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**2009**

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**Exploring Boundary Spanners in Interorganizational Collaborations**

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**Communicating Social Identities:  
Exploring Boundary Spanners in Interorganizational Collaborations**

by

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**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

The University of Texas at Austin

December, 2009

**Dedication**

for Grandpa



## **Acknowledgements**

The road that led from beginning to culmination of this dissertation was anything but straight. The many twists and turns that life threw at me would not have been navigable without the help and support of numerous people. First and foremost my advisor, Laurie, deserves a medal. Thank you for the numerous hours, edits and the ongoing help and encouragement. Along with Laurie, I have one of the best committees I could have ever hoped for during my graduate experience. Thank you for your time, perspectives and ideas. In the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Texas resides a staff of women who have worked tirelessly to get me through this program. Thank you Susan, Jennifer, Deanna and Margaret. I will miss you dearly and will forever be indebted to you all.

During my five year in Austin, I have had the honor of calling friends to a great group of individuals. There are certain places I will remember forever, not for the locations but the people that were present and the memories that were made there- UA9 and my officemates (past and present), Gillis Park/Zilker Park and the Friday night Whales, Sodade Coffee House and Lake Travis. These places and this part of my life I will always treasure. Thank you.

I want to thank my family. To my brother- I am proud that the week I am defending this dissertation, you are turning in your first script. Thank you for keeping me grounded and giving me a space to talk about something other than work. To my mom- I always aspire to follow in your footsteps. I finally have a higher degree than you but you will “always be smarter” than me.

Finally, there is no way I can possibly thank you enough Kelly. You are always my support, my guide, my friend and my partner. This journey was ours together and there is no better co-pilot in the world. Thank you for going on this journey and every journey yet to come.

**Communicating Social Identities:  
Exploring Boundary Spanners in Interorganizational Collaborations**

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2009

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The purpose of this study is to investigate the ways in which members of interorganizational collaborations (IOCs) create and maintain the processes and structures of collaborative organizing. This research argues that IOCs are complex organizations that include ongoing communicative processes among individuals who act as collaborative members and constituent representatives. Specifically, this research seeks to explain how individual boundary spanners come to understand collaborative identities that create structures affecting actions and outcomes of the collaboration. Five research questions are posed using social identity theory as a guide to explore the data collected.

The communication processes of IOC boundary spanners was investigated during a 13-month ethnographic field study, which included meeting observations, in-depth interviews, video stimulated recall, and document analysis. Overall, over 90% of the active members in the IOC were interviewed. Data was analyzed using the constant comparative method and organized by research question.

Results indicate that boundary spanners in IOC use social identity to help orient and

organize the diverse voices present within the collaboration. IOC members invoked group prototypes that created sub-groups within the IOC, thus allowing members with different goals for participation to find ways to justify membership. These prototypes also formed norms for communicating between members and created a collaborative environment that eventually led to organizational collapse. In addition, memberships within the IOC was constantly negotiated between members as the IOC worked towards certain goals. As sub-groups communicatively interacted with each other in the IOC, individuals would become more or less engaged in the collaborative process based on the successes and failures of the sub-group a boundary spanner has joined.

Overall, this study helps us better understand how individuals within the IOC experience the collaboration and emphasize the importance of communication in collaborative processes. This study concludes with a discussion of the results and implications of the data for social identity theory, boundary spanner research and IOC research, as well as implications for practice. Limitations and future directions are also discussed.

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*The point is, we should never underestimate process.  
The experience of the doing really is everything.  
The ending should be the end of that experience, not the experience itself.*

*--J. J. Abrams*

## CHAPTER ONE: RATIONALE

**Robertson Hill Boundary Spanner:** The history of OCEAN says that OCEAN has never overturned a vote of an individual neighborhood, when there's been strong support against it. We've always kind of made fun of the idea that busing people to meetings to win votes, but today might be a little bit different. It seems like there's a particular agenda to try and stop something – I don't even know what it is and we're – in the process we're trying to create a whole new hierarchy of, kinda, control. And if that hierarchy of control – the board of directors or hybrid model – involves 7 people, rather than whoever shows up, which is usually 7 or more, it seems like we're going to be disenfranchising way more people, when you only have to win a simple majority of 7 to 9, 4 to 5 people, versus anybody from any neighborhood. That's just my opinion.

**Swede Hill Boundary Spanner 1:** Well, if those people that sit on the board are duly elected by their constituencies, then we could argue that it's a lot more representative than whomever has the time and the inclination and the good will or whatever, to show up on a monthly basis. You could say tonight – Look at all the people from Swede Hill. You might not think that's fair, but that's the way the rules are now.

**Swede Hill Boundary Spanner 2:** We're just trying to play by the rules.

**Guadalupe Boundary Spanner:** And the big fear that you all have, especially people in Swede Hill, is that that Blackshear's going to come in and overwhelm you, make something happen in your neighborhood that you don't want. Can't we still keep the democratic process and put some sort of control on, that if the neighborhood has a position, if Swede Hill has a position on a certain item then it takes like a supermajority of the people that attend the meetings to overcome it. Why just throw out democracy because of paranoia?

**Swede Hill Boundary Spanner 3:** I think when you use words like fear and paranoia, it automatically drives a huge wedge between what we're trying to be, which is a group, to get along. Myself, I wish I only had to go to one meeting – that was my neighborhood association meeting. And when they created the Central East Austin plan, it did 2 things – it put another meeting on my schedule, which I feel is unnecessary. And number 2, it diluted the value of the neighborhood's representation. So, you can call it fear and paranoia, but it's really not. If I said – You're paranoid and fearful. How would you react? Would you think – Well, those are emotionally laden words.

**Guadalupe Boundary Spanner:** Let me apologize for fear and paranoia. But it is based on suspicion that OCEAN is going to override your neighborhood's wishes.

**Swede Hill Boundary Spanner 3:** Could. Could.

**Guadalupe Boundary Spanner:** Okay, could. There's a better way to deal with that than just disenfranchising people that want to have a say in what's happening in the neighborhood.

This is an example of the messy world of interorganizational collaborations (IOCs). By definition, IOCs represent the mutual partnering of organizations in more or less formal coalitions or short-term partnerships around specific events, goals, or for the purpose of sharing information and networking (Gray, 2000). In practical terms, IOCs involve partnerships of pairs or small groups of organizations, or large multiorganizational alliances (Keyton, Ford, & Smith, 2008; Phillips, Hardy, & Lawrence, 1998; Stohl & Walker, 2002). Interorganizational collaborations are formed for numerous reasons. IOCs can form around certain issue (e.g., art preservation), or a common need (e.g., presidential fundraising). They may also form due to similar geographic propinquity (e.g., Dell Inc., and Seton Medical Center- both located in central Texas- put together a children's hospital) or similar mission goals (e.g., The Salvation Army and Good Will). In some cases, collaborative relationships are driven by the mandates of a funding source (Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001), in other cases IOCs occur out of a trust and mutual respect for each other (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001; Vangen & Huxham, 2003) and a need to just stay in the loop with likeminded others (Harter & Krone, 2001). IOCs happen in and across all three major sectors of organization: public, private and state. Researchers have explored various contexts of IOCs including education (Ravid &

Handler, 2001), biotechnology (Kreiner & Schultz, 1993; Powel, Koput, & Smith-Doerr, 1996), technology (Browning, Beyer, & Shetler, 1995), the environment (Yoder, 1994), health and human service organizations (Lewis, Isbell, & Koschmann, in press; Stegelin & Jones, 1991; Yon, Mickelson, & Carlton-LaNey, 1993), nonprofit organizations (Isbell, Lewis, & Koschmann, 2006; Koschmann & Isbell, in press) and political organizations (Andrews & Edwards, 2004).

IOCs are largely decision-making bodies that are comprised of individuals who are representing self-interests or boundary spanners representing the interests of certain groups (Huxham, 1996). The communicative interactions of these members create and shape the collaborative form. As emphasized above, there can be gross differences in the purpose and processes of IOCs. Within IOCs, members not only share-information and work towards collective goals but wrangle with issues of control, representation, and membership. In the above transcript, the interplay of “mutual partnering” is highlighted. Boundary spanners who represent different neighborhoods not only work towards the collective good of the larger community, but also argue over what way decisions are made in the IOC and how representation in the decision-making process should occur. Boundary spanners<sup>1</sup>—who span the boundary from inside to outside or across different constituencies-- for different neighborhoods discuss what it means to “dilute the value of neighborhood’s representation” and what it means to be truly representative. Researchers have called these individual interactions between IOC members the “black box” of collaborating because little is known about how members communicate with each other to constitute IOC and achieve collaborative goals (Thomson & Perry, 2006; Wood &

Gray, 1991). Williams (2002) exemplifies this argument with the following observation:

It seems that the prevailing [research] discourse at both the theoretical and empirical level is quite often confined to a narrow discussion of the effectiveness and sustainability of new inter-organizational structures and mechanisms... This fixation at the organizational and inter-organizational domain levels understates and neglects the pivotal contributions of individual actors in the collaborative process. (p. 106)

The present study investigates the black box of IOC by focusing on communication between individual boundary spanners within collaborations. In the remainder of this chapter, I set a rationale for this dissertation by summarizing the gaps in IOC research and how a focus on boundary spanners, specifically the communicative construction of social identities among boundary spanners, advances our knowledge of interorganizational collaboration and organizational communication.

#### Trends in IOC Research

The foci of the general IOC literature has generally followed three themes: 1) explanation of the rise in partnership popularity, 2) discussion of the outcomes of collaborations, and 3) investigations of criteria for successful partnerships (Noble & Jones, 2006). In these three research themes, the underlying premise for investigation is to discover why the relationship makes sense and whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The focus on antecedents and outcomes has “enhanced our understanding about the preconditions for collaboration, how resources and dependencies are distributed among collaboration members, and collaboration outcomes” (Keyton & Stallworth, 2003,

p. 239). Yet these themes have overly dominated investigation of IOCs while focus on interactions among participants have received far less attention (Guo & Acar, 2005; Starnaman, 1996; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Wood & Gray, 1991). Attempting to integrate the omission of a focus on interactions in IOC research, Wood and Gray (1991) posed a framework that incorporated antecedents, process and outcomes. They argued that IOC processes are the “black box” in the research on collaborations, the part least understood (Thomson & Perry, 2006; Wood & Gray, 1991). Ring and Van de Ven (1994) further this argument stating, “Scholars for these research streams have ignored process. Although knowing the inputs, structures, and desired outputs of a relationship provides a useful context for studying process, these factors do not tell us how a relationship might unfold over time” (p. 91).

Although investigations into internal processes and structures of IOCs are less frequently published, there is recent growth focusing on the “black box” between inputs and outcomes. For example, process-oriented literature has investigated forging of missions and goals (Donahue, 2004; Huxham & Vangen, 2005), building leadership (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Crosby & Bryson, 2005), internal relationships (Williams, 2002), and trust (Mattessich & Monsey, 1994; Ostrom, 1998). Furthermore a process-oriented definition of collaboration suggests, “collaborations evolve as parties interact over time” (Thomson & Perry, 2006, p. 22). The focus on interaction over time, emphasizes the critical role communication plays in collaboration and highlights the ongoing creation and recreation of collaborative organizing at an individual level.

Communication plays a vital role in collaboration (Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005; Keyton, et al., 2008; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994) and communication scholarship is investigating this role. For example, Miller, Scott, Stage and Birkholt's (1995) study of coordination and communication within social service networks, found that organizations had to wrestle with the autonomy-connectedness dialectic while collaborating. Flanagin's (2000) examination of interorganizational networks found that social pressure communicated during the collaboration affected the adoption of innovation of organizations. Browning et al. (1995) explored the communication challenges and cooperative practices of the decision-making process and governance structure of collaboration, and Heath (2008) evaluated the consensus model of decision-making and the interplay membership had on consensus. Eisenberg and Eschenfelder (2009) discussed the affect of partnering on the collaborative structure. Heath and Sias (1999) investigated IOCs and posited the notion of collaborative spirit as a way to conceptualize how processes occur.

Since Miller and colleagues (1995) call for more communication scholarship in IOCs, numerous communication scholars have examined collaborative processes (e.g., Eisenberg & Eschenfelder, 2009; Heath, 2007, 2008; Heath & Sias, 1999; Iverson & Mcphee, 2002; Keyton et al., 2008; Keyton & Stallworth, 2003; Koschmann, Lewis, & Isbell, 2007; Mohr, Fisher, & Nevin, 1996; Renz, 2006; Scott, Lewis, D'urso, & Davis, 2007; Stallworth, 1998; Zoller, 2004), still more can be done to examine the individuals within the IOC and how individual interactions affect the outcomes of IOCs.

Communication in IOCs affects members' motivations to join, continue, and exit

(Friedman, 1991). Communication between IOC members establishes, and may hinder, common bonds and social identities (Beech & Huxham, 2003; Hardy, et al., 2005; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). In order to examine how IOCs reach outcomes, this research investigates the communicative interactions of individuals involved in IOCs. Following Noble and Jones' (2006) call for more individual level collaborative research, the present study examines boundary spanners as individual organizational representatives in IOCs. Focusing on boundary spanners directs attention towards the communicative construction and maintenance of IOCs and structures that enable boundary spanners to instantiate an IOC (Heide, 1994).

#### Boundary Spanners' Interaction in IOCs

The individual boundary spanner in IOCs serves as the representative of many constituencies. The individual may represent him/herself, a specific group, a home organization, and/or another IOC just to name a few. Individuals play representative roles and perform the communicative functions in IOC meetings (Heath & Frey, 2004).

Boundary spanners are defined as the individuals who enact extensive communication through their individual ties to external organizational members (Adams, 1976).

Boundary spanners are the exchange agent between the organization and the environment (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Levine & White, 1961; Miller & Rice, 1967; Thompson, 1962) and the linking pin between an organization and the community he/she serves (Organ, 1971). Wilensky (1967) defined boundary spanners as the contact people who mitigate the tension between the demand of flexibility from the environment and the need of stability in within the organization. Similarly, Aldrich and Herker (1977) posed that



boundary spanners are the coping mechanism for the organization as it tries to achieve compromise between the organizational policies and the environmental constraints. The boundary spanner in an IOC serves as representative of other constituencies. Boundary spanners play representative roles, and perform the communicative functions in IOC meetings (Heath & Frey, 2004). Yet beyond the designation as the representative for a constitutive, the boundary spanner may represent themselves and other interests. Within IOCs boundary spanners may be self-appointed, and some boundary spanners may shroud his/her constitutive group for personal or organizational benefits.

Boundary spanners cope with many internal and external tensions in IOCs. Internally, IOC members must address the political and power inequities that exist between collaboration members. This makes the relationship building and identity management between IOC boundary spanners (Keyton & Stallworth, 2003) crucial. Externally, ongoing tensions between boundary spanners participation in an IOC and their responsibilities to their constituent organization or group make identity management difficult (Jones & Bodtker, 1998; McKinney, 2001). As Heath and Frey (2004) highlight, “Dialectical tensions manifest themselves, for instance, in differences between organizational goals and collaboration processes. With respect to goals, individuals have to balance their organization’s motivation for participating with the larger goals of the collaboration group” (p. 203). Boundary spanning in IOCs challenges the definition of boundary spanning. IOC members may be representing themselves and their own interests at one point, and the interests of their constitutive group at another. A member may use his/her relationship with a certain group to become a boundary spanner, but once

a member of the IOC not function as a liaison between the two organizations. Some boundary spanners may be self-appointed or there may be more than one boundary spanner from a certain group, thus over representing one particular constituency in the meetings.

To this end, boundary spanners memberships and collaborative interactions should no longer be conceptualized as a unidimensional construct between the boundary spanner and the IOC, but rather research must take into account the complex and numerous affiliations and consequent identities that a person must manage in order to participate in the IOC (Stohl & Walker, 2002; also see Craig, 1998).

The construction and maintenance of boundary spanners' identities is inherently rooted in communicative interactions. As Hardy and associates argue:

Individual identities are created as people talk particularistically about an individual, constituting her or his reputation. Thus, one acquires an identity through inclusion, by being 'on' the collaboration team; for being 'a member' of the management committee, for being 'important,' perhaps by sending out the memos, for deciding where the meetings are held. (Hardy, Lawrence, & Phillips, 1998, p. 7)

Furthering this notion, Beech and Huxham (2003) state, "the processes of identity formation will affect almost every aspect of the nurturing that is the essence of productive collaborative practice" (p. 28). In a review of collaboration literature across numerous contexts Lewis (2006) found that identity construction is necessary to create collaborative

interaction, but may also limit individuals ability to differentiate and thus hinder one's willingness to interact collaboratively.

Following the assumption that IOCs are complex, include ongoing communicative processes among individuals who act as collaborative members and constituent representatives (Hardy, et al., 2005, Keyton, et al., 2008; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994), **this dissertation research seeks to explain how boundary spanners come to understand collaborative identities that create structures affecting actions and outcomes of the collaboration.** Identities originate in socially constructed meanings, and communication is critical to that construction (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Weigert, Teitge, & Teitge, 1986).

One theoretical framework to study collective identity formation is Social identity theory (SIT). SIT predicts that a part of a person's identity comes from the social groups they belong to (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Tajfel, 1982). A social identity approach to communication emphasizes that both individual and structural factors are essential to understanding coordination and organization (Postmes, 2003). In this research, I use SIT to frame boundary spanners' communication within a specific collaboration to better determine how organizational identity is understood and subsequently address how identity influences the interactions that create the structures of interorganizational collaboration.

The remaining sections of this chapter further develop the connection between boundary spanners, social identity and communication. The next section begins with a brief overview of boundary spanner research and social identity research with a focus on

how it is germane to the current study. I conclude with a discussion of the significance of this study and a summary of my rationale.

## Advancing IOC Research- Boundary Spanning and Social Identity

### *Boundary Spanning*

Historically, boundary spanner research was more common during the emergence of the networks perspective on organizing (cf. Adams, 1976, 1980; Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Grunig, 1978; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Organ, 1971; Tushman, 1977; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a, 1981b). As scholars were problematizing organizational boundaries (see Finet, 2001 for an overview), they turned their interest to the people that spanned those boundaries and made systems more permeable (Weick, 1979). In the mid-1970s the objectivist perspective of the environment saw the organization's environment as a place to acquire resources and information (Sutcliffe, 2001). The boundary spanner role as gatekeepers of information and environmental scanners was highlighted (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981b). As more organizations formalized the role of the boundary spanner in the organization, more organizations mimicked this tendency to the point that by the mid-1990s many *Fortune* 500 companies had some form of formalized position for boundary spanners (Rao & Sivakumar, 1999). As technology became more accessible to organizations, the contemporary corporation boundaries became highly permeable thus allowing a substantial increase in boundary-spanning communication (Manev & Stevenson, 2001). By the early-1990s this boundary spanning communication became so extensive that researchers began to hypothesize the boundaryless organization (Dess, Rasheed, McLaughlin, & Priem, 1995). The boundary spanner became the information

gatherer, the conflict manager, the person who brought new ideas back to the organization, and assisted in organizational decision-making (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Sutcliffe, 2001; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a, 1981b).

Yet for the popularity of research on boundary spanners in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the notion of boundary spanning has received little investigation since. Only recently have inquiries into boundary spanning seen a resurgence. In the late 1990s researchers began to note the lack of investigations on boundary spanners in relation to the larger body of research on interorganizational relationships and called for a more person-centered approach to the process of boundary spanning. In a recent article, Noble and Jones (2006) argue that the literature is “dominated by institutional and organizational level discourses to the detriment of analyses of the dynamic role of individual actors in the management of [collaborative] forms of inter-organizational relationships” (p. 891). The authors emphasize the need to understand the manager and his or her role in the partnership process. They posed a four-stage model that boundary-spanning managers go through in the assessment and enactment of a public-private partnership. Stephenson and Schnitzer (2006) posit that in order to understand IOCs we need to understand how trust is built into the relationship. These authors’ argue that the only way we can examine this process is at the boundary spanner level of analysis. To this end, the examination of boundary spanners becomes an integral part of our understanding on IOCs and how organizations enact the collaborative process. “The effectiveness and success of inter-organizational ventures rests equally with the people involved in the process and their ability to apply collaborative skills and mind-sets to the

resolutions and amelioration of complex problems” (Williams, 2002, p. 106).

The examination of boundary spanner and the creation of social identities with the collective is one key direction for understanding how the IOC reaches its outcomes. As Lewis (2006) states about collaborative research overall, there are already several lines of research examining the construction of self and other within collaborative communication. Additionally, as Scott (2007) emphasizes:

Issues of identity and identification are fundamentally communicative ones.

Indeed, it is through communication with others that we express our belongingness (or lack thereof) to various collectives, and assess the reputation and image of those collectives, that various identities are made known to us. (p. 124).

Within IOC research there are several studies that have highlighted the identity issues of collaborative members. Harter (2004) identified several key tensions that boundary spanners encounter in the push-pull between different organizational memberships. Lawrence, Phillips, and Hardy’s (1999) examination of IOC members emphasized the difficulty in negotiating their role in the collaboration. The authors found that even though a person may successfully negotiate an identity, that identity may not be salient to others in the IOC. In two different investigations of social identity, Hardy and colleagues posit that effective collaboration emerges out of the discursive resources that create a collective identity (Hardy, et al., 2005). Bartel (2001) examined the organizational identification of boundary spanners and its effects on social comparison during community outreach.

These investigations into boundary spanners and identity leave many avenues to be explored. First, there is an assumption that the boundary spanner will act ethically when interacting outside of the organization (Williams, 2002). Most of the literature still creates a positive valiance around the boundary spanner, and less is known about the “dark side” of boundary spanning where spanners do not work toward building trust and respect (Tushman and Scanlan, 1981a), but rather function as a covert operative sent into a group to achieve personal or organizational gain. Second, in IOCs membership is rarely formalized to the extent that individual representation is scrutinized. There may be numerous boundary spanners from one organization represented at an IOC. Some boundary spanners may be formally designated by the organization to represent the group, others may be informally boundary spanning and at points represent themselves, and at others represent minority or differing perspective from the continent group. This vacillation of identity and switching between representative groups creates messy and entangled interaction within the IOC where representation and salient identity may not coincide.

In sum, recent investigations into identity research has emerged and established the importance of investigations into boundary spanner identity management in IOCs. More specifically the focus on social identities (or how people classify themselves as compared to others) offers a fruitful branch of investigation. As DeSanctis and Poole (1997) point out, as changes in group structures occur, groups may undergo changes in membership and shifts in social identification. The use of social identity shifts the focus of organizational identity from a self-in-isolation to a self-in-relation perspective (Bartel

& Dutton, 2001; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Surrey, 1991). As previously stated, exploring how identity issues affect communication in collaborative interactions is important to our understanding of how boundary spanners create structures used to operate in an IOC. Using boundary spanners and social identity to explore IOCs, the next section summarizes the tenets of social identity theory (cf., Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and establishes connections between research areas in this study.

### *Social Identity Theory*

Social identity theory (SIT) began in the social psychological analysis of group processes, intergroup relations, and the self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; also see Hogg & Abrams, 1988). At its core, SIT predicts that a part of a person's self-concept comes from the social groups and categories they belong to (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Tajfel, 1982). According to the social identity perspective, people classify themselves into various social groupings in which they have membership (Scott, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). By associating with certain groups, individuals identify themselves as members, and as non-members of groups, (Paulsen, Jones, Graham, Callan, & Gallois, 2004; Pratt, 1998). Using SIT, individuals are a) motivated to achieve or maintain a positive self esteem; b) the individuals' self esteem is based partly on their social identity derived from group memberships; and c) the quest for a positive social identity enhances the need for positive evaluations of the group in comparison to relevant out-groups. For these assumptions to hold, identification with a group must occur, and membership in a particular group will be psychologically relevant (or salient) in a given social context (adapted from van Dick, 2001). In terms of



the organization, the sub-groups that emerge within an organization can become social groups that workers seek membership. Likewise, the organization itself can become an identity target (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Paulsen, 2003).

### *Prototypes*

The core assumption of social identities revolves around the creation of in-groups and out-groups. In order for organizational members to help delineate between different groups, “fuzzy sets” of attributes are created by and among people to differentiate groups (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 10). These sets of attributes, referred to as prototypes, capture similarities and differences among group members. Critical to prototype construction is the ability to polarize groups through the accentuation of similarities within in-group members and the maximization of differences with out-group members (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Prototypes allow members to create salient difference between groups that ostensibly may appear similar. These prototypes are context dependent and maintained through communication between in-groups members. As group members coalesce around a similar prototype, they reinforce the positive attributes and modify them based on contextual experiences. Furthermore within IOCs, boundary-spanners use prototypes to seek members with similar prototypes to create organizational sub-groups. For example, if two collaborations are working on the same issue, each IOC will have a prototype of why their collaboration is better and why the other IOC is less capable of dealing with the issue. When one collaboration is successful, each IOC will recreate or update their prototypes. Similar to fundamental attribution error (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967; Ross,

1977), the successful IOC will add this as evidence to bolster their internal prototypes about the organization, while the losing IOC will socially create reasons why the other collaboration “got lucky” rather than examining in-group failures. Alternatively, members may reevaluate membership in a group not adhering to its group identity and move to another group. This movement, referred to as social mobility, allows the group member to fluidly move between groups based on identity salience (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997). Finally, members may employ social creativity and change the identity of the group so that another group no longer threatens it, thus remedying identity threat created by interaction (Ellemers, van Rijswijk, Roefs, & Simons, 1997).

Important to the conception of prototypes is the emphasis on identity salience and situational relevance (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Although the prototypes can be used to create distinctions between two groups, the salience of these distinctions wax and wane depending on interaction. Furthermore, identities generally nest in one another (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) creating situations where group members may hold similar prototypes depending on identity salience (Vescio, Hewstone, Crisp, & Rubin, 1999). For instance, IOC members may all have a similar abstract prototype of a collaboration, but find a greater distinction in prototypes between sub-groups within an IOC (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Thus, prototypes are fluid, context and situational categories that IOC members use to create inter-group distinctions. While these distinctions may be salient at one point, depending on interactions and time member’s discriminations of groups can change (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1999).

### *Norms*

The creation and maintenance of prototypes affects numerous facets of organizational interaction, from individual uncertainty reduction to role conflict, leadership and groupthink (Hogg & Terry, 2000). The current study focuses on three main areas affected by social identity: (1) creation of norms from prototypes, (2) membership, and (3) disengagement. The move from prototypes to group norms is relatively easy if the prototype is collectively held by group members. As Hogg and Reid (2006) state:

From a social identity perspective, in-group prototypes not only describe behavior but also prescribe it—telling us how we ought to behave as group members. In this sense, norms that define an in-group that we identify with may have significant potential to actually influence our behavior... In-group prototypes have prescriptive potential because they define and evaluate who we are—they are closely tied to self-conception (p. 13).

This internalization of prototypes and the communicative construction and approval of prototypes between members creates an adherence to group values and perpetuates certain norms over others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

### *Membership and Disengagement*

In addition to norms, social identity and prototypes affect membership and disengagement with the group. Membership with a specific group is largely based on the congruency of perceived individual prototypes between group members (Hogg & Reid 2006). As new members enter the organization, he/she endeavors to not only understand the job task and role, but also create a sense of self within the organization (Ashforth,

1985). This creation of the organizational self relies on the social identity one produces about the organization (and the sub-groups of the organization that the member belongs- e.g., HR, accounting, marketing). “A developing sense of who one is complements a sense of where one is and what is expected...the prevalence of social categories suggest that social identities are likely to represent a significant component of individuals’ organizationally situated self-definitions” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 27). Likewise, if the prototype of an individual is not communicatively acknowledged or privileged among group members, disengagement with the sub-group or larger organization can occur. For example, if an IOC member sees the collaboration as a vehicle for helping the homeless, that prototypic expectation will be violated if the reality of collaborative engagement does not address this issue. Furthermore, this discrepancy in prototypes can ostracize a member from the group and make him/her not feel a member of the group at all (Hogg & Reid, 2006).

As stated earlier, IOCs, are fundamentally rooted in communicative interactions yet the “communication dimension is hardly explored at all by social identity researchers” (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 14). In exploring IOCs, boundary spanners come to understand shared prototypes and the creation of in-group norms through discursive interactions. The ways in which interdependence is understood between different boundary spanners can be examined through SIT and the communicative interactions that lead to social identities. Finally, membership and disengagement are cultivated through categorizations of in-group prototypes between boundary spanners and the consequent norms that these categorizations produce. SIT focuses on the need for boundary

spanners to affiliate with the IOC. This shift in conceptual focus helps explore the IOC by examining how collaborative relationships are communicatively understood over time through social identities.

Overall, the study of boundary spanner social identities is important to the exploration of IOCs. The examination of boundary spanner's identity in the context of IOCs is important for three main reasons. First, social identity theory through the use of prototypes and in-groups, emphasizes the communicative interactions of the boundary spanner in the development of the IOC. As members enter the collaboration, he/she brings prototypes about the IOC. Focusing on how boundary spanners understand these prototypes and the consequent engagement in the collaboration highlights the commutative creation of social identities and the norms and structures that guide communication. Second, communication between boundary spanners creates IOC normative structures. As boundary spanners communicate a shared set of attributes about the collaboration, these attributes set the normative behaviors of IOC members. Third, social identity theory and the creation of prototypes underscore the importance of context and time on collaborative norms and engagement. Prototypes of organizations are contexts specific and change over time. Tracking the shifts in prototypes based on the interactions of in-groups and out-groups broadens the perspective of IOC processes and structures. As boundary spanners interact with other in the IOC, changes in perception occur. Over time, these shifts in perceptions and prototypes can explain how members engage at one point, and disengage at another. It also documents the change in norms over time and its affects on boundary spanners in the collaboration. IOC processes such

as norm creation, membership and disengagement are all inherently communicative phenomena, and investigating the communication involved with these IOC processes through social identity theory will add key intellectual value to the theoretical development of interorganizational collaborations and our current conception of organizational issues.

### Significance of the Present Study

Heeding this call for more research examining the relationship between identity, IOCs, and communication, this study investigates the creation and production of social identities in IOCs. Whereas the Hardy group (Hardy et al., 1998, Hardy et al., 2005) examined identity creation and management through the manifestation of texts and the performance of collective identity through action, the present study looks at how individuals understand and categorize their expectations of involvement in the IOC and the consequent production of in-groups and out-groups based on social identities. In this research, I argue that social identities are understood through communication among individuals and that these interactions produce in-groups and out-groups for the IOC as a consequence. The process of creating in-groups and out-groups affects numerous facets of IOC, most notably in the creation of IOC norms, membership and disengagement.

Furthermore, the study of IOCs also has significant impact on the field of organizational communication and future directions for research. In an article on the future of organizational communication research, Taylor and colleagues emphasized the need for more research on interorganizational relationships in order to better understand what counts as organizations (Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney, & Seibold, 2001). Since, IOCs

are an entanglement of multiparty/multimotive interactions researchers are challenged with untangling these multiple relations and reproblematising our notions of organizational communication (Taylor, et al., 2001).

“Because these new organizational forms emphasize multiparty cooperative work...and strong links between activities and individuals across boundaries, communication processes assume a critical role in our attempts to understand them. Additionally, such interorganizational and quasi-organizational developments make problematic customary notions of collaboration and competition (Golden, 1993)” (Taylor, et al., 2001, p. 121).

These new organizational forms also call into question some of our traditional notions of organizational identity, commitment, and conflict. Consequently, research in IOCs need to be examined so as to reinterpret and evolve core organizational communication issues (Taylor, et al., 2001).

### Review and Organization

The breadth of research topics on IOCs does little to establish common links between research agendas (Keyton & Stallworth, 2003; Osborn & Hagedorn, 1997). As a result, our knowledge of the IOCs is disparate and unattached (Lawrence et al., 1999). There is little exploration into the micro level interactions of IOCs and the central role of communication in the collaborative process. Since “communication underpins and permeates the entire construct of capability for collaboration” (Engel, 1994, p. 71), communication scholars are in a unique position to make a significant contribution to the understanding of IOCs. As Hardy and colleagues state:

Effective collaboration depends on the relationship among participating members, which are negotiated on an ongoing basis throughout the life of the collaboration. Consequently, collaboration represents a complex set of ongoing communicative processes among individuals who act as members of both the collaboration and of the separate organizational hierarchies to which they are accountable. (Hardy, et al., 2005, p. 59)

The negotiation between IOC members and the communicatively constructed sense of “we-ness” is central to my examination of communication within IOCs, because these acts produce a collaborative identity that constructs and guides boundary spanners in IOCs (Cerulo, 1997, p. 386). As Turner (1987) points out, identity and inclusion are two fundamental forces that motivate human thought and action. Consequently, identity and inclusion are “the basis for an exploration of the development of [IOCs]” (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994, p. 99).

To date, the individual in interorganizational collaboration has been given little attention. I argue that the best way to understand the macro-level communication of IOCs is to move the focus to the micro-level actors involved in interorganizational communication. Boundary spanners experience and enact collaboration. The present study investigates the micro-level organizational communication of boundary spanners in interorganizational collaborations. Answering the call of communication and organizational scholars, this investigation focuses on how identity creation and maintenance affect the interactions of boundary spanners and subsequent creations of structures in the IOC. Specifically, I examine how communication is central to the



construction and maintenance of social identities between IOC members and the consequent affects on IOC operation.

In the next chapter of this dissertation, three areas of literature are summarized. First, I give a brief examination of the interorganizational literature. Second, I review the literature on boundary spanners. Although a relatively developed area of study, there are few organizational reviews of the boundary spanner literature. To better establish consistencies and hole in the boundary spanner literature, I propose an organizational frame for the research. Following the review of boundary spanner literature, the tenets of social identity theory will be highlighted with reference to organizational literature. Finally I posit the research questions that will connect IOC/boundary spanner research to SIT and guide my data collection and analysis.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is organized into three parts. The first part summarizes the current research on interorganizational research and interorganizational collaboration. In the second section, I elaborate on the boundary spanner literature and pose a conceptual categorization of research in this area. In the third part, social identity theory research is reviewed and links are made between SIT, IOC and boundary spanner research. Also, within the third section, five research questions are posed that guide the data collection for the present study and seek to understand IOCs through boundary spanners' communicative interactions in the collaboration.

### Interorganizational Relationship

Since IOCs are categorized as a subset of IORs, this section briefly summarizes the trends and gaps in the larger IOR research and examines differences and similarities between the larger IOR literature and the subset of IOC literature. After describing the larger IOR research, this section concludes with a review of IOC research trends with emphasis given to the four areas of research that overlap with the present study- identity, norms, membership and disengagement.

### *Growth*

The growth of interorganizational relationships since the 1970s is substantial. One report states that the growth of IORs in the public and private sector doubles every six years (Rule, 1998) and more recently a report published in the *Harvard Business Review* estimates that IORs increase 25% a year (Hughes & Weiss, 2007). In some sectors of

business, IORs have gone from fewer than 10 per company in the 1970s, to more than 250 per company by the 1990s (Gomes-Casseres, 1996, Kalmbach & Roussel, 1999). While organizations were less likely to see strategic advantage in IORs less than 30 years ago (accounting for less than two percent of revenue generated), today IORs account for over 35% of organizational revenue (Borker, de Man, & Weeda, 2004). In dollar amounts, it is estimated that worldwide IORs represent somewhere between \$25 trillion and \$40 trillion in corporate revenue (Kalmbach & Roussel, 1999) or approximately \$54 million in increased market value per alliance (Dyer, Kale, & Singh, 2001). Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric, has been quoted as saying, "If you think you can go it alone in today's global economy, you are highly mistaken" (Harbison & Pekar, 1998, p. 11). In a similar vein, James R. Houghton, chairman of Corning Inc. (an organization where IORs account for nearly 13% of earnings), found that, "More companies are waking up to the fact that alliances are critical to the future" (Byrne, 1993).

Beyond the for-profit sector, IORs have also become an important tool for grassroots organizations (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002). Although the focus may be less on market value and profit, community-based IORs bring opportunities for individuals to get involved in enhancing the community and promoting systems of change (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allen, 2001). The power of community-based IORs was highlighted in the 2008 presidential election when grassroots organizations worked together to rally community members for primary caucuses (which many political pundits believed was an integral part of Barack Obama becoming president). President Barack

Obama himself promotes the importance of community-based IORs as a way to rally people together to work for larger goals (Obama, 2008).

The growth of IORs puts organizations in a position where they need to partner in order to keep a competitive advantage in the environment (Cools & Roos, 2005). IORs can be difficult to manage (Cools & Roos, 2005; Culpan, 1993; Kanter, 1989; Spekman, Forbes, Isabella, & MacAvoy, 1998) and have failure rates that have grown from roughly 50% in the 1980s (Borker, et al., 2004; Harrigan, 1988; Porter, 1987) to almost 70% by 2007 (Borker, et al., 2004; Hughes & Weiss, 2007). In response to the growing prevalence of organizational partnerships, the investigation of interorganizational relationships has seen marked growth in the last thirty years (see Aldrich & Whetten, 1981; Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Galaskiewicz, 1985; Laumann, Galaskiewicz, & Marsden, 1978; Oliver, 1990; Schermerhorn, 1975; Van de Ven, 1976; Whetten, 1981 for an overview of IOR literature). Yet as growth continues in this area, researchers have found a “vast but fragmented literature” (Oliver, 1990, p. 241) on IORs across numerous fields of study (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Contractor & Lorange, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c; Eisenberg, et al., 1985; Evan, 1966; Huxham & Vangen, 1998; Koza & Lewin, 1998; Monge, et al., 1998; Osborn & Hagedorn, 1997; Taylor & Doerfel, 2005; Van de Ven & Walker, 1984; Williams, 2002).

IORs are defined as long or short-term transactions, flows, and linkages between one or more organizations in a given environment (Oliver, 1990). IORs can be categorized into numerous types of relationships. There are trade associations, agency federations, joint ventures, social service joint programs, corporate-financial interlocks,

agency-sponsor linkages (Oliver, 1990), hybrid arrangements (Borys & Jemison, 1989), franchises, strategic alliances, research consortia, network organizations (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994), quasi-firms (Luke, Begun, & Pointer, 1989), health organizations (Arnold & Hink, 1968; Farace et al., 1982; Luke, et al., 1989; Meyers, Johnson, & Ethington, 1997), and the focus of this research study- interorganizational collaborations (Einbinder, Robertson, Garcia, Vuckovic, & Patti, 2000; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Lewis, 2006; Snavelly & Tracy, 2000; Takahashi & Smutny, 2002).

### *IOR Research*

The common focus of the general IOR literature “is either an explicit or implicit...notion of whether interorganizational relationships make sense, and whether the advantages [of participation] outweigh the disadvantages” (Barringer & Harrison, 2000, p. 368). Researchers have established a corpus of knowledge about antecedents and outcomes of interorganizational partnerships (Oliver & Ebers, 1998). This research perspective commonly focuses on resource needs of IORs and outcomes that are achieved when certain antecedents are present. Vlaar and colleagues (2007) found that the evolution of IOR research started with first wave investigations into antecedents necessary for formation and the degree of formalization that occurred in IORs. The “second stream” research examined the degree of formalization and outcomes IORs (Vlaar, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2007, p. 438). Investigations of antecedent/outcomes developed a robust literature on formation of IORs where the underlying assumptions about IORs formation is that (1) organizations are assumed to make conscious, intentional decisions to establish an IOR for explicitly formulated

purposes and (2) the organizations enter into relations from an organizational (top-management) perspective” (Oliver, 1990, p. 242). While this research trajectory has increased our understanding of the reasons for entry into IORs and the plausible outputs, it leaves out processes involved in getting from antecedents to outcomes and limits the role of IOR members “to making right choices that render optimal alignment” (Vlaar, et al., 2007, p.438).

Although IOR process research is not the dominant trend of the literature, there is a growing body of research in this area. For example, Ebers (1997) evaluated how individual actors retained control and influence over an IOR by positing three micro-level dimensions that individuals use in order to negotiate enacted partnership: resource, information, and mutual trust between partners. The author poses that members negotiate these three dimensions, which in turn affects the governance and coordination of the IOR. Likewise, Powell et al. (1996) examined the flow of communication through IORs to comprise a model of organizational learning where as participants engage more they become more aware of the IORs goals, but this engagement can have a double-edged sword. If IOR participants do not receive the information needed in the engagement, they will disengage from the partnership. Researchers have posited that IORs are on a continuum of sophistication (Mattessich & Monsey, 1994; Taylor, 2000). The continuum reflects “the changing intensity of interaction and the magnitude of the reconfiguration of power relationships” (Williams, 2002, p. 109) in the negotiation of IORs between individual organizations. Much like the previous study, this research highlight the dynamic nature of the IOR and how participation can fluctuate based on interaction in the

IOR. The more intense the interaction of IOR members, the more the relationship between members can shift.

Communication scholars have also made contributions to the study of process in IORs. In Miller et al.'s (1995) study of coordination and communication within social service networks, the authors took a grounded theory approach to their investigation so that the words and symbols used in the IOR would inform us about interorganizational relationships. This study found that organizations had to wrestle with the autonomy connectedness dialectic while working in the IOR. At one level the organizations needed to participate to get funding (connectedness) at another level the organizations lost individual autonomy as organizations while working in the IORs (Miller et al., 1995). Flanagan's (2000) examination of interorganizational networks found that social pressure communicated during the IOR affected the adoption of innovation of organizations. In the study of a research consortium, Browning et al. (1995) explored the communication challenges and cooperative practices of the decision-making process and governance structure of IORs. Zoller (2004) looked specifically at the rhetoric of the Transatlantic Business Dialogue (an IOR) and how it communicated multiple viewpoints to different publics in order quell controversy surrounding the alliance.

#### *IOC Research*

A significant amount of recent research has examined IOCs (cf. Abramson & Rosenthal, 1995; Alter & Hage, 1993; Austin, 2000; Connor, Kadel-Taras, & Vinokur-Kaplan, 1999; La Piana, 1997; Lawrence, Hardy, Phillips, 2002; Milne, Iyer, & Gooding-Williams, 1996; O'Regan & Oster, 2000; Rogers et al., 2003; Saidel & Harlan, 1998;

Tucker, 1991; Williamson, 1991). Although IOCs are considered a subset of IORs, the research in this particular area has flourished. While initial investigations into IOCs focused more on the inputs and outcomes of collaboration (Guo & Acar, 2005; Starnaman, 1996), more recent research investigates the interaction and structures of IOCs and how these internal functions relate to inputs and outcomes (Jones, Crook, & Webb, 2007). In this section, I will summarize the corpus of research on collaboration structures and processes with emphasis on the creation of normative structures within the collaboration. I will then focus on how the individual IOC members interact in these structures with subsections concentrating on the main areas of study for this research: identity and membership

#### *Interaction and Structure Research*

Gray's (1989) definition of IOCs is one of the first to emphasize interaction and co-construction as important to collaborating. As she stated, collaboration is "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (Gray, 1989, p. 5). More recently, Thomson and Perry (2006) added to Gray's definition and highlighted the importance of norms in collaboration:

Collaboration is a process in which autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that brought them together; it is a process involving shared norms and mutually beneficial interactions (p. 23).

As stated in chapter one, communication is key to collaboration. Numerous



communication scholars have emphasized the importance of communication within definitions of IOCs. Keyton and colleagues proposed a meso-level communication model of collaboration that emphasizes the emergence and effectiveness of collaborative talk (Keyton, et al., 2008). This model moves away from communication as a mere component of the IOC to focus on communication as the “essence” of collaborating (Keyton et al., 2008, p. 1). Likewise, using communities of practice perspective, Iverson and Mcphee (2002) posit that communication is vital to collaboration. As members work together, the individual skills each person brings to the collaboration cultivates knowledge collectively within the IOC. Finally, Heath (2007) stated that collaborative outcomes are communicatively accomplished through democratic communication practices where diverse voices are welcome to and should be considered a precondition to reach collaborative decisions. Common throughout these definitions and models of IOCs is the importance of individual interactions within the collaboration as key to organizational functionality. In order to better understand how interactions lead to organizational functionality, researchers investigated IOC structures that enabled interactions.

Current research on IOC structures has examined numerous topics. For instance, Hall and colleagues (1977) found that the way IOCs structured themselves in the environment varied depending on whether the IOC was mandated by law, based on a formal agreement, or are voluntary (Hall, Clark, Giordano, Johnson, & Roekel, 1977). Lasker and colleagues (2001) posited that IOC governance structure was determined by the five elements of “partner synergy” or the outcomes of partnership functioning that

makes collaboration especially effective (p. 188). In this governance structure, IOCs must consider the resources, partner characteristics, relationship among partners, partnership characteristics, and the external environment when determining the appropriate IOC governance structure. Takahashi and Smutny (2002) found that IOC structure was based on a confluence of issues they call the “collaborative window” (p. 166). They found that governance is set up during windows of collaboration and that structures became more difficult to alter once these windows closed. Mulroy (2000) stated that collaborations needed a flexible structure that was fluid and malleable so that changes over time could be adopted without creating possible IOC failure. In her findings, the best IOCs start small with similar voices. This finding differs directly from Heath (2007) statement that IOCs need a diverse set of voices to achieve collaborative decisions. Mulroy (2000) also found that IOCs learn through doing and that overtime the structures become more stable as members learn what works and what does not in the IOC. Finally, Mohr et al. (1996) found that collaborative communication in IOCs serves as a governance structure where volitional compliance between partners allows for easier coordination and organization. This governance structure allows members to interact without formal control structures (such as formal position designations or hierarchies of positions). Members had higher group satisfaction and the IOC achieved better outcomes when collaborative communication was in place.

*Norms.* One area of focus in IOC structure research is creation and maintenance of IOC norms. Thomson and Perry (2006), drawing on Wood and Gray’s (1991) notion of the black box of collaboration, note that inside the black box are five key processes

that lead to collaborative outcomes: governance, administration, organizational autonomy, mutuality and norms. Keyton et al. (2008) found that IOC norms are likely carried over from individual home organizations and that norms are needed early in the collaborative process to create structures for members. Furthermore, a lack of norms early on can create early disorganization and role ambiguity (Browning, et al., 1995). Problematic to this assertion is that differing home organization norms can cause conflict in the IOC (Takahashi & Smutny, 2002). Lewis' (2006) model of collaborative interaction posited that norms form the external environment exerted pressure on the collaboration and how people interact. Within IOC norms research, two specific norms are frequently investigated- reciprocity and trust.

Norms of reciprocity proves to be key normative structures that enable IOC processes such as decision-making to occur (Thomson and Perry, 2006). In what Ring and Van de Ven (1994) call "fair dealing" the norm of reciprocity is well researched in IOC literature and a key factor in IOCs (cf. Axelrod, 1986, 1997; Ostrom, 1990, 1998; Powell, 1990). Thomson and Perry state that "tit-for-tat" reciprocity as common among IOC members as he/she decided what to bring to the table versus what will be gained from interacting within the IOC (2006). Doerfel and Taylor (2004) posit that norms of cooperation and competition beget more of the same in groups and that focusing on how these structures emerge over time gives a better understanding of the development of IOCs. Hardy et al. (2005) proposed that norms of reciprocity set a structure where one person uses a certain pattern of communicating (e.g., cooperative talk, competitive talk), and others will follow similarly.

In addition to research on reciprocity, investigations on norms of trust are also frequently published. Cumming and Bromiley (1996) define IOC trust as a common belief among IOC members that each person will make a good faith effort to (1) behave in accordance to any commitments, (2) be honest with negotiations about such commitments, and (3) avoiding taking advantage of other members. A norm of trust is central to IOCs as it reduces complexity and costs associated with organizing (Chiles, & McMackin, 1996; Ostrom, 1998; Thomson & Perry, 2006). Lewis (2006) found in her review of research that in some contexts trust needs to be earned in order for collaboration to occur. Gray (2007) posited that norms of open and honest communication enable IOC members to understand each other's concerns as real and legitimate. Additionally, cooperation can arise through norms of trust (Browning, et al., 1995). Bardach (1998) also found that trust was a key norm for collaborative capacity and Huxham and Vangen (2005) stated that trust is a critical component that takes time to develop in IOCs.

Overall, more research is needed on the creation of norms in IOCs (Hillebrand & Biemans, 2003). Much of the present research on norms is rooted in the input-output research on IOCs (Guo & Acar, 2005) and fails to explain how these norms are created and maintained. Understanding how norms are created and maintained gives insight to the impetus for organizational structures and how IOCs function. The current study examines the social identities of IOC boundary spanner and how different social identities can create norms within the collaboration. By focusing on the individual and the creation of norms through social identities, this research seeks to not only posit the

importance of norms for collaborating but also examine the creation of norms over time. In the next section, a summary of research on the individual within the IOC is developed with emphasis on research that directly relates to the present study.

### *Individual Actor Research*

Investigations into individuals within the collaboration have led to few common findings and the methodologies used in these studies leads to more questions than answers (Jones, et al., 2007). Much of the research on individuals focus more on best practices for individuals and successful collaborative creation rather than the individual in the collaboration. Foster and Meinhard (2002) found that leaders' predisposition toward collaboration is key in determining when IOCs will be sought out. "The predisposition to engage in formal interorganizational activities is the result of a combination of organizational and attitudinal factors that work together to intensify the need to collaborate" (2002, p. 561). Austin (2000) found that IOCs succeed when people personally and emotionally relate with the mission of the IOC and each other. In this chapter, Austin states that a successful collaboration "ultimately involves jointly tailoring a garment that fits the unique characteristics and needs of the individuals" within the IOC (Austin, 2000, p 173). Building on the norms research of trust, Huxham (2003) proposed that trust building, via expectation formation and risk taking cultivates mutual respect between members. In terms of leadership, successful IOCs need leaders who are sophisticated and experienced in order to navigate through the political and practical problems of the collaboration (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001). Counter to the more prescriptive best practices research, Medved and colleagues (2001) found that people

tend to focus on short-term goals while long-term goals go unacknowledged.

Furthermore, people tend to prefer interacting with likeminded members even if diversity is more effective (Medved, et al., 2001).

Research into the individuals in IOCs has also examined traits of individuals and the outcomes for individuals in collaborations. Trait research has focused on such concepts as cognitive complexity (Kline, 1990) or self-awareness (Ellis & Cronshaw, 1992), conflict management style (Kilman & Thomas, 1977), collaborative competence (Barrett, 1995) and collaborative ethic (Haskins, Liedtka, & Rosenblum, 1998). Research that has examined individual outcomes related to IOC participation includes focus on self-efficacy (Heath & Sias, 1999), understanding of organizational boundaries (Innes & Booher, 1999), trust (Jones & Bodtger, 1998), and political power (Thomann & Strickland, 1992). In a recent review of collaborative interactions across contexts, Lewis (2006) posits a model of collaboration that explicates the interplay of inputs and outcomes through the management of mutual goals, execution of collaborative skills, and the negotiation of identities for collaborative members.

More generally, Jones et al. (2007) stated that future research should conceptualize how individual organizations (and their representative boundary spanner) position themselves in IOCs to maximize integration. Below, two areas of individual-actor research are summarized concluding with an overview of how the present research can build on individual-actor research in IOCs.

*Identity research.* Exploring identity issues in IOCs is a relatively new line of research (Beech & Huxham, 2003). Identity and threats to loss of individual (or home

organization) identity can pose serious obstacles to collaborating (Beech & Huxham, 2003; Gray, 2004, 2007; Rothman, 2000). Two recent studies have examined the interrelationship between identity, communication and IOC members. Hardy, et al. (1998) examined how communication and action worked as part of a system to create and recreate the IOC and the identities of the IOC members. The authors posed a two-stage process, which argues that the activity and content of conversations discursively produces identities, skills and emotions, which in turn produce action in IOCs (Hardy et al., 1998). The first stage of the model highlights the importance of the discursively constructed collective identity in achieving effective collaboration. The second stage of the model emphasizes how the IOCs group identity is changed and reshaped through further conversations and actions (Lawrence, et al., 1999).

In an expansion of this two-step model, Hardy, et al. (2005) pose a model of collective identity, conversations, and effective interorganizational collaboration. In this model, identity is examined in a multi-step process where issues of membership and affiliations are discursively managed and shaped. During the discursive process, effective IOCs can be examined over time to see how the IOCs collective identity is shaped and reshaped based on the extent of self (organizational) or other (collaboration) discourse that occurs. Taken as a whole, the examination of collective identity through discursive interaction emphasizes the process through which boundary spanners construct themselves within the IOC and creates a recursive norm for future participation (Hardy, et al., 2005).

Communication scholars have also examined the role of identity and collaboration. Lewis' (2006) review of literature characterized conclusions about identity this way: "in many cases, the constructions of self and other impeded or enabled collaboration to take place, in other cases, it was viewed by authors as an antecedent to or necessary component of collaboration" (p. 224). Lewis goes on to place the negotiation of identities as a core part of the processes for collaborative interaction and states the negotiation of identity (as well as management of mutual exchange and execution of collaborative skills) is a common issues faced in collaboration that is central to accounting for outcomes. Eisenberg and Eschenfelder (2009) discuss the affect of partnering on the IOC structure. They posited that one of the most significant challenges to partnering is the affect on individual organizational mission statement when partnering with other agency and the consequent loss of individual organizational identity. Stone (2000) found that members who strongly identified with the collaboration saw a shift in the member's entire orientation towards a collective view of self within the collaboration.

Overall, the investigation into identity explores the nature of interactions in IOCs and opens up explorations into how identities are understood between members. The salience of identities within IOCs give needed insight into the impetus for normative behaviors and the creation of IOC structure that each boundary spanner use to operate. Research on identity "recognizes that the ways in which individuals construct parts of their own identity and those of their interaction partners can fundamentally shape the collaborative interaction" (Lewis, 2006, p. 226). One of the key components affected by



the construction of self in the IOC is membership in IOCs and how individuals come to know that they are members.

*Membership Research.* Huxham and Vangen (2000) found that IOCs membership is inherently ambiguous, complex and dynamic. In order for members to find a space to feel included, the IOC has to manage the ambiguous nature of collaborating and the complex relationships between boundary spanners as the collaboration grows and changes. Furthering the need to manage the IOC experience, Lawrence and colleagues speculate that members must be highly involved in order for IOCs to institutionalize new rules, forms and technologies in the environment (Lawrence, et al., 1999). Likewise, Einbinder et al. (2000) found that boundary spanners need to be willing (based on interpersonal and interorganizational trust) and able (bases on collaborative knowledge and skill) to cultivate a successful IOC environment. Members must also share common characteristics in order for the IOC to coalesce as a group and succeed (Saxton, 1997).

Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2001) found that IOCs need to build positive internal relationships among members through a good work climate, mutual identification and shared power in decision-making. In order to do this, strong leadership and formalized structures are necessary to facilitate inclusion of members (Foster-Fishman, et al., 2001). Knickmeyer and colleagues (2004) examined the role of members and membership in collaborative neighborhood associations. They found that although collaborating would increase the voice of the individual neighborhoods, there were not enough members in the individual neighborhood associations to create a new collaborative organization. In addition, the individual neighborhoods had such strong

identities that collaboration would be problematic for individuals (Knickmeyer, Hopkins, & Meyer, 2004). Alter and Hage (1993) found that the bigger the membership the lower the commitment each member has to the IOC. Furthermore, members need to be chosen carefully rather than throwing in a person solely because they are available at the time. The experience a member has with collaborating leads to better outcomes within the collaboration (Abram, Mahaney, Linhorst, Toben, & Flowers, 2005).

Communication scholars have also researched membership within IOCs. Heath and Sias (1999) found that reaffirming and discussing why members participate in the IOC contributes to the success of the collaboration and a renewed enthusiasm towards membership within the IOC. Keyton and Stallworth (2003) invoke a bona fide groups perspective to illuminate membership issues. This perspective considers membership boundaries to be fluid and somewhat unstable (Lammers & Krikorian, 1997). Using a bona fide groups perspective, collaborations are seen as having fluid boundaries (Frey, 2003; Putnam & Stohl, 1996; Stohl & Putnam, 2003). Collaborations are then initiated to take advantage of multiple memberships. The multiple memberships provide conduits for information flow between the collaboration and its members but also between represented members. The bona fide group perspective highlights the process members go through in the IOC and how membership changes over time (Keyton & Stallworth, 2003).

Overall, the research on membership in IOCs has highlighted the processes of membership, the way membership is constructed by the individual, how members should be chosen, the value of membership to the IOC and the home organizations members

represent. The present study examine how individuals come to know they are members of an IOC though the creation of similar social identities with other boundary spanners. Membership is a key element to social identity theory. Understanding how members come to identify and disidentify with an IOC will give insight into the ways IOCs grow and change over time.

In sum, the individual within the IOC becomes a focal point of analysis in determining the outcomes of the IOC. Members must understand the rationale for collaborating and find a space to collaborate with others. In order to find that space, boundary spanners must bring certain qualities to the table and find commonalities among the other members to cultivate a successful partnership. Moving forward, this research attempts to fill a gap in the IOC research by examining the individual boundary spanner in the collaboration. Using social identity theory, this investigation focuses on the ways boundary spanners create social identities about an IOC and the consequent affect these social identities have on the normative structures and membership within collaborations. The next section presents a review of boundary spanner research and calls attention to gaps in the research to date.

### Boundary Spanners

Boundary spanner research has gone through ebbs and flows. Yet, oddly throughout the course of boundary spanner research few links have been made between IOCs and boundary spanners. Tushman and Scanlan (1981b) saw boundary spanners as communication stars (people who are frequently consulted on work related matters) and who have substantial interorganizational communication. These communication stars

have to evolve and adapt their communication style in order to navigate the numerous discourses coming from outside organizations (Miles, 1977; Tushman, 1977). Monge and Eisenberg (1987) posit that boundary spanners are the communicative links that “monitor, exchange with and represent the organization to its environment” (p. 313). This link to and representation of the organization in the environment helps the organization better respond to a turbulent environment and construct an external identity to different constituencies (Dollinger, 1984). This link also becomes vital to influencing other organizations in the environment (Rao & Sivakumar, 1999) as well as changing the tone of the overall environment (Finet, 1993; Seiter, 1995). IOC investigations into individual interactions have focused on such topics as how individuals within the IOC communicate a shared mission (Gray & Wood, 1991; Heath & Sias, 1999), share values (Jones & Bodtker, 1998), foster dialogue (Zoller, 2004), and legitimize membership (Barrett, 1995). Although there are numerous and overlapping areas of boundary spanner and IOC research, rarely are there similar citations or acknowledgements between research lines.

The literature on boundary spanners to some degree suffers from the same fragmentation as research on interorganizational collaborations. Although there is a small body of literature on the topic, there is also a lack of theoretical continuity among scholars. The result has been a lack in theory-testing research. Also notably absent from the boundary spanner literature is a meta-analysis of conducted research. There are reviews of boundary spanner research (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Keller & Holland, 1975; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Miles, 1980; Williams, 2002) but most of the reviews are dated. Many of the reviews focus solely on the profile and role of the boundary spanner rather

than the interaction that boundary spanners encounter while representing home organizations to external environments. In order to evaluate numerous lines of boundary spanner research, I analyzed boundary spanner research from 1975 to present and organized the findings about boundary spanners into a four-part categorization: 1) the role of boundary spanners, 2) the outcomes of boundary spanning, 3) the communication of boundary spanners, and 4) the actor-level analysis of boundary spanners. From this categorization, I will highlight areas where further exploration can emphasize boundary spanner communication and make some connections to IOC research.

### *The Role of Boundary Spanners*

This area of research focuses on individual boundary spanner characteristics and preferred roles of a boundary spanner. Investigations in this area of the boundary spanners view the individual in terms of the characteristics, beliefs and attitudes. Although the focus on communication and boundary spanner can be more outcomes oriented or more process oriented, overall the research in this area seeks to understand boundary spanner traits as they relate to individuals in the organization.

Early research into boundary spanners sought to discover what characteristics would lead to a successful boundary spanner and consequently a more effective and efficient organization. In one of the earliest articles on boundary spanners, Organ (1971) argued that boundary spanners needed certain abilities, traits and values in order to be successful in interorganizational communication. Spanners needed to watch their language and be able to manipulate words. They needed to have a good memory and value the people they meet. Boundary spanners needed to be flexible in the environment

and more extroverted than introverted (Organ, 1971). Tushman and Scanlan (1981a) found that boundary spanners needed organizational confidence as an antecedent to successful boundary spanning. Other characteristics of a successful boundary spanner involved the ability to process information and represent the organization in the environment. Aldrich and Herker (1977) posited the ability to process an overwhelming amount of information coming into the organization and an ability to represent well the information out of the organization were the two most important roles of the boundary spanner. Tushman and Scanlan (1981b) found concurrent result and posed the information processing was one of the most important roles of the boundary spanner. The ability to process information buffered the organization from conflict and allowed to the organization to change according to influences present in the environment (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981b).

This focus on characteristics, roles and successful boundary spanning has continued in more recent research. Rugkasa, Shortt, and Boydell (2007) found that the ability to mitigate conflict was one of the key indicators of success in organizational boundary spanning. Foster and Meinhard (2002) found that leaders' predisposition toward collaboration is key in determining when IORs will be sought out. Einbinder et al. (2000) identified and found support for the importance of "willingness" (based on interpersonal and interorganizational trust) and "ability" (e.g., necessary collaborative knowledge and skills) of boundary spanners in IOCs in predicting the success of collaborations. Finally, Sutcliffe (2001) agreed with previous research when stating that boundary spanners key role was to share, surface and attend to unique information.

There is smaller body of research that examines the characteristics of boundary spanners but focuses more on the process of communicating rather than the outcomes of the communication process. Lewis and Scott (2003) found support for a link between boundary spanners' attitudes about network collaboration (i.e., "should the network work together" rather than "should my organization work with that specific collaboration") and perceptions of the current quality of collaboration and identification with network of providers. Noble and Jones (2006) looked at the characteristics of boundary spanners from a sensemaking perspective (Weick, 1995) and posited that most boundary spanners are selected based on their skills and abilities rather than volunteer based on their interest in the task. The authors presented a model of boundary spanning in the collaborative process that looked at boundary spanners communication in numerous stages of the collaboration (Noble & Jones, 2006). Finally, Williams (2002, p. 114) proposed the "art of boundary spanning" by evaluating the traits of the boundary spanner. Based on these traits, he found that boundary spanners need to focus on sustainable relationships throughout the collaborations and that communication, empathy, and personal trust were key factors in relationship maintenance (Williams, 2002).

The core corpus of research on the role of boundary spanners focuses on the ways in which boundary spanners can communicate effectively with the environment. Early research posited that boundary spanners needed to be professional representatives of the organization with strong ties to the organization and the ability to communicate effectively (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a, 1981b). In more recent research, the boundary spanner was labeled, as a trustworthy individual that people respect, is diplomatic and

tolerant (Williams, 2002). Yet little is known about the boundary spanners who hold few or none of these traits. This research seeks to explore the dark side of boundary spanning. As previously discussed, IOCs operate with a membership that is largely volunteer and in many cases the membership qualifications are rarely checked or upheld. This creates an environment where boundary spanners may in some cases represent a certain constituency and respectfully attempt to build trust with other IOC boundary spanners. But also, the IOC creates an environment where boundary spanners can reconceptualize his/her role and find opportunities for personal or organizational gain. The messy and chaotic environment of the IOC questions the more altruistic roles of the boundary spanner that previous research has described. This research study examines this gap in the literature and seeks to explain how boundary spanners identities may change and create instances where trust and respect are not necessarily key components of successful boundary spanning.

### *The Outcomes of Boundary Spanning*

The second area of research looks at the outcomes of boundary spanning. Research in this area has two general foci. One focus of the research emphasizes the characteristics of the individual boundary spanners and the results of the spanning on the organization. Research in this subset focuses on the results for the organization posited that boundary spanning outcomes helped a) reduce uncertainty about the environment, and b) confirm or protect the image of the organization in the environment. A second focus of outcome research emphasizes the individual more holistically and the results of boundary spanning on the individual spanner.



In terms of uncertainty reduction, Leifer and Delbecq (1978) posited that boundary spanners served to reduce the uncertainty of operating in a given environment. Confirming this proposition, Kapp and Barnett (1983) found that “organizations cope with increased perceptions of environmental uncertainty through increased communication across the organizational boundaries, indicating that boundary communication functions as an intermediary variable between environmental uncertainty and organizational effectiveness” (p. 251). In two more recent studies by communication scholars, boundary spanners helped create an environment where potentially problematic discourse could be addressed in creative way to avoid organizational conflict (Harter, 2004; Harter & Krone, 2001).

A second outcome research set examines how the boundary spanner confirms, creates, or protects the organizational image in the environment. In a 1992 article on performance in organizational teams, boundary spanners in an ambassadorial role were able to protect teams from excessive interference (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). In a similar study, Schwab and colleagues (1985) found that boundary spanners sought to control the environment that the within which the organization operated. In this attempt to control, organizations could make better predictions about organizational needs (Schwab, Ungson, & Brown, 1985). Fennell and Alexander’s (1987) study of hospital systems found that in difficult and highly regulatory environments, boundary spanners seek out linkages to help buffer the organization from the systems demands.

Although there are several articles that emphasize the outcomes of boundary spanning from an organizational perspective, there is a smaller set of research that

highlights boundary spanning and the outcomes for the spanner in the organization. Several studies have examined the affects of boundary spanning on influence, performance and promotion of the individual. Floyd and Wooldridge (1997) found that middle managers obtained more influence in their organization as they participated in boundary spanning. They found that as boundary spanning increased so did the influence the manager had in the organization (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997). Affirming these results, Manev and Stevenson (2001) found that managers needed to have strong internal and external ties in order to exert influence in the organization. They found that boundary spanner communication was strongly related to influence even beyond the affects of hierarchy. Moving from influence to performance and compensation, Dollinger (1984) found that the more a small business owner participates in boundary spanning, the better that owner's performance in the job and compensation for work. Likewise, Katz and Tushman (1983) discovered that managers who participated in boundary spanning were more likely to retain their employees and have a higher rate of promotion (for both managers and his or her employees) compared to managers that did not participate in boundary spanning. Finally from a communicative prospective, Finet (2001) posed that boundary spanning served an autopoietic function for boundary spanners where their external communication also served to reinforce the individual's organizational identity.

Missing from the research on outcomes of boundary spanning is the negative consequences. Much of the research addresses positive outcomes of spanning and how boundary spanners can create good will with the environment and internally with employees. This research examines the potential negative aspects of boundary spanning.

Specifically, this research questions the role of the boundary spanner as the liaison to the environment and what occurs when information is misrepresented in the IOC or to the home organization. The boundary spanner serves as the “linking pin” between the organization and the environment but members also serve as filters that are designated to channel information but have little oversight in doing so. The ways boundary spanners shift identity salience and find social identity is one way to evaluate the boundary spanner and the various outcomes of boundary spanning in IOCs.

### *Boundary Spanners’ Communication*

Research in this category examines communication through different channels and the relative amount of communication received by different parties. Research in this area is smaller compared to the first two areas of research, but the corpus of data deserves to be highlighted. In one of the earliest evaluations of boundary spanner communication, Tushman and Scanlan (1981b) looked at the role of information transfer. They posited that communication happens in a two-part process where boundary spanners obtain information from external sources and disseminate information to internal users. For boundary spanners, the ability to cross borders is predicated on his/her having the expertise required to communicate effectively on both sides of that border (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981b). For boundary spanners, the ability to cross borders is an important one. Boundary spanners create a border around what he/she considers their home organization or group. In order to cross these borders, the boundary spanner must identify with the new group or organization it is joining. This crossing over represents a joining of identities for the boundary spanner, and an ability to work within groups outside of the

home organization. In order to create a space to cross over boundary spanners communicatively co-create a space where boundary spanners can interact in the external environment and construct communicative pathways between the external environment and the internal representative organization.

The focus on communication processes is emphasized in more recent literature. Johnson and Chang (2000) evaluated the two-part process of communication and argued the boundaries becoming less identifiable and investigated different communication patterns in new organizational forms. The authors found that while formal communication patterns were not linked to boundary spanner discourses, neither were cyclical models that were dynamic in nature. Overall, the communication star (the person with a high degree of connection internally and externally) explanation was found to be the most successful way to communicate with others (Johnson & Chang, 2000). In a second study, Kapucu (2006) examined communication of boundary spanners from a social network perspective with the goal of evaluating boundary spanner communication affects on decision-making and coordination. From this research the author posited a model of interorganizational communication locating communication technology and boundary spanners as the linking pin between a chaotic environment and increased communication effective decision-making (Kapucu, 2006).

In addition to research evaluating communication, a second area of research evaluates flows of communication and what types of discourse coordinates with types of boundary spanners. In his 1978 article in *Human Communications Research*, Grunig evaluated the types of communication that came from different levels of boundary

spanners. He posited that high-level boundary spanning (upper management) discourse would focus more on planning where as low-level boundary spanner discourse would be client-oriented. Grunig found that in general lower-level employees got more external communication than upper-level management, but overall communication does not flow back into the organization beyond a negligible rate. Rugkasa, et al. (2007) found similar results in their research on North Ireland partnerships. The authors found that downward flow (or communication to the clients served by the partnership) was needed for organizational effectiveness. Too often communication flows across organizations (at a meso-level) or up through individual organizations. As Rugkasa and colleagues state, “The valuable connections and relationships that derive from linking ‘up and across’ can only make a real impact on people’s lives if mechanisms are also there for linking ‘downwards’” (Rugkasa et al., 2007, p. 229). Finally, Ancona and Caldwell (1992) examined the patterns of external communication and the flow of communication to the environment. They found that the patterns of boundary spanning communication (who you are connected with) were a better predictor of organizational performance than the frequency of your external communication (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992).

In sum, the investigation into boundary spanner communication is a narrow slice of the boundary spanner research overall. Furthermore, communication is commonly treated as a simple transmission variable with little exploration beyond a linear definition of communication as a transmitting channel between sender and receivers. The literature does offer a good starting point for more exploration into communication processes. From these investigations we know that boundary spanners need to a) identify with the

outside organization the boundary spanner is communicating with; b) be a “star” with a high degree of connection within the home organization and the external organization; and c) that communication returning from the external boundary spanning is limited at best with few good channels of upward communication within the home organization, leaving key information bottle-necked with the boundary spanner and few others in the home organization. While these investigations seeks to explain communication as a variable of boundary spanning, it does not explicate the how question. This research study furthers one of the aforementioned research agendas by asking how do boundary spanners identify with the external groups and what creates a strong external identity among boundary spanners?

#### *The Person as Boundary Spanner*

The last and least represented area of study in boundary spanner literature is research on boundary spanners as a person in the process of communicating with the environment. Although there are numerous studies of boundary spanner roles and characteristics, and there are a few studies that look at the processes of communicating (see above sections) there is little research on what boundary spanners go through during a process of interorganizational communication. In general the research in this area falls into two areas: investigations on 1) identification and 2) tensions.

Hardy and colleagues recently published an article examining the communication process, identification and its affect on the boundary spanners. They posit that there is a relationship between discourse and interorganizational collaboration where “interorganizational collaboration can be understood as the product of sets of

conversations that draw on existing discourses” (Hardy, et al., 2005, p. 58). Specifically, the authors argue that effective collaboration emerges out of a two-stage process that produces discursive resources that create a collective identity. In this piece the identity of the individual and how the identity grows and changes over the course of the collaborative interaction is directly affected by the discourse of the collaboration. In a similar article, Bartel (2001) examined the organizational identification of boundary spanners and its effects on social comparison during community outreach. The article poses a model of organizational identification in a boundary spanner context. Overall Bartel (2001) found three important implications in the investigation of communication and identification. First, social comparisons and environmental cues serve to guide the individual during IOCs and set the stage for further social comparisons involving this particular identity. Second, favorable intergroup contrasts lead boundary spanners to feel more positively about their organization and motivate him or her to identify more strongly with it. Third, certain favorable comparison between collaborative members may highlight more attractive descriptors of their own organization and consequently alter what their organization means to them and how he or she identifies with it (Bartel, 2001).

In the second area of research in this area, scholars have examined the tensions that boundary spanners experience as they interact with external organizations. Harter and Krone (2001) examined the discourse that occurs in community cooperatives. Their investigation brought to light the paradoxes that boundary spanners must manage while working with external organizations and the larger community. The authors posit that boundary-spanning communication serves as a stabilizing force in a turbulent

environment. Although communicating to the external environment, boundary spanners are faced with the issue of organizational stability versus environmental change. Both forces pull simultaneously on the organization (and consequently the boundary spanner) and the boundary role occupant helps the organization negotiate this paradox through networks of learning, promoting legitimacy and protecting interests (Harter & Krone, 2001). In a similar study, Harter (2004) found that boundary spanners needed to negotiate the tensions between equality for all members and equity for each person involved, efficiency versus participation and the paradox of agency. Although these tensions were potentially problematic, the boundary spanners were able to construct collaborations that provided opportunities for dialogue to creatively negotiate these contradictory demands (Harter, 2004). In a final article on tensions, Stephenson and Schnitzer (2006) found that in creating collaborations, boundary spanners can spend too much time communicating with agencies within the environment at the exclusion of the people the collaboration serves. The authors state that often boundary spanners do not seek out the connection between community members thus creating this tension between inclusion versus exclusion with the collaboration and the community, which ultimately hurts the legitimacy of the collaboration in the environment (Stephenson & Schnitzer, 2006).

In sum, boundary spanners are affected by the communication between other external boundary spanners. Positive interactions lead to positive evaluations of the external group. In general, the more favorable the interaction the more a boundary spanner identifies with an external target. Problematic to this process is the tensions experienced by the boundary spanner when communicating externally. The boundary



spanner must deal with the push and pull of identifying with an external group, while maintaining the interests of the home organization. The boundary spanner must decide how to work collaboratively with the external group while obtaining the objectives of the home organization. These tensions manifest themselves in the way power and control are exerted among boundary spanners and the equity given between boundary spanners.

Missing from the literature on boundary spanners as a person is a discussion on the boundary spanner and the identity that person claims in the IOC. It is presumed that a boundary spanner will be the mouthpiece for the home organization, yet that presumption may not hold true in IOC interactions. While there are investigations into the tensions that boundary spanners experience in the role of boundary spanning, less is known about the interactions the boundary spanner has in the environment and what portion of those interaction represent formalized organizational communication and what represents personal opinions. Furthermore, the person as the boundary spanner has been traditionally understood as a official role where designation is formalized by the home organization. In IOCs, boundary spanners can be formally designated from a home organization, but also members can informally speak on behalf a home organization or constituency. Members can self-appoint themselves as boundary spanners who represent others, thus challenging the notion of the traditional boundary spanner. This research project seeks to understand how the boundary spanner interacts in the IOC and what factors affect these interactions.

### *Summary*

Overall, the literature on boundary spanners is diverse in method and theoretical exploration. From this review of literature, four distinct areas of research are determined within the corpus of boundary spanner investigations: inputs, outcome, communication of boundary spanners and the individual as a boundary spanner. The bulk of these studies focus on the inputs and outcomes of boundary spanning rather than the processes and structures individual boundary spanners encounter while interacting in the external environment. The present study works towards building a greater understanding of the boundary spanner as an individual in the process of IOCs. Building on the communication and individual-level research on boundary spanners, this research study examines the issues of identity that boundary spanners experience in interorganizational relationships. This research asks the “how” question missing from much of the boundary spanner research summarized above. How do boundary spanners identify with external groups? How are expectations and norms communicatively created between boundary spanners that give structure to the external group? How do boundary spanners communicatively discern members from non-members, and how do boundary spanners disengage from the external group? Specifically, this research explores how social identities are determined in interaction among boundary spanners and how these interactions produce in-groups and out-groups for the IOC as a consequence. The creation of social identities among boundary spanners has implications for the processes of operating IOCs, most notably in the creation of IOC norms, membership and disengagement. As Postmes (2003) states:

Communication plays a pivotal (but often covert and underexposed) role in social identity processes. Its importance becomes evident when asking *how* the processes actually work. When one reflects on this, communication appears a key factor in determining the salience of social identities. Also, communication is essential for interaction between the social and the individual, which enabled identity formation (p. 89).

In the next section, the basic tenets of social identity theory and examples of research are reviewed. This section culminates in the presentation of five research questions that guide the current study.

### Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was first proposed by the Bristol Theory of intergroup relations (Tajfel, 1972, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Drawing from Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, which posits that we have an upward drive that leads us to compare ourselves with others who are similar or slightly better than ourselves on relevant dimensions, SIT proposes that one's identity is clarified through social comparisons of in-groups and out-groups (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). In this theory, Tajfel introduced the notion of social identity- "the individual's knowledge that [he or she] belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to [him or her] of this group" (1972, p. 292) - in order to conceptualize the self in intergroup contexts (Hogg & Terry, 2001). Tajfel proposed this limited notion of social identity to a) avoid discussions of what is identity and b) to establish how aspects of the social world contribute to an individual's social behavior (Tajfel, 1981). More specifically he states:

Our explicit preoccupation is with the effects of the nature and subjective importance of [social] memberships on those aspects of an individual's behavior, which are pertinent to intergroup relations- without in the least denying that this does not enable us to make any statements about the 'self' in general, or about social behavior in other contexts. 'Social identity' as defined here is thus best considered as a shorthand term used to describe (i) limited aspects of the concept of self, which are (ii) relevant to certain limited aspects of social behavior. (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255)

Thus, SIT examines the social identity through intergroup relations. At its most fundamental level, SIT posits that individuals have a need for a positive self-concept and are consequently motivated to establish linkages that will enforce these self concepts (Caddick, 1982). SIT uses intergroup settings because these group memberships are generally a significant component of a person's self-concept. "The satisfactoriness of one's social identity...is usually determined through comparison, on meaningful dimensions, with other groups. Depending on the outcomes of these comparisons...individuals may be motivated by their social identity needs to establish or maintain ingroup distinctiveness on the valued dimensions" (Caddick, 1982, p. 139).

SIT, in its original form, consists of four key elements: categorization, identity, comparison, and distinctiveness. These four elements are linked together in the process of social identification. As Brown and Ross (1982) summarize:

*Categorization*, by segmenting the world into groups, gives both a necessary order to a person's world and a locus of identification. The group(s) to which a

person belongs provide a satisfactory *identity* for that person to the extent that *comparisons* of it (or them) with other groups are favorable, and result in it obtaining some *positive distinctiveness* vis-à-vis these others. (p. 156, italics in the original)

In a newer summation of SIT, Hogg and Terry (2001) propose that SIT is based on two underlying socio-cognitive processes: categorization and self-enhancement. In their assessment, categorization sharpens intergroup boundaries by producing normative perception to relevant contexts. These social categorizations help reduce an individuals' uncertainty and give guidelines on how he/she and others should act in a given situation (Hogg & Terry, 2001). Self-enhancement guides the social categorization by creating favorable in-group norms and distinguishing between in-groups and out-groups (Scott, 2007).

Evolving directly out of the notion of social identity and further exploring the idea of categorization, self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985; Turner, et al., 1987; Turner & Oakes, 1989) emerged as a way to explain social categorization as the cognitive behavior of self- categorization (Hogg & Terry, 2000, 2001). As Hogg explains, "The process of social categorization perceptually segments the social world into in-groups and out-groups that are cognitively represented as prototypes. These prototypes are context specific, multidimensional fuzzy sets of attributes that define and prescribe attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that characterize one group and distinguish it from other groups." (2001, p. 187). The self-categorization theory (SCT) ultimately serves the function of rendering the world meaningful and makes individuals' actions relevant in certain

contexts (Hogg & McGarty, 1990). SCT thus distinguished three levels of abstraction that are most important in the social self-concept: (1) the subordinate level of humanity where a person defines one's human identity; (2) the intermediate level of in-group/out-group abstraction, where a person defines one social identity, and (3) the subordinate level of self where a personal identity is created that is distinct from the in-group (Rosch, 1978). SCT focuses mainly on the intermediate level of abstraction where "the individual is perceptually and behaviorally depersonalized in terms of the relevant in-group prototype" (Hogg & McGarty, 1990; p. 13). The depersonalization process does not imply a deindividualization, but rather a contextual change in the level of identity, where the person no longer represents a unique individual (subordinate level) but rather the embodiment of a relevant prototype (intermediate level) (Hogg & Terry, 2000). For example, college sports fans use an intermediate level of in-group/out-group abstraction to create social identity about a certain team. If you are a Texas Longhorn fan you call upon a set of attributes that make you a fan. During football season these attributes are heightened when a salient out-group (in this case a rival team like the Oklahoma Sooners) plays the Longhorns. Longhorn fans rally around other Longhorn fans. They will even display shirts deriding the other team (e.g., shirts with slogans like "O-who" are commonly worn and the fight song is adapted to include "OU sucks" by the fans). Fans use prototypes to discuss the advantages the Longhorns have over the Sooners, and play up stereotypes about Sooner fans. Prototypes are highly context dependent and influenced by out-group salience (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Prototypes become central to our understanding of SIT. They represent the defining and stereotypical attributes of groups. A critical feature of prototypes is that maximize the features within joined social groups while emphasizing differences between groups (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Prototypes for individual groups are stored individually, but are maintained, changed and endure through communication between members of the specific group (Hogg & Terry, 2001). The emphasis on prototypes in SCT and SIT more broadly situate these theories as having a dynamic nature. SIT and SCT moves the focus of identity away from interactions isolated within groups to identities created contextually by the interactions between groups (Turner, 1975). In this perspective, social identity becomes more fluid where changes in relationships create and recreate individual identities. This dynamic notion of social identity moves away from more static interpretations of fixed identity structures to a more processual conception of identity that is responsive to the intergroup interactions in specific contexts (Brown & Ross, 1982; Hogg & Terry, 2001). Continuing the college sports example, The University of Michigan (UM) considered Michigan State University (MSU) its main rival in the early years of the schools history. As UM began to dominate the rivalry, MSU as an out-group became less salient and overtime the rivalry shifted to Ohio State where it remains UMs main rival today. “Thus social identity is dynamic. It is responsive, in type and content, to intergroup dimensions of immediate comparative contexts” (Hogg & Terry, 2001, p. 124).

Overall, SIT predicts that a part of a person’s self-concept comes from the social groups and categories they belong to (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Tajfel, 1972). By associating

with certain groups, individuals identify themselves as members, and as non-members of groups, (Paulsen, et al., 2004; Pratt, 1998). SIT suggests that to understand how social groups are formed and maintained we need to focus on variable such as similarity, proximity, shared threat and other factors that become criteria for prototypes and categorizations of a context (Turner, 1982). In addition, SIT emphasizes the solidarity of social groups, the conformity of in-groups and the juxtaposition of out-groups. At its core, SIT asks the question ‘Who am I?’ in relationship to the social group by emphasizing the importance of how we perceive and define ourselves compared to other groups (Turner, 1982). Communication scholars have taken up this approach to explain the influences issues of social identity and intergroup interaction (Harwood, Giles, & Palomares, 2005; Giles & Coupland, 1991; Williams & Giles, 1996). Much of this research has focused on how social identity affects communication between generations (Harwood, Giles, & Ryan, 1995), ethnicities (Giles, 1977), and health (Harwood & Sparks, 2003). Within organizational communication literature, Scott (2007) reviewed the current communication literature on organizational identification research. In this article, the author proposes areas of integration with current lines of research and how social identity theory can further scholarship on organizing.

#### *Research on SIT in Organizations and Research Questions*

The development of SIT in various research agendas has grown considerably since the introduction of the theory in the mid-1970s. Although SIT is used in numerous interpersonal and dyadic investigations, organizational research is less cultivated (Hogg & Terry, 2001). There are a growing number of studies published on SIT in organizations



(e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2004; Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Reid, 2006; Hogg & Terry, 2000, 2001; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Paulsen, 2003; Pratt, 1998, 2000, 2001; Scott, 1997, 1999, 2007; Suzuki, 1998; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998) and organizational communication scholars are beginning research agendas using SIT (see Scott, 2007). In this section, SIT research is summarized and research questions linking boundary spanners, IOCs and SIT are proposed. The presentation of the research questions follows a deductive pattern where the study first seeks to explain how boundary spanners create social identities in IOCs and then moves to discern the differences between in-groups and out-groups. The final three research questions drill down to investigate how the social identities of boundary spanners creates norms, goals, a sense of membership and disengagement with IOCs.

#### *The Communication of IOC Social Identity*

As mentioned above, prototypes are the cognitive representation that defines and stereotypes attributes of groups (Hogg & Terry, 2000). These prototypes are not static, set lists but rather ‘fuzzy sets’ of attributes that emphasize what group membership should take the form of or what an ideal group should look like (Hogg & Terry, 2001, p. 5). One of the most important features of prototypes is their dynamic nature. Prototypes are stored in memory, but are constructed and reconstructed in social interactions. This constant redefining is predicated by the salient out-group at the moment and is reconstructed through communication between in-group members. As Hogg explains, “New prototypes form, or existing ones are modified, in such a way as to maximize the ratio of perceived intergroup differences to intragroup similarities; prototypes form to

accentuate similarities within a category and differences between categories” (2001, p. 187).

The use of prototypes in organizational SIT research highlights certain foci for exploration. Specifically, Prototypes guide in-group members and allow them to distinguish similar social identities based on how well a person matches the prototype (Hogg, 1996a, 1996b, 2000). Important to the conceptualization and exploration of prototypes is the contextual dependence for the sets. As members spend time with one another, they begin to share prototypes (Hogg & Terry, 2000). High intergroup distinction increases group identity. Conversely, when distinction between the two groups becomes less obvious, salience is reduced and group identity less polarized. Within the IOC, members can join for various reasons. All IOC members may have a more abstract identity of the IOC that creates a similar IOC prototype but find greater distinction between sub-groups within the IOC (Ashforth & Johnson, 2002). For instance an IOC member may join a collaboration to fight poverty. That individual may believe that the only way to fight poverty is through the increase in wages. Although this member may share a larger more abstract prototype with other members about reducing poverty, this person may find a “living wage” sub-group where greater distinctions between IOC members can be made. Although prototypes have been explored in numerous organizational settings, little is known about the use of prototypes in interorganizational relationships. To explore the concept of prototypes in IOCs, I posit the following research question:

RQ1. How do boundary spanners understand the IOC through prototypes?

Research question one builds a foundation for how boundary spanners in IOCs understand a social identity and the set of attributes IOC member call upon to distinguish IOCs and collaborative involvement. Following the tenets of SIT, the construction of an IOC social identity provides a guide for boundary spanners in all facets of collaborative interaction.

#### *Distinction between In-groups and Out-groups*

The importance of social identity and organizational members highlights how the employee defines oneself and the actions he/she makes in the organization (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000). As Paulsen (2003) explains:

Individuals within organizations identify with groups based on their work unit or team, functional roles (e.g. marketing, the senior management team), professional identities (e.g. engineers, scientists), employment status (e.g. fulltime vs. part-time), informal arrangements, and with the organization itself. Consequently, when individuals interact, they do not simply act as individuals but also as members of the salient organizational groups to which they belong.  
(p. 16)

Organizational scholars have been particularly interested with how and why organizational members identify with certain organization and not others (Pratt, 2001). Additionally, studies have looked at the employees within the organization and how identity affects certain work factors. These studies have emphasized employees' identification processes and how employees' identifications affect burnout, job

satisfaction and motivation (e.g. Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Dutton, et al., 1994; Gossett, 2002; Mael & Ashforth, 1992, 1995) among others.

Much of the research on social identity looks at the two processes that underlie SIT: categorization and self-enhancement. Since the target of these processes are to clarify the boundaries of in-groups and out-groups, researchers have posited three conditions that are likely to make in-groups conceptually different from out-groups (Pratt, 2001). First, identification with an organization is enhanced when the target organization is distinctive. Second, in order for differentiation to occur, out-groups must be salient in the environment. Third, competition between in-groups and out-groups is necessary for members to separate from other organizations. For example, an IOC will complete the first condition if there is a distinct goal for the collaboration (i.e. a mission statement and list of work objectives) that is beyond the scope of any one organization to complete. The IOC will fulfill the second condition if there is a competing organization or group working on the same goals and objectives. Finally, if the other organizations are seen as being in direct competition with the IOC, then members can create an in-group/out-group distinction and create prototypes that emphasize membership in the IOC versus membership in the competing organization. Based on these three conditions organizational members can establish a social identity in the IOC.

An important component of groups are the social mobility of members. Since IOC members interact with one another and create shared expectations (at both an IOC level and any sub-groups of the IOC) the ability to move and develop prototypes of groups is imperative (Terry, 2003). Groups with highly open and fluid boundaries will compare

themselves with each other and depending on interaction can shift from one group or another. Groups with less open boundaries force members to create new ways to socially identify because social mobility is reduced (Ellemers, Haslam, Platow, & van Knippenberg, 2003). Since organizational membership creates an important social identity (Scott, 2007), understanding conditions that create social identity will better explain how boundary spanners construct the IOC, understand membership to the IOC and create norms about the IOC. Using SITs processes of categorization and self-enhancement, I pose the following question based on the conditions for in-group differentiation stated above:

RQ2. How do boundary spanners communicatively discern between in-groups and out-groups in IOCs?

RQ2a. How (if at all) do boundary spanner prototypes assist in discerning groups?

Research questions one and two serve three key functions. First, these questions integrate the core assumptions of SIT in order to better understand the social identities one forms in the IOC. Second, it emphasizes the role communication plays in the boundary spanners construction of the IOC. Finally, these questions explore how IOC boundaries are created in order to build in-group membership.

### *The Communication of IOC Norms*

One area of research on SIT and organizational members examines the use of social identity and establishment of group norms. Communication research on social group norms is developing (Arrow & Burns, 2004; Kincaid, 2004; Lapinski & Rimal,

2005; Rimal & Real, 2003), but less is known about the establishment of social group norms through SIT (Hogg & Reid, 2006). In social identity research, group norms are defined as “shared patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior, and in groups, what people do and say communicates information about norms and is itself configured by norms and by normative concerns” (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 8; also see Hogg & Tindale, 2005).

When examining social identity and organizational members, the establishment of prototypes that categorize and delineate between in-group and out-group membership allow members a space to identify with a certain group. Additionally, these prototypes become guidelines for how members feel, behave and conform to the group (Hogg & Reid, 2006). In this sense, the understanding of group prototypes is a key step in the conception of group norms. As Hogg and Reid state:

It is only a short step from prototypes to group norms...Group prototypes are grounded in consensual views that constitute a social reality that is reinforced over and over again (cf. Moscovici, 1976). Prototypes tend to be shared—people in one group in the same context share their prototype of the in-group and relevant out-group(s). In this sense, group prototypes are group norms (Turner, 1991). (2006, p. 11)

From this prospective communication plays an important role in the development of group norms. Social identity theory sees norms as a reflection of consensual group prototypes. The stronger the identity with the group, the more rapid and complete normative formation and behavior becomes in the group (Hogg & Reid, 2006). These group prototypes not only describe the group but also prescribe certain behaviors for

members (Terry & Hogg, 1996). Consequently, group prototypes and the representative norms set the expectations for boundary spanner engagement in the decision making process, how work is conducted; who is expected to do what, and what work should be done. Group norms guide goal creation and mission objectives as well as emphasize what the IOC can accomplish and when it is not meeting expectations. To investigate the development of IOC norms from an SIT perspective, the following questions are offered:

RQ3. How are IOC norms communicated and maintained?

RQ3a. How (if at all) do boundary spanner prototypes develop/guide these IOC norms?

### *Membership and Disengagement*

Underlying the research on organizational membership is the notion that individuals are motivated to believe that they are part of an organization and the sub-groups of that organization (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Through communication between organizational members, people get a greater clarity about themselves and the status of others. This interaction between organizational members establishes and develops member status in the organization (Bartel & Dutton, 2001; Goffman, 1959; Hogg & Mullin, 1999; Mullin & Hogg, 1999). Through membership claiming and granting, individuals discursively distinguish between organizational members, and supply a sense of clarity to the ambiguous nature of organizational membership. As one person claims membership to a specific group, other members grant or deny that membership through communicative cues and patterns of discourse. During the process

of claiming and granting/denying, self-understanding and identification with a certain group becomes mutually constructed between group members (Bartel & Dutton, 2001).

On the other side of the membership coin, organizational disengagement has seen fewer studies and less scholarly exploration (Pratt, 2000, 2001). As Scott (2007) states, “Beyond a few hints about public praise and criticism and the role of mentors, we know little about what sorts of communication might contribute to these various alternative identifications—or if communication is even an antecedent to such outcomes” (2007, p. 133). Research has examined the effects of whistle blowing and found that the more a particular individual disidentifies with the organization, the more organizational member who identify with the organization will distrust this person (Dukerich, Kramer, & Parks, 1998). Using SIT, the disidentifiers became out-group members and are stripped of their credibility within the organization. In a similar study, Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001) found that public criticism of an out-group led organizational members to disidentify with that group. In the communication field, Scott and colleagues argue that identity has a front a back region, where the back region gives space for members to disengage with the organization (Scott, 2007; Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998). Even though there have been some studies into disengagement, overall scholars know little about why organizational members may disidentify and even less about how it may lead to organizational exit.

In the present research, understanding both membership and disengagement can be useful in explaining how IOCs develop or dissolve over time. Boundary spanners must carve out identities with IOCs but at points may disidentify and/or disengage completely. Exploring the reasons for membership and disengagement can further the theoretical



development of IOCs and how social identity plays a role in joining and exiting. As stated previously, the growing prevalence of IOCs in all sectors of business is creating a new way of conducting business. IOCs are critically important to individual organizational success, yet the high failure rate of IOCs call attention to individual membership and what drives engagement and disengagement. Understanding membership and exit can lead to better practices within the IOC and set expectations for boundary spanners engaging in collaborations. To further explore these concepts, I pose the following questions:

RQ4. How do boundary spanners communicate membership to the IOC?

RQ5. How is IOC disengagement and exit communicated?

### Chapter Summary

The goal of this chapter was threefold. The first section of this review summarizes research on IORs and IOCs and where future areas of research should be conducted. The second part of this literature review summarized and organized the boundary spanner literature. While there has been over thirty years of research, little conceptual organization of the research has been established. In this section, I organized the literature into four conceptual areas: roles of boundary spanners, outcome of boundary spanning, communication of boundary spanning and the boundary spanner as a person. From this categorization, the extent and focus of boundary spanner literature could be determined. Holes and theoretical gaps were emphasized and a call for more research on the boundary spanner in the process of spanning was made. In the third part of this chapter, social identity theory was unpacked and summarized in terms of organizational

research. Four specific areas of organizational SIT research were reviewed: identity construction, in-groups/out-groups, norms and membership. In each area, links were made between SIT research, IOC research, boundary spanners and communication.

In all, five research questions were posed. Each questions looks at a particular aspect of social identity theory and how the theory can further our understanding of IOCs through boundary spanners communication. Although SIT has largely been posed as a cognitive process, emphasis is given to the communicative interactions that shape social identity construction. In keeping with the larger rationale for this study, the research questions posed in this chapter all work towards a larger understanding of the individual in IOCs. In the next chapter, I summarize current methodological inquiries into IOC and boundary spanner research and discuss the methods for data collection.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

### Review of Methodological Approaches to Interorganizational Research

The research and scholarship on interorganizational relationships and interorganizational collaborations is diverse in theoretical perspectives. Conversely, there is less diversity in the methodological approaches to IOR and IOC research. Oliver and Ebers (1998) examined 158 articles published on interorganizational relationships between 1980 and 1996. The authors organized the review around several key issues, one of which being methodological approaches to IOR research. Of the 158 articles reviewed, approximately 89% (n= 141) of the articles were empirical in orientation. Additionally, 75% (n= 118) of the articles were studied with a self-report survey using Likert-types scales where as only 30% of the research used qualitative or mixed methods of analysis. In terms of levels of analysis, 124 (78.5%) of the articles were focused on individual organizations and how they interacted in the IOR, where are only 33 (21%) articles focused on actual individuals representing the organization in the IOR (Oliver & Ebers, 1998).

Lewis (2006) examined 80 scholarly articles on the topic of collaboration. The author found that 68% of the articles were empirical in nature; whereas the rest focused more on theory building and conceptual categorizations. Again, the majority of studies employ a quantitative (usually questionnaire oriented) approach to collaborative research, followed by interview and/or observational data. As Lewis states, “This [research] suggests that most of the empirical knowledge about collaborations comes from self-report data and that observation of collaboration, especially in naturalistic settings, is the

thinnest slice of data” (2006, p. 240). More specifically to IOC research, there are differing opinions of the methodological approaches to IOCs. Hardy and associates state that, “much of the contemporary research has been dominated by large-scale, quantitative methods that track extensive networks across an industry over time” (Hardy, Phillips, & Lawrence, 2003, p. 343). Conversely, Austin stated that the “prominent methodology in past research on collaboration has been case studies, which have proven particularly useful for generating theoretical and practical insights (Gray & Wood, 1991)” (2000, p. 70). Although the single-case study has proven useful for theory development, it only renders a momentary glance into one IOC at one particular time with little longitudinal reporting.

In order to obtain a better understanding of the methodological approaches to IOR and IOC research, I examined 93 articles that have been published from 1990 to 2008 (approximately the same time frame as the Oliver and Ebers’ 1998 study). To establish categories of methodological approaches to IORs and IOCs, I evaluated the research based on the type of article (empirical or conceptual/theory building), methodological approach (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed data), level of analysis (case-based, organizational-based, sector-based, etc.) and whether or not it was published in a communication journal. Overall, similar to Lewis’ (2006) findings, 65% (n= 60) of the articles were empirically-based studies, whereas only 35% (n= 33) focused on conceptual arguments, theory building or recommendations to practitioners. Counter to previous studies and assertions, over the current timeframe a shift in methodological approach is noted. Of the 60 empirical studies, 65% (n=39) of them are qualitative in focus, with

most of this research focusing on interviews and field observations. This is a major shift from the Oliver and Ebers (1998) study that found 75% of the articles were self-report surveys using Liker-type scales (compared to 27% in this evaluation, with only 8% using a multi-method approach).

Another interesting shift is in the level of analysis. Whereas previous research was more focused on the organizational level analysis and how the organization interacts in the IOC (Oliver & Ebers, 1998), I found that the majority of recent studies focused on a specific interorganizational collaboration rather than a specific organization in the IOC. The vast majority of empirical research focused on one specific interorganizational relationship (55%, n= 33) or a few specific collaborations in a given area or sector (23%, n=14). Overall, 78% of recent empirical research investigates a particular alliance or alliances. And although this shift may be in response to the preponderance of organizational level studies in the prior years, the shift still focuses research and data collection on a single organizational form.

Communication research on IORs and IOCs has parallel findings. Communication research in this area accounts for 17% (n=17) of the total studies on this topic. Within that corpus of research, five (31%) articles were conceptual or theory development pieces, whereas 11 (69%) were empirical studies. Of the empirical studies in communication IOR/IOC research, 64% of the research was qualitative in nature, and 10 of the articles (91%) were case-based or multi case-based investigations.

From this analysis of methodological approaches to interorganizational research, and following on the observations of Lewis (2006), there are two distinct areas of

research that should be investigated in IOC research. First, although there is a body of research that examines the organization and a body of research that examines the IOC as levels of analysis, there are few investigations that seek a wider, more national response set. In my evaluation of interorganizational research, only four studies used participants from a city or statewide population and no studies attempted to cull a set of data from a national sample. The preponderance of studies based on individual cases gives needed depth in the exploration of IOCs but little breadth in terms of a larger understanding of commonalities between individuals over the national landscape.

A second area of research would continue the use the case and multi case as the level of analysis but explore the depth of these cases with investigations in naturalistic settings. As Lewis (2006) states about the larger body of collaborative research, we know little about how collaboration occurs in naturalistic settings. She poses that we should explore research designs in “more naturalistic settings to further our understanding of the processes of collaborative communication practices and their effects” (2006, p. 240). One way to accomplish this course of research is through multi-perspective self-reports from the same IOC. The use of self-report data in IOCs is prevalent, but rarely are these reports compared and juxtaposed to the perspectives of others in the collaborative relationship (Lewis, 2006). IOC literature is replete with case studies but few studies focus on communicative processes in situ. To advance the current state of IOC literature, (1) more observations and recordings of actual communication need to be conducted, and (2) more comparative analyses of individual perspectives against other members should occur. By digging deeper into individual case studies, we can avoid single-sided reports of

communicative processes in IOCs and better examine the communicative processes that affect IOC members.

The present study and its focus on boundary spanners and social identity are well suited to advance the latter of the two proposed directions of future research. Following the call for more research in naturalistic settings, the evaluation of an individual collaboration over time will add to the research on IOCs and move case study research in new directions. A local neighborhood association collaboration was the subject of this study. Focusing on interview and observational data my aim is to examine communication as it occurs. I analyzed audio and video recordings of IOC meetings and events so that communication can be studied in situ.

Recording actual communication has several benefits. First, it allows for coding of data from the actual process of communication, giving a more robust rendering of communication processes for analysis. Second, communication processes can be examined and shown back to research participants to help aid in the recall of specific events. With the advances in technology, it is no longer difficult to cut down a piece of video footage, upload it to a computer and show it in an interview. Instead of asking IOC members to “remember a time” or having interviewers prompt a person about a certain situation, the participant can offer feedback about a specific instance and the researcher can feel more confident in the validity of the answer.

Third, as stated previously, self-report data is rarely juxtaposed against other self-report data. The use of recorded communication processes allows the researcher to interview all the IOC members involved in a specific communication event (e.g. a

decision-making event, or a conflict, etc.) and get feedback about the event from all the people involved. Prompts such as, “How did this decision affect you?” while watching the decision can once again increase response validity, but also give researchers the ability to get 360-feedback about a specific communication process. This type of data collection can cultivate a more in-depth understanding of the IOC and continue to inform and renegotiate organizational communication scholarship. Although the use of case studies is prevalent in IOC research (especially communication studies of IOCs), there is still room to cultivate a better and more in-depth understanding of IOCs by looking at specific cases. This research study moves beyond just observation and inquiry by examining communication processes in action.

#### Research Site

##### *Neighborhood Associations*

Although IOCs occurs in many types of organizations, civil-society organizations (CSOs) are one of the most researched. In the United States and abroad the CSO (public) sector is large and economically important (Clayton, Oakley, & Taylor, 2000; Salamon, 1997). In this study, I investigate one particular CSO, the neighborhood association (NA). Grass-root organizations such as neighborhood associations, have seen tremendous growth in recent decades (Knickmeyer, Hopkins, Meyer, 2004) and increased interest by scholars (Chaskin, 2003; Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Knickmeyer, et al., 2004; Mesch & Schwirian, 1996; Meyer & Hyde, 2004). NAs are a type of CSO that are locally based, volunteer-run and basically autonomous with an official membership (Smith, 1997). NAs have several common characteristics that distinguish their organizational structure. They



are (1) *geographically based* and built through a common territory, (2) *volunteer-driven* with modest monetary resources and virtually no paid positions, (3) *locally initiated* around common interests, (4) *human-sized*, where activities are driven by the availability of the membership, and (5) *problem-solving oriented*, with directives to address issues in the neighborhood (Florin & Wandersman, 1990). Generally considered one of the most genuine forms of citizen participation and local democracy, NAs institute a broad form of governance for the neighborhood (Chaskin & Abunimah, 1999; Knickmeyer, et al., 2004). This neighborhood-based governance employs “mechanisms and processes to guide civic participation, planning, decision making, coordination, and implementation of activities within the neighborhood, to represent neighborhood interests to actors beyond it, and to identify and organize accountability and responsibility for action undertaken” (Chaskin, 2003, p. 162).

The neighborhood association has become a viable organization to carry the representative voice of its constitutive neighborhood against the public and private threats to the social and physical well being of the neighborhood (Mesch & Schwirian, 1996). Although the growth and legitimization of NAs is well documented, little research has been conducted on how NAs collaborate over larger community issues. One study evaluated NA research post-1975 and found only a handful of studies have investigated the extent to which NAs have collaborated around community issues (Knickmeyer, et al., 2004). Like many other CSOs, neighborhood associations struggle to survive (Austin, 1991; Schwirian & Mesch, 1993). “Simply put, when it comes to social action, some neighborhood organizations are effective and some are not” (Mesch & Schwirian, 1996,

p. 467). In an effort to build social capital as well as organizational viability, CSOs have routinely sought partnerships with similar organizations to produce capital at the same time minimizing expenditures (Bailey & Koney, 1996; Foster & Meinhard, 2002). The investigation of neighborhood associations and the collaborative process is ripe for investigation. With its unique organizational structure and growing presences as a collective voice for community action, the ways neighborhood associations collaborate adds a needed perspective to a growing corpus of interorganizational collaboration research.

### *Qualifications*

For this study there is a few important qualifications that must be present in the IOC. First, it is important to have an IOC that has an established calendar of events. Newer or less concrete IOCs could be difficult to explore and record due to the sporadic and potentially lengthy gaps between meeting times. Second, IOC meetings need to be attended by at least a few organizational boundary spanners. Meetings among staff members or meetings that are sparsely attended would lead to fewer participants to interview about a specific interaction among boundary spanners. Third, meetings and events must be conducted so that audio and/or video recordings can capture the interactions of the meeting. Virtual meetings and email correspondences may have a different affect on participation and membership in the IOC for a particular interaction.

### *Site Demographics*

The data collection for this study was collected from the Organization of Central East Austin Neighborhoods (OCEAN). OCEAN is a collaboration of six east Austin

neighborhoods “dedicated to bringing together the people of the historic, diverse and vital neighborhoods just east of downtown Austin and to work with other neighborhoods throughout East Austin and the city on issues of common concern.” (OCEAN, 2009a). OCEAN represents the diverse population of Central East Austin with a population of over 4500 people (City of Austin, 2001). The demographics of Central East have seen tremendous changes over the last decade. Traditionally an area of Austin that struggled with crime and poverty, its propinquity to downtown Austin has brought increased attention from developers looking for property with high investment potential. Currently, Central East has one of the most diverse pockets of residents in all of Austin. As of the 2000 census (the most current data available), the ethnicity of Central East is 51% Hispanic, 38% African-American, 8% Anglo, and 3% other groups but in the last nine year there has been further shift in demographics where the makeup of the community is closer to a one-third split between Hispanics, African-Americans, and Anglos. The median age of Central East is 31 and the average household income is approximately \$24K. These community demographics are important to keep in mind when juxtaposed against the demographics of the of OCEAN members representing the community (described in the data collection section).

### *History and Structure*

OCEAN as an organization has a long and sorted history<sup>2</sup>. Originally conceived as an organization the would represent the Central East area in the late 1990s when a collective voice was not readily available, the organization has gone from a loose amalgamation of concerned individuals to the dedicated contact team for the entire

Central East area in the eyes of the city (see appendix A for a map of Central East Austin and OCEAN area). In February of 2000, OCEAN was formally tasked with bringing together the opinion of the residents to create a neighborhood plan for the area. This plan was to be the visionary document of what Central East could become. Through meetings, surveys, and focus groups, OCEAN was able to help put together the neighborhood plan by December of 2001. The plan stated nine goals for the community and ten priorities that need to come from the neighborhood plan. The overarching goals of the plan were to (1) Preserve, restore, and recognize historic resources and other unique neighborhood features, and (2) create housing that is affordable, accessible, and attractive to a diverse range of people.

Once the neighborhood plan was accepted, OCEAN became the formal neighborhood plan contact team (NPCT). For the city of Austin, the NPCT became the voice of the area. The NPCT is the entity in charge of monitoring and prioritizing the neighborhood plans recommendations. In addition, the NPCT is responsible for responding to proposed plan changes by property owners. The NPCT affectively consolidated the voices of several NAs and created a hierarchical system in which people who wanted to make changes to property would have to go through their NA to get approval, and once approval was granted the property owner would have to go to OCEAN to get a letter of support before they could go to the city with proposed changes to property. From 2002 to the present, OCEAN has been responsible for working on the implementation of the neighborhood plan recommendations.

The structure of OCEAN began as a representative democracy in the form of a elected board. In the board model, each neighborhood would elect an official representative to voice concerns for the specific neighborhoods: Blackshear/Prospect Hill, Davis-Thompson, Guadalupe, Kealing, Robertson Hill, and Swede Hill. Problematic to the representative model is that several of the neighborhoods did not have an organized NA to elect representation. Of the six neighborhoods, only four have functioning NAs: Blackshear, Guadalupe, Robertson Hill (which only became organized in early 2008) and Swede Hill. At the time of data collection Kealing and Davis-Thompson were still without NA representation (although initial efforts have been made to organize these neighborhoods). Over time the board model of representation collapsed due to lack of participation. OCEAN informally segued into a participatory democracy where anyone who attended the OCEAN meeting got a vote in OCEAN. Concurrently, OCEAN also went through several presidents, each of which had a different vision of what OCEAN should do as an organization.

By the time I had entered the collaboration, OCEAN was at a turning point in the collaboration's history. Just prior to my arrival, OCEAN had gone through a long and contested battle with the residents of Central East over property rights and the construction of new homes. Affectionately nicknamed the "McMansion" ordinance, the city of Austin was trying to regulate the size of houses people could develop on small lots. This small lot amendment (SLA) came under fire by residents of Central East. Since Central east has traditionally undersized lots, the McMansion ordinance allowed people to build houses that were almost the size of the entire lot. Many long time residents saw this

as a gentrification tactic to build bigger homes and raise property values (and consequently property taxes). Traditionally a poorer community, many of the long-term residents are being taxed out of their homes. As one resident stated, “we are paying more per month in property taxes now than our mortgage payment when we bought our home.” That is how much the value of homes has risen. When once you could purchase property in Central East for under 25K, now property is averaging over 200K. The other side of the argument over small lots came from the developers and property owners who saw the small lot amendment as a potential reduction of property rights and a diminished return of potential property value. OCEAN as the NCPT could not come to a consensus over the issue since many of the resident opinions were split. Eventually OCEAN decided to oppose the SLA. When the issue came to the city council, vocal members of Central East protested the representation of OCEAN and its “supposed position” on the small lot amendment. One of the points these members protested was that OCEAN was no longer representing Central East since it was not running according to the OCEAN bylaws (which still stated that the organization was a representative democracy functioning under a board model). Ultimately, OCEAN’s position on the SLA was voted down by the city of Austin and the credibility of the organization was put into question.

Starting in early 2008, OCEAN began the task of overhauling the bylaw so that the structure of OCEAN matched the functioning of OCEAN. Initially, OCEAN members attempted to change the bylaws so that the participatory democracy of one-person-one-vote was ratified. This came under intense scrutiny as some neighborhoods protested the model arguing that larger neighborhoods would be over-privileged

compared to smaller neighborhoods and that it would allow people to “swamp the vote” if necessary so as to ensure certain neighborhoods could control the vision of OCEAN. Over a ten-month time the bylaws were written and rewritten based on neighborhood input and protest. At one point the participative model came to a vote, and the smallest neighborhood (Swede Hill) swamped the vote to prove that the model would not work and to promote a representative board model. After a cantankerous battle between neighborhoods, the new bylaws were ratified in February 2009 with a board model.

From the new bylaws, OCEAN reorganized its structure and reemphasized its goals and objectives. As stated in the bylaws (OCEAN, 2009b), the purpose of OCEAN involved seven specific items:

- (1) to improve communication and support between and among Residents, Businesses and Property Owners in Central East Austin;
- (2) to serve as the Central East Austin Neighborhood Plan Contact Team and to review and make recommendations on all proposed amendments to the Central East Austin Neighborhood Plan, and when appropriate initiate amendments to the neighborhood plan;
- (3) to assist Residents, Businesses, Property Owners, Neighborhood Associations, and public entities with implementation of the Central East Austin Neighborhood Plan;
- (4) to cooperate with other individuals or entities interested in enhancing Central East Austin;
- (5) to advocate for the affordability of housing in Central East Austin;
- (6) to advocate for preserving the historic, ethnic, and cultural character of the neighborhoods of Central East Austin; and
- (7) to engage in any other activities in which associations may lawfully engage in under the Texas Business Organizations Code.

Overall, OCEAN is an excellent site for this study for several reasons. First, it fulfills the qualifications set up for this study. The organization has a long history that is documented. It meets regularly and has distinct organizational representation from several NAs in the collaboration. OCEAN holds a regular monthly meeting on the second Monday of each month. Additionally, the issues surrounding OCEAN keep the collaboration active and participation high. With the issues of gentrification salient to all community members and the city mandate that all development issues go through OCEAN, I have found that the communicative processes this study purports to examine are present and frequently exhibited. The internal strife the collaboration encountered due to the bylaw/organizational restructuring emphasized the difference between represented NAs and brought forth numerous issues of social identity. Boundary spanners from each neighborhood and business corridor were present and brought forth their individual issues to the collaboration. Finally, OCEAN has been exceedingly agreeable to my presence and research goals. I have been granted full access to all organizational documents and electronic (email, listserv, blog posts, etc.) communications. I was granted access to audio and video record OCEAN meetings and given permission to interview OCEAN members.

### Data

My assumptions about data start with my assumptions about communication. Following Wood and Kroger's (2000) discussion of discourse, I see language as more than a tool for description and a vehicle for language. Language is *the* central and constitutive feature of social life and organizing (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Putnam &



Fairhurst, 2000). From this perspective, talk and action become integrally related. Communication represents action and action can affect communication (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wood & Kroger, 2000). As an extension of this belief, my assumptions about organizational communication follow those presented by Eisenberg, Murphy, and Andrews (1998): (1) Communication constitutes organizational reality. Meanings are manufactured rather than found (Weick, 1995); (2) meaning is constructed in local, social and historical contexts; (3) different people can construct different meanings of the same event, and consequently negotiate over a shared reality; and (4) there is no one best way to view organizational communication. Communication appears different through different metaphors and lenses (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Martin, 1992; Morgan, 1986).

From these assumptions, data is best understood as the communication that occurs in the process of organizing and in the organization (Grant, Keenoy, & Oswick, 1998; Hardy, et al., 2005; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). From this perspective communication not only has certain meanings but also create a force. Communication consequently has three elements: meaning, action, and effect (Wood & Kroger, 2000). The best way to capture this communication is through fieldwork, observation and inquiry. As Van Maanen (1988) argues, fieldwork is one of the best ways to understand others. Data can consequently be any discourse that relates to the organizing or organization of members in an IOC. By using ethnography and inquiry, the qualitative researcher can capture communication as action and see how communication affects and are affected by organizational members in their surroundings.

### *Data Collection*

OCEAN approved my research objectives in June of 2008. For this project, data was collected from three main sources: audio/video recorded meetings, semi-structured interviews with OCEAN members, and stimulated recall interviews. In addition, relevant documents (both formal and informal documents such as emails and blog posts) from the City of Austin and OCEAN also contributed to the richness of the data. For this dissertation, the primary source of data came from interview and stimulated recall transcripts. Fieldnotes were also used to supplement information from the transcripts and add context to situations. Video and audio recorded meetings were only used to create stimulated recall video clips and not independently analyzed for this dissertation. I have been attending OCEAN meetings since June of 2008 and to date have observed for 13 months. The data collection for meetings happened in two stages. In the first stage, I began as an observer (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) of the meetings (my participation was limited since I do not qualify to participate in OCEAN because I do not live in the Central East area). I audio-recorded the first few meetings to get comfortable with the group and allow the members to acclimate to my presence. During this time, I took ethnographic fieldnotes and began to document the group's norms and processes, with reference to the research goals (see Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995 for an overview of ethnographic fieldnotes).

After three months, I began the second stage of data collection by video recording the meetings. During this time I became a participant-as-observer (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), where my primary objective was observation, but I interacted with participants at

points during observation. The video recording began as a major shift in the bylaws began at OCEAN. Overall, I have collected 13 months of meeting observations. My initial meeting was documented with fieldnotes. The next two meetings were audio-recorded and the remaining 10 were both audio and video recorded. In addition to OCEAN meetings, I observed several NA meetings that feed into OCEAN and a couple of city of Austin meetings that OCEAN was to represent the voice of Central East. Overall, I attended 23 OCEAN and OCEAN-related meetings accumulating 38 hours of observational data (see appendix B for a description of the meetings observed).

The second component of the data collection was semi-structured informant interviews with OCEAN members (Lindlof, 1995; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Participation in the interviews was determined by reviewing the attendance of meetings during the eight-month observational period (from June 2008 to January 2009) of my research to that point. In order to determine active membership, a person was considered active if they attended three of the eight meetings. This criterion was set based on the current OCEAN bylaws for participation. In addition, OCEAN requires that people seeking property changes attend two concurrent meetings, setting the criteria at three meetings weeded out people that only attended a couple of meetings for a specific reason and then never attended again. In all it was determined that there was 26 active members. In addition, four participants were added to the list because of their importance to OCEAN (two were past OCEAN presidents but not active members, and two were business members that worked directly with OCEAN). Of the thirty potential participants, 28 interviews were conducted and two members declined the invitation to participate.

This sample represents over 90% of the active members of OCEAN (28 out of 30 members). The participants were evenly distributed across the different NAs that are represented at OCEAN (Blackshear n= 7, Guadalupe n= 4, Kealing n=1, Robertson Hill n= 7, Swede Hill n= 7, Business Members-non residents n=2). As stated earlier, there is no representation from Davis-Thompson and no formal representation from Kealing so only one active member of those NAs was interviewed. In all 39% of the participants were female (n=11) and 61% were males (n=17) with an average age of 49. The ethnicity of the sample was mixed between Caucasian (71%, n=20), African American (21%, n=6), and Hispanic (8%, n=2). Almost half the sample had business interests in the Central East area and average household income was between \$50K-\$75K (29%) followed an average income of \$76K-\$100K (24%). In terms of OCEAN participation, members went to an average of eight meetings, lived in the OCEAN area for a median of eight years, and have been an OCEAN member an average of almost five years.

Participants were contacted via email and personal invitation at OCEAN meetings to participate in interviews. All the interviews occurred at a time and location of convenience for the participant. There was no monetary compensation for being involved in the study, and informed consent was obtained from each participant in compliance with Human Subject protocol. All participants were assured confidentiality for participation in the interviews and all names used in this report are pseudonyms. To further protect the subjects of this study, the University of Texas at Austin IRB reviewed and approved the data collection methodology.

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix C for the final interview schedule) that allowed me to follow the flow the interview while offering me the flexibility to probe participants in order to control the direction of the discourse (Lindlof, 1995). I reviewed the interview schedule once during the data collection to add probes and questions that were salient in initial interviews. The interviews were digitally recorded and all interviews occurred in person. 27 interviews were transcribed and one participant declined my request to record the interview. Fieldnotes of this person's interview were produced for evaluation purposes. The interviews averaged 61 minutes and produced 323 single-spaced pages of transcribed text<sup>3</sup>.

The third component of my data collection was the stimulated recall interviews. Stimulated recall is a technique used to elicit responses about particular communicative interactions by watching a video recording of that interaction. Using participants comments in conjuncture with recordings of interactions provides the potential for enhancing the researchers analytic claims and/or for opening up avenues for investigation that otherwise might go unnoticed (Pomerantz, 2005). The primary purpose in collecting video stimulated comments is to gain access to the thoughts, feelings, concerns, interpretations, reactions etc. that were oriented to by the participants during the event. For this study, two video clips were used for stimulated recall. These two clips were culled from two different meetings and between the two clips over 80% of the active OCEAN members were in attendance and eligible for the stimulus. The two clips were identified by evaluating communication events during OCEAN meetings that emphasized

the social identities of the group members and membership issues within OCEAN in accordance with the focus of the present study. The first clip is four minutes long and the second clip is two and a half minutes in duration (see appendix D for the transcripts of the stimulus). In all, 22 participants viewed either one or both stimuli (participants were only shown the stimuli from the meetings they attended). The stimulated recall was given at the end of the interview with the participant. Each person was asked to view the stimulus and then answer a few questions about what they saw (see appendix E for stimulated recall schedule). The stimulated recall was transcribed with the interview data. In all the stimulated recall produced 75 pages of single-spaced text.

By February of 2008, I had completed all the interviews with active members and began data analysis. I continued to collect data until I have achieved theoretical and practical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In context, saturation can be assumed when the research can categorize and explain all the interactions or responses from a given piece of data. In addition, using Snow's (1980) test for information sufficiency my data (1) produced no surprises by the time the interviews were completed, (2) offered no new conceptual returns, and (3) the data seemed true to the lived experience of the OCEAN members (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Although I believe my study has reached theoretical saturation, I will continue to observe and record meetings to obtain longitudinal documentation of meetings for future data analysis.

#### *Data Analysis, Validity and Rigor*

The validity and rigor of this research started prior to the collection of data. During the first phase of my field observation, I reviewed the history of OCEAN, and

made initial theoretical questions to “ground” the data collection (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For instance, my research objectives focus on the communication between members and how different members establish social identities within OCEAN. To explore this objective, I observed the interaction between participants and documented difference between member’s expressed beliefs about the organization, goals of the organization and conflict between members. During data collection, I followed Geertz’s (1973) model of thick description and Emerson and colleagues (1995) guidelines for obtaining fieldnotes. This process allowed me to capture the communication processes and the context in which they occurred. I would make direct quotations of members during the meetings. I would also write personal notes and observations to establish a context for the quotes and my impressions of the meeting.

For interview data, Wood and Kroger’s (2000) orthographic method for transcription was used. This process uses commas and full stops to represent pauses and spaces in the interview. Since the data was professionally transcribed and as an additional step in assuring validity, I went back and listened to the interviews to check for transcription accuracy and to reacquaint myself with the data. While validating the transcriptions, I also open coded the data (Emerson et al., 1995; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Schwartzman, 1993) to see what emerged in an emic approach to theme construction. An emic approach allows that data to be interpreted from the members perspective, where participants attribute meaning to their communicative actions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). During open coding, I made initial comments about recurring topics. It was in this open-coding that the different prototypes and in-groups emerged. I used members own labels

and terms to define categories to root them in the context. For instance, the in-group and out-group labels of “protectors” and “developers” are terms individuals used to differentiate groups. I used these initial comments to help orient and organize subsequent data analysis.

For data analysis, both the interview data and the stimulated recall data were analyzed together. By combining the data sets, I added to the richness of the themes that emerged from the interviews with specific comments about individual interaction in the stimulated recall data. In data analysis, I used analytic induction (Bulmer, 1979; Huberman & Miles, 1994) to construct categories. Bulmer (1979) argues that concepts from data are “not developed out of observations neither are they develop a priori, but rather they are justified in terms of the context in a particular theory and particular observations in which the theory tries to explain” (p. 659). From this approach, I went through the data and parsed out the “essential” datum that was represented across participants on a certain topic (Bulmer, 1979, p. 661). Using analytic induction, I was able to organize data about each research question (using an etic- or theory driven-approach to organization) while still allowing emic themes emerge from the responses. For example, to explore how prototypes were constructed among boundary spanners (RQ1), I initially examined the transcripts for data discussing prototypes of OCEAN. Within this general parsing of data into “prototype data” open codes were attached to the individual comments. So this comment: “[OCEAN’s] always been an opportunity for people in the neighborhood to have a voice in the overall – not just their little neighborhood group – but in the overall area’s direction” is labeled as “prototype” to



bring in etic terms and open coded “collective voice” to place in emic context. All the data was parsed and separated in this nature for evaluation in a second round of data analysis. This first round of analysis is recorded in a qualitative data analysis software program called TAMS analyzer so it is available for others to reference if need should arise (see Taylor & Trujillo, 2001 criterion six for judging qualitative research).

For the second round of data analysis, I used a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparative method prescribes that the data be coded into themes and then constantly reevaluated to ensure that the properties of the data are placed in the appropriate category. In this round of data analysis, I took my initial parsing of the data and the open codes attached to each unit and began comparing them with other codes to establish themes. Building on my previous example, as other participants commented on how OCEAN was a forum to establish collective voice, I created a theme called “collective voice” as a part of the community builder prototype members used to define OCEAN (again trying to maintain the participants own labels to increase the verisimilitude of the data presentation).

To further organize the themes, a round of axial coding occurred (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In this coding round, larger meta-themes were created to make links between the original codes and the larger research focus of the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Smaller themes were compiled into larger sets of data that spoke to more abstract concepts. For example, the themes of “collective voice” and “bringing together neighbors” both related to the larger theme of community builder that emerged from axial coding the data. The use of these meta-themes helps keep the emic-spirit of the data *and*

focus the etic-categorization based on organizational communication theories. This second round of data was conducted in Microsoft Excel and by hand coding the data. To ensure both descriptive and interpretive validity and rigor, I triangulated my data in two ways. First, I conducted negative case analyses (Gossett & Kilker, 2006; Kidder, 1981) of the larger meta-themes as well as the initial emic themes produced in the data analysis. The data is reanalyzed to ensure that informants' comments not only represent the smaller emic-themes, but also fit the larger meta-themes. All the codes are then checked against one another and the body of the data for possible opposing interpretations. The spirit of the data has to be represented at both thematic levels in order to validate our presentation of the data. Second, I conducted member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with my results. I gave my results section to OCEAN members to see if it maintained a verisimilitude with the participants. Below are two exemplar responses from OCEAN members:

The chapter you sent is brilliant. Getting your detached outsider's view reminds me of the first time I saw my house on Google Earth, gives me a completely different perspective of where I fit in within the rest of the members'/former members' views. But there it is, oh so real. I recognized my 'handle' in the chapter and many other OCEAN members. I think that the way you identified the 4 prototypes and the distinction between protectors and developers was spot on. Another member stated, "The quotes you included were so evocative of the utter stupidity and futility of this process, that after reading the entire text, I once again want to secede from OCEAN."

By following these methods, I feel like my research fulfills Taylor and Trujillo's (2001) criteria for rigorous qualitative research that accounts for both the subjectivity of the research and defends the quality of the interpretation (Gossett, 2006). Additionally, by using these analysis techniques I feel that I captured the spirit of the data, including both the explicit and the tacit knowledge illustrated in a situation (Altheide & Johnson, 1998). This process increases verisimilitude and interpretive validity for both my academic audience and the participants I investigate.

### Summary

This chapter serves as a framework for how I investigate the research questions set forth in chapter two. In order to explore how boundary spanners create social identities with other IOC members, I conducted a qualitative investigation into OCEAN. My exploration of OCEAN over 13 months provides longitudinal documentation on how social identities are created and adjusted over time and what the consequences of certain social identities are on the collaboration. The multiple data collection methods (audio and video recordings of meetings, semi-structured interviews, and stimulated recall) add richness to this research by capturing communication and perceptions of interaction at numerous points. While the interview data only captures a snapshot of OCEAN at a particular time, the stimulated recall and meeting observations allow for interpretation of interview data as it relates to experiences in OCEAN over the course of a year. Overall this methodology allows for interpretation of boundary spanners communication within OCEAN and the affects of these interactions on norms, membership and disengagement. The following chapter presents the data summery from this research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Data from of the discussions captured during interviews, stimulated recall, and meeting observations are presented in this chapter. This chapter is organized by research questions. The first section addresses the prototypes OCEAN members construct about OCEAN. Section two discusses the in-groups and out-groups of OCEAN and how the prototypes from section one influence these groups. Section three describes the norms of OCEAN; how the main norm of disorganization has led to disengagement of boundary spanners; and how members have tried to change the prevalent norm of OCEAN through shifting social identities. Section four and five address membership and disengagement from OCEAN based on social identity adherence or violation. Within each section key quotes are used to exemplify ideas and salient themes. Respondents' names are presented in parenthesis to identify comments and to keep any one person from over representing a given point. In each section every effort was made to represent all members voices. Although this is not always possible, in each section at least 2/3<sup>rds</sup> of the participants are represented by key quotes. At the end of each section a brief summary of the section is given with reference how the exploration of data has answered the posed research questions in chapter two. The first section investigates how boundary spanners come to understand OCEAN through prototypes (RQ1).

### Prototypes of OCEAN

This section examines prototypes OCEAN members have about the collaboration. The first research question asks: how do boundary spanners understand the IOC through prototypes? These prototypes define and create stereotypes about OCEAN based on what

people believe the collaboration should look like (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Prototypes are fluid sets of attributes that assist members in creating differentiation between groups. From conversations with participants, four main prototypes emerged that define OCEAN: Community builder, bureaucracy, the privileged few, and rudderless. These four prototypes represent different levels of identities with OCEAN (see figure one).

As discussed in chapter two, IOC identities can be nested within one another. Furthermore, the perception of open boundaries influences the ways members construct social identities. In OCEAN, there is a mandate to work with this collaboration by the city of Austin. Members are not allowed to create similar (or competing) organization in Central East. These closed boundaries limit the social mobility of OCEAN members. To help create distinction between membership, group members have created sub-groups within OCEAN. The sub-groups create different nested identities within OCEAN that allow members to find a social group to organize around. In this section, two of the prototypes (community builder and bureaucracy) address sub-group differences. The other two prototypes address the more abstract notion of OCEAN as a collaboration. As will be discussed in subsequent sections, these prototypes lead to the development of groups and norms that influence the outcomes of OCEAN. Furthermore, since members are collectively working under the umbrella of OCEAN, members have shared components of prototypes where beliefs about OCEAN's goals coalesce. For instance, in both the community builder and bureaucracy prototype, the importance of "voice" emerges from both sets. While the scope and direction of that voice is different between

prototypes, both acknowledge the creation of a collective voice as an important attribute to group membership.

*OCEAN as a vehicle for community building and bonding*

One prototype of OCEAN is OCEAN as a vehicle for community building and bonding in Central East Austin. “[OCEAN is a] group of individuals who have common interests in where they live, where they work, their livelihood. And want the best for themselves and for the other residents in the area” (Allison). OCEAN as a community builder emphasizes a need to strengthen community and bring neighborhoods together in order to preserve qualities that make East Austin a unique part of the larger city. As such, OCEAN members who use this prototype describe OCEAN as a community builder integrating the neighborhoods (and each representative neighborhood association) by bringing people together to forward neighborhood-focused messages on issues beyond the ability of individual neighborhoods to accomplish. This prototype describes the care neighbors have for each other and the bonding that needs to occur between neighborhoods to keep Central East vibrant. Below I discuss how OCEAN boundary spanners come to create this version of OCEAN.

The first component of OCEAN as a community builder emphasizes the collective voice created by the collaboration. “[OCEAN’s] always been an opportunity for people in the neighborhood to have a voice in the overall – not just their little neighborhood group – but in the overall area’s direction” (Shannon). OCEAN was originally conceived as an organization to help cultivate Central East Austin. During this revitalization period (1985 to present) of Central East many neighborhoods had (or still

have) no representation in city government. OCEAN was convened as a way to bring the voices of the eastside to city council. As Central East has become more developed, individual neighborhoods strengthened their association so OCEAN became a way to coordinate actions between neighborhoods and give an organizing framework to the entire Central East region. As one former OCEAN presidents noted:

OCEAN was always envisioned as kind of this bigger bullhorn for the individual interests of the small neighborhoods. And yet there is a common interest that we all have – not just because we’re East Austin, but because we’re Austin neighborhoods, in this kind of growing city, with a lot of the challenges with globalization that touches locally. So I think it was always envisioned as this support organization and bullhorn for the little guys (Benny).

By bringing together individual neighborhood voices in Central East, OCEAN creates an authoritative voice of Central East. “The real benefit to OCEAN is that when there are any issues that face Central East Austin that are important to even one area or maybe a couple of the areas, then really, it’s very helpful to have a unified front of people in that area” (Wayne). The collaboration represents thousands, rather than hundreds in the most economically and ethnically diverse pocket of Austin. “OCEAN works specifically for the neighborhoods, in the best interests of the neighborhoods” (Jen).

Beyond collective voice, OCEAN is a forum for the different neighborhoods to interact. “[OCEAN is], to me, a place for where each neighborhood can go and hear how other neighborhoods feel on the same issues” (Kristin). As neighborhoods experience growth and redevelopment, some neighborhoods encounter explosive increases in

property value and rapidly changing demographics. “It was always interesting. You’d see different people in the neighborhood. Sometimes you’d see the same people. New people would come in. [OCEAN] was as much as integrating the neighborhoods for the people that showed up as it was anything else” (Brendan). With these changes come differences in opinions and cultures in Central East. A region that was historically populated by African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans now is seeing a shift in demographics, with almost one-third of the population comprised of affluent Caucasians. Shifting demographics and socio-economic status brings different and sometime disparate ideas about Central East and development. OCEAN serves as a forum to bring these differing ideas together to create and shape a singular vision of Central East. One OCEAN member said:

From my perspective, with the years that I’ve been a member of it, [OCEAN’s] just kind of a meeting of the minds, of each neighborhood, trying to sort things out – what issues are important needs in each neighborhood. What can they do as a coalition to improve each and everyone’s neighborhood (Brock)?

Another OCEAN member from a different neighborhood views OCEAN in the same light:

That’s [OCEAN’s] strength, is bringing together the voice of the neighborhoods, to be able to say – Okay, everybody in these areas thinks this or feels this. This is what you should do. That’s its purpose. And that’s the one area that it has been successful in bringing everyone’s voice together and providing a forum for discussion (Hayes).



For OCEAN members that view OCEAN as a community builder, one central feature and driving force for collaboration is the ability to bring people together. “To be honest, the things it’s done that’s been best for me about what it is, is a place to meet really great neighbors. And some people I’m good friends with now, I met at OCEAN” (Kim).

OCEAN becomes a gathering ground for people that would not normally interact. The creation of this space allows people a space to discuss issues and facilitates a channel for communication beyond the boundaries of the individual neighborhoods. Not only does OCEAN create a forum for people to meet and get together, it also moves beyond the micro politics of individual neighborhoods to encourage communication at a macro regional level:

Every neighborhood has its own power structure. [OCEAN] bypassed that and got a lot of neighborhoods talking to each other that normally never do (Brendan).

A second central feature of OCEAN as a community builder highlights the ability of OCEAN to address problems beyond the ability of individual neighborhood associations. “It’s kind of just an ad hoc group of people from this area trying to have a say in what’s going on – things that seem like they’re beyond the residents’ ability to impact, like the crazy developments and city policy” (Anna). Members view OCEAN as a David-type figure versus the Goliath that is the city of Austin. As one of the former OCEAN presidents stated, “[OCEAN] deals with some of the more intractable problems that are very specific to our neighborhood, such as gentrification and over taxation of poor people and things like that” (Ion). OCEAN is the group “that represents broader interests of Central East Austin...It came out of the fact that we were faced with issues

that were big in little neighborhoods” (Wayne). For boundary spanners that use this prototype of OCEAN, the ability to speak to issues beyond the individual neighborhoods gives members power to protect their neighborhoods as well as the larger Central East culture.

I never doubt that every single person in there wants a better neighborhood, wants a better quality of life, a higher quality of life. And the simple fact that they take the time to come out makes them pretty special. They’re willing to give away valuable free time to participate in the hope that the neighborhood becomes better (Benny).

Problematic to this prototype is the lack of representation at OCEAN meetings, and the lack of awareness about OCEAN overall in the neighborhoods. OCEAN is ostensibly serving a community of over 5000 people. The constituent base represents a variety of cultures, landowners, renters and businesses. All with diverse backgrounds and a large variance in socio-economic standing. Reaching such a varied audience can be difficult for a nonprofit collaboration with little to no revenue sources. One member walked the neighborhood to get a sense of awareness about OCEAN and he found that as he “talked to the neighborhoods that were shown on the [OCEAN] letterhead. Some of them didn’t know they were a part of OCEAN” (Felipe). Another OCEAN member concurred with Felipe stating:

[OCEAN’s] not vibrant. A lot of neighbors don’t even know of its existence...I think that the only way that I can see OCEAN working is to expand the awareness

of it, to expand the good works done in the name of OCEAN, to build that sense of community (McKenna).

Due to a general lack of awareness about OCEAN, when issues of importance are decided upon much of the representative population are not aware of the issues OCEAN is weighing in on their behalf. “Big issues hit the table at OCEAN and no one from the neighborhood is there to represent their neighborhood. That’s sad” (Kristin). Although this lack of representation can cause participants to question membership, the lack of awareness also serves as a rallying point and goal for members who view OCEAN as a community builder.

In sum, boundary-spanners construct a prototype of OCEAN as a community builder. This prototype emphasizes the collective voice that OCEAN has with the larger Austin community while also bringing together the voices of individual neighborhoods to discuss issues that affect all of them. OCEAN becomes a collaboration that fights against larger issues in Central East and represents collective thoughts and actions of the greater community of members. This prototype creates a collaboration that brings together people from every part of the community to work together and make Central East a place that preserves the heritage of a diverse neighborhood. This prototype accentuates OCEAN as a leader in the fight against the city on larger societal problems. It also creates lines of stark difference between the other three prototypes described in this section. In the next section I discuss OCEAN as a bureaucracy .

*OCEAN as a level of city bureaucracy*

A second prototype of OCEAN describes the collaboration part of the city's bureaucracy. Whereas the prototype of OCEAN as a community builder views OCEAN as a place where people work together on larger "intractable" issues surrounding Central East, OCEAN as a bureaucracy views the collaboration as an organization designed to address development issues in Central East. Boundary spanners with this prototype describe OCEAN as an umbrella group designated by the city to work on and enact the neighborhood plan for that region of Austin. The bureaucracy prototype sees OCEAN's goals as they relate to city planning and those that use this prototype do not view OCEAN as a place to work on larger social issues. The bureaucracy prototype focuses on what OCEAN is designated to accomplish by the city of Austin.

The current bylaws for OCEAN state that the collaboration is the umbrella organization for Central East neighborhoods on issues of zoning and land use for the city of Austin. From this orientation, members of OCEAN communicatively create the organization as a function of the city's bureaucracy. "OCEAN is, to me, the umbrella group that encompasses not only my neighborhood association, but several adjacent associations. It's supposed to have some clout and some authority as far as zoning and planning and urban renewal issues in our area" (McKenna). Although originally conceived as an organization to create a collective voice for Central East, as OCEAN has matured the city of Austin has given it the designation of neighborhood contact team. This designation is a double-edged sword. On one side, the city has designated OCEAN the organization that represents the neighborhoods in Central East. "It's the neighborhood

contact team for the city. It's what the city goes to, to try to get zoning requests" (Anna). On the other side this designation comes with a definition that limits the scope of OCEAN's goals to those designated by the city as a contact team. As one member stated:

The thing about it is it's only a contact group. It's not supposed to get involved in all these things. They're not supposed to do that. That's not in the city ordinance as far as what a contact team does. They're only supposed to do land use decisions (Hope).

As the contact team for the city, OCEAN has a stated function for the city. "OCEAN was a voice for the neighborhoods of Central East Austin and it was nothing more than the neighborhood contact team for those neighborhoods, as part of the neighborhood planning process" (Hayes). And for boundary spanners functioning under this prototype of OCEAN, the organization needs to stay within the parameters of a contact team. "My druthers would be that OCEAN is solely a neighborhood contact and that all other efforts are handled by some other organization, you know, efforts like bigger social issues and beyond" (Nick). A former member of OCEAN and previous president concurred with this view:

All it is, is a neighborhood group with influence. It's supposed to advise the City of Austin neighborhood and planning, Planning and Zoning Department. That's all. That's all the authority they have. Just for a boundary within IH-35 to maybe northeast 7th Street to MLK. That's all. It's to advise when it comes to land use and zoning (Luke).

Although OCEAN is seen as a “model” contact team, the city is still the entity that gives OCEAN legitimacy under this prototype. Consequently the perception of OCEAN is tied with that city. “OCEAN really was kind of a model that the City was using for how they wanted us to carry forward neighborhood planning. Part of the problem is the City has kind of abandoned its own neighborhood planning agenda” (Gary). With this tie to the City and its politics, the purpose of OCEAN is called into question. “It’s purely a function of the City. The City, somewhat arbitrarily, delineated the boundaries and then the plan was developed based on that. So we’re left having to implement the plan” (Hayes).

Another part of the bureaucracy prototype involves the locus of control for OCEAN. Although OCEAN is designated by the city as the contact team and voice of Central East, that designation calls into question who is really controlling the collaboration and whether the city is purely using OCEAN as a way to control Central East. To emphasize this, one member stated that OCEAN is “purely as a tool that the City uses to circumvent anything that we want as citizens” (Jim). Some members view OCEAN as a control mechanism that benefits only the city. “The City doesn’t want 15, 20 or 30 people trying to speak for this neighborhood. They want to simplify the matter and have one voice if they can. That helps them administratively” (Luke). Justin had a similar impression of OCEAN and the city:

It’s something to make people think they’ve got a voice. It keeps fifty people from going down and trying to talk before the City Council instead of you got a letter to read, you know. It is something to limit the amount of hassle.

The use of OCEAN as a tool for control by the city is another way in which the representation of members is co-opted. In an effort to keep each individual neighborhood from contacting the city about Central East issues, OCEAN is the channel in which these voices get funneled thus limiting the amount of voices the city hears on any particular issue concerning Central East development. A business member in Central East noted:

I believe that the city asks an undue high threshold of involvement. I think that Robertson Hill, San Bernard, can all speak to the city. For the city to impose something that all of a sudden nine of us, nine neighborhoods and businesses need to get along, it's just too high a threshold considering the time...It was almost cruel. It was like putting one piece of meat into a room and then having us all figure out how we were going to divide it. And then not letting us have the tools, or the money, or the knives, or letting us know where it was coming from, or what was in it for us. So in a way it was kind of an empty gesture and almost meaningless (Jay).

Even though the bureaucracy prototype limits the scope of OCEAN to only the goals set forth by the city, the organization still has a key role in Central East. First, OCEAN is the watchdog of the neighborhood plan for development in Central East. "I'm of the opinion that as the umbrella organization, we're supposed to really focus on the neighborhood plan, protect it, try to improve the neighborhood plan, make sure that the City recognizes it" (Ion). As one member stated:

The neighborhood plan is supposed to be what OCEAN is guiding and keeping the faith of. That's what they are in the eyes of the city too. That all changes to

that land and all enactments of that plan are supposed to go through OCEAN...I think that individual neighborhoods should take up more of the social issues and it should basically be a land planning body that deals with zoning issues basically (Shannon).

As protector of the neighborhood plan, OCEAN is responsible for development of Central East's vision of this community. "So what I really see, ideally, [OCEAN] is representing Central East Austin and what – and ensure that the development goes with that Neighborhood Plan. The neighborhood is developed according to that plan and to update that plan" (Kim). This responsibility gives OCEAN unique voice within the city. It becomes a small scale governing body that works for the citizens of Central East. As some view it, OCEAN becomes a neighborhood-level government that polices development and land use issues for its constituents. "Basically [OCEAN] needs to be a government. It needs to be, you know, street level government and it mostly a decision making authority or participates in the decision making on land use questions" (Gary).

A second key role of this prototype is OCEAN's voice at the city. Being the designate for all land issues in Central East, OCEAN carries a cache of power with the city that is important to people trying to develop and protect Central East. "OCEAN is an umbrella organization for all of the neighborhoods to speak to the City. It is in fact, the mouthpiece, if you will, to the planning group to the City, for planning purposes – land use purposes" (Andy). As another member acknowledged:

Because there are really important issues and they're big issues that are definitely going to affect the entire Central East Austin area. And the City of Austin knows



they need the input initially, before they move forward. It's the only way you're going to handle those big issues. Those don't make it to your neighborhoods, unless you go to OCEAN (Kristin).

OCEAN as the neighborhood contact team is *the* voice of Central East with the city of Austin. When neighborhoods have issues concerning land use and development they go to OCEAN in order to get concerns heard at the city level. This designation gives OCEAN a certain level of authority over the five neighborhoods it represents and consequently a level of importance for all involved in the collaboration. As stated previously, voice is a central feature to both prototypes of OCEAN. The scope of voice may be different, but there is some consensus that collective voice is important for all OCEAN members. For the community builders, collective voice can be a vehicle for larger issues of taxation, political representation and neighborhood development. For the bureaucracy prototype, voice is limited to the issues of development and gentrification.

Overall, the bureaucracy prototype views an OCEAN that is the mouthpiece for Central East on land use issues with the city. Boundary spanners use this prototype to keep OCEAN's objectives strictly in line with those objectives set by the city for a contact team. Under this prototype OCEAN is an entity of the city that provides a vehicle for neighborhoods to express development issues. OCEAN is the watchdog over development for Central East and ensures that the neighborhood plan for this area is developed in a way that encourages growth while maintaining a sense of heritage that Central East cultivated over decades. Whether OCEAN is the community builder of Central East fighting against regentrification and over-taxation, or a watchdog for

neighborhood development and a voice at city government, these two prototypes place OCEAN as a proactive collaboration working towards the betterment of Central East. In contrast to this picture, the next two prototypes emphasize a collaboration with privileged access and no direction.

*OCEAN as a collaboration of a privileged few*

The third prototype of OCEAN describes the collaboration of the privileged few making decisions for a constituent group that is either unaware of OCEAN and its objectives or who have little voice. In this prototype, OCEAN is in opposition to representational governance and is a collaboration run for personal or self-serving reasons by a small group of people not welcoming to new people or contrary opinions. This prototype stands in stark contrast to the portrayal of OCEAN as a community builder fighting for the people it serves.

One of the most salient themes to emerge in this prototype concerns the lack of continuity between the people that participate in OCEAN and the people OCEAN represents. “The people that are showing up are well educated and politically savvy and they are not really representational of Central East Austin” (Kristin). Boundary spanners who discuss the lack of representation often talk about how OCEAN is “not like us.” As a former member declared:

You had 20 or 30 people and that’s what OCEAN is, consistently, speak on behalf of 5400 people, without having this chain of communication – a formal chain of communication. I’m not trying to be the wisest guy, I’m just saying – what is fair play? Then when you go to the meetings, the demographics of the meetings is

basically white and a few Hispanic. The demographics of the neighborhood are mostly Hispanics and blacks (Luke).

This disparity in representation brings with it an assumption about what Central East values as a community and what directions are best for the area. “I don’t know what income levels are represented there, I don’t know what the demographics of the neighborhood are, but I would say middle income white people are well represented. The development is well represented, and business” (Kim). Another member of OCEAN also acknowledged the disparity and the potential problem with skewed representation:

Unfortunately it’s far more white than the neighborhood is. It’s probably wealthier than the residents of the neighborhood as a whole. There are probably more owners than renters. I joined as a renter. So then you’ve got a whole different set of values there as well (Anna).

The implications of a lack of representation become evident in ways members talk about who attends meetings. The membership becomes typecast as an “old boys club” run by whom ever has control at the time. One member surmised:

It’s kind of an old boys club. It really is more black than anything. It’s not black – but when Ion was president, he’d always say – These people... Our people... or whatever and he’d be talking about people who’d been in East Austin forever. That’s fine. No problem. But you have to convince them that you’re not in there to make a quick buck and get out (Trey).

For Tom, OCEAN is nothing more than a cabal:

Cabal is a pretty good word to describe it because in organizations, you kind of expect predictable output based on input with an organization. And like you just can't with OCEAN because you don't know what the moving parts are. But you always know that you don't know everything.

From these members perspectives, whoever are in control of OCEAN seems to engage only certain members or certain neighborhoods. These members work to keep control while limiting representation by others.

You have different constituencies who like it the way it is and want to keep it the way it is. They feel like it's democracy. That's not engaging everyone. It means the same group makes the same decisions. It means they have a monopoly.

What's happened with OCEAN, you have these different cliques, whether it's someone from Blackshear, saying we included Blackshear, but you have the clique between Guadalupe and Swede Hill and Blackshear basically running everything (Luke).

Because you get these power centers that monopolize OCEAN and it's objectives, members feel that personal motivations are the driving force of OCEAN rather than the objectives stated in the neighborhood plan or bylaws. "I think everybody has their own goal really. I mean a lot of people, it's economic. They are looking out for themselves" (Justin). The personal interests of individuals may be masked as organizational goals, but some people come in with self-serving plans that OCEAN can help see to fruition.

Almost everyone involved in OCEAN has some sort of other kind of investment in the neighborhood, be it rental property, a business... I think what happens with

OCEAN is there's this perception that the neighbors are fighting something. But what it really is competing developers fighting each other (Kim).

Taken as a whole, this prototype describes a collaboration where representation is lost to all but a few voices and certain people with self-interests make decisions for uninformed and unaware constituents OCEAN claims to represent. Whereas the community builder prototype places OCEAN as the vehicle for addressing larger community-wide social issues, the privileged few prototype portrays OCEAN as a hegemonic organization that controls the voice of Central East while seeking little if any input from the people whom it proclaims to represent. The final prototype to emerge from the data centers more on the disorganization of OCEAN and how little the organizational works towards stated objectives.

#### *OCEAN as a rudderless collaboration*

The final prototype manifested by boundary spanners describes OCEAN as a rudderless collaboration. Within the prototype, OCEAN is seen as disorganized with no focus and no semblance of control. Again, where as the bureaucracy prototype depicts OCEAN as a collaboration with a specific purpose and goal, the rudderless prototype questions the goals of OCEAN and if they can be achieved. Similar to the privileged few prototype, the rudderless collaboration describes the problems that can ensue when boundary spanners with different orientation and objectives work together towards common goals.

One component of this prototype describes OCEAN as disorganized and without orientation towards a purpose. To some, the organization appears to flounder with a lack

of leadership. “I really don’t know what the goal of it is. Nobody rules – everybody has a different plan for it. There’s no leadership with one person saying – ‘this is what we want. This is how we’re going to get it’” (Trey). Lack of leadership causes problems with organization and structure in OCEAN. McKenna summarize this disorganization best when she said:

It’s one of those things – it’s like looking at a machine that’s held together with bubble gum and paper clips and rubber bands and you wonder how it’s still running...Right now, the animals are in control of the zoo. The inmates are in control of the asylum. Nobody is in – it is rudderless right now. Gary is doing a good job of being at the helm and keeping things at least from capsizing. But like I say – it’s completely rudderless right now.

What happens when OCEAN falls into disarray is that information is not communicated uniformly to all OCEAN members and the collaboration does not produce anything beyond the sum of its parts. One member questions whether or not OCEAN can be considered an “organization” based on his experiences with the collaboration:

OCEAN to me is not a strong enough or – it’s not a structured enough organization to call an organization in my mind. At best, it’s an amalgamation of neighborhood associations and it’s not more than the sum of its parts at this point (Hayes).

A second and connected component in the rudderless prototype emphasizes the loss of focus that has occurred in OCEAN and how disorganization causes the collaboration to drift away from its goals. As the organizational losses focus, the content

and target of OCEAN communication become less clear. “I still don’t know why we have OCEAN. I see no communication from OCEAN to the city, nor the city to OCEAN. So that’s no communication. I don’t see any communication from OCEAN to the neighborhood” (Kelly). And while some older members acknowledge the potential of OCEAN, the loss of focus is causing the collaboration problems:

I see great potential there. I see a glimmer of a very powerful voice that has not yet come to fruition. In fact, I see OCEAN as sliding backwards as far as the potential, as a powerful representative for the Central East community (McKenna).

As OCEAN “slides backwards” the relevance of the collaboration is questioned and meetings become monthly chat groups where little work gets accomplished:

I think it’s lost focus and really, unless there are pressing issues, there’s not much community involvement. With just a core group of people running it, there’s no focus, there’s no direction, there’s nothing really to do other than show up to chat on a monthly basis (Hayes).

The loss of focus adversely affects the work being accomplished and the importance of that work. The organization is less proactive and more reactive to problems after they have occurred:

What I want [OCEAN] to be is the actual group that negotiates development solutions for the neighborhood. But I don’t think it does that. So, what is actually to me is, kind of anxiety... I think probably that OCEAN’s biggest, the biggest problem with OCEAN is that it doesn’t really do anything until there is a

problem... It's all completely reactive and you would expect people who were reacting, it is kind of a built in level of anxiety about it because they feel defensive. But they are never, I mean there has only been one time when they were proactive and that was the small lot amendment where they tried to push something and that just created a total hailstorm. (Tom).

Members communicating a rudderless prototype call to question the ability of OCEAN to follow its objectives and the strength of OCEAN's voice for Central East issues:

The biggest problem with OCEAN is that they don't seem to understand they're a neighborhood contact team – that that is first and foremost their goal. And while all these other goals are laudable, achieving those goals, if that requires a different kind of organization that's less efficient for achieving your primary goal, we are not down with that (Averi).

Another OCEAN member has a similar perception of OCEAN and questioned the purpose of continuing the collaboration:

I don't know that there needs to be an OCEAN. I think it was important when it started, but I think they did a neighborhood plan. They filled the place with neighborhood association. Not every part of town has an OCEAN. If you look at the goals of OCEAN, if it were really doing what its goals are, I think it would be really important because its goals are like preserving the quality – not quality, character – of the neighborhood and afford – I mean, affordable housing, preserving diversity housing stock. I don't know (Kim).



In sum, the rudderless prototype portrays OCEAN as a disorganized group of people who lack clarity on the goals of the organization and who are in control of the group. The boundary spanners who enact this prototype question the ability and relevance of the organization. This prototype views the collaboration as directionless and with little drive towards accomplishing goals.

### *Summary*

Within this first section, I explored how boundary spanners in OCEAN create prototypes about the collaboration. In response to my first research question, these data reveal several different prototypes used by various members at different levels of nested identity. Some boundary spanners see OCEAN as a way to address serious issues that confront Central East Austin (community builders). Other members view OCEAN as a function of the city to oversee land use cases and development issues (bureaucracy). At the more abstract OCEAN-level of social identity, members see OCEAN as a group of self-serving individuals that are unrepresentative of the larger constituent body and their needs (privileged few). Finally, some people see OCEAN as a rudderless amalgamation of neighborhoods that accomplish little and have few operational objectives (rudderless). In all there are four prototypes that boundary spanners use to help understand in-groups and out-groups. Within social identity theory, prototypes are one way IOC members use to distinguish differences between groups. These prototypes define stereotypes different groups of people invoke to create salient differences between each other. In OCEAN members have little room for social mobility outside of OCEAN, so they have created distinct sub-groups of OCEAN within the IOC. Members who use a community builder

prototype will see OCEAN working to bring together neighborhoods to fight the issues that plague Central East. This group will see stark differences between themselves and other groups (using other prototypes). For instance, the bureaucracy prototype describes OCEAN almost in direct opposition to the community builder. Within the meetings of OCEAN the differentiation between these two groups can be seen at every meeting.

In the December 2008 meeting, a large group of bureaucracy members came to OCEAN to sway the vote on the bylaw reorganization. This showing of members angered those members who function under the community builder prototype (since the community builder group also lost the vote). For the next two meetings of OCEAN, attendance numbers were 50% greater than previous meetings as group members from both prototypes attended meetings in an effort to structure the bylaw in a way the represented their prototype of OCEAN. The different sets of prototypes about OCEAN allow members to distinguish what boundary spanners match his/her particular prototype of OCEAN. These members can then better identify intergroup similarities (Hogg, 2001). As members interact with each other, they communicatively reinforce the prototype of each group in OCEAN so as to maximize similarities in the group and create distinction between the groups. Yet they are all sub-groups of OCEAN. So the interactions among the groups allow for the sharing and overlap of prototypes. Since prototypes are sets of attributes about OCEAN and the sub-group, IOC members will hold similar and overlapping prototypes as a mean to create social mobility where members can shift from one sub-group to another if individual goals are not being met a particular sub-group.

In exploring this first research question, it has also set a frame for the other four research questions. Knowing how boundary spanners portray OCEAN is critical to understanding the other research questions in this study. Depending on the prototype, boundary spanners will have a different impression of in-groups, OCEAN norms, membership and disengagement. The four prototypes in this section set the stage for how members come to know OCEAN and the structures within OCEAN. In the next section I explore how in-groups and out-groups are established while exploring my second research question.

### In-groups and Out-groups

The second section of results explores RQs 2 and 2a- how do boundary spanners communicatively discern between in-groups and out-groups in IOCs? And how (if at all) do boundary spanner prototypes assist in discerning groups? One of the primary objectives of social identity is to understand who belongs to the group and who does not (Paulsen, 2003). In order for sub-groups to have strong identities within each group, there needs to be a salient out-group that helps in-group members create distinction between groups (Pratt, 2001). In this research, understanding how out-groups and in-groups are formulated gives a better understanding of how structures and processes within the IOC are created and maintained. The social identity boundary spanners create in the collaboration directly affects the structures within the IOC and the creation of in-groups and out-groups as sub-units of the collaboration. From these data, two distinct in-groups—protectors and developers—are identifiable. Each considers the other as “out-group.” These two distinctions reflect the prototypes of OCEAN discussed above. For

instance, protectors use a community builder prototype of OCEAN and view OCEAN as working towards socially conscious goals to bring together all the neighborhoods. The developers use the bureaucracy prototype that view OCEAN as a part of the developing process to regentrify the neighborhoods of Central East.

During the interviews, members were struggling over organizational structure. This struggle pitted the two subgroups of OCEAN against each other and polarized them in beliefs about OCEAN goals and structure. While the groups were polarized, members evaluated and reevaluated membership in groups based on threats and group standing. At the time of data collection, protectors were struggling to gather votes in OCEAN. This caused many members to reevaluate their position in the protector's sub-group. Since OCEAN does not have open boundaries, some protectors also echoed prototypes of the developers. Likewise at certain times, one identity may be more salient than another in OCEAN. When a major issue on development emerges in OCEAN both groups rally around the shared collective voice attribute to work towards the goals of OCEAN. Finally, members interact with one another and begin to share or understand the prototypes of both sub-groups. Thus it is not uncommon to see members from both sub-groups discuss prototypes of OCEAN as a whole and both sub-groups. Below I will summarize the ways members communicate differences about the two types of groups. This section begins with a review of protectors and then moves to summarize developers.

### *Protectors and Developers*

Within OCEAN members make abstract distinctions of in-group and out-group members based on the goals a member has to the neighborhood and development. In

these groups, the prototypes of OCEAN are used to help distinguish people as protectors of the Central East population or developers focused on development and individual profits. Protectors see OCEAN as a collective voice for Central East and a way for members to work on issues beyond their individual capacity. Developers see OCEAN as a bureaucracy and part of the process for developing the Central East region. This difference in orientation creates two distinct groups within OCEAN that coalesce around a specific prototype that emphasizes in-group similarities. In conversations with OCEAN members, these two groups frequently speak about the two groups and differences between them.

Protectors use a community builder prototype and communicate in-group and out-group membership based on this orientation. The protectors describe group membership by the espoused belief that Central East needs protection and OCEAN is the vehicle for that goal. When discussing differences between protectors and developers, members use salient out-groups to help create the boundaries of OCEAN. In the following quote, one OCEAN member distinguishes OCEAN from a development group, the Austin Revitalization Authority (ARA), when creating a boundary for a group based on protection. “I think OCEAN stood with our neighborhood – every neighborhood that was there was against what ARA was proposing. [OCEAN] said – Look, this is what we’ve asked for. You’re asking for something – you’re putting speculative office space. We don’t need that crap” (Brock). Another member has a similar view of OCEAN and the distinction between ARA:

I just think that OCEAN is more personable where they talk to our neighborhoods and get something done...It is supposed to be sisters and brothers and OCEAN and it is supposed to really have an interest in the needs of the residents in that area whereby ARA just seems like it is a financial thing (Allison).

Although protectors see OCEAN as a voice for change, this distinction creates a group of people that become salient out-group members—developers. One of the main goals of prototypes is to create a salient out-group that is a considerable threat to a sub group (in this case, protectors). Although not all developers are evil, the perception lingers that this group is attempting to gentrify Central East at the expense of the culture and people already residing in the neighborhoods. When protectors discuss stereotypes of developers, it highlights why the two groups are hostile towards each other. One member spoke about the violation of trust between the two groups and how that affected OCEAN:

We were relying upon the developers to give us their expertise. We were relying upon the architects to give us their expertise. And then they would tell us one thing and the other would tell us another thing. And that's when OCEAN just went down hill (Allison).

Because OCEAN is the designated voice of Central East on zoning issues, no matter your orientation (protector or developers) both groups must engage each other at meetings. This interaction builds hostility in the groups and the hostility comes to a head over control in OCEAN. One of the former presidents of OCEAN worries about the possible direction developers could take the collaboration. "I envision the worse case scenario being that OCEAN turns into a group that is basically run by people, you know, that have

the most at stake in neighborhood planning decisions. Developers, or people like that” (Gary). Others echo this concern. “I am seeing the two interests are looking at it as an advantage to ascend in the organization and take it in a completely different direction that will not be resident and community minded” (McKenna). And while developers are trying to assuage members that they are not all “evil” there is an underlying belief with protectors that the pocketbook is the most important goal of developers. “They say they want the best for the neighborhood, but really, I think they want the best for their pocketbook “ (Jen). Others members concur with this belief. One member stated, “I think that those people [developers] are mostly concerned about increasing property values and maximizing profit” (Shannon). Another member avowed, “I think, like capitalism, business, especially developers and such, primarily have to think of their bottom line. So in many instances they are not thinking of the community and what their development might do to the community” (Ion). The use of the community builder prototype gives members a set of attributes about OCEAN to rally around. The protectors use this prototype to invoke similarities and goals for OCEAN while highlighting differentiating and negative stereotypes about the salient out-group—developers.

On the flip side, developers see OCEAN as a bureaucracy and use this prototype to help create the boundaries of in-group and out-group membership. For those that fall into the developers group, much of the communication revolve around justifying the importance of development and that all developers are not “evil.” “They don’t like Nick because he’s the developer. Nick’s not really a developer. He built those houses right there. He’s not a developer like some evil guy. He’s a thoughtful person.”(Averi).

Another member also discussed the label affixed him because he is a developer, “I’m automatically labeled an evil-doer if I’m a developer. So I’m consistently not on the winning side of issues, but I don’t ever feel like I don’t have a voice. I’ve always been able to give my opinion [at OCEAN]” (Benny). Benny went on to acknowledge the differences in perspectives between the two groups and the stereotypes held by both groups:

There are 2 sides to gentrification. There’s a really good side. And there are negative affects and a really bad side. You’ve got to figure out where that balance is. Some people felt like gentrification – just the bad overwhelmed the good and therefore we must stop all things that gentrify. Then of course, there’s the other extreme thought – Who cares? Let’s just redo everything (Benny).

Because developers are often seen in a negative light—as the “let’s just redo everything” group, this group is often misrepresented at OCEAN. “Quite often, I find that our positions have been simply mildly misrepresented. So we go and I try to explain and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t” (Felipe). The misrepresentation of developers can be frustrating to the group, especially when development is a part of the group’s livelihood. “It’s like – We bought these under one pretense and paid a lot of money and now you’re going to change it on us so that basically you’re taking a ton of money out of our pocket” (Trey).

Just as protectors used the community builder prototype to create negative stereotypes about developers, so to do developers expresses negative stereotypes about



the protectors. From a developers perspective the reach and goals of a protector can be overly optimistic and detrimental to the gentrification of Central East:

When I've seen OCEAN and other people fight it at the City, it's kind of farcical. [Members] going to Planning Commission and be very – I think OCEAN is probably seen as an obstructionist, NIMBY neighborhood group, which is not what it really is (Kim).

Others developers are more opinionated about protectors and the role they play in OCEAN:

I think the people that want to take on the big issues are those people that feel a social responsibility towards equitable, you know, trying to make life equitable for everybody. You know, and I think, I'd say do-gooders but that sounds really bad. I mean that actually in a good way...I think that for a lot of people, that is what OCEAN is. It's like a socially conscious neighborhood association, which is absolutely not what the City wanted it to be (Nick).

While the protector may see their cause as larger than just city zoning issues, developers describe protectors as obstructionists who want to limit the development of Central East and address larger community issues beyond the reach of such a small organization.

OCEAN as a collaboration must deal with both groups working with each other in order to reach its objectives. The protectors advocate for the Central East population and the needs of its citizens, the developers advocate the need to develop Central East and create a community where people want to live. These interactions between the two groups emerged in many of the conversations about OCEAN. People discussed the

obvious tensions that the two groups caused within OCEAN and how that affected everyone. One member spoke at length about the environment the two groups created:

The people who regularly attend – I think there’s 2 sort of factions, from what I can tell – there’s the faction – this is an oversimplification – but the developers and the people who want to keep the neighborhoods the same, or want to protect them. Say the developers and the protectors. I think the protectors can demonize the developers and make them look like they’re really bad people. And the developers can seem like they’re just overtaking everything. Like they’re just coming to make everything bad, or take everything over. So sometimes there’s talk about – there’s these people and they’re squatting on property and they’re not paying their rent, and they’re living there and we want to evict them. I think the protectors will say ‘Have you talked to them? Have you figured out what we can do for them? Is there someone who has talked them to--?’ And at the same time, they understand that you can’t just let people live on property and they’re not paying rent. But there’s got to be assistance for those people. We’ve got to help those people. I think the developers’ side – some of them – maybe it’s a continuum, so some on the far side of developer would say – ‘They can’t stay there. Tomorrow let’s evict them. They don’t have any rights.’ And they don’t legally. We can just tell them to get out of here, and when they’re gone to the store, we can knock down their house. They come back and it’s gone and all their stuff is gone. Sort of like in Gaza. And I think there’s a continuum, so there’s the far side, the developer’s side says – We really need to make sure that we help

them out as much as we can, but once we have, there's nothing we can do. And at the far end of the protector says – We should never let them do anything until we've made sure...There's the far side of the developers says – Well, they're probably running crack and their doing – and they have prostitutes there. And the far side of the protectors says – They're probably old people who don't know what to do, and retarded and handicapped and old. And on and on and on (Aneta).

This back and forth between the two groups can be discouraging for both sides. With each group trying to prevent the other group from reaching goals, OCEAN wallows in inefficiency. Protectors see it as an uphill battle that never ends; developers acknowledge that both sides need to come together to work out the differences. One protector expressed this frustration over the constant battling:

There's so many things to fight. We came off a very contentious battle in 2007 with the 12th Street NCCD. We got nothing we wanted. The 12th Street commercial property owners got everything they wanted. We'd been fighting this prior to even the existence of an NCCD from when I bought the house in 1999. There've been people fighting this before I bought the house in 1999. People have been fighting this stuff since the '60s and '70s. So it sometimes seems like an exercise in futility. You're fighting, fighting, fighting. You know you're on the side of right. You're on the side of good. You're on the side of the people. You're on the side of the community. Yet, it's the money and the power that always win (McKenna).

Overall, OCEAN becomes a forum for different groups to interact. The protector/developer distinction is most apparent during OCEAN meetings that address zoning and development (the majority of meetings OCEAN conducts). For instance, the July and August 2008 meetings addressed development on the 11<sup>th</sup> street business corridor. In these meetings protectors and developers argued over the best approach to development of 11<sup>th</sup> street. These meetings were long and contentious with many members walking out in disgust. In the end, the protector's position was forwarded as the representative stance of Central East. Many of the developers left OCEAN and protested this stance with the city.

#### *Summary*

In sum, the prototypes boundary spanners hold about OCEAN drive affiliations and group ties. Protectors use a community builder prototype to create in-group members that want to see OCEAN protect the neighborhood and stand up for the infringed upon rights of its citizens. Developers use a bureaucracy prototype to limit the reach and scope of OCEAN to issues of zoning. By limiting the scope, developers lessen the importance of OCEAN as an entity for change, and make OCEAN part of a larger process in development. In response to RQ2- OCEAN boundary spanners make several different distinctions between groups to help determine in-groups and out groups. RQ2a asks how (if at all) do boundary spanners prototypes assist in discerning groups. The use of prototypes to help distinguish membership within each group is evident from the discussions with members. In order for social identity to become salient, in-groups must rally around a common prototypes and that prototype must encourage in-group

similarities while accentuating out-group differences. In the case of OCEAN, protectors viewed OCEAN as a community builder that worked for the good of Central East. The developers were seen as working against these goals and thus became a threat to in-group members (one of the criteria of social identity theory). Likewise, developers use the bureaucracy prototype to build in-group membership and create negative stereotypes of the protectors. No matter what group distinction boundary spanners make, the interactions between the groups drive the identity salience of the groups and create further distinctions between members. For example as protectors and developers meet on an issue, the difference in orientation and goals for OCEAN causes friction between the two groups. This friction maintains a level of threat between groups and reinforces the group's boundaries. Following the tenets of SIT, these interactions create a cyclical process where communication between the group at OCEAN create further conflicts between the groups thus reinforcing the distinction between groups and creating more distinct borders.

### OCEAN Norms

The third section of results explores the answers to RQ 3 and 3a- How are IOC norms communicated and maintained? And how (if at all) do boundary spanner prototypes develop/guide these IOC norms? The production of social group norms is directly connected to the prototypes boundary spanners have about OCEAN (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Through social identity, norms are the manifestation of communication and shared interactions between collaboration members that create shared patterns within OCEAN. The prototypes boundary spanners have towards OCEAN function as a guide

for behavior in the collaboration. In this section, the established norms of OCEAN are summarized. Since norms are constantly created and recreated, this summary highlights one specific norm within OCEAN: disorganization. Below, I describe how disorganization as a norm came into prominence within OCEAN and the affects of this norm on members. In the last portion of this section, I describe how OCEAN attempted to change the norms of the collaboration and shift boundary spanners underlying prototypes of OCEAN.

#### *Disorganization as a norm*

Boundary spanner repeatedly discussed the disarray of OCEAN meetings. “If you are going there expecting some kind of organized discussion and consensus building, then you’re going to be sorely disappointed. If you’re going there for a circus sideshow, then it might be better than American Idol” (Averi). In this section, members describe the norms that occur when dealing with OCEAN. The disorganization norm of OCEAN incites a lack of direction at OCEAN meetings, and the disregard to formalized order. The lack of orderly process also manifests itself in the way members deal with the voting structure and decision-making in the group. In all, most OCEAN members saw OCEAN as a rudderless organization and used this prototype when discussing the norms that emerged in the collaboration. One OCEAN member summarized the disorganization of OCEAN in it processes when he discussed an ongoing project OCEAN was involved with:

[OCEAN] recommended, when we were changing the plan for 12th Street, working with the merchants along 12th Street and the homeowners along 12th

Street – this was 2 years ago – they recommended a particular structure, eliminating a lot of the land use controls that were somewhat superfluous, eliminating some other restrictions in favor of some things that would encourage development, but also put a lot of responsibility on the land developer. To address some issues – I thought it was a great idea. We talked about it and so we started working down that path. As it came to fruition, people from OCEAN came and argued against it. One of the issues they raised was – There’s no compatibility. Well, they were the ones who said to take the compatibility standards out. But, again, you have to remember, that their resolutions are driven by who’s at the meeting (Felipe).

In this statement Felipe discusses the tentative nature of OCEAN’s stance on an issue and how that stance is tenuous at best and dependent on a static group of people. As OCEAN’s attendance at meetings is in constant flux, different opinions on issues emerge at different times, and little consistency can be traced from one meeting to the next. The more OCEAN shifts its stance on issues and cannot maintain a consistent voice, the more ineffective the organization becomes. This inconsistency in stance can be problematic, especially when a developer may potentially have to present at two separate OCEAN meetings before that person can get a letter of support:

[OCEAN] is really a reactive organization that like becomes NIMBY very quickly rather than like an urban complicated neighborhood group... Even if it is something super simple like, a guy wanting to add on another bedroom to his house. Somehow he ends up having to go to OCEAN. And like, you know, it is

way more complicated and OCEAN could or could not support him based on any number of reasons that have nothing to do with his house or his addition or where he is or what impact that would have on the neighborhood at large (Tom).

Another former OCEAN member and developer also expressed frustration how disorganization seems to be the norm of OCEAN:

What's supposed to happen is – well, who knows what's supposed to happen. They say you go in and present. The next meeting you vote. But they don't have any rules about that. So, theoretically you can come in and present – and there's 10 people there – and those 10 people go out and get 30 people. And those 30 people come in on 1 person's recommendation and vote you down or vote you up. It's ridiculous and it doesn't work (Trey).

The disorganization norm at OCEAN affects the processes and procedures of the collaboration. Specifically, procedures are affected in two way, first by the lack of direction the collaboration has from meeting to meeting and second by the poor adherence to a rule of order when it comes to organizational processes.

For many members, the problem with establishing some efficient work norms in the group is directly related to the direction of OCEAN overall. OCEAN has few tangible objectives to accomplish. The collaboration has a list of objectives to obtain in its bylaw, but there is no way to measurably enact the change needed to obtain those objectives. Consequently, the group struggles to find a reason to meet from month-to-month and this lack of direction means that boundary spanners begin to drop out when irrelevant issues are on the agenda:



[OCEAN's] like a shifting tide – it is what neighborhood association will have the greatest amount of voting members present at any given OCEAN meeting. That's the way the tide blows. So if Swede Hill, for instance, there's some sort of issue that affects them directly, they'll be there in droves. But then the next month, when there's nothing on the agenda with Swede Hill, they don't contribute. I think that that's wrong. You should have some consistency (McKenna).

While it is important to have a consistent group of people present at each meeting to avoid the ever-changing opinions on issue, generating topics to discuss can be difficult. Beyond that, without a clear path of action beyond “talking” about an issue, boundary spanners see little relevance in the meetings:

To me, it was just people going and really doing a lot of talking. To me, they could just go on talking about the same things, even not only in the same night, but at each meeting, and never really coming up with a solution (Jen).

Over the years, the mission of the organization has drifted and the goals of the organization are less concrete. To many, this has encouraged a “preaching to the choir” type mentality at the meetings where less is done:

[OCEAN] doesn't really have a clear mission or goal. When it started, when I was involved with it in the beginning, the neighborhood plan had just been done. People who served had been active and getting information together from their neighborhoods and it was more of a – Okay, we've done this. There's some development things associated with it, putting in street lights, neighborhood improvement issues that the City had put aside money for – so it was really more

monitoring those issues. The plan with the City is that every 5 years, they would go back and revisit the neighborhood plans and see if any of them need to be made or if things were okay. We're a couple years passed that point now, and the City is just now starting to think about doing that. I think it's lost focus and really, unless there are pressing issues, there's not much community involvement. With just a core group of people running it, there's no focus, there's no direction, there's nothing really to do other than show up to chat on a monthly basis (Hayes).

When OCEAN does make a decision on an issue, the way the decisions are discussed leave many people disenfranchised with the process and questioning the validity of the decision. "If just some basic parliamentary procedure was followed, I think that there would be a more orderly meeting and less confusion and less wishy-washy votes from month to month" (McKenna). The lack of order in decision-making causes OCEAN to unravel:

Probably the biggest problem with OCEAN is it didn't have any procedures, protocol. As things started getting contentious, which started with the SLA thing, Ion couldn't control the meetings enough and OCEAN would vote – OCEAN was sort of like the whore that couldn't find anybody they didn't like. They couldn't find an issue they didn't want to vote on. The bylaws process didn't get consummated quick enough and things just sort of unraveled on the organization, I think (Brendan).

One of the former OCEAN presidents also spoke about the lack of order in the current OCEAN meetings and how it led to disorganization:

Certainly what I've heard and what I've seen lately, has not been a functional – has not been an effective organization. And when I stop being involved, it's kind of at that state when it seemed to be – it seemed to me, that because there was not adherence to Robert's Rules of Order, adherence even the bylaws, adherence to at least what had been the processes, even if they weren't written, that OCEAN had followed in years past, then things started to fall apart (Benny).

The disorganization in OCEAN spread through the group. The leadership did not follow the rules of order set forth in the bylaws and other members of the collaboration began to follow this new norm of disorganization and speak out of turn or with little regard to others at the table:

My opinion is [The president] doesn't know how to run a meeting. And he doesn't really know about parliamentary procedures, which a lot of people think as being real formal and being a stickler. But when you're making decisions, you have to have a clear idea – you need to know exactly what it is you're deciding on. It needs to be recorded properly and you need to ensure that the people who vote on it are eligible to vote on it. Those are just basic rules that the Chair of a meeting should – and make sure that the secretary clearly words the motion... I think the problem is that there was no one, including the secretary, clearly wording motions, making sure everybody knew what we were voting on and keeping the discussion to motions and that decision. And I feel like a number of

decisions were made under rules that were too – in terms of who could vote, who couldn't vote and then versed in – they weren't recorded properly (Kim).

Another OCEAN member talked at length about the decision making process. Much like the observations from the previous quote, the decision made was questionable at best:

What they do is they have a vote. And everybody who happens to be there, if they signed up and been to at least 2 meetings in a row, they get a vote. And they basically let all those people vote and they don't say – Well he hasn't been to a meeting in 1 year. There's none of that. Anybody can vote if they'd signed up. So then what they'll do is they'll throw out the thing on the table that they want to vote on. Other people might understand it because they've been to a few before, and it might or might not have been talked about before. If it hadn't been talked about before, they'll give you a little refresher – really quick. And assume that you know everything, that you're an insider. And then they'll say – What do you think about that? And then somebody will get all excited, practically jumping up and down saying – I want to set a motion ahead for that. Then somebody else, just as gleefully goes – I'll second it. I'll second it. But we haven't said what the motion is. To me, it's always seemed like equating it to playing house. Except they're playing politics (Hope).

The problems with order become endemic to the collaboration and how boundary spanners view the procedures of the group. As people begin to invoke the rudderless prototype about the organization, the disorganization norm becomes the prevalent guide for work in OCEAN and the collaboration soon breaks down.

For a collaboration that's primary function is decision-making, the lack of organization is detrimental the entire group. As noted above, the leadership of the organization does not follow any rules of order and the consequent affect on the decision making process is two-fold. First, the decision-making process becomes disorganized and easy to manipulate. OCEAN moved from a representational democracy (where one member voted on behalf of a neighborhood) to a participatory democracy (where one person had one vote regardless of the affiliation of the member). This undocumented change in process instilled a belief in the members that the vote of OCEAN was easy to manipulate:

It's majority rule. And that was also part of why I brought so many people from Swede Hill to the meeting, was to show how easy it is to manipulate the current bylaws to get what you want. Because you only have a few people that show up at every meeting. Unless it's not immediately relevant, they're not going to show up. So if you feel strongly about a position, get enough people in there and you've got it (Hayes).

This stacking of the deck was frequently discussed at meetings and people became worried that OCEAN would be run by the people who could bus in enough votes at any given meeting:

It's been one person one vote and majority rules. So whoever comes to a meeting ends up swaying the decisions for OCEAN... It gives a lot of possibility for stacking the deck. If only 10 people show up, then you have 10 people deciding

on something for 5 neighborhoods. So I'm not sure that it works and I'm not sure that everyone is represented (Anna).

As this member experienced the manipulation of votes, it violated her prototype of community builder in the group. This member highlights the interplay that the prototypes have with one another. The organization becomes rudderless, and as a new "less optimal" norm becomes the standard other facets of the collaboration suffer. In this instance, the group becomes less representative and this particular member becomes less involved with OCEAN.

Another affect on the decision-making process concerns the actual vote, how it is casted and how many times an issue can be voted on. Ideally, when an issue is voted upon the decision is final. With disorganization as the norm in OCEAN, uniformed members are voting on topics and votes cast at one meeting can be undone at another meeting, calling into question the democratic objective of the collaboration. "A lot of people complained that [developers] presented at one meeting and then the people that come and vote on it are different" (Brendan). This is problematic because people are casting uneducated votes on important topics:

I have a real problem with people just showing up and voting and they have no idea with what's going on. I'm not saying that there should be a test for information, but if you don't have – first of all – an agenda where everyone knows, and you don't give people the opportunity and access to become informed and create consensus at the neighborhood level, I don't understand what the neighborhood contact team is doing when it says it creates consensus. Creating

consensus among the people who bother to show up, but it's not a representative consensus (Averi).

Another member relates a specific instance about uneducated voting and the frustration that this can cause with other members:

The last meeting was a great case of everything because [one member] walked in in the middle of a vote and voted. Yeah, like he walked in and voted. He looked over at [another member] and raised his hand. Like you don't even know what it was about. You walked in and you make this case all the time about how uninformed the voter is...and then you fucking walk in and just like toe the party line based on something you have no idea what's going on. And in that particular case, he was voting on OCEAN, on whether or not they should participate in that eviction (Tom).

Beyond the lack of knowledge people had when voting, if a vote was cast at a previous meeting it could be reopened and re-voted on at the next meeting. This vote, re-vote process gave OCEAN even less credibility in the eyes of the members and the groups that dealt with OCEAN

You've got people that drop in and out of the meetings and when they drop in, they try to take over and that's why we had four separate votes on what size of house could go on a substandard lot. And that's why the City Council completely ignored them on that... Because people that didn't show up for one meeting that had a vote, showed up for another meeting and said, Hey, we didn't get to vote

and we want to vote again. So then they voted again and they changed everything every time (Justin).

Again the problems in OCEAN are directly related to the perspective of the people in the meetings. With leadership on one page, and membership on another the procedures of OCEAN fall into disarray. For instance, OCEAN's president at the time believed the decisions should be about consensus, which meant that no decision was permanent. This is his standpoint on voting:

You can get consensus sometimes, but a lot of times it's very difficult. You always have – people don't necessarily care for consensus. That is the objective. And as the president, that is what I've tried to reach. Sometimes you think you've consensus, and at the next meeting you realize you don't have consensus. Then you go back to the drawing board and go at it again and see if you can pull it out of (Ion).

Yet from a member's perspective, the voting and re-voting is a leadership problem that diminishes the effectiveness of the organization. One member recalled a specific set of "votes" this way:

We've had like, in the past half-year, we've had 3 different votes on the bylaws. The first one said – 1 vote for every person. The second time we voted, it was like one vote for every person, but with a Board of Directors that didn't necessarily override that one vote for one person. And the 3rd vote threw all the first 2 votes out. I think it has a lot to do with the leadership hasn't been that well versed in the



form a meeting should take. I think that – I don't think you're supposed to vote that many times on one issue (Shannon).

Over time OCEAN has drifted away from some of its original goals and structures for procedures. This drift has instilled a norm of disorganization within the collaboration. People come to expect numerous votes on a decision and can manipulate votes by just “busing in” enough people to any given meeting. The disorganization can be attributed to numerous sources, but the spread of it as an organizational norm led to the collapse of OCEAN in August 2008. As more people become frustrated with the decision-making of the organization and the lack of diverse representation in OCEAN's stances on issues, people called for an organizational restructuring. During this time the current president resigned and an interim president presided over the change in voting structures and bylaws for OCEAN. From this disorganization emerged the possibility of a new organizational structure and new more representative and functional norms in OCEAN. Members began talking about ways to move the collaboration back to a representational democracy where members are represented through the votes of their boundary spanners at OCEAN. These discussions led to the emergence of an organizational direction and the potential to instill new norms at OCEAN.

### *New Directions*

The changing of OCEAN's organizational structure was a primary discussion point during conversations about the collaboration. All of the respondents mentioned the new directions OCEAN was heading and how the change in representation could lead to a new life for OCEAN, one where everyone could be represented equally. Although

many worried about the change in representation limiting the voices of OCEAN's membership, overall most people found the "board-model" of representation to be the most advantageous for all involved. An OCEAN president describes this change in the norms of OCEAN this way:

That's the chaotic part of OCEAN where there is no real leadership. There was no – didn't seem to me to be any real structure to it. I was opposed to the board model. I liked the democracy of being able to go in there and have a vote, if you live in the neighborhood. So I opposed the board model. I've come around to it because it is chaotic that way. Everybody ought to have a say. Everybody ought to go in meetings and have a say. But having a representative who speaks for the neighborhood, being able to hold or have a vote – and vote based on that representation – to me, makes a lot of sense. And having people who really are responsible to those other organizations, who can in fact be ousted if they're not doing their job, makes a lot of sense to me. Whereas the mess of democracy, hasn't really worked. As long as everything that the board does, is relayed in a timely manner to the neighborhoods (Andy).

The shift in representational form mirrors the shifting prototypes boundary spanners invoke about OCEAN. Whereas the current OCEAN is rudderless and for the privileged few, the new version of OCEAN is organized and can represent everyone effectively. This shift is important to boundary spanners who feel like the voice of Central East was getting lost in the "messy, chaotic" one person/one vote system:

As long as you get real representation of the individual neighborhoods, then you can't stack the vote. In that way, [the board model] is good. I, initially, was totally opposed – if people take the time and energy to go to an OCEAN meeting, it seems like they ought to be able to vote in the direction they want and not just be like powerless. I've come to the conclusion that it just doesn't work. We don't have enough people that will actually work to keep things going. And you really can stack the vote (Shannon).

Although most embraced the changes in OCEAN some worried about the diminished voice in OCEAN and offered solutions to create a norm in OCEAN where everyone has a voice but voting on issues follows a set procedure:

I think we need to hear from more people. Two representatives from the neighborhood – you can bring their ideas, but if you're going to have an organization, you need to hear from people. We can represent our area, but some people can express what they want better than I can. I think there should be some time on the agenda where that should be provided – not just the directors, but persons within the neighborhood. It's a lack of a lot of communication. It is a lot of communication.

In sum, the move to a new board model offered boundary spanners a way to conceptualize OCEAN in a positive light. As prototypes lead to norms, by shifting members focus to the positive aspects and potential of the organization, people focused more on the ways OCEAN could affect change. This shifting in norms was imperative to OCEAN as an organization and one that was not taken lightly. From the August 2008

meeting when OCEAN's president resigned, the collaborative members spent six months coming to a decision on the new model of representation at OCEAN. During this time, much discussion ensued over the role of OCEAN in Central East and how that role would best be carried out. No matter what prototype a member invoked, by August 2008 almost all members were unhappy with OCEAN. New (interim) leadership brought focus on the decision-making process and legitimacy to the organizational change:

I'm trying to enact a sort of discipline at this point. I mean the major decision of organizational structure and the by-laws, that I am still trying to at least get informed consent, not a consensus, I want to get the people who are the most opposed to doing it in a particular way to move over the hump to be a bare minimum of willing to concede that this is how [OCEAN] should go forward... I want the legitimacy to attach to the process and have legitimacy attached to the outcome. We didn't really care how the sausage got made because everyone agreed that it spoke for the voice of East Austin (Gary).

### *Summary*

The norms present at OCEAN are influenced directly by the prototypes people have about the collaboration. In response to RQ3, norms in OCEAN develop overtime based on the prototypes boundary spanners invoked about OCEAN. The prototypes of OCEAN are grounded in the communication of members over time. Constructing these prototypes over time creates a reinforced pattern of expectation about the operation of the collaboration. As OCEAN shifted away from the original representational form, members saw disorganization ensue in the way meetings were conducted and issues decided upon.

Over time prototypes shifted and the privileged few/rudderless prototypes of OCEAN reflected a norm of disorganization. The interplay between norms and prototypes addresses RQ3a. It is only a short step from a boundary spanners prototype to OCEAN's norms (Turner, 1991). As disorganization became the expected norm, OCEAN members found fewer areas of mutual identity and consequently disengaged. Disorganization led to the collapse of OCEAN in August 2008 and new leadership brought a new direction for OCEAN. This new direction helped change people's prototypes of the collaboration and pushed discussions of new norms for the organization. As members began to discuss the new social reality of OCEAN, a norm was created.

#### OCEAN Membership

The fourth section explores answers to RQ 4- how do boundary spanners communicate membership to the IOC? Membership is a key facet of collaboration. Through a boundary spanners social identity, members claim certain identities and deny other identities. This interaction between members helps determine status and clears ambiguities about groups (Bartel & Dutton, 2001). Understanding requirements for membership, benefits of membership and how to reach your membership are important elements to a working collaboration. If a member is unclear on any one area, then problems can arise in terms of identifying with a salient group. In the following section, discussions about membership are summarized. These discussions are broken down into three main areas: requirements, benefits, and representation. The prototypes boundary spanners have about OCEAN play an important role in understanding the rationale behind membership and how social identity affects membership. To begin the exploration

of research question four, I summarize the requirements for membership in OCEAN and how these requirements change overtime and the effect these requirements have on boundary spanners.

### *Requirements*

One of the most prominent themes about membership involves requirements for membership. Boundary spanners routinely talk about what it takes to be an OCEAN member, how to become a member and questioned what membership means. Although the basic protocol for membership is detailed in the bylaws, members discussed how protocol does not necessarily match process. In this section, discussions about membership requirements are summarized.

Since OCEAN is the designated contact team for Central East, membership with the collaboration is implicit with residency. To most boundary spanners, there are no barriers to entry into the collaboration other than time and energy. “Anybody is an OCEAN member. All you have to do is show up at the meeting. I live in the neighborhood. I work in the neighborhood” (Felipe). Another member also commented on the open membership of OCEAN, “You just need to let people know you are interested. We were signing a form but now we aren’t doing that any more. Just be interested and come” (Allison). Although most people believe that membership comes with residency, the designation of OCEAN as the contact team of Central East makes some boundary spanner feel forced to participate rather than freely joining. “The City of Austin is forcing us to be members of OCEAN” (Jim). Another boundary spanner viewed membership as something you cannot circumvent:

I think that the Swede Hill folks, for example, whom I know the best, I think that we are members of OCEAN only because we are trying to go along. Cause we've been asked to be, because the City has said you can't secede. This is the neighborhood contact team, and so it is kind of like, well this is our, if this is the setup, then we will play along but primarily we would like to see it only deal with, you know, land use issues (Nick).

In addition to members feeling forced into the collaboration, the open membership makes it hard to discern who is speaking and whom they represent. At OCEAN some members come to the meetings representing themselves, while others represent an entire neighborhood. Because membership procedures are inconsistently enacted, representation beyond the individual becomes questionable. "You can't vote unless you're a member, and it's hard to tell if you're a member or not, and you don't know what a member is. It takes you 3 or 4 meetings to figure out what a member is" (Aneta). One OCEAN member elaborated on this problem:

There's no buy-in. There's not groups that are represented in OCEAN. It's never even been clear even if you have a Ion showing up or Brock, who are presidents of neighborhood associations that they're really representing the neighborhood associations there. Because it's just not been the discussion or format or structure...Now I don't mean, obviously in the past, at various times, you've had someone show up and say – Our neighborhood association met and here's where we stand on it. But that – there's no structure or consistency or system for that. That's the problem (Wayne).

Problems with membership and representation are echoed by another member from a neighborhood that does not have a formal organization behind it yet, “A member would be a representative of the neighborhood. I’m not representing the neighborhood, because we are not completely organized” (Kelly). Kelly emphasizes the need to have clear requirements for membership. As a member of an inactive neighborhood, her membership cannot be viewed as the voice for her area. With two neighborhoods in OCEAN currently without active associations to represent the needs of its constituents, membership and representation in OCEAN needs to be clear when decisions are voted on.

Since there are no requirements for membership, initially OCEAN had an application process to ensure membership validity and keep people from arriving at “voting” meetings and “swamping” the vote with people that had never attended a meeting before. Many OCEAN members discussed the process of becoming a member and told stories of how they first entered OCEAN:

I had submitted a membership application probably 2 or 3 years before I started going to the meetings. They never contacted me. I saw some OCEAN people at the coffee shop – at the Dandelion. I said – I’d love to join. I filled out a membership application on the spot and then never heard another peep from them. Then I had to go investigation. Go – Hey, what happened? And I had to fill out another registration form (McKenna).

Two former members had similar experiences with the process:



I was asked point blank “Jay. You’re not even registered. Why are you here?” Like why are you here and I had done an impassioned plea of why it may be important for us to be here and what the things we do and who the East End merchants are... And then, low and behold they said, “Huh, we’ll let him sit here.” So, you know, I think I was still supposed to go register somewhere and then while we were gone and came back there was emails. I did read one of them that said boy anyone who attends is and lives in the area, is automatically a member (Jay).

Aneta had an analogous experience:

Okay, just personally, I came to a meeting, there was a vote. They said you had to be a member to vote. I said – What’s a member? How do you know if you’re a member? They said – You have to fill out this application and the next meetings you’re – if you bring it back the next meeting, and then the next meeting you can vote. Or something like that. So I said – Okay, I want an application. They gave me one and I filled it out and handed it in. Nobody ever told me if I was accepted as a member. Nobody ever voted on it. It was questionable to me whether I was a member or not, but I started voting. And there’s people who did that, I suppose, years and years ago, who never went to a meeting for 5 years, and then came back. And they don’t know whether they’re a member or not, and then they vote.

These stories emphasize the inconsistent ways OCEAN documented membership. Others see this inconsistency and are concerned with the protocols OCEAN uses to validate

membership. One person even recommended a more complete system of checks and balances:

I suggested that we have – on the sign in sheet – a list of members and you check off your name. And then if you're not a member, you have to fill out my address, phone number, da-da-da-dah da-da-da-duh. And if you want to become a member-- Then you have some way of knowing whether you're a member or not. There ought to be some way of acknowledging – Okay you've turned in your thing. There should be some official list, some official file somewhere and a list saying – Here's the members. So if somebody says they're not a member, the Secretary should be able to open a binder – or computer file – and say – Yes, you're a member. No you're not a member (Aneta).

Without some measure of membership validation, the authenticity of voting and decisions can be problematic to OCEAN. This is challenging when people vote on issues without some way to validate who they are and what they represent. “I do think that probably we should be more careful – should have been more careful about who voted. Because I know there's people that neither own property or live in the neighborhood that have come to meetings and voted” (Shannon). Still others think there should be more stringent requirements for membership in order to ensure a level of education on issues discussed at meetings. One person discussed having a fee for membership so that there could be more buy-in to OCEAN:

I think OCEAN should have a membership fee too. It doesn't have to be much. I mean it could be ten bucks. But you've got to have some ownership in it. I mean

it's like studies of if you walk in and you give doughnuts away, people are going to take more than they want or more than they are going to eat. But if you charge a nickel apiece, which is way below what the market value is, people are only going to take what they need. And if you don't charge people to become a member of OCEAN, they are not going to have the ownership in it that even ten bucks is going to give them, you know. So if you get something for free, you don't respect it as much (Justin).

Other members thought that a fee for membership was not the right requirement for membership:

There are no dues like there are in Blackshear, which I like that there are no dues...The only stipulation – the requirement was before that you fill out a form that lists where you live so that it's on file that you in fact reside within the boundaries of OCEAN... I think there's only 100 and some people that actually have any kind of form on file (Andy).

One member proposed a tenure system to prove membership and stake in the neighborhood. This requirement would keep out transient members who may only live in the area for short time (i.e. students or short term renters):

I feel you need to prove yourself that you're a long time person in a neighborhood before you really should get a vote on what the neighborhood shape is. Because you're shaping the development of a neighborhood with the decisions you make. If you're in this for 6 months, and you're a tenant that sits at a house. And you know you're in college and you're going to move on, you really shouldn't have a

voice – to me. A lot of people think I’m crazy to say that. And I’m rude and whatever. I think it’s almost the same as a business. I think if the business owns the property, sure. But if you’re just a temp there – unless you can prove like – I’ve been here for 4 years. I’m staying here. I am affected by the decisions that are made. My business is affected (Trey).

Although all the proposed requirements would add structure to the membership, to date there is still little in place to discern members at meetings. At the February 2009 meeting, a major decision about bylaws was on the table. At that meeting 55 people attended and voted. This was well above the average meeting attendance of 18 people. Yet, at this meeting no member checking occurred, no sign in sheet was passed around, no identities were verified. The vote was 23-22 amongst much controversy but the decision stood and a set of bylaws was adopted. After that meeting many long time members left and have not returned.

### *Benefits*

A second theme about membership concerned the benefits of being an OCEAN member. Although less salient than the discussion about requirements, many boundary spanner talked about the personal benefits of attending meetings and perceived benefits others obtained from membership. For some, the most important benefit is having people listen to their opinion and getting an opportunity to vote. “The fact that people ask my opinion and listen to my opinion. I feel like it’s -- I vote and my votes have a say. That makes me feel like a member” (Anna). Another member asserted voting as the primary benefit of membership:

If I can vote in meetings, then I can be involved if I want to be. I feel like I have to make an effort to know what's going on, but I feel like – until recently, was welcomed to participate and have a vote and have influence (Kim).

A longtime member experienced the benefits of OCEAN beyond just voting and having a voice:

They listen to what I have to say. I mean they definitely listen. They may not pay me any attention, but they definitely listen to what I have to say... And then a lot of times when they are going to have some meetings and stuff, they will give me a call and Shannon had some kind of party and she called me, and she asked me if I would go bicycle riding with her. You know, things like that. The other day she pulled off her jacket and gave it to me. I said, Oh that's pretty. She just pulled it off and gave it to me. I talk. People listen. And they will usually hug me sometimes and sometimes they won't (Allison).

For some members the benefits of membership are more intrinsic. As people collaborate, they begin to build collectively towards a common goal. This work gives people a sense of pride and can build on an internal need to do good for the neighborhood. "I put some blood and sweat into trying to make it an organization that made more sense and was more representative as opposed to just saying fuck it and just walking away" (Nick). Each person comes to OCEAN for a reason, and each person has an intrinsic motivation for doing it. The current OCEAN president summarized the benefits of being a member this way:

I think everybody that's involved has a personal reason that is different from mine. Ion's is by far, far different from mine. His wife's is different than mine. I've not been burglarized. Mine's not the same as Kristin's. Safety is important to me and Allison asked me to be a part of the weed and seed. I couldn't say no. She asked me to be her alternate. It's just I can't see a reason to say no. And I'm learning more. So that's why for me, I just want to do what good I can (Andy).

While some member's benefits are more altruistic, others are purely functional. Some members come to OCEAN to get through this layer of bureaucracy so he/she can move on in the development process. "[Members] come to OCEAN just because a lot of them have land and want to build, or some who have business, commercial property. A lot of them want variances" (Anna). For these "members" the benefits are self-serving and do not encourage tenure in the collaboration:

It's like sometimes you'll see someone there and then you won't see them again ever. Or sometimes they'll pull in for a vote. And they may be part of a neighborhood group. But you won't see them steadily because they're just coming there to get the vote for something they need (Hope).

Overall, while the perceived benefits of membership are important to some, few people commented on benefits as the driving force for membership. As an organization largely driven by planning and procedures, the main benefit of membership is voting and voice. While some may find more altruistic benefits for participating in OCEAN, overall having a say in the development of Central East is the driving rationale for membership.

### *Representational Membership*

The representation of membership is the final theme in this section. Many boundary spanners discussed the need for a diverse membership that is representative of the larger community. These comments coincide with the prototypes that members enact about OCEAN. This theme summarizes the need for membership and outreach while emphasizing the interplay between member's beliefs about OCEAN and membership needs of the collaboration.

Much of the discussion about representational membership revolved around getting a more diverse group of voices at the table and the legitimacy it would bring to OCEAN:

You have to let everyone in. Now whether you let them all in directly or you let them in through some sort of formalized representative process, it doesn't really matter. But you've got to let them all in...If OCEAN is actually a membership organization with some people and not others get to be a part of, then some people and not others have a particular rights with them, then you really do have to be proactive at reaching out to all of the people who are eligible to keep them involved (Gary).

The more people you pull from the neighborhoods, the greater voice OCEAN has with the neighbors. No matter how that representation is manifested at OCEAN, the organization needs to reach out and get as many members as possible:

You look at OCEAN, you get individuals to represent significant constituencies, whether it's Swede Hill, Guadalupe – those who have an organizational structure

in place currently, or if they want to develop one – you’ve got to leave opportunity for those like in Kealing area, who want to organize and put their team together. And you have to have that flexibility. But you need to have individuals who are representative, who can speak on behalf of the larger mass of these constituencies and come together as OCEAN...I just want to make sure that they try to do as much as possible to engage everyone, and the diversity. We have churches here, and some people in the area go to the church. They don’t even take advantage of the church. Take advantage of what you have. You don’t have to reinvent the wheel (Luke).

Beyond diversifying membership, it is important that individuals see the larger Central East picture and how OCEAN is part of maintaining that culture. Getting members to see their neighborhoods influence on the larger Central East neighborhoods will bring continuity to the voice of OCEAN. The current OCEAN president summarizes this imperative:

[OCEAN needs] an at large representative – somebody who was not responsible to the neighborhoods. Somebody who could maybe come to OCEAN with ideas and visions that are citywide or at least OCEAN-wide rather than – I’m from Blackshear and this is what Blackshear wants. Somebody that has a bigger picture in mind...I think that that kind of attitude, that we’re only a part of the bigger picture and that we need to not only know what’s happening in our own neighborhood or in OCEAN, but also down whatever it’s called on the other side of Cesar Chavez and so on (Andy).



In order to get more membership the organization needs to reach out in more effective ways. They need to engage all stakeholders in the neighborhood. “I think we need to reach out more. I think the majority of Central East Austin doesn’t even know [OCEAN] exists... I don’t think we get enough business owners showing up or actual residents showing up” (Kristin). Outreach is at the heart of the membership drive. Without it OCEAN will continue to portray that “old boys club” stereotype. “The problem is, people who live in the area that OCEAN represents, have a voice. But unless they show up to the meetings and vote, they’re not being represented. OCEAN currently doesn’t have an effective outreach program” (Felipe). The premise most OCEAN members follow is that with effective outreach, membership will diversify. With a more diverse membership, OCEAN will have a greater representation of the entire Central East area and be better equipped to voice the concerns of the larger membership.

One area of contention about diversifying membership is the inclusion of business in the organization. On one hand, business members are landowners and have just as much at stake as people living in Central East. This vestment in the community should grant them access to the organization working on the development of the community. “I would hope to see that OCEAN could incorporate the businesses... Maybe incorporate the business people into it” (Brock). Another member summarized why business should be involved with OCEAN:

[Business owners] have got more invested in it than somebody that is just, well they have just as much or more than anybody renting a house here. Yeah, they definitely should have a voice. They’re investing their money and their time. They

have more invested in this community than somebody that is just renting a house that could leave at any time...Anybody that is willing to invest in the business, I think should get credit for it. I mean businesses are hard to start and keep going. So if the question is, Should they be represented in OCEAN? Yes, they should definitely be a full partner in it (Justin).

A third OCEAN member went on to explain that it should not just be small business members but the larger landowners as well. “I think the business people should be represented...the City should probably be represented too. I mean the City is probably one of the largest landowners in this whole, in OCEAN, and they have absolutely no representation in OCEAN” (Tom).

On the other hand, by allowing business members to be a part of OCEAN, some members see it as a conflict of interest. If developers are voting on the development of their project, it gives them an overly weighted vote on OCEAN and calls into question the validity of the membership to vote impartially on issues of land use:

Most of the neighborhood associations have a shared interest and can work together, but I’m starting to see some fractures and splits. That’s what I’m saying – especially now with the inclusion of business and commercial property owners as fully full members of OCEAN – that has the potential to fracture it more, I think.

A second person echoed this concern about membership and competing interests:

I don’t know that I really have a strong opinion about whether or not [OCEAN] should include volunteer and outreach and neighborhood improvements, as much

as I feel like there should be a voice about – it should be neighbors making, weighing in on neighborhood development who aren't also developers or invested, or have a financial interest...most of these people would have to recue themselves from some of the decisions they're making that say represent the neighborhood (Kim).

### *Summary*

In sum, membership is an ambiguous process within OCEAN. The collaboration is open to any resident, but how to become a member and what qualifies as a member are vague and up for negotiation. Some members have been asked to go through a formal process, whereas others are allowed to participate with no designation of membership. Additionally, as members come in and out, whom they represent while participating in OCEAN is uncertain. Although some people have more altruistic goals for the collaboration (those who generally invoke the community building prototype), others are more inclined to use OCEAN for their own means and than disappear from the membership roll. Although a diverse membership is generally considered a good thing for OCEAN, there are questions about the voice of the collaboration if business members and developers are allowed to partake in the organization. As long as a person is allowed to vote and have a voice then they reap the main benefit of membership. When that voice is silenced and the value of membership diminishes, boundary spanners may disengage from OCEAN. RQ4 explores how members communicate membership to OCEAN. From discussions with members and former members, the membership process is vague and unclear. Formal membership granting is an ambiguous process, so members use informal

membership clamming to distinguish membership. Boundary spanners view the benefits OCEAN renders as a way to discern membership. Other members use prototypes to help distinguish groups within OCEAN and then seek acceptance with a group that most closely aligns with that boundary spanners perceived identity of OCEAN. Overall, membership with OCEAN is fluid and lacks formalized designation. Since everyone can be a member, it is unclear on who *is* a member.

### Disengagement

“I just thought – I wash my hands of this. If I’m going to abstain at every vote and I feel ineffective and stupid, and these people have taken over, that I have seen at meeting after meeting after meeting. And I’m learning to know their names even. I know I can identify a face to a name, but they’ve never talked to me and I’ve never talked to them...I give up. I felt like I was surrendering and saying – I give up. I’m out of here. So, I care about my Robertson Hill – I have only a limited amount of time and energy and those meetings exhaust me and are frustrating. So I decided, what energy I have, I want to put into Robertson Hill. So I’m going to go to those meetings and going to make sure that my neighbors are taken care of” (Aneta).

Disengagement from OCEAN can occur for numerous reasons and for most of the participants it has happened at least once. When the collaboration seems to stray from the prototype an individual has for OCEAN, he/she questions why they continue in the organization. Many members told stories about heated arguments between boundary

spanners and people storming out of the room. Other members have questioned the usefulness of OCEAN and simply disappear from the membership rolls. In the above quote you get a feel for the frustration that can occur when certain members take control and how time and effectiveness become rationales for disengaging. During my conversations with OCEAN members, almost all had expressed a desire to disengage at some point. In this section, I summarize three many reasons for disengagement: internal issues, representation drift, and time.

### *Internal Issues*

Within OCEAN, the lack of a firm organizational structure and leadership leads to internal disorganization and conflict that causes members to disengage. For the better part of a year OCEAN went through an organizational change that saw three different people lead OCEAN in less than six months. With this type of turmoil within OCEAN, people experienced an organization that routinely violated their expectations for involvement. Members would talk about the lack of support they received from other boundary spanner when it came to getting tasks accomplished and the consequent burnout that ensued:

It was hard to get somebody to take notes. It's hard to get somebody to make a copy for you... I just felt like maybe we should step back. Because I felt like it was – for as much as we worked on it, we weren't getting any support as far as physical support. I think eventually, we could get some support in some of the things that we would bring forward in the meetings, but it was just taking a toll on us, really...I just wanted to step away... I think I just got tired (Jen).

A previous president of OCEAN believed that the lack of support meant that a few people did all the work, enabling others to just ride along:

I'm having to go to all these organizational meetings and run here and run there. I just said – I'm going to stop, resign. So I just felt that if I – kind of like a drug addict – if you let them go, if you don't facilitate their behavior – if you're not enabling it, then maybe they will come to realize that they have to do something. So I felt like I had to stop enabling OCEAN by still trying to make it work under the structure that we were under and just resign. Then maybe that they would move towards an organization that was functioning (Ion).

Not only was there a lack of support within OCEAN, there is a general lack of organization about procedure and protocol. As discussed above, this disorganization became a norm in the collaboration and led to frustration among members. The norms of OCEAN aggravated boundary spanners that were trying to accomplish objectives for the neighborhood.

I'm a paid professional going out there and doing this for my job and I have had zero success [with OCEAN] with a rational argument that has like gotten research and everything behind it. [I have had] just as much as whoever shows up and screams the loudest. So, yeah, it's, every time I go to an OCEAN meeting, like you've got to wonder why you are even bothering (Erik).

Beyond the disorganization of OCEAN, members have experienced hostile situations that cause them to disengage. Conflict between members is common over certain issues and when I first began observing meetings people would tell me how

“tame” a meeting was based on the outcomes. One member got caught in a heated argument and recounts the experience below:

I feel like experienced abusive behavior more than once and nobody called them on it. [One person] said – Shut up, sit down, you don’t know what you’re talking about – to me. Yelled at me...And [another person] was a shit to me numerous times saying ‘Kim wants this, but that’s not going to happen.’ That’s personally one reason I’m [not going]– Who needs this (Kim)?

Again, it is apparent that the ways members perceived OCEAN and the norms in place that allowed this type of communication between members pushed many people to disengage from OCEAN. A former member of OCEAN witnessed the power struggle between boundary spanners and decided the whole experience was not worth the effort:

There was no order in those groups. It really irritated me. I did not like [one person] in that position. [Two people] acted like this overpowering team that would just overpower people’s talking. They’d get in arguments and get heated. It’s like a freaking sorority or something (Trey).

Even when conflict is not the direct reason for a person to disengage, OCEAN can be unwelcoming to new members thus pushing them away:

I’ve heard it enough from folks that when they first show up that it’s baffling to them, that they feel a bit alienated from [OCEAN]. I think that’s because of the structure that’s in place now. You’re not quite sure who’s what and what the leadership is and what you can and can’t do, what you’re expected to do and why you’re being asked to vote on something that you’ve only heard about half an

hour ago for the first time and sounds really complicated. Zoning type stuff and planning stuff is pretty intimidating for most people (Wayne).

The complicated nature of zoning issues and the lack of structure not only keeps new members at bay but after a while the complicated processes and procedures push away some of the older members:

I'm taking notes and I'm thinking – I don't understand a word he's saying. It's hard to take notes when you don't understand what they're talking about. I feel that interrupting them and saying – Could you please explain what dah-dah-dah is, and I think I'm educated – so think of an uneducated neighborhood person who decides they're going to come to OCEAN and be involved and there's these meetings and they go – what a waste of my time, I didn't understand a thing. And I felt weird. So I'm not coming every again (Aneta).

OCEAN members do not take the time to explain the “ropes” of the organization so consequently people are left to figure it out on their own. For some it takes months and they still do not fully understand the lingo and structure without looking up information on their own time. For others they attend one meeting, get lost in a sea of jargon and never return:

They would actually chase away the people that they needed to work with. So they would lose support because they would get so set. There was a lot of animosity in there. It actually got to the point where a lot of people were asking themselves, why go? A lot of people stopped. The Chief of Police didn't want to



show up anymore. The Captain didn't want to come to the meetings. It wasn't productive (Kristin).

As people disengaged from OCEAN, the stereotype of the "old boys club" became more commonplace among certain members. The interactions with OCEAN created new prototypes with members, and when the interactions led to prototypes that boundary spanners did not identify with, they disengaged.

A last component of the disorganization was the disenfranchising of members. Some members found that as OCEAN tried to get more organized by changing the bylaws, their individual votes became meaningless and one of the key benefits of membership was stripped away. "I feel like if there's a board of directors where I can't really vote at any meeting, I don't know that I'll feel like a member as much" (Kim). Other members were just outright left out of the loop all together and not granted the benefits of membership. "Quite often, I didn't get invited to a meeting. I didn't get the information. I don't know if someone was sinister or they just forgot. But that did make it a little more difficult [to be a member]" (Felipe). And as member felt like the key benefit of OCEAN was striped from them by reorganization, people disengaged:

As a resident, I think [a board model] is disaster because my vote counts even less. Like I really never, my opinion or my voice never gets heard at OCEAN as a consensus and it sure as hell doesn't get voiced as one representative of a board. No way. Like there is really no reason to be a member of OCEAN with a board model. Like, you know, you can send me a mailer or something, it doesn't really matter (Tom).

### *Representational Drift*

A second reason for disengaging from OCEAN occurs when members see the collaboration drifting from its stated purpose. When this representational drift occurs, members question engagement in OCEAN. For some members the purpose of OCEAN seems unattainable, for others OCEAN does not work in an efficient manner towards the goals of Central East. “Why get my neighborhood organized and be a part of OCEAN and they do nothing with it. When I take people’s time, we gonna work on the neighborhood” (Kelly). A former member has similar questions about OCEAN, “For worthwhile reasons, I would consider staying [in OCEAN]. I don’t know what the end point is. I don’t know what we’re doing. What are we going to do once we are a group? What do we talk about?” (Jay). As drift became apparent to members, they express frustration with OCEAN and the possibility of getting work accomplished:

Well why would I go the, I mean, at OCEAN. I mean the real hope is in the room, right. My whole shtick is basically in the room, having a rational conversation about that. Come out with an outcome that somebody can work with. Right. Because like the vacant lot thing, you can play the NIMBY (not in my backyard) card all day. You are just going to end up with a vacant lot if you keep playing that card. So you gotta, figure out a way to come to a solution with the developer. That can only really happen in the room. And if the room doesn’t matter anymore, and the room already didn’t matter. Like obviously the room doesn’t matter anymore, but if the room really doesn’t matter anymore, I’m probably not going to go to the room. Because that is just people like screaming at you for really no

upside. Like you don't even get to vote anymore. Like, why would you bother?

There's a lot of less anxiety that I don't need to deal with (Tom).

For this member, OCEAN drifted away from a prototype. When that occurred, Tom became less invested in the collaboration and the outcomes of the decisions OCEAN made. Other members were irritated by the drift and disengaged:

What I see happening is the people that really want to advocate for the residents and for the community will throw up their hands in disgust and walk away. In fact, one of my neighbors, who has just gotten involved with OCEAN in the past year – after this past OCEAN meeting – told me personally, privately that she does not want anything more to do with OCEAN and that she's going to devote all of her community energy just to the neighborhood association... I think that's why my neighbor decided to put her energy into the neighborhood association and not into OCEAN. She'd been attending these meetings for months and still has not made heads nor tails of what OCEAN stands for (McKenna).

Other members see the drift as a way for personal interests to get accomplished at the expense of neighborhood goals. As members of OCEAN make choices based on their own development or political agendas, the collaboration drifts further away from its espoused goals:

You can't be an advocate against things or what you think is the fair way and then be doing self-serving things. You have individuals in OCEAN that do that, whether it's for their non-profits or whatever. I can't do that. That's why I don't do it. That's why I don't get so involved... That's what frustrated me. That's why

I backed up. Too many decisions are made – instead of for the commonality of the good of all the neighborhood, it's more self serving to those who understand the process a little bit better (Luke).

Overall, the more OCEAN drifts from the perceived direction a member wants it to go, the more likely a member is to disengage from the collaboration. In many ways, trying to keep everyone happy is like “herding cats”. With different prototypes being enacted about OCEAN by boundary spanners, there is at least one group not happy no matter what objective OCEAN addresses. If OCEAN attempts to address issues of taxation or political representation, the bureaucracy members see OCEAN as overreaching and tackling issues that are beyond the scope of the collaboration. Conversely, if OCEAN only addresses land use issues, community building people feel like the scope of work is too narrow and lacks purpose beyond the mandate of the city contact team. For OCEAN leadership, it is a constant battle to find a position that appeases all group members or risk losing a portion of the membership.

### *Time*

The last reason for disengagement is time and what time is worth to members. Boundary spanners join OCEAN for various reasons. This is a volunteer position that has monthly requirements of time. At the bare minimum a member must attend a two-hour monthly meeting, but depending on what issues are currently being addressed, OCEAN can quickly become a part-time job for some. If there is a perception that OCEAN is not using the boundary spanners hours wisely, members reduce the amount of hours he/she attends OCEAN or disengage all together. “I did not find it productive to continue going

to meetings and find – most of the meetings I went to I didn't find satisfying" (Felipe). One former member stated that you only have a limited amount of resources total in life and you need to allocate those resources wisely or lose them altogether. Once you spend that hour, you never get it back. "You can only spend that one hour one way and that's why I kind of had to pull back from OCEAN" (Jay). Another OCEAN member outlined the importance of time this way:

It's one more meeting that somebody has to go to. And unless it's important, there's not much interest in giving up time in our lives. I've got 4 kids. Everybody's got things that are going on. It's really – believe it or not, one meeting a month is a big effort for people. It doesn't sound like it, but you've got the neighborhood meeting that's once a month. Then you put OCEAN on top of that, that's another meeting. That's 2 nights out of the month, and then the associated work that goes on with that... I've got much better things to do with my time than burn 3 hours with people that can't see logic staring them in the face – or at least logic as I see it (Hayes).

Other members need to feel like the time they are spending is working towards an end. "If I don't feel like my participation in any way is helpful, then I'm not going to be a part of it and I'll find something else that's helpful. I'm still involved, also, with other campaigns" (Andy).

Another time related reason concerns how much "bang for your buck" OCEAN gives with the time a member spends in the collaboration. Some members see OCEAN as

redundant to other organizations or neighborhood groups and disengage from OCEAN in lieu of a similar organization:

[OCEAN] felt redundant to a lot of what we had done, what we were doing at Swede Hill so for all these reasons, I kind of, I stepped back from OCEAN for quite some time and felt that it didn't really play a role in my life and the life of my neighborhood association (Nick).

A former OCEAN president also found himself less inclined to work with OCEAN when other organizations were doing more:

I have not participated in OCEAN for the last, probably year... not because I think that OCEAN is irrelevant. I just think that among the different neighborhood organizations and among the different impacts that I can have, OCEAN was not the largest – I was not getting the biggest bang for my buck in OCEAN (Benny).

Finally, some members of OCEAN just get burned out on OCEAN. The collaboration has been active for over a decade, but some of its biggest accomplishments (namely creating a neighborhood plan for the entire Central East area) were completed seven or more years ago. When I asked members what OCEAN has done recently, most boundary spanners shrugged and said, “the bylaws”. For some, working with OCEAN for years just gets tiring. “I’ve done this for a long time now and I want to do something else. It’s not hostility but I don’t want to have to come to this meeting every month” (Gary). Other members are a little more hostile toward OCEAN and the layer of bureaucracy it represents:

Well, I contest whether or not it is just a personal waste of time, yeah. I mean almost 100%. Like, oh absolutely. Like the rational informed information has no bearing on the outcome. I mean it is pretty good disillusionment. I mean, spending a year going through a neighborhood planning process to get kicked in the teeth at every turn of events, 100%, it is a pretty good version of rejection therapy. You get it at every level. You get it at City staff level. You get it at City Council level. You get it at Planning Commission level. You get it at OCEAN level. You get it at neighborhood level. Like having a reasonable conversation about, you know, anything related to development is not, doesn't really get you anywhere (Tom).

How OCEAN uses members time becomes another reason for disengagement with the organization. In all three disengagement themes there is overlap and connection. In my discussions with members, I would routinely here one reason for disengaging linked to another. A person would be frustrated with the disorganization or hostility at OCEAN and question why he/she was wasting time with this group. Other members would be disillusioned by the lack of representation in OCEAN and seek other organizations that they could better identify with to spend time. All three of these reasons for disengagement are interwoven with each other and relate to the way boundary spanners perceive OCEAN. Oddly, when people disengage, rarely do they do more than just stop coming. Although there may be time invested and goals yet to achieve, when a member gets to the point of exit they usually just stop attending:

I think that if you wanted to make a protest statement, you could write a letter and say – Please take my membership away. I do not want it anymore. Whether the

members at large, whether the acting president or the eventually elected president would make that announcement – it might just be a protest that nobody hears, so why make it (McKenna)?

### *Summary*

The social identity boundary spanners use for membership claiming plays an integral role on the engagement and disengagement of members. From the discussions about disengagement, the prototype a boundary spanner constructs about OCEAN directly relates investment with OCEAN. The three areas of disengagement (internal issues, representational drift and time) summarized in this section all tie back to prototypes of OCEAN from the first section of this chapter. As members experienced a disorganized, unrepresentative collaboration, he/she disengaged. The boundary spanners could no longer find a salient social identity within OCEAN and left the organization. Much like the prototypes of OCEAN are fluid and are constructed through the communication with other in-group members, so too is disengagement. While members may disengage from OCEAN at point, as the collaboration changes over time, it can create a space for re-engagement among former members while trying to attract new members to OCEAN.

### *Review*

The goal of this chapter was to explore the five research questions posed in this study. Research question one sought to explore the prototypes of OCEAN. From these data four prototypes emerged- community building, bureaucracy, privileged few and rudderless. These four prototypes also affected how in-groups and out-groups were



conceptualized with members. Research question two investigated the ways in-groups and out-groups are discerned. Members used the bureaucracy and community building prototypes to create two groups within OCEAN- protectors and developers. In reviewing the interviews for OCEAN, over the nine months of observation the most prominent normative structure in OCEAN was disorganization. Research question three asks how norms are created and maintained, I found that norms were context specific and that OCEAN, at the time of observation, was functioning under a norm of disorganization. The lack of leadership and decisions-making structures impaired the IOC and limited its effectiveness. This in turn affected the boundary spanners participating in OCEAN and their perception of the IOC. Research questions four and five explore the ways boundary spanners come to know membership with OCEAN and how interactions within OCEAN can lead to disengagement. In sum, the use of social identity theory to explore the individual interactions with IOCs is a fruitful way to conceptualize how processes and structures within IOCs are created and maintained through boundary spanner communication.

In chapter five, I begin with a summary of the results from this study. I then discuss the implications of these results and what this study informs about social identity theory, boundary spanners and interorganizational collaboration. I conclude the chapter with limitations and future directions for research.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

In this last chapter, I summarize and discuss the implications of my findings. The initial section of this chapter is organized around the research questions posed in chapter two. A brief summary of the key findings are presented followed by a discussion of the implications of these findings. At the end of this chapter, limitations of the study are summarized and directions for future research are proposed.

### Summary and Implications

The first section of this chapter summarizes the key findings from each research questions. After this brief summary, the implications of these findings are discussed as it relates to previous research on social identity theory. This format is used for all five research questions. The second part of this section discusses the implications of this study as they relate to the current state of research on IOCs and boundary spanners. This section of discussion concludes with a brief discussion of implications for practitioners in IOCs.

### *Prototypes of OCEAN*

#### *Summary*

In investigating the question- How do boundary spanners construct prototypes of IOCs (RQ1), data indicates that four main prototypes of OCEAN are present: community building, bureaucracy, privileged few, rudderless. The community-building prototype views OCEAN as a collaboration for the people of Central East. This version of OCEAN is one where the collaboration brings together people in order to fight the inequities present in the neighborhoods. The community building brings the neighborhoods together

to discuss issues and works as a collective force thus creating a vehicle for action that is beyond the ability on any one person or neighborhood. The bureaucracy prototype views OCEAN and the goals of OCEAN in a different light. The bureaucracy prototypes sees OCEAN purely in terms the City of Austin set out for a neighborhood contact team. These terms place OCEAN as a part of a process of development that is between the neighborhood and the city. The collaborations objective, from this prototype, is to tend to the neighborhood plan and address planning issues as they arise. Additionally, OCEAN is the contact for planning issues with the city. City council members will defer to the recommendations of OCEAN on issues of land use in Central East.

The third prototype to emerge from the data is that of OCEAN as a collaboration of the privileged few. In this prototype, a few individuals who are not representative of the larger constituency run OCEAN. The privileged few prototype describes an OCEAN that is run by self-interests, political investment- a group created and maintained “old boys club.” This club of individuals controls OCEAN by engaging only those who are deemed important to development or political advancement at the expense of constituent representation. Privileged few prototypes views OCEAN as a puppet of the city and controlled by the city’s interests. The final prototype to emerge was OCEAN as a rudderless organization. In this prototype, OCEAN is viewed as disorganized and without clear purpose. The rudderless prototype promotes an OCEAN without process or procedure where decisions are fluid and changeable. Furthermore, leadership is incapable of enacting the protocols created to govern the structure of OCEAN and there are not

common goals to work towards. The collaboration has no focus or road map to accomplishing the tasks at hand.

### *Implications*

The use of prototypes to help individuals categorize themselves into groups is one of the essential elements of social identity theory. It is these fuzzy sets of contextual specific attributes that IOC members use in order to identify with a group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). The process of social categorization begins the deindividualization process whereby the IOC member perceives themselves and others in terms of particular prototypical categories, instead of as separate individuals (Ellemers, Haslam, Platow, & van Knippenberg, 2003). The use of prototypes guide individual's beliefs about a collaboration. This guidance helps IOC members find others with similar sets of beliefs. IOC members also use these prototypes as a guide for social comparison in which assessments of worth are rooted in comparisons of groups on relevant dimensions (Tajfel, 1972, 1978, 1981). In this study, the prototypes of OCEAN serve as categorization and comparison sets for boundary spanners. Boundary spanners discussed the attributes of OCEAN and in turn used these sets to assist in creating a mutual social identity among individuals. Further examination of the specific prototypes reveals that there is a hierarchical order to the prototypes of OCEAN where two of the prototypes discuss the larger organization of OCEAN, and the other two prototypes describe sub-groups of OCEAN.

More recent investigations into the social comparison between groups has revealed that the perceived fluidity of boundaries play a significant role in how group

members interact within in-groups (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993; Terry, 2003; Terry & Callan, 1998; Terry, Carey, & Callan, 2001). Although the fluidity of group borders was first conceptualized by Tajfel (1972, Tajfel & Turner, 1979) in the original investigations into social identity theory, more recent investigations have empirically tested how this fluidity affects group members. The fluidity of borders between groups reflects the way group members believe they can move between groups. The more open the boundaries, the more members perceive that they will have access to the opportunities and benefits other groups may afford (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Terry, 2003). Conversely, closed boundaries imply that changing groups is limited and that “access to the opportunities and benefits afforded to member in higher status groups are precluded for members” (Terry, 2003, p. 230). When boundaries are closed between groups, members use collective strategies such as social competition or social creativity to improve in-group standings (Ellemers, et al., 2003; Tajfel, 1972). When using social competition or creativity, members directly or indirectly change the prototypes of the group or with whom comparisons are made externally (Spears & Manstead, 1989).

One of the variables to consider when analyzing the data are constraints put on the organization. In the case of OCEAN, participation with OCEAN is mandatory when it comes to land use and development issues. As previously stated, the city of Austin has designated the voice of Central East. Problematic to this designation is the mandate that all communication with the city about Central East land use go through OCEAN. Summarized in the data, boundary spanners were frustrated with this mandate to interact

with the IOC. Neighborhoods even discussed seceding from OCEAN but were rebuffed in their attempts by the city. The mandate to work with OCEAN affectively closed the borders of OCEAN. Members were stuck working with the collaboration. This mandate to work with the city creates a collaboration where membership is implicit with residence. Since membership with a salient out-group no longer is a possibility, IOC members social created a hierarchical structure to OCEAN where you have the larger collaboration of OCEAN and the internal sub-groups of OCEAN; members basically reframed the orientation and comparisons of salient groups. In OCEAN the different prototypes deal directly with the source of comparison for IOC members. Two prototypes of OCEAN directly relate to OCEAN as a whole: privileged few and rudderless; whereas the other two prototypes deal with the sub-prototypes (and eventually sub-groups to be discussed in the next section) created within OCEAN: community building and bureaucracy.

Social identity is dynamic structure that develops and changes over time but is also context specific (McGarty, 1999). As Ellemers and colleagues (2003) state, “the same person may identify with some parts of the organization but not with other constituencies” (p. 13). When discussing OCEAN the distinction of prototypes helps to emphasize the difference in where people identify. Because OCEAN is a closed collaboration where membership is implicit but mandated, members have trouble identifying with OCEAN as a whole. In both discussions about OCEAN and observations of OCEAN meetings, it is clear that members generally invoke one of two prototypes when referring to OCEAN. Members see the larger OCEAN structure as disorganized or

a group of privileged few where little work is done and the goals of OCEAN are self-serving and unrepresentative of the larger needs and desires of its constituency.

To find structures that group members could identify with, OCEAN members created new prototypes of comparison within OCEAN oriented around goals. Since boundary spanners are unable to join other salient out-groups, members created smaller sub-sets within OCEAN to help distinguish the goals of different boundary spanners mandated to work together. As one member stated, it is almost unfair to make all these different neighborhoods work together since the needs of each neighborhood are so different. From the data, members created the prototypes of bureaucracy and community building that led to distinctions of boundary spanner in OCEAN. For members, the goals of OCEAN became the driving force for social categorization and comparison during my observation of the collaboration. Boundary spanners who viewed OCEAN as a part of the development and gentrification process for Central East used a bureaucracy prototype. Boundary spanners that viewed the goals of OCEAN as a collective vehicle working against larger intractable issue used a collaborative voice prototype to help distinguish a social identity and salient group members. Since few people identified with OCEAN as a whole (in interviews, only two people total stated that OCEAN was a part of their social identity) the creation of new prototypes is important for members to find some way to identify with OCEAN.

In sum, the use of prototypes helps OCEAN boundary spanners create a social identity with other collaboration members. Taken as a whole, OCEAN is viewed as a rudderless organization that does not have direction or the leadership to reach espoused

goals. It is also a group of individuals that represent only a small portion of the larger Central East constituency. Yet within OCEAN, members identify with certain sub-groups of OCEAN based on a boundary spanners perceived goals of OCEAN. Members who see it as a contact team for the city rally around a bureaucracy prototype to help categorize themselves. Boundary spanners who see OCEAN as a vehicle for change rally around the representational voice and socially compare themselves to bureaucracy members (“developers” as will be discussed in the next section) to help define their group.

### *In-groups and Out-groups*

#### *Summary*

The second set of research questions asks- how do boundary spanners communicatively discern between in-groups and out-groups in IOCs? And how (if at all) do boundary spanner prototypes assist in discerning groups? Data from interviews and meeting observations revealed that two distinct groups are present in OCEAN: protectors and developers. These two groups are distinguished by the two sub-group prototypes of OCEAN, community building and bureaucracy. Protectors see themselves as the community building group within OCEAN. These members describe their group as the vehicle for change in Austin. The people that most closely align with the protectors want OCEAN to be more involved in issue of taxation and gentrification as well as relevant political and social issues. The protectors use the community building prototype to attract members and set agendas for OCEAN meetings. The second group in OCEAN is the developers. This group sees OCEAN as part of the process for development in Central East. Generally, these group members are developers and landowners who want to have



increased land rights and are less concerned about larger societal issues as an objective in OCEAN (note- this is not to say these members are not concerned about societal issues, but they do not see OCEAN as the vehicle for societal change). The developers use the bureaucracy prototype of OCEAN as a guideline for in-group members and agenda setting. Developers would like to see OCEAN focus on issues of land use and development as it relates to the neighborhood plan.

Since there is a mandate that all neighborhood members work together through OCEAN and no one group can break off and form another contact for Central East (closed boundaries), the groups must work together within OCEAN. The interactions between these two groups has created conflict among members and consequently hampered the effectiveness of OCEAN as a collaborative body. Meetings during the time of observation were contentious and polarizing. One member pointed this out in a meeting, stating that she was uncomfortable with how tense the room had become. Although the interactions between groups were, at points, detrimental to the collaborations efficiency the two groups fulfilled needed social identity components for each other. Key to finding a social identity with a certain group is the presences and threat of a relevant out-group. Since OCEAN had no relevant out-group due to the mandate of one contact team per area, the sub-groups functioned as relevant groups for each other within OCEAN. The collaboration essentially became a forum for these two groups to meet and hash out issues. The protectors saw the developers as a threat and vise-versa. Both were concerned about who would have control over OCEAN as a whole and consequently, the two groups battled each other over rights and representation.

### *Implications*

From the interviews with OCEAN members and meeting observations, it is clear that there is a link between the internal belief about OCEAN as an organization (prototypes) and the group members coalescence around these beliefs (in-groups). Pratt (2001) argued that three conditions needed to be present for categorization and enhancement to occur with certain group. First, a group needs to be distinct from other groups. In the case of OCEAN, protectors and developers had different goals for the collaboration that made them distinct. Second, a relevant out-group needs to be present for differentiation to occur. In OCEAN, members needed to have two groups competing against each other at meetings for people to polarize to one group or the other. After meetings would adjourn, different group members would gather together outside the meeting room and talk about one another. Third, salient out-groups needed to threaten the goals and directions of the in-group. In OCEAN both groups were attempting to create a version of OCEAN that ceded control to their particular group. Developers wanted OCEAN to focus on land use issues, where as protectors wanted a more socially conscious set of goals for the collaboration.

Within OCEAN, the focus of the two groups on the goal of OCEAN has implications on how members come to identify with the groups and the motivation behind group action. Recent work on social identity and group goal setting has examined the processes members go through to engage in a group and the outcomes of group involvement (Wegge & Haslam, 2003). Group goal setting can encourage motivation within groups and keep group lethargy at bay (Haslam, 2004). Wegge & Haslam (2003)

define a goal as “a desired state or outcome that is perceived to be prototypical for a salient self-category” (p. 52). They argue that member’s engagement in a group is predicted by the relative congruence with their perceived goals a member has coming to the group. Using the notion of self-categorization and prototypes (Turner, 1982, 1985), members who come in with a prototype of the group that is in line with what a member wants to achieve from the group, social identity and (depersonalization) occurs. If the setting of group goals within a potential group are in line with the group members individual prototypes of the group, members will feel a sense of “we-ness” with the group (depersonalization) and social identity with the group occurs as the it provides a sense of common fate and purpose (Haslam & Turner, 1992, Wegge & Haslam, 2003). “When group goal setting of this form occurs, individual are encouraged to seek out and behave in line with those norms that define the group in context” (Wegge & Haslam, 2003, p. 50).

In the case of OCEAN, sub-groups within the collaboration emerged partly due to the closed boundaries of OCEAN. Boundary spanners were forced to work only with OCEAN. Consequently differentiation occurred within the boundaries of OCEAN to create relevant groups. As members discussed the sub-groups of OCEAN, the group goals became a main source of social identity. Protectors frequently spoke of the goals they wished to accomplish as a collaboration. Members wanted to work towards lower taxation in the neighborhoods, better political representation in the local government and more appropriations for local schools. Developers spoke about the goals of OCEAN in terms of the neighborhood plan, getting development along the business corridors, and

filling in empty lots with housing. These group goals help to give meaning and direct shared social identity (Wegge & Haslam, 2003). In OCEAN, the group goals allowed boundary spanners a choice in identity targets. The boundary spanner could evaluate their own goals and find groups that offered the most congruent set of goals. Boundary spanners whose constituents were more development oriented could find membership with the developers group. Boundary spanners whose constituents were more concerned with larger societal issues could join the protectors. The goal setting of each group provided a framework for coordination and organization in OCEAN. Furthermore, these groups offered a social identity that was not based on neighborhood boundaries but rather focused on the goals of OCEAN and allowed members to organize under a framework of action rather than area.

Using group goal setting and prototypes as a frame for how boundary spanners identify and participate in certain groups gives insight into the ways individuals come to interact in the IOC. From this perspective, individual prototypes (and the individual goals that are incorporated into those prototypes) help direct members into certain collaboration or sub-groups of collaboration. If a member finds a congruent fit between individual and group prototypes, the member is more likely to depersonalize the self and work in the group towards collective goals. As stated above, this process also shows how the normative structures are created and enacted based on a member's categorization with a group. In the next section a more detailed discussion of OCEAN's norms (RQ3) are summarized and implications are posited.

## *Norms of OCEAN*

### *Summary*

In the third section of results, I investigated how IOC norms are communicated and maintained (RQ3) as well as how boundary spanner prototypes develop/guide these norms (RQ3a). Hogg and Reid (2006) argue that there is a direct connection between prototypes and norms. Based on discussions with and observations of OCEAN members, it is evident that the prototypes of OCEAN as a collaboration guided the creation of norms in OCEAN. Specifically, members discussed the norm of disorganization when describing the structures that guide behaviors in OCEAN. The general norm of disorganization encompasses several normative structures in OCEAN, including leadership and decision-making. Members frequently spoke of the disorganization that occurred in every OCEAN meeting. Meetings were expected to have a lack of direction where agenda points may or may not be accomplished. The disorganization affected the processes and procedures on the collaboration. Eventually, OCEAN members lost focus and struggled to find relevance in the collaboration and the monthly meetings. As members felt the collaboration drifting further from its missions and goals, fewer people voted and decisions had little permanence.

In an effort to change the collective norm of disorganization that permeated OCEAN, members set out to redesign the representation and bylaws of the collaboration. During this time, all the members focused on the revisions in bylaws. In total the effort to change the bylaws took seven months. In this time span little else was addressed in OCEAN. While all members agreed that there was a need to change the norms of

OCEAN or face potential collapse, within both relevant sub-groups (protectors and developers) there were different goals for the change. The conflict that ensued between the two groups over the changing of OCEAN caused the collaboration to narrow the scope of its agenda to almost entirely the topic of bylaw revisions.

### *Implications*

As stated in previous chapters, the step from prototypes to norms is small. From a social identity approach, norms are the prescribed behaviors that emerge from the prototypes of group members. Of importance is the conceptualization of norms in the group. The traditional view of norms is that of external influence, whereas social identity theory sees norms as internal standards that emerge via identity salience with the group (van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003). Norms are more likely to be adhered to with higher group identification, whereas low group identification would lead to less adherence to group norms. The higher the identification with the group, the more the norms become internalized and part of the personal norms of an IOC member, influencing thought and guiding action (Postmes, 2003). Social identity theory also emphasizes how problematic internalized norms can become within a highly identified group. Turner and colleagues argue that internalized group norms can lead to groupthink (Janis, 1972, 1983) and outcomes that are not representative of group goals (Turner, Pratkanis, & Samuels, 2003). The authors warn that highly identified groups may make decisions based on identity threats rather than group goals and outcomes. Since a salient group identity is important for members, relevant out-groups need to threaten the group. Problematic to this proposition is that a group's identity will be threatened with each interaction between

out-groups. As Turner (1991) found, threatened individuals tend to focus on the threat and not the issues related to the threat. This decision making structure can implement groupthink where decisions are made based on the prototypes of a group with the intended outcome of preserving identity rather than obtaining goals.

Within OCEAN, the norm of disorganization can be ascribed to the process of groupthink that occurs due to perceived threats from out-groups. On the surface, having a collaborative norm of disorganization seems counter to the previous literature. Why would an IOC have a norm that does not encourage identification? Upon examination of the interviews and fieldnotes, it can be seen that the OCEAN norm of disorganization is a byproduct of the interaction between groups within OCEAN. Participants in this study commented on the ineffectiveness of decisions and the lack of permanence where one vote could be voted and re-voted on in successive meetings. Yet, in review of the meeting fieldnotes, most of this disorganization can be ascribed to the sub-groups making decisions based on protection of identity rather than goal of OCEAN. In chapter four, members discussed the problems that ensued between protectors and developers over development within Central East. Each group was threatened by the other and there was a consequent polarization in the groups. At one point, a participant pointed out that protectors had made some concessions on development in Central East, only to take those concessions away at the very next meetings. The conflict between groups in essence kept the collaboration from effectively collaborating. Groups did not work towards the common goals of OCEAN and that is represented in the conversation with OCEAN members. Several members stated they were no longer sure of what the goals of OCEAN

were and others outright laughed when I asked about goal accomplishment. One member even asked if OCEAN had ever accomplished a goal.

In sum, although a norm of disorganization within OCEAN seems counterintuitive to the predictions of social identity theory, the norm of the IOC as a whole is a byproduct of the conflict between subgroups within OCEAN and the competing identities each group attempts to maintain. Research on social identity with group members has shown the members identify differently with different parts of the organization (Ellemers, De Gilder, & van den Heuvel, 1998; McGarty, 1999). A member may highly identify with the department of employment but identify less with the organization overall. In the case of OCEAN during the time of observation, members identified more with the sub-groups of the collaboration than OCEAN as a whole. Yet overtime, the more each group polarized the less work was accomplished. This inability to accomplish anything within OCEAN caused the collaboration to collapse. It was only when the threat of OCEAN collapsing that the sub-groups moved towards a collaborative decision on bylaws and organizational structure.

### *Membership*

#### *Summary*

The fourth research question investigates the ways that boundary spanners communicate membership to the IOC. An analysis of the data indicated that requirements for membership, benefits of membership and a representative membership were all key factors for participants of OCEAN. The requirements for membership in OCEAN are ambiguous at best. Many members believed that membership was implicit with



residency. Problematic to this assumption is how OCEAN membership is designated. OCEAN did not follow any formal procedures and many members spoke about the difficulties in becoming a “voting” member. The requirements of membership in OCEAN followed inline with the norm of disorganization. At some meetings, members would attend and vote with little to no system to guarantee the vote was even valid. Furthermore, with OCEAN being an open membership collaboration people had little reason for investment in the collaboration and representation was difficult to determine. Some members were there as boundary spanners for their neighborhood, others were there as “interested parties.” While OCEAN was functioning on the one person, one vote rule open membership caused friction between members as people claimed membership although bylaws stated a person could not vote at their first meeting. In several meetings, groups of “members” would arrive and be allowed to vote with only the assurance that they were residence from the OCEAN member they arrived with. This “swamping” of the vote is an example of how the two groups within OCEAN used the leniency of procedures to gain an advantage over the other during the change in organizational structure. The developers rallied members for Central East that held a similar prototype and arrived at a meeting to vote. The developers won and it created a larger chasm between the two groups.

In addition to requirements, OCEAN members also discussed the benefits of membership. The primary benefit of the collaboration is voting. Members discussed the importance of voice in the voting process and being allowed to have a voice in Central East. Beyond voting, members also found intrinsic benefits to membership. Boundary

spanners would see OCEAN (and the related sub-group) as a place to work on issues that are larger than any one individual to tackle. Many members have been a part of OCEAN for years and are invested in its success. Working in OCEAN gives them pride of ownership. The final theme in the data on membership discussed the need for representation in the membership. This theme, which stems from the prototypes of OCEAN, summarizes the need to have a more diverse base of people in OCEAN; a group of people that represent the constituents that live in Central East. For members that viewed OCEAN as a community builder, the lack of a diverse membership was problematic to the prototype of the group. The privileged few prototype of OCEAN as a whole captures the concern about diversity. It emphasizes the need to bring in membership and raise awareness about OCEAN with its constituents. Overall, membership with OCEAN is a fluid process that lacks formalization. Everyone can be a member but it is hard to discern who is a member. Participants receive internal and external benefits from membership, but by and large the membership of OCEAN lacks representation from certain groups within Central East. This lack of representation calls question to the decisions OCEAN makes on behalf of its constituents.

### *Implications*

Membership and social identity are interrelated concepts. Social identity theory posits that membership with a group is based on the self-categorization and self-enhancement (Terry, 2003). In self-categorization, members define themselves as a member of a certain group and then create group prototypes and norms about who is and is not a member. Self-enhancement describes the desire of people to maintain a positive

sense of self. As members interact within the group, they find themselves accentuating the benefits of being a part of the group and finding relevant out-groups to compare against to heighten the sense of self-worth. Furthermore, members tend to like and trust in-group members more so than comparative out-group members (Haslam, 2001; Turner 1999). Consequently, members are more inclined to seek out members that are similar in-group orientation thus creating an environment where membership lacks a diversity of opinions and perspectives (van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003). While this lack of diversity is potentially problematic, Jehn and colleagues posit that diversity is a complex variable and that different types of diversity affect groups in different ways (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). Specifically, the authors found that informational diversity (diversity in knowledge on a certain content area) was positively related to work group performance; whereas social diversity (diversity in social categories) was negatively related to performance (Jehn, 1995). Moreover, informational diversity is associated with task conflict that can end up benefitting collaborative outcomes. Conversely, social category diversity is associated with relationship conflict (disagreements about personal preference and interpersonal interactions) that can be detrimental to performance (van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003).

In the case of OCEAN, the membership issues that emerged from the data can best be understood when considering the propositions and affects of social identity. The discussion about membership requirements comes from the frustrations that members are experiencing in OCEAN. In the previous discussion about norms, members articulated their experience with OCEAN as disorganized. Members came to know OCEAN as

rudderless and without direction. One of the manifestations of this disorganization is in the way membership is accounted. The process of membership is plagued by the disorganization inherent within the organizational structure. Likewise, the different experiences that members have with the membership process emphasize that lack of leadership and control within the collaboration. Each of the groups used this disorganization to their benefit when it came to control in OCEAN. One group would attempt to swamp the vote in order to gain control, where as the other group would try to use prewritten protocols to disavow the “new” voting members. The lack of procedure became both a point of contention and a source of covert action. At one level, members communicated a general disdain for the lack of membership procedures, while simultaneously using that lack of protocol in their favor when it came to voting.

Additionally, the discussion of benefits in OCEAN parallels the tenants of social identity theory. In the process of self-enhancement, members look at the benefits of membership (with both the sub-group and the collaboration) as a way to distinguish in-groups and out-groups in the collaboration. Members’ discussions of the intrinsic benefits were rooted in the prototypes each person had about the collaboration. A protector sees the collaboration and a vehicle for collective change and discusses the benefits of doing good for the neighborhoods of Central East. Finally, members discussed the desire to have a more diverse set of voice represented at OCEAN, yet how little is being done to obtain a diverse membership. In light of the findings on diversity in group membership, it comes as no surprise that there is a rift between the need to have diverse membership and the practice of limiting representation. Furthering the example of the protector, although

they see OCEAN as a community builder for Central East and encourage people to attend in order to create a more representative body within OCEAN, overall the diversity of voices works against the desires of the group when accomplishing goals. At one level the group acknowledges the need to diverse voices, but in line with previous research (see Jehn, 1995; Medved et al., 2001) the more diverse the voices in the collaboration, the more it is difficult to reach a consensus about goals. In OCEAN, this problem is emphasized with the two sub-groups. Both groups discussed the need to have greater membership, but with greater membership comes the potential to have a greater array of social diversity and a chance that one group may become more salient in the collaboration than another. So while each group extolled the virtues of greater membership, there was little motivation to actually achieve that goal.

### *Disengagement*

#### *Summary*

The final research question in this study asks how IOC disengagement is communicated (RQ5). The data revealed three reasons members disengage from OCEAN: internal issues, representational drift, and time. In total, almost all members had expressed a desire to disengage from OCEAN at one point during membership. The first theme summarized in this section described the affects of disorganization on the members and the consequent internal issues that led to disengagement. With all the conflict that ensued between the members of OCEAN's two subgroups, boundary spanners experienced a collaboration that violated his/her expectations of engagement. Members found that there was a lack of support among the groups and that no one initiative could

be sustained because each group did not have enough members to support and initiative without the help of everyone involved with OCEAN. People would consequently burn out and feel as if all the work was completed by only a handful of individuals. Beyond the lack of support, the conflict between groups led to hostile situations where members would become verbally aggressive with each other. The environment this created within OCEAN forced participants to reevaluate membership in OCEAN. The old boys club mentality made membership difficult and many felt disenfranchised (and consequently were stripped of the primary benefit to membership) if they were not apart of the “club.”

A second reason for disengagement occurred when members began to realize that OCEAN was no longer working towards any specific goals other than organizational preservation. Members routinely spoke about the lack of accomplishments in recent organizational history. Most of the major goals were obtained over five years ago and since that point, OCEAN has struggled to keep momentum going for other objectives. As the organization drifted away from its espoused mission, members become more likely to disengage in the collaboration. Other members saw OCEAN’s goal being absconded by different groups for individual or group interests. If one group were perceived to be “in power” then the other group would see the goals of OCEAN as irrelevant to that group’s prototype. This also caused members to disengage for the collaboration. Finally, OCEAN members discussed disengaging from OCEAN as an issue of time. Commonly, when members decided to disengage, they would use time and time constraints as a rationale for leaving. The three reasons for disengagement also work collectively in the way people communicate exit. OCEAN members would routinely cite internal issues or

representational drift as reason for why OCEAN has become a waste of time. When people inquire about why a member is disengaging, although the first two reasons may be the catalyst for exit, time is the reason people communicate for exit.

### *Implications*

The proposition that social identity is context specific and can change over time highlights the process of disengagement in IOCs. The social identity approach proposed that identification with a group only affect behaviors to the extent that the group membership is salient (van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003). Just because an IOC member may identify with a group does not mean that the identity is always salient. As the context and interactions between members change over time, so to does that saliency of a boundary spanner's identity with the group. Moreover, although out-group threat is one of the primary keys to increasing group salience, the context also plays a key role. Two groups may be in competition with one another and therefore create strong in-group social identity, if the organization as a whole is failing IOC members may use this as a factor for reevaluating self-categorization. Scott and colleagues (1998) discussed how a person could have numerous identities in an organization, and these identities shift in salience depending on the given context. Likewise, social identity theory states that identity salience can grow and shift over time and is affected by the communicative interaction with organizational members (Haslam, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Understanding social identity processes in dynamic situations emphasize the interplay of context and time (Tajfel, 1972). As the organization grows and changes, individuals must adapt his/her identity to accommodate for these differences (Ellemers, 2003). As

Ellemers (2003) points out, “One way to cope with inclusion to a negatively valued group is to disassociate the self from the group... Alternatively, people may opt to work together for the improvement of their collective plight” (p.195). As the group grows and changes, the group members must decide if membership within the group still matches the individual prototypes. If there is a discrepancy, the member can disengage or work towards recreating the group’s identity (Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990).

The members of OCEAN experience this change in identity salience as they participate in the collaboration. Although a boundary spanner may experience a strong sense of identity with a sub-group of OCEAN, the context created in OCEAN at any given moment can affect the ways members categorize themselves. The data indicates that members find a group within OCEAN that has similar prototypes, but problematic to the process of social identity, the threat of out-groups creates an environment within OCEAN that affects that identity process of individuals. The internal issues created as a byproduct of communicating among group members makes the overall experience within OCEAN problematic. Although identification may be strong within the group, the context is causing members to renegotiate identity salience. Furthermore, as the collaboration grows and matures the goals of OCEAN change. Members experience OCEAN differently overtime. Where as initial commitment to the group may be strong, as members continue to work burnout can set in as support wanes. All of these factors become part of a larger process that boundary spanner account for as they experience OCEAN. The boundary spanners’ social identities with the group become more or less salient at given points in the collaboration. The individual within OCEAN not only



accounts for the within group experience but the entire OCEAN experience and uses that data to adjust identity salience and engagement with the collaboration. As seen from my discussions with OCEAN members, as OCEAN becomes less salient to the boundary spanner, the less engaged an individual becomes. Alternatively, if OCEAN becomes more salient to the boundary spanner, individuals can reengage with a group and strengthen participation.

### *Theoretical Implications*

The overarching goal for this research seeks to explain how boundary spanners communicatively construct collaborative identities that create structures affecting actions and outcomes in the collaboration. This study explored the “how” questions that were underrepresented in the boundary spanner and IOC literature. To help summarize the findings of this study and add to the conceptualization of the individual in IOCs, I discuss the implications of this research on IOC and boundary spanner research.

### *Implications for IOC research*

The present research study adds several new insights on IOCs. First, this study focuses on how norms are created through the communication of sub-groups and social identities in IOCs. Keyton et al. (2008) argues that norms are carried over from the home organization and affect the structures and processes of collaboration. In addition, Lewis (2006) posits that external norms affect the collaborative structures and processes. This research found that some normative expectations are carried over from home organizations or from the external environment, but that new norms are created within the IOC that also establish structures and processes. In OCEAN, members brought with them

a set of beliefs about OCEAN. In an effort to find other members that had a consensual set of beliefs about OCEAN, sub-groups were created. These sub-groups created norms within OCEAN that were to some extent representative of the outside “home” norms of each member, but were also represent new collective norms based on a sub-group identity that is created between the communication of members.

Furthermore, as different sub-groups within the IOC interact normative structures can emerge that are not representative of the desires of any one group. As is the case with OCEAN, neither group wanted OCEAN to become disorganized, but as individual sub-groups polarized and less work was accomplished IOC members began to expect an OCEAN where nothing was accomplished and decisions were malleable. Browning, et al., (1995) found that norms needed to be in place early in the collaborative process. The lack of normative structures can lead to role ambiguity and disorganization. This research would argue that role ambiguity and disorganization can happen at numerous points in IOCs. Depending on the norms enacted, the IOCs and its members can lapse into disorganization at any point. Highlighting the creation of problematic IOC norms as an outcome of communication between IOC subgroups is an important addition to the establishment and creation of IOC norms. As Hardy et al. (2005) argues, the communicative patterns of IOC members are influenced by the normative structures within the group. In the case of OCEAN, as members began to see the IOC as a “farcical” endeavor, people began to mimic this belief and thus created a paralyzing structure and expectation of disorganization that led to the reconstruction of the organizational system.

A second implication of this research addresses the creation and maintenance of IOCs over time. Thomson and Perry (2006) state that collaborations are defined in part by mutually beneficial interactions. Likewise, Gray (1989) posits that a hallmark of collaboration is the constructive exploration of difference. Both these IOC definitions imply a level of cooperation and civility in collaborations that may or may not be true of IOC creation and maintenance. This research would argue that a collaboration does not necessarily need to be mutually beneficial to everyone involved. As seen in the case of OCEAN, boundary spanners from different sub-groups attempted to direct OCEAN in a way the complemented the vision of that particular group. Although there is communication between groups as they work towards accomplishing goal, there were are deferent instances where “mutual benefit” was not the objective. In several instances, OCEAN members talked about “getting their way at all costs”. This research emphasizes the need for more research on the conceptualization and definition of collaboration. OCEAN represents an IOC where unwilling participants work towards goals that may or may not be inline with a particular collaborative orientation.

Furthermore, this research speaks to how diverse sets of people can come together to create and maintain this type organization. As discussed in this chapter and chapter two, there is little consensus on the “best” way to create IOC. Mulroy (2000) argues that IOCs need to start with a small set of similar voices in order to create an environment for success. Heath (2007) found that a large group of diverse opinions in tantamount to a successful collaboration. While this research does not offer support to either side of the argument, it does emphasize how IOCs address membership and voice. Whether the IOC

is large with a diverse set of voices or small with a humongous voice, members will gravitate towards others with a similar prototype of the IOC. In the case of OCEAN, in order to handle a membership of diverse opinions, small sub-groups were created through communal social identities to manage the differences in goals. This research highlights way IOC members deal with diverse groups. Although a diverse set of voices may be beneficial to the overarching goals of a collaboration, members still seem to prefer coalescing around a group of similar voices. This finding emphasizes the need for future research to go beyond the question of diversity versus homogeneity and discuss the implications of having one type of collaboration versus another. Is having a diverse set of voices more advantages for meeting collaborative objectives? Or is the need for a diverse set of voices offset by the desire to work in an efficient manner to achieve IOC goals?

Finally, Mulroy (2000) also found that over time IOCs begin to stabilize. This research contradicts these findings. In OCEAN, stability was a process that went through phases. The collaboration grew and adapted as different members participated. The communication between members created norms for OCEAN. Although OCEAN had periods of organizational stability, during my observation of the collaboration, OCEAN went through immense change due to pre-held beliefs about the collaboration and how it should operate. This research emphasizes that IOCs go through stability and change as it relates to the environment in which it interacts. Both external groups and internal conflict between sub-groups threatened OCEAN as an organization. In order to handle this threat, OCEAN reorganized its structure to mitigate the threats. While stability may occur over

time with some IOCs, the connection to the environment and the internal structures of OCEAN all affected the stability of the collaboration.

*Implications for boundary spanner research*

OCEAN exemplifies the messiness of boundary spanning and the problems that emerge when boundary spanners interact in IOCs. With few membership requirements, OCEAN members began to self-appoint boundary spanners. In some meetings, there would be a formal boundary spanner from a neighborhood present and two or three self-appointed boundary spanners representing a dissenting group opinion or their own. This research begins to reconceptualize the notion of boundary spanning. In the case of OCEAN, boundary spanners could be formally or informally acknowledged. What becomes key to the definition is the voice granted the IOC member. Once granted, any IOC member could potentially represent the view of a constituency. As previously discussed, the membership with the constituency (or who that member represents) becomes less important than the task diversity and voice granted the individual.

Boundary spanners in OCEAN also represent a model of boundary spanning not rooted on trust and respect. Although members would discuss the need for respect and trust building in order to work towards goals, the disorganization allowed for boundary spanners to work towards personal goals at the detriment of the IOC. In many instances group members would discuss the need to follow procedures, but boundary spanners would use the lack of formalized rules to forward the agenda of a particular neighborhood or group. For example, during meetings boundary spanners would routinely ally with

other boundary spanners to forward an agenda, even if that agenda did not meet with the consensus goals of OCEAN.

This research also highlights the ways boundary spanners can find a mutual social identity that can influence the communication and goals of any individual boundary spanner. In OCEAN, boundary spanners from an individual neighborhood found membership with one of two sub-groups of OCEAN. As a mutual social identity was created, the representation of any one neighborhood was subsumed under the goals of the sub-group a boundary spanner joined. While the boundary spanner may agree on many issues that the sub-groups of OCEAN discussed, when divergence occurred, individual boundary spanners became caught in a tension between consistency of social identity and adherence to the home organization identity.

The present research study also extends current knowledge of boundary spanner research. Some of the early research on boundary spanners as individuals focused on the need for boundary spanners to identify with both the home organization and the target of the spanning. Tushman and Scanlan (1981b) posit that boundary spanners need to have a distinct understanding of the borders of the home organization and the target organization in order to work successfully in the environment. This research extends this assertion by examining how identities with target organizations are created and how identities with home organizations are maintained. In the case of OCEAN, neighborhood boundary spanners came to the IOC with the goals of the home organization as referent identity targets within the OCEAN. As a neighborhood boundary spanner interacted in OCEAN, he/she would find a social identity with other boundary spanners with similar prototypes

of OCEAN. Whereas Tushman and Scanlan (1981b) posit the need for identification with a target organization, this research examines how those identities are created and maintained.

This research gives directions for future research on identity creation with boundary spanners in IOCs. Less is known about the role of the boundary spanner when that person begins to dis-identify with the home or target organization. As is the case with OCEAN, boundary spanners are forced to participate in the IOC. This forced participation affects the ways in which boundary spanners interact within the IOC. More research needs to investigate this line of inquiry. If boundary spanners no longer identify with an IOC, but membership is mandatory, how does this affect engagement in the collaboration and with the home organization? A second but related line of future research should investigate the ways boundary spanners address the potential disconnect between personal goals and home organization goals. The boundary spanner as the representative of a home organization to some degree becomes the mouthpiece for that organization in the IOC. This can be problematic if at points the individual's personal identity does not match either the home or target organization. In conversations with OCEAN members, the differences in identities would emerge as problematic for the boundary spanner. If the boundary spanner represents a group that is more pro-development, but the person individually is more pro-protection how does the boundary spanner manage these multiple identities while interacting in the IOC?

A second implication of this research study involves the tension experienced as a boundary spanner. Harter (2004) argues that boundary spanners experience numerous

tensions while spanning. The author states that a boundary spanner must communicatively negotiate these tensions with other IOC members in order to accomplish the objectives of the IOC and the boundary spanners home organization. In OCEAN, neighborhood boundary spanners dealt directly with the tension of efficiency versus participation. As stated previously, the diverse set of voice within OCEAN caused problems in efficiently obtaining goals. Through the process of categorization, this study highlights how members of OCEAN dealt with the diverse voices of OCEAN and how sub-groups allowed each boundary spanner to find a place where they could work towards IOC goals. Harter (2004) also found that boundary spanners had to deal with the equality for all versus equity for each person involved. In OCEAN, this tension has implications for the perception of IOC members. Neighborhood boundary spanners attended OCEAN as a representative voice for a given area. Although this boundary spanner was the collective voice of many, at the table this boundary spanner is only one voice in a group of others. Prior to that change in bylaws, the one-person one-vote structure neutralized the weight of boundary spanners in the voting process. Since a boundary spanner could only vote once, that person's vote became no more powerful than an individual representing his/her own concerns. This emphasizes the equality/equity tension among members since the representation of members was so varied.

A third implication to emerge from this research involves the investigation of communication between the home and target organization. Grunig (1978) found that communication was limited between the home and target organization. Although



boundary spanners are tasked with representing the home organization, this person does not back channel information to the home. In a similar examination of communication Stephenson and Schnitzer (2006) found that boundary spanners had a tendency to ignore relevant stakeholders in the environment while collaborating. These findings are upheld in the present research. As discussed in chapter four, representation at OCEAN was a key issue for members. Many members believed that not enough communication was occurring between the IOC and the population of Central East. Furthermore, OCEAN was seen as an IOC for the privileged few, where access to the group was limited and people were less welcoming of new comers. Those boundary spanners who wanted better communication channels with the larger Central East community worked to get the information out, but received little assistance and support from the larger membership of OCEAN so consequent burnout was almost inevitable. For many members, this led to a decategorization process with OCEAN whereby members began to see less overlap between identities and disengaged from the IOC. This research not only highlights the problems with communication between the boundary spanner and the environment, it also discusses the outcomes of poor external communication on identity salience and engagement.

Finally, Harter and Krone (2001) posit that the boundary spanners can be a stabilizing force in a turbulent environment. The authors found that the boundary spanner, through networks of learning and protecting interests, can navigate the change environment where an organization may want to resist change but the environment is encouraging change. In OCEAN the boundary spanners were tasked with navigating a

similar situation. When the environment called for an change in representation in OCEAN, it was the boundary spanners that worked through that change and allowed OCEAN to stay relevant in Central East Austin. This research adds to Harter and Krone's (2001) initial findings by positioning the boundary spanner as the agent of change. Just as a boundary spanner can create stability in the organization, they can also be the impetus for turmoil within the IOC. As the representative of a certain neighborhood, these boundary spanners frequently challenged the relevance of the IOC. One group attempted to secede from OCEAN if changes did not occur. Future research needs to examine the role of the boundary spanner as an agent for change as well as a stabilizing force. This line of research can continue to examine the tension encountered while boundary spanning, but also investigate when boundary spanners may use a certain tension to his/her advantage.

#### *Implications for Practice*

Beyond the theoretical implications, this research has numerous implications for practitioners in IOCs. First, IOC leaders need to be aware of what draws members to IOCs. Boundary spanners and individual members will come to the collaboration with a predetermined set of attributes about the IOC and his/her expectations about the interaction in the collaboration. The initial communication with a new member serves as a vetting period where both the new individual and current members can see how they interact with each other. As an IOC leader, it is important to note what pre-established attributes the person brings to the group. These stereotypes will serve as a way for members to identify. If new members do not seem to be a good fit with the current group,

the new member will be less likely to identify with the IOC (or any of its sub-groups). Research has shown that the less a person identifies with the IOC the less engaged and productive that person will be. For IOC leaders, understanding what a person brings to the table early on will help determine the level of participation you will get from that member later (cf. van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003).

A second and related implication of this study involves the diversity of the IOC. As noted, the desire for a diverse set of voices in IOCs has mixed results on outcomes. While many collaborations aspire to be a forum for diverse voices on a given topic, this diversity comes with a price. IOC leaders should pay close attention to the membership of the collaboration. Adding diversity of the sake of having a “diverse voice” may lead to collaborations that are marred with contentious meetings and inefficient processes. The best approach to membership may be collecting a group of individuals that are more homogenous in relational diversity but more heterogeneous in task diversity. Based on this study and the findings of others, IOC members constantly reevaluate membership with a group. If a diverse set of voices is preventing the collaboration from achieving goal, then the IOC may suffer as members that bring important task diversity begin to disengage.

Third, IOC leaders should be aware of the sub-groups within IOCs. These groups help members find individuals that match their own ideas about IOC goals and outcomes. While these groups can be effective in spreading norms and increasing productivity, the groups can also have a detrimental effect on the collaboration and everyone involved. What can be most problematic is the groupthink that can occur if groups are in direct

competition with each other. As described in the case of OCEAN, while internal groups can work together to reach collaborative goals, these groups also use each other to increase in-group identity salience. To some degree, sub-groups need each other to maintain a sense of group identity; on the other hand the interaction of these groups can lead to threats on group identities. When a group identity is threatened, a group may try to eliminate that threat rather than make decisions based on what is appropriate for the collaboration as a whole. This form of group think can slow down the decision-making process as each group polarizes around their position and becomes less likely to negotiate on a topic. IOC leaders have the tough task of trying to allow communication between groups to necessitate increased in-group identity salience, while maintaining a focus on the end goals of the collaboration. To help avoid these problems, IOC members who are perceived as neutral and unaffiliated with any particular group may be the best option for a leadership role. Once an IOC leader is designated, keeping groups focused on how to reach the end goal, while acknowledging differences in-group opinions is critical for success. Each group will have a vision of what the final outcome should look like; it is the task of the IOC leader to create an outcome that balances the vision of all the groups involved.

Finally, IOC leaders must recognize the dynamic nature of member identity within the collaboration. Working in an IOC can be a long process that takes years. During this time members are going to go through periods of increased and decreased engagement. There will be topics that IOC members are more interested in than others. When there are periods of low engagement, the IOC leader should reevaluate the topic

diversity of the group. If there is notably low engagement with members, it may be that the scope of the task is outside the perceived goals members' hold of the IOC.

Engagement is a recursive process. Members are constantly evaluating their experiences and interactions with the group to determine how engaged they will remain.

Disengagement over time is a natural part of the dynamic nature of membership. In order to keep members engaged constantly communicating how current tasks are inline with perceived outcomes for the IOC is important.

### Limitations

Although every effort was made to account for potential limitations in this study, there are several that should be acknowledged. First, social identity theory emphasizes the importance of context in understanding group membership. While this emphasis gives a more robust rendering of social identity, it is also important to recognize how context may affect the results. During my data collection period, OCEAN went through an immense amount of restructuring. During this period, three separate presidents presided over the group. OCEAN as a collaboration spent a great deal of its energy trying to internally restructure in order to maintain viability as a neighborhood contact team. This restructuring was started just prior to my arrival at OCEAN in June of 2008 and finally came to a conclusion in March of 2009. The turmoil internally may have caused members to act in ways that are not normal to collaboration at other periods in time. As Ellemers (2003) discusses in her article about social identity and change, organizations in times of change can cause members to reevaluate identity salience based on contextual factors that are not normally present. In OCEAN, the change in organizational structure drew stark

lines of difference between the two groups, and caused them to polarize. While my observations of OCEAN during this time give insight into how boundary spanners interact in an IOC, the fact that this observation period was during time of organizational change should be noted.

A second and related limitation to this study addresses that nature of case study research. As discussed in chapter three, the use of single cases in empirical research has seen tremendous growth in the last decade. While this study of OCEAN over a 10-month period gives a needed depth of analysis to the interactions of individuals in an IOC, this research has limited breadth in terms of comparison. The themes that emerged from this data set are culled from discussions with 28 members (and former members) of OCEAN. Although the results offer perspective on boundary spanners in the IOC, more research should be conducted to test these results and the propositions made in this chapter. A case-study methodology is usefully for exploring field conditions and by giving an in-depth examination of condition a real context (Eisenhardt, 1989; McCutcheon & Meredith, 1993; Yin, 1981, 1994, 2003) as stated in chapter three, more research testing these findings in a larger national sample could give added validity to this and other IOC case research.

A third limitation of this study involves the data sample. For this research, active members of OCEAN during the period of observation were eligible for participation in this study. Beyond those that qualified as active, only few other related individuals (who did not qualify as active) were interviewed. While all but two members from this population were interviewed for this study, there are other populations that could add

perspective to the findings. Throughout the interviews members consistent spoke about the lack of representation at OCEAN. One potential population not interviewed were those people under represented in OCEAN's membership. On average the members of OCEAN have been participating in the collaboration for five years. These members are very familiar with the group and have pre-established connections and history with many of the people in OCEAN. Having a set of active members was important for the present study to get a more complete picture of the individual in the IOC. Yet, this study also discusses issues of social identity, membership and disengagement from the perspective of the active member. Getting the perspective of those who do not participate could add to the claims made here about membership and identity. Furthermore, this population could better answer why people do not join or identify and what implications that has on social identity theory and IOC processes.

In addition to the limitations of population, there is also the limitation of observation. OCEAN is nested within a hierarchy of city government. At the bottom level of the hierarchy you have the neighborhoods and their associations. OCEAN serves as the voices of the Central East neighborhoods and is one of numerous collaborations around Austin. These collaborations all report to the city planning team, which reports to city council. The bulk of my observations involved the meetings (and related meetings) of OCEAN. Although I did attend a few neighborhood association meetings and city planning meetings, no data from these observations was used in this study. More observations of both the meetings that fed into OCEAN (neighborhood meetings) and the meetings where OCEAN represented the voice of Central East (city planning meetings)

could give a more complete perspective on the process of collaboration on the system it is nested within. In the study of prototypes, understanding how boundary spanner prototypes are constructed at the home organization (in this case the neighborhood associations) could add a new perspective on the way group prototypes and identity salience are obtained in the IOC. Likewise, although OCEAN did not have any salient out-groups for comparison in the Central East environment, seeing the collaborative outcomes are represented externally to the city could also be useful in gaining insight into the way IOC members and relevant stakeholders in city government come to create prototypes of OCEAN.

One final limitation involves the use of social identity theory as the primary lens to interpret data. In reviewing IOC literature for this study, there is no shortage of perspectives and models for understanding IOCs. This research adds social identity to that body of work, but there are other literatures that may support or refute the findings presented here. Within the field of communication alone, researchers using different group perspectives (i.e. bona fide groups approach or intergroup theory) are also exploring the dynamics of individual interactions within the IOC. All of these research lines are leading to fruitful discoveries in the “black box” of IOCs yet more should be done to integrate potential overlapping research areas and bring together the “fragmented” body of research on IOCs. This research acknowledges many of the investigations into IOCs but still fails to answer the call to find an internal dialogue between scholars.



## Future Directions

The present study leads to multiple roads for future research. One area of future research involves the exploration of the social identity of boundary spanners in the actual interaction of IOC meetings. This research summarizes the prototypes of OCEAN and how they affect the communication of individual from participant's retrospective accounts of interaction and the use of stimulated recall. This study did not do any formal analysis of the recorded meetings as it relates to the findings presented in chapter four. Taking these findings and using them as a guide for analysis of discourse could add to the validity of the present findings and highlight specific instance where communicative interaction with different groups may lead to a reevaluation of identity salience with individual members and the protection of a group identity for threatened groups. This area of research would emphasize the affect of different group interactions on the IOC and how communication is central to collaborative organizing.

A second potential line of research should examine the impetus of prototype creation in boundary spanners. The boundary spanner is the representative of a larger constituency. These members are tasked with representing the needs and goals of an invisible community. From a social identity perspective, IOC members come to the collaboration with a specific set of attributes already prescribed the organization. This set of prototypes is a cognitive list that affects self-categorization and identity salience. In the case of the boundary spanner, individual prototypes about the IOC are supplemented with the collective prototypes of the representative home organization. In reviews of the boundary spanner literature, the link between the home organization and the IOC is an

under explored area and one that could give insight into how boundary spanners are prescribed to act in the IOC versus how individual may want identify with the IOC. In the case of OCEAN, several boundary spanners mentioned the difficulty in representing their particular neighborhood at OCEAN although not wanting to be a part of the collaboration personally. How a boundary spanner comes to terms with membership and how the conflicting identities are handled would clarify some of the preconditions to engagement in IOCs.

A third line of research on IOCs and boundary spanners would take the proposed model in this study along with other models of “process” in IOCs and conduct a meta-analysis. In my review of the IOC literature, I encountered numerous articles that proposed a model for the process of collaborating. Beyond those models, there is a wealth of proposed models that focus on the inputs and outputs of IOCs. To date no analysis of these models has been conducted. Although there are numerous calls to synthesize the IOC research across the fields of scholarship, the literature on IOCs is still “vast but fragmented” (Oliver, 1990, p. 241). A meta-analysis of the proposed models for IOCs has the potential to incorporate different approaches to the literature, emphasize overlap in findings and propose areas of study that have still not occurred in the investigation of IOCs.

A final line of research that stems from this study evaluates the goal of collaboration versus the outcomes of collaborating. Within OCEAN, the contention between the two groups reduced the efficiency of OCEAN and prevented some goals from being accomplished. The collaboration also allowed every interested party to have a

voice in issues and welcomed diversity in task as well as relationship. To some degree the “messy” world of IOCs that was discussed and highlighted on the first page of this study represented a form of grassroots collaboration that encouraged involvement from every constituent. The restructuring of OCEAN into a representative democracy changed the role of participation. No longer could concerned individuals meet with others from across Central East, these individuals were pushed back to the neighborhood associations where their concerns would be carried by a representative who may or may not have the same level of investment on the issue. In observations of OCEAN meetings since the conclusion of this study, the way people communicate about issues and the structure of participation has changed. It seems initially that the push to become more structured in OCEAN’s approach to meetings may have structured out the conversations that allowed for a diversity of voices to be heard. Under the new bylaw provisions, the boundary spanner becomes the channel for communication with the constituent group. While this is more efficient, the boundary spanner may not fight for an issue so much as deliver the message at OCEAN. This shift in structure needs to be investigated further. There is a general tendency in the IOC literature towards outcomes and how to efficiently achieve collaborative goals (Oliver & Ebers, 1998). While this may be optimal in theory, the over structuring of OCEAN seems to have reduced participation and eliminated the grassroots nature of neighborhood involvement.

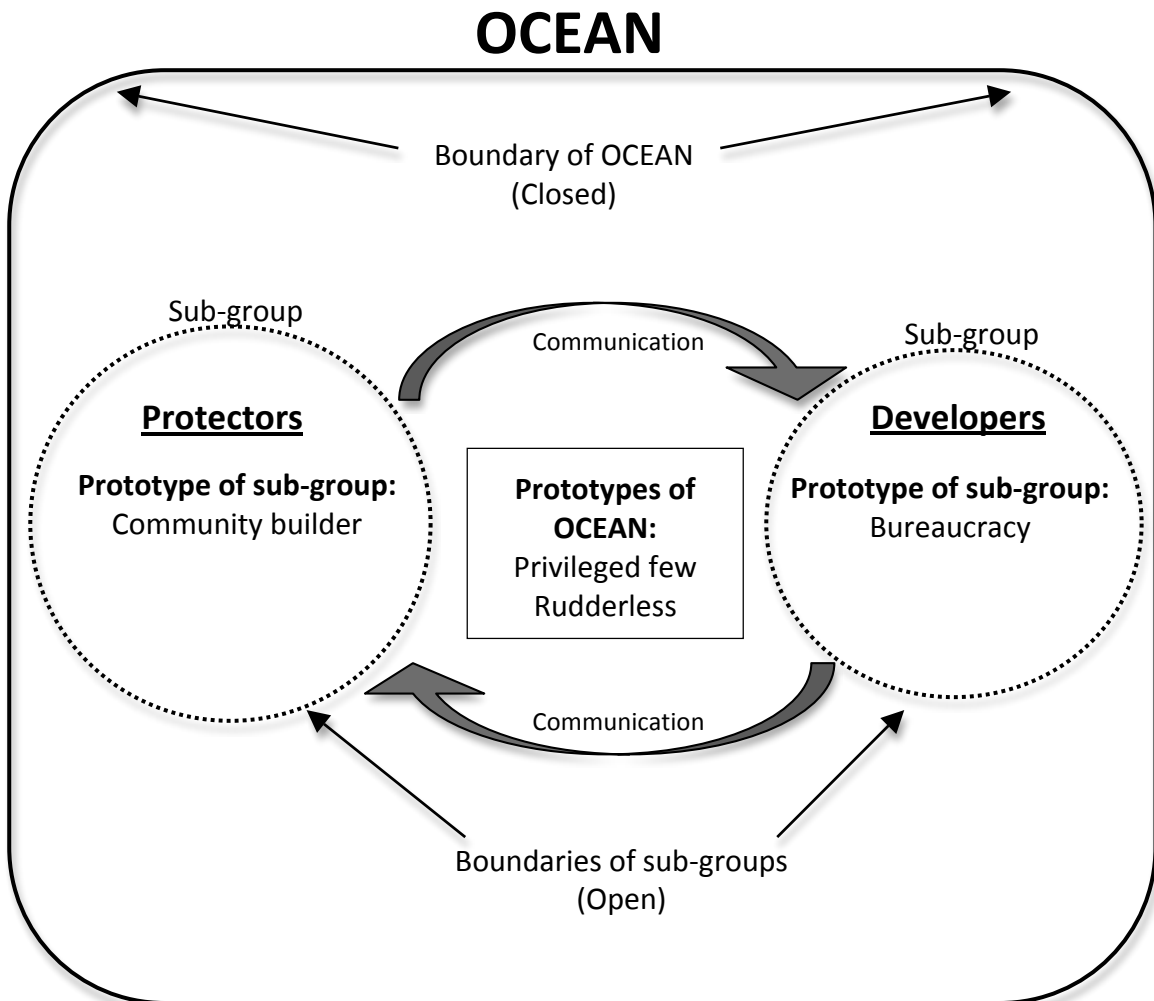
## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Boundary spanners are defined as the individuals who enact extensive communication through their individual ties to external organizational members and serve as exchange agent between the organization and the environment (Adams, 1976; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Levine & White, 1961; Miller & Rice, 1967; Thompson, 1962).

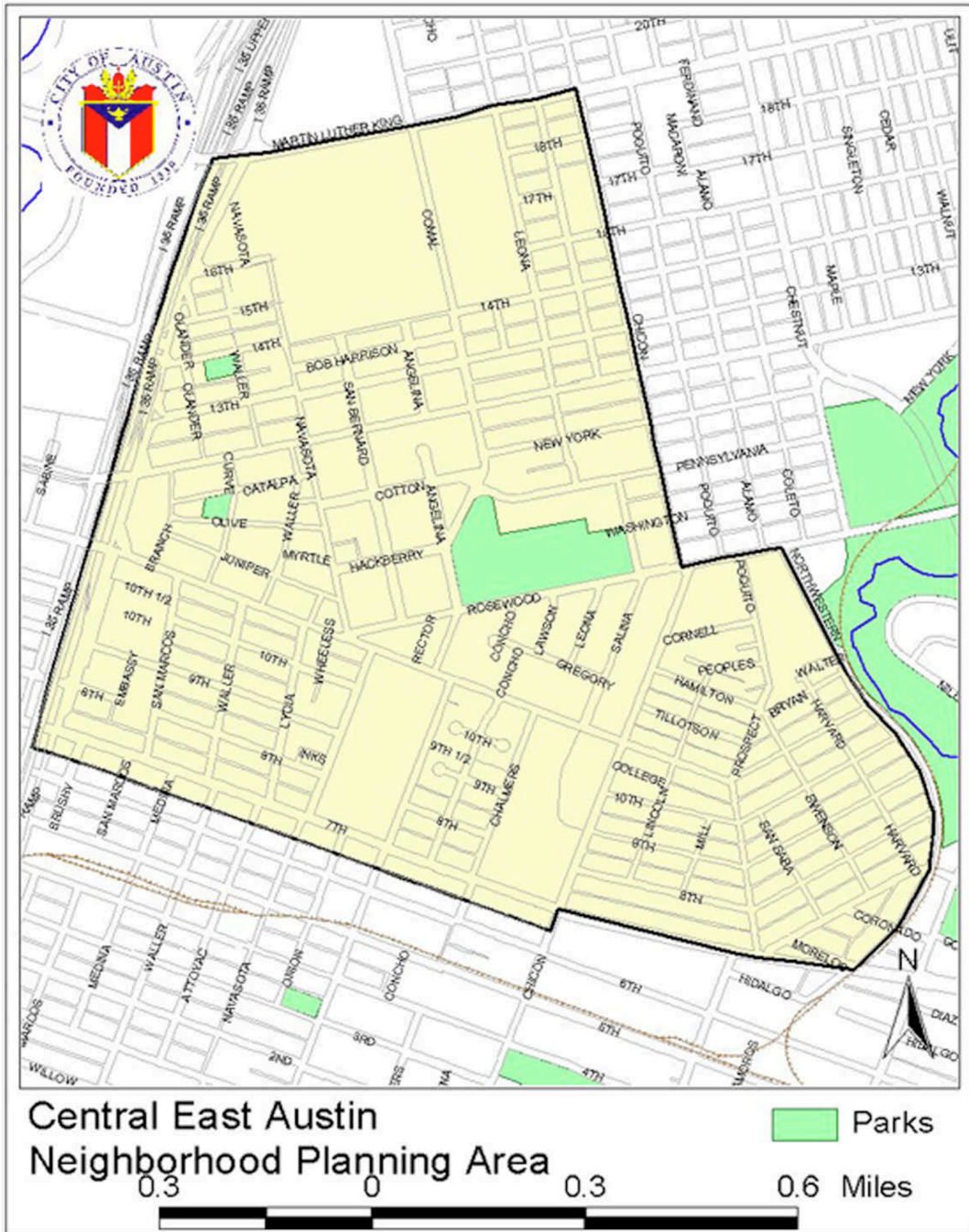
<sup>2</sup>Information about OCEAN and OCEAN's history has been compiled through various sources. Most of the information comes from the OCEAN website at [centraleastaustin.org](http://centraleastaustin.org), the City of Austin website at [www.ci.austin.tx.us/zoning/central\\_east\\_austin.htm](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/zoning/central_east_austin.htm), the Central East Austin Neighborhood plan, and the OCEAN By-laws. All other information has been constructed through individual interviews with OCEAN members.

<sup>3</sup>Interviews were professionally transcribed and funded by a grant from the North American Case Researchers Association.

Figure 1- OCEAN and sub-groups of OCEAN with representative prototypes



# APPENDIX A OCEAN Map



From: Central East Austin Neighborhood Plan, 2001

**APPENDIX B**  
Central East Meeting Observations

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Length (in hrs)</b>
6/10/08	OCEAN	Carver Library	2
6/28/08	Guadalupe NA	Guadalupe Church	2
7/13/08	Robertson Hill NA	Lott Park	2
7/14/08	OCEAN	Carver Library	2
7/21/08	City of Austin- URB	Street-Jones Bldg.	2
8/11/08	OCEAN	Carver Library	2
8/29/08	East Austin Blues Show	Victory Grill	1
8/30/08	OCEAN-Consensus Mtg.	GNDC	2
9/8/08	OCEAN	Carver Library	2
9/14/08	Robertson Hill NA	Lott Park	2
9/18/08	Upstream Radio Show on OCEAN	KVRX Studios	1
9/25/08	Upstream Radio Show on OCEAN	KVRX Studios	1
10/7/08	Swede Hill NA	Swede Hill Park	1.5
10/13/08	OCEAN	Carver Library	1.5
11/17/08	OCEAN	Carver Library	2
12/2/08	Swede Hill NA- OCEAN Mtg.	Swede Hill Home	1
12/8/08	OCEAN	Carver Library	1
1/26/09	OCEAN	Carver Library	1.5
2/23/09	OCEAN	Carver Library	2
3/9/09	OCEAN	Carver Library	1.5
4/13/09	OCEAN	Carver Library	1.5
5/11/09	OCEAN	Carver Library	1.5
6/8/09	OCEAN	Carver Library	2.0
		TOTAL	38 hours

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Schedule

#### **General Collaboration Information:**

What is OCEAN to you?

What are some ways you would describe it?

What labels would you associate with OCEAN?

Do you feel like OCEAN is an organization?

Why or why not?

If not, what is it?

How does the group work?

How can you tell when the group is working well (or not)?

Can you provide an example?

How are decisions made and agreed upon within the group?

Is consensus the goal? What does that look like?

Who is in control of OCEAN?

Does any one group get privileged, or one agenda promoted?

#### **Collaboration Membership:**

Who makes up OCEAN? (beyond NAs)

What labels would you associate with different NAs, including your own?

Why does it seem so contentious in the meetings?

What brings people to OCEAN?

Are there common goals and values that bring people to OCEAN?

What are they?

How are they communicated?

What differentiates OCEAN from other groups with similar concerns/issues?

How do members of OCEAN talk about/perceive these other groups?

Are there any groups that are not represented?

Do you feel like a member/part of OCEAN?

What makes you feel this way?

What do people do or say to make you feel like a member (or not)?

Can anyone go to the meetings? Is it a welcoming group?

When people leave, how is it communicated?

Do you ever question your affiliation with OCEAN?

What makes you question your affiliation?

What makes you continue as a member?

Do you ever feel particularly strong about your affiliation with OCEAN?

How do you communicate your support for the group?

#### **Role conflict/Dual role negotiation:**

Who are you within your neighborhood association? What is your role in your NA?

What is your role at OCEAN?

Is your position/role in your NA important to OCEAN?

Is OCEAN important to your position/role within your NA?

How do you express who you are within your NA when you are at OCEAN?

How do you manage being both a member/part of your NA and OCEAN?

When do you represent NA vs. OCEAN? How?

Why have OCEAN?



## **APPENDIX D**

### Stimulated Recall Transcripts

#### *Stimulated Recall One*

**Robertson Hill Boundary Spanner:** The history of OCEAN says that OCEAN has never overturned a vote of an individual neighborhood, when there's been strong support against it. We've always kind of made fun of the idea that busing people to meetings to win votes, but today might be a little bit different. It seems like there's a particular agenda to try and stop something – I don't even know what it is and we're – in the process we're trying to create a whole new hierarchy of, kinda, control. And if that hierarchy of control – the board of directors or hybrid model – involves 7 people, rather than whoever shows up, which is usually 7 or more, it seems like we're going to be disenfranchising way more people, when you only have to win a simple majority of 7 to 9, 4 to 5 people, versus anybody from any neighborhood. That's just my opinion.

**Swede Hill Boundary Spanner 1:** Well, if those people that sit on the board are duly elected by their constituencies, then we could argue that it's a lot more representative than whomever has the time and the inclination and the good will or whatever, to show up on a monthly basis. You could say tonight – Look at all the people from Swede Hill. You might not think that's fair, but that's the way the rules are now.

**Swede Hill Boundary Spanner 2:** We're just trying to play by the rules.

**Guadalupe Boundary Spanner:** And the big fear that you all have, especially people in Swede Hill, is that that Blackshear's going to come in and overwhelm you, make something happen in your neighborhood that you don't want. Can't we still keep the democratic process and put some sort of control on, that if the neighborhood has a position, if Swede Hill has a position on a certain item then it takes like a supermajority of the people that attend the meetings to overcome it. Why just throw out democracy because of paranoia?

**Swede Hill Boundary Spanner 3:** I think when you use words like fear and paranoia, it automatically drives a huge wedge between what we're trying to be, which is a group, to get along. Myself, I wish I only had to go to one meeting – that was my neighborhood association meeting. And when they created the Central East Austin plan, it did 2 things – it put another meeting on my schedule, which I feel is unnecessary. And number 2, it diluted the value of the neighborhood's representation. So, you can call it fear and paranoia, but it's really not. If I said – You're paranoid and fearful. How would you react? Would you think – Well, those are emotionally laden words.

**Guadalupe Boundary Spanner:** Let me apologize for fear and paranoia. But it is based on suspicion that OCEAN is going to override your neighborhood's wishes.

**Swede Hill Boundary Spanner 3:** Could. Could.

**Guadalupe Boundary Spanner:** Okay, could. There's a better way to deal with that than just disenfranchising people that want to have a say in what's happening in the neighborhood.

## APPENDIX D

### Stimulated Recall Transcripts (continued)

#### *Stimulated Recall Two*

**Business Owner:** To begin with, and I've never supported business owners as organizations being voting members of OCEAN because it dilutes the neighborhood – the residential voice of the neighborhood. Yes, we want to be – we want to cooperate with them. Yes, maybe 80% of the time, we're on the same side. But we're not always on the same side. Businesses are there to make money. We're there to make money and we're there to be businesses on the corridor. And that may not always be totally consistent with what the neighborhood wants, so you dilute that potentially with having 2 strong business advocates on the voting representative board.

**Robertson Hill Boundary Spanner:** The inclusion of businesses – or when the SLA came out, and there was this kind of Gang of Five started at the City, the Gang of Five's argument was that OCEAN is not a representative of everybody, is excluding business owners from voting. So like that kind of – the gang that gave the Gang of Five – for lack of a better words – support in saying that OCEAN isn't representative. So our bylaw discussion came about at the urging of the city to clarify that we weren't discriminating against business owners or people that own property. So the discussion that was in OCEAN is that – if you want to participate in OCEAN, and you're a stakeholder in this process, whether you're a business owner, resident or landowner, you have a right to have your voice heard at OCEAN. So if you want to sign up for OCEAN and you want to come participate in the meetings, you get a vote. Who has more interest versus residents versus business owners is a valid discussion, but our idea for dealing with that, rather than having a tiered level of OCEAN – you can participate, but you can't vote or you can just come – was that this was an easy way to encourage both participation, OCEAN-wide, and to alleviate the city saying – OCEAN is not representing everyone.

**Business Owner:** And I don't think there's anything wrong with the businesses saying OCEAN doesn't represent us. I think it's fine that OCEAN doesn't represent the businesses and we can have a pure position going forth. But, I don't mind being included...

**Blackshear Boundary Spanner:** Say guys, I think you all are talking about 2 different things. He's talking about East End Business Merchants or 12<sup>th</sup> Street Business Association. You're talking about an individual business owner. So those are 2 different things.

**APPENDIX E**  
Stimulated Recall Interview Schedule

**SR-1 Interview Schedule:**

What is happening in this clip?

Explain this paranoia comment.

What is the “dilute of value of neighborhood representation” mean?

At this point do you feel more like an NA member or an OCEAN member?  
Why?

**SR2 Interview Schedule:**

What is going on in this clip?

Why are we having this discussion about membership?

What is the “dilute the value of the NA” mean?

What is the “gang of five” and why does it have that name?

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