

The sample size was fitting for several reasons. First, a small percentage of the 600 SBNG and 800 SHEN employees actively participated by coordinating events, serving in a leadership role, or contributing to strategic planning. Members with whom I spoke guessed that this number was about 10% to 20% or 60 to 120 SBNG members and 80 to 160 SHEN members. I learned that members who were not very involved were not usually aware of the group's specific goals of the group and the agendas set in the

board meetings. While less involved members could tell me about their personal experiences with the group, they did not tell me as much about the level at which the group interfaced with the organization. Therefore, only the active members who took positions as officers or committee members or who regularly attended events were able to answer my questions related to the group's interfacing at four relational units.

Second, I began to experience saturation in the interview content. I started to hear the same information from the last few members in each group which suggested that I had reached a saturation point in my data collection. Finally, since members of network groups were scattered among six locations, connecting with participants was difficult. Members of the network groups often knew just a few others that they felt comfortable about suggesting as contacts. Thus, the distance between members posed a challenge in scheduling interviews since members did not know each other very well.

I strategically sought to meet with network group members who represented a variety of business units, occupations, and levels in the corporation. I interviewed 11 employees in Oil, 10 from Downstream, 2 from International, 2 from Trading, 1 from Exploration and Production, 1 from Gas and Power, and 1 from Global Solutions. These employees worked in several occupational areas: 3 in finance, 5 in accounting, 1 in marketing, 3 in diversity and human resources, 6 in information technology, 4 in engineering, 1 in legal services, 1 in administrative assistance, and 4 in environmental and ethics compliance. Sixteen participants were at the middle management level, one was a tax attorney and one was an executive. I interviewed participants with the

awareness that members provided different perspectives based on their multiple memberships, representative roles, and access to outside resources.

I also met with a number of network group board members who were involved in the trajectory and strategy for the groups. Several members of SBNG and SHEN with whom I spoke were also representatives for Women of Color. Tables 1, 2, and 3 below identify those I interviewed.

Table 1: SBNG Members

Name	Business Unit	Position	Years at Summit	Network Role	Location
Jafar	Oil	Business Systems Manager, Property Management	18	President	Downtown
Danielle	Gas and Power	Ethics and Compliance Manager, Renewables	10	Vice President	Downtown
Tonya	Oil	Americas Infrastructure Projects Delivery Manager	12	Secretary	Downtown
Cass	Global Solutions	Manager, Health, Safety and Environment	2	Chair of Attraction, Recruitment, Retention	Southwest Side
Sean	Downstream	Marketing Manager, Lubricants	10	Former President, Member	Downtown
Perry	Oil	Social Investment Manager, Corporate Affairs	12	Attraction, Recruitment, Retention Committee	Downtown
Randall	Oil	Engineer	8	President, Port Refinery	Port Refinery
Donna	Downstream	Team Lead, Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable	9	Site Coordinator	Southwest Side
Bethany	Downstream	Process Engineer, Technical Support	4	Site Coordinator	East Side Plant
Alisha	Oil	Accountant	10	Women of Color Representative	Downtown
Louis	Oil	Change Management Analyst, Product Systems Support		Member	Downtown
Mattie	Trading	Financial Analyst	9	Member	Downtown
Janice	Downstream	Accountant, Chemical	30	Member	West Side
Timothy	Downstream	Environmental Specialist, Fugitive Emissions	30	Member	East Side Plant

Table 2: SHEN Members

Name	Business Unit	Position	Years at Summit	Network Role	Location
Andre	Downstream	Operations Lead, Information Systems	5	President	South Side IT
Patrice	Downstream	Environmental Compliance Representative	10	Secretary	Northwest Side
Victor	Oil	Audit Coordinator	6	Treasurer	Downtown
Jacob	Downstream	Senior Research Technician, Olefins and Derivatives	17	Site Coordinator	West Side
Ava	Oil	Information Technology Support, Human Resources	6	Former Vice President, Member	Downtown
Jennifer	Downstream	Transition to Support Team Lead, Information Systems	9	Women of Color Representative	South Side IT
Lydia	International	Executive Assistant, Corporate Affairs	1	Conference Committee	Downtown
Emily	Exploration and Production	Security Information Management Manager	9	Member	West Side
Ramone	Oil	Tax Attorney	10	Member	Downtown
Angela	Trading	Treasury Team Lead	7	Member	Downtown
Gabriel	Oil	Audit Coordinator	8	Recruitment Chair	Downtown
Michael	International	Global Security Advisor	2	Member	Downtown
Joey	Oil	Project Lead	5	Member	Downtown
Joseph	Downstream	Manager, Supplier Diversity	18	Member	Downtown

Table 3: Diversity Office Representatives

William	Oil	Director of Diversity for Summit U.S.	Downtown
Susan	Oil	Global Diversity and Inclusion Manager	West Side

Interviews

My primary data consisted of the 30 in-depth interviews that I conducted. An in-depth interview is a qualitative technique of gathering information that allows for person-to-person discussion over a significant duration. In-depth interviews can be advantageous over other forms of interviewing and surveying because of the detail they supply, their accuracy, flexibility, and rapport between researcher and interviewee, as well as the ability to help the interviewer reach and understand the perspective of underrepresented groups. Because they allow interviewees to become immersed in their

responses, in-depth interviews can be healing for participants when confronting sensitive subjects (e.g., Varallo, Ray & Ellis, 1998).

The 30 interviews I conducted ranged in length from about 1 to 2 hours each, with most interviews lasting about an hour. Before interviewing, I took precautions to avoid any unanticipated and unnecessary consequences by communicating to participants that I would meet them at a location of their choosing. This approach granted interviewees the freedom to select a meeting place that felt safe and was convenient to them. I also reminded them that interviews in their workplace might be overheard and that they should keep this in mind when selecting a setting for our discussion. Most participants chose to interview at their work location. Since most interviews took place during a lunch hour or break during the workday, it seemed that this was most convenient for people. Participants were working professionals who had limited time to devote to the interview process. Several members were in technical or clerical positions that required them to remain at their posts during work hours and so they could only meet during their lunch hour. Others were in managerial roles and had more freedom in their schedules.

I conducted 24 interviews at the 6 Summit locations in the metropolitan area, 4 interviews at off-site coffee shops and restaurants, and 2 interviews by phone. The two participants I interviewed by phone had been unable to meet in person because of scheduling conflicts and distance (one of these members worked at a refinery four hours away). Thus, the phone was a last resort but was necessary in two cases.

I also communicated by email and phone to arrange appointments or to request responses to additional questions or to discuss an interpretation. However, I did not email transcript data to a work email unless someone requested it after I suggested other means of communication. My preference for communication regarding the transcript or interview questions was to meet in person.

The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that I used a list of pertinent questions regarding members' experiences in the network groups and their impressions of the interfacing between the group and their jobs and the larger organization. These questions prompted participants to reflect on ways that the networks functioned as groups inside an organization. Hence, the questions related to issues of membership and relationships between the networks and other organizational entities like the Diversity Office. I began with four primary questions, which addressed group concerns related to the boundaries and interdependence of the groups. Nested within each of these group-level questions were secondary questions regarding the group's relationships with other groups and how individuals related to their different groups. For example, the following represented one of the four sets of questions: *Who can be a member of SBNG/SHEN? How does SBNG/SHEN recruit new members? How did you find out about SBNG/SHEN and decide to join? What was it like being a new member? How does the socialization process compare to the way you were socialized by Summit when you first came to work here?* Appendix A contains the full interview schedule.

While I made an effort to address every issue pertinent to the network groups, I conducted the interviews like conversations, allowing for the discussion to take a new

direction if it was relevant to my research questions. Frey, Botan, and Kreps (2000) note that naturalistic researchers commonly have a list of questions but then improvise probing questions as needed. Mishler (1986) explains that, although interviews are inherently structured to grant the interviewer the most power, it is possible for in-depth interviews to be empowering to the participants as well. Allowing for more reflective responses places most of the discussion in the hands of the interviewee. I felt that the natural flow of the interview conversation also enabled us to develop a rapport because I was truly listening and showing concern for specific group issues that individual members believed were important.

Supplemental Data

In addition to interviews, I acquired documents such as mission statements, newsletters, and intranet postings for the network groups. Written and electronic communication provided valuable insights regarding communication within the network groups as well as with external parties. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) refer to documents as the “paper trail” that reveal a history of the participants, what activities, actions, and values are “certified” by the participants, and how members are categorized (p. 117). These documents provided information that supplemented my interview data and that represented the official communication of the network groups. I often used this data as background to understand the structure of the groups, such as which members held officer positions, how many new members the group had acquired in the previous quarter, and the tone the group set through communication with its members and

Diversity Office. At times, this data informed my construction of the dialectics. One example of this was my use of the groups' mission statements, which were posted on the intranet. Their mission statements summarized some of the tensions that they faced in defining the purpose of the groups.

I also attended a board meeting for the Black Network Group as well as the annual conferences that each group held. I took detailed notes at the board meeting as well as took notes on the speeches at the annual conferences. The data I collected from these observations could not have been garnered from interviews or printed communication and shed further light on the dialectical tensions that the groups experienced through their complex inter-relationships. At the board meeting I became privy to current issues and about conflicts in SBNG's relationship with the Diversity Office. My experiences as a participant at the annual conferences shed light upon the values of the two groups and allowed me a rare opportunity to observe members interacting face to face, which was out of the norm from their everyday experiences with the network groups. The inclusion of interview data, written communication, and observational analysis helped me detect parallels and patterns among messages as well as reveal any contradictions that were present in the network groups' communications.

Confidentiality

At the interviews, I informed network members that their participation was confidential and I asked to record the interactions. In all cases of face-to-face interviews, participants allowed me to use the audio recorder. I took detailed notes

during telephone interviews and at the SBNG board meeting. I also provided participants with written information about my study as well as a consent form to read and sign. I kept these forms in a locked filing cabinet for future reference, if necessary. Alternatively, I brought information sheets to pass around at large gatherings where I was conducting participant observation and taking field notes. I had each interview transcribed by an outside transcriptionist and then kept the audio files and word processed documents on a password-protected computer. I used aliases to represent the corporation, network groups, and individuals in my dissertation to ensure that data could not be linked to anyone by association.

Through the interview process, I was able to garner a detailed history of each network group. Most of the accounts I heard could not have been gathered through the corporate website alone. The histories of these network groups are vital to analyzing group relationships and tensions within the organizational context of Summit.

History of the Summit Black Networking Group

The Summit Black Networking Group, or SBNG, came about in the late 1990s as primarily a social venue for Black employees to connect with each other. William, Vice President for Diversity, pointed out that SBNG was first a small group of Black employees who began to gather socially on Friday nights as an alternative to going out dancing to the country-and-western music that their White colleagues favored. Coincidentally, this small group of Black employees was forming at the same time as the business case for diversity was coming into vogue with upper management. Upper

management soon approached the early group leaders about drafting a charter so that the corporation could officially recognize the network group and gain some control over its functioning. The United States Director of Diversity described the early SBNG as a “support mechanism” by which to navigate through Summit and as a “safe haven” for achieving common ground and forming strategic business partnerships with others. At that time, Tonya explained, “They only had programs about leadership development, career development, and if you weren’t really secure in who you were, it could have been a little bit intimidating because the original people were the elitists among the Blacks, if you will, so they were the doctorates who happened to work in [the oil and gas industry] forever.”

After its initial charter, SBNG quickly became a driving mechanism for the company’s strategic diversity and inclusion efforts. According to Sean, the original agreement was that the networks would take on the role of “making the company aware [and] making employees aware of issues facing minorities and women and so forth.” In turn, SBNG would receive publicity and funding for programs through the Diversity Office that existed separately from Human Resources.

By the mid-2000s, SBNG had a formal structure with elected officers and committees for attraction and recruiting, membership, events, learning and development, and mentoring. SBNG was also represented by a site coordinator at each of the six Summit locations around the city. The site coordinator would communicate with SBNG officers and take responsibility for hosting site-specific events since distance and traffic congestion made meetings at the central downtown location very difficult. By the time

of this study, the Executive Diversity Office was housed in the central business district downtown with diversity managers also appointed at each of the six Summit sites around the city.

At the time of the study, only a small percentage of the 800 members actively participated in some capacity, such as by coordinating events, serving in a leadership role, or contributing to strategic planning. Members with whom I spoke guessed that this number was about 150. While SBNG was open to all employees, group leaders surmised that most members were Black, based on who they saw at events and who came forward to take on a leadership role. Members also noted that while attendance at events was somewhat mixed, group leaders and members involved in planning and carrying out events were typically Black. Many members with whom I spoke said that they were members of other network groups as well, but that SBNG was the main group in which they participated.

Members stayed connected with each other through SBNG's website, which was part of the Summit intranet and was accessible only to employees. The homepage of SBNG's website featured the group's vision, which was to be "a catalyst to create a workplace where Black employees [could] reach their full potential. The network is recognized as a source of competitive advantage to Summit and is an invaluable asset to Black employees and our communities." SBNG stated its mission as "a volunteer collaboration that empowers Black employees. Our goal is to positively impact Summit's competitive edge globally by fostering a corporate culture that respects differences and values the contributions of all employees."

It appeared that SBNG prioritized three main goals: 1) to pursue visibility, 2) to develop programs, and 3) to be a resource to Summit with a direct, positive impact on the bottom line. These three goals were intertwined and dependent on one another as well as a source of tension that the group experienced between focusing inward versus outward in its endeavors.

Visibility involved making sure that SBNG was recognized for its ability to be progressive and to lead the way for other network groups. This goal was often accomplished by hosting relevant programs and then making sure that the Diversity Office received communication about events that SBNG hosted. In recent years, members said that SBNG had lost some visibility but that early on, SBNG's mentorship program had created a sense of prestige for the network group. When SBNG began, it established a mentoring program which was seen by corporate officials as adding a new resource to employees, thereby benefitting the network group as well as the company. Other networks saw this mentoring program and touted SBNG as "premier."

The idea of being premier was strongly tied to visibility in the sense that the network wanted to be visible in the right ways, such as by developing relevant programs that could benefit a large number of employees. Programs also needed to be relevant to the corporate diversity mission and be distinct from what other networks were doing. Finally, programs also needed to be important so that not all events were happy hours and mixers. SBNG specifically stressed the development of programs related to improving the performance of Blacks within the company and to the development of Black corporate leaders.

Finally, several members emphasized that, in the end, SBNG must support Summit's mission and fulfill its role in the company, although no one really discussed how this goal should be reached. Many members framed SBNG as a resource to Summit with the idea that corporate leadership would approach the group to help with recruiting Black employees and participating in community outreach. While members expressed the group's potential for helping with recruitment, one member voiced skepticism as to whether this aim would occur: "I heard that sometimes some people would get calls and [Human Resources would] say, 'We have this position and we are looking for a minority candidate. Do you have one?' I don't really think that's our purpose because I know HR has everyone's race."

History of the Summit Hispanic Employee Network

The Summit Hispanic Employee Network, or SHEN, was also officially sponsored by the company. SHEN emerged in 1997 when a group of Hispanic employees approached Summit leadership about forming a network group of their own after learning that the Summit Black Networking Group was granted its charter. According to Jerry, a group of Black employees had threatened Summit with a lawsuit for discrimination in the company's placement and promotion practices. Overseas assignments were particularly sought after since an employee who was granted such a responsibility was given the privilege of representing the corporation at a global level. Jerry explained, "Whenever it came time to go overseas [or] to meet with clients overseas, [Hispanics] were always bypassed." After settling out of court, corporate

leaders decided that emphasis should be placed on diversity at Summit. Jerry explained the company's decision process:

The executives said, "We need to understand what's going on with all the people at Summit because we have so many different, nationalities here, so many different classes." The biggest class difference that we saw was, not so much the different races as it was, the technicians and the engineers and the managers, and so there was a BIG difference in that. And so Summit noticed that and they said, "We're also gonna work with the race part of it too." And that's when the networks all of a sudden started up. And the way they would try to show that they meant business is how much money they would put into the network.

After its initial charter, SHEN quickly became a driving mechanism for the company's strategic diversity efforts. It is important to note that Jerry was the only SHEN member interviewed who was a Summit employee at the time of the network group's formation and thus, he provided the only account of the events that took place.

By the early 2000s, SHEN had established a formal structure with elected officers and committees for mentoring, development, community relations, participation, and recruitment. SHEN was also represented by a site coordinator at each of the six Summit locations around the city. SHEN also maintained its own website on the Summit intranet, which was a part of the company's website. The website stated that SHEN's vision was to be "the leading proponent and resource committed to supporting the recruitment, development, and advancement of Hispanic employees within the [Summit] Companies." In addition, SHEN communicated with its members by way of a monthly newsletter distributed by email. The newsletter began with a note from the President, Andre, followed by a listing of new SHEN members, upcoming events, community service activities, and trivia about Hispanic culture and history.

Because Summit policy mandated that membership of any network group be open to all employees, SHEN participated in membership drives with other network groups at various times during the year. Just as with any network group at Summit, becoming a member of SHEN was simply a matter of an employee adding his or her email address to the group's email list. New members were announced every month in the SHEN newsletter. SHEN might recruit as few as 30 members or as many as 75 in a given month. Although new members frequently joined, only a few members regularly attended or held leadership roles. Those I interviewed often cited the Pareto Principle, that 80% of work is accomplished by 20% of members as a way of explaining the low participation rate. In examining the number of officers, site coordinators, and committee members, volunteers, and audience members at the events, this estimate seemed fairly accurate.

Members also noted that while attendance at events was mixed, group leaders and members involved in planning and carrying out events were typically Hispanic employees. Many members with whom I spoke said that they were members of other network groups as well, but that SHEN was the main group in which they participated. Several members of SHEN with whom I spoke were also representatives of the Women of Color Network.

Members who were interviewed provided extensive positive feedback about SHEN and Summit and expressed satisfaction with SHEN and the company as a whole. I received a general sense that members felt the corporation was supportive of their network group and was generally committed to creating a working environment in which

diversity was promoted and valued. SHEN members who were interviewed also described many incidents in which their participation in the network had benefitted them at a personal or professional level. On the surface, the interviews usually displayed very little expression of conflict or dissatisfaction with the group. Several comments noted, however, that Hispanic employees were still struggling to ascend to high positions in the company.

Members of SHEN, SBNG, and the diversity officers at Summit confided that despite the existence of a corporate diversity mission, a diversity office, and multiple network groups, minorities remained employed primarily at the lower and middle levels of the company. Summit might have excused this glass ceiling effect, convinced that given more time the ceiling would break. However, in the 12 years since the original diversity conference and the founding of the network groups, Summit had seen significant increases in the percentage of White women who ascended into upper management positions. While employees would not share specific numbers because of confidentiality, they all assured me that the incongruity in the percentages between White women and minority women and men was substantial. Thus, the discrepancy between advancement of White and minority employees was impossible to ignore.

Studying Race as a White Female Researcher

Given that incongruities exist between Whites and minorities, I recognized that being a White and woman researcher would affect the way I positioned myself, my data collection, and my interpretation of the interviews. Scholars such as Ashcraft and Allen

(2003) and Calvert and Ramsey (1996) argue that Whiteness is a largely unrecognized racial identity that is not neutral. Critical Whiteness theory challenges Whites to explore the ways that they are privileged because of their racial heritage. In considering my own Whiteness, I constantly forced myself to be reflexive while conducting this study because my own perceptions and experiences would color my interpretations of the Hispanic and Black employees I interviewed. This study acknowledged the perspective of co-cultural group members (albeit filtered through my own White female and upper middle class interpretation). This study did not treat race as just a variable but regarded the social construction of a racially-defined group as linked to its context.

Cox (2004) cautions researchers to acknowledge how their own racioethnic identity can influence the design, data collection process, and interpretation of the data. He suggests that nonwhite researchers are more likely to employ “nontraditional designs” (p. 13) such as ethnography and other interpretive methods. I chose the case study method as well as in-depth interviewing as a strategy for increasing the likelihood that my findings would be grounded in the experiences of the specific groups that I studied and to minimize the chance that my *a priori* notions of minority experiences in organizations would cloud the data. I cannot be certain that my identity as a White woman did not affect what information the group members were willing to share with me.

As a White, woman researcher, I took steps to ensure that I was treating my participants as knowledgeable corporate network group members. First, because this research addressed diversity, I incorporated in my data collection Mishler’s (1986)

suggestion that the researcher treat the interviewer and interviewee roles as advocate/learner-actor, in which the interviewer (advocate) is championing the interviewee's (learner-actor's) cause. This practice is especially useful when the subject matter is sensitive or when the interviewer wishes to examine social change. The interviewee comments on his or her experiences rather than simply being subjected to a list of standardized questions with no opportunities for personal adaptations. By providing a medium through which network group members could voice their ideas and goals, I learned ways that I could teach other scholars, diversity officers, and network members how to increase their success in reaching network goals.

Although I was an outsider to Summit, my background lent me some insider knowledge of the oil industry and employee network groups. My father had spent his career as a project manager for several oil companies and because of this, I had developed an understanding of the corporate environment and the unique characteristics of this industry. I had also worked as a graduate assistant with the Women's Faculty Network at my own university and had become intrigued by the possibilities that networks offered for advancing diversity efforts and increasing member opportunities. I usually found ways to introduce this information into my conversations with participants. I also stressed that I was interested in learning about their perspectives and that I was invested in making work environments better for all employees. I did not ask the Diversity Office to solicit participants but made the contacts myself. Since I was an outsider to Summit, this practice ensured that network members chose to participate and

were less likely to feel pressured to volunteer. Ideally, my advocacy role enabled network members to discover ways to move forward with goal attainment.

Data Analysis

Stohl and Putnam (2003) indicate that many methodological approaches are appropriate for understanding bona fide groups. Indeed, existing studies of bona fide groups have incorporated a wide array of post-positivist and interpretive data analysis techniques, such as thematic analytic technique (Petronio, Jones, and Morr, 2003), modified conversation analysis (Tracy and Standerfer, 2003), and content analysis (Yep, Reece, and Negron, 2003). This study applies thematic category analysis and constant comparison to uncover and analyze dialectical tensions experienced by the group and the ways in which the group handled these tensions. Thematic category analysis is a process that requires sifting through the interview transcripts to identify data that fits previously selected categories (Boyatzis, 1998). Constant comparison is a method of data analysis involving assignment of data to categories, refinement of categories, generation of themes between categories, and synthesizing data into theory (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In the case of this study, I used the eight characteristics of bona fide group theory as categories by which to initially organize my interview data. I first examined the interviews for evidence of the groups' stable yet permeable boundaries and interdependence with their immediate (organizational) context. I coded the data by placing it into eight categories, each representing one element of bona fide group theory: 1) multiple group memberships, 2) fluctuating group membership, 3) representative

roles, 4) formation of group identity, 5) coordinated actions among groups, 6) intergroup communication, 7) autonomy and jurisdiction, and 8) sensemaking about group contribution to diversity concerns. I found that “sensemaking” was an accurate way to describe participants’ discussions of intergroup relations pertaining to diversity. The words and phrases that pertained to a specific attribute of the bona fide group perspective became the units of analysis.

I pulled sections of the interviews that related to a particular bona fide group quality, such as “intergroup communication,” and then placed these segments into charts that represented each category. I determined the alignment of my data with a particular category by first examining key discourse exemplars from the interview segment. For example, I looked for words and phrases that related to modes of communication, such as “email,” “word of mouth,” “speak with everyone,” “handsome web presence,” and so on.

After placing the data in categories, I looked for recurring themes by focusing on similarities between topics under discussion or similar words or phrases being used multiple times to describe a phenomenon. For example, numerous network members mentioned that the leaders emailed a newsletter every month. When interviewees discussed this newsletter as a way of connecting people, I placed all of those segments into the chart in a theme of connection. However, sometimes participants would describe difficulties the group faced in strategically reaching their constituents. I then grouped these comments together under the theme of disconnection. Through this process, I discovered that dialectical tensions were prominent in members’ interviews

and in the groups' relationships. Within the broad charts related to bona fide group characteristics, I began to generate smaller categories based on dialectical tensions that played out through the discourse.

After the initial stage of coding, I classified dialectical into source or organizational units of analysis: 1) intragroup, 2) individual-group, 3) group-organization, and 4) intergroup. I stayed close to the discourse of those I interviewed, using their own words as descriptive labels for the units, such as internal group communication, members' multiple memberships, and their representative roles. These internal or group versus individual tensions became clear in the way that participants discussed the sources of their group's tensions. For example, a member might describe a disagreement in group goals that divided the group. This tension may be attributed to the relationships between individual members. In another case, a member may have discussed the challenge of balancing career and network responsibilities and the fluctuations in group membership that resulted. In this case, I categorized the tension as emerging from the relational unit between the group and the individual member.

I also found numerous external dialectics which were experienced between the group and the organization (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). These external tensions informed the nature of intergroup communication, how actions were coordinated, and ways that autonomy and jurisdiction were defined. I defined these tensions as occurring at two types of intergroup units: 1) between network groups or 2) between the group and the executive leadership of Summit. I recognized external tensions by noting that the origins of the tensions seemed to exist in these intergroup relationships. These tensions

might emerge because of conflict between organizational policies and group actions or because of competition between network groups. My approach to Baxter and Montgomery's presentation of the "relationship-context boundary" aligned with the bona fide group perspective, which emphasizes a group's relationship with its immediate context, and dialectics, which stresses that relationships do not exist in a vacuum but instead are bound by social units (p. 11).

Once I began this process, however, I did not always discover clear sets of dialectical tensions that were distinct from one another. On the contrary, I unearthed multiple overlapping tensions and tensions that branched off from primary tensions. Thus, my analysis turned to the constant comparison method to locate sub-themes or more specific dialectic tensions within the broader ones. This experience is consistent with Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) stance that "contradictions are thus multivocal, not binary" (p. 30). The authors explain:

Multivocal contradictions are a dynamic web of interplay among the many radiants of meaning...in a given A-B contradiction. It expands the conceptualization of contradiction from oversimplified binary structures like openness and closedness to more complicated meanings like the tensions between expressiveness, verbal disclosure, directness, honesty, on the one hand, and privacy regulation, deception, ambiguity, and discreteness, on the other.

This analysis offers similar complexity by relating dialectical tensions to one another using the constant comparative method. In essence, these relationships form the basis for understanding how various aspects of group relationships and boundaries are interconnected.

The final stage in the analysis involved examining ways in which the groups managed the tensions they faced. I tried to identify common or consensual ways of managing the tensions or ways of “source splitting,” in which a group is divided in how to deal with the tensions (Tracy, 2004, p. 130). I found that the ways in which groups handled tensions often related to a unit of group functioning (e.g., intergroup communication) that affected other elements (e.g., autonomy and jurisdiction). Ultimately, this interpretive approach allowed me to remain flexible in my analysis of the dialectical tensions that were pertinent to the network groups, and thus, how their boundaries and relationships with other groups in the organization were constructed.

Conclusion

The methods presented in this chapter enabled an *in situ* understanding of dialectical tensions experienced by network groups at internal and external relational units: intragroup, group versus individual, group and the corporation, as well as tensions between network groups. Through this research design, I sought to promote new ways of addressing race and diversity in organizations by not accepting best practices for diversity at face value, but questioning the underlying dilemmas that emerged and by examining the contrasts between group goals and the promised missions of corporate endeavors.

The chapter that follows presents the analysis of the dialectical tensions that emerged in SBNG’s relationships. This analysis demonstrates that the relationship between SBNG and the corporate leadership presented the most constraints of any

relational unit. The constraints that the corporate leadership placed on SBNG significantly affected the group's ability to manage the dialectical tensions effectively, which in turn, made it difficult to achieve group goals. This analysis illustrates the vital role that intergroup relationships play in a group's management of tensions. This management of tensions can increase interdependence in ways that confound the achievement of group goals.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS: SBNG

Dialectical theory lends an understanding of the roles employee network groups play in organizations. For example, network groups exist for their members but also for organizational leaders (Helfgott, 2000). Some studies promote them as a way to draw underrepresented group members into the organization (Friedman et al., 1998; Friedman & Craig, 2004), while other research reveals that they sometimes do the opposite (Bierema, 2005). Findings have shown that members of employee network groups experience more optimism about their career potential (Friedman & Holtom, 2002). However, evidence suggests that minority employees remain less connected to organizational leaders than do White employees (McGuire, 2000, 2002; Mehra et al., 1998). Some research suggests that management draws on organizational diversity as a resource to the organization (Jackson, 1991; Jackson et al., 2003) while other research highlights problems associated with diversity management (Kochan et al., 2003; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). This chapter and Chapter V address the following research questions:

RQ 1: What dialectical tensions do SBNG and SHEN face?

RQ 2: What differences exist in the tensions that SBNG and SHEN experience?

RQ 3: What differences exist in the ways that the two groups manage dialectical tensions at four relational units: the group and the organization, the group and other network groups, the intragroup unit, and the group and individual members?

RQ 4: How do these differences ultimately enable or constrain the groups in their goal achievement?

Chapter IV presents a case study of SBNG by delving into the tensions the group experienced, the ways its members managed them, and the ways in which the group was enabled and constrained through the management of these tensions. This chapter sets the stage for the chapter that follows, which presents findings related to SHEN and compares the two network groups. While many similarities emerged in the types of tensions that the groups faced, the groups differed in the emphasis placed on the unit levels and the ways in which the tensions enabled and constrained them.

The case study of SBNG revealed that dialectical tensions arose from four unit levels: between the network group and Summit, between different kinds of network groups, among members in the network group, and the relationships between the individual members and the group as a whole. The findings between the networks and organization focused on dialectical tensions that stemmed from the purpose of the groups, how the groups acquired organizational resources, the image of the groups within the organizational community, and the structure under which the groups functioned and pursued their visions. Relationships between network groups involved

establishing unique group identities and relying on other groups to pursue goals. Intragroup tensions concerned the social structures of the groups, the types of members that best defined the nature of the groups, and how members divided tasks. Finally, the group versus individual relationship involved the negotiation of group and individual goals, which were sometimes at odds. The dialectical tensions that emerged from each unit level permeated the decisions that the groups made and the actions that they carried out.

However, there were fundamental differences in the ways that SBNG and SHEN perceived these relationships, the emphasis they placed on them, and the salience of the resulting tensions. As a whole, SBNG perceived the challenges that Black employees faced as resulting from social structures that Whites continued to dominate. Therefore, SBNG members emphasized organizational tensions as the primary source of dilemmas linked to group success and failure. In contrast, SHEN members envisioned success as arising from Hispanics at Summit supporting one another and striving for unity as a group. SHEN interviews focused on tensions among Hispanics in intragroup and group versus individual relationships while de-emphasizing tensions between SHEN and Summit leadership. SHEN perceived success as stemming from forming a group with a unified purpose getting each individual to participate and support the group.

SBNG and SHEN managed the tensions that they faced in ways that interfered with their group goals of advancing Black and Hispanic employees within Summit. SBNG wrestled with tensions in all of its relationships to a greater extent than did SHEN. It initially appeared that SBNG handled the tensions in ways that aggravated the

group's organizational challenges. However, while SHEN initially appeared to transcend many of the tensions, a comparison with SBNG revealed that the group was actually masking some tensions rather than recognizing them. SBNG's approach highlighted the weaknesses that still existed in Summit's diversity management process while SHEN's focus on individual members and the group masked executive-level weaknesses. SBNG, in contrast, failed to recognize the importance of group unity in the pursuit of empowering Blacks at Summit. This chapter and the next one elucidate the dialectical tensions that each group encountered and the differences in the ways the two groups perceived their successes and failures in diversity pursuits.

Tensions between the Group and the Organization

SBNG and Summit shared a distinctive relationship because SBNG was the first officially recognized network and emerged in a particular environment. Remnants left from the Summit of the pre-Civil Rights Era continued to remind Black employees of injustices that their predecessors had faced. Timothy, an environmental specialist at the East Side Refinery and an employee for 30 years, recalled the first time he discovered the reason for an adjacent pair of restrooms on the site:

Things were a lot different, especially from a diversity standpoint, when I first came out here. We had a flare that was located kind of in the middle of the plant and there was two restrooms there at this flare. And I used to always wonder, *why are there two restrooms there at this flare?* And [my co-worker] said, "Oh, there was a Black and White restroom there." Course, all that was going on before I actually got here, but you know, you can still see some of the remnants of those types of activities that were going on.

While the restrooms were physical reminders to Black employees that inequalities still existed, Timothy emphasized that the climate had changed and career opportunities had improved. He wore a corporate pin during our interview that featured the words, “Diversity and Inclusiveness at Summit.” The pin embodied SBNG’s expectations for change while the two restrooms symbolized an inability to escape the past. These clashing symbols reflected the hope created by Summit’s promise on one hand and the ever-present glass ceiling on the other. Jafar, SBNG’s President and an Information Technology Manager, recognized the complexities of being a Black employee at Summit:

I am looking to tackle the challenges that exist today. Challenges are different. In my view they are much more subtle and harder to deal with (but that’s a challenge that I enjoy)...than more obvious, more blatant discrimination, for instance. For me that is very out there and easier to recognize, whereas the kind of challenges [we’re now facing] -- they are not blatant, they are maybe organizational, systemic.

The following tensions emerged from the group’s relationship with Summit: diversity versus productivity, front stage versus backstage, visibility versus invisibility, valued versus marginalized, and empowered versus controlled.

Diversity versus Productivity

Diversity was touted as an important value at Summit and members pointed out corporate initiatives such as the Diversity Office, network groups, and the supplier diversity program as evidence of this value. At a recent diversity conference, Susan, Diversity Manager for the West Side, hosted a panel for which she included the following description:

In a world of changing demographics, white men may not see much personal benefit in embracing diversity and inclusiveness. This interactive workshop will look at the impact of diversity and inclusiveness initiatives on white men and how businesses can ensure that these efforts benefit us all.

Susan's description provided evidence for the Diversity Office's interest in diversity initiatives that extended beyond EEO compliance and representation. This panel emphasized the role of the Diversity Office in educating employees about cultural differences, speaking directly to corporate leaders, many of whom were White and male. Programs included raising money for the United Negro College Fund and the Rainbow Team, which was a tutoring program designed to increase interest in math and science among youth. Corporate initiatives such as these were in alignment with network concerns so members viewed the network as Summit's partner in improving the community. SBNG participated in many company-wide community outreach programs that focused on Black youth. Members expressed particular interest in charity work because they wanted to give back to the community.

The interest that members had in the network was directly tied to the views that corporate held regarding the network and they cited productivity as a very real concern. Members discussed the networks' need to "add value" to Summit. Emily explained this view: "I believe you need to make sure that the [networks] are going to add value. How do we improve Summit? And that's part of the goal." Louis, Co-chair of the Retention and Advancement Committee, stressed that adding value also meant improving Summit's financial position: "Everything we do goes directly to the bottom line."

However, there seemed to be a disconnect between diversity values espoused by corporate leaders and middle management's treatment of diversity-related events. The focus on diversity at the executive level reflected long-term strategy while the attention to daily productivity by middle managers was indicative of a primary concentration on the here and now. While this contradiction made it difficult for SBNG to define its focus and direction in the diversity mission, it was also difficult to transcend.

Because there was no structure in place to help employees balance these different needs, the ability to participate in the network was left to individual members. Members often talked about the difficulty in balancing their network group participation and satisfying the productivity needs of middle managers. If members felt that their involvement in SBNG was going to negatively affect their work or their supervisor's perception of their work, they quickly lost sight of network concerns in favor of refocusing attention on their work. Tonya, SBNG's Secretary, explained, "I know that there are some supervisors who really don't see the value and really don't want their employees using company time to go and sit through a Lunch and Learn, for example." Sean, former President of SBNG, echoed Tonya's perspective: "If I feel like I am going to get penalized and get a poor performance review because I've taken time to participate in this network, I'm not participating. In corporate America, it's all about the dollar, right?"

Other priorities made participation in SBNG difficult for members. Members with whom I spoke had work responsibilities that accounted for why they were part of Summit in the first place; yet they cared about the network and found that they had to

balance job and SBNG responsibilities. In most cases, people discussed the importance of communication with management about their involvement in the network group. Everyone I spoke with said their own supervisors supported their involvement in SBNG as long as it did not affect their job. However, many people also described how they had heard of others having a problem encouraging their managers to see the importance of network group activities.

Members, for the most part, recognized that there was a time for awareness and a time for action. At this point, members believed that awareness was complete and that action should replace it. Sean explained the transformation that had occurred:

How much more aware do you need to be? How much more education do you need on [diversity issues]? You have Black people working in this company that are not attaining levels, for whatever reason, but they remain an underrepresented population across the job grades of the company. And so our focus turned from awareness activities to: *How do we achieve actions and reach targets and goals?*

Kevin's comment reflected the group's use of separation as a way of recognizing both poles but regarding each as more important at different points in time. The group was distinctly cognizant of its current need to focus on developing the membership rather than merely educating members of the dominant group about issues facing Black employees. Many of those I interviewed sensed the real change happening gradually as generations came and went. Janice summed this common sentiment among members: "I think it's starting to change very slowly. But as some of the more senior employees kinda move out, move on, it'll start to get better." Thus, in managing these tensions, SBNG saw diversity initiatives as focused on the broader picture, not just a short-term solution.

Empowered versus Controlled

Summit had staffed a Diversity Office in the late 1990s to manage the corporation's strategic diversity initiatives. The Diversity Office existed as a separate department from Human Resources and was officially housed within the Summit Oil company. The Diversity Office ensured that the company was complying with EEO laws, that underrepresented groups were receiving representation through employment and supplier diversity, and that employees viewed diversity as a strategic business imperative.

SBNG relied heavily on the Diversity Office for feedback from senior corporate leaders about the progress of the network group, setting up a budget, and developing channels for generating awareness about Blacks at Summit. William, the Vice President of Diversity, stated that when Summit held its diversity conference in the late 1990s, executive leaders offered to officially support and sponsor the small group, provided that the group would work with the company on its diversity initiatives. While SBNG's relationship with the Diversity Office provided additional resources and expanded the group's purpose, SBNG was now bound by rules.

One of SBNG's primary purposes was to reach Black employees at Summit and forge connections between them. However, corporate policies enforced by the Diversity Office, often made these tasks difficult. First, company rules limited the amount of information that network groups could access about potential new members. Network groups were not permitted to obtain information from Human Resources regarding the race, tenure, pay grade, or any other demographic details about the members they served.

It was often difficult to determine by seeing a name on a list if that individual was Black, so it was difficult to know who to target. Moreover, even if the ethnicity of a particular individual could be identified, corporate policies also prohibited soliciting employees who were not currently on the group's list serve.

Summit's policy also mandated that membership of any network group be open to all employees and that the network groups could host membership drives together by setting up tables in the lobbies of Summit buildings at various times during the year. Becoming a member of SBNG was a simple and informal process of an employee adding his or her email address to the group's list serve. This list serve was the only record that SBNG had to determine the number of members in the group and how to reach them. Black employees thus gave up some freedom in obtaining the support and resources needed to expand the purpose and utility of the group.

The Diversity Office wielded significant control over SBNG and also triggered frequent frustrations. Tonya, Secretary of SBNG, confided her frustration about the way that new membership was regulated by the company: "I know that we've gotten pushed back a couple of times when we wanted to send something out and [the Diversity Office would] say, 'No. You cannot submit out just to the Black employees if they are not members of the network.' The 'police' could really do a lot more to help." Janice, a Committee Chair, expressed feelings that the Diversity staff was really just "managing diversity" rather than supporting or championing the networks:

When it comes to supporting some of the initiatives on the events that we've needed their support on -- we've never necessarily been able to count on them for the support totally. We just do what we can on our own, whether we have [the Diversity Council's] support or not.

Leaders of SBNG did their best to obtain additional information by talking to those who attended group-sponsored functions, emailing surveys to the list serve for feedback, and by convening at board meetings and discussing members' needs. SBNG sometimes sacrificed approval at the executive level because of addressing issues that were important to constituents in addition to corporate leadership. Sean, former President of SBNG, described the group's position toward executive decision makers:

SBNG has come across sometimes as uncooperative because our position has been, give us money, that's great. If you don't, we're still going to do what we're going to do. And to have that mindset causes a very different paradigm to take place than if you come in with the mindset of, we need the company to approve these things, or we need the company to allow us to do these things.

One agenda item at a board meeting concerned negative feedback from the Diversity Office over a recent email SBNG sent to its members, encouraging them to donate to NAACP. SBNG had emailed this same donation request for the past five years. However, the Diversity Office recently received a complaint that this was solicitation and notified SBNG that this activity was not in compliance with company policy that prohibited outside solicitation. In response to the hand slapping, board members decided that they would orally request NAACP donations when members contacted officers. This way, there was no written record of solicitation, but members could still share the message they desired.

Sentiments from active members like Tonya, Janice, and Sean differed from the opinions that less active members expressed. Occasional participants, such as Wayne, were not exposed to the exchange between SBNG and the Diversity Office and were

unaware that tensions existed. Instead, the mere presence of this entity suggested to most non-core members that the group was well-supported. One of these members-at-large, Timothy, demonstrated this opposite response through the “Diversity and Inclusiveness” pin that he wore. These members tended to handle the tension through source splitting between officers and general members in response to the Diversity Office. Officers in the group saw themselves as “policed” or controlled by the Diversity Office while less active members saw their relationship as one of mutual respect, support, and freedom. This source splitting was more obvious because members-at-large who were not involved in the strategic directions of the network received their information from the official SBNG website. This information was carefully prepared to convey the utmost professional and ideal relationship between SBNG and its overseer. The website could be viewed by all Summit employees, so it was vital for SBNG to maintain a close eye on the content that it posted.

Front Stage versus Backstage

In addition to the tension between the network and the Diversity Office, SBNG faced a tension in how the group acquired money and supplies. This tension was characterized by separation that located the poles into a front stage and a backstage. The front stage was characterized by the formal acquisition of resources through a planned budget from the Diversity Office while the backstage represented instances when individual members provided resources on their own that were not considered part of the official budget. On the front stage, SBNG received an annual budget from the Diversity

Office to cover many of the costs of running the group and administering programs. Thus, funds provided through the front stage helped the group host an annual conference and provide speakers and food at its events. In addition to this budget, members also provided resources through their positions in the company. Thus, these funds and supplies also came from corporate pockets but were obtained through unofficial backstage requests.

Members indicated that the official budget was insufficient to meet all of the needs of the group, so backstage acquisition of resources was also necessary. Secretary Tonya expressed the importance of the backstage when it came to acquiring supplies necessary for the group's functioning. Through her own management position, she regularly provided funding for small needs such as software and supplies. Occasionally, these members provided giveaways at events. Tonya described how she used her position to help the network:

I wouldn't buy a \$600 software, but a hundred bucks, \$150, the software we were going to use for the strategy session, the butcher paper, whatever we needed I would fund. Or if we wanted to recognize people—I would take from my personal recognition budget and award them with \$100 American Express. And I could do that because it was my budget and I know I had the money to do it and it supported the greater cause, and nobody would squawk about it.

Tonya's explanation suggested that problems would arise if she used her position to provide unlimited resources. Since neither the front stage nor the backstage sufficiently met the financial needs of the group, SBNG handled this tension by separating the poles. The group worked with the Diversity Office while members also contributed material resources they could provide through their position in the company.

SBNG recognized its reliance on the Diversity Office as a legitimizing entity but they also reasoned that much of the work would not be accomplished merely by relying on this unit and that individual members could play a role by donating their own resources.

Intragroup Tensions among SBNG Members

SBNG faced tensions that arose from members' different beliefs about the purpose and strategy of the group. These tensions revealed factions within the group that represented different philosophies on how the group should run, different foci among leaders and members-at-large, and different needs held by members based on their locations and occupations. SBNG's choices in managing these tensions influenced its ability to function as a collective with a united purpose.

Centralized versus Decentralized Processes

Members faced a dilemma regarding whether the group should centralize leadership or take advantage of the connections that decentralized control might create. SBNG was required to elect officers to take on administrative roles within the group and to communicate with the Diversity Office. This centralized leadership provided the group with a unified voice and ensured the group was pursuing its mission. However, since SBNG members were spread apart by various offices around the city, processes that were completely centralized often did not fit their needs. The size of the network group and its limited number of active members made it necessary to keep leadership centralized, yet members who did not work in central locations preferred that each

location had some control over the group's functions. Donna, a Team Lead in the Accounting Division of Summit Downstream, took a stand for decentralization: "So if you don't have a high population base [in a given work location] and SBNG does not address that area then you don't have any visibility here." When officers worked at other sites such as the Southwest Side, members at those sites felt as though they were at the center of SBNG action. Donna said of a board member who worked at her Southwest Side location:

I know that one of the board members is here, and that was a big plus for us, because she was brand new, came in from another organization, was very interested in the diversity. Having her here will give us a little bit more spotlight, will probably even give a little bit more focus to the employees themselves that say, "Hey, maybe they're trying to do something here at our site. Let's join."

SBNG tended to manage this tension by separating the poles according to need. At times the group preferred centralized power and at other times the group leaned toward decentralized power to accomplish goals. The choice of decentralized power was necessary when the reach of the network group was affected by distance between Summit work locations. One way that SBNG addressed this problem was by electing site coordinators to take charge of communication with the main officers often working downtown. Site coordinators took the burden away from central leadership by taking responsibility for events at their particular sites and making sure that members at those sites were aware of the SBNG events that occurred. Bethany, a Technical Support Engineer and Site Coordinator for the East Side Plant, explained her communication with the board: "I work with the group of people here at the site to make things happen

here, but if downtown needs to communicate with [SBNG] as a whole, I'm the one that they contact for that type of information.”

Members who were active but were not on the Board did a better job of transcending this dialectical tension than their counterparts in official leadership roles. Active members who had not taken on the burden of leading SBNG were not troubled by members who participated infrequently. Instead, they viewed themselves as core members who did most of the necessary work to plan and carry out events, but at times when additional help was required, they always had extra volunteers who would come to the rescue when they contacted them for assistance. The “80%” of inactive members were seen as a resource that that network could draw on as needed.

Narrow Focus versus Broad Focus on Membership

Members contended that SBNG was first and foremost designed for Black employees, but they also observed that the activities and topics of universal interest drew the greatest number of participants. The network faced additional challenges because of diversity among its own membership. SBNG was not a homogeneous entity; rather, the network membership was fragmented internally by factors such as nationalities, physical locations, business units, occupations, pay grades within the company, gender, and age.

All of these layers within the group created complexity for leaders in discerning the direction that would reach the most members while not being so broad as to be useless. Despite this recognition, some members (including officers themselves) included topics that were so broad that they felt alienated because they were not

receiving information that was pertinent to their specific occupation or business unit. Danielle, an Ethics and Compliance Manager and SBNG's Vice President, presented her ideas for resolving this issue:

There are newer, brighter, younger folks here who really want to see it grow into a little bit of a different direction so that activities are focused more on like a specialty or support group, like finance activities, or folks who are human resources people.

The struggle between conventional ways of handling internal diversity and the methods desired by the new generation of employees created a tension of broad versus specific. Discussions were just getting underway to promote the establishment of smaller groups within SBNG, specifically ones dedicated to specific business units and occupations. As a group, SBNG currently selected one pole, broad, rather than the narrow, specific information for its events.

A related challenge that the group faced involved a focus on developing members within the organization versus recognizing the need to reach beyond the current pool of Black employees and develop the skills, education, and social capital of future generations. In capitalizing on opportunities to improve communities, the President, Jafar, believed that the network was attacking discrimination at the systemic level. In this sense, SBNG seemed to handle this tension by selection, choosing community as the best long-term solution to breaking through the glass ceiling that continued to oppress Blacks. Yet, they also recognized the organization's inadequacies in hiring and retaining Black employees. SBNG could host all of the leadership programs that they could for existing members in the company, but at the end of the day,

the group was spinning its wheels if there was no recognition that human resources also relied on the available pool of applicants in the community. Therefore, there was a keen interest in reaching out to make changes in the environment outside of the organization.

The tension of whether to focus narrowly or broadly also stemmed from another tension, local versus global. This tension related to the breadth to which the group focused its energy. A struggle existed between an international or global outlook and a domestic one. At the domestic level, African Americans struggled with a long history of civil rights violations in the United States. Many members explained that while race was an important diversity issue in the United States, it was not such an issue in Europe, where many of the other Summit offices were located. Instead, members indicated that gender was considered a much more relevant diversity issue in European Summit offices. Thus, a women's network existed in Summit Europe, but the notion of a Black network group or any group established around race was not deemed necessary. Thus, while SBNG coped with being appreciated within the domestic offices of Summit, their mission and purpose was largely lost at the global level. Vice President Danielle summarized this common concern: "It is supported by the leadership here or the board of directors of Summit, but it's still a U.S. thing. The European folks are like, "Okay, fine."

Although SBNG used the "Black" rather than the "African American" label to include their non-American counterparts, the paradigms for diversity and for networks in the United States were not fitting the relevant issues in Europe. The network also focused on connecting Black employees in the United States with European Black

employees. One of the ways that the network sought these connections was through the election of a Sudanese-American president. Tonya described her perspective on the impact of this decision:

But I thought it was really necessary to have a president who is not in traditional Black America. And we've actually seen this President have more of a relationship with the African network in Europe. Because that was the filter he had on. He didn't separate Blackness. And he's actually learned from them and done a little bit of work with them early on in his office.

Tonya's comment reflects the feeling of many members that SBNG could not ignore the effects of globalization on the ability of Black employees to gain recognition as a group. Therefore, it was seen as vital to connect with culturally similar others to build credibility as a group. If SBNG had recognized this need sooner, it might have been able to organize constituents overseas to create a more powerful and visible network group. However, other members argued that on a domestic level, maintaining differences between black, Hispanic, and other networks was empowering. By standing out from other network groups to create visibility at the domestic level, SBNG remained invisible at the global level. Tonya, Secretary of SBNG said, "There's a whole world out there globalizing. And when you start to see Summit's talent on the great wide web, it's someone in Malaysia. So if competing and staying in the game is the name of this thing, I think we should come together, not separate."

Tonya's comment illustrates both poles of the tension between global and domestic focus. At the global level, employees saw a large picture that was not developed on the role of African Americans in the U.S. civil rights movement. Rather, at the global level, the concerns were related to competition that drew on a broad array

of employees, as Tonya suggested in her comment about Malaysia. Thus, to expend energy focusing only on the specific concerns of African Americans was to miss out on an opportunity to band together with Black employees in Summit offices around the world and tackle the universal concerns that they shared.

Group versus Individual Tensions

The group versus individual unit represented the struggles that the group faced in promoting collective action while also appealing to the interests of individual members. This unit related to the fundamental ability for the group to function as a group, for without the participation of individual members, SBNG would experience a complete lack of consistency in carrying out its goals and mission. Members emphasized this unit as important although it did not appear as fundamental to the group's success as SBNG's relationship with the organization. SBNG members appeared fairly comfortable with the idea that members might take what they wanted from their experiences with the group and that key leaders would naturally emerge to guide the group in its endeavors.

Ethnicity versus Diversity

Network members contributed to the diversity mission, regardless of whether they personally cared about the mission or not. Many times members were involved primarily for personal reasons. Nonetheless, their personal choices contributed to SBNG's reputation and the contributions it made. Alicia's comment reflected this recognition:

For me, by being a black woman, this whole diversity thing I kind of got down. I mean, just the mere fact that I'm here. I don't know if it's wrong to say that or I'm not saying that I don't need to learn from other cultures because I know I do. I mean, it is a diversity goal because it is considered a diversity network . . . but it isn't really "diversity" for me.

Some individuals were members of only SBNG but most were associated with at least one other network. SBNG members primarily used selection to handle the tensions between committing to one network and belonging to several of them. Interviewees who were members of multiple network groups expressed that their membership in one group took precedence over the others. All the SBNG members included in this study stated that SBNG was the network with which they were most involved.

It appeared that while employees could claim membership in more than one group, they felt the strongest ties and the greatest responsibility to only one network. The ties that they felt were based on which part of their identities they perceived as most salient in determining their career success within Summit. For example, Alicia indicated that, while she was a member of both SBNG and the Women's Network, her work with SBNG took precedence. She explained:

Not that I don't identify with women issues, 'cause I'm a woman. It's just that I haven't found that to be my biggest struggle. I think I've always kind of assumed that if I had an issue – and I don't have a lot of issues – I wasn't born in the 60's, all right? This is a very broad statement – I just think our biggest issue has been racism and not so much sexism. I mean, black women had worked for years, so it's not like people are not used to seeing us in the workforce. I really don't think I noticed [gender discrimination] until I'd been in Summit for a couple of years and something kind of happened. They kept asking me to take notes at meetings. I was like, "I don't take notes." And then I was like, "Oh, that's a gender thing." And I think some of the [gender] topics are relevant but that's just not the way I choose to address them.

Alicia expressed her reasons for focusing on SBNG rather than spending time with the Women's Network. Her story depicted the ways in which her Black identity took precedence over her identity as a woman because she had commonly viewed her race as creating a greater barrier to her career than her gender. In this way, the salience of certain parts of individuals' identities may draw them toward organized groups that are related to those identities. Individuals are not equally drawn to all groups of which they belong; rather, they make selections based on the ones that best address their needs. In this sense, the presence of multiple network groups at Summit served to encourage greater overall membership than if one superordinate group existed. As Alicia further noted, "It isn't really "diversity" for me." Instead, she was part of SBNG to meet other Black employees at Summit.

Group versus Individual Success

Some members said that, while the network had been a positive resource for them, their success in the company really boiled down to their own personal efforts. Because the structure of the network group left participation up to individual members, increasing the "hiring, retention, and promotion" of Black employees at Summit became a matter of effort on the part of the individual. Some members then used the network for social support, to meet new people, and to showcase personal skills to make individual members more visible. Thus, the network offered an option to address systemic racism in the corporate structure by relying on individuals' use of the networks to achieve success. Promotion of diversity concerns was seen as improving the face of Black

employees at Summit; at the same time, there was recognition that if employees were highly productive, it would reflect well on the group as a whole. Although the President of SBNG and others described the network as a “resource” to the company, one of the primary concerns was providing its members with the skills they needed to break the glass ceiling and become leaders in the company. However, no one with whom I spoke said that they believed the network group was fully responsible for this advancement. Members believed that SBNG would provide the needed resources and information but that individuals had to attain their own success, which also resulted in success for the network group as an entity.

The group used selection to handle this tension, favoring members who aspired to high levels within the company, as they were seen as greater representatives of the trajectory that SBNG advocated. Antorri explained, “Everybody does not want to be an executive. Do we tend to gravitate towards that type of person? Well, I think that a certain type of leadership or certain personality is going to be well received. I do feel like that person would have a better chance.”

SBNG’s website stated that one of its purposes was “developing leaders” and because of this focus, the group tended to cater and market itself to Black employees who resided at higher levels of the company or who had aspirations of ascending to higher ranks. However, the vast majority of SBNG members were positioned at the lower to mid-level pay grades. This discrepancy existed in part because it was difficult for high level management and executives to commit to network work. These individuals had greater work responsibilities than others or often traveled and could not

commit the time necessary to participate as full-fledged members. It was also conceivable that Blacks at the upper rungs of the corporate ladder no longer felt that they needed the benefits of the network. Rather than actively participating, these Black corporate leaders often acted as linking pins between members and upper management. The President explained that one of the primary goals of the group was to provide people with access to upper management who would be willing to act as “sponsors” for members. Tonya shared her understanding of sponsors: “They might be on [a hiring] committee and say, ‘Hey guys, I’m not trying to encourage you to pick this person, but here’s the skills I’ve seen in them.’” Members who acquired sponsorships were able to showcase their individual skill sets and perform roles within SBNG that would earn them recognition within and outside the network group.

Yet, sponsors had to approach potential protégés rather than network members choosing them. In this sense, members did not have a tremendous amount of control over whether or not they received a sponsor. Tonya described sponsorship as an individual process: “They pick you. I mean the general rule is you don’t go to the company and say, ‘I’d like a sponsor.’ Sponsors sort of pick the people they want to sponsor.” In this way, the network catered more toward members who had ambitious career goals rather than those who were content with their current position. Alicia noted:

We’re all just working from our own situation. There are people in SBNG that really have very ambitious goals. And I’ve even had to say to [the board members], “Everybody doesn’t want to be CEO. So let’s make sure we don’t gear everything towards the idea that we all want to run the company. Especially since we all can’t run the company.”

On the one hand, if the network wanted to maintain its visibility, its members needed to be high-ranking employees in the company. Therefore, it needed to focus on those members who wanted to be leaders in the network and executives in the company. On the other hand, if the goal was to “advance black employees,” then the majority of members who hovered around the bottom to middle pay grades in the company were being excluded from the programs offered by the network group.

In this sense, members managed the tension between the group and the individual focus by selection of one of the poles. Their comments reflected a concern for individual advancement. Mattie discussed how her role as Chair of the Mentoring Committee had helped her gain needed skills: “It gave me exposure to a lot of senior managers, and it allowed them to see my capabilities. Because at the time I was a very low graded staff person in finance, and so it allowed them to see that I do have leadership capability.” This tension between group versus individual success thus existed because of the interdependence that members felt between personal efforts they put forth and the group’s ability to say it was achieving its mission as a whole.

Connection versus Siloing of Members

SBNG aimed to create connections, or ongoing relationships, among Black employees within Summit. Members sought connection with other Black employees across several dimensions and for several main reasons. Reasons for connection with other Black members were varied. First, connection constituted camaraderie with others of similar ethnic identity who otherwise might not have connected. Connection provided

professional opportunities by uniting members across the varied Summit businesses for which they worked. Members expressed enjoyment in working with others across job grades and business ventures. Several members also pointed out how they gained access to job opportunities in other areas of the company through their participation in the network.

Siloing, by contrast, occurred when individuals separated themselves from the larger group of Blacks. Members used the term “siloing” to describe the tendency of employees working within a given business unit to interact only with others in the same business or at the same site. Members remained siloed from other Blacks at Summit for several reasons. First, members remained separate because the group’s goals dealt more with member professional development and the Diversity Office’s recognition that that group was contributing to Summit’s strategic diversity efforts. Because SBNG focused on instrumental, task-oriented goals, very few members discussed having personal friendships or forming purely social connections with other members. The Vice President, Danielle, expressed this tendency:

I have people I can turn to for help trying to get something together, but would I call them to go to the movies or out to dinner? No. Hopefully that will change. You know, I wouldn’t mind something occurring like that, but I think the organization as a whole is, “Let’s focus on [professional goals],” and not really looking outward towards other activities.

In addition to the group’s task-oriented focus, members also experienced disconnection from each other because they worked in a vast variety of distinct Summit businesses. Because of the breadth of Summit’s business endeavors, Black employees experienced physical separation within the city and across the world. Employees often

perceived advantages to separation. When they focused on members within the same area of the company, they learned information directly relevant to their careers. It was often difficult for SBNG members to understand how connecting with Blacks in other Summit companies could directly help their own careers. Vice President Danielle emphasized this preference for siloing:

When you have everybody together, sure there is a certain generic amount of information that applies to everyone, but when you want specific information towards what your job duties are, there's not really much that you can go to to help you out with that.

During one board meeting, leaders conferred regarding ways that they could counteract these problems and reduce the burden to recipients. They discussed creating different list serves for various issues related to SBNG. This way, the network was not so reliant on the Diversity Office to determine what was appropriate to send to whom. In addition, the officers decided that it would be helpful if they received feedback from members, and requested that members respond if they were receiving too much email or the wrong kind. Perry, a member of the Attraction, Recruitment, and Retention Committee, described the group's use of multiple message sources to control the amount of communication initiated by SBNG:

Word of mouth, corporate communication – they put out different announcements about different activities. Those are the primary ways of [reaching out] because one of the things we are trying not to do is bombard people all the time with a bunch of emails and paper products. They just get tired and say, “We've had enough of your inbox,” so you don't wanna deal with all that stuff.

SBNG used selection to cope with the tension of connecting versus siloing. SBNG consistently chose to connect with current and future members to the extent that the Diversity Office allowed. The group used the emails that were authorized by the Diversity Office as a way to filter the information that constituents received. By relying on the Diversity Office to help distribute messages about SBNG, the group was able to prevent its presence from becoming a nuisance to employees.

When members moved around they created opportunities for SBNG to expand and grow. One of the greatest examples of SBNG connecting members despite physical distance was the establishment of a branch of SBNG at the Port Arthur site. Port Arthur is a town about 90 miles east of Houston and it was difficult for employees in Houston offices to connect with their Port Arthur neighbors. Louis described how a former member from a Houston office began a new branch of SBNG when he was transferred to Port Arthur:

That's one thing about Summit, people move around so much until they know people in these various places. Well, there's a guy [in Port Arthur] who was working right here, and he transferred over there. So he was also very active in SBNG at one time. And I think they told me he was one of the founders. But he moved to the refinery there and so now they're getting ready to kind of start up a chapter at the refinery. So the very exchange of ideas and information between these two places, that helps to break down a lot of the "silo" type mentality.

Louis's story exemplifies the group's effort to expand and increase membership in all areas of the company. All of the directions taken by the network were designed to create networking opportunities for Blacks at Summit.

Even though the board and the communication committee knew they wanted to reach out to Black employees at Summit, they had great difficulty obtaining information about their members. Because of this lack of information, SBNG faced the underlying

tension of action versus response in deciding when best to communicate with Black employees at Summit. Leaders were never certain of exactly who their members (or potential members) were and how best to communicate with them. The President admitted during his interview that he himself did not know all of the members or what they looked like. Thus, it was difficult to know what information would be most valuable to Black employees and how often to initiate communication with them.

Conclusion

This chapter addressed the dialectical tensions that SBNG faced as a diversity network at Summit. Some of the tensions that members experienced left a bitter taste that was pronounced by the physical reminders of past injustices. SBNG faced its most significant tensions at the group-organizational relational unit. SBNG's relationship with organizational leadership constituted the primary relationship for the group. Members were split on whether the Diversity Office empowered or controlled the group. More involved members believed that the group was controlled more than necessary, whereas less active members did not observe every interaction and only saw the ways in which the group was supported and empowered through funding and political backing.

SBNG managed the other tensions it faced with the organization by separating the poles. This choice reflected the particular care and caution with which the group handled its relationship with organizational leaders. The group chose to separate the poles out of a desire to handle the relationship with caution. SBNG used selection to manage the tensions it faced between the group and individual members. When

confronted with the dialectic of ethnicity versus diversity, SBNG members chose to focus on benefits such as connections with other Black employees. The broader diversity initiatives became a secondary goal for most members. SBNG members also emphasized the individual as the primary contributor to the success of the group. These choices of selection draw attention to Black employees' original interests for the group, which involved a place where Black employees could connect with one another as well as a venue for individual networking. The next chapter addresses the ways in which SHEN managed the tensions it faced as a group. SHEN differed from SBNG in the focus it placed on its organizational relationships. While SBNG emphasized its relationship with the executive leadership, the interviews with SHEN members stressed the importance of alignment of group with individual goals.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH FINDINGS: SHEN

Dialectical tensions in my interviews with SHEN members served as lenses for understanding how the four units of group-organization, group-group, intragroup, and group-individual member enabled and constrained the group. In contrast to SBNG, however, SHEN placed its primary emphasis on the relationship between the group and the individual members and on the intragroup relationships. These relationships, which members consistently discussed during interviews, revealed that SHEN believed that its success as a group primarily hinged on the abilities of individual Hispanics to band together as a collective and to eliminate sources of conflict that might create factions within the group.

By focusing inward, it was also clear that SHEN placed less emphasis on its relationships with other network groups. When members discussed other network groups, they did so in passing or to mention that SHEN had worked with other groups as representatives of Summit on community service projects. Members occasionally stated that other network groups looked to SHEN as a model network group.

SHEN also de-emphasized the importance of Summit leaders and the role of the Diversity Office in determining the group's success. SHEN members acknowledged that Hispanic employees at Summit faced a glass ceiling and had not received the same career advancements that White women had recently enjoyed. However, in contrast to SBNG members, SHEN members did not assign blame to Summit leaders for their

situation; rather, SHEN members saw the glass ceiling as primarily created and perpetuated by Hispanics themselves. Thus, improvements in network group functioning involved ways that Hispanic employees could support each other more, band together as a group, and help others below them develop skills and make connections that would enable them to advance.

Tensions at the Group-Individual and Intragroup Units

SHEN emphasized the relationship between the group and the individual as well as intragroup relations as primary to the group's survival and success. Group members valued the collective and the need for Hispanics to look out for one another. Andre, President of SHEN, encouraged Hispanic employees at Summit to take care of the group:

As Hispanics we tend to try to get ahead, if we can. And we may not be vocal, we may not be loud or boisterous about it, but when you get ahead, don't forget those that helped get you there. And I don't mean to say that you've got a spot reserved for them. I'm saying, coaching, mentoring, [and] guiding. That's what I mean, because you got there for a reason. People always need [to] help each other out in the corporate environment, and there's a funny story around that. There's bucket of crabs and the crabs are scrambling to get to the top. One crab makes it to the top and when he gets there he's overjoyed. At the same time those below him are scrambling up, reach up to grab him, and end up pulling him down. That's what tends to happen with Hispanics. But we can't allow that. And so that's the advice that I give to any Hispanic who's in the corporation, is you've got to applaud those that have made it to the top. And you gotta keep them there because one day they might be able to help you figure a way to get to that top. Maybe they will give you a job. But you better earn it before you get there.

Andre's story depicts a strong belief in the power of the collective to influence the success and failure of Hispanics. His story also illustrates the responsibility of each

individual to help others reach the top. Success for the entire group therefore emerges when the group helps individuals and individuals help the group. Thus, tensions at the group versus individual and the intragroup units emerged as the most significant concerns for the group's success.

Multiple versus Single Network Membership

Since company policy required that the networks be inclusive of all employees, it was easy to join a network group by sending an email. Thus, members of SHEN were often members of other network groups. One member, Victor, told me he was a member of the Women's Network, the Asian-Pacific Network, the GLBT Network, and the Generation Y Network for young, new employees. These multiple network memberships created a tension for employees as to where to focus their energies. SHEN members primarily used selection to handle the tensions between pressure to commit to one network or another. All of those who were members of multiple network groups explained that SHEN was the network with which they were most involved. The most common reason members expressed for participating in other networks was to attend events that sounded useful for building skills and developing their careers. Victor further clarified that because he was a board member for SHEN, he did not have enough time to take a more active role in other networks:

It's more of just attending the events and everything. I think with dealing with SHEN, it's very demanding. With dealing with SHEN and with the job, I don't have time to be part of another board. Now, I have offered to help [other network groups] when it comes to putting events together and everything. Like, when they ask for volunteers and stuff, I've done that. But not to the point where I'm part of their board and taking more of a direct, active role in it.

Members also commonly expressed that SHEN was a way for Hispanics to connect with one another. As a secondary purpose, SHEN and other network groups were available for career development and knowledge building. Since the members who participated in interviews for this study all identified as Hispanic, they participated in SHEN for the purpose of networking with similar others. Often, employees were members of networks that did not represent a group with which they identified (e.g., Victor as a male member of the Women's Employee Network). Thus, while they found certain events hosted by other networks to be valuable, their top priority was to participate in SHEN functions. In this case, being Hispanic represented a very salient part of these employees' identities and they participated in SHEN as a way to find other employees with a similar identity.

Connection versus Siloing

According to members interviewed, one of the most important purposes of SHEN was to provide a venue for Hispanic employees at Summit to meet each other and to network across business units for social as well as professional reasons. Even more than influencing corporate attention on diversity and inclusion of Hispanics, members frequently mentioned connections with other Hispanic employees as the central focus and benefit of their participation in SHEN.

First, the formal network group kept Hispanic employees from feeling isolated from one another. SHEN members described these homophilous connections as fulfilling their needs for social support and friendship with others at work. During the

interviews, members conveyed that because of SHEN, they felt a strong sense of connection to other Hispanics in the company. Jennifer described how she met and became close friends with another SHEN member, Emily, through her involvement in the group:

We've both led similar career paths in IT, yet I work for downstream, she works for upstream. What's neat about our relationship is that we're close friends. We've done a lot of stuff in SHEN together, co-coordinating the conference, and our careers have been progressing at the same rate. We can support and talk to one another about the challenges we're facing as minority women.

Jennifer's comment reflected themes of friendship, similar struggles, and support from a peer. The themes that emphasized connecting with other Hispanics were common among the SHEN interviews. In addition to connecting for social support, members described the network as creating professional development opportunities for Hispanics at Summit. Ramone explained:

You get to learn other aspects of the business – because here I am personally in tax, so I do employee benefits, so I'm kind of focused on just one thing. When you start meeting other people from another group, someone you don't engage with on a day to day basis in casual conversation, they tell me a little about what they do and I get a better sense of what the company does just overall.

Ramone's remark showed how members acted as representatives for different business units within the company. They were also able to share their expertise with each other, acting as speakers for Lunch and Learns or hosting a Spanish language class after work. Members also connected with similar others with idea that they would interact in the future.

At the same time, a few members such as Emily acknowledged that connecting with other Hispanic employees might carry unintended consequences of disconnecting

with dominant group members at Summit: “Some people see it as a negative thing, making the identity or the tags more obvious.” This sense of disconnecting from the dominant group discouraged members from participating more frequently in the group. Thus, for some members, connection led to increased feelings of isolation in Summit, whereas to others, connection to other Hispanics led to greater inclusion in the company. SHEN members appeared to manage the tension between connection and disconnection by source splitting. The connection pole of the tension resonated with more active members, while the less active members maintained a greater distance from other SHEN members.

Network versus Job

Job responsibilities made participation in SHEN difficult at times. Most members had work responsibilities that accounted for why they were part of Summit in the first place; yet they cared about the network and found that they had to balance job and SHEN responsibilities. They managed these tensions through a choice point known as integration, where “divergent norms [become] various priorities that just need to be balanced (Tracy, 2004). Victor explained that diversity was an integral part of his work:

And it’s part of our, our own goals here in, in the tax group. We have to do something as -- that includes diversity. And for me, that’s being an active member of the network. I’m blessed right now because I have a boss that really understands diversity, and she pushes diversity.

At the same time, he acknowledged the importance of using strong judgment to discern when to work with SHEN and when to prioritize the job:

So, anytime that I need some time to go ahead and do something that's related to the network, if it doesn't contradict with my job or puts me behind my job, then the staff here is more than willing to let you do it. It is a kind of a balance -- a balancing act. Because there are times that we run into busy seasons and you have all this stuff going on.

One member, Jennifer, expressed a belief in Summit's commitment to making diversity part of an individual's work responsibilities:

I have always looked at it as not as like a volunteer opportunity, but as an extension of what I do. When you talk to senior leaders, their intent of Diversity and Inclusiveness is that it's an extension of who we are as a company. A lot of people see it as volunteer work and I think there needs to be a paradigm shift in the way people think about it. And maybe that's why we sometimes have questions or issues about participation.

As a member, Jennifer was able to transcend the dialectic of job versus network by viewing the network as an "extension" of the work she did. Jennifer's position as a manager in the manufacture, supply, and distribution of chemicals was not directly related to the human resources or diversity strategy for the corporation; however, she included a diversity component in her personal goals for the year and was thus able to view network responsibilities as directly related to her performance as an employee. Jennifer also pointed out that the current "paradigm" of volunteerism, through which many employees viewed network participation, contributed to often sporadic member participation. In this way, less permeable boundaries between her job and the network led to fluctuating group membership.

Emily's experience demonstrated this tendency to view the job and the network as separate duties and as a result, she would come and go as her work dictated. She

expressed feelings of burnout at times and the need to pull back from network responsibilities, depending on the needs of her work. She explained:

I didn't do much in '05 and '06 [because] I traveled internationally quite a bit so I was gone. So last year I didn't really commit to anything except as a participant – just because my schedule didn't really permit. However when I came back I did help some of the SHEN conference last year. Last minute I stepped in and helped them and there were some areas where they really needed help so I jumped in. But this year I've moved into a new assignment so my focus has just been my new assignment.

Emily managed the tension between job and network responsibilities by or vacillating between the poles on a temporal basis; that is, she would give attention to the network at times and then at other time attend only to her job. During certain seasons, employees could take the time to delve into network responsibilities while at other times, employees needed to take breaks from the network and focus on work assignments.

In addition, several interviewees discussed the importance of communication with management about their involvement in the network group. Everyone I spoke with said that their supervisors supported their involvement in the network as long as it did not affect their jobs. Ciria explained:

My manager was on board [and said,] “Go develop yourself because our jobs are going away and you're not going to be marketable.” I mean, I had become so specialized in the things that we do in this department that I don't know if I could go and sell my expertise or my knowledge in other groups. But you just have to say, “I'm going to do it.”

However, two members also described how they had heard of other employees having difficulty encouraging their managers to value the network activities. Emily

addressed how the culture surrounding diversity and inclusion initially changed following a merger between Summit and Discovery Oil:

We have the conference as a one day event and usually you could take that as free training and just go for the day. When Discovery Oil first came in I think it was just a different culture. I wouldn't say it wasn't accepted but it just wasn't as easily approved. So people sometimes had to take vacation to attend the SHEN conference.

The merger ushered in a management team who had different procedures and expectations about diversity than did Summit. This change that stemmed from management's attitudes and cultural expectations at Discovery Oil employees impacted SHEN members' abilities to make room for both the network and their jobs. This example speaks to the significance of a bona fide group's relationships and with group member abilities to manage dialectical tensions in productive ways.

Clearly, the tension between network and job was associated with the tension between connection and siloing as well as centralized versus decentralized control. These relationships manifested themselves in the following way: Each Summit site focused on distinct aspects of the oil industry. The West Side campus, for example, largely employed engineers who were developing new technologies for production. The downtown buildings housed the finance and sales departments, while the technicians who refined the oil worked at the East Side Plant. Thus, the tension between network and job produced a need to decentralize control over SHEN efforts, which in turn worked against the desire of many members to network with those outside their immediate department or business unit. Moreover, the interactions between these three

tensions illustrates the bona fide nature of the group in that tensions related to balancing multiple group memberships and affected the nature of members' representative roles.

Low versus High Level Members

Several interviewees revealed that the vast majority of SHEN members -- and Hispanic employees in general -- were positioned at the lower to mid-level pay grades of the company. This discrepancy existed within SHEN because it was difficult for high level management and executives to commit to network work. Individuals at high pay levels had greater work responsibilities than did others and often could not commit the time necessary to be present at events. Rather than serving as full-fledged members taking on official leadership roles, these Hispanic corporate leaders often acted as linking pins between the membership and upper management. Emily explained:

They are just so busy that they don't have maybe the time to run for an office and take on that role and just move it forward...but some of them do come in and say, "Okay, I want to help shape the program for the conference." And so Sam Ortiz is one of those guys who doesn't take the lead for it but he's in one of those teams you know helping to shape that.

One linking pin, Michael, was the Global Security Director, an executive who reported directly to the President of U.S. Summit. Members expressed pride in having support and backing from members like Michael. Michael described his role in SHEN as helping with various events, yet he was not involved in making decisions for the group or in attending meetings or events. Michael's purpose as a member of SHEN

revolved around helping other Hispanics reach higher levels in the company. Rather, as a linking pin, Michael was a true connector:

I get a call, you know, from Jessie or someone, or an email, 'hey, we're looking for this', 'we're looking for that', whatever. So, those things, that's what I do in between everything else that I do. Pointing people in the right direction. Getting people connected to the people that could help.

Michael's strength lay in his ability to link SHEN members to his own informal network, which consisted of others in powerful positions. While Michael did not attend many events or make decisions for the group, he was admired by those in SHEN, particularly because of his direct impact on the promotion of several Hispanics in Summit. SHEN members enjoyed the reward power and benefits that Michael's executive position in the company afforded them

My position in Summit is in the leadership pool, so I help out with the mentoring of others that are in Summit. Since I've been here two years, I have been helpful in promoting the Hispanic assistant in Global Security to be the number two assistant to the Chair of U.S. Summit, I have hired a Hispanic administrative assistant to work for me, and hired another Hispanic to replace the one we promoted and also hired a new security advisor who's Hispanic as well.

Michael also discussed ways in which, Cheryl, the wife of the Chair of U.S. Summit, had contributed to SHEN because of her position and expertise. Michael emphasized that she had established a career based on training top CEOs in improving their leadership effectiveness and in sharing her knowledge as a mentor and speaker at the annual SHEN conference.

Thus, powerful SHEN members, such as Michael, and linking pins like Cheryl were highly valued representatives of SHEN. At the same time, SHEN's mission was to help Hispanics at Summit reach higher levels of success in the company; thus, these lower-to-mid-level members had the burden to carry SHEN's purpose. Thus, SHEN managed this tension by separating the poles according to different functions that these members served for the group. Summit leaders were desirable representatives for SHEN due to providing the group with resources and connections, whereas Hispanic employees at lower and middle levels participated in events, made decisions for the group, supported one another, and provided the corporation with evidence that SHEN was a successful and popular network group.

Members also faced tensions between contributing to the group endeavors based on their professional strengths as opposed to meeting the group's current and pressing needs. Usually members contributed because of a talent or resource they provided which might not meet the needs of the network. Because of this tendency, the best talent took on the roles needed to complete the task. However, people might not contribute if they did not have a talent or resource to provide. At any rate, fluctuations in membership were tied to the dialectic of contributing based on ability versus need. If more members believed they could fulfill the needs of the group as well as offer their skills and talents, a larger percentage of them might have been involved in doing the work. Thus, SBNG engaged in source splitting, whereby less active members contributed based on their abilities rather than the group's needs. More active members, such as officers, treated the poles as inseparable and did not experience the tensions between ability versus need.

Because of the source splitting between job versus network and between ability versus need, a distinct core of highly participative members emerged that were central to the group's functioning. However, peripheral members who came and went also provided expertise and networking opportunities across the corporation. Joseph, a former officer, explained the importance of having both core and peripheral members:

The core is what keeps you afloat and you're thankful that if you can get a high level of participation on various events, then you've met most of your folks' interest. But there are so many different levels of interest. Some people that are Grade 8 are trying to figure out how I get to Grade 7. People that are Grade 6 want to get a supervisory experience at a Grade 5. People that are Grade 5 want to understand what roles are there for 3 and 4, and just on and up. And every one of them has a different skill set that should be mastered. So when it comes to these Hispanic leaders that are out there, I just want them to participate period.

Joseph emphasized the necessity of core members who would "keep the group afloat" by taking on leadership roles that offered SHEN the organization and structure to produce results. However, he also stressed that simply getting people to participate was worthwhile since the more that representatives from different areas of the company were involved, the greater the opportunity existed for members to find career connections. Thus, SHEN managed the dialectic between the core and periphery through separation by discussing the different ways in which both poles were reliant on one another for group functioning.

SHEN also coped with the question of whether to work with other network groups or to work alone by separating the two poles. As a separate entity with its own charter, officers, and members, SHEN worked separately from other network groups in planning board meetings, elections, the annual conference, and social events. However,

its members often worked with other networks, such as SBNG, to plan events when goals were similar or when the functions were based on issues of general interest rather than those specific to Hispanic employees.

In this way, the decision to work together with other networks was based on two purposes. First, the group could use its resources more efficiently and could develop positive relations with Summit. Members such as Ava, SHEN's former Vice President, explained these two purposes in working with other groups:

Financially it helps out. You kind of split the cost. And it's also a sense of trying to build a camaraderie, I guess. You know, sometimes there can be situations where we are compared to each other. The networks are compared. And the fact that the budgets are not the same throughout the different networks.

Ava pointed out that the Diversity Office evaluated each network group annually. The groups that were judged as providing "premier" service to Summit through professional programming and increasing their memberships were given a more generous budget than were the other network groups. Thus, if the groups collaborated on activities that they were already planning, they could increase efficiency, pool resources, and be more successful as a separate group.

As previously illustrated, SHEN members contended that the network group was intended primarily for Hispanic employees, yet they also recognized that topics of general interest drove participation and attendance. In addition to promoting diversity at Summit, SHEN also faced the challenge of appealing to its own diverse Hispanic membership. The group itself was also diverse because of different business units and

occupations that Hispanics represented. Ramone admitted that he had traditionally found that the tax unit's diversity group provided more direct relevance to his career needs, since the topics addressed in that forum were focused around professional development for tax attorneys like him. Many topics addressed at the SHEN events were much more generic, and thus some Hispanics like Ramone did not participate as often since they received more valuable information and networking from other sources. Thus, as a group, SHEN selected broad rather than specific information for its events.

Centralized versus Decentralized Processes

Members also experienced tension between centralized and decentralized processes in their intragroup relationships. SHEN managed this tension by separation based on the immediate needs of the group as well as their practicality. At times the centralized power of the main officers was the most practical and at other times, the group provided all SHEN members with as many benefits as possible, through delegating work to the various sites around town.

Decentralizing the group's power through the use of site coordinators was necessary when travel time between Summit work locations made connections difficult. Patrice, the site coordinator for the Greenspoint location, commented that having coordinators at each site enabled all Summit employees to benefit from involvement with SHEN:

It's difficult to go downtown all the time and it's not always accessible to us and if your manager feels that the work for that day needs to be completed, then you may lose out on an opportunity to get the full benefits of what some of the

networks are trying to bring when you're not downtown, so we try to bring that to them at the location that they're at.

Jacob, the site coordinator for the West Side branch, communicated with the SHEN leaders, who were frequently planning events for downtown, to do similar events at his own location. Thus, site coordinators also removed some of the stress from the officers by coordinating events at their own sites. Jacob elaborated on his responsibilities as a go-between for SHEN members at the West Side site and those working downtown:

I had to learn how to organize meetings. I had to learn how to bring people in from different locations for Lunch and Learns. If you're in the leadership positions, you get to find out what the other groups are doing from the different parts of the company.

Jacob's experience as a site coordinator exemplified SHEN's commitment to distributing the network group's benefits to the work locations around the city. The impermeable boundaries that physical distance created worked against the network group by separating members and preventing them from participating. By favoring decentralized control and delegation to site coordinators, SHEN was available to employees at all locations rather than only those who worked downtown.

Attracting versus Losing Participants

In addition, SHEN faced the tension between attracting versus losing participants. The group faced this tension because they recognized that members could not sustain a high level of commitment to SHEN without experiencing burnout; thus,

new leaders were needed to take over the responsibilities and bring fresh ideas to the table. Emily summarized this need that the group faced: “You need new blood to come in with new ideas. So I think this year is good because I will step away and just see them come up with new ideas for the conference.”

At the same time, older members needed to continue making their contributions because of their knowledge and experiences. Jacob expressed the difficulty he had in learning the ropes as a new site coordinator for the West Side location:

The coordinator that was leaving asked if I would like to take on that role. I really didn't want to do it and I said I'd never done it before... To me, a coordinator needs to really be able to know how to organize things, how to do the paperwork, the little things...that I don't want to do. Anyway, I said, “Okay. I'll try.” I said, “And you're gonna have to help me” and that was my basic answer to it. So, I'm not saying I did a great job, I'm not saying I did a bad job, but it was a learning experience.

Emily explained the problems inherent in new leaders emerging without any veteran members available to train them in basic procedures and practices:

One of the things that really helps is that some of the old blood stays around to mentor those new people. At least you have a template to start from and you don't have to reinvent the wheel. So I think that's helped a lot and as an officer for SHEN we were keen to develop things that we [could] template so that we didn't have to reinvent the wheel because nothing was documented.

Emily's comment emphasized SHEN's tendency to manage the dialectic between attracting and losing participants through using separation. Veterans guided new members and thus, both were needed. Old members offered best practices while new

ones could select the most beneficial activities and offer fresh suggestions without confronting problems that previous leaders had addressed.

Individual versus Organizational Change

One of SHEN's primary concerns was providing its members with the skills they needed to break the glass ceiling and become leaders in the company. Members seemed to believe that although SHEN could provide the resources and the information, it was still up to individuals to achieve their own success, which also reflect the success of the network. Emily discussed ways that she had personally benefited from her involvement with SHEN:

My biggest take away from being involved with SHEN is the opportunity to demonstrate some of the skills that I thought I had or that I just didn't have the opportunity to showcase in my day-to-day activities. And I was in a safe haven, so if I made a mistake it wasn't as huge as if I was in the work environment and was going to lose X amount of money.

In this sense, members managed the tension between the group and an individual by integration of the poles. Members' comments reflected a concern for both group action – and individual responsibility, which was apparent when members such as Ava discussed how her role as Vice President had helped her gain needed skills:

For me, SHEN is a tool for employees within Summit to use in order to help them grow in their career, and even outside of their career, maybe even personal, within leadership skills or even career skills, networking. So for me, SHEN helps in being able to develop oneself in many aspects, in whatever the employee's interested in pursuing. (Ava)

In effect, members like Ava recognized that the group was dependent on individual members to improve the life of Hispanics at Summit. This tension between group and individual thus existed because of the interdependence that members felt between personal efforts they put forth and the group's ability to achieve its mission.

Company Inreach versus Community Outreach

Another dialectic that the group faced involved helping Hispanic employees within the organization versus reaching out to Hispanic professionals in the community. On the one hand, SHEN's mission emphasized the advancement of Hispanics at Summit. However, as an expression of its collective focus, the group felt a strong sense of duty to provide opportunities for Hispanics outside of the company. For example, Summit hosted a Supplier Diversity program whereby corporate representatives would develop relationships with minority-owned businesses who might supply needed goods and services. Joseph, a Supplier Diversity Manager, informed me that while 35-40% of the city's population was Hispanic, only 8% of Summit's employees were Hispanic. He explained, "Why not give them [the community] the opportunity to get some of Summit's business? This is the community we live in; it's the community we do business in. Why not give business to those who are capable of serving us?"

Thus, SHEN handled this tension through selecting outreach to the community as a long-term solution to breaking the glass ceiling for Hispanics. Through selection of this pole, it was clear that members had a keen awareness of their limitations as a group as well as the interconnectedness to their immediate environment. They also recognized

the inadequacies of the organization in hiring and retaining Hispanic employees, if they could not broaden the pool of qualified Hispanic applicants. Therefore, there was a keen interest in reaching out to make changes in the broader environment.

Tensions between the Group and the Organization

SHEN members did not express many tensions between the group and its relationship with the organization. Members rarely made statements that challenged Summit leaders or the Diversity Office. Instead, members primarily emphasized solidarity between the group and Summit's goals. Yet one tension that surfaced was between the goals that members held for SHEN and Summit's goals for this network.. This tension was very subtle because the way in which members managed it served to de-emphasize the two poles. SHEN's mission for the group was to advance Hispanics at Summit, but it viewed this goal as similar to the company's goal for the group which was to bring value to the organization. Gabriel explained, "Part of the [network's purpose] is: How do we improve Summit? How do we make Summit a better place?" Like Gabriel, other SHEN members reflected the desire to align with corporate initiatives as part of the group's responsibility to Summit. Patrice expressed this loyalty to Summit:

We're always doing something; we're always throwing ourselves out there. We don't go out [into the community] and say, "Hey, we're SHEN and we're here to help you." We go out there and say, "Hey, we're Summit." So, that's the value you get back. We've had other networks approach us and asked us, "Hey, how do you all do this? How do you all do that?"

Patrice implied that SHEN enjoyed great success when it acted as a representative for Summit. This representative role became particularly important when the group took on community projects or forged ties with Hispanic-owned businesses through the Supplier Diversity Program. Patrice's comment further characterizes SHEN's perspective that the best way for the group to advance was to become Summit's ally and to help create financial success for the company.

For the most part, the group managed the tension between SHEN and Summit goals through integration, specifically, neutralization. Neutralization was a middle ground or a coping mechanism by which members compromised the poles. Neutralization could be considered a form of denial because in striving for the middle, members denied each pole as a distinct need and instead defined them in the same way. By integrating the two poles through neutralization, SHEN experienced little conflict in its relationships with Summit leaders or the Diversity Office. By aligning group and corporate goals, SHEN was able to avoid conflicts with the administration.

Members felt certain that the Diversity Office viewed SHEN as a model network; in fact, other groups often approached SHEN for advice. In another sense, managing the tension between the group and the organization through neutralization constrained SHEN because it did not allow the group to develop its own sense of identity, to examine critically whether the group's interests were truly being served, and to seek Summit's help in breaking the glass ceiling. The neutralization of tension between SHEN and Summit only emphasized the responsibility that Hispanics placed on one

another and de-emphasized the responsibility of Summit leadership in attacking racism at a systemic level.

Comparison of SBNG and SHEN

A comparison of SHEN and SBNG revealed that the groups were enabled and constrained in various ways through their relationships at the group-organization, group-to-group, intragroup, and group-individual units. However, members of both groups generally conveyed satisfaction with SBNG and SHEN and believed that Summit supported the network groups as an expression of corporate commitment to diversity and inclusion. These expressions of satisfaction were consistent with Friedman and Craig's (2004) findings in which the desire for social support, rather than feelings of dissatisfaction, drove network group membership. Members of SBNG and SHEN described many moments where they had personally benefited from their participation. Overall, the findings of this study stand in contrast to those of Bierema (2002) in that SBNG and SHEN members rarely expressed dissatisfaction or open conflict regarding the group's relationships. Members enjoyed working at Summit and often described the corporate culture as one that encouraged openness and informality in interpersonal relationships. Several of them even compared their positive experiences at Summit with less positive ones at other companies. These expressions of pride were tempered by the acknowledgement that somehow, Blacks and Hispanics continued to face barriers while climbing the corporate ladder. In this study, difficulties in achieving group goals were subtly embedded in the management of dialectical tensions faced by the groups.

Dialectic analysis of the tensions that the two groups faced also revealed their members' sensemaking processes. For example, members of SBNG expressed how the network was enabled and constrained by the company. Namely, Summit provided the group with funding but then policed it or its executives gave a green light for action but then individual managers discouraged participation. The group was designed for African Americans, but topics were general enough to attract all employees. The two groups claimed hundreds of members, yet only a fraction actively participated. Members were connected through email and website but disconnected by physical location. SBNG was very loosely coupled which led to disconnection. Moreover, without the aid of boundary spanning members who provided resources for the group, the group would not have been as effective since it was spread out across business units and sections of town.

The ways in which the two networks managed their dialectical tensions suggested differences in comfort levels between the two ethnic groups. SHEN, in comparison with SBNG members, seemed more comfortable with the dialectical tensions that they faced. The SHEN interviews often revealed passivity toward the tension that they faced, whereas SBNG seemed to struggle with working through their tensions.

Unlike SBNG, SHEN was able to transcend the dialectical tension related to conformity versus individuality. SHEN had Spanish language classes that its members could offer, whereas SBNG did not have the same benefit of language training to offer Summit employees. In addition, SHEN viewed its purpose as one of connecting and

networking with other Hispanic employees whereas SBNG's vision resided in a struggle to be set apart from other groups. Unlike SHEN, SBNG did not see the fact that most of its members were Black as enough to create visibility for the group.

Conclusion

Interviews with SHEN members revealed that the group was focused primarily on the group-individual and intragroup relational units. These units emphasized the inward focus with which SHEN approached its purpose in the organization. SHEN members expressed a strong collective spirit in their interviews. They accentuated individual relationships as primary to the group's success and to their experiences as employees at Summit. The group's most significant relational unit, group-individual, was characterized by members' frequent choice to manage poles of the dialectical tensions they faced by source splitting. By handling some of the group-individual tensions (connecting versus siloing, and network versus job) by source splitting, members heightened their importance to the group's pursuit of its mission. Using selection to manage the tension between multiple and single group membership reflected the strong identifications that group members held with SHEN.

SHEN members did not discuss the group's relationship with the organization to a significant extent. In fact, the group seemed to approach its relationship with Summit leaders with passivity or acceptance. SHEN's relationship with the organization stood in contrast to SBNG's relationship with Summit, and in particular, with the Diversity Office. Interviews with members of SBNG emphasized distrust or uncertainty to some

extent and illustrated a certain level of interest in making organizational changes. SHEN members appeared more interested in maintaining their relationships with organizational leaders to ensure the group continued to benefit from the Diversity Office.

CHAPTER VI

A BONA FIDE GROUP PERSPECTIVE OF SBNG AND SHEN

Bona fide group theory recognizes that groups negotiate interdependent relationships and form the boundaries that aid in accomplishing their purposes. Interdependence with immediate context relies on coordination of actions with other groups, the negotiation of group autonomy and jurisdiction, intergroup communication, and sensemaking about intergroup relationships. These factors strengthen and loosen interdependence with other entities, which ultimately affects a group's ability to perform and reach its goals. A group's boundaries are constructed through group identity formation, fluctuations in group membership, and the roles members that bring to the group based on their multiple affiliations. When boundaries are too permeable, a group either experiences an identity crisis or conforms so much to outside expectations that it lacks individuality. In these ways, bona fide group theory highlights the tensions that a group faces between being enabled and being constrained through stable yet permeable boundaries and interdependence with organizational context.

This study examined the ways that these characteristics enabled and constrained SBNG and SHEN in accomplishing their missions. These groups at times seemed to act in direct opposition to their stated goals. Moreover, while the network groups were required to follow company policies and to receive annual evaluations, SBNG and SHEN often acted on their own with a high degree of autonomy. The groups elected their own board members and chose the diversity goals that they wished to pursue. For

the most part, their interactions with the Diversity Office were infrequent and largely occurred via email and phone. Thus, using the lens of bona fide group theory, it became apparent that SBNG and SHEN were part of a concertive control process enacted through relationships between the network groups and the Diversity Office. Concertive control referred to how members of self-managed teams exerted control over each other's behavior in ways consistent with corporate values. As Barker (1993) explained:

Instead of being told what to do by a supervisor, self-managing workers must gather and synthesize information, act on it, and take collective responsibility for those actions. Top management often provides a value-based corporate vision that team members use to infer parameters and premises (norms and rules) that guide their day-to-day actions.

Barker (1993) pointed out that the organizational leaders presented corporate values to employees who, in turn, created rules and norms that group members used to control each other. Team members held each other accountable to the norms and unobtrusively enacted organizational values and decision premises (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985).

Unlike previous research, this study revealed how concertive control emerged as a process that the network groups used to control each other. As engines that promoted corporate values, the employee network groups exerted concertive control at the intergroup unit as they competed for recognition and limited resources while cooperating with each other. Concertive control originated with the Diversity Office, who reminded the groups of key corporate values and rules. Evidence of Summit's corporate values emerged during interviews with network group members, through diversity rhetoric on

Summit's website, and through discussions with managers in the Diversity Office. The network groups then structured their own intergroup control system by constructing expectations for their relationships with one another and for the collective contributions they were making to the company. SHEN lived out the espoused values more successfully than did SBNG, who cultivated a sense of accomplishment for SHEN. SBNG, in contrast, lost confidence because of their group's inability to live up to the standards that the corporate values created.

Bona fide group theory provided a lens to examine the concertive control processes that emerged from the interrelationships among the network groups, corporate policies that governed them, and the evaluation of the group's accomplishments. Encouraged by the Diversity Office, the groups stressed inclusiveness, which made boundaries permeable and developed overlapping membership among the groups. Thus, using bona fide group theory, this chapter illustrates the concertive control processes between SBNG and SHEN. These processes entailed using SBNG and SHEN as resources for individual networking while encouraged conformity, silencing the groups, and preventing the networks from becoming advocates for radical changes in corporate structures and policies.

Interdependence with Context

Autonomy and Jurisdiction

Interdependence is influenced by the autonomy with which a group conducts itself and its overall jurisdiction. This component of bona fide group theory emphasizes the

organizational structures and values that are necessary for intergroup concertive control to operate. In the case of Summit, the Diversity Office conveyed the corporate values and policies that guided the groups' operations.

First, the Diversity Office used an annual Scorecard to evaluate each network according to the tasks that helped Summit with its strategic diversity initiatives. William, Director of Diversity for Summit U.S., explained how the Scorecards influenced the goals of the groups:

When we were considering company support for network groups, we did not want the networks to become unions. They are not designed to represent employees [in a legal capacity]. They are change agents. They highlight issues and bring them forward for management to work on.

The Scorecard thus represented a way in which the networks were connected to Summit's corporate culture. The Scorecard evaluated networks based on four areas of diversity: 1) attraction, recruitment, and retention; 2) economic development and supplier diversity; 3) brand/reputation enhancement; and 4) education of members. Groups received one of four assessments (improvement needed, moderate progress, significant progress, and premier) based on the goals that they set for themselves and the percentage or degree to which they attained these goals.

Network groups could strive for different assessments in the four diversity categories. For example, a group that was just starting out might strive for "significant progress" in the education category by hosting three or four educational events during the year. The same group might decide to participate in one brand-related event, which

constituted “moderate progress” in reputation enhancement. The higher the levels at which a group set its goals, the more the Diversity Office and executive leaders regarded it as “premier.” Achieving “premier” status meant more funding, more political support and a sense of group achievement in comparison to other networks. In contrast, a group that only hosted happy hours received a rating of “improvement needed,” and faced funding cuts.

The Scorecard also assessed group’s performance in relation to other groups who were striving for the same kinds of tasks and goals. These practices created competition between groups because they looked to each other for ways to improve their own practices. However, their goals rarely changed from year to year, which did not allow for networks to grow in membership and resources. The goals were also sufficiently vague, which made them relatively easy to attain but encouraged intergroup competition. Despite its role within the corporate diversity initiatives, the Scorecard promoted conformity among networks instead of diverse ideas. The goals for the “premier” level, for example, were the same, regardless of the network group striving for them. Moreover, in the rare instance that a network did introduce a new program, other networks soon copied the idea for their own members, particularly if the innovative group had received praise from the Diversity Office. When the groups reached their goals, members felt a sense of accomplishment toward diversity initiatives but, in fact, the Scorecard, even at its top level fell short of standards of excellence, which restricted the groups from attaining their visions. While the Scorecard was used to evaluate the official networks, two unofficial networks emerged that were not bound by this policy.

The “Un-Networks”

Two networks existed that interviewees described as “unofficial”: the White Men’s Network and the Women of Color. These networks did not receive their own funding or formal recognition from the Diversity Office, yet they had an agenda to promote diversity at Summit. Cass, the Site Coordinator for the Southwest location, discussed the White Men’s Network and Danielle, the Vice President of SBNG, explained her position regarding the group:

[The White Men’s Network] had a little seminar not too long ago, and it was right around the Don Imus time. It wasn’t what I was thinking when I said, “Oh, there’s a White man’s group” (*rolled eyes*). When I was at [the University of Texas] there would be the White Republicans or some extreme group – always some crazed nuts collected together. But no, these were guys that really bought into diversity. They really wanted to see it work in its truest sense, and were sort of really good natured about it. And they just wanted to form an organization of like-minded individuals – as all organizations are – who would promote diversity. So it sounds bad, but it turned out to be okay. I think they just need to change the name so it sounds a little more friendly, that’s all.

Danielle’s story reflected the caution with which other network groups felt about the White Men’s group. By contrasting them with a right wing extremist group that she had encountered in the past, Danielle came away from her experience accepting the group as a legitimate supporter of the diversity cause.

Other members, such as Janice, heard about the group but had not attended one of their meetings. Janice conveyed uncertainty about the intentions of the White Men’s Network: “No one seems to know much about it. I think it came about because they felt left out. It’s like everybody else has a networking group...crazy,

you know?” Janice’s response reflected feelings of distrust, uncertainty, or competition that SBNG and SHEN members had toward “unofficial” network groups.

SHEN and SBNG members were also critical of another unofficial network, the Women of Color. The purpose of the Women of Color Network was to address discrepancies between career advancement of White and minority women. Several years before, corporate leaders decided to improve the company’s record of career advancement for all women at Summit. Pauline, a Women of Color representative for SHEN, explained:

So they took a look and [said], “Let’s be strategic about getting women progressed up the ranks.” Well, they made some progress and when they looked at the data, they came back and said, “Wow, we have really progressed women. But we’re only progressing White women.”

Alicia, SBNG’s Women of Color Representative, explained further:

“So the former [Global Head of Diversity and Inclusiveness] came up with the Women of Color. It’s an add-on to the Women’s Employee Network and it wasn’t official but because of who was championing it, it might as well have been.” So two years ago, we got surveys and [the Diversity Office was] like, “Do you want to make it an official network?” I think some people just felt like it was just competing with [the Women’s Employee Network] and the compromise was that it would be an “inter-network,” whatever that means (*chuckled*), and its objective was to ensure that each ethnic network – Hispanic, Asian Pacific, and Black – would have a woman target within their Scorecard.

Alicia’s explanation highlighted the added responsibilities that SHEN and SBNG took on after the emergence of Women of Color. Alicia explained how some members felt that the Women of Color Network detracted from the more broadly focused

Women's Employee Network. However, members like Danielle believed that, even as an "inter-network," Women of Color competed with groups such as SBNG and SHEN that focused primarily on issues of race. To characterize her disinterest in Women of Color, Danielle referred to the group as the "Un-Network." She expressed further ambivalence toward the group and its purpose: "I haven't gone to a lot of Women of Color activities. In a lot of ways, it's kind of duplicative, and a lot of the men, especially in SBNG, will say, 'Aren't we already covering that?'"

Danielle's comment suggested that only certain groups should have jurisdiction as venues for networking. Her comment implied that if Black, Hispanic, and Asian men did not have their own group, perhaps the women should not either. Moreover, since the Global Head of Diversity founded the Women of Color Network, SBNG and SHEN did not feel as much ownership of the group. The Women of Color group, then, was a Summit project, and thus, it did not hold the same importance to SBNG and SHEN network members as their own grassroots recruitment efforts. Ultimately, interviewees expressed a desire to increase the membership of SBNG and SHEN and to increase participation by existing members in established networks. Thus, the branching off of smaller groups like Women of Color was viewed as diluting the power of SBNG and SHEN. This dilution of power created fragmentation at the intergroup unit and decreased the ability of SBNG and SHEN to pool their resources.

Sensemaking about Contributions to Diversity Concerns

As seen in reactions to the White Men's Network and the Women of Color, the issue of group jurisdiction fostered a strong sense of competition among the network groups. This sense of competition was heightened through the annual Scorecards by which the Diversity Office evaluated each group. The competition created through negotiation of autonomy and jurisdiction also led to group sensemaking about their contributions to diversity concerns.

Victor, SHEN's Treasurer, explained that his group consistently selected the loftiest set of goals and reached them. The Diversity Office considered SHEN a "premier" group and members like Michael, Summit's Global Security Advisor, were proud of this rating:

What SHEN brings to us is hopefully learning from other organizations how to do it and hope to bring it back over here. You're proud to say, "I belong to SHEN" and you don't mind saying that. So that's what SHEN brings to me. I want to be part of it and I'm proud to tell people I'm part of it.

SBNG's impression of their group's standing stood in contrast to that of SHEN's. As the first network group that the company officially sponsored, SBNG was at one time recognized as setting the standard for other network groups. However, after 15 years, some of the programs that initially gave SBNG a premier rating were beginning to age. When other groups conformed to SBNG's standard, SBNG no longer stood as a pacesetter but was overtaken by other groups. Janice expressed a common concern among SBNG members: "I haven't really heard too much lately. I know we used to be

recognized as the premiere group as far as leading the way for the other affinity groups.” So each network faced pressure to implement new and useful programs, to set the standard for other network groups, and to stand out.

However, once a group received positive feedback from the Diversity Office regarding a new program, other groups borrowed the idea, hence rendering it commonplace. Thus, network groups felt pressure to constantly change programs so that they could take the lead and create the impression that they were premier. SBNG recognized a need to update its programs and to fit them to changing diversity needs. Tonya illustrated the pressure SBNG felt to stay ahead of other network groups:

I think SBNG sees itself as a forerunner, like the Mentoring Program and all the other, and I am not sure everybody else does that. I just have not heard them do it. I don't know that they do. And everybody else being all the other networks, do they say, “SBNG is the one,” or is SBNG always trying to *prove* we are the one?

The types of goals a group addressed also contributed to its rating. For example, if a network group focused only on the social support needs while neglecting areas such as corporate brand enhancement, the group was not likely to receive a premier rating since it failed to connect with Summit's executive level. For this reason, group leaders had a strong incentive to appeal to the executive level. In appealing to executive leadership, SBNG focused on members who accepted leadership roles and made connections with the Diversity Office as well as the executive level. As Danielle commented, “If [corporate leaders] have an issue or something they feel needs to be

addressed, it will trickle down through the Diversity Center. ‘SBNG, what can you do to help us generate more people with this sort of skill or mindset?’”

Thus, to stay competitive, network groups adopted many of the “best practices” of other groups. For example, SBNG originally introduced the concept of mentoring circles, in which a senior Black leader would act as a mentor to several junior employees simultaneously. Other groups, including SHEN, borrowed the idea, which generated similarity among the groups. Therefore, mentoring circles, an idea that the various groups shared, became an intergroup requirement for success and represented a way that groups coordinated actions. Enough similarity existed between the groups on such ideas that they competed with each other for corporate recognition.

Coordinated Actions

Another component of a group’s interdependence with its context stemmed from its need to coordinate activities and actions with other groups, which tightened or loosened its interdependence (Putnam, 2003). SBNG and SHEN responded to this need to coordinate actions by either copying the programs that the other groups had or working together to produce an event or program together. The Diversity Office often encouraged groups to work together on similar projects. William, Director of Diversity, explained, “There is no need to reinvent the wheel. We encourage several groups to team up on some of their initiatives where it makes sense. It’s also less of a drain on senior leaders who stay engaged in what the networks are doing.”

SBNG and SHEN frequently worked with one another as well as with other groups, such as the Women's Employee Network, to plan events. While SBNG and SHEN worked separately in many ways (e.g., board meetings, elections, strategy sessions), they also coordinated numerous events together. One way that members adopted the corporate value of working together was to reason that differences that existed across network groups were not as important as the similarities they shared. Perry, a member of SBNG's Attraction, Recruitment, and Retention Committee, explained:

All the networks participate in mentoring circles. They mix it up and that's one of the things that helps to break down barriers. Getting the opportunity to learn from different perspectives and also partner with others at the circle that have similar experiences but don't look like yourself.

The value in working together was based on the groups' choice to increase its efficiency. Members, such as Perry, reasoned that if SBNG joined with other groups to complete projects, the group could minimize strain on its members' time and resources: We encourage the networks to work together on projects, to leverage their resources and energy. Pretty much you have similar issues or interests, so just to leverage it a little bit more instead of having multiple announcements go out about the same topic, all at different locations doing the same thing. Dividing the work allowed network groups to create events that were more extensive and far-reaching than if they remained isolated. When groups collaborated on activities, they increased efficiency by pooling resources.

Intergroup structures also encouraged connections among groups. For example, the Women of Color group promoted working relationships among networks because it was a branch of the Women's Employee Network and had representatives from each of the minority networks. Danielle of SBNG explained the way in which Women of Color forged these connections:

With [Women of Color] being the "un-network," all the other networks have been asked to designate someone to be the Women of Color contact. And so there's a little board of officers for Women of Color, and it pretty much relies on all the other networks to either get together and support their issues collectively or within an activity that's already being put on. Like if SBNG had a Lunch and Learn on putting together a development plan, we could add something onto that activity for Women of Color.

The ties created by the Women of Color group encouraged SBNG and SHEN to support each other and members of each group reasoned that expending time and energy to help the other would be rewarded. However, some members were concerned that power would be taken away from them if they synthesized goals and relied too much on other network groups.

Working together was also constraining because it was not always based on a groups' individual needs. SBNG and SHEN often worked with other network groups on a company-wide trend, even if it meant that one or both groups did not consider the trend relevant to its own members. For example, SBNG struggled while working with other network groups on a seminar related to gender differences. Alicia explained SBNG's perspective on the gender conference: "SBNG really doesn't think that's a big issue but... (laughed). I don't think it is either. But I think there is an overall gender

awareness within Summit, but they are trying to get it across for everybody.” On the one hand, Alicia underscored the importance for SBNG to support a company-wide trend. However, she also expressed the group’s struggle with the relevance of the topic: “From a traditional standpoint, Hispanic and Asian cultures are a little bit different than ours and so [conflicts caused by gender differences are] probably not as prevalent [within our culture].” At such times, SBNG recognized differences between itself and other groups, but felt it was important to cooperate so that it would be perceived as a team player.

Another area in which the groups worked together was the membership drives. While SBNG’s and SHEN’s missions expressed their primary concern for Black or Hispanic employees, corporate values focused on inclusivity and emphasized diversity over the importance of any one group. A company policy also stated that all network groups should be open to everyone, which allowed any employee to attend or become a member. Therefore, membership drives were not targeted to specific employees but rather to all new Summit employees. Conducting membership drives collectively portrayed the groups as inclusive, which was another important corporate value.

Groups participated in membership drives together during new employee orientations. These orientations, or “onboarding” programs, occurred several times per year and it was during these times that the Diversity Office allowed the network groups to solicit new members and learn about the different network groups through these collective membership drives. At these times, each network group set up tables in the lobbies of each Summit office to encourage employees to join the groups. Volunteers

from each group passed out brochures, talked with potential members, and encouraged employees to sign up to receive the monthly newsletter by email. In effect, network groups coordinated actions through planning events together, supporting company-wide trends, and working together on membership drives.

Intergroup Communication

As part of interdependence with immediate context, groups also exchanged information with other organizational entities to aid in accomplishing their tasks. In the case of SBNG and SHEN, intergroup communication provided a space for communication and allowed the groups to learn from the diverse networks rather than just their own members. Timothy mentioned, “SBNG, when they do have activities, everyone in the plant’s invited. And so everyone shows up and so this helps people to communicate with each other. And the same thing happens with the other [network] groups.” Donna echoed Timothy’s story by describing her experience at a recent potluck hosted by all of the network groups:

Just through the [diversity potluck] people got around and started talking. And you start just asking questions about different people’s cultures because we have people from all over the world here at this site. And some of the food’s strange. I am so Americanized and I eat about this much of American food (*spread arms wide*). But [I enjoyed] just interacting with folks.

Network groups also received information about one another through the Diversity Office. The ways of communicating fit the event at hand; for example, the onboarding process provided a natural time for new employees to learn about all the

networks. SBNG's reliance on company-sponsored communications allowed the network to seek out new members without carrying the burden on its own and without burdening recipients with too many messages from the network group.

However, using multiple sources to send messages to employees contributed to problems in targeting an audience and isolated the network leadership from its constituents. As Jafar, SBNG's President, explained:

We have a website and people hear about SBNG it has its own website, or through corporate events or through the Diversity Office...we have no idea how people hear of SBNG, but we don't have a marketing brochures that we hand out or that kind of stuff. New employees, if they go through on-boarding, they get introduced to networks, all the networks.

Since officers handled email and website communication between network groups, they created only a few strategic ties between groups, thus simplifying information exchange. As leaders experienced isolation from their own constituents because of one-way, top-down communication, they relied on plans from other network groups that they heard about through the Diversity Office.

Stable yet Permeable Boundaries

The characteristic of stable yet permeable boundaries referred to the way that membership in a group was constructed and managed as well as how outsiders accessed and influenced group information. Three characteristics of group boundaries – fluctuating group participation, multiple group memberships, and group identity

formation were particularly significant to understanding how Summit's system of diversity networks created patterns of concertive control.

Multiple Group Memberships

Employees who took part in SHEN and SBNG had roles in several organizational groups that influenced their participation in the network groups. First, participants held memberships in different Summit business units as employees of the company. Members found they often had to balance roles in the network with their roles as employees. A few of the members who took on leadership roles in the network groups also had diversity responsibilities built into their jobs. Perry, for example, found it much easier than some members to balance his role in the network and in the company. As a Social Investment Manager, Perry spent much of his workday researching ways that the company could attract and retain young, talented minority employees and women. Perry also chose to work with SBNG's Attraction, Recruitment, and Retention Committee and was able to apply much of the knowledge he brought to his job to helping SBNG with recruiting efforts on college campuses. Perry discovered that by merging skills he used in his job with the work he did for SBNG, he could balance both roles effectively. He could stay involved with the network all year long without sacrificing his professional position.

Perry found himself in a unique position compared to other network group members. Most often, network members found it difficult to effectively manage both roles simultaneously and thus, the networks faced difficulty in filling all of the officer

positions. When I attended SHEN's annual conference, elections for new board members had just taken place, yet several of these positions remained open. The current President, Andre, made an announcement that they were looking for leaders to take on these roles during the next year. The demands that most members faced because of their jobs made it difficult to participate in the networks.

In addition to work roles, employees often claimed membership in multiple network groups. Therefore, many members of SBNG and SHEN who I interviewed claimed membership in other network groups as well and several members, such as Victor, participated as a member in all of the networks. Members typically attended network events when the theme or purpose of the event piqued their interest, regardless of which network group had hosted the event.

Given the membership rules that the Diversity Office developed and enforced, SBNG and SHEN promoted inclusive membership and welcomed employees of all ethnicities. Non-members also attended network events that addressed a topic of professional interest and the networks announced these events with banners in lobbies or flyers in break rooms. Most of the network functions did not allow for members to talk candidly with one another since all kinds of employees attended. This inclusiveness often prevented members from using the networks for social support.

The pressure that groups felt to include outsiders also meant that they stressed inclusion of executive decision-makers within Summit. The groups needed to make their activities as transparent as possible to executive leaders in order to remain visible within Summit. Because groups felt forced to compete with one another, they had to

invite powerful (often non-Black and non-Hispanic) individuals to their group functions. If a group was visible to the executive level, it meant the group was accomplishing something important, which often meant a larger budget to continue the contributions it was making. Jafar, SBNG's President, explained:

We now have a visibility strategy and I have a specific plan on how we are going to become more visible, make sure that people are aware of all the great things that we do ongoing and that's part of the challenge, that you can be doing the best job in the world but if people don't know about it, they're sitting out there wondering do you even exist, so I took that as a challenge, as feedback, good feedback, and we are now creating a public relations committee with the specific goal of making sure that we are engaged out there. We have visibility throughout the company, so we have a specific plan coming out of the strategy session.

By being visible to senior leaders, members gained recognition for their accomplishments and the opportunity to be considered when positions became available. By providing access to senior leaders who could serve as mentors or sponsors, they could expand their personal networks and generate social capital. Therefore, the need to appeal to the executive level often outweighed the need to appeal to African Americans and Hispanics at the grassroots levels. One instance in which SBNG appealed to corporate leaders at the expense of Black members occurred when the group heard positive feedback about its program, the Fireside Chats. The Fireside Chat was an intimate off-site meeting during which a senior Black leader would share their personal experiences with the group. The Fireside Chat allowed members to discuss candidly but in a safe environment the challenges that they faced in the company. SHEN had a similar meeting called a Junta. Alicia explained that when officers began receiving

positive feedback about the Fireside Chats, they decided to advertise it broadly and invited corporate executives to attend:

[The founder's vision for Fireside Chats] was to be a small setting outside of Summit so you could have a candid conversation about what it took for you to move along. And I think we were successful with that. And then the officers said, "Let's make it bigger." So I pushed back. We've had speakers come in and be very candid, not tow the [Summit] line. I mean we've had people, the gamet of the [pay grades], want to share their experience. And you don't want to lose that.

In an effort to create visibility, however, SBNG lost its ability to provide a safe haven where Black employees could be fully candid with each other. To create visibility, group members were forced to tow the line and suppress many of their concerns as Black employees. In addition, including executives who were outside the group increased SBNG's visibility while reducing members' ability to support each other, share their struggles, feel surrounded by others with similar experiences, and experience empowerment. The demands that members faced and the intermingling that occurred because of multiple group memberships prevented the networks from forming their own unique identities.

Fluctuating Participation

Participation in the networks fluctuated because of turnover in membership, and inconsistent participation. Fluctuating membership prevented the development of network groups as main outlets for social support. Occupations, times of year, business trips, and work locations all affected who could attend network events and when.

Members in management positions enjoyed more job flexibility than members in support roles who needed to remain at their posts (such as to turn a valve or to answer a phone). Members expressed that their work was more demanding at certain times of year and that business trips sometimes prevented them from network involvement. Members worked at six locations in the metropolitan area and traveled to different sites to attend events.

Because members participated in network functions when the topics interested them and their schedules permitted, a diverse group of participants attended each event. In addition, the group of employees present at one SBNG or SHEN event might look extremely different from the group that attended the next month's event. Thus, members had a difficult time forming relationships with each other since attendance was inconsistent and they were often meeting people for the first time.

Moreover, the existence of multiple networks meant that some members of SBNG and SHEN felt more devoted to other diversity networks. It was especially difficult for these groups to draw in the new Black and Hispanic employees who were members of the Generation Y Network. The rules regarding solicitation and the multiple networks from which employees could choose generated further competition among groups.

Perry, a member of the Attraction, Recruitment, and Retention Committee, expressed concerns that the members of SBNG were aging and lacked enough young people to develop its future leaders. Several members mentioned the formation of a group called the Generation Y Network, which was another officially sponsored network

designed to connect young employees with one another and to address the generation gap at Summit.. SBNG members expressed concerns that the new Black employees were more involved with the Generation Y Network rather than with SBNG. Perry explained, “Some of the younger ones are actually picking up that there’s another organization, the Generation Y Network, which the younger employees seem to get more involved in and that’s definitely more of a mix of different [ethnic] groups.”

Sean, former SBNG President and Cass, Chair of the Attraction, Recruitment, and Retention Committee, expressed a disconnection between the older generation of Blacks and the youthful, recent college graduates. Cass and Sean mentioned that the older employees saw the younger ones as feeling an entitlement or as deserving to be compensated according to their worth. In Sean and Cass’s eyes, this sense of individuality led young employees to dismiss SBNG as unnecessary for career success. According to Cass, these college-educated newcomers believed that “racism was a thing of the past,” that generational gaps had become a salient concern, and that these gaps were best addressed through the Generation Y Network. Thus, members were concerned that the Generation Y Network was more relevant to the younger generations at Summit than was SBNG.

Furthermore, networks competed against each other when there was overlap in member characteristics. In one sense, membership in multiple groups encouraged the mingling of different types of people and ensured that there was a group with which an employee could identify. Conversely, it meant that members did not always select SBNG or SHEN as their primary group and that these groups were not easily reaching

certain employees. Employees usually participated in the group with which they most strongly identified. SBNG desired to be that group for all African Americans while SHEN wanted to appeal to Hispanics.

Sean stated, “So from a competition aspect, if we want to attract more members we have to kind of be competitive. We have to be at least as visible as they are, because from an employee standpoint, I mean you only got so much time you’re going to spend on work type stuff.” Therefore, SBNG and SHEN had an incentive to maintain excitement about their respective groups so they could recruit younger members to take on leadership roles when older members retired. The need for fluctuating membership and recruiting younger employees to assume leadership positions in the networks also led to competition among the groups and the need to work together.

Group Identity Formation

Porous boundaries through multiple memberships and fluctuating participation made group identity formation difficult. Employees had incentives to participate in many networks as topics interested them and yet, belonging to a network provided some benefits that members would not receive solely through their occupations. The networks provided opportunities for individuals to develop weak ties and to learn about the corporation as a whole. In addition, most networks offered mentoring opportunities in dyadic or group contexts.

While members were drawn to network groups because of these benefits, they also admitted that many group activities and goals were similar to those of other networks. Adriana, SHEN’s Vice President admitted, “The groups aren’t really that

specific in terms of culture. There aren't seminars on how to get a better performance review as a Hispanic, for example.”

The desire for visibility also made it difficult for SBNG to craft a separate identity. Wayne commented that the formation of SBNG had created a domino effect among other underrepresented groups: “Hispanic employees said, ‘Well, we need to have our group.’ So they got their group going and then others got their group going...” SBNG faced confusion about how its functions were distinct from those of other network groups. SBNG felt a need to solidify the group, move toward a common goal, and address the concerns of as many Black employees as possible. The primary reason for this goal was that the Diversity Office supported the networks that reached out to a broad array of employees. As seen with the example of the Mentoring Circles, once SBNG implemented an idea, others followed suit, making it difficult to create individuality. The group seemed to have little choice in handling this tension because it was constrained by the Diversity Office’s expectations for what a network group should be.

Although many of SHEN’s programs were similar to those offered by other networks, members were more concerned about the group’s value to its members than about appearing unique. Members defined SHEN as a “place for Hispanics to find other Hispanics” at Summit and a venue for connection with each other. Nancy summarized this sentiment that members shared: “[The network groups] are similar but their goals are supposed to be to focused on these issues that are specific to that ethnicity.”

SHEN viewed itself as unique in the sense that some of its members contributed training related to Spanish language learning for Summit employees. This skill allowed the group to claim a specialized program that other groups could not provide:

Well, I guess, you know, when you get into the details of what SHEN offers, it's never really touched on as far as culture. Yeah, so we don't, you know, there's not training or there's not a lunch and learn that is, you know, that has a message of how to be, how to have a better performance review as a Hispanic.

While the groups were part of Summit's diversity initiatives, employees often attended events for practical reasons unrelated to race. Members contended that while Summit created the rules, the rules were fair to everybody--they did not exclude anyone, so they were justified. Members also pointed out benefits associated with embracing all employees; that is, different perspectives, larger numbers, and greater exposure.

Thus, the open membership policy allowed members to access information that increased insights across boundaries. As Sean explained, "I think any type of advancement that the network has is that we don't focus just within ourselves. We reach out and pull everyone in the Summit community in." Summit was satisfied when the network groups attracted all kinds of employees and when attendance at sponsored events was high. Group members reasoned that the greater numbers of SBNG supporters, regardless of race, the more the group could serve its own constituents. In this way, diversity and increased membership equaled corporate support. SBNG coped with a lack of power over membership rules by creating and implementing programs that were beneficial to other employees as well. Thus, choosing to see inclusivity as a

benefit to the group helped the network increase membership and participation, regardless of race. This focus on drawing others into the network served to loosen group boundaries. Yet by becoming too broad, the group lost focus on the constituents they were trying to help and created fragmentation among the membership.

The mission and vision of SHEN was to help Hispanic employees reach their full potentials at Summit. Because corporate policy required that the networks include all interested employees, SHEN responded by allowing any employee to attend events, become a member, or receive the group's monthly newsletter. Jose expressed SHEN's approach to this required inclusiveness:

When [SHEN] holds their annual conference, I believe they pass the word along to the other network groups who then in turn make it and I think the corporation. They have a weekly corporate announcement and email with just different items of interest and I believe it's communicated there, so anybody can register [for the conference], it's not limited to SHEN members.

Not only was information about SHEN available to all Summit employees, but non-Hispanic employees often attended events that the group hosted. The Diversity Office encouraged members of the network groups to mix and mingle at any of the network events.

Despite the group's commitment to diversity initiatives, employees often attended events for their own professional development and networking, as opposed to advancing diversity per se. Rather than focusing on events relevant to Hispanic culture, most of the programs that SHEN offered focused on general topics, such as leadership,

conflict management, and emotional intelligence. Ciria explained how SHEN's purpose and approach had evolved since its inception:

[SHEN] probably started off with bringing in Hispanics in trying to maybe serve as some type of a mentoring organization to help employees become more connected, and help maybe bring some of those up the corporate ladder with getting to know people that are already in higher positions... [The conference] was not just applicable to Hispanics. It's applicable to everybody because we have a quiet majority of people that enter the workforce at Summit that may be freshly graduated, that are maybe in some type of a non-management position that they could see that there is opportunity out there but you also have to work for it.

By focusing on non-Hispanic issues, SHEN recruited very different employees to its events, which promoted a positive network image. Thus, the group loosened its boundaries in how membership and participation was defined. One difficulty of such a highly open and inclusive approach was losing focus on Hispanic issues, thus creating fragmentation within the membership. In addition, this inclusiveness also diluted attention to the challenges that Hispanic employees faced because, as Ciria suggested, problems facing racial minority groups were redefined as problems affecting all employees.

Discussion

Overall, members took a collectivistic approach to participating in the Summit networks until they felt their jobs were at risk due to their involvement in these groups. At that point, the focus turned to taking care of the individual and attending to personal needs. This attentions to personal needs suggested that concertive control was also

salient at the intragroup unit level as well as the intergroup unit level (e.g., Barker, 1993; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985).

Bona fide group theory accounted for the ways in which the permeable boundaries and interdependence among network groups and their organizational context enacted a process of concertive control. That is, both SBNG and SHEN were enabled and constrained through intergroup coordination amid competition for visibility and through a policy of inclusive membership that made it difficult to form unique identities. The Diversity Office communicated key corporate policies and graded the networks according to the goals that they had chosen for their annual Scorecards. These evaluations encouraged the networks to compare themselves to one another, which generated competition and conformity. The Diversity Office also reminded the groups of corporate values and encouraged them to cooperate by pooling their resources and working together.

The groups, in turn, constructed norms and expectations that directed their behaviors toward one another. Networks responded to the corporate value of inclusiveness by opening their doors to outsiders, including organizational leaders. The bona fide group perspective accounted for how network groups were constrained by their immediate context of cooperation in the midst of competition and difficulty of negotiating group boundaries. The theoretical framework was useful in identifying areas in which groups were enabled and constrained as well as revealing the context factors that kept the groups from attaining their goals.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

When I initially took on this project, I sought to investigate the ways that employee network groups enabled or constrained the goals for advancing Black and Hispanic employees at Summit. This study presents novel connections between the theories of dialectics and bona fide groups to illustrate the complex relationships that the groups managed in pursuing their missions. As I began to analyze the data, however, it became clear that these network groups were serving in such a way to reproduce the existing diversity practices in the organization rather than to promote change. Bona fide group theory shows how groups are enabled and constrained through the negotiation of their internal and external relationships. Dialectical theory uncovers the conflicting interests that groups develop because of a) their simultaneous usefulness to and reliance on other groups and b) their role of being simultaneously within the group and outside of it. This bona fide group study reveals that the organization influences the ways in which internal groups manage the dialectical tensions that they face. Thus, the management of group tensions in organizational settings should consist of a collective effort between groups and the organization that supports them. This study also offers broader insights on the ways that the system of diversity network groups serves to harness diversity as a strategic endeavor and mode of control.

This study problematizes network groups as modes for concertive control. The sections that follow present broader implications for dialectical theory, the bona fide

group perspective, concertive control. I offer practical implications for enhancing the value of employee network groups for their members. Finally, I present limitations of this study and some directions for future research.

Dialectics

Dialectics provides a way of understanding the sensemaking that network group members faced. Examining dialectical tensions that a group faces and how they manage those tensions helps generate an understanding of a group's underlying needs and concerns. Dialectical theory reveals the conflicting interests that that groups develop because of a) their simultaneous usefulness to other groups and their reliance on them as well as b) movement between being in the group and being outside of it.

These tensions come about because of the ways in which network groups are controlled. Members expressed how the network was enabled and constrained by the company (provided with funding and then policed by the diversity office; given a green light by the executive level but then discouraged by individual managers). They walked a fine line between feeling respected and being ignored. They had autonomy yet looked very similar to other network groups (they developed top programs that others wanted to implement but then they all became the same). They targeted Black or Hispanic employees but included and catered to all. Finally, the groups boasted hundreds of members but few participants. Members connected through email and the website yet were disconnected by physical location. Topics and issues were designed to cater to a broad audience but then often irrelevant to many. Group itself was very loosely coupled

which in some ways leads to disconnection (crosses over all levels and all jobs and business units) but without the linking pins that provide resources for the group, the group would not be able to do half of what it could do since membership was so spread out.

By emphasizing permeability of group boundaries and interdependence with a group's context, bona fide group theory highlights the dialectical tensions a group faces between looking outside itself and looking within. This analysis identifies choice points that the network groups faced because of this dual purpose, but it also explains how choices made influenced the permeability of group boundaries and interdependence, which enabled and constrained these groups' ability to serve their members. The ways in which dialectical tensions were managed enabled and constrained the groups in confounding ways.

This study revealed that tensions arose between four distinct relational units: intragroup, group-individual, group-group, and group-organization. Interviews with SHEN members indicated that the group primarily focused on intragroup and group-individual tensions. As a whole, SHEN took the perspective that success as a group relied on individuals carrying their own weight, working for the collective good, remembering those less fortunate, and finding unifying goals as a group. In doing so, SHEN stressed individual and group empowerment. However, the group also lacked awareness of the ways in which relationships with organizational leaders and with the other network groups influenced goal achievement.

In contrast, SBNG placed the greatest emphasis on its relationships with other groups and with the organizational leadership. SBNG stressed these relationships as key to the group's success. As a group, SBNG perceived that success relied on creating visibility so that executives could see the group's achievements, cooperating with other network groups while standing out, and feeling that the Diversity Office supported the group. Overall, members of SBNG placed significant emphasis on appealing to organizational leaders, which at times, detracted from meeting the needs of its members.

SBNG interviews typically conveyed a willingness by members to engage the tensions they faced. The critical ways in which members approached some of these tensions created stress at times. SBNG handled many tensions by separating the poles, and members were frequently changing the pole that was favored, based on different moments in the group's history, the relationships involved in the tension, and different issues the group faced. In general, the SHEN interviews displayed a high degree of comfort with tensions, almost bordering on passivity at times. Moreover, SHEN members often ignored group-organizational tensions altogether. According to Kramer (2004), ignoring dialectical tensions only suppressed conflict. Instead, SHEN could have gained greater control over its relationships by recognizing and embracing the tensions and then by finding ways to work with them.

By using a grounded approach to discern tensions in the interviews, I did not expect to locate any particular tensions in the network groups' relationships. Rather, I allowed them to fall out of the data itself. Kramer (2004) took a similar approach in his analysis of dialectics in a community theater group. He found that members faced a

tension between the group and commitment to other activities. I discovered a similar tension, network versus job, during my interviews with members of SHEN and SBNG. It appeared that tensions between individual members and the group itself might be common across all studies of group dialectics.

The dialectical analysis in this study also benefitted from its pairing with bona fide group theory. As bona fide group theory emphasizes a group's relationships with the organizational entities on which it relies, using dialectics in combination with the bona fide group perspective reveals the influence that outside relationships have on a group's ability to manage the tensions that it faces. Without the application of the bona fide group perspective, these four relational units would not have emerged. Therefore, this study departs from other research on group dialectics in that it reveals the complexity that multiple units add to a group's experience of dialectics. Therefore, groups may face greater difficulties in managing tensions than individuals or dyads, particularly when they are part of a larger social or organizational structure that wields influence.

Bona Fide Group Theory

In contrast to network theory, which focuses on ties between actors, the theory of bona fide groups allows for an examination of a loosely-coupled, yet mission-driven collective in its larger context. Bona fide group theory proposes that there are two main areas that affect group functioning, which cannot be examined in laboratory settings. First, groups have stable yet permeable boundaries and these boundaries are defined

based on how the group constructs its identity, especially when fluctuations in membership occur through multiple affiliations, and when group members take on representative roles through acting as ambassadors for their group. These group boundaries ultimately play a role in determining how the group goes about reaching its goals and achieving its mission.

Second, groups have interdependent relationships with their immediate contexts and are thus influenced by dynamics such as the coordination of actions with other groups, the negotiation of group autonomy and jurisdiction, intergroup communication, and sensemaking about these intergroup relationships. These factors serve to strengthen and loosen interdependence with other entities, which ultimately affects the group's ability to perform and reach goals. In certain respects, interdependence with its context enables the group's functioning while in other areas, the interdependence is constraining.

In its current state, bona fide group theory does not explain the choice points that influence its interdependence with context and the permeability of its boundaries. While bona fide group theory does not reveal dilemmas specific to any given group, the characteristics of a bona fide group do form the basis for choices that groups make to manage tensions. Dialectical theory fills this gap by identifying what those choice points are and the ways in which group members handle these tensions.

Bona fide group theory and dialectical theory lend themselves especially well to understanding the role of employee network groups in organizations since the theories underscore the basic conundrum previous research and dialogue have revealed: Do the network groups exist for the members themselves or for organizational leaders as a way

of managing diversity? On the one hand, employee network groups have been touted as a way to draw underrepresented group members into the organization; on the other hand, they are also seen as a way of managing problems associated with diversity or strategically drawing on diversity as a resource to the organization.

The analysis of SBNG reveals that members use the network groups to promote their issues and organizational leaders use it to control and guide the diversity concerns. This push-pull relationship created dialectical tensions that permeated decisions that the group made and every action it carried out. By emphasizing permeability of group boundaries and interdependence with a group's context, bona fide group theory highlights the dialectical tension a group faces between looking outside itself and looking within. This analysis not only identifies choice points that the Summit Black Networking Group faced because of these dual purposes, but it also explains how choices influenced the permeability of group boundaries and interdependence, which enabled and constrained the group's functioning and ability to serve its members.

In some cases, it was preferable for the network groups to achieve tighter boundaries; in other cases, the groups needed more flexible boundaries in order to function. As SBNG and SHEN managed their group boundaries and interdependence with key organizational entities, they enacted a system of concertive control that prevented the groups from working toward more radical organizational change. Therefore, the system of loose group boundaries and the groups' inability to control them created difficulties in their goal achievement.

Stable but Permeable Boundaries

Group boundaries were porous, in part, due to multiple memberships, fluctuations in membership, and group identity formation. Tight connections existed between most members' roles in the network and their roles as employees of the company. Because the core, active members viewed the tensions of diversity versus productivity and network versus job as ones that required integration, they managed their network and job responsibilities with greater ease than less active members who only participated in the network when they had the time. More active members assumed that those who were not active may have lacked support from managers who wanted workers devoted to their jobs. The Diversity Office communicated corporate support for the network groups, but participants individually fended for themselves, based on their relationships with managers. The ability of members to manage the tensions of diversity versus productivity and job versus network were largely dependent on the attitudes of individual managers. SHEN experienced the effects of these permeable boundaries between network roles and work roles in a way that impacted group cohesion and created difficulties in forming a united group identity. While SBNG and SHEN were bona fide groups, in some ways they failed to work like traditional groups because of a lack of accountability among members. Thus, multiple memberships loosened group boundaries and weakened group identity of members who were already separated by physical locations and business units.

The choice of selecting inclusiveness over exclusiveness also loosened group boundaries in a harmful way. The Fireside Chats and Juntas, which founders had

intended as a venue for speaking out about difficulties that minority employees faced, were opened to anyone, including executive leaders, which made boundaries even more porous. The choice to select inclusivity in almost every area of network functioning indicated that the groups did not realize they were enacting concertive control. Ordinarily when a group is controlled by a authority unit, the group may resist this control. One way this resistance emerges is through Scott's notion of hidden transcripts (Scott, 1995).

Scott's (1995) theory maintains that "underclasses" privately share hidden transcripts that reflect their true beliefs, desires, aspirations, enemies, and friends. These transcripts are shared with their in-group, which may emerge based on the same identifying characteristics from which employee network groups originate. These transcripts are also hidden from powerful individuals and groups that they perceive as a threat and who might mobilize their power against the underclass if they sense the underclass may be threatening their authority. Scott's (1995) theory of hidden transcripts provides an explanation for SBNG and SHEN's need to converse in intimate settings where members could be candid with one another. SBNG's Fireside Chats and SHEN's Juntas provided the perfect venues for hidden transcripts to emerge. However, the groups did not produce hidden transcripts through these venues because they selected inclusiveness and invited corporate leaders to attend. By opening group boundaries to include corporate leaders, the group members lost their ability to meet in a safe venue and discuss challenges they faced.

Interdependence with Immediate Context

Friedman (1999) compared sponsoring a network group to dancing with a bear. The bear is so large, powerful, and unpredictable that “it is hard to know who is leading [and] some managers worry that, once groups start, there is no end to the number of groups that could form” (p. 154). In this sense, an organization that sponsors network groups risks losing control over its employees. When these groups exist on their own and are offered autonomy to make their own decisions and set the goals they wish to set, the risks that the groups would challenge management increase. William, Summit’s Director of Diversity, conveyed Summit’s interest in maintaining control of the network groups when he commented, “When we were considering company support, we did not want the networks to become unions.”

Autonomy and Jurisdiction

By creating a Scorecard to evaluate the networks and allowing SBNG and SHEN to carry out their chosen goals, the corporation further encouraged cooperation and competition. The Scorecard related to SBNG’s tension between feeling empowered and feeling controlled. The group handled this tension by source splitting. The less active members believed that Summit empowered the group whereas the members with leadership roles believed that the Diversity Office often policed the group. Group cohesion suffered from these different beliefs about the group’s autonomy and jurisdiction. Because members experienced the relationship with the Diversity Office in different ways, the group’s interdependence with its context increased. The group was

less able to act as a solid unit since members brought these contrasting perspectives to the group.

The Scorecard certainly constituted a group performance review. However, while individuals who received a poor performance review risked losing their jobs, network groups did not face the risk of disbandment. By abandoning a network group, Summit would damage the corporate image that it constructed as a pro-diversity organization. Thus, the Scorecard did not constitute the sole reason that the groups engaged in concertive control since there was no danger that leadership would eliminate them. The network groups did compete for favoritism and funding, however. Fundamental intergroup cooperation and competition ensured that managers did not need to worry too much about losing control and that the networks could also help carry out the diversity initiatives. Just as individual employees were evaluated each year, the Diversity Office could ensure that the network groups carried out the purposes that Summit approved.

Front stage versus backstage represented a tension between task accomplishment that was publicly visible and officiated by Summit leadership versus tasks that members performed privately and that did not follow official policies. On the front stage, for example, SHEN approached the Diversity Center for monetary assistance and help with the membership drive.

Because of members like Tonya of SBNG and Michael of SHEN, the groups established their autonomy, not by negotiating jurisdiction with the Diversity Office, but by exercising the power of their individual members. This choice to separate the front

stage and backstage poles also suggests loose boundaries between some members' roles in the network and their official jobs in the company. The members who were most responsible for task accomplishment took the relationship with the Diversity Office seriously but then also took the steps they needed to provide resources out of their own department's budget to aid the groups in completing tasks. Concertive control processes, then, required a degree of autonomy in decision making. By exercising their authority to use the backstage in the company at certain times, these core members expanded the autonomy of the network groups which, in turn, helped to foster an environment in which concertive control could occur..

Coordinated Actions among Groups

Tompkins and Cheney (1985) noted that "most groups and organizations foster an informal norm of conformity" (p. 187). This norm of conformity has a practical purpose – to increase the efficiency with which organizations operate. Summit encouraged conformity in corporate practices and projects and this value also surfaced as a norm among the groups through intergroup communication. First, Summit's mission statement emphasized that corporate solutions should foster financial viability and ease of reproduction. During my interview with the Director of Diversity at Summit, he also conveyed that the Diversity Office encouraged similarity and collaboration among the network groups to minimize the strain they placed on organizational leaders. The network groups also adopted this value by inviting each other to their own network's events and to collaborate with each other. In managing the tension between working

together and working separately, both groups chose to collaborate with the other network groups to complete projects and to implement best practices. In managing this tension by selection and working together, the groups constructed norms of conformity. After seeing an event that one group produced, members introduced the same idea in their own network.

This conformity increased efficiency for members who already had limited time to devote to network innovations. However, since groups managed the tension by favoring collaboration, the groups fostered greater interdependence with one another. This interdependence increased conformity between groups but also encouraged feelings of competition among groups, which detracted from their missions to further the advancement of Blacks or Hispanics at Summit.

SBNG and SHEN relied on the Diversity Office for resources such as time, money, and space as well as political backing and communication. However, the Diversity Office took a “hands off” approach and mainly advocated corporate diversity values, which allowed networks to make their decisions autonomously, as long as they did not violate company policies.

Summit espoused values that were consistent with the corporate diversity management paradigm, which included: 1) “adding value” to the company; 2) education and training about diversity, 2) inclusion of all employees, 3) representatives of Summit before network groups; 4) forging business relationships with minority populations, 5) and ensuring that the most excellent candidates are hired and promoted. Summit provided the network groups with autonomy to make their own decisions, as long as they

contributed to strategic diversity initiatives and did not violate corporate policies. By embracing the values that the Diversity Office established, the groups formed cooperative-competitive relationships with each other that fostered their own concertive control. For example, SBNG first created the Mentoring Circles to develop the political and professional skills of their members. The Diversity Office praised SBNG for the group's contribution to diversity initiatives. Soon after this recognition, other groups, such as SHEN, followed suit and formed its own mentoring circles. Thus, it was difficult to forge completely cooperative relationships when the system of relationships among the units set the stage for comparison and competition.

Bona fide group theory can also explain the control processes, particularly the ones that occur at the intergroup unit. As the prevailing paradigm shifts from affirmative action to managing diversity, a change occurs in the accompanying system of control. Affirmative action seeks to increase opportunities for women and minorities by engendering a bureaucratic scheme of quotas, hiring procedures, and legal requirements. Hence, bureaucratic control operates to oversee the program. In contrast, diversity management that enacts network groups may foster patterns of concertive control because of its emphasis on a multicultural workplace that emerges from corporate values.

Practical Implications for Corporate Diversity Initiatives

The values of fairness and legal compliance that are promoted through the affirmative action paradigm have not sufficiently addressed the interests of

organizational leaders, so scholars of management were compelled to find an alternative paradigm that would secure the business interests of their audience. The diversity management paradigm exists largely because management scholars turned to alternative foundations for convincing executives that diversity mattered. While many scholars who write about “managing diversity” take a sincere interest in employees, they do so in such a way that appeals first and foremost to the interests of organizational leaders. Thus, the diversity management paradigm is ultimately designed to help companies create a competitive edge, increase productivity, and improve their bottom lines. For scholars to take a “non-managerial” pro-diversity stance they would have to abandon the managerial audience for whom their research is intended. They would instead be concerned with increasing access and fairness to minority members because it is the right thing to do. They would take a value-laden approach to diversity in organizations that would be subtly or blatantly critical of hegemony and patriarchy in organizations.

Githens and Aragon (2009) devised a chart identifying four types of employee network groups that might be found within organizations. According to their typology, SBNG and SHEN would have been considered “conventional” employee network groups that frequently showed solidarity with the company’s goals of using diversity to improve the bottom line (p. 225). However, the scholars also noted that while co-cultural employees in their research did sympathize with the managerial agenda, they ultimately aligned themselves most with their own activist goals. Prior to becoming sponsored entities within Summit, the network groups constituted what the authors would have defined as “internally responsive informal approach” (p. 225).

During my interviews with members, I sensed that they felt the corporation had taken care of them as individuals and provided many benefits and opportunities. These sentiments emerged in the following ways: 1) Summit supported many networks based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and age; 2) gGroups had autonomy to make decisions about the specific missions and projects they wanted to pursue; 3) group members received opportunities to showcase talents in a safe environment and to gain exposure to upper management; 4) groups provided mentoring opportunities for individuals and members ; 5) members took part in social functions that brought them together with similar others; 6) employees had the opportunity to learn from a diverse array of experiences; 7) members could attend professional development courses that introduced skills in leadership and conflict management; 8) members could connect with employees in other business units rather than remaining isolated in their own departments; 9) employees could help Blacks or Hispanics in the communities through volunteer programs; and 10) members could help minority-owned businesses thrive through working with the supplier diversity program.

However, at the global level the groups were not able to advance many of the diversity aims for its members. Therefore, the groups were constrained in the following ways: 1) The networks required valuable time spent outside of work. 2) Managers did not always support members' network duties; 3) mMembers experienced frustrations because they lacked the ability to garner more participation from others; 4) nNo direct correlation existed between network involvement and career advancement. As mentioned, minority employees still did not advance at the same rates as White

employees; 5) The few active members experienced some burnout; 6) Competition with other networks sometimes detracted from the groups' abilities to fully support their own constituents; 7) Agendas did not usually address issues specific to ethnicity of members; 8) Network activities often did not address the needs of diversity employees; 9) Loose coupling and infrequent communication did not enable the groups to respond quickly to changing group needs.

When groups are pitted against one another as equals and compete against each other for the acquisition of resources and respect, the lesser group stands out in sharp contrast to the accepted group (Putnam & Poole, 1987). In the case of networks at Summit, SHEN stood out as a "premier" group while SBNG admitted that they had once held a high status but now struggled with the imperfections they saw in comparison with SHEN. SBNG members interviewed provided consistent feedback regarding the group's reputation at the executive level and among other networks. While competition can highlight areas for individual or group improvement, the feelings of inadequacy that SBNG members experienced seemed counterproductive to the group's purpose of providing a venue for Black employees to feel connected, to feel that they could be themselves, and to feel empowered. The pressure to conform also required a great expenditure of energy for members. Fine (1995) wrote, "People who must spend significant amounts of energy coping with an alien environment have less energy left to do their jobs. People who are forced to keep a part of themselves hidden from others only bring a part of themselves to work each day."

Minority group members already faced numerous challenges to advancement because of the ways in which they differed from the dominant group. Therefore, the system that the Diversity Office fostered through its corporate values and solidified through concertive control placed undue focus on group competition while taking the spotlight away from the group's ideal endeavors, which were to empower, promote, and create more supportive social environments for Black employees. Scully and Segal (2002) argued:

Historically, HR's role in conventional employee groups has been important. In some organizations, employees in HR have served as allies who support these groups and help to foster environments where they can flourish. However, there is a need for organizations to *encourage* these groups instead of to *control* them from the top-down (p. 185).

If Summit leaders had a genuine goal for diversity they would be able to change the system so that the networks did not experience competition with each other. It seemed, however, that neither corporate leaders nor the network groups were aware that concertive control was taking place or that the groups even experienced pressure to compete.

Summit described diversity and inclusion as a core part of its mission and a key value for the company and yet members experienced difficulty being involved because of time constraints and lack of support from management. If diversity was made an authentic part of all employees' jobs, employees and the network groups they serve could be empowered to transcend dialectical tensions that otherwise forced them to choose between business and network activities.

In examining the dialectical tension of job versus network, members primarily managed this tension by separating the two poles so that each of the poles became salient at different times. Perry of SBNG was able to transcend the tension between network responsibilities and job duties because, as a Social Investment Manager, he oversaw the recruitment and retention of diverse employees on a daily basis. For Perry, the boundary between job and network group was highly permeable because they were so intertwined. He relied on his network responsibilities to be successful at his job and vice versa. While not every organizational member can have a job that involves recruiting on campuses and working with Human Resources to strategize methods of retaining and promoting employees, there are unrealized opportunities for improvement of the ways in which diversity is implemented in the daily work of the members of the company.

Another way was by improving intergroup communication between the executive level and middle management. More strategic communication about diversity initiatives between management and executives could have paved the way for network members to be more open with their supervisors about the importance of participation in network functions. For example, Tonya felt comfortable discussing how she approached her manager to let him know that network activities were important to her. She asked if it would be acceptable to occasionally attend to her network responsibilities during the workday, provided she managed her work responsibilities as well.

Victor stated, "If one piece breaks down the whole system stops." SHEN did not seem to face a class tension in the same way as SBNG. Because of the networks' relationship with the Diversity Office and the regulations they were required to follow

regarding open membership, the networks did not truly have the autonomy to be exclusive. Thus, the company was able to manage relations among different classes of Blacks, Hispanics, women, and other groups. However, if the group purposes had been made narrower, members might have received learning and development training that was honed to their specialized career paths within the company. For example, there might have been a network for Hispanic petroleum engineers and a network for Hispanic administrative assistants, and so on. However, this method of managing the tension would have also separated people by class, which could have ultimately served to break down the power that the group of Hispanic employees would have had if they had all worked together. In other words, certain individuals might have been served by this structure, but it would have done little to benefit the group as a whole.

Throughout this project, an overarching tension emerged between the individual and the collective. Participants expressed the ways that success for Blacks or Hispanics was determined by the ability of individuals to develop professional skills and to advance up the corporate ladder. However, employees who reached upper management positions no longer remained members in the network groups and thus, the larger group often lost opportunities to learn from members who had achieved success. In this way, the group had an interest in encouraging individual members to express concern for the collective. Therefore, the ways in which the networks managed tensions related to their autonomy and jurisdiction were tied to the choices they made in managing tensions related to other bona fide characteristics such as sensemaking about their purpose as well as defining the members they represented.

Limitations

The sample size and the single organization represented in this study limited the generalizability of the findings across contexts. The 30 participants represented about 10% of the active members in these groups and therefore limited the conclusions that I could draw regarding these groups. Future research might expand the sample or compare network groups across organizations that are similar in industry or size to obtain a broader picture of network members' experiences. Alternatively, future research could address the question of why employees choose not to participate in these networks. The members I interviewed took a strong interest in the direction of the groups but they also represented a smaller group of employees within a corporation of thousands.

In my methods chapter, I addressed the inherent limitations I would face as a White woman interviewing minority members about diversity issues. While I took steps in my communications with participants to ensure confidentiality, I cannot be certain that members were entirely open with me. My status as an outsider to the corporation and as a student may have helped foster trust since I had not been hired as a consultant and was not a member of the Diversity Office or human resources with some authority to make changes to the groups. I was pleasantly surprised, however, at how easily I seemed to develop rapport with my participants. While a few members asked with curiosity how I became interested in the project, I also received positive feedback from several. One of the members indicated that she had learned something through our interview. Another member complimented my willingness to tackle diversity research.

Nonetheless, future studies of diversity would no doubt benefit from the varied perspectives that a team of diverse researchers could bring to the table. At times, I reflected numerous times on an interpretation because I wanted to ensure that my perspective aligned with the participants' experiences. Having a partner or team of researchers representing different racial groups may have made this process more efficient.

Future Research

In 2007, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the American Institute for Managing Diversity (AIMD) published a study in which they had interviewed and surveyed over 1400 human resources and diversity professionals regarding the state of diversity management. Participants responded to a number of questions concerning diversity in international contexts. 73% of the 876 human resources managers surveyed reported that it was extremely important for global HR managers to exhibit competence in managing diversity. Of the 314 diversity practitioners who participated, 62% reported that they were personally involved in their organization's global activities and the vast majority of those involved in global operations (93%) believed that competence in diversity management was extremely important (SHRM, 2007).

Although the research presented here suggests the importance of a global outlook concerning diversity, this study has focused attention on issues of race that are of particular importance to diversity management in the United States. While race remains

a key area of concern in organizations based in the United States, other diversity issues take precedence in other international contexts. Gender is a primary area of importance for human resources practitioners in Europe, class in India, and age across Asia. However, other members argued that perhaps on a domestic level, maintaining differences between black, Hispanic, and other networks is empowering, on the global level maintaining these distinctions meant very little. Tonya said, “There’s a whole world out there globalizing. And when you start to see Summit’s talent on the great wide web, it’s someone in Malaysia. So if competing and staying in the game is the name of this thing, I think we should come together, not separate.” When groups chose to stand apart from other network groups they also prevented their ability to gain global visibility regarding diversity concerns.

SHRM’s (2007) report also revealed that many HR professionals felt their organizations gave too much attention to ethnicity and gender while neglecting other areas and meanings of diversity. This finding highlights Jackson and Holvino’s (1996) argument that extant studies of diversity equate ethnic diversity with cognitive diversity. This assumption may not prove accurate and so other ways of considering diversity can be valuable from the standpoint of organizational leaders. More research is needed to understand the experiences of other underrepresented groups, such as GLBT employees and disabled employees.

Along with this contextual approach to diversity research and practice, scholars and practitioners should acknowledge the overlapping group memberships that employees hold. Network members at Summit referred to multiple network

memberships, tugs between participating in one network versus another, and realizations about which group memberships took on the greatest prominence while at work. Intersectional theory emphasizes the complex identities and experiences that emerge from membership in multiple categories that include race, class, religion, sexual orientation, and gender. Intersectional theory emerged from critical race scholarship and argues that these categories have been essentialized and separated (Adib & Guerrier, 2003). An important next step for diversity scholarship involves recognizing this intersectionality between the various groups of which employees identify

The identification of concertive control processes at the intergroup unit also requires development through future research. This expanded theory can prove beneficial to other studies in which peer groups work together under an organizational framework that emphasizes values over rules.

Conclusion

This study examined employee network groups from a bona fide group perspective. Bona fide group theory offers breadth in the types of group related questions it can address. On its own, the bona fide group theory uncovered areas in which boundary permeability and interdependent relationships enabled and constrained network groups in pursuit of their missions. In connection with dialectics, bona fide group theory helped to reveal the multiple units from which group tensions emerge and the complex decisions that group members must make in managing them. The application of bona fide group theory also revealed an unexpected finding: that the

network groups were engaged in concertive control with each another through interdependence with the organizational context. The bona fide group theory uncovered these processes because it revealed the norms and expectations that groups formed based on the corporate values regarding diversity. The study further revealed that diversity management may be less politically charged than affirmative action because the groups engaged in their own control processes that discouraged radical actions.

These findings represent a useful basis from which scholars can examine diversity management practices from a critical perspective. I also urge human resources and diversity practitioners who sincerely endeavor to improve organizational life for diverse employees to consider some the pragmatic implications that I have presented. Finally, I believe that my application of the bona fide group theory serves to expand the possibilities for group research that engages the study of groups at multiple levels.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

In what direction do you see the group headed? Is it accomplishing what it set out to do?
How?

What kinds of responsibilities or projects does the group take on and how are these decisions made?

Is SBNG/SHEN working with any other groups or offices to accomplish its goals?
How?

What are your personal goals as a member of the network group? How are you accomplishing them?

How do you balance your responsibilities in the group and in your job?

How does the network group welcome and socialize new members?

What was your experience when you first joined the group?

How does it compare to the way you were socialized by Summit when you came to work here?

How and to whom does the network group make its presence known and communicate its needs?

How is SBNG/SHEN seen by other groups and departments within Summit? How do other groups and departments respond to SBNG/SHEN?

How do you make your presence known and get your needs met within the group?

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