



Cross-Group Flouting and Territory Management: Navigating Cross-Group Terrain in Organizations

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Cross-Group Flouting and Territory Management:
Navigating Cross-Group Terrain in Organizations

A dissertation presented by

Lisa B. Kwan

to

The Department of Business Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Cross-Group Flouting and Territory Management:
Navigating Cross-Group Terrain in Organizations

ABSTRACT

The tension for groups in organizations to be both differentiated and integrated with one another has long been recognized in literature. Differentiation allows groups – such as departments, business units and project teams – to specialize and tackle deep problems and subtasks for the organization, while integration unites efforts across groups toward achieving the organization’s purpose. Yet despite decades of research on boundary spanning, intergroup conflict, and facilitating coordination and collaboration between groups, navigating cross-group terrain in organizations remains challenging. In fact, it may have gotten more difficult. Organizations are driven to deepen the expertise within their groups to address increasingly complex and ambiguous problems to remain competitive, while simultaneously demanding greater efficiency from and across their groups to meet stakeholder expectations for increased speed-to-solutions propelled by technology. To integrate each group’s contributions, organizations coax and command their groups to “work better, faster with each other!” – whether through formal mechanisms or informal means. Cross-group collaboration is now considered a determinant of organizational survival in many companies.

Yet the difficulties of navigating cross-group terrain, whether from the perspective of a senior executive, group leader and her members, or organizational scholar remain puzzling. The three essays in this dissertation introduce and illuminate two novel phenomena that together make the case that a dominant focus on integration in organizational behavior thus far may have limited attention to the imperative for groups to remain differentiated. The case is made that ignoring this general differentiation imperative of groups can be counter-effective for our efforts to help groups get along and perform well in organizations.

Chapter 2 introduces the first phenomenon, that of cross-group flouting, which shows how accepted wisdom about one way to encourage cross-group integration can backfire if groups' natural tendencies to remain differentiated are not adequately considered. This qualitative study captures the bilateral process that arises when a group uses one means of cross-group integration (informal cross-group activities) to bypass another (formal cross-group processes), and the short and long term cross-group consequences that occur. *Cross-group flouting* is the behavior to circumvent formal cross-group processes, driven by a unilateral focus on one's group goals.

Chapters 3 and 4 introduce the second phenomenon, group territory management in organizations. Drawing on psychological, group, and organizational literatures, I present a theory in Chapter 3 for why territory management exists among groups in organizations – particularly during organizational change and when organizationally strategic opportunities arise that require cross-group collaboration – the positive functions it serves, how territory management may become escalated and reinforced in organizations, and how this cycle can be weakened if necessary. Chapter 4 presents a qualitative study that maps a framework of the general territory management orientations, forms, and behaviors that surface during intergroup conflict in organizations. This study provides a starting point for future research to develop measures for studying group territory management. It also provides a framework to help organizational leaders better understand and identify if territory management is present during intergroup conflict.

Altogether, this dissertation aims to illuminate the natural imperative of groups in organizations to remain differentiated with one another, while also being called to integrate. It does so by introducing and investigating two novel phenomena, cross-group flouting and group territory management, that I hope can provide generative directions for future researchers to further knowledge on how to help people and groups better navigate cross-group terrain in organizations.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The necessity for groups to differentiate from one another yet simultaneously integrate efforts to achieve organizational success has been widely acknowledged and accepted for decades (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Thompson, 1967). Differentiation, the segmentation of an organization into groups such as departments, business units, and project teams that develop specialized structural, cognitive, and behavioral attributes from one another, allows the organization to efficiently meet the component demands of its organizational task. Integration, the process of unifying effort among groups, allows effective emergent performance of the whole organizational task.

While firm level differentiation and integration have both been central to organizational design research, cross-group integration has been the favored concern of organizational behavior research. Generally taking differentiation among groups as a given, organizational behavior researchers have pursued questions such as “Why and how do groups fail to cooperate and collaborate with one another?” and “What are the conditions that facilitate cooperation and collaboration between groups?” These lines of questioning have led to rich and important insights about cross-group integration, such as identifying that internal group conditions can influence the boundary spanning behaviors members employ with other groups (Edmondson, 1999, 2012), specifying characteristics and behaviors of individuals who effectively bridge groups (Jang, 2017; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981), and illuminating cross-group cognitions and processes that can facilitate collective understanding, agreement, and cooperation (Bechky, 2003; Carlile, 2004; DiBenigno & Kellogg, 2014; Kellogg, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2006; Polzer, 1996).

However, despite an impressive body of research centered on facilitating integration between groups and despite adoption of best practices, researchers and managers still find their groups resistant to cooperation and collaboration. The tension for groups to remain differentiated from other groups in their structural, cognitive, and behavioral attributes persists. Reflecting the central reason organizations segment into groups at all – to achieve a division of labor to meet the demands of the organization’s

environment and purpose (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) – organizational systems¹ are inherently structured to facilitate and coax the specialized value that each group adds to the organization, distinct from other groups’ contributions. Further, social psychological research robustly shows that people strive to belong to groups that are distinct from other groups, that people will engage in cognitive and behavioral activities to defend group distinctiveness, and that the primary reason is because groups define who we are (Brewer, 1991; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). With the increasing importance of work and career in people’s lives, and the fact that the majority of one’s waking hours are spent at work, the influence of workplace groups on individuals’ identity and well-being are displacing that of community groups and, some argue, even those of ascribed groups such as age, ethnicity, and nationality (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Limited attention to the study of cross-group differentiation may have caused us to miss a substantial piece of the theoretical puzzle for understanding how and why groups interact as they do in organizations – and why navigating cross-group terrain can sometimes seem so difficult in organizations. This dissertation contributes toward a deeper understanding about differentiation between groups in organizations, investigating how groups attempt to differentiate or maintain differentiation from other groups in their organizations. To gain traction in this area, I focus on two specific phenomena: (i) a bilateral process that arises at the intersection of formal and informal cross-group activity, through which differentiated priorities between interdependent groups play out and inadvertently harm cross-group relations, and (ii) how groups stake out and are driven to retain or acquire “territories” in organizations.

To examine these phenomena, this dissertation contains three separate essays. A customized literature review is associated with each chapter.

Chapter 2 introduces the construct of cross-group flouting, which captures how informal activity among groups, a form of behavior encouraged among groups to aid integration, can backfire in organizations because it is at odds with the differentiated internal priorities and processes of the groups involved. This chapter presents an inductive qualitative study of 48 cross-group processes in a large

¹ These organizational systems include but are not limited to the organization’s socialization system, resourcing systems, and formalized processes.

medical devices subsidiary to trace how activity of one group to circumvent the formal process it shares with another can initiate a bilateral process that sensitizes each group to advance its own priorities and processes, but inadvertently, at the detriment to both groups, their cross-group relationship, and their abilities and desires to work together in the future. This paper builds on and extends literature on boundary spanning and workarounds, and more broadly, contributes to dominant scholarly work on cross-group integration challenges within organizations, by offering a new source and explanation for cross-group conflicts.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I introduce the construct of territory management, which captures the behaviors groups use to retain or acquire areas of ownership inside organizations in response to threats to their security. Chapter 3 presents a theoretical model for why territory management exists in organizations and how it comes to be reinforced. Chapter 4 presents a qualitative study of 117 challenging cross-group episodes across a variety of industries and companies to map a framework of what territory management generally looks like in organizations: the behaviors groups employ, the orientations that guide their behaviors, and the content of the territories over which they fight. Both chapters build on social psychological literature, particularly that of psychological ownership, and organizational literatures on individual level territoriality and jurisdictional control.

I conclude in Chapter 5 with a general discussion of how the essays in this dissertation together help to illuminate the phenomena of groups attempting to differentiate or remain differentiated within their organizations. While the need for groups to integrate efforts across their boundaries in organizations is important in today's increasingly complex environments, the tension to maintain differentiated from other groups remain a reality that groups must navigate daily. Lack of knowledge about differentiation between groups in organizations may cause us to miss an important theoretical and practical opportunity for understanding how to help organizations achieve their strategic goals that require working with the differentiation-integration equation among groups.

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CHAPTER 2

Cross-Group Flouting:

Boundary Spanning that Circumvents Formal Processes

Lisa B. Kwan

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ABSTRACT

Counter to the dominant emphasis in groups research on boundary spanning's benefits, this qualitative study shows how informal activity across group interfaces (a kind of boundary spanning) can override formal cross-group processes in organizations and lead to negative outcomes for groups and the larger organization. We introduce the construct of *cross-group flouting* to capture informal cross-group activity that circumvents formal cross-group processes, driven by a unilateral focus on one's own group goals. In addition to disrupting the task performance of other groups, our results suggest that cross-group flouting can give rise to a bilateral flouting process that creates relational harm between groups. Our findings contribute to the boundary spanning and workarounds literatures and add to prior scholarly explanations of integration challenges within organizations.

Informal interactions between groups in organizations – that is, cross-group activities not mandated by rules or structures – are celebrated in both practitioner and scholarly writings. Spontaneous collaboration across groups facilitates innovation (Burt, 2005); favors that span group boundaries enable work to get done (Flynn, 2006), and boundary spanning promotes team performance (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Sundstrom, De Meuse, & Futrell, 1990). Informal interactions that take place across group interfaces are increasingly important in today's workplace because organizations face numerous problems that cannot be solved without such horizontal communication and coordination (Sull, Homkes, & Sull, 2015).

At the same time, cross-group interfaces in organizations have been identified as settings for conflict, operational breakdown, and lost opportunity (Roth & Kleiner, 2000; Walton, 1975). Members of one group may fail to share information with members of other groups, schedules and activities may fall out of sync, and people from different groups who each hold part of the solution to a problem may fail to connect (e.g., Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Burt, 2005; Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009; Singh, 2008; Sull et al., 2015; Szulanski, 1996). Widespread appreciation of the practical challenges of working across group interfaces in organizations has given rise to catch-phrases to capture the phenomenon, including silos, tribes, and ships passing in the night.

To mitigate these challenges, organizations typically implement formal structures to guide interactions between groups, especially those of a recurring nature matter to work execution. Cross-group committees, mediators, mandated meetings, and joint procedures thus can be found in most organizations to decrease coordination errors and facilitate collaboration between departments, business units, or other organizational groups (e.g., Blau, 1972; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Thompson, 1967). However, despite the ubiquity of formal cross-group processes and the frequent use of informal interactions to get work done across groups, little is known about what happens when formal structures and informal interactions across groups come together.

Our inductive study sought to understand which challenges were most salient in the minds of members involved in difficult cross-group collaborations; in the process, we stumbled on repeated

accounts of people engaging in informal cross-group behaviors that circumvented established cross-group processes, which we call *cross-group flouting*. Counter to extant literature that emphasizes the benefits of informal interactions in proximal problem solving and achievement of local goals (e.g., Richter, West, Van Dick, & Dawson, 2006), we trace how informal activities interact with formal processes at cross-group interfaces and lead to disrupted within-group task performance and decreased desire and ability for groups to work together in the future.

LIMITS OF FORMAL STRUCTURES ACROSS GROUPS

Historically, organizational research focused on how managers facilitated interactions between departments, business units, and other organizational groups via formal structures. Formal structures linking groups within organizations come in various forms, for example, cross-functional teams (Alderfer, 1987; Blau, 1972; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), plans and procedures, and rules and policies (e.g., Canales, 2011; Morrison, 2006; Tucker, 2016). Formal structures have many operational benefits, including setting expectations, codifying cross-group coordination, increasing accountability, streamlining processes, and avoiding reinvention of the wheel (Canales, 2011; Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009).²

Formal structures, however, do not fully solve the challenge of working across group interfaces. In addition to failing to address cognitive and social psychological difficulties that can arise across group interfaces (e.g., lack of a shared lexicon (Carlile, 2004), different thought worlds (Dougherty, 1992), attachments to occupational identity and status orders (DiBenigno & Kellogg, 2014) and ingroup-outgroup biases (Tajfel & Turner, 1986)), formal structures can be overly static, inflexible, and cumbersome (Canales, 2011; Sull et al., 2015).

Formal structures across groups are too static when they do not change adequately over time to meet evolving needs of work. For example, a company with a static formal procedure for launching marketing campaigns may lag in its use of social media, leading to failure to reach a target market. Similarly, organizations may adhere to procedures that use familiar but outmoded technologies, even

² Formal structures also offer legitimacy benefits for organizations, (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) which is beyond the scope of this paper.

when better solutions exist. Indeed, literature that examines the patterned and performative dimensions of organizational routines highlights how static formalized structures such as standard operating procedures can outlast their use (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Howard-Grenville & Rerup, forthcoming; Rerup & Feldman, 2011). Compared to formal structures that are bounded within a single department or group, formal structures spanning group interfaces may be particularly susceptible to being overly static because changing needs of the work arise from multiple groups and accountability for changing cross-group structures may be shared or unclear.

Formal structures across groups also can be insufficiently customizable to unique situations created by one-off project or customer needs. For example, formal structures may not be adaptive when accidents or interruptions arise (Tucker, 2016; Tucker & Edmondson, 2003) or when exceptions, such as might be triggered by novel customer requests, are required that run counter to existing processes. People tasked to follow formal protocols often discover that the protocol designers were unable to anticipate all the contingencies they would face (Canales, 2011). Exceptions to standard processes, to which formal structures may remain inflexible, are likely more common at cross-group interfaces because the involvement of multiple groups leads to greater possible combinations of work and customer demands, limiting designers' ability to anticipate them in advance.

Finally, formal structures such as cross-group protocols or rules are often cumbersome. Often designed by people who do not carry out the tasks in question, they can be unwieldy and inefficient from the perspective of the worker, requiring more effort than he perceives is necessary to accomplish the goal. Formal structures can be cumbersome at two levels – logistical effort and psychological effort. Logistically cumbersome structures require more steps, contingencies, and thus, more effort than the worker believes should be necessary. For example, if an employee is tasked to follow a protocol requiring her to meet five separate people for approval on a departmental purchase, she will perceive that sending a single email for approval – counter to the formal protocol – would be less effortful. Psychologically cumbersome formal structures require a person to behave in an emotionally or mentally effortful way when a more comfortable alternative exists. For example, a formal protocol that requires a low-status

nurse to correct a high-status doctor face-to-face would be experienced as psychologically effortful (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Formal structures, especially protocols and rules, that span group interfaces are likely to be experienced as more logistically and psychologically cumbersome compared to formal structures bounded within a single group. Logistical steps involving another group often demand multiple corresponding stakeholders to be involved and influenced, thus increasing the complexity and effort required. Psychologically, involving another group means interacting with those about whom one has less social information compared to one's own group, thus creating greater psychological risk about how others will react.

In sum, formal cross-group structures, though necessary and beneficial in many instances, also give rise to problems due to being static, inflexible or cumbersome, or all three at once. Formal structures are thus frequently seen as “bureaucratic” or as sources of “red tape.” Perhaps for this reason, recent research has increasingly focused attention on the advantages of informal interactions across groups.

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF INFORMAL INTERACTIONS ACROSS GROUPS

Because formal cross-group structures cannot anticipate all problems that could arise when different groups must integrate work to achieve organizational goals, many forms of informal interaction occur alongside formal structures across group interfaces. For example, people build and tap into informal networks to reach needed individuals (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004; Burt, 2005; Casciaro & Lobo, 2008) and call on favors across groups to get work done (Flynn, 2006). Benefits of informal interactions include being fast and flexible in responding to exceptions, creating opportunities for innovation, minimizing red tape for future interactions, and generating a sense of autonomy or buy in from people whose cooperation is needed (Burt, 2004; Edmondson, 2012). Informal interactions also constitute an enjoyable social activity, supporting a sense of well-being and community (Cohen & Prusak, 2001; Durkheim, 1997/1951).

The boundary spanning literature has highlighted the importance and benefits of fluid interactions across groups that are unspecified by formal structures. Boundary spanning captures behaviors of individuals or groups to connect internal and external parties as needed to accomplish team and

organization goals (Marrone, Tesluk, & Carson, 2007; Tushman, 1977). Boundary spanning has been linked to many positive outcomes, including team effectiveness (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Choi, 2002; Edmondson, 1999), intergroup productivity (Richter et al., 2006), financial performance (Morash, Droge, & Shawnee, 1996), successful implementation of new technologies and practices (Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001; Leonard-Barton & Sinha, 1993), and innovation (Hargadon & Sutton, 1997; Ibarra, 1993). Relatedly, X-teams, a concept that emphasizes boundary spanning and external orientation as features of effective teams (Ancona, Bresman, & Caldwell, 2009), celebrates the actions of team members fluidly reaching across boundaries to “orchestrate the flow of information and expertise..., create new synergies, and take advantage of emerging opportunities” (p. 217). Leaders of such teams are instructed to select team members “for their networks” and to focus the team on cross-boundary behaviors such as scouting for novel information and influencing external stakeholders to attain buy-in, support, and resources for the team (p. 217). Subsequent research has distinguished between boundary activities that “loosen” group boundaries (e.g., spanning boundaries to coordinate with other groups) and activities that reinforce boundaries (e.g., attracting and focusing members’ attention on the internal team task and buffering members from external input), finding that behaviors associated with spanning and loosening boundaries are particularly beneficial (Drach-Zahavy & Somech, 2010). In sum, boundary spanning research has generally viewed informal cross-group activity to be positive for outcomes at the group and organizational levels.

Informal interactions across group interfaces may not be the panacea that managers desire and that some research implies, however. To begin with, over-relying on informal interactions across groups leaves operations vulnerable to turnover, for example when employees whose relationships with specific individuals in other groups have been critical to smooth cross-group operations leave the organization. Moreover, informal cross-group interactions must be considered together with the formal structures already in place. Recent studies on workarounds, though they do not focus on cross-group interfaces, identify one way that unscripted behaviors interact with formal structures to lead to mixed outcomes. The workarounds literature draws attention to the fact that individuals circumscribe formal rules and

procedures within their jobs that they experience as obstacles to getting work done. For individuals completing their work, workarounds are experienced as positive; but researchers observe that working around operational failures results in lack of second-order learning because the problem is “solved” in the moment; its root cause remains unaddressed, and the problem tends to recur (Halbesleben, Wakefield, & Wakefield, 2008; Spear & Schimdhof, 2005; Tucker, 2016; Tucker & Edmondson, 2003; Vestal, 2008). Little research, however, focuses on the interaction of unscripted behaviors and formal processes situated at cross-group interfaces, as compared to workarounds used by individuals completing their own tasks.

In sum, the increasing complexity of work at cross-group interfaces in organizations and the growing dependence on both formal and informal processes to address these integration challenges gives rise to a need for greater understanding about how informal activities interact with formal processes across group interfaces. That was the goal of the present study. In this paper, we refer to informal cross-group interactions as unscripted boundary spanning interactions between groups that deviate from an established formal or normative cross-group process. We discover effects informal cross-group interactions can have when they usurp formal processes at cross-group interfaces – a behavior we call *cross-group flouting*, which tends to give rise to a problematic flouting process across groups. This paper develops an account of the cross-group flouting phenomenon and theorizes how and why it is associated with disrupted within-group task performance and deteriorating cross-group relationships, including a decreased desire and ability for groups to work together in the future.

METHOD

Context

We conducted this research in the North American subsidiary of a global medical products group, which we refer to by the pseudonym ApexCo. The \$200M subsidiary is responsible for the distribution, sales, marketing, regulatory compliance, and customer service of the group’s products in North America. This company was purposefully selected for our research because of our interest in cross-group interfaces and the company’s suitability as an information-rich case, which Patton (1990) described as that “from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p.

169). The company had close to 300 employees (approximately 155 of which were in Sales), was structured into units and subgroups, and through the course of its regular work, the company's groups had to collaborate to provide a seamless customer service experience from the first point of contact to post-purchase support. Seamless customer service was recognized as strategically necessary for the company to remain a premium provider in the industry. Customers ranged from medical doctors, surgeons, and hospital administrators, to end-users. The company's employees, in informal conversations, described their groups as interdependent and as needing to interface through boundary spanning interactions in their everyday work.

Groups at the Research Site

Groups inside ApexCo were organized in a functional hierarchy, with up to four layers under the subsidiary's CEO. This led to a large number of possible groupings within the company, and therefore to numerous possible cross-group interfaces. To understand the nature of interactions at cross-group interfaces, we sought to include in our study only the group categories that were meaningful for ApexCo employees in their regular work, an emic classification of groups. Research shows that people are likely to identify most strongly with the group whose members they are most frequently exposed, with which they feel the greatest affinity, and for which they are approached most frequently on the basis of their group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). We learned through speaking with the CEO, his vice presidents, and company employees on a visit to the company prior to data collection that, in ApexCo, these meaningful group categories existed at levels two and three of the organization's hierarchy and included groups such as Sales, Customer Service, Accounts Receivable, Marketing, and so on. Table 2.1 provides a list of the groups included in this study.

Table 2.1. Groups and informants in this study

	No. of informants from each group*
Accounts Receivable	2
Complaints	3
Customer Service	4
Education Events	3
Finance	2
Human Resources	1
Information Technology	2
Logistics	2
Marketing	3
Special Orders	4
Product Management	4
Sales	5
Technical Support	4

*The number of informants in Table 2.1 (total=39) is greater than the number of interviews (n=35) because four informants who were higher in the hierarchy commented from the perspective of multiple groups.

Cross-Group Interfaces at the Research Site

While executing their daily work in their groups, almost all employees interacted with members of at least one other group at ApexCo. Boundary spanning interactions involved hand-offs and coordination between groups – for example a member of Education Events making a detailed request to Marketing for new event brochures, or a member of Complaints reaching out to Customer Service to initiate a customer’s warranty replacement – and cross-group meetings such as when a Product Management member would convene a typical meeting consisting of representatives from specific other groups to plan a product launch. People at ApexCo communicated with members of other groups in a variety of ways. The main channels were instant messaging, email, telephone, and face-to-face. Except

for many of the Sales members who were staffed regionally throughout the country and brought into headquarters a few times per year for training, most employees at ApexCo were collocated within a modern 140,000 square feet building, much of which was dedicated to warehouse and shipping activities. Table 2.2 captures the number of interfaces possible at ApexCo, the number of interfaces among the groups that had regular, human, non-automated interfaces, and the number of interfaces that were reported by interviewees and observed in our data.

Table 2.2. Cross-group interfaces at ApexCo.

Cross-Group Interfaces at ApexCo	
Number of possible pair-wise interfaces*	78
Number of interfaces among groups that had frequent, human, non-automated interfaces	49
Number of interfaces reported as contexts for challenging cross-group interactions	31

*With 13 groups, the number of possible pair-wise interfaces is a combinatorial calculation: ${}_nC_r = n! / r! (n - r)!$ where $n=13$; $r=2$
Therefore, ${}_{13}C_2 = 13! / 2! (2 - 13)! = 78$

Data and Sampling

We began our inductive study seeking to understand what challenges were most salient in the minds of individuals involved in difficult cross-group collaborations. Along the way, we stumbled in the process on repeated accounts of people engaging in goal-oriented circumvention behaviors around formal cross-group processes. We relied on six field visits to collect data from 35 in-depth interviews with employees from the lowest levels to middle managers and up, as well as from archival data.

Our interview data were collected as a purposeful sample to give insight into cross-group interfaces within organizations (Patton, 1990). Prior to data collection, the first author met with ApexCo's CEO, vice presidents, and staff to understand the emic groupings within ApexCo and the central work streams that ApexCo groups strived to achieve together on a daily basis. This information helped us identify the groups within ApexCo that were highly involved with other groups on a daily basis and therefore most able to report on rich incidents of cross-boundary interactions (Schatzman & Strauss,

1973). We sought to include approximately 2-4 members from each of these groups in our interviews. Table 2.1 shows the groups included in this study along with the number of informants from each category. (The number of informant perspectives in Table 2.1 is greater than the number of interviews because four informants who were higher in the hierarchy were in a position to comment from the perspective of multiple groups). Following an informational email that the CEO sent to ApexCo employees broadly introducing the study as one on organizational dynamics, we sent electronic invitations to specific members of these groups. We randomly identified at least one supervisor and one staff member from each of these groups using the company's organizational chart. Interviews were semi-structured, lasting 45-75 minutes, and conducted by the first author onsite at ApexCo or over the telephone. The interviews were recorded and transcribed with interviewees' consent except for nine interviews where recording was declined. In all cases, the first author took detailed notes during and immediately after the interviews. Interview data was supplemented by field visits, which involved the first author shadowing randomly selected interviewees on the job for 1-2 hours at a time to better understand work flows and processes, observing cross-group convening spaces in the company – for example in the dining hall, kitchen, and lounges – and observing cross-group meetings. Notes and transcripts generated over 560 pages of single-spaced text describing ApexCo groups, their work, and their interactions across group interfaces.

Interviews are particularly useful and suited for an analysis into the nature and challenges arising from the intersection of informal activities and formal cross-group processes. First, interviews allowed us to collect data on many cross-group episodes, spanning a variety of groups and cross-group processes, along with data on informants' specialized understanding of each group's wider and temporally-sensitive context that we would need for appropriate analysis into each episode. Such privileged information on multiple incidents would not be available through pure observations. Interviews, therefore, allowed us to gain access into a variety of instances of our phenomenon that otherwise would be closed to us (Weiss, 1994). Second, interviews permitted us access into the subjective experiences of the people engaged in cross-group interactions at ApexCo (Yin, 2014). Hence, interviews enabled us to understand the events

that unfolded between groups and to gain “privileged access to individuals’ articulations of perceptual and affective responses” (Chan & Anteby, 2015, p. 11), both crucial for constructing a comprehensive understanding about what happens when informal interactions and formal processes come together at cross-group interfaces.

The interview questions were designed to elicit concrete descriptions of challenging boundary spanning interaction episodes between the interviewee’s group and that of other ApexCo groups within the past six months. We defined a boundary spanning interaction episode, or cross-group episode, as a bounded instance in which a member (or members) of one group needed to interact with a member (or members) of another group to complete a bounded task in which both groups’ participation was required. The general questioning permitted us to capture informal behaviors that occurred over formal cross-group processes (and associated events) without directing members to talk specifically about informal and formal cross-group activities (Edmondson, 2002), which can have strong demand characteristics for interviewees (Orne, 1962). We sought to include multiple informants from each group so that we could triangulate perspectives as much as possible for each cross-group episode and each cross-group interface – both from the perspective of a single group and from the perspective of its “partner” group across the interface. Because we promised confidentiality for each individual, however, we asked each informant for 1-2 concrete cross-group examples, but could not direct informants to speak about specific examples that their colleagues had described to us in prior interviews. As such, some of our cross-group episodes were sourced from multiple perspectives, while others were single perspectives. However, even for single perspectives into specific episodes, we were able to confirm details about the work and relationship of the groups involved by using comments (not specific to the given episode) that other informants made about the identified groups in their interviews and by using observations made during our field visits.

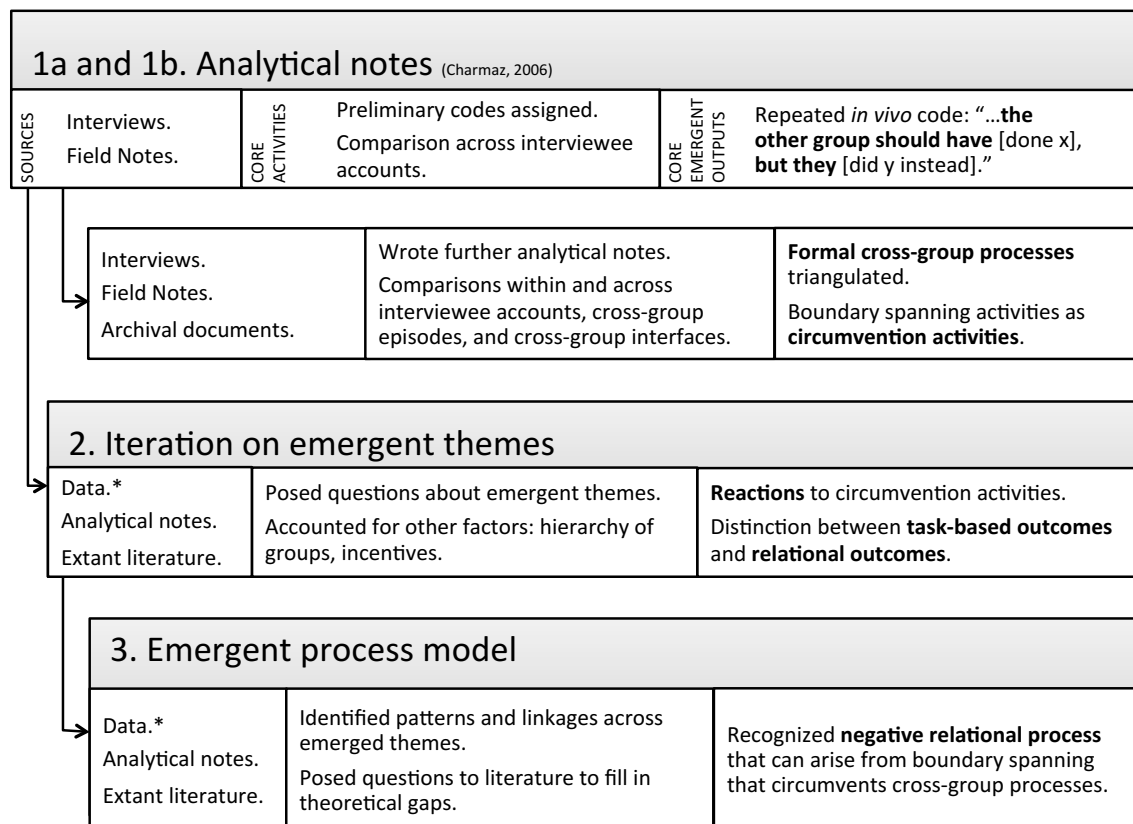
For each interview, we started by asking the person to describe his or her group and its role in the organization, and then to list other ApexCo groups that the person’s group interacted most with in the course of daily work. Interviewees were then asked to describe examples of when their groups needed to work with another group in the last 6 months – first, an example that went smoothly if necessary to ease

interviewees into the topic (Weiss, 1994), and then 1-2 examples that were challenging.³ We followed interviewees' introduction of challenging examples with prompts designed to elicit detailed and concrete descriptions of the cross-group episodes.

Data Analysis

Our analysis consisted of an iterative multi-step process. Figure 2.1 presents our analytical process. We cycled among the steps presented, typical of inductive qualitative research (Eisenhardt, 1989; Kellogg, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2006), to deeply understand our data and to draw out themes and identify patterns among them; together these steps ultimately allowed us to identify an emergent process at cross-group interfaces when unscripted behavior interacted with formal processes.

Figure 2.1. Analytical Process.



*Interviews, field notes, archival documents.

³ In 25 out of the 35 interviews, people brought up the topic of struggling with other groups without our need to ask about a positive cross-group example first.

We started by reading through the interview transcripts and notes and writing analytical notes for each interview, while also assigning preliminary codes of interesting events that jumped out at us (Charmaz, 2006). As we compared across interviewees' accounts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994), one *in vivo*-inspired code that we called "...the other group should have [done x], but they [did y instead]" frequently recurred in accounts of difficult cross-group interactions. This was in contrast to the rare but second and third most frequent codes of "the cross-group work was complicated" and "neither group actually had control of the cross-group outcome." A puzzle arose around the role of "...the other group should have [done x], but they [did y instead]" in difficult cross-group interactions.

We anticipated that accounts of another group doing something different to an expected process at a cross-group interface could be attributed either to a formal process where the other group "should," by some objective standard, have indeed done one thing but did another instead; or be attributed to a subjective perception of the informant. We continued to analyze and write notes for our interviews to see what objectivity about groups' behaviors and cross-group processes could be established. We also extracted cross-group episodes from our transcripts and analyzed them in the same fashion, writing analytical notes. These parallel and iterative steps in our analysis allowed us to cross-reference both interaction episodes and cross-group interfaces across interviewees, which in turn allowed us to establish what cross-group processes we could be confident existed between groups. At least two interview sources had to describe the same cross-group process in the same way for us to categorize it as an established process, or it had to have been observed during our field visits. We also verified these cross-group processes with ApexCo leadership in later stages of our analysis. We defined a formal cross-group process as an established series of steps to accomplish a task that requires the participation and internal processes of more than one group. For our purposes, established meant that the cross-group processes – whether written into manuals or not – are ones where (1) people involved in the cross-group process and knowledgeable observers within the organization would expect the steps to occur according to the set contingencies, modes, timings, and interaction forms; and (2) newly trained individuals in the involved groups would have been instructed that this series of steps is how the interaction and process are expected

to unfold. Processes in our conceptualization can stipulate straightforward actions (e.g., first m, then n), contingencies (e.g., if x, then y), modes of interaction (e.g., email only), timings of interaction (e.g., during the last week of the project), forms of interaction (e.g., use a sketch of the prototype, not the physical thing), range of acceptable responses, or a combination of these. Following Charmaz (1983) and Golden-Biddle's (2001) model, reading transcripts and excerpts on cross-group episodes, writing analytic notes, and comparing them was a highly iterative process.

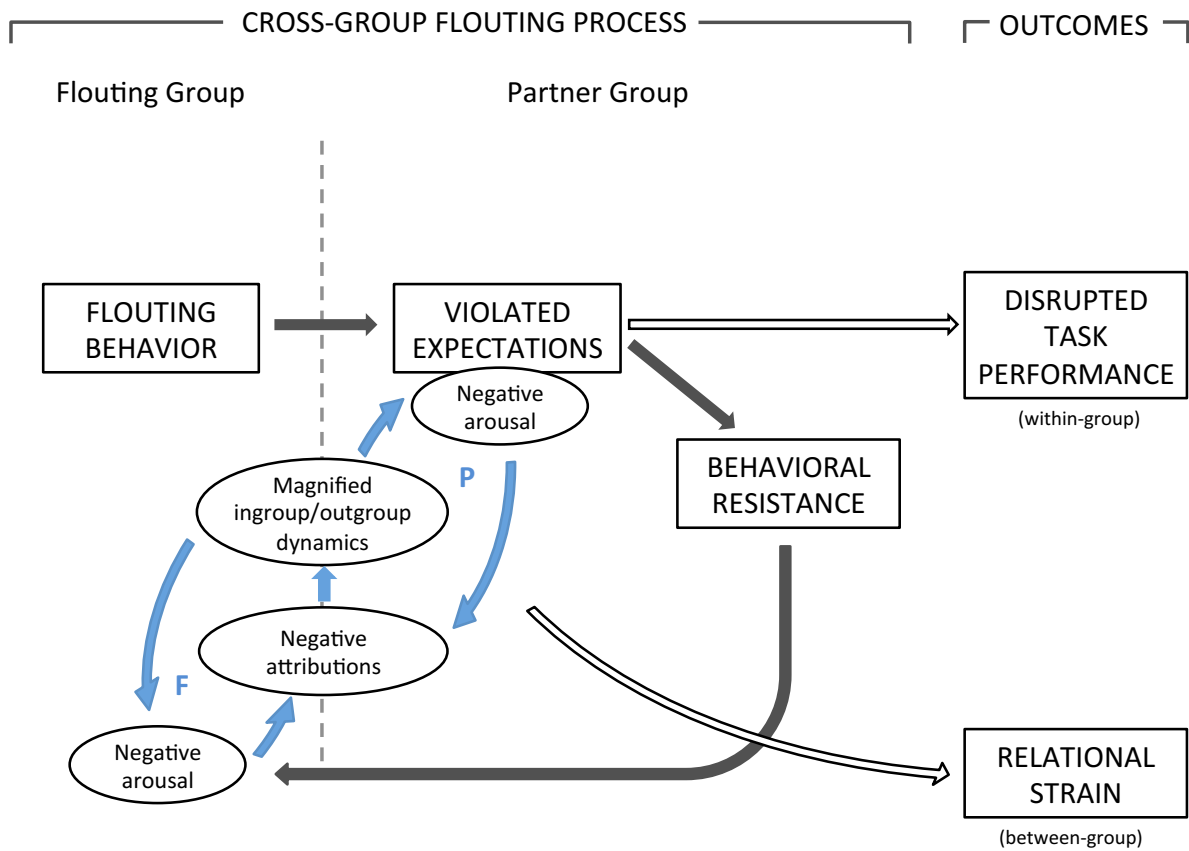
Themes around boundary spanning activities that deviated from formal cross-group processes soon emerged from the data. This led us to question what the effects of such occurrences were on the cross-group interface and on the groups themselves. Using the same iterative process of analyzing, making notes, and comparing as described above, and also drawing on extant literature, further themes emerged encompassing logistical, task-based outcomes and relational outcomes. We continued iterating within this process until we reached theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 1998).

FINDINGS

Counter to extant literature emphasizing benefits of informal activities across boundaries, our analysis revealed that they can cause problems. Specifically, we uncovered the phenomenon of *cross-group flouting*, in which unscripted, goal-oriented circumvention behavior around a formal cross-group process by members of one group leads to violated assumptions and behavioral resistance in another group. This behavior, we find, produces negative task-based and relational consequences.

In the sections that follow, we show (1) how formal processes at cross-group interfaces were circumvented at ApexCo; (2) why this became problematic; and (3) why the emergent cross-group flouting process, illustrated in Figure 2.2, creates negative outcomes for groups on both sides of an interface, particularly for future collaborations.

Figure 2.2. Cross-group flouting process.



F denotes psychological cycle within Flouting Group.
P denotes psychological cycle within Partner Group.

Cross-Group Flouting

Formal Cross-Group Processes

Like many organizations, ApexCo had in place formal cross-group processes for integrating the activities, outputs, and efforts of various groups. At ApexCo, our interview and observational data revealed evidence of 48 formal cross-group processes. These formal cross-group processes were typically detailed, understood by members of the involved groups, and designed to span internal processes of involved groups to manage the interdependence between them. To illustrate cross-group process detail, consider the creation of customer education events, an important activity in medical products companies.

When a member of the ApexCo Sales department wished to create a customer education event,

for which cooperation with the Education Events department was needed, the formal cross-group process starts with the salesperson filling a form with her desired event details on Education Events's online events platform. The salesperson then clicks a button online that sends her Sales supervisor an email notification to approve the event request. The supervisor checks that the salesperson has filled the online form appropriately and in its entirety, and clicks approve. A member of Education Events then receives an email notification to start the Education Events internal process based on the information in the request form, including sourcing marketing materials, identifying speakers, booking venues, checking regulations, and attending to other logistics. The formal cross-group process further specifies that the Education Events group has 10 business days to assemble the basic components of the education event before the Sales group should expect to receive a progress email on its event request and to begin marketing the event to customers. Both Sales and Education Events members described the process this way and both trained new members accordingly. This cross-group process spanned and connected both groups' internal processes. When either Sales or Education Events fails to adhere to its portion of the process, both groups face barriers to process completion, and the cross-group process is disrupted. For example, when Sales does not fill out all the information, Education Events is not able to do its part; when Education Events does not assemble basic event components within 10 business days, Sales is not able to begin registering attendees despite promises it may have made to customers. In both cases, the customer education event is not successfully created. The three features of this example – detailed, mutually understood, and interdependent – were characteristic of the 48 formal processes from our interviews and observations.

Circumvention of Cross-Group Processes and Unilateral Focus on Own Group Goals

The majority of problematic cross-group episodes reported by our informants consisted of intentional behaviors to circumvent established cross-group processes. Circumvention behaviors came in various forms depending on the formal cross-group process that was in place. For example, in the example above, Sales members sometimes submitted incomplete event requests forms, which their supervisors then approved, which led to incomplete information for Education Events members to

process. In other examples, members of one group passed off a customer problem to another group without attempts to jointly resolve it first, per cross-group protocol. Timelines required in cross-group processes were ignored, leading to emergencies in partner groups. Members of some groups over-ruled decisions without engaging in required formal discussion with a partner group. And, members of one group bypassed the group they were meant to contact and instead reached out to another group to get what they needed – to the chagrin of members in both the bypassed and substitute groups. Table 2.3 provides examples. Representing a typical sentiment, an informant from Customer Service described, “these [occurrences] shouldn’t be happening, but do all the time. Weekly, daily even.”

Table 2.3. Examples of cross-group flouting.

Groups Involved	Formal Process	Circumvention of Formal Process	Goal Focus
Special Orders & Sales	<u>Placing promotion orders for large clients:</u> - Sales emails large-client promotion orders to Special Orders. - Special Orders members, who are trained to deal with large-client promotions, process the orders as a queue.	"There are Sales reps who still [call us] on the phone... If they can't get through to us on the phone, they called Customer Service instead." --Special Orders member (OA10-11)	"Sales call other groups like Customer Service so they don't have to wait." --Sales Operations member (SO2-2) "[Sales] are like, I'm making the most use of my time driving to clients [by calling in]." --Special Orders member (OA10-11)
Education Events & Product Management	<u>Selecting leaders from industry to test new products:</u> - Product manager includes member of Education Events in Product Launch team. Product manager consults with Education Events member about which key opinion leaders (KOL's) are needed to document use of the new product 'in the wild.'	"The Product Manager (again) went to KOL's without having consulted anyone on Education Events." --Education Events member (EO1-15).	"There is a lot going on in Product Management. ...The quicker you can have completion on something the better, because there are so many moving parts." --Product Management member (PM5-19) "The cost of agreeing on a good KOL is that it takes sit-down discussion time to collaborate on making the right choice." --Education Events member (EO1-15)
Complaints & Technical Support	<u>Answering customers' "technical" questions about faulty product:</u> - Customer calls Complaints group with questions about a faulty product. - If too technical for Complaints to answer, Complaints messages Technical Support to contact the customer. Technical Support calls customer to answer technical questions.	"I [from Complaints] reached out to Technical Support to ask them to please go over the letter with the customer and I've gotten resistance. They didn't contact the customer." --Complaints member (CO19-8)	"We are pretty busy..... We have a good grasp of what the other groups are capable of [in terms of technical explanations] so sometimes we leave it in their court, have them deal with the customer directly." --Technical Support member (TS7-13) "They [Technical Support] prefer to do other projects like XX and YY services or other services that they provide. Those services are more 'interesting' compared to what other customer-facing groups call them for." --Customer Service member (CS16-3)

*Table continued on
next page...*

Table 2.3 continued...

Groups Involved	Formal Process	Circumvention of Formal Process	Goal Focus
Accounts Receivable & Customer Service	<u>Removing blocks* on customers to place new orders:</u> - If Customer Service sees the block code on a customer who is trying to place an order, Customer Service calls Accounts Receivable immediately to find out more about the situation. - Accounts Receivable and Customer Service jointly make a decision on the block depending on the circumstance. <i>* Blocks because of poor credit or too many unpaid bills</i>	"Customer Service have been known to remove the block without asking us [in Accounts Receivable]." --Accounts Receivable member (AR13-1)	"We [are trying] to bring our service levels up.... There's lots of pressure from Sales to get orders through." --Customer Service member (CS16-3) "...Even with pressure from Sales, especially if it's a large order, it doesn't make sense to remove a block...when you look at the overall picture of that customer's financial history with." --Accounts Receivable member (AR13-1)
Education Events & Sales	<u>Turning an "Event Request" into reality:</u> - Sales fills out an event request form with complete information and submits it online. - Sales' supervisor approves the content and double checks information is complete. - Request form is shows up in Education Events's queue to process with a 10-day turnaround.	"Sales did not complete the info on the form but still submitted it, trying to use the form as a placeholder for their spot in our 10-day turnaround queue." --Education Events member (EO1-15)	"We [Sales] should have more flexibility on the turnaround time.... [and] it takes too much time to fill out all the fields - sometimes they are irrelevant or it's like we have to write the same thing over and over." --Sales member (SA12-1) "The extra time we spend sitting in front of the laptop or on the phone is time taken away from the field with our customers." --Sales member (SA16-19)
Customer Service & Education Events	<u>Charging customers for attending Education Events events:</u> - Education Events compiles a spreadsheet with all the information needed to charge customers for tuition. - Education Events sends the complete spreadsheet to Customer Service. - Customer Service charges customers per the information on the spreadsheet.	"That spreadsheet from Education Events had missing fields like credit card number or customer number....again." --Customer Service member [CS16-3]	"We run over 3100 events a year. It's busy... So the sooner we can get back to going through the queue of event requests from Sales, the better." --Education Events member [EO4-6] "They are never nasty about it when I tell them to not do that again because they know they purposefully 'forgot'. It saves them time if we just do it for them." --Customer Service member [CS16-3].
Human Resources & Sales	<u>Hiring Salespeople.:</u> - Sales manager CC's Human Resources (HR) in communications with candidates whom the Sales manager is interested to potentially hire. - HR follows along the process to make sure internal check boxes (e.g., references etc.) are ticked.	"The Sales manager was ready to make an offer and contacted me. And this was the first I or anyone in HR had heard of this candidate. He hadn't looped us in...." --Human Resources member [HR19-19]	"They [Sales] want to move very quickly...they want to find someone good quickly and they want that person to start the next day." --Human Resources member [HR19-19]

A common characteristic of episodes of flouting formal cross-group processes was a unilateral focus on the goals of one's own group. Specifically, those who flout procedures focused on their own group's goals, without noting the potential implications for the partner group. For example, Sales frequently circumvented formal processes, and members of the Sales group acknowledged they would "do whatever it takes" to get what they needed. One Sales member explained his group members' circumvention behavior (bypassing the "right" groups and contacting other groups to try to get what Sales needed) as follows: "For us, there is a strong link between speed and customer happiness and our paychecks. Whether to Orders or Accounting, you call whatever internal [ApexCo] groups you can...to resolve these matters." Even without explicit references to paychecks, however, group members faced implicit incentives to focus on their own group's goals. For example, although Education Events members' pay was not contingent on the number of Education Events events hosted each year, they explained that implicit pressure to deliver on the group's purpose – that is, to facilitate events – was enough to compel members to disregard timeline requirements in a cross-group process with the Marketing group. An Education Events member put it bluntly, "When our team feels pressure on delivering our events, we put pressure on Marketing to make exceptions and deliver more quickly than the [protocol] 10-day turnaround." In the earlier example of Sales circumventing the formal process that required they submit complete event request information to Education Events, Sales circumvented because of their goals to save time. As Sales members described, "it takes too much time to fill out all the fields," and Sales members saw "the time [they] spend sitting in front of the laptop [as] time taken away from the field with...customers."

We call this behavior of circumventing cross-group processes with a unilateral focus on one's group goals, *cross-group flouting*. Table 2.3 provides further illustrative quotations and observations of cross-group flouting. Table 2.4 presents the breakdown of unique cross-group processes that were flouted among the total number of cross-group processes identified in our data.

Table 2.4. Break down of cross-group processes.

Cross-Group Processes	
Number of unique cross-group processes observed in data	48
Number of unique cross-group processes observed in data that involved flouting	40
<i>Breakdown of the 8 cross-group processes that did not involve flouting:</i>	
The cross-group process was followed but the interaction was challenging because the work itself was challenging*	7
a group lobbied to officially change the cross-group process	1

*E.g., the cross-group process involved work to incorporate government regulations; the cross-group process involved trying to get agreement on a complicated issue

Paradoxically, when asked if a flouted cross-group process was *usually* followed or not, informants reported affirmatively that it tended to be followed most of the time. For example, despite Sales flouting a cross-group process daily by calling the “wrong group” 2-3 times per day to place special promotion orders (i.e., calling Customer Service instead of the Special Orders group), they followed the cross-group process and called the “right group” 15-20 times per day. Why then were flouting behaviors a central feature in the majority of problematic cross-group episodes? Our analysis suggests it was because flouting behaviors generated violated expectations and behavioral resistance in partner groups on the other side of the cross-group interface.

Reactions to Cross-Group Flouting

The primary reason that cross-group flouting – undertaken for a reasonable cause from the flouting group’s perspective – escalated and became problematic episodes was that the behaviors directly affected another group. Specifically, cross-group flouting generated violated expectations and behavioral resistance in the partner group (the group on the other side of the interface). The resulting cross-group flouting process is depicted in Figure 2.2, which captures how flouting behavior, combined with violated expectations and behavioral resistance, gives rise to disrupted task performance in the partner group and relational strain between groups. Below, we describe the violated assumptions and behavioral resistance that arose as reactions to cross-group flouting, and in the subsequent section, discuss the two negative

consequences of the process, that of disrupted task performance and relational strain.

Violated Expectations

Flouting behavior at cross-group interfaces led members of partner groups to experience two kinds of violated expectations – about what behaviors one could count on from the other group and about the emotions they would experience.

Expected behavior. Members of partner groups expected members of other groups to behave according to formal cross-group processes. Evidence of ApexCo employees' expectations were captured in how they typically set a day's plans around the expectation that other groups would behave as established in cross-group processes, or how their group's internal processes were tailored to those behavioral expectations. One Customer Service member described the typical experience of setting her schedule according to expectations of how the other group would behave and explained the disruption to her group's internal task performance that occurred when the other group's behaviors violated those expectations:

My timeline was set to have complete information [in the handoff], not to have to hunt down this extra information Education Events is meant to provide. But when they handover these forms with empty fields, I have to take the afternoon to do what they were supposed to do, and that puts everything I have to [do for my group] behind.

A Special Orders member described a situation where his group's internal process had been shaped by expectations that another group would behave according to cross-group protocol:

Our internal processes are set up with the expectation that Sales is not calling our group about these kinds of questions. We're not even supposed to be on the phone at that time, but should be [prioritizing a different task]. But they keep calling..."

Expected emotions. Members of partner groups expected to have familiar cross-group experiences when formal cross-group processes were in place, but instead of a predictable and comfortable emotional experience, they described experiences of emotional labor or aversive role conflict. For example, a Special Orders member described the emotional labor required of her when a Sales' member flouted protocol, in this case asking her to make an exception for a special discount with the customer on the phone:

He put me on the spot with a customer on the phone when I wasn't expecting it! I'm like [after the call], "Don't ever, ever, ever do that to us! It's not fair."... Sure, you [Sales] may want to impress the customer with your quick service, but there's a reason we have that protocol.... There's some things that I just can't answer, and I don't want to look stupid in front of the customer!

In this episode, the Special Orders member had expected Sales to follow the formal cross-group process by keeping customers off joint conversations, but instead was forced to wrestle with simultaneously maintaining a professional image in front of the customer while self-regulating her surprise and anger at the Sales person for putting her on the spot. This kind of emotional labor – engaging in an emotional display at odds with one's internal feelings – has been associated with emotional exhaustion (Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 2009).

According to our informants, instead of a predictable or comfortable emotional experience, flouting by members of other groups created role conflict where an employee was caught between formal role demands aligned with the formal cross-group process and the general social demand to "be cooperative" with other groups (Katz & Kahn, 1978). In an illustrative episode, an Accounts Receivable member described the emotional difficulty he experienced when a member of another group wanted him to remove a customer block counter to cross-group protocol, and he had to defend keeping the block on, "I was accused of preventing a deal from going through. But that wasn't the case at all. I was like, 'I'm just trying to do my job. Just going by the rules here!'" Such role conflict, in turn, is associated with dissatisfaction with one's work colleagues and supervisors (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983), leading to further emotional strain as one is forced to interact with these people daily in one's work.

Behavioral Resistance

Given the violated expectations elicited by flouting behaviors, it was unsurprising to find behavioral resistance on the part of members of partner groups on the receiving end of flouting. Evidence from psychology shows that violated expectations lead to aversive arousal that people automatically seek to decrease through compensatory responses (Festinger, 1957; Proulx & Inzlicht, 2012). Consistent with this, in our data, when expectation that another group will follow a cross-group process was violated, this often created extra work for the partner group – such as needing to make new plans of action, reprioritize

group tasks, or mitigate the impact the change would have on other interdependencies in the organization. Understandably, in that people usually seek the path of least effort (Zipf, 1949), members of partner groups often begrudged cross-group flouting.

Behavioral resistance manifested in some cases as outright unyielding behavior, or noncooperation, and in others as conceding but “making a fuss” or “dragging one’s feet.” Outright noncooperation was described by one employee as follows: “I’m *not* afraid to tell them no.” An HR employee, similarly, described how he would not accommodate attempts to flout the hiring timeline and process:

I’ll get on the phone as many times as needed to explain [to the flouting party], but the answer is going to be no because there are boxes we [HR] have to check internally and that we are responsible for. You don’t want to find out later that something fell through the cracks because we made this exception.

Besides verbally telling a flouting group no, outright noncooperation also manifested as ignoring flouting behavior. For example, when Sales submitted incomplete event forms to flout cross-group timelines (i.e., wanting the turnaround time for their event requests to start counting down before they had all event information), Education Events might simply skip those requests.

Employees reported other episodes where resistance came in the forms of “making a fuss” or “dragging one’s feet” despite overtly conceding to flouting behaviors. Conceding but “making a fuss” usually occurred when the cross-group flouting caused an incident that needed to be dealt with immediately, such as when a customer was present. But afterward, members of partner groups would signal their disapproval of the flouting, for example, by telling the flouting group that the behavior should not be repeated or by complaining to one’s boss. A typical example of sorting out a flouting incident first and then making a fuss afterward was illustrated by a Complaints group employee:

Customer service should follow standard procedure. And that’s to fill a form that my group can process. Instead they try to forward me customer calls directly. Of course, I’ll deal with it [take the call] rather than keep the customer waiting, but getting those types of calls is frustrating! I’ll take the call, but you can be sure that afterward, I’ll be talking to the Customer Service person. Fill out the form next time! They’ll say, “I didn’t know what they wanted.” That’s not true. Just probe the customer, a couple questions to fill out the form! I always follow up with them because they shouldn’t be doing this.

Members of partner groups also displayed behavioral resistance by “dragging their feet” in the accommodation of a flouting behavior. A Special Orders employee described how her group would delay responses to flouting behaviors from Sales:

I’m not going to sit there and let him [Sales member] do that to me or my colleagues... You think that because you send it in [counter to protocol] and you harass everybody, that that’s going to get it done? No. It makes us go, yeah, I’ll get to that when I “can.”

Consequences of Cross-group Flouting

Simultaneous consideration of flouting behaviors, violated expectations, and behavioral resistance revealed a larger cross-group flouting process (Figure 2.2) that helped explain why initial flouting behaviors give rise to salient cross-group practical and relational problems. First, flouting disrupted task performance in partner groups, in part by violating expectations about what would happen. Second, violated expectations and behavioral resistance together precipitated a psychological sequence between involved groups that gave rise to relational strain between them.

Disrupted Within-Group Task Performance

Violating expectations disrupted task performance within partner groups and sometimes groups in the wider organization. As discussed above, members of partner groups set their schedules and their internal processes based on the expectation that other groups will behave according to cross-group protocols. When these expectations were flouted, members of partner groups experienced delays, had to reprioritize tasks, and – because partner groups were interdependent with yet more groups in the company – sometimes caused disruptions with the plans and task performance of other groups uninvolved in the original cross-group episode. An example from Customer Service provided a typical example reflecting the internal delays and disruptions that arose as consequences of being on the receiving end of flouting behaviors:

We are short-handed to begin with. When other departments...call in for things we shouldn’t do, other customers are waiting in line – sometimes in the queue for five minutes, six minutes, seven minutes, which is considered very long by our standards – or we’re delayed from answering emails or entering [regular] orders, making returns, releasing warranties, which then hold up the other departments that are depending on those things. It’s very stressful. It’s very stressful.

A Special Orders member described how another group’s flouting could affect his group’s task

performance by directly causing errors:

So, Sales [submitted the order to another group instead of to Special Orders]. But...that's where the problem comes in because...it's not going to be anywhere one of us can see it in our open orders that we check all the time to make sure are on track. So then it's forgotten and it's not shipped out. As you can expect, the customer does not end up happy.

Because cross-group processes connect the internal activities of both the flouting group and partner group, it is not surprising that flouting a cross-group process will disrupt the task performance of the partner group and any other groups with which the partner group is interdependent (Tucker, Heisler, & Janisse, 2014). However, beyond disrupting within-group task performance, our analysis suggests that flouting contributed to more diffuse and lasting strained intergroup relations.

Strained Intergroup Relations

Violated expectations and behavioral resistance gave rise to a damaging psychological sequence in each of the involved groups that in turn gave rise to relational strain between them. Specifically, informed by prior psychology research, our analysis suggests that violated expectations and behavioral resistance led to negative arousal, which fostered negative attributions about other groups. Negative attributions in turn likely exacerbated ingroup-outgroup biases, which further fed negative arousal, potentially perpetuating a negative cycle.

First, negative arousal arose in both partner groups and flouting groups. As noted, research shows that violated expectations give rise to psychological discomfort and affective arousal (Festinger, 1957; Proulx & Inzlicht, 2012). Partner group members thus likely experienced negative arousal when others' flouting behaviors violated their behavioral or emotional expectations at cross-group interfaces. Flouting group members, in return, experienced negative arousal because of partner groups' behavioral resistance. Because flouting group members did not follow cross-group processes with their own group goals in mind and with awareness of circumstances they believed justified their flouting behavior, behavioral resistance by partner groups was seen negatively, creating both blocked goals and negative arousal emotions (Agnew, 1992; Berkowitz, 1989).

Second, negative arousal in both partner and flouting groups, in turn, gives rise to negative

attributions. Research on emotions shows that people are more likely to take cognitive shortcuts when in high arousal psychological states (Loewenstein, 2000).

Within an intergroup setting, a particularly harmful cognitive shortcut is the fundamental attribution error, a bias to attribute others' behavior to dispositional traits, discounting situational constraints (Jones & Nisbett, 1972; Pettigrew, 1979; Weber, 1994). In the cross-group flouting process, members of negatively aroused partner groups and flouting groups were thus likely to attribute one another's behavior to negative dispositional traits, unaware of situational constraints that could be driving behaviors. We identified instances of partner group members making dispositional attributions about the flouting group ranging from its members being untrustworthy and inconsiderate to being intentionally arrogant and hostile. For example, Special Orders and Customer Service members attributed Sales flouting behaviors to a disposition of laziness and self-centricity: "They just don't want to look it up [or do it] themselves. That's why they call us for all these menial things," and "They don't care about anyone else. They are the rainmakers and think they 'can do no wrong.'" Flouting group members, cognizant of the situational reasons driving their own behaviors but unaware of the situation facing partner groups, made attributions about partner groups being dispositionally inflexible, unhelpful, or lacking intelligence. For example, in response to behavioral resistance from partner groups, members of Sales said, "It's common sense – just because one line isn't filled out [counter to protocol] doesn't mean you just sit on it and hold everything up," and "When we follow up to ask them what happened or why we haven't heard back yet, they always have excuses – they don't want to help."

Finally, negative dispositional attributions magnify ingroup-outgroup dynamics between groups. Ingroup-outgroup dynamics have been robustly studied in intergroup research and are premised on social identity theory and its elaborated self-categorization theory. This perspective posits that, the moment group boundaries are drawn, people cognitively and automatically segment themselves and others into social categories or groups based on prototypical characteristics abstracted from category members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Because people derive their identities and self-esteem from their membership in social categories, such as their department or occupational group, they are motivated to maintain or

enhance positive comparison between their ingroup social categories (to which they belong) and outgroup categories (to which they do not belong). A core implication supported by large amounts of research is that individuals' behaviors will be guided in biased ways due to these social group categorizations (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). For example, studies using the minimal group paradigm found that people rewarded and penalized others in ways that favored their in-groups even when the assignments to groups were explicitly random (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). Other biases that occur because of ingroup-outgroup delineations include the tendency to grant ingroup members greater benefit of doubt when things go wrong and to view outgroup members as homogenous individuals (Jones & Nisbett, 1972; Judd & Park, 1988; Park & Rothbart, 1982; Pettigrew, 1979). In the cross-group flouting process, negative dispositional attributions are likely to exacerbate the boundaries and perceived differences between "our group" versus "their group," thus magnifying the automatic biases that result from group-based delineations. Magnified ingroup-outgroup biases, such as not giving outgroup members the benefit of doubt for their behaviors or viewing outgroup members as homogenous, make it more likely for groups to react with increased negative arousal the next time expectations are violated or goals are blocked due to behavioral resistance.

This cycle thus presents the potential to turn an isolated incident of cross-group flouting into a driver for relational strain between groups that may harm both groups' desire and ability to work together effectively in the future. First, through this process, groups are likely to associate negative experiences and affect with the other group, making the anticipation of interacting with the other group aversive. As one Sales member described, "Out of years of frustration, I don't go to the individual collections or accounting persons anymore if there's a billing issue; it's a complete waste of time to deal with them. I'll escalate it." Second, negative attributions about other groups are very difficult to dislodge once in place. Research on self-fulfilling prophecies suggests that once a dispositional attribution about another party is in place, people unconsciously act in ways that elicit the expected behavior from that party in future interactions, or prevent future opportunities for that party to prove otherwise (Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974; Cha & Edmondson, 2006). In the case of cross-group flouting, group members may behave in ways

that elicit expected behaviors from another group based on prior experience, thus reinforcing negative attributions already in place. For example, negative attributions that a partner group's members are dispositionally unhelpful, and therefore cannot be changed, may cause flouting members to not bother explaining reasons driving their flouting requests, making it even more unlikely for partner groups to help. Third, exacerbated ingroup-outgroup biases are likely to magnify and ingrain negative associations, attributions, and uncooperative behaviors between groups, devolving into relationally-harmful situations, for example in ApexCo when groups would "finger point" other groups at high-profile meetings as the groups responsible for problems. Intergroup conflict research suggests that when groups have engaged in repeated incidents of conflict over time, it is very difficult for their histories to be forgotten (Lickel, Miller, Stenstrom, Denson, & Schmader, 2006). Altogether, cycles of negative arousal, negative attributions and magnified ingroup-outgroup biases are likely to precipitate relational strain that damages groups' desire and abilities to work together in the future.

DISCUSSION

Prior organizational research has emphasized benefits of informal cross-group activities – a type of boundary spanning behavior unconstrained by formal structure – for groups and organizations. The literature on formal organizational structures, meanwhile, emphasizes the positive organizational outcomes of structures such as formal cross-group processes. Understandably, given the different topics of organization structure and team behaviors, these streams of research have remained separate lines of inquiry. Perhaps for that reason, what happens when informal activities interact with formal processes at cross-group interfaces has been underexplored. The data from this study point to negative consequences of informal boundary-spanning activities when they circumvent formal processes, a phenomenon we call cross-group flouting. This behavior appears to give rise to a problematic process between groups. Specifically, our analysis traces how incidents of cross-group flouting violated expectations and generated behavioral resistance in partner groups. Together these dynamics disrupted task performance in partner groups and gave rise to ongoing relational strain between groups. Relational strain, our data suggest, can erode the desire and ability of groups to work together in the future. Although research has identified the

circumvention of formal processes within individual jobs, with short-term positive consequences for getting things done and secondary negative consequences for organizational learning (Tucker & Edmondson, 2003), little work exists to illuminate how circumvention of formal processes at cross-group interfaces can affect near- and long-term outcomes beyond a bounded job. This paper thus contributes to theory by suggesting a process through which informal activities circumventing formal cross-group processes have negative consequences for immediate and future cross-group work.

Contributions to the Literature

Overall, this study extends literature on boundary spanning and workarounds, and more broadly, adds to dominant scholarly work on cross-group integration challenges within organizations, by offering a new source of and explanation for cross-group conflicts.

The literature on boundary spanning has highlighted the importance and benefits of fluid interactions across groups that are unspecified by formal structures. Particularly from the perspective of the group initiating boundary spanning, research has shown that such behaviors are associated with team performance, external support for the team, acquisition of needed resources, innovation, and coordination with other parties (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). However, research on boundary spanning between groups has rarely considered ways that informal cross-group interactions may lead to negative cross-group outcomes. By examining formal and informal processes at cross-group interfaces simultaneously, our study thus extends the boundary spanning literature by illuminating how unscripted boundary spanning behaviors across group interfaces can interact with formal cross-group processes in negative ways. Consistent with the boundary spanning literature, we find that group members engage in boundary spanning to further their group's goals. However, our findings suggest that these goal-focused cross-group behaviors, when considered in context of the structures that exist between groups, are not always positive. Formal cross-group processes exist because groups in organizations are often interdependent. When boundary spanning circumvents formal cross-group processes, these behaviors can lead to violated expectations, resistance, disrupted task performance, and relational strain between groups.

Our findings also complement and extend prior research on workarounds. Studies on

workarounds have focused on formal within-job processes to identify that individuals circumscribe formal rules and procedures within their jobs that they experience as obstacles to getting work done. Workarounds research suggests that circumvention of operational obstacles is beneficial for individuals to get their work done, but can lead to missed opportunities for organizational learning (Halbesleben et al., 2008; Spear & Schimdhof, 2005; Tucker, 2016; Tucker & Edmondson, 2003; Vestal, 2008). Our study builds on this work by examining how unscripted behaviors and formal processes interact at cross-group interfaces. Prior research has hinted that interdependence in organizations may mean workarounds within one individual's job can have ripple effects within the organization (Tucker & Edmondson, 2003; Tucker et al., 2014), but has not focused directly at the cross-group interface. The flouting behaviors that emerged in our study at cross-group interfaces are similar to workaround behaviors at the individual job level, but instead reveal that members at cross-group interfaces circumvent on behalf of their groups, and that this can lead to a process that disrupts within-group task performance and reduces the ability and desire for involved groups to work together in the future.

A third contribution of this study is that it adds new insights to explain integration challenges within organizations. Structural- and communication-based explanations emphasize the lack of means to integrate efforts or arrive at mutual understandings, for example when there is no cross-group process or actor to bridge two separate groups, or when two groups lack tools, shared symbols and common meanings through which to communicate (e.g., Carlile, 2004; DiBenigno & Kellogg, 2014). Ingroup-outgroup explanations emphasize automatic perceptual and behavioral biases toward others that arise from mere existence of group boundaries, despite arbitrary group membership, anonymous fellow members, and no present or expected future interactions with one's ingroup members (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). Our theoretical explanation extends prior work by suggesting that boundary spanning – generally emphasized in literature to expedite integration of cross-group work – can lead to unintended integration barriers when engaged in myopically, because these behaviors interact with pre-existing structures to collaborate (e.g., in the form of cross-group processes) and develop into a bilateral process that magnifies ingroup-outgroup dynamics.

Limitations: Gaining Cross-Group Insight from Analysis of Individual Interview Data

Our interview data shed light on challenging cross-group interactions. An important conceptual issue is whether accounts from individuals can be used to understand issues at the cross-group level (Hackman, 2003; Rousseau, 1985). Yet, we argue that the use of these individual-level data is appropriate for two reasons. First, the episodes we collected occurred at interfaces of groups, described people acting on behalf of their groups, and were interpreted by others in the organization as behaviors associated with represented groups. Such qualities of activity at the individual-level are likely to guide subsequent attitudinal, emotional, and behavioral responses along cross-group boundaries and are considered cross-group behavior (Jackson, 1993; Sherif & Sherif, 1979). Second, over time, individual actions on the part of a group may lead to collective action of the group. Research suggests people naturally look to their social environments to understand how to behave (Hackman, 1992; Webster et al., 2008), and simultaneously spend most of their work life in the context of their work-groups (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). As such, it is likely that in a context where individuals repeatedly see or hear of group colleagues behaving in specific ways toward another group – for example, disregarding pleas for technical support help – they may begin to act in similar ways over time (e.g., DeBenigo & Kellogg's (2014) Nurse16).

Managerial Implications

In recent years, recommendations for managers to let employees work out issues across boundaries without formal scripts and procedures have been on the rise. For example, some have advocated more flexible organizational structures and open plan offices to facilitate self-organized interactions and spontaneous communication across boundaries. Our study shows how informal cross-group activities, especially when overlaid on formal structures, as is often the case, are not a panacea. Indeed, we find, ironically, that when individuals take the initiative to deviate from formal processes, it can make boundary interactions more problematic rather than less so.

This is not to say that blocking initiative taking at boundaries is the solution. As noted earlier, formal structures such as formal cross-group processes can sometimes be too static, rigid and

cumbersome. Far from recommending managers forbid deviations from formal processes, we argue for managers' attention toward training, coaching, and modeling perspective-taking and thoughtful dialogue at cross-group interfaces. Perspective taking, the active imagining of "the world from another's vantage point" (Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008, p. 404), is necessary for coordinated action (Boland & Tenkasi, 1995) and leads to empathy and altruistic behaviors (Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997). Empathy and altruism may be able to combat the spontaneous lack of consideration for others' needs and myopic focus on own group goals that are characteristic of cross-group flouting. Despite taking another group's perspective, of course, circumvention behaviors counter to another group's goals is sometimes necessary. Thoughtful dialogue is needed in these cases to manage partner groups' expectations and to clarify the rationale, which can decrease the severity of violated expectations and behavioral resistance. Asking questions to better understand the impact of intended actions on the other group is also likely to improve intergroup understanding and relations. Even simple questions such as "How does this affect you if we do that?" may help manage expectations as well as convey caring. These approaches likely can attenuate the psychological loop that feeds off negative arousal and negative attributions.

Future Research

The model put forward in this article was induced based on a qualitative study in a single organization. Limited by a theory generation approach, the causal relationships remain speculative. Our aim is to provide suggestive theory as a basis for further inquiry into mechanisms and outcomes of circumvention at cross-group interfaces (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). Future research is needed to test the relationships proposed. Further, it will be important for future research to investigate the relation of cross-group flouting to positive circumvention behaviors at cross-group interfaces – for example when one group deviates from a formal cross-group process in order to help another group. In such cases, what conditions enable groups to circumvent pro-socially, and what signaling behaviors do groups use to overcome negative logistical, emotional, and relational effects? Finally, although we triangulated our episodes among interviewees, observations, and archival data, future research is needed to explicitly investigate the perceptual disagreements that may occur in cross-group flouting episodes and with what

consequences. For example, Flynn's (2006) research on the subjective interpretation of favors could suggest that a flouting group may not always interpret a concession made by its partner group as a concession. This may further ensnare the involved groups in a cycle of relational deterioration, for example, as the partner group perceives the flouting group as ungrateful, unappreciative, and even unfair.

CONCLUSION

Cross-group flouting is as tempting as it is problematic for members of organizational groups whose work is interdependent. Our research suggests that boundary spanning – so often considered a purely positive source of communication and relationship building across disparate organizational groups – must be handled carefully and thoughtfully for its benefits to be realized. Moreover, just as individuals naturally rely on shortcuts and workarounds in getting their own work done, while failing to appreciate the potential unintended consequences for the organization, groups also can circumvent formal procedures that tie them together, giving rise to unexpected and unintended harm for intergroup relationships in organizations.

Our study stands as a reminder that boundaries, by their very nature, are challenging. Intergroup dynamics lead us to favor members of our own group over those in other groups and to fail to appreciate others' perspectives. Combining the well-documented in-group bias with the ever-present performance pressures in organizations, violated expectations and behavioral resistance across boundaries, along with the resulting relational problems between groups, should not come as a surprise. Yet, if understanding the needs and perspectives of those on the other side of a wall is never easy, it is nonetheless essential when work is interdependent. And, when an activity is important but difficult, managers have an opportunity to make a difference. Our aspiration is that our discoveries can lead to the development of practices to do just that.

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CHAPTER 3

A Theory of Territory Management Among Groups in Organizations

Lisa B. Kwan

ABSTRACT

Existing literature has provided evidence that territories may be important at the levels of individuals and professions. The present paper argues that territories are also important to groups inside organizations. Mobilizing evidence from social psychology, groups research, and organizational literature, I theorize a general model of territory management among groups in organizations that can give us novel insight into why groups tend to behave uncollaboratively during times of organizational change and, ironically, when strategically important cross-group collaboration opportunities arise. Specifically, I theorize that group territories are the surface level representations of group legitimacy, control, and identity, three primary sources from which groups derive their existential security in organizations. Threats to groups' territories cumulate to threatened existential security through threats to group legitimacy, control and identity. To guard against loss of security, groups are motivated to manage their territories as a means of protecting their levels of legitimacy, control, and identity – that is, their sources of existential security – and these behaviors tend to be construed as uncollaborative, though they are not always. The resultant conceptual model offers propositions that may be empirically tested, including ones that specify how a reinforcing loop of elevated territory management inside organizations can be weakened.

Organizations have to be divided in some way in order to function effectively, or even to survive. However, despite a tradition of research into cross-boundary collaborations inside organizations, scholars have only begun to understand the mechanisms that help groups work well with one another. Early research focused on formal mechanisms that presumably could be prescribed onto cross-group interactions (e.g., Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), such as committees and task forces, while recent research has exposed the superficiality of some of those prescriptions and begun to consider the informal and organic mechanisms that groups use, such as boundary objects and trading zones in between groups (e.g., Bechky, 2003; Kellogg, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2006). I propose that another aspect of cross-group collaborations that has been overlooked is that of the natural tendencies of groups and their members to view and respond to their environments in terms of territory – domains over which one feels psychological ownership and attachment. Psychological ownership is “the state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership...is ‘theirs,’” which includes the sense of a close connection between the self and the target and a sense of responsibility (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003, p. 87). At the group level, psychological ownership is the sense that the target of ownership belongs to the group, has a close connection to the group, and is a responsibility of the group.

There is evidence that people naturally view their environments in terms of territory and behave accordingly. For example, at the individual level of analysis, transactive memory research exposes the natural and automatic tendencies for people to divide an environment of responsibilities into territories (Wegner, 1987). People operating in dyads to complete a task will automatically behave as if each person of the pair owned a knowledge domain making up that task and is responsible for it. Recent empirical work on individual territoriality has found that people view and treat physical space inside organizations as territory, marking and defending portions of it as claimed space (Brown, 2009). At the professions level, jurisdictional control research captures the struggles of occupational groups for status and control over occupational task domains (Abbott, 1988). These perceptions of and responses to “territory” are natural and automatic.

I argue that a territory lens can be applied to groups inside organizations to give us novel insight into why groups tend to behave uncollaboratively during times of organizational change and, ironically, when strategically important cross-group collaboration opportunities arise. I mobilize evidence from social psychology, groups research, and organizational literature to theorize that group territories are surface level representations of group legitimacy, control, and identity, three primary sources from which groups derive their existential security in organizations. Because organizational change and novel collaboration opportunities threaten group territories, these situations cause groups to experience threats at multiple layers, cumulating in threatened existential security. To guard against potential loss of security, groups are motivated to manage their territories as a means of protecting their levels of legitimacy, control, and identity – that is, their sources of existential security – and these behaviors tend to be construed as uncollaborative.

GROUP TERRITORY

Boundaries and Psychological Ownership

Boundaries inside organizations are inevitable. Without internal boundaries that delimit different groups and domains, most organizations would be too monolithic and unwieldy to function or perform effectively (Blau, 1972; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). For example, boundaries allow single organizations to achieve depth of expertise, without sacrificing breadth, by differentiating an organization and its overall task into separate knowledge domains that are then assigned to different groups of people. These groups can specialize but also link together to achieve the organization's overall purpose. Dividing components of large organizations into smaller pieces is also intended to facilitate greater management control, clearer roles and reporting relationships, and better overall organization of tasks (Blau, 1972; Thompson, 1967).

Research has tended to focus on specific types of boundaries. Organizational behavior research emphasizes boundaries that circumscribe people and knowledge (Carlile, 2004; Mortensen, 2014), and strategy and organizational design research emphasizes boundaries that circumscribe subsystems, processes, and task domains (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). For example, in organizational behavior

literature, group membership boundaries underlie theories of boundary spanning which show groups benefit from external-facing interactions (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Marrone, Tesluk, & Carson, 2007), overlapped and dynamic membership boundaries affect organizational performance (Mortensen, 2014; O'Leary, Mortensen, & Woolley, 2011), and boundaries delimiting specialized knowledge require translation and transformation methods if organizational innovation and learning are to occur (Bechky, 2003; Carlile, 2004). Strategy and organizational design literature shows that firm performance is determined by the appropriateness of boundaries that circumscribe an organization's subsystems – including the processes and task domains therein – to meet the demands of a corresponding subenvironment faced by the organization (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), and that blurring the boundaries between an organization and user's task domains can lead to open innovation (von Hippel, 2005).

When it comes to the reality of people's experience working inside organizations, the most salient boundaries are often those associated with one's group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brewer, 1991) and group boundaries can delimit content including people, knowledge, processes, and tasks. Taking a functional view from the perspective of people working daily inside groups, this paper conceptualizes group boundaries to delimit anything that members experience to belong to the group; group territory is the content circumscribed within group boundaries.

More formally, *group territories* are domains of content over which members experience psychological ownership and attachment at the group level. Extending the individual level concept of psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 2003), *group psychological ownership* is members' sense that the target of ownership belongs to the group, has a close connection to the group, and is a responsibility of the group. Although it is possible for individual members of the same group to disagree about their group's ownership over a particular target, thus disagreeing on what is the group's territory, research shows that members tend to converge in their mental models and perceptions of the group environment over time (Hackman, 1992). For the purposes of conceptual development at this stage, this paper assumes member agreement on group territory. I relax this restriction later to explore conditions under which member disagreement might be likely and the consequences for groups' territory dynamics. The

definition of group territories in this paper complements the definition of territories at the individual level, defined as “things that employees feel are theirs to use as their own” (Brown & Robinson, 2011, p. 211).

A conceptualization of group territory that is rooted in group members’ experience of psychological ownership sets the stage for territories to be contested and overlapped among groups. For example, members of the procurement group in a company may view a set of supplier relationships to belong to their group, but this does not preclude the company’s production group members to feel psychological ownership over the same set of supplier relationships. All else equal, the greater the agreement between internal members’ and external parties’ perceptions about a group’s ownership within a territory, the more *established* that group is in the territory.

Dimensions of Territory Content

Targets for potential inclusion in a group territory may be tangible or intangible (Brown, Lawrence, & Robinson, 2005; Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001). For an object or cluster of objects to be considered a candidate for group territory, it need only be considered possible for a group to psychologically own. For example, the rights to use a new production technology can be considered possible for a group to own. Similarly, reputation for being the most creative branding team within a firm can also be considered possible to own. Groups can also be perceived to own responsibility for particular tasks or outcomes. In contrast, content that cannot be controlled or assigned within the organizational context are not candidates for group territories because they are not seen as possible to own or possess (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Rudmin & Berry, 1987; Tuan, 1980). Often this controllability or assign-ability depends on the particular organization (Pierce et al., 2001). For example, it is generally not considered possible for an internal group to possess an organization’s history – an exception is if the organization has made it acceptable and normal to systematically re-tell the organization’s history. In this case, there is the opportunity for a group to perceive it is possible to own the retelling and framing of the organization’s history.

Any intra-organizational content that can be bounded inside territories – possible to be psychologically owned – also ranges from static content to continuously changing content. See Figure

3.1. For example, organizational assets like genetic sequencing equipment may be considered static content if the company is not adding or destroying equipment from their stocks. In contrast, annuity client projects inside a marketing agency may be considered continuously changing content if the requests of the annuity client evolve.

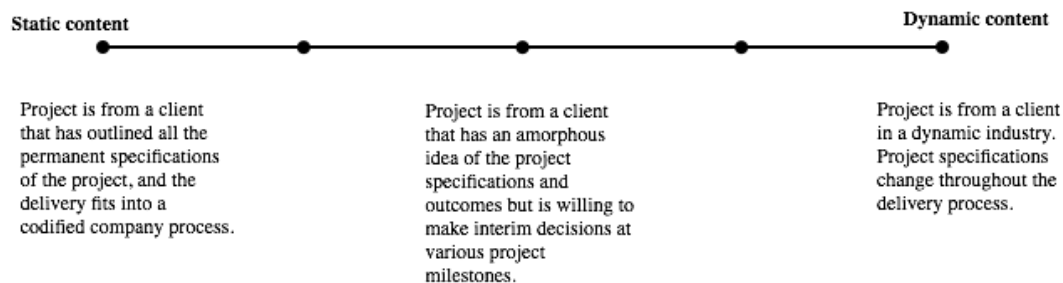
Importantly, the possibility for content to be bounded within a group's territory is not the same as actual inclusion in any group's territory. Only when a group experiences psychological ownership and attachment over the content, and thereby the group boundaries circumscribe the content as conceptualized above, does it mean that the content is a part of group territory. This implies that, at any given time, there can be unclaimed content within any organization.

Figure 3.1. Examples of static and dynamic intra-organizational content.

Example 1 (tangible):
Content = Forklifts



Example 2 (intangible):
Content = Client project



A MODEL OF TERRITORY MANAGEMENT

Evidence from separate literatures supports the view that people experience ownership or at least a strong sense of attachment over targeted content or objects that they will try to protect. For example, evolutionary theories have described the survival function among animals, including human beings, of claiming and protecting turf (see Edney, 1974; Fried, 1975). In line with the evolutionary view, research on individual level territoriality within the workplace presents a view of how individuals mark and defend ownership over objects, such as physical space or roles, due to feelings of individual level psychological ownership (Brown et al., 2005). At the professions level, research on jurisdictional control examines the struggles among occupational groups for dominance over occupational tasks as a means of status and control (Abbott, 1981, 1988), illuminating how professional groups will “fiercely guard their core task domains from potential incursions by competitors [other professions]” (Bechky, 2003, p. 721).

There is no theory or framework, however, that describes, explains, and predicts the phenomenon of groups managing their territories inside organizations. We know about boundary spanning, the act of individuals bridging groups (e.g., Ancona & Caldwell, 1992); we know about the use of interpretive objects to signal and control occupationally-valued tasks (Bechky, 2003); and we know about individuals reacting in defensive ways when others appear to have tried to take what is theirs (Brown & Robinson, 2011). But the dynamics and consequences that result from groups’ psychological ownership and, hence, group territories are not well understood. In the following sections, I build a model of territory management among groups in organizations and use it to explain why groups tend to behave uncollaboratively with each other during times of organizational change and, ironically, when strategically important cross-group collaboration opportunities arise.

Territory Management

Territory management inside organizations is the behaviors that people use to maintain or to change the boundaries circumscribing their individual- or group-based territories. This paper focuses on group-based territory management, which occurs both when members act on behalf of their group and when members behave collectively as a group (Ashforth, Rogers, & Corley, 2011). I use ‘group’ to

indicate both instances: a collection of members acting in concert, and group members acting individually as representatives of their group inside the organization.

Evidence that people act on behalf of their group to maintain or to change their group's boundaries – which circumscribe content that they perceive their group to have a privileged connection or entitlement to – can be found in various forms within organizational literature. For example, Brown and Robinson (2011) showed that when people feel that others have attempted, without permission, to claim, take, or use something that they perceive belongs to them, they will engage in a number of defensive behaviors, such as using facial expressions to show disagreement or dislike toward the infringer, complaining to supervisors, or physically confronting the infringer (p. 217). Barley's (1986) study shows that radiologists in a hospital took scanner controls away from technicians, a responsibility that was previously the technicians'. In response, the technicians tried (but failed) to challenge radiologists' right to do so. Bechky's (2003) study further shows that engineers and technicians attempted to claim authority over boundary objects like drawings and machines “by asserting their physical control over these objects and the processes used to create them” (p. 729). They did so because these objects were symbols of their occupational knowledge and allowed “workers to claim standing as valid practitioners of a particular occupation” (p.729).

Groups' territory management behaviors, similar to ones evident in literature, affect others' perceptions of who owns what territory, and signal how much effort incumbents or challengers are willing to expend to establish their territory ownership. For example, territory management behaviors include what are called marking behaviors theorized by Robinson, Lawrence and Robinson (2005), which function to “demarcate...and indicate the relationship between a territory and an individual” (p. 583). At the group level, territory management behaviors similarly operate to signal group ownership to other external parties. The form and frequency of territory management behaviors are also likely to signal to others that the acting group is willing to expend effort to maintaining or reinforcing its ownership in that territory. The greater the frequency or more aggressive a group's territory management behaviors – for example, overtly confrontational behaviors – the more likely other groups are likely to perceive the group

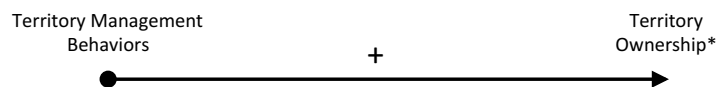
as willing to continue allocating effort and resources to gaining or protecting the target territory. This likely decreases the inclination of other groups to challenge the target group.

Through their signaling and cautionary effects, territory management behaviors are thus likely to increase the agreement between external and internal views of a group's ownership over a territory. That is, territory management behaviors cause non-group members to perceive the acting group to own a territory to a similar degree to how members of the acting group perceive their group's ownership. When external views agree with the internal view, actors outside the group likely behave in reinforcing ways (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) – for example, not challenging the target group, and defaulting to the target group when a question comes up regarding the territory. In essence, the target group's ownership is thus more established in the territory, less likely to be challenged, and more robust against challenges.

Given the arguments above, the first component of the general model of territory management is built on the following proposition. This is illustrated in Figure 3.2.1

Proposition 1: All else equal, greater territory management behaviors lead to greater establishment of a group's ownership in a particular territory.

Figure 3.2.1



*All else equal, the greater the agreement between internal members' and external parties' perceptions about a group's ownership within a territory, the more established that group is in the territory.

Motivations for Territory Management

Groups are motivated to maintain or to change the scope of their territories because owning intra-organizational content is a source of group legitimacy, group control, and group identity within

organizations, which in turn are sources from which groups derive their existential security in organizations.

Group Legitimacy

Ownership over intra-organizational content is a key source of group legitimacy because a group's territory content is associated with the group's reason for existing in the organization. To be legitimate means that a group's existence is perceived to be proper or appropriate (Suchman, 1995), and "able to be defended with logic or justification" (Oxford Dictionary, 2014). Ownership over particular territory usually comes with responsibility for the territory (Mackin, 1996; Pierce et al., 2001) and, thus, ownership may be held as a proxy for a group's *raison d'être* in an organization. Ownership represents the group's value to the organization. The clearest support for this relationship is that territory content is first allotted in the formation stages of a group and tends to include and then extend from the group's purpose. For example, a newly formed procurement group's boundaries are likely to circumscribe the responsibility for purchasing certain materials on behalf of the organization, and at least to circumscribe relationships to suppliers. If the procurement group lost its ownership over relationships to suppliers, or worse, lost the responsibility to purchase a proportion of the organization's supplies (e.g., to the production group which chose to procure its own materials), the procurement group's legitimacy to exist inside the organization would be weakened. In contrast, if the procurement group extended its boundaries to include greater categories of necessary suppliers or greater responsibilities over purchasing (e.g., purchasing not just for one business unit, but two), the group's legitimacy would be strengthened.

Group Control

Ownership over intra-organizational content is also a source of group control, or the ability of the group to affect change and to act. Ownership is associated with rights, agency, and influence involving owned objects (Pierce, Rubinfeld, & Morgan, 1991; Rodgers & Freundlich, 1998). Dictionary definitions of generic ownership describe these bundles of rights, agency and influence as "ultimate and exclusive rights to enjoy, occupy, use, give away or even destroy the object" and the right to "exclude others from the use or enjoyment of the possession without consent" (Business Dictionary, 2013;

Encyclopedia Britannica, 2013). Territory ownership in organizations is similar in that a group has agency and influence associated with its territory's content⁴ – such as the content's use, development, access, or benefits. Although ownership in organizations can have limitations due to interdependencies with other groups and because of the hierarchical nature of organizations (such that groups must justify their actions to a higher party such as executive teams or boards (e.g., Ancona & Caldwell, 1992)), territory ownership means groups have the right to make decisions, act, affect change, and to achieve ends over a set of content.

It is important to note that group control in this model does not refer to control or influence over others, the definition of power (Emerson, 1962; French & Raven, 1968). Group control here refers to the basic desire and need for agency in and of itself, to control one's own world (Beggan, 1991).

Group control is distinct from group legitimacy. Importantly, group legitimacy does not require actual responsibility, autonomy, or ability to affect change. For example, group legitimacy can be high for a group that simply represents a pet project or aspiration of the company's leadership, or that represents a core organizational identity.

Group Identity

Ownership over intra-organizational content is a source of group identity. Adopting the distinction in Ashforth and colleagues' (2011) foundational work on identity across organizational levels, this discussion refers to identity at the group level of analysis rather than to identity at the group level of self, which are often confused (p. 1144). Accordingly, group identity here does not refer to "how the individual conceives of his or her identity from the level of...the group" (e.g., I am a team member; or I am an engineer), but rather refers to the "central, distinctive, and continuous characteristics of the [group as an] entity" (e.g., we are a creative and innovative group; or we are powerful) (Ashforth et al., 2011, pp. 1144-1145). Identity captures the "essence of an entity, whether that essence is thought to reflect an

⁴ Only in a situation where the group's work is entirely automated or codified would this relationship be absent.

objective reality and/or a subjective construction (Corley et al. 2006, Whetten 2006)” (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1145).

The essence of a group – its identity – is strongly associated with its ownership over intra-organizational content for at least three reasons. Identity is associated with the state of owning particular objects, whether these objects are tangible or intangible, across literature spanning multiple disciplines.⁵ Early recognition of this relationship is captured in William James’s *Principles of Psychology*, “...it is clear that, between what a man calls *me* and what he simply calls *mine*, the line is difficult to draw...*a man’s self is the sum total of what he CAN call his.*” (1890/1981, pp. 279–280, emphases in original). Studies have subsequently shown that people view their possessions as parts of their identities (Belk, 1988; Prelinger, 1959), and that this relationship is strong even when tested implicitly (Oyamot, 2004). Additional research shows that the state of owning serves various identity functions – such as helping people to construe, construct, and express identity (Dittmar, 2011, p. 749; Pierce et al., 2001) – and that, if the state of owning changes (e.g., people’s possessions are taken away from them), then identity also changes (Goffman, 1968). This relationship between identity and the state of owning can be applied to the group level of analysis. A group’s members likely use what their group owns to construe, construct, and/or express the group’s identity. For example, owning glossy expensive equipment may be a means through which group members construe, “we are the type of group that has high operating standards.” Through intersubjective interactions, this understanding of “who we are” is collectively enacted by group members and moves up a level of abstractness to become a group’s identity (Ashforth et al., 2011). In sum, the content that a group’s territory boundaries circumscribe - what it owns – can function as embodiments of the group’s identity.

Another primary purpose of identity is to differentiate an entity from others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brewer, 1991), and territory ownership contributes directly toward a group’s differentiation from other groups. While groups commonly face overlap at the peripheries of their territories due to the

⁵ Psychology (e.g., James, 1890/1981), sociology (e.g., Sassatelli, 2007; Slater, 1997), anthropology (e.g., Douglas & Isherwood, 1979), and marketing, advertising, and consumer research (see Dittmar, 2011).

changing and interdependent nature of organizational environments, group boundaries circumscribe mostly unique content that other groups do not own. Uniquely owned content is the usual make up of group territories inside organizations because organizations design their groups so that there is differentiation of task and responsibilities (Thompson, 1967) and, thus, differentiation of associated content like resources and reputations. Additionally, people are evolutionarily motivated to defend and protect their possessions, such that exclusivity over those possessions is established to the extent possible (see Brown et al., 2005). The implication of these arguments is that, when there are overlaps among groups' territory boundaries, territory management behaviors among groups will increase.

Finally, identity is partially composed of objective components that are directly circumscribed by group territory boundaries. Scholars conceptualize identity to include subjective components such as values, goals, and beliefs, and objective components such as an entity's mission or role (Ashforth et al., 2011). With the exception of groups whose prospects for survival are tenuous, most groups inside organizations have territory boundaries that encircle responsibilities (established during group formation stages and that are then subject to changes throughout the group's life). These responsibilities contribute to the group's understanding of their mission and roles – thus constituting a core component of group identity.

Connections to Existential Security

Group legitimacy, control, and identity are fundamentally connected to a group's level of existential security, defined here as its members' collective experience and belief (which may be conscious or unconscious) that their existence *as a group* is free from danger or threat. Existential group security is threatened by threats to group legitimacy, control, and identity in different ways. To examine the differences, consider what it means for a group to lose group legitimacy, control, and identity.

Loss of group legitimacy means that a group's existence is unable to be defended with logic or justification in the organization. It is loss of an organizationally valued reason or purpose for the group to exist.

Loss of group control means that a group's existence is unable to be defended by even the general capacity to act, to affect change, or to achieve ends. It is loss of a general operational reason for the group to exist – it can achieve no work.

Loss of group identity means that a group's existence is unable to be defended even in concept or idea. It is loss of the conceptual core on which a group's essence or meaning is based (Ashforth et al., 2011). For a summary of the relationships between existential group security and group legitimacy, control, and identity, see Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Relationships between existential security and group legitimacy, control, and identity.

SOURCE of existential group security	Because it CONFERS...	LOSS translates to..
Group legitimacy	Organizationally justified / defensible reason for the group to exist – it has an organizationally valued reason to exist.	“We have no organizational purpose, no organizationally valued function.”
Group control	General operational logic for group to exist – it can affect change, it has agency.	“We have no general capacity to affect change or to act.”
Group identity	A conceptual entitative core for the group to exist– the group has meaning as an entity and a conceptual anchor.	“We do not know who we are or what binds us together. There is no ‘Us.’”

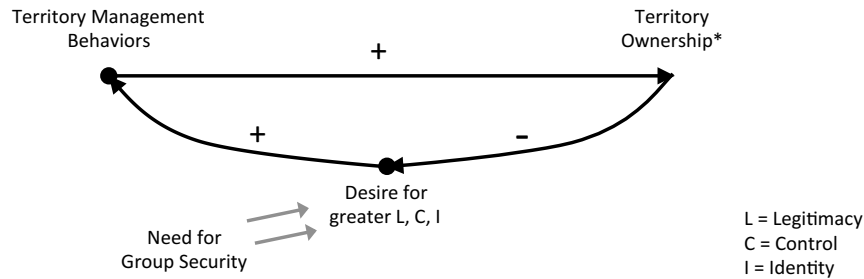
Given that territories are surface representations of group legitimacy, control, and identity, which in turn are sources from which groups derive their existential security, three propositions follow. See Figure 3.2.2.

Proposition 2: Groups that experience weakened territory ownership (i.e., less established ownership) have an increased desire for greater group legitimacy, greater group control, and/or stronger group identity.

Proposition 3: An increased desire for greater group legitimacy, greater group control, and/or stronger group identity increases a group's territory management behaviors.

Proposition 4: Weakened territory ownership (i.e., less established ownership) increases a group's territory management behaviors and this relationship is mediated through an increased desire for greater group legitimacy, greater group control, and/or stronger group identity.

Figure 3.2.2



*All else equal, the greater the agreement between internal members' and external parties' perceptions about a group's ownership within a territory, the more established that group is in the territory.

This model does not include the constructs of status and power because the model seeks to map the necessary and sufficient factors that affect territory management dynamics. Status and power are neither necessary nor sufficient factors for territory management. Status is prestige and esteem by others (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009), and power is defined as influence over others' behaviors that arises from dependence among parties (Emerson, 1962; French & Raven, 1968). Literature suggests that status and power may be a driving force for groups' behaviors to claim others' areas of ownership or responsibility (e.g., Bechky, 2003; Metiu, 2006). While having status or power may contribute to group legitimacy, control, and identity, and therefore its existential security, having high status and power is neither necessary nor sufficient to predict a decrease in territory management behaviors. That is, high status and power does not always mean one has existential security. For example, consider a group that has high status and influence over other groups in a global organization because of its ownership over algorithmic methods to predict consumer trends. However, given recent restructuring patterns by the company leadership, the organization knows this group could be suddenly disbanded and its function outsourced. I argue that groups with high status and power but a low sense of security will still engage in territory management. In contrast, groups with adequate existential security from group legitimacy, control, and

identity, will stop engaging in territory management even without high status or power over others. It is possible, however, that after meeting a threshold level of security, some groups – but not all of them – will seek power for the sake of power or higher status. But survival, in the form of security, comes before status and power over others.

External Sources of Change to Territory

Territory Landscape in Organizations

Because group territories are defined as domains of content inside organizations over which members experience group level psychological ownership and attachment, this model conceptualizes every organization as having a *landscape* of intra-organizational content that can be bounded within group territories. The landscape represents the universe of possible content that groups may circumscribe within their territory boundaries, or perceive to own.

Groups establish (or are allotted) and manage their territory boundaries within this content landscape. The delineations of groups' *initial* boundaries commonly arise as a function of three sources. First, the purported reasons for forming a group have the greatest impact on what the group's initial territory boundaries will circumscribe. For example, a procurement group is formed to buy materials for the company's production processes. It is likely that the procurement group's territory boundaries will circumscribe relationships to suppliers, procurement processes, office space, and a specific purchasing budget. Foundational theories in organizational design support this idea, stating that organizations instrumentally segment themselves into subgroups in order to cope with specific subcomponents of the organization's environment (Blau, 1972; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967).

Second, the landscape of intra-organizational content at the time of a group's formation also influences initial territory boundaries of the group. For example, an organization may be young when it establishes its procurement group and lack office space. In this case, the procurement group may be asked to work remotely and its territory boundaries would not circumscribe any office space. Theory on psychological ownership lends credence to this idea, stating that in order for people to form feelings of

ownership over an object, it is important that the object be existent and visible, among other attributes (Pierce et al., 2001).

Third, the power and initiative of group members at the time of group formation can also impact the group's initial territory boundaries. This relationship draws on classical concepts of power and dependency (Emerson, 1962; French & Raven, 1968). For example, a well-established production group may already exist at the time an organization forms its procurement group. A gestating procurement group with less powerful or ambitious members may find its territory to exclude the rights to develop procurement processes when it is fully formed, because the production group has influenced the group's formation to include the production group's old procurement processes. In contrast, a procurement group with more powerful or ambitious members may negotiate the initial position of the procurement group's territory boundaries during the group's formation.

Organizational Change and Other Groups' Behaviors

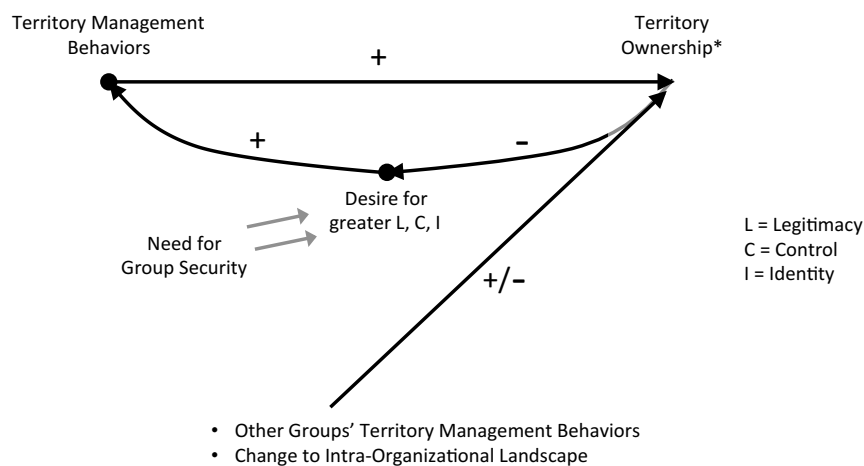
In reality, the landscape of intra-organizational content is continuously changing within any given organization. The landscape of content that groups can include in their boundaries, or perceive to own, necessarily reflects the continuous changes of any organization (Weick & Quinn, 1999), including changes to the organization's overall tasks and environmental demands. For example, organizational tasks and demands affect the possible range of responsibilities, resources, or reputations that groups can try to circumscribe within their territory boundaries (e.g., Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Organizational tasks and demands, in turn, are a function of continuous changes to organizational learning, composition and structure, maturity, and external environment that are realities of any living organization (Amburgey, Kelly, & Barnett, 1993; Levitt & March, 1988; Thompson, 1967). Changes within an organization that affect group territories may be incremental, reflecting the day-to-day learning and adaptation within an organization to its environment, or step-wise, such as during times of restructuring.

Groups, therefore, must manage their boundaries over a continuously changing landscape of content in order to maintain or to change the scope of their territories. This task is made more complex because any given group inside an organization must manage its boundaries in the context of other groups

also managing their boundaries. As such, a group's territory ownership (and subsequent territory management) is a function of two factors external to the group: changes to content landscape and changes to other groups' boundaries.

Proposition 5: Two factors external to the group – changes to the landscape of intra-organizational content and changes to the territory boundaries of neighboring groups – can weaken or strengthen the group's territory ownership (i.e., less established ownership).

Figure 3.2.3



*All else equal, the greater the agreement between internal members' and external parties' perceptions about a group's ownership within a territory, the more established that group is in the territory.

Reinforcing Loop of Territory Management

The proposed territory management model suggests the potential for a reinforced loop of elevated territory management in organizations. Territory management behaviors are likely to exist at low levels in most organizations at any given time because of the continuous incremental changes that all organizations experience (Weick & Quinn, 1999), of which at least some will weaken or destabilize territory ownership and prompt territory management. But organizations can find their groups collectively caught in a state of elevated territory management levels that are very difficult to attenuate. Leaders in these organizations lament the seemingly intractable orientation of their groups toward “building walls” and “kingdom

building.” Scholars and practitioners often point to culture and formal incentives as the primary causes in these cases, but the territory management model proposes another avenue for why these types of behaviors may be elevated and reinforced.

The model shown in Figure 3.2.3 reflects territory management dynamics for a single group. Within an organization, there are many of these loops, interconnected with one another through each groups’ territory management behaviors, which can then affect other groups’ territories. As such, for territory management levels to increase and be reinforced within a single organization, it may take just one change in the organization (e.g., technology used by one group is phased out). The change causes a single group to engage in territory management behaviors, which in turn may impinge on the territory boundaries and ownership of other groups. These other groups engage in territory management behaviors of their own as a response, which can affect territory of yet other groups (or each other or the original group), and thus the cycle continues.

I theorize that territory management behaviors in the overall organization, once elevated, decrease only if groups reach an equilibrium where each has adequate levels of existential security through group legitimacy, control, and identity. This organization-wide equilibrium where all groups experience adequate existential security can be very difficult to achieve through acquiring more territory, depending on the organization. For example, it can be extremely difficult if the organization itself is contracting (e.g., divesting functions or experiencing resource constraints). An exception to the difficulty of interrupting the loop through acquiring territory occurs if an organization is growing so fast that impacted groups have ample content to claim within new or expanded territories without affecting other groups’ territory boundaries.

This model implies a promising avenue for leaders to mitigate an elevated state of territory management in their organizations, or to prevent territory management from becoming elevated at all in the face of planned organizational change. If leaders can intentionally increase group legitimacy, control, or identity for threatened groups without threatening other groups’ territories, the loop of elevated territory management can be interrupted or possibly not triggered at all. Consider the real case of

competition in the insurance industry that caused one organization to plan a substantial change: its small Risk Management group would no longer be the only group in the company that would be responsible for or know how to calculate and structure risk in new insurance cases. Members of business line groups would also have this knowledge and be responsible for calculations and structuring, relevant to their products. This change was an extreme threat to a primary territory of the Risk Management group, and hence its group legitimacy, control, identity, and ultimately, its sense of existential security in the organization. When the change was first announced, the Risk Management group engaged in strong territory management behaviors to protect its boundaries and ownership, refusing to help or teach other groups how to calculate or structure risk. It also exhibited increased protective behaviors over its research activities and reputation, which was a separate territory. However, when leadership created a new territory for the Risk group – that of teaching others how to calculate and structure risk, and adjudicating any complicated risk cases – the territory management behaviors exhibited by the Risk Management group decreased in both its risk territory and research territory. The theoretical lens in this paper suggests that the newly created territory served to re-establish the Risk Management's sense of security in the organization: first, by increasing its group legitimacy through the public attention from leadership toward granting the group its new territory; second by reestablishing its control over an area; and third by re-strengthening the group's identity as being expert in risk. Two propositions follow from the discussion above.

Proposition 6: In a slow to moderately growing organization, once territory management levels increase, it will take a long time for territory management levels to decrease again without intervention, compared to a rapidly growing organization.

Proposition 7: Elevated levels of territory management in an organization can be decreased by interventions that increase threatened groups' legitimacy and control and strengthen their group identity without threatening the territories of other groups.

DIVESTING TERRITORIES AS TERRITORY MANAGEMENT

Territory management can also mean divesting territories, seeking to no longer own areas of content in an organization. While territories are sources of group legitimacy, control, and identity, and therefore desired, owning territories are also associated with expectations, which can sometimes be

undesirable – whether they are real expectations by other parties in the organization, or projected expectations by group members. For example, having established ownership in a territory translates to greater responsibility and clearer accountability for the activities and outputs that are associated with that territory. Responsibility and accountability means that the group must do the work associated with that territory and, although the group gets to reap rewards of associated success (e.g., raises and bonuses), it must also face the repercussions of poor execution and outcomes associated with the territory.

Owning a territory also takes work and effort to maintain and defend. All else equal, this paper posits that a group will choose to give up a territory that is strongly vied for, if another less contested territory that it already owns can be easily increased to make up for the loss of legitimacy, control and identity that results from giving up the first territory. Contests over territory, according to this lens, are not dependent on a common objective value of the territory, but the unique value to the acting groups in the context of their identities, and their current levels of legitimacy and control. Existing theories related to group contests tend to couch contests as stemming from an unlimited and common desire for increased power or status in an organization (e.g., Bechky, 2003; Metiu, 2006). However, a territory management lens offers the insight that contests depend on each group involved: the levels of legitimacy, control and identity that it already has, and the discrepancy between those levels from the levels of legitimacy, control and identity that it needs to feel existentially secure in the organization – along with the opportunities that the contest offers the group to gain more legitimacy and control, and to strengthen identity.

As such, territory management can also mean divesting territories, seeking to no longer own areas of content in an organization. Based on the above discussion, groups are likely to divest territories only if (1) they have excess existential security; or (2) they are able to expand other areas of territory to make up for the effect of the divested territory on losses to group legitimacy and control or weakened identity.

The effect of divesting territories may have the effect of destabilizing other groups' territory if another group's territory is dependent on the divested area. More broadly, divesting territory triggers a change in the landscape of intra-organizational content that could potentially start the territory management loop in Figure 3.2.3 of other groups in the organization.

NOVEL CROSS-GROUP COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES

Strategic organizational opportunities, prized by organizational leaders, often require collaboration among intra-organizational groups to realize. Coveted opportunities include, for example, the opening of new markets, potential for novel product development, or new technologies that could enable greater firm-wide performance if adapted and implemented. The value of such opportunities depends on uniquely extending or recombining capabilities that already exist in the organization, and groups inside organizations are often the locus of these capabilities (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Henderson & Clark, 1990). Consider the example of two disparate R&D groups inside a drug company, each specializing in treatment for separate diseases. The company's strategy unit identifies an opportunity for treating a disease not yet in the company's portfolio that is financially and competitively promising for the company. Developing a treatment of this disease has a high likelihood of success given the objective expertise of both R&D groups. Each of the groups are provided with additional resources, and mandated by company leadership to allocate time, people, and effort to realize the opportunity. The groups should do so while continuing their original functions, each progressing toward treatments for the group's original disease target. Given the visibility and strategic importance of this joint effort, both groups stand to gain from the success of developing a viable avenue for treating the new disease. In cases like this – found in analogous forms inside many companies – what happens next?

At the observable level, the process of collaborating between groups could be conceptualized as a negotiation – whether it is one that occurs in several explicit interchanges between leaders of the two groups, or more commonly, one that is long, drawn out, and embodied in repeated interchanges between members of the different groups as they try to realize the strategic mandate to collaborate (Edmondson & Reynolds, 2016; Truelove & Kellogg, 2016). I refer to this entire process as a negotiated collaboration, which groups and their members engage in both intentionally and unintentionally when attempting to collaborate. Centrally, from a negotiations view, each of the two groups looks to create and claim value for itself and potentially for the larger organization by engaging in behaviors that are cooperative or competitive (Schelling, 1960). In the R&D scenario, cooperative behaviors are those that invest the

group's resources in ways that efficiently further progress on the joint opportunity, whether it costs or benefits the individual group; and competitive behaviors are those that resist investing the group's resources (or investing its resources in particular ways) toward the joint opportunity to protect or increase value for the individual group, potentially at the detriment of the other group.

A traditional negotiations paradigm would call attention to the official issues and underlying interests in the collaboration process (Fisher & Ury, 1991). Official issues are about the specifics of the collaboration opportunity – for example, which group will lead which phase of treatment development, how much time and which star performers will each group contribute to the joint effort, in what form and to what timeline should progress be reported to the leadership team, and which treatment direction should the effort pursue first. Organizational settings however are messy, and official issues around a collaboration opportunity are rarely the only ones driving behavior. Underlying interests between parties may explain greater variance in behaviors. For example, in the case of collaborating across boundaries for new product development, Carlile (2002, 2004) theorizes and illustrates how surface level issues such as how to transfer knowledge across boundaries are inadequate to explain collaborative behaviors, or lack thereof. Rather, deeper interests that extend beyond the specific collaboration are at stake – arising, for example, when people need to draw on a knowledge area that they use across all their work, and so it would be costly to change or share for the specific collaboration. There is also evidence that members of groups needing to collaborate for multiple projects will 'pick their battles' (Truelove & Kellogg, 2016).

The negotiations perspective, however, generally leaves unspecified the structure of underlying interests within and between negotiating parties. In a negotiated collaboration process, the paradigm therefore offers little guidance for how to think about interacting groups' interests, and little guidance to understand and predict how the collaboration process may play out.

A territory management lens complements the negotiations perspective by offering a framework to understand groups' underlying interests in a negotiated collaboration, and provides a way to understand the difficulty of executing cross group collaboration opportunities. This framework suggests that what matters is how decisions on the official issues affect subsequent group territories. In the R&D scenario

above, consider three possible official issues: which group will lead which phase of treatment development, in what form and to what timeline should progress be reported to the leadership team, and which treatment direction should the effort pursue first. Literature that assumes groups are ultimately driven by unrestricted desires for relative status and task control would suggest that both groups will wish to lead the treatment development, control the form and timeline by which progress would be reported to the leadership team, and push their incumbent treatment direction as the one that the joint effort should pursue first (e.g., Bechky, 2003; Metiu, 2006). The assumption is that resistance or impasse will stem from both groups vying for these areas. Scholars and leaders of companies alike may thus be perplexed when neither group wishes to lead the project, one group wants to present progress in white papers early in the process while the other wants to present progress at a presentation late in the process, and one group insists on using a method neither group knows much about while the other group does not care what method is used as long as it allows the effort to target a particular molecule first. Progress stalls and the groups are perceived to be uncollaborative as they fail, in seemingly unsystematic ways, to come to agreements.

The territory management lens suggests that underlying interests that drive the negotiated collaboration stems from three things: what the official issues do to underlying group territories, how those territories are rooted in the three sources of group security – legitimacy, control, and identity – in the organization, and the discrepancy between the levels of those security sources the group already experiences and the levels that they need to feel secure within the organization. For example, if both R&D groups already have adequate levels of control through the territories they own outside the collaboration opportunity, then neither will be compelled to take on more control via leadership over the joint project, especially because control often comes with greater responsibility, costs, and work. If one group has recently lost territory that was core to its value to the organization, and hence the group has experienced a decrease in group legitimacy – for example, the group’s primary methodology has recently been leapfrogged in the field because of new technology – then the group will seek outcomes on the official collaboration issues that will allow it to regain territory that boosts group legitimacy. For example, this

could come in the form of writing a white paper that demonstrates mastery of a new method and ownership over that territory, and thus reinstates the value of the group to the organization. Group territories predict underlying interests because of their relationship to group legitimacy, control, identity, and ultimately group security.

CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTIONS: TERRITORIALITY, CONFLICT AND COMPETITION, ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS, AND POWER

Territory management is related to but distinct from important concepts within the intergroup and organizational behavior literatures. First, territory management is related to but distinct from the individual level construct of territoriality. Territoriality is defined as “an individual’s behavioral expression of his or her feelings of ownership toward a physical or social object” (Brown et al. 2005, p. 578). These expressions of ownership can include some aspects of territory management behaviors, those related to signaling ownership or defending ownership boundaries; but territoriality also includes those that are not related to territory management, such as deliberate behaviors to personalize and modify the territory to reflect or express one’s identity (Brown et al. 2005). Further, territoriality captures only maintenance or gain of territory, whereas territory management includes acquiring, maintaining, and divesting territories.

Second, territory management is related to but distinct from intergroup conflict and competition. Specifically, territory management can naturally arise from conflict – defined as perceived incompatibilities between groups (Boulding, 1963; Jehn, 1995) – and competition – situationally defined as a scenario where two or more actors’ goal attainments are negatively linked such that the success of one actor necessitates the failure of the other(s) (Deutsch, 1949). For example, when groups vie to include the same intra-organizational content as parts of their territories, their goal attainments can be incompatible and negatively linked such that one group’s successful claim means the failure of the other group’s claim. In this situation, territory management behaviors between the two groups as they try to resolve the boundary disputes would be accurately recognized as conflict and/or competitive behavior. However, territory management is more than a subset of conflict or competitive behaviors among groups,

because territory management also involves neutral and “peaceful” behaviors of groups and their members. For example, a group’s engagement in territory management includes building up its existing territory boundaries, which does necessitate intergroup conflict. Territory management can also involve non-confrontational actions where a group extends its boundaries to circumscribe unclaimed intra-organizational content. Unlike the concepts of conflict and competition, which focus strictly on incompatibilities or situations of winning and losing, the focus and value of the territory management lens is that it draws attention to and explains a larger range of scenarios in which neighboring groups maneuver their boundaries, with or without conflict.

Third, territory management is related to but distinct from organizational politics. Organizational politics is the management of influence within organizations (Mayes & Allen, 1977), using unsanctioned means “that are strategically designed to benefit, protect or enhance self-interests, often at the expense of the organization and its members” (Rosen, Ferris, Brown, Chen, & Yan, 2014, p. 1026). Group territory management is also concerned about behavior in organizations that first benefits, protects, or enhances own group interests. However, while political behavior is intentional, individual, unsanctioned, and mostly considered a dysfunctional and divisive force in organizations (Gandz & Murray, 1980; Mintzberg, 1983; Voyer, 1994), territory management can be automatic, occurs between groups, can often include sanctioned behaviors and outcomes, and has both negative and positive consequences for organizations. Moreover, territory management behaviors are not primarily motivated by the achievement of influence over other groups.

Fourth, territory management is related to but distinct from power. Power is influence over others’ behaviors that arises from dependence among parties (Emerson, 1962; French & Raven, 1968). Territory management has implications for power, but is not synonymous. Owning territory that other groups are dependent on may result in the ability to influence other groups – for example, the production group may be dependent on processes within the procurement group’s territory. However, the motivation for territory management is about the right to survive rather than the right to influence or to control others. Further, the power lens does not provide insight into why groups will sometimes strive to take

territory that has no implications for controlling others – for example, owning equipment that no other group needs – while a territory management lens that incorporates the relationship of territory with group legitimacy, control, identity, and group security can.

DISCUSSION

Evidence from separate literatures has provided evidence that people experience ownership or attachment over targeted content or objects that they will act to protect (Edney, 1974; Fried, 1975; Brown & Robinson, 2011; Abbott, 1981; Bechky, 2003). But the dynamics and consequences that result from groups' psychological ownership and, hence, group territories are not well understood. Mobilizing evidence from social psychology, groups research, and organizational literature, this paper builds a general model of territory management among groups in organizations that integrates and extends existing literature on group contests and individual level territoriality, providing a framework that explains and predicts territory management in organizations. The model elucidates the conditions under which a group is likely to engage in territory management (i.e., during times of organizational change or when other groups engage in territory management), why territory management may be reinforced in organizations, and how the reinforcing loop can be interrupted. The paper then illustrates how the proposed territory lens, applied to groups inside organizations, can give us novel insight into why groups tend to behave uncollaboratively when strategically important cross-group collaboration opportunities arise.

Theoretical Contributions

This paper extends the research literatures on intergroup contests within organizations and the literatures on territoriality and psychological ownership.

Intergroup Contests

The theory presented here extends literature on intergroup contests by approaching the phenomenon from a groups' perspective. In recent years, the dominant perspective for explaining intergroup contests has rested on jurisdictional control literature, which is rooted in the sociological tradition of research on professions and professionalization of occupations (Abbott, 1988). To explain

intergroup contests within organizations, this literature has emphasized the roles of abstracted occupational knowledge, relative authority, and occupational reputations in determining an occupational group's status and dominance over task areas (Bechky, 2003). The jurisdictional control approach has been important for illuminating the influence of both occupational structures and everyday interactions and practices on how intergroup contests unfold (Barley, 1986; Bechky, 2003). The present territory management lens complements this general model by approaching intergroup contests from the tradition of groups' research, rooted in social psychology. The groups' perspective allows several avenues for additional insight: It allows us to bring group motivations and needs to the foreground, to situate group concerns in an organizational system, and to illuminate the role of social psychological constructs such as psychological ownership in intergroup contests.

The theory presented here further relates to a dominant theme within research on intergroup contests that emphasizes the value to groups in claiming control or rights over domains of activities or resources in organizations. Extant research focuses particularly on status and power that is granted by successful claims (Abbott 1988; Bechky, 2003, Metiu, 2006). Two assumptions that underlie this research is that groups are motivated by a desire for ever increasing status and power, and that successful claims over a domain grant a level of status and power that is inherent to the domain. The present theory complements this research in its view that groups are driven to meet group-level desires, and adds to the research by theorizing that a more basic desire of groups, before status and power, may simply be for existential security, which is derived from group legitimacy, control, and identity. The connection of group legitimacy, control, and identity to territories introduces the role of group ownership to conditions for intergroup contests. The present theoretical lens goes on to propose that groups' desires are not ever increasing, but that there are thresholds after which groups no longer seek more (e.g., more security), which offers an avenue to explain why groups are not always in contests with another. Further, the present lens extends the literature by illuminating that intergroup contests are not usually engaged over an inherent or objective value associated with an intra-organizational domain. Rather intergroup contests depend on each group involved: its current levels of legitimacy, control and identity; the discrepancy

between those levels from the levels it needs to feel secure in the organization; and how loss or gain of the contested domain will change those levels of legitimacy, control, and identity, and ultimately its sense of existential security in the organization.

The proposed model that territories exist as the top most concrete representations of group legitimacy, control, and identity, and ultimately existential security, also provides an avenue to theorize about when and why groups divest territories, and further, provides an explanation for the phenomenon of “hot potato” in organizations, which current theories cannot explain. “Hot potato” is a form of intergroup contest to *not* own. As described earlier, a group is likely to divest a territory if being accountable for or maintaining and defending the territory take a great amount of effort relative to other territories. But they will divest only if the group already has enough group legitimacy, control, and identity for their needed threshold of existential security, or there is another territory the group could expand or claim that will make up for the losses to legitimacy, control, and/or identity from the divested territory. The “hot potato” phenomenon occurs when no group in a collaboration opportunity wishes to take ownership of an area,⁶ and actively try to avoid ownership. The present model can explain this phenomenon through the connection of territory ownership to group legitimacy, control, identity, and existential security. If the groups involved have enough group legitimacy, control, identity, and thus enough existential security, they will not wish to be associated with more territory because owning and being accountable for activities in a territory requires work. Alternatively, even if the groups involved do not have enough legitimacy, control, identity, and existential security, they may still actively avoid owning the target area if they have options to meet their security needs through expanding or claiming other territories that will be less work to own compared to the target area.

Territoriality and Psychological Ownership

The theory proposed in this paper extends the territory and ownership lens found in research at the individual level to the group level, and extends it to explain a wider phenomenon of territory

⁶ This unwanted area does not always have to be an area of responsibility. It can also be an area of reputation, wherein no party wishes to be known for x.

behaviors and dynamics in organizations. In micro-organizational research, territory was introduced in work that theorized about individual level territoriality. Territories are “things that employees feel are theirs to use as their own” (Brown & Robinson, 2011, p. 211). Territoriality is “an individual’s behavioral expression of his or her feelings of ownership toward a physical or social object” (Brown et al., 2005, p.578), and encompasses behaviors to defend one’s possessions and to mark new ones. Territoriality is primarily about protection. The present theory argues that a territory lens provides novel theoretical insights when it is extended to capture not just defensive and marking behaviors (i.e., territoriality), but the array of behaviors and motivations related to managing territory, including divesting territories. Further, by approaching territories at the group level, a territory management perspective can situate territories and associated behaviors in relation to features of the whole organization – such as organizational growth, resource constraints, or external shocks – because in contrast to individuals, groups are tractable units of analysis to investigate the expanse of potential territories within an intraorganizational landscape. Situating territories and associated behaviors in relation to the whole organization also allows scholars and practitioners to better predict the dynamics of territory ownership in organizations, particularly those related to phenomena such as intergroup contests and barriers to cross group collaboration, which have been central concerns for organizational scholars for decades. The present theory also extends the concept of psychological ownership from the individual level to the group level to reflect a common but theoretically underexplored state where one perceives one’s group to own something without the self also owning it. Future work on group psychological ownership may have implications for deviant behavior (e.g., stealing from one’s group), tragedy of the commons (e.g., conditions that dissuade acting contrary to the common good of all users), and resilience (e.g., when group resources act as surrogates to limited individual resources in times of need).

Managerial Implications

The phenomenon of groups in organizations shoring up their boundaries, engaging in unnecessarily competitive behaviors with one another, and claiming value for themselves while destroying value for others is lamented by leaders across companies and industries. Organizational

leaders often recount these scenarios in terms of their groups being preoccupied with “building walls” and “kingdom building.” Culture is often the fall back explanation in these cases when pleas and reprimands from leadership, the inclusion of collaboration as a core organizational value, and restructured incentive systems fail to change behaviors. While culture is an undeniable driver and sustainer of these behaviors, it is also a difficult factor to change. Culture has been conceptualized both as an entity, such as a pattern of shared basic assumptions within an organization learned from working in the organization (Schein, 1985), and in most contemporary studies, as an evolving social construction (Weber & Dacin, 2011). In both conceptualizations, culture is “rooted in history, collectively held, and sufficiently complex to resist...attempts at direct manipulation” (Denison, 1996, p. 644). As such, an explanation for “kingdom building” based on culture does not provide tractable avenues for potential solutions.

The territory management lens provides an alternate explanation to why “building walls” and “kingdom building” occur and are sustained at elevated levels in organizations. And it does so in a way that offers a more actionable avenue for addressing these situations. The theory posits that as long as groups do not have adequate levels of group legitimacy, control, and identity to meet their threshold needs for existential security in the organization, they will engage in territory management behaviors to try to make up for the discrepancy. Territory management behaviors are not always protective or antagonistic to other groups, but multiple groups can vie for ownership over overlapped areas which lead to behaviors that practitioners describe as “kingdom building.” A potential way for leaders to mitigate these behaviors is to address the discrepancies between the levels of group legitimacy, control, and identity that groups have and the levels they need to feel secure in the organization. As discussed in an earlier section, one example of an intervention could be to grant to a group a new territory (or expand its existing territories) in ways that fulfills its legitimacy, control, and identity needs, and that does not overlap and threaten other groups’ territories. Leaders are also able to increase group legitimacy, control, and identity without granting new territories or changing existing ones. For example, leaders can increase group legitimacy by publically emphasizing the value to the organization from a group’s existing, uncontested territory, which does not change any territory boundaries. Encouragement to personalize existing group territories or

increasing autonomy of the group within their existing territories can also help strengthen group identity or increase group control, without changing group territories. In these ways, a territory management lens provides a theoretical explanation for “building walls” and “kingdom building,” which also offers actionable avenues for mitigating the phenomenon if desired.

Future Research

The proposed territory management model provides relationships for empirical studies to test and refine. The theoretical application of territory and ownership at the group level also provides promising areas for further exploration.

Co-Ownership and Invitations into Territory

Further development of the presented territory management theory may focus on the possibility that territories may be co-owned by multiple groups in an organization. What does co-ownership look like? While joint projects or activities requiring high interdependence between groups may appear to represent co-ownership at first glance, a deeper analysis may reveal that those projects or activities are finely delineated and associated with each group’s existing territories, and further, that each group feels no ownership over the other groups’ areas. For co-ownership to occur, the territory management model requires that each group perceives itself to own the territory and perceive the other group to also own the territory. What conditions enable co-ownership without conflict over territory?

In a similar direction of investigation, future research is needed to explore what conditions enable groups to maintain territory but to also allow or even invite other groups into the territory. One executive describes this scenario as one where groups invite others to “come play in my sandbox.” It is clear whose sandbox it is, but others are invited in – perhaps to use or contribute to its contents. My preliminary research suggests that strong and overt mutual respect is a necessary condition for successful co-ownership; however, it is unclear whether it is sufficient. It is likely that the degree of a group’s existential security will play a role.

Behaviors and Territory Content

While the current territory management model defines group territory as any bounded area of content over which members experience psychological ownership and attachment at the group level, it is unclear what types of content *in practice* are the targets for territory ownership and potential intergroup contests. Various theories in organizational behavior and organizational theory offer possibilities: specialized knowledge, resources broadly writ, responsibilities, and physical objects (Bechky, 2003; Brown & Robinson, 2011; Grant, 1996). But which are the targets for territory in practice? An understanding of common targets for territory will allow researchers in the field to more fruitfully allocate their time and data collection efforts for further illumination of the territory management phenomenon.

Similarly, while group territory management captures the behaviors that people use to maintain or to change the boundaries circumscribing group-based territories, it is unclear in what forms territory management behaviors may manifest. Literature on jurisdictional control and individual level territoriality provide clues, but no empirical work to my knowledge documents the array of behaviors groups employ in organizations to manage areas that they perceive to own. Gaining a deeper understanding of the forms in which territory management manifest among groups in organizations will contribute to developing a measurement of territory management in organizations for future research, and potentially help practitioners recognize when territory management are escalating in their organizations.

Unexpected Group Behaviors

The proposed territory management lens is also fertile ground to examine unexpected group behaviors that may have implications for organizational performance. For example, the conceptual model provides a starting point to investigate why, if a group loses a core territory, its members may hone in on and aggressively defend any small territory that the group retains, and do so beyond an intensity that appears rational. The model may also be a starting point to investigate why some groups become less vigilant defending their territories despite the formal incentives associated with those territories. The model predicts that if a group's sense of existential security – through levels of group legitimacy, control and identity – is high, there will be a weaker drive for that group to engage in territory management

behaviors. In situations where a group has been granted more territory or where a group's ownership over a territory has been externally endorsed and strengthened (e.g., in a merger), the model would predict that the group may become less vigilant over defending its other territories. For example, a group may gain geographic management scope and, because of the associated boost to its group legitimacy and control, become less vigilant about defending its role on an ongoing unrelated project. This type of knock-on effect cannot be predicted or explained by current models of intergroup behavior but could have serious implications for organizations, for example, possibly explaining some of the complications in organizational change, or mergers and acquisitions (see Larsson & Finkelstein, 1999).

Intragroup Disagreement

There is also the question of what happens when group members disagree about their group's territory ownership. Future research is needed to explore conditions under which member disagreement might be likely and the consequences of this disagreement for territory dynamics. Drawing on groups' research and the presented territory management theory, conditions that result in member disagreement about group ownership are likely those that parallel mental model divergence within groups, such as a large proportion of group members splitting their time as members of other groups (multi-team membership), high variance of interaction patterns within the group, and geographic dispersion, which all function to decrease the shared information and experiences from which members construct their mental models about the group and its environment (Cramton, 2001; Mohammed, Ferzandi, & Hamilton, 2010; Mortensen, 2014). As for consequences, members' disagreement about their group's territory ownership is likely to decrease collective and coordinated action. Decreased collective and coordinated action is likely to directly decrease a group's ability to successfully engage in territory management behaviors. There is also the possibility that intragroup disagreement about territory ownership will result in internal conflict over how to respond to other groups' potential infringement behaviors and decrease group cohesion. Decreased group cohesion may generally weaken two components in the proposed model: how established a group's ownership is in a territory and the group's need for group existential security (i.e., the members collectively care less about the survival of the group) and hence a decreased need for group

legitimacy, control, and identity. Altogether, the greater the intragroup disagreement about group territory ownership, the weaker the relationships among the model constructs are likely to be. Future research is needed to investigate the intragroup disagreement needed to render a group an unlikely candidate to engage in territory management. I would argue, however, that if a group is meaningful to its members and is their primary group, territory management will be present.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the current paper argues the importance of studying territory management among groups in organizations. Mobilizing evidence from social psychology, groups research, and organizational literature, I theorize a general model of territory management among groups in organizations that can give us novel insight into why groups tend to behave uncollaboratively during times of organizational change and, ironically, when strategically important cross-group collaboration opportunities arise. The conceptual model presented here is preliminary but provides a needed starting point to examine this prevalent phenomenon of territory management among groups in organizations, which may be a powerful influencer of intergroup dynamics within organizations. The work aims to offer a novel perspective and model to spur further research endeavors into underexplored aspects of intergroup dynamics and into those that have been studied but that remain puzzling for scholars and practitioners alike.

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CHAPTER 4

Mapping Group Territory Management Behaviors and Territory Content in Organizations

Lisa B. Kwan

ABSTRACT

The reality of many groups in organizations is that they are simultaneously self-contained, yet dynamically interrelated to other groups inside their organizations. This poses a challenge for groups to reliably define what they can call “theirs” in an organization. Extant research suggests that ownership is important to individuals and collectives for numerous reasons, and shows that actors will engage in protective behaviors over objects and domains that they believe or desire to own. However, over what intra-organizational groups struggle for ownership, and how these groups behaviorally manage their turf remains underexplored, despite the likelihood that ownership struggles are contributors to cross-group conflict and collaboration failures within organizations. In this study, I qualitatively analyzed interviews on 117 episodes of intra-organizational groups that struggled to work together to induce the construct of territory management behaviors. I map a framework of behaviors that groups use to manage their territories and explore the categories of territories that groups target their territory management efforts toward. The behaviors that emerged complement those that have been found at other levels of analysis, but also extend the concept of ownership-driven behaviors to include a source of lost opportunity for organizations: when no group wishes to own a domain, and actively divests or avoids ownership. Drawing on literature and the emergent framework, I make propositions about how counter-collaborative behaviors and forms of territory management behavior may escalate in organizations and what may be possible effects of territory management behaviors on organizational outcomes.

The reality of many groups in organizations is that they are simultaneously self-contained, yet dynamically interrelated to other groups inside their organizations (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). For example, one department's goals, resources and responsibilities are imbedded in an ecosystem of other departments' goals, resources and responsibilities (Thompson, 1967). While this poses a strain on groups to balance their internal priorities and processes with that of the groups they are interdependent (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992), the dynamic interrelationship among groups also poses a challenge for groups to reliably define what they can control and call "theirs" in an organization. For example, the boundaries of responsibilities and resources among interdependent groups can sometimes be blurred (e.g., Bechky, 2003a); or a change of responsibilities or resources in one group can cause the change of responsibilities and resources in another group.

Research in psychology and organizational behavior has shown that ownership is important to people and is a driver of behavior between individuals and between collectives. People often build their status and identity based on what they perceive to own (Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 2011; Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010). Because one's group is also a source on which people draw their identities and self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and is the context in which people conduct the majority of their organizational activities (Hackman, 1992), the question of what one's group controls and calls its own in relation to other groups likely motivates intergroup behavior in systematic ways. Research based in evolutionary psychology and sociology have suggested that when people perceive parts of their surroundings or work as theirs, they will actively defend and protect this "turf" against perceived infringers (Abbott, 1988; Brown, Lawrence, & Robinson, 2005; Brown & Robinson, 2011).

Surprisingly, over what intra-organizational groups struggle for ownership, and how they behaviorally manage their turf remains largely unexamined, despite the likelihood that ownership struggles may be an important contributor to intergroup conflicts and failures to cross-group collaboration inside companies. This inductive study sought to understand the role of group ownership and its associated behaviors in cross-group conflicts inside companies. I use data on 117 episodes of intra-organizational groups struggling to work together to build a framework of behaviors and content

associated with group ownership inside organizations. I draw on this framework and literature to make propositions about how these behaviors, which I call territory management behaviors, can shape cross-group dynamics and relationships and affect organizational outcomes.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Intergroup Conflict

Intergroup conflict is defined as perceived incompatibilities between groups (Boulding, 1963; Jehn, 1995) and is a barrier to effective cross-group collaborations. Intergroup conflict is most often understood from three research perspectives: realistic conflict theory, social identity theory, and cross-group integration.

Realistic conflict theory asserts that intergroup conflict emerges from material conflicts among groups' differing interests (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). According to this perspective, social psychological components of intergroup interactions are treated as dependent variables rather than determinants of conflict. Classic work within this functionalist tradition is Sherif's (1961) naturalistic study on the development of intergroup relations and processes within a boys' summer camp. In organizational literature and practice, realistic conflict theory has been the impetus for emphasizing alignment of group interests and use of superordinate goals, although boundary conditions to the use of superordinate goals are often overlooked (e.g., Worchel, Andreoli, & Folger, 1977; Worchel & Norvell, 1980).

Social identity theory and its elaborated self-categorization theory consider intergroup conflict to arise from the cognitive and social psychological processes activated by group boundaries. The perspective posits that, the moment group boundaries are drawn, people cognitively and automatically segment themselves and others into social categories or groups based on prototypical characteristics abstracted from category members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This process occurs even without conflicts of interest. Because people derive their identities and self-esteem from their membership in social categories, they are motivated to maintain or enhance positive comparison between their in-group social categories (to which they belong) and out-group categories (to which they do not belong). A core

implication is that individuals' behaviors will be guided in biased ways due to these social group categorizations, and this has been supported by a substantial body of research (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). Within organizational literature, social identity theory has been mainly studied at the inter-individual and intra-group levels, and has been influential in explorations of intra-team diversity and impact on individual and team outcomes (e.g., Li & Hambrick, 2005; Polzer, Crisp, Jarvenpaa, & Kim, 2006).

Research on cross-group integration provides a third way to understand intergroup conflict. Within this perspective, intergroup conflict is assumed to arise from capability-based barriers to cross-group coordination, which in turn are consequences of the fundamental tension for groups to be both differentiated and integrated within organizations (e.g., Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). To aid integration, various methods are theorized to mitigate barriers, including standardization, planning and scheduling, mutual adjustments, organizational structure, and cross-group liaisons and taskforces (e.g., Blau, 1972; Thompson, 1967). Contemporary studies have further emphasized how mechanisms such as boundary objects and co-creation of common ground (Bechky, 2003b), enactment of a trading zone (Kellogg, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2006), and group-level processes such as rewiring (Martin & Eisenhardt, 2010) can facilitate higher-performing collaborations. The central concern for cross-group integration research is to understand the mechanisms and conditions that can help coordination, and often implicitly assumes an overarching motivation or impetus across groups to work together (see Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009 for a review).

In summary, intergroup conflict has been investigated from a material conflict lens, a social psychological lens, and a capability lens. Each perspective has helped the field to understand the barriers to cross-group collaborations in organizations more clearly, but issues remain. First, little work has focused on what intra-organizational groups fight to include within their boundaries. Theories in organizational behavior and organizational theory offer possibilities: specialized knowledge, resources broadly defined, responsibilities, and physical objects (Bechky, 2003a; Brown & Robinson, 2011; Grant, 1996). Analogous to the way intra-group processes were better understood once attention was paid to the

content of group tasks (Hackman & Morris, 1975), placing focus on the content over which groups wrestle for ownership may further our understanding into barriers to cross-group collaborations inside organizations, and help us to theoretically trace the reasons for why they may happen. Second, no research to my knowledge systematically outlines the behaviors groups employ when they struggle over cross-group content inside organizations. Understanding such behaviors among groups can begin to illuminate underexplored cross-group dynamics that contribute to conflict and barriers to collaboration and to theorize about their organizational outcomes.

Group Ownership in Organizations

Group ownership inside organizations is a useful lens for exploring the content and behaviors in cross-group struggles. Research has shown that groups – such as departments, divisions, and project teams inside organizations – are intimately connected with other groups in multiple ways. For example, the goals, tasks, and processes of one group inevitably interlink with the goals, tasks and processes of other groups in the organization (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Thompson, 1967). At the same time, groups are also discrete units with their own specific identities, norms, and processes (Hackman, 1992; Tucker, Heisler, & Janisse, 2014). While this creates a challenge for groups to balance their internal priorities and processes with that of the groups they are interdependent (Tucker et al., 2014), I argue that the interdependence among groups also creates a difficulty for groups to reliably define what they can control and call “theirs” in an organization. For example, the boundaries delineating group resources can sometimes be blurred (e.g., when an R&D team is expected to allow another R&D team to use its sequencing machines despite already facing backlogs); or a change of responsibilities in one group can cause the change of responsibilities in another group (e.g., the brand strategy team may find some of its responsibilities curbed when a product team gains responsibility for specifying the direction of a new product bundle).

The challenge for groups to reliably define what they can call “theirs” in an organization has implications for cross-group behavior because research in social psychology and organizational behavior has shown that people often build their status and identity based on what they control and perceive to own

(Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 2011; Han et al., 2010). Psychological ownership is defined as “that state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership (material or immaterial in nature) or a piece of it is ‘theirs’the feeling of possessiveness and of being psychologically tied to an object” (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001, p. 299). Because one’s group is also a source from which people draw their identities and status (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and is the context in which people engage in the majority of their organizational activities (Hackman, 1992), the question of what one’s group calls its own likely drives cross-group behavior in systematic ways. Extending the individual level concept of psychological ownership (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003), *group psychological ownership* is members’ sense that the target of ownership belongs to the group, has a close connection to the group, and is a responsibility of the group.

Literatures rooted in evolutionary psychology and sociology, in line with this argument, have suggested that when people perceive parts of their surroundings or work to be theirs, they will actively defend and protect this “turf” against perceived infringers (Abbott, 1988; Brown et al., 2005).

Organizational behavior research that draws on evolutionary psychology suggests that people will guard tangible and intangible objects that they perceive to own or have rights to (Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Robinson, 2011). The work theorizes that individuals, driven by feelings of proprietary attachment (Pierce et al., 2001), will engage in marking and defending behaviors to protect their claims over physical and social objects in organizations (Brown et al., 2005). Subsequent empirical work has found that both behaviors are used to protect physical workspace (Brown, 2009) and that defending behaviors are used to protect tangible and intangible objects (Brown & Robinson, 2011). This literature was the first to formally introduce “territories” to organizational literature, defining it as, “things that employees feel are theirs to use as their own” (Brown & Robinson 2011, p.211).

Sociological research has approached territories from a different direction, focusing on the struggles within professional systems and among occupations for jurisdictional control over work domains. This literature is rooted in research on professions, which illuminates how perpetual disputes exist over which profession controls the provision of “expert service” solving a domain of human

problems – such as “heal[ing] our bodies, measur[ing] our profits, and sav[ing] our souls” (Abbott, 1988: 1, 35). The research posits that professional and occupational groups act strategically within the public, legal, and workplace arenas to claim and maintain jurisdictions. For example, in the public arena professions construct problem domains in ways that position the focal group’s knowledge, skills, techniques, and abstractions as the most appropriate for diagnosing and treating the problem (Abbott, 1988). In the legal arena, professional groups build images of their profession that pressure the legal system to formalize their jurisdictional control – for example, championing terminology such that the public believes the group is more legitimate to solve the task domain than other professions. In the workplace arena, professional groups use enactment of expertise, informal practices, and rhetorical strategies to blur and change professional work domains and to claim desired roles (Allen, 2000; Barley, 1986; Chambliss, 1997; Mesler, 1991).

While individual territoriality and jurisdictional control literatures provide clues about territory-related content and behaviors that occur among individuals and collectives, how these contents and behaviors play out among groups *qua* groups in organizations, and thus their role in cross-group conflict in organizations, remains underexplored. For example, jurisdictional control research conducted within the workplace arena retains its focus on occupational groups, while increasingly complex problems facing organizations has created a growing reliance on groups that incorporate multiple occupations, professions, skills, and roles (Edmondson, 2012). Similarly, while literature on individual level territoriality provides clues about behaviors in organizations, it misses the opportunity to gain insight on cross-group conflict in organizations because the literature does not investigate territories at the group level. Empirically investigating territories at the group level is important because individuals rarely function as isolates within organizations (Ashforth, Rogers, & Corley, 2011; Hackman, 1992), but instead operate, process the environment, and filter events through the lenses of their groups and teams (Edmondson, 2002; Hackman, 1992; Li & Hambrick, 2005). Groups such as project teams, business units, departments, and divisions are also the units by which larger organizational tasks, categories of reputation, and sets of resources are often allocated (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2011; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), setting the stage for

group-based perceptions of territory. To more adequately understand cross-group dynamics in organizations that may hinder cross-group collaboration, it is necessary to empirically focus on groups *qua* groups in organizations. In this sense, I follow Alderfer's (1983, p. 409) definition that a group is:

a collection of individuals (1) who have significantly interdependent relations with each other, (2) who perceive themselves as a group... (3) whose group identity is recognized by nonmembers, (4) who, as group members acting alone or in concert, have significantly interdependent relations with other groups, and (5) whose roles in the group are therefore a function of expectations from themselves, from other group members, and from non-group members.

In the tradition of Tajfel and Turner (1986), I consider cross-group behavior as any behavior displayed by one or more persons toward one or more others that is based on the actors' identification of themselves and others as belonging to different social groups. By definition, then, cross-group behaviors occur at both the group level (acting as collective) and the individual level (acting as a representative).

Further, territoriality and jurisdictional control literature has thus far focused exclusively on the orientation to own or to gain, but has not considered the inverse: an orientation not to own. If intergroup conflict is defined as perceived incompatibilities between groups (Boulding, 1963; Jehn, 1995), then orientations not to own are also a source of intergroup conflict inside organizations, for example, if multiple groups wish not to own an aspect of the joint effort.

In sum, while research on territoriality and jurisdictional control provide a starting point to understand over what and how people struggle for ownership, the two streams do not adequately capture the role of group territories and associated behaviors in organizations. The two streams focus either on individuals or occupations, rather than on intra-organizational groups, and focus on one direction of ownership: that of desiring to own. Because the goal of the present research was to better understand the role of group territory content and their associated behaviors in cross-group conflicts, and because groups have not been the target of empirical investigation in prior studies, this study employed an inductive qualitative approach. Through analysis of 117 episodes of intra-organizational groups struggling to work together, I build a framework that captures the general contents over which groups fight and the array of ownership-associated behaviors employed in cross-group conflicts inside organizations. Drawing on this framework and literature, I make propositions about how these behaviors, which I call territory

management behaviors, can shape cross-group dynamics and relationships and affect organizational outcomes. My interest specifically into territories was not driven by deductive logic, but by the dominance of the theme in my interviews and then finding that there was extant theory at other levels of analysis (i.e., jurisdictional control and individual-level territoriality) that supported the concept.

METHOD

The original purpose of this study was to develop an empirically-driven framework of the content over which intra-organizational groups fight when they actually need to be collaborating, and the behaviors that groups employ in these cross-group struggles. The resulting conceptualizations of group territories and territory management was not driven by deductive logic, but by the dominance of the themes in my interviews and then, through the analysis process, finding that there was extant theory at other levels of analysis (i.e., individual level territoriality and jurisdictional control) that provided support for the concepts.

Since my original objective was to generate a framework mapping the content of cross-group struggles in organizations and the spectrum of behaviors groups use, the study design aimed to capture as many episodes of challenging cross-group collaborations in organizations across as many companies as possible until theoretical saturation was reached. To achieve this breadth, I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants who were neutral third party observers of an cross-group conflict in their organization, members of the one of the groups involved in the conflict, or over-arching managers of the groups in conflict. While this method provided a single perspective on each episode of cross-group conflict, it is known to be an appropriate and accurate source from which to generate classifications about cross-group activities when reports contain great depth (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992) and meet the critical incident quality criterion – specifically, “if the information provided is full, clear, and detailed” (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005, p. 481) – is met (Flanagan, 1954). Such were the criteria for my interviews. Additionally, because I included a large number of episodes in the analyses, biases due to the directional perspective on the phenomenon (i.e., whether an informant was a third-party observer, a member of a group, or an over-arching manager of the groups in conflict) offset one another.

Indeed, the alternative perspectives converging on the same conceptual classifications strengthen the emergent findings. The findings developed in this article are grounded in 117 episodes of cross-group conflict among groups in 53 organizations and provided rich and detailed accounts of when groups were meant to collaborate but did not do so.

Research Context

Research participants were executives recruited from seven executive education programs at a large east coast business school. The focus of these executive programs ranged from topics on strategy to finance. I recruited participants by making an announcement at the start of their programs, describing the research project as investigating the struggle organizations face among their groups to share and collaborate. Participants were then able to sign up during breaks to participate in this research. It was made clear that participation was voluntary and not required for completion of the executive education programs.

My aim was to establish a theoretical sample in order to gain a deep understanding of cross-group struggles through the analysis of multiple cases (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Executive education programs were therefore an opportunistic but appropriate context for recruiting. Students of these programs had at least eight years of working experience, and all had risen to the ranks of management, director, vice president, or chief executive. In the course of their experiences, these participants had been exposed to many instances of cross-group interactions within organizations. Because the purpose of this study was to collect data on as many instances of cross-group struggles as possible, it was an advantage that participants could draw on a wealth of work experiences during the interviews. Moreover, because of the diversity of executive education programs included and the diversity of students within each program, I could be sure to include episodes of cross-group challenges from many different industries, country contexts, and cross-group contexts (e.g., business group to business group; corporate to regional; functional department to functional department, etc.), enabling this study to have high generalizability and external validity. Twenty-three industries and 11 countries were represented in the collected cross-group episodes.

Data Collection

In total, 117 episodes of cross-group conflict were collected from 77 informants across 53 organizations. An episode was a bounded occurrence of a conflict between two or more groups that was composed of a series of directly related events and behaviors. The average interview length was 74 minutes. Seventy-one percent of the interviews were conducted over the phone with extensive notes taken during the interviews. I annotated and filled in details to the notes immediately after completion of every interview, and followed up by email with participants if there were ambiguities to clarify. Email follow-up was only required for two of the phone-based participants. The other 29 percent of interviews were conducted face-to-face and audio recorded. The interviews were then transcribed. Table 4.1 shows the semi-structured interview protocol. Ten additional interviews were completed after the initial model emerged to confirm whether the emergent framework had external validity. These participants were re-contacted between three to eight months of their initial interviews and they were chosen based on their permission to be re-contacted.

Table 4.1. Semi-structured interview protocol.

-
1. Tell me about a time when you were a part of or managing groups that needed to work together but that did not or would not.
 2. What were the groups? What was their context?
 3. What were the groups meant to do together?
 4. What happened?
 5. What was the “normal work” of Group X before this?
 6. What was the “normal work” of Group Y before this?
-

Data Analysis

Analysis followed a typical inductive, qualitative analysis process, iterating between the data, emergent themes, and extant theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1998; Eisenhardt, 1989; Sutton, 1991). The unit of analysis was the conflict episode played out at the interface between groups. I started with open coding of the data for the best chance of understanding cross-group struggles comprehensively (Glaser & Strauss,

1967). Three coarse themes frequently recurred in this first stage: Risk, Conflict Set Up, and Actions. Repeated series of coding, iterations within and between first-level and then second-level codes and categories, and drawing on extant literature revealed further patterns from the initial coarse themes. Data initially coded as Risk sorted into what I called Anticipated Consequences and Competition Targets, the latter which clustered into dimensions of Responsibility, Reputation, and Resources in a later cycle of analysis. Through a series of iterations between the data and provisional codes and categories, clusters also emerged among the data coded under the first-stage Actions theme. These clusters were called Assertions, Attacks, Power Plays, Blocking, and Manipulations of Space, which in later cycles of analysis, were categorized into Overt and Covert Behaviors themes. Data coded under Conflict Set Up in the first stage converged into six Forms, and subsequently sorted into Maintenance, Expansion, and Contraction Orientations, which represented a pivotal instance that, along with literature, helped me to see that territory management was what these groups were engaging in. This insight then led me to re-analyze the prior categories and codes associated with the initial Risk and Actions themes identified in the first phase.

Although the explanation above is described somewhat linearly, to come to these results, it must be reemphasized that I conducted many series of iterations, moving between theorizing, coding, and extant literature to understand the relationships between the codes and emergent categories and themes. I often took random conflict episodes to “test” the evolving framework. Cycling did not stop until a strong match between the episodes and framework was attained. Further as the conceptual framework became more complete, I conducted ten follow-up interviews with participants from the original 77 to confirm the external validity of the emergent framework’s components and relationships. I explicitly asked for what in the framework reflected interviewees’ realities and what did not. This data was folded into the later cycles between evolving theory, episodes, and literature. If data from the follow-up interviews challenged a component or relationship in the evolving framework, I would revisit the original episodes

and literature to probe for alternative conceptual meanings or relationships⁷. What resulted is the following framework of cross-group territory management.

I will start by describing one of the organizations in my sample. Although this example does not capture all the components of the resultant framework, it helps to exemplify the reality of “group territory” and behaviors groups use to manage it in organizations. I will then discuss the components of the framework.

A CASE OF TERRITORY MANAGEMENT

InnoConnect was a global, full service digital agency that integrated strategy, marketing, and online technology for their corporate clients. With nine geographic offices and over 260 staff, InnoConnect had completed over 7000 projects for world leading brands.

The Challenge

Externally, InnoConnect aimed to deliver seamless products and services to its clients. Internally, however, InnoConnect was structured into distinct divisions in order to “invigorate people within their groups....for everyone to strive and be successful in their areas.” The daily challenge however was that, despite operating along divisional boundaries, these groups had to collaborate so that the final products and services appeared seamless for clients. InnoConnect’s CEO described the challenge:

There is all this gray area of the cross-over between one division to another....We were creating friction between one area of the business to another that were both needed to deliver the product that the client needed. This is one of the immediate challenges: Areas of the business not wanting to relinquish areas of work where they can capture value although they are not the best ones to do it.

A Tale of Two Divisions

One example occurred between two divisions that had different but overlapping purposes. The Complex Projects Division was the group that was meant to take on complex and large projects for new and existing clients. The division specialized in implementing specific development processes (e.g., risk assessments, analyses, etc.) so that InnoConnect could guarantee a quality product for their clients. In

⁷ Conflict between the evolving framework and data from the follow-up interviews was low. Only one interim framework component (hierarchy of territory types) was questioned, and later discarded. Overall, the follow-up interview data confirmed the direction of the framework and helped guide subsequent propositions.

contrast, the Retainer Division was the group that was meant to provide ongoing support to existing clients and to respond to clients' change requests. The Retainer Division provided the nimbleness that clients wanted. While the separation between the Complex Projects and Retainer divisions made sense for the two distinct phases of client service that InnoConnect offered, the separation also meant that InnoConnect had two divisions with similar capabilities and overlapping purposes. As is often the case, clear boundaries in theory, are messy in practice.

The friction started here: what determined a change request from existing clients that meant the change project should rightfully stay within the Retainer Division versus complex enough that the Complex Projects Division should take it over? Each project and change request from clients differed and could not be anticipated a priori. The CEO described the tension:

Because both groups took pride in their abilities and work and wanted to increase revenues for their P&L, the Retainer group wanted to keep all projects and the Complex Projects group wanted to consume everything.

Typical Situation

A typical situation of turf friction between the Complex Projects Division and the Retainer Division started with an InnoConnect client sending a change request to the Retainer Division. The Retainer Division was described as “guarding very carefully the work being requested from the Complex Projects Division and just focusing on getting the work done.”

When complexity in the change project required resources beyond those housed within the Retainer Division, however, Retainer members had to make requests to members within the Complex Projects Division for help or additional information. Retainer members would try to frame the project as under the control of the Retainer Division, but in the course of the cross-division conversations, members of the Complex Projects Division would challenge whether the project should stay within the Retainer Division. That's when “we have groups yelling at each other in meetings or on the phone - ‘That's bullshit! The reason why...!’ or ‘I already told you we were going to do that work on...!’”

Prevalence

There were similar tensions throughout other parts of InnoConnect, sometimes even more intense than the ones between the Complex Projects and Retainer divisions:

We want to give seamless response to our clients, so there are points of integration to every point of the company. At least with the shared capabilities between the Retainer and Complex Projects groups, there is a shared mentality. But with tensions between divisions of different purposes or backgrounds, there's an added challenge of different mentalities to the work.

For example, both Marketing and Complex Projects groups must be in touch with new clients to determine what the ultimate product will look like. While the Complex Projects division locks into specifications within the first few weeks of the client project, the Marketing group maintains a relationship with the client for the whole development process. The CEO describes:

Over the 6-9 months to develop the project, Marketing will continue meeting with client. If Marketing comes up with a new campaign with the client, and the client says, "Yes, that's exactly what we want!" then we as a company need to deliver that. But recall the Complex Projects group has locked down already on the work, specs, and prices from several months ago. And now they must deliver on this new addition?

So it's one department versus the other. In the next communications – whether meetings, emails, or phone calls – Complex Projects pushes back on Marketing saying things like, "This is going to lead to delays (or costs or resources), we can't do that. We already decided the project with the client." Marketing will argue back, "We don't care what you signed off on! We are doing this."

This behavior is in the areas in-between. We have these occurrences in some way, shape or form every day of the week.

Consequences

These turf frictions make the quality and timeliness of work, company reputation, and improved margins vulnerable. At a minimum, projects become delayed during the process of resolving turf frictions. Information is sometimes lost, and relations between groups become strained although they must work together again in the future. If the project requires rerouting, substantial review of the project is needed and costs can be triple or quadruple the original (or even more). Timing can go from an expected 10 days to a new estimate of three months. To make the situation even more difficult to untangle, groups sometimes cling even more tightly to their territories during attempts to resolve the gray areas:

There is a great sense of pride within each of the teams, and if something has been taken on and begun, then there is an especial ambition to deliver it successfully and to prove that it was fair for

their department to take on that work.

In the worst case scenario, despite offering to absorb additional costs for its clients, InnoConnect may be unable to make up for lost time and clients are lost because they had depended on assumptions of the original timeline. The CEO reflected:

While the current structure has a lot of positives – amazing buy-in, rock solid work, and rock solid cohesion within each of the teams no matter how they are geographically split – we’ve created a bit of a monster with cross-over of capabilities, pride, territoriality, and a true sense of ownership.

MAPPING GROUP TERRITORY MANAGEMENT

While the situation recounted above is the story of one company and does not capture all the components of the proposed framework, it illustrates how organizations can be natural landscapes for territory management among groups. Groups do not require overlapped expertise, however, to find themselves needing to manage territories, and cross-group struggles are not always oriented to gain or maintain ownership over work or responsibilities. Table 4.2 provides examples of groups involved in the conflict episodes and the content they fought over. First, note in the two “Group” columns (B and C) and the “Expertise” column (D) that struggles arose when groups’ expertise areas were complementary, independent, or overlapped. Second, as can be noted in the “Fought over” column (E), groups struggled over reputation (e.g., credit for success of an innovation; credit over the making of an advertisement) and resources (e.g., distribution channels relationships; access to customer information) in addition to decision rights and work responsibility.

Table 4.2. Sample episode companies, groups, expertise relationships, and targets of conflict.

A	B	C	D	E
Episode Company	Group 1	Group 2	Expertise was	Fought over
Amusement and recreation company	Business Innovation Group	Parks Group	complementary	Credit for success over a specific innovation
Fashion and lifestyle company	Old media	New media	complementary	Credit for work on an advertisement
Pharmaceutical company	Modeling Group	Sequencing Group	independent	Reputation as experts of computational analysis
Petroleum refinery company	Operations (at factory plant)	Maintenance (at a factory plant)	complementary	Access to machines
Internet information provider	Business unit	Rest of company business units	overlapped	A distribution channel, partners
Pharmaceutical company	DNA technology group	Platform science group	independent	Access to a set of machines
Transportation equipment manufacturer	After-market team	Units that build products	complementary	Access to already developed technology
Consumer electronics company	Corporate legal team and IP team	Sales group	independent	Technical info on new products
Fashion and lifestyle company	Design group	Business group	complementary	Decision to carry a particular product for the next season or not
Bank	Sales group	Credit & Collateral group	complementary	Decision to grant loan to clients
Computer systems design services company	Brand strategy team	Product teams	complementary	Decisions of which products to be included in a product package
Internet information provider	Global sales strategy team	Country teams	overlapped	Decisions over a sales strategy
Communications equipment company	HQ team	Local country team	overlapped	Decisions over local country unit
Software company	Feature team	Unrelated platform team	independent	Direction of a project component
Automobile manufacturer	Product development (Brazil)	Product development (Thailand)	overlapped	Features to be included in the product
University	Department of Social Work	Department of Law	independent	Who gets to house a new teaching and research center

Although reputation, resources, and responsibilities are intuitively related (e.g., losing ownership of a responsibility area such as a project reasonably leads to losing the reputation for that area, or gaining resources may come with gaining responsibilities), participant accounts indicated that groups tended to target their behaviors toward one central type of content within each episode. For example, in one technology company, a division that was primarily responsible for remote servers called a high-profile meeting about an unrelated platform feature that they were not involved with in an attempt to establish their reputation as associated with the ongoing work done on that platform feature. The dominant content in this struggle was reputation. In another example, the Product Development group in a heavy equipment manufacturing company would not provide access to information about their products to the After-Market team who were meant to follow up with customers and provide annuity products. The dominant content in this struggle was a resource. Table 4.3 provides episode quotes illustrating the three types of content.

Table 4.3. Territory types: the content categories over which groups fought.

Territory Types	Description	Examples
Responsibility	Area of responsibility, often associated with decision making rights	“They were thinking the domain of deciding all this belongs to HR.” (02021.035). “It’s our mission area” (01034.063). “Ultimately they wanted to push off [give away] the doing of the work.” (02023.039)
Reputation	Range of recognition or credit	“We are good at this... and this.. and this” (04016.025) “Fear that the [M] division will become as well known for the expertise as [N] division is.” (01034.062) “Who gets the credit?” (04017.000)
Resources	Set of resources (e.g., information, technology, time) or bases of resources (e.g., sponsors).	“It’s our sponsor.” (01034.000) “The [X] people keep information close to their chests.” (02025.043) “They want access to our machines.” (06006.010)

Because of the way groups struggled over reputation, resources, and responsibilities, territories emerged as a conceptually-appropriate label for the content. First, equivalent to how territories are understood to be bounded areas that actors believe are their own (Oxford Dictionary, 2015), the content at stake between groups had specific boundaries to those involved in the cross-group episodes. Second, similar to how territory at the individual level captures the objects over which employees feel psychological ownership (Brown et al., 2005), the episodes revealed that when groups fought over content, what they wanted to acquire or protect or divest were rights associated with ownership – such as association with, control over, or access to the content. As such, the responsibilities, reputation, and resources categories are labeled *territory types* in the proposed framework.

The behaviors groups use to manage territory therefore are discussed in terms of *territory management*. And the intention of groups to expand, maintain or contract territories is called *territory management orientations*. In the following sections, I situated the remaining framework in territory management orientations, then present data on territory management behaviors.

Territory Management Orientations and Forms

Participants' accounts revealed three territory management orientations, which were subdivided into six forms of territory management. The three territory management orientations differed along whether the focal group acted with the intent to expand its territory ownership, maintain territory ownership, or contract territory ownership. Table 4.4 provides a summary of the three territory management orientations, the six forms of territory management they represent, and how they differ.

Table 4.4. Territory management orientations.

Orientation	Form	Intention	Who owns the target territory? (from perspective of territory-managing party)
Expansion-Oriented Toward expanding the group's original territory(ies)	Poach	Toward expanding the group's original territory into a territory owned by another group.	Another group's territory
	Claim	Toward expanding the group's original territory into joint or unclaimed territory space.	Unclaimed territory.
Maintenance-Oriented Toward maintaining status quo on the group's original territory(ies)	Defend	Toward regaining the group's previously uncontested ownership over a territory and ending the ongoing infringement of its territory by other groups.	Our territory
	Buttress	Toward reinforcing the group's existing ownership over a territory and pre-empting potential challenger groups from infringing.	Our territory
	Avoid	Toward preventing the group from owning an unclaimed or another group's territory	Unclaimed territory or another group's territory.
Contraction-Oriented Toward decreasing the group's original territory(ies)	Divest	Toward disassociating the group from currently owned territory.	Our territory

Expansion Orientation

Expansion-oriented territory management captured the most aggressive intention of territory management behaviors and consisted of the poach and claim forms of territory management.

The *poach* form was oriented toward expanding a group's existing territory into a territory already owned by another group. The focal group was an active threat to incumbent groups. For example, this form was captured by the case recounted by a participant whose group was excluded from a critical meeting by another (poaching) group. As the participant incredulously described, the meeting was about a project component the participant's group was responsible for:

In organizing that meeting and excluding the [Y] people, the [X] group was trying to take ownership of something that was already done by our group and drive its future direction. (04017.026)

Similarly, another account showed how ownership over a resource was poached:

They created the calendar and did not allow us administrative access, which meant they had essentially taken control of our machines. (06006.010)

The *claim* form of territory management was oriented toward expanding a group's existing territory into unclaimed territory space. In the claim form, the focal group is a potential threat to other groups seeking to also expand into the same territory. Many of the reported cases involved the context of a new joint product or project where boundaries and ownership over project components were ill-defined or not defined at all. For example, business groups often fought to claim decision rights over features to be included in new product or service offerings. This occurred in fashion companies between their creative groups and their business strategy groups – for example, over whether to include a jacket in the next season because “it’s not cutting edge fashion anymore!” but “it sells!” (02019.031) – and also in conventional companies, for example between regional sales groups vying to take the lead in developing a national sales strategy.

Maintenance Orientation

Maintenance-oriented territory management captured intentions to maintain status quo of one's territory. This orientation consisted of the defend, buttress, and avoid forms of territory management.

The *defend* form of territory management was oriented toward regaining a group's previously uncontested ownership over a territory and ending the ongoing infringement of its territory by other groups. Infringement is defined as the encroachment by one party into an area that belongs to another (Lyman & Scott, 1967). The focal group was actively threatened by other groups. For example, one participant described a departmental group reacting to his division's inclusion of the department's component in their product demonstrations:

The [X] department got very upset when they found out our [Y] division did a demo with an [X] component that did not involve the X division. They started screaming when they found out, trying to try to make us stop. (01034.062)

The defense form of territory management was always targeted at a specific infringing group. For example, several participants recounted episodes that involved regional business units defending from headquarters the territory of decisions on how to run the regional businesses. Another example described a business division defending resources – both in terms of information and time – from another division:

That's the first taste of being shut down. We say, "Here are the 10 part numbers from you guys that we want to work with." They say, "No." We say, "What do you mean 'no'?" They say, "I can't make the time to be focused on this." Or they ignore our requests altogether. (01031.055)

The *buttress* form of territory management was oriented toward reinforcing the group's existing ownership over a territory and pre-empting potential challenger groups from infringing. For example, in order to prevent volunteers from infringing on the territory of decisions about food distribution procedures to the needy, the administration group of a non-profit organization added a step in volunteer group briefings:

Groups of volunteers often come in thinking they 'know better' how to do a process...Now we tell them in the morning briefing how it must be done and, explicitly, that it is non-negotiable. (09051.087)

Unlike the defend territory management form, which is aimed at a specific infringing party, the buttress form involved territory management behaviors that were targeted at a specific party or generally at any potential challenging group. For example, another participant described a scenario where his group increased the difficulty of *any* other group challenging his group's ownership (in the present or future) over access to a technology within the organization:

We took initiative for organizing a matrix team across the organization that helped establish to senior management that [the technology] is primarily – if not only – used for [a particular process], which is what our group does. This attached the technology to our group's function – it created a strong connection in the minds of management. (06006.009)

The *avoid* form of territory management is different from the forms of territory discussed thus far because it is oriented toward preventing the group's ownership over territory rather than toward keeping or gaining territory. However, the intention is still toward maintaining status quo of territories, and thus is considered a maintenance territory management orientation. An example of the *avoid* form of territory

management was reported in a tech platform development episode where each group actively tried to prevent their ownership over a vendor relationship:

We have created a software development kit. But there will always be questions from the vendors about how to use them. While the business development group makes initial contact, the developer support group explains to the vendor how to build, and the quality assurance group reviews the tools before they go live, when the vendor has a question, the vendor is the hot potato. Every group wants the vendor off their plate. (17001.063)

Similarly, another participant described how groups in a product packaging project all sought to avoid answering the question of what other products to include in the overall package:

The question of “how do you, what do you package together?” moved from one group to another, with each group trying to give it away to another. This resulted in too many products being added to the package. (07005.008).

Contraction Orientation

Contraction-oriented territory management is a major departure from the prior orientations. This orientation represents only one territory management form, the *divest form* and is focused on decreasing territory.

The divest form of territory management came up less frequently in episodes of cross-group conflict than the other forms because it is not often a problem for another group, but rather a problem for the overall organization (i.e., a group decides to no longer take care of a domain that is strategically or operationally necessary for the organization). However, the divest form of territory management surfaced in accounts of challenging cross-group episodes when another group was dependent on the focal group’s ownership of the divested territory. For example, when a sequencing group inside a biotechnology company intentionally divested ownership over late-stage analyses in the sequencing research workflow to another group, the drug R&D groups that had been dependent on the sequencing group for analyses ran into difficulties because the new group took much longer to do the analyses than the original group, and after divesting, the original group no longer had the bandwidth to service the drug R&D groups.

We gave up ownership of the secondary and tertiary analyses...It was so high touch [requiring so much time with the R&D groups].... We thought, “This is stupid...” So we got rid of it. Then of course the [other group] became very backed up, and that led to issues with the R&D group calling us up and saying, “Hey you need to be doing [the analyses] for us,” but we no longer had bandwidth. This was a big issue for the R&D groups. (17001.064)

Similarly, in an account at a construction company, the technical maintenance group intentionally divested its ownership over medium-cost maintenance requests, which it usually received from the production group to repair and upkeep factory assets. This meant that another group, the general maintenance group, was forced to take on these medium-cost requests but the general maintenance group did not want this territory either, creating a cross-group conflict that escalated up the company.

(17004.090)

Multiple Orientations in Single Episodes

The data suggests that within any episode of territory management, there can be more than one form of territory management enacted, because at least two groups are involved within a single episode. For example, both the poach and defense forms of territory management are in play within a situation where one group is trying to expand its territory into that of another group and the other group is trying to end the infringement. Or one group divesting territory can trigger another group to avoid the territory.

Different forms of territory management may also exist as the cross-group situation unfolds. For example, a first group may reinforce its ownership over a territory (buttress), the second group may begin to expand into the first group's territory (poach), the first group then tries to end the infringement (defense), etc.

Territory Management Behaviors

Analysis of the cross-group episodes suggests that the behaviors groups use to manage their territories are orthogonal to their territory management orientations. That is, the behaviors a group uses to manage its territory in an episode is independent of the group's territory management orientation. The behaviors that emerged in this study were found across all three orientations. Cycles of coding further exposed a pattern of the behaviors that plotted on a continuum from overt to covert. Table 4.5 displays this continuum. There is theoretical reason to suggest the overtness and covertness of behaviors have implications for the success of a group's territory management efforts, which will be explored in the Propositions section.

Table 4.5. Behaviors: Overt to covert.

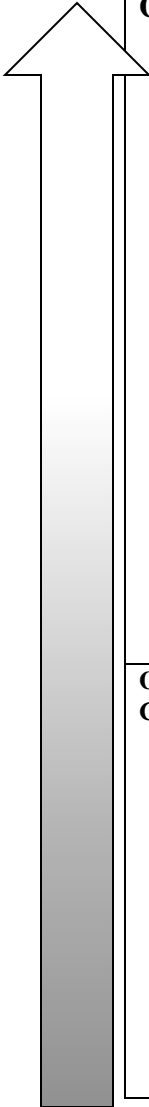
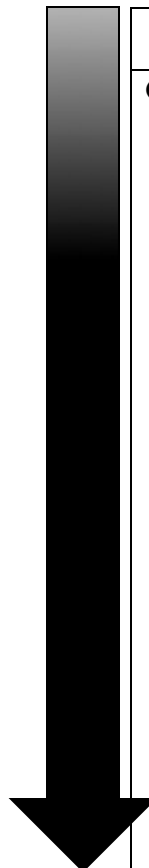
		Behaviors	General Description	Mechanism/Function
	OVERT	Assertions	Behaviors that explicitly display felt ownership over a territory: usually explicit verbal assertions or explicit exercises of control within the territory. In <i>avoid</i> and <i>divest</i> forms of territory management (under Maintenance and Contraction Orientations, respectively), these same behaviors are used to indicate the opposite: to display <i>no</i> ownership and a lack of association.	Explicitly signals to the (actual or potential) opponent group, and bystander groups, that the territory is considered owned (or not owned, in the case of avoid or divest forms of territory management). Insinuates that the territory-managing group will put in effort to compete for, defend, or challenge the opposing group if required (or to prevent or disown the territory, in the case of avoid and divest forms of territory management). This may prompt the opposing group to reassess whether it is worth their efforts to continue (or start) pursuing or defending this territory.
		Attacks on others / own group*	Behaviors that directly challenge another group's legitimacy or competence in a territory. In <i>avoid</i> and <i>divest</i> forms of territory management (under Maintenance and Contraction Orientations, respectively), these same behaviors are used to question the group's own competence in the territory.	Better positions the territory-managing group as legitimate owners over the territory of interest (or illegitimate owners, in the case of avoid or divest forms of territory management). Attracts attention and intimidates the other group from infringing, defending, or competing for a territory.
	Overt and Covert	Power plays	Behaviors that change the power balance between the focal group and the other group(s).	Puts the other group(s) in a weaker power position to defend or vie for territories (or puts own group in weaker position to own the territory, in the case of avoid or divest forms of territory management). Facilitates third-parties to view competing groups as less capable of taking on territory ownership compared to the territory-management group (or facilitates opposite view, in the case of avoid or divest forms of territory management). <i>Table continued on next page...</i>

Table 4.5 continued...



		Behaviors	General Description	Mechanism/Function
COVERT		Blocking	Behavior that activates or leverages structural, operational, or seemingly “rational” reasons or barriers against another group’s movement into the territory of interest. If infringement of one’s territory has already occurred, blocking involves activating or leveraging these barriers and reasons in attempts to remove the opportunity to infringe. In <i>avoid</i> and <i>divest</i> forms of territory management (under Maintenance and Contraction Orientations, respectively), these same behaviors are used to create barriers to prevent the group from owning the territory or to remove the group’s ability to continue owning the territory.	Prevents others the opportunity to infringe on, compete for, or defend desired territory (or prevents own group to compete for or defend the desired territory, in the case of avoid or divest forms of territory management). If infringement has occurred, behaviors are oriented to <i>remove</i> the opportunity to infringe. (Or removes opportunity for own group to own the territory, in the case of avoid or divest forms of territory management). Facilitates the speculated or actual failure of the opponent group in the desired territory (or the speculated or actual failure of own group in the focal territory, in the case of avoid or divest forms of territory management).
		Manipulations of space and boundaries	Behavior that changes the perceived space or distinctions between groups’ territories.	Either perceptually moves territories to become proximal to each other in order to blur boundaries and expand one’s territory (or contract one’s territory, in the case of the divest form of territory management), or moves territories to be as distant as possible from one another in order to keep other groups from expanding into one’s territory (or to keep own group from gaining territory in the case of the avoid form of territory management).

* Attacks are targeted at own group in *avoid* and *divest* forms of territory management (under Maintenance and Contraction Orientations, respectively) rather than on other groups.

Overt Behaviors

Overt strategies are behavioral strategies that are easy for others to recognize as territory management. Among the five behavioral strategies that emerged in open coding, *assertions* and *attacks on others* were classified as overt behavioral strategies.

The *assertions* behavioral strategy involved behaviors that displayed felt ownership over a particular territory. For example, one participant described, “It would play out as ‘Our [department’s] opinion is this and your opinion doesn’t matter,’” (02021.035) – an assertion of dominance within the territory. In another representative account, a participant described how “each group is explicit at the table and says, ‘We have a procedure we want’” (04016.025).

While the majority of assertion episodes in the study involved verbal behavior, another common practice of this behavioral strategy was to demonstrate ownership by exercising explicit control within the desired territory. For example, in an episode where a maintenance team wanted access to factory equipment, the operations group simply refused to release the machines. Both verbal claims and exercising of control signal to the (actual or potential) antagonistic group that the territory is owned (whether that ownership is agreed upon or not) and insinuates that the focal group will put in effort to defend, compete, or challenge the antagonistic group if required. This may prompt the antagonistic group to reassess whether it is worth their efforts to continue (or start) pursuing this territory.

The *attacks on others* behavioral strategy involved behaviors that directly challenged another group’s legitimacy or competence in a territory. For example, in an episode involving two groups vying for responsibility over a merged technology system, one group kept saying – to the other group, as well as to senior organizational members who were third parties to the territory management – “we know our system has features that yours [Group X] doesn’t have and it’s going to cause huge problems for us and for our clients!” (04016.023). Similarly, one participant recounted the general strategy within her organization where “people from the different departments will criticize the operations, processes, and policies of each of the other departments” to better position their groups as legitimate owners for the territory (01033.061).

Attacks on others may be effective for multiple reasons. First, simply stating another group “does not know enough” can be useful – even without a supporting argument – because merely suggesting an alleged fact often leads people to remember and believe it (Wegner, Wenzlaff, Kerker, & Beattie, 1981). This is particularly powerful when there are a number of bystander third parties who can be influenced by observing these attacks. To the extent that ownership over an object is a socially-negotiated state (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Brown et al., 2005), then the perceptions of third parties are worthwhile targets to influence. Second, attacks on other groups may be useful in attracting attention and intimidating the other groups from infringing on, defending, or competing for a territory. Participant accounts sometimes described groups using emotional outbursts against other groups to serve the latter purposes. In line with the function of attracting attention, most of the episodes consisting of attacks – particularly those involving emotional displays – resulted in escalation of the cross-group problem to higher authority third parties, such as the Chief Executive group. Finally, emotional displays or emotion-based attacks may serve less pragmatic ends. Ownership can be closely tied to identity, and as such, “infringements most likely evoke an immediate emotional response (Zajonc, 1984), followed by cognitive rationalizing” (Brown et al., 2005, p. 584).

Covert Behaviors

Covert strategies involved behavioral strategies that were comparatively subtle. Among the five behavioral strategies that emerged, *blocking* and *manipulating space and boundaries* were classified as covert strategies.

Blocking refers to behavior that prevents others the opportunity to infringe on, compete for, or defend desired territory. If infringement of one’s territory has already occurred, blocking involves behavior that attempts to remove the opportunity to infringe (e.g., facilitating the other group’s failure, or providing reasoning that operationally or logistically concludes the bases for infringement is not valid).

Blocking came in three subcategories: stonewalling, reasoning, and sabotaging. Stonewalling was behavior within cross-group interactions that prevented other parties from having the opportunities to infringe or compete. For example, one participant recounted a territory management episode that

involved a project to make organization-wide compensation policy changes, “HR was leading the effort. They saw the project as their territory... The other divisions wanted to have input into this process... HR resorted to telling as opposed to listening,” which prevented the potential infringers (i.e., other divisions) even the opening to encroach on HR’s decision territory (02021.035). In other cases of stonewalling, territory-managing groups would refuse to be transparent with even seemingly trivial background information related to their territories, preventing other parties from establishing any foundation to infringe or compete.

Reasoning was a subtler means of blocking through the strategic use of operational explanations that were not wholly accurate. For example, territory-managing groups sometimes justified not collaborating with or helping other groups by using the explanation that they lacked resources or time. Psychology research suggests that providing an explanation, whether relevant or not, may be effective in winning compliance to requests (Langer, Blank, & Chanowitz, 1978). This may be why providing an explanation for protecting, defending, or managing territories – whether reasonable or not – may be an effective strategy.

Sabotaging was the subtlest means that groups used under the blocking strategy. It most often occurred when some level of cooperation between two groups was explicitly or implicitly required by a third party authority. Sabotage behavior often had the surface guise of “cooperating” but was functionally territory management. The functional effect of sabotage behavior was to facilitate the failure of the competitor group in the desired territory. One participant described it as “low key and hidden. People’s behaviors were more subtle: ‘We won’t give you this info’; or ‘you want something, I’ll hold back’” (02021.036). One representative account of sabotage behaviors described how one group, which viewed another group as infringing on its subject matter, “helped” the other group by “sharing” mandated information:

So then [the X group] comes to [the Y group] and just data dumps: Here’s some data you couldn’t possibly parse or understand without being a subject matter expert. We are trying to demonstrate to you that you are not the subject matter expert. It’s inflammatory, hostile... But what [the Y group] actually needed, and that [the X group] knew, was to understand more about the processes and not just the product. (01031.055)

In sum, blocking behaviors remove or minimize opportunities for other groups to compete for or defend desired territories. This behavior is played out using three sub-strategies: stonewalling, reasoning, and sabotaging.

Manipulations of space and boundaries refer to territory management behavior that changed the perceived space or distinctions between groups' territories. For example, territory management groups acted in ways to keep the territories of (potential or real) antagonistic groups as separate from their own territories as possible. One participant illustrated this in an account of an attempt to jointly develop a product:

The really easy thing to do, and that we had been doing, was to say as little as possible to these guys. It was a less-than-productive relationship with each other. It was like we were trying for there to be a wall. We were essentially just throwing samples over the wall. (04014.021)

Another participant described the strategy as, "We'll do it our way, you do it yours" (01032.057). The premise of this behavior is that the farther other groups and their territories are distanced from one's desired territory, the less likely these other groups will have opportunity or basis to expand into one's territory.

Under this behavioral strategy, groups also blur territory boundaries. For example, participants described how territory-managing parties would latch onto a commonality between their own territories and a desired territory in order to justify their expansion of ownership:

[The finance group] would imply that the project has to do with the company's money, and so they would have some say in how it is managed. They would try to control things that they weren't responsible to control, trying to control projects that were run by other depts. (02021.036)

Or the territory-managing group would create and claim ownership over a "new but similar" territory to the desired one:

The X group is trying to move into the capability space under the guise of developing a new technology. They say: "We're going to do [Y technology]", which is just a different name for the same thing and which will answer the same question. They are trying to develop capability outside their function space in an attempt to move into that functional space that currently belongs to the Y group. (06006.009)

Still other territory-managing groups expanded their territories by redrawing the boundaries of desired territories. They broke down the desired territory into smaller pieces and by doing so gradually gained traction in it. An illustrative episode described the expansion of a subsidiary's territory into another territory that its parent company owned:

It's an area that [the parent company] has been doing for 50 years. They don't want to let it go. So last year, we offered them, "Fine. You can have your call center....But, the area of call center which is not profitable for you or maybe which you want to get out of, outsource it to us. You don't want to do this part? Don't do it, we do it." It's like, if I come to you...and I tell you, "How about I take this portion from a division you have?" You will say, "Why should I leave this full division to you?" But if I say, "I'll take off one portion from you," you will still feel threatened but that threat will go down very low on your radar. (01036.067)

Overt and Covert

Table 4.5 shows the continuum of overt strategies and covert strategies identified in data analysis. *Power plays* straddled the midpoint, sometimes manifesting as strategy that involved overt behaviors and sometimes covert. Power plays refer to behaviors that changed the power balance between a territory-managing group and an (actual or potential) antagonistic group. It was a means of decreasing the opportunity for others to start to infringe, to increase the costs of ongoing infringement, to increase the success of claiming, or to decrease others' ability to defend poached territory. For example, one participant recounted how a group in his organization created a power dependency, which ultimately helped the group reinforce its ownership:

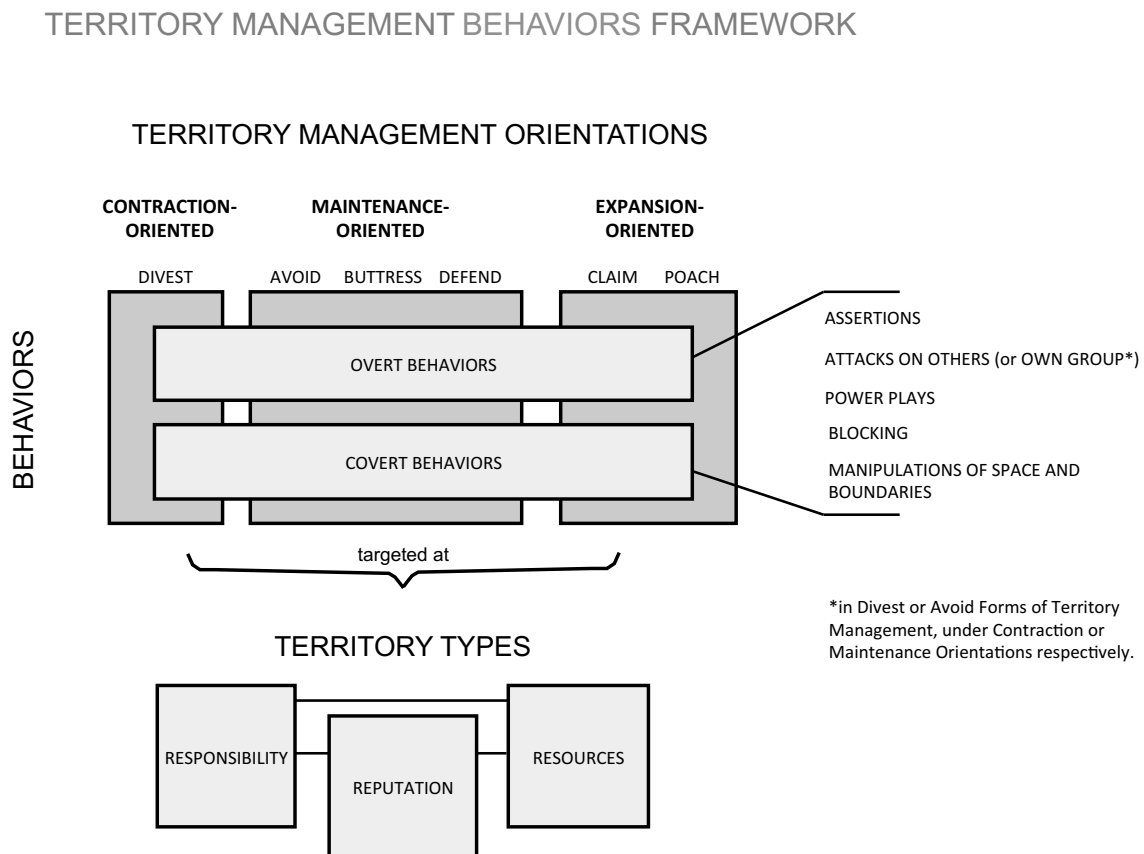
The group waited until the sales people came through and said, "Will you please look at this again?" over and over. The group was not willing to create a dialogue about the decision criteria with the sales people [or two other groups]. This led to years of back and forth where [their group had and continues to have] the power to say no. (02025.043)

Similarly, other accounts involving the power play strategy described groups dropping names during their territory management interactions, or "using supercharged words – they called a meeting the '[Topic] Summit' – to make it sound like something big was happening, and then they excluded groups that were actually involved in developing expertise in the [topic]" (04017.027).

PROPOSITIONS

The induced framework of cross-group territory management provides a starting point to theorize about the dynamics of counter-collaborative behaviors between groups, the impact that cross-group territory management may have on organization level outcomes, and conditions for when groups are more likely to succeed in their territory management goals. The emergent framework of territory types, territory management forms, and behaviors is shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Emergent framework of territory management among groups in organizations.



Escalation of Territory Management Among Groups

While much research focuses on conflict between groups, little work provides a direct basis to theorize on the escalation dynamics of counter-collaborative behaviors among groups. The finding that there are overt and covert behavioral strategies spanning the four forms of cross-group territory

management may have implications for how such behaviors escalates within organizations. Because overt territory management strategies involve behaviors that are explicitly enacted to manage territories, they are more likely to be interpreted by others as threatening, political, and “cut throat” (Schein, 1977). Thus, territory management using overt strategies, while already more likely to be detected in organizations and easier to be called out, are also more likely to be interpreted as hostile and retaliated against (Halevy, Chou, Cohen, & Bornstein, 2010). As a result, territory management employing overt strategies may lead to faster escalation (i.e., greater total frequency and intensity of territory management behaviors within a given time) in organizations, especially for maintenance- and expansion-oriented form of territory management. The faster the escalation of protective or offensive behaviors among groups in an organization, the more quickly cross-group relations between the groups will deteriorate and the more quickly upper management must step in to rectify the situation. Faster escalation may also quickly lead to the development of rivalry between groups – a competitive relationship between groups that “entails increased psychological involvement and [increased] perceived stakes of competition...independent of the objective characteristics of the situation” (Kilduff, Elfenbein, & Staw, 2010, p. 945).

Covert strategies, in contrast, involve territory management behaviors that are comparatively subtle. The subtlety of covert strategies has two implications. First, territory management enacted through covert strategies will be more difficult to notice, especially within noisy organizational contexts. For example, it may be unclear when a territory-managing group is actually constrained for time, or simply using time constraints as a move to justify withholding information from a threatening group. Moreover, organizational norms for retaliation or calling out covert territory management even when detected are likely prohibitory in organizations. For example, implicit norms may discourage calling out territory management that bystander groups have not yet detected, because calling out makes territory management explicit. Making territory management explicit may be seen as having a negative impact on organizational culture, seen as explicitly damaging cross-group relationships, or seen as a distraction from completing the ‘real’ work that the groups are meant to do (Perlow & Repenning, 2009). As such, calling out may reflect badly on the group that voiced the problem (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). The combined

barriers to detecting, calling out, and retaliating against covert behavioral strategies lead to slower escalation of cross-group territory management.

A second implication of covert strategies is that its use may not only have latent effects but also longer lasting effects within cross-group relationships. Ownership over territory that is acquired or sustained using covert strategies is likely to be more robust than using overt strategies. The reason is because covert strategies affect processes (e.g., blocking) and perceived structure (e.g., manipulation of space and boundaries) between groups. Although processes and perceived structure are difficult for the territory management group to influence, processes and perceived structure are also more difficult for other groups to retaliate against and modify (e.g., Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001; Steele, 1973). Finally, covert strategies may have longer lasting effects because, once detected, territory management using covert strategies is likely remembered for a longer time by other groups. Covert behaviors, if discovered, may be interpreted as more ill-intentioned and competitive (e.g., Rosen, Ferris, Brown, Chen, & Yan, 2014) and, because of its perceived clandestine nature, be more damaging to cross-group trust (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Mishra, 1996).

Proposition 1: The use of overt strategies leads to faster escalation of cross-group territory management in organizations compared to the use of covert strategies.

Proposition 2: The use of covert strategies has longer lasting effects on territory boundaries and cross-group relationships compared to the use of overt strategies.

Organizational Outcomes

Territory management is often associated with a negative connotation, and for good reason. Cross-group territory management can have negative organizational outcomes. For example, territory management may lead to relational conflict between groups that have lasting residual effects on possible future collaborations between the groups (Kilduff et al., 2010). As one participant described it:

The large majority of the interactions between the groups became confrontational ones over time even on different projects. All this became intolerable after a while” (02021.035).

Territory management may also lead to the alienation of groups. This is problematic because research shows groups that isolate themselves and that fail to connect with other groups often reach the worst

performance outcomes, although the group members see themselves as internally effective (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). Third, territory management may lead to unshared information and lost synergies at the organizational level. In the words of interviewees:

It got to the point where one side of the organization simply did not know what the other side of the organization was doing. There was complete lack of communication. It was completely intentional. Both of them found it problematic but they couldn't get past it. (02026.045)

We have silos. So rather than having an organization that looks after all of its business, with everybody sitting under the same umbrella and making sure that the rain doesn't hit us, everybody is just worried that they don't get wet, not that everyone else doesn't get wet too. (05059.101)

Finally, territory management can lead to lost opportunities for internal groups learning how to work better together in the future, a form of cross-group viability. Lost learning and decreased cross-group viability may have implications for organizations' absorptive capacity, competitive advantage, and ability to innovate (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011; Cohen & Levinthal, 1990).

Because the connotation of territory management is usually negative, however, the longer-term potential positives of cross-group territory management on organizational outcomes are often overlooked. For example, by protecting responsibilities and resources, territory-managing groups may make coordination more efficient. Intra-group research on transactive memory systems suggests that the more people understand "who knows what" within a system, the easier it is to coordinate (Lewis, 2003). In this vein, groups may coordinate more efficiently at the intra-organizational level when it is clear which group owns what responsibility or resource.

Second, establishing too many owners of a territory sometimes runs the risk of over-complication. For example, decisions become difficult to make and delays can damage the organization more than the potential collaboration may help. Even when all the parties vying for ownership are separately justified in their involvement – for example, each offering relevant expertise – research has shown that too many owners can be damaging for collective effectiveness (Groysberg, Polzer, & Elfenbein, 2011).

There are also situations where cross-group territory management helps to preserve the necessary integrity of a group or its task. Research on group effectiveness has shown that the perception of boundedness within a collective and the perception of a clear and compelling task are important factors for setting up a group for success (Hackman, 2002). An excessive number of fluctuations, for example, about which parties get to have a say in a territory may negatively impact the odds of success within the territory. At other times, groups may also try to infringe even when they do not have value to contribute. In those cases, keeping such groups out of a territory may be beneficial not only for the group, but also for the task and the organization.

Fourth, territory management may counterintuitively lead to greater creativity and innovation within organizations in the long-term. Groups that successfully manage territories may force peer groups to find alternative, unconventional connections within the organization that lead to unexpected innovation or creativity in solving an existing problem. Strategy research has shown how independent decisions made by separate intra-organizational groups interact to affect firm level outcomes such as performance and the ability to find new and better organizational strategies (Rivkin & Siggelkow, 2003). Research on creative behavior has shown that constraints may spur creativity (Chua & Iyengar, 2008). Taken together, constraints caused by one set of groups' decisions to behave territorially may affect the amount of new solution search engaged by other groups within the same organization.

In sum, given the potential harms and benefits of cross-group territory management, it is probable that neither a high occurrence of territory management nor zero territory management is optimal for organizations. Organizations may have the best performance outcomes following an inverted U-shaped function where the y-axis is organizational performance and the x-axis is the level of cross-group territory management inside the organization.

Future research is needed to help distinguish the characteristics and conditions specific to cross-group territory management that leads to harmful versus beneficial outcomes. When it is possible to distinguish between territory management that leads to harms versus benefits, I predict the proposed inverted U-shape function may be decomposed into two separate curves: a positive sloped curve for

beneficial cross-group territory management and a negative sloped curve for harmful cross-group territory management. Based on our preliminary understanding of cross-group territory management, however, a general inverted U-shape relationship is predicted.

Proposition 3: Organizational performance is associated with an optimal level of territory management in organizations represented by an inverted U-shaped function.

Territory Management “Success” at the Group-level

Although this study suggests that common behavioral strategies were used across the six territory management forms and their three associated orientations (expansion, maintenance, and contraction orientations), it is reasonable that different forms of territory management may interact differently with overt versus covert behavioral strategies. I theorize that groups engaged in territory management forms that reinforce status quo (i.e., maintenance-oriented forms: defense, buttress and avoid) will be equally successful when using either overt or covert behavioral strategies. In contrast, I theorize that groups engaged in territory management forms that prompt change inside the organization (i.e., expansion- and contraction-oriented forms: poach, claim, and divest) are more likely to succeed in their territory management aims when they employ covert behavioral strategies, but not overt strategies.

Territory management forms maintaining status quo are equally likely to be successful when using either overt or covert behavioral strategies because maintaining status quo is cognitively and emotionally safer than instigating change (Greene et al., 2009; Greene, Morelli, Lowenberg, Nystrom, & Cohen, 2008; Hirsh, Mar, & Peterson, 2012). As such, the need to hide these forms of territory management using covert strategies is less important compared to territory management forms that prompt organizational change. In contrast, territory management forms prompting organizational change are likely to be more successful when using covert behavioral strategies. The possibility of change leads to uncertainty and generates anxiety (Hirsh et al., 2012). In territory management scenarios, uncertainty and anxiety spurred within not only involved parties but also by-standing parties may generate resistance that is difficult for the territory-managing group to overcome. As such, covert strategies that allow territory management to be hidden increase the odds of territory management success.

Proposition 4a: Groups engaged in territory management forms that reinforce status quo (i.e., defense, buttress, and avoid forms) are equally likely to succeed in their territory management aims when using either overt or covert behavioral strategies.

Proposition 4b: Groups engaged in territory management forms that prompt organizational change (i.e., poach, claim, and divest forms) are more likely to succeed when using covert behavioral strategies.

DISCUSSION

Over what content groups in organizations fight and how they do so has not been systematically explored within extant literature despite the likelihood that understanding these two building blocks of cross-group dynamics may help the field's ability to theorize more deeply and make predictions about why groups sometimes fail to collaborate. This study used qualitative analysis of a range of cross-group conflict episodes within numerous companies to induce a framework capturing the content over which groups fight, the orientations and forms of these struggles, and the behaviors employed.

Struggles between groups were found to occur over three main types of perceptually bounded content – responsibility, reputation, and resources – and to be targeted toward ownership-based rights, such as the rights to associate with, control, or access the content. These content categories are called territory types. Groups were further found to manage their territories with an orientation toward expanding, maintaining, or contracting their territories, using behaviors that ranged from overt to covert.

Territory Management and Collaboration

The goals of this paper were to map the content over which groups struggle in organizations, and the orientations, forms and behaviors that groups use in these struggles. The findings can help to illuminate underexplored cross-group dynamics that may contribute to collaborative failures in organizations.

Drawing on extant literature and the current framework, this paper provides a basis to theorize one way that counter-collaborative behaviors may escalate in organizations and theorize when counter-collaborative behaviors may be successful toward a group's goals. First, engaging in territory management behaviors is often perceived to be counter-collaborative and extant research shows that when other groups perceive another group to be counter-collaborative, they are likely to behave in kind (Halevy

et al., 2010). The present framework and propositions build on this logic and suggest how there may be different escalation rates depending on whether the territory managing group is engaging in a maintenance-oriented form of territory management versus an expansion- or contraction-oriented form. Second, drawing on the current framework and social psychological literature, the framework also provides a basis to begin theorizing about when groups are likely to be successful in their territory management goals (Proposition 4).

This paper also contributes to the emerging dialogue in organizational literature concerned with why collaborations may fail even when the ‘right’ collaboration tools are in place (DiBenigno & Kellogg, 2014). While research has demonstrated that specific tools – for example, rules, boundary objects, liaisons, and common spaces (see Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009 for a review) – are important to facilitate cross-group collaborations, recent work demonstrates that such tools can be used in counter-collaborative ways. For example, tools may be used by members of higher-status occupations to reinforce occupational boundaries that support their privileged position (Bechky, 2003a), or collaborations tools may be used for different outcomes depending on the extent of cross-cutting demographics between groups (DiBenigno & Kellogg, 2014). The current paper is compatible with and extends this literature. Specifically, this paper maps the array of behaviors groups inside organizations use to manage territories. These behaviors are strategic, and the more that a group understands about and shares with a target group, the more likely the group is able to effectively implement territory management behaviors. For example, by having shared language or symbols with another group (Henderson, 1999), a territory managing group can more effectively engage in assertions or attacks on the other group. By understanding the rules and relationships between interacting groups’ outputs (Bardram, 2000), a territory managing group could be more effective in using blocking behavior against another group. Similarly, by having greater understanding with another group about the meaning and usage of boundary objects (e.g., Bechky, 2003b), a territory managing group may be better positioned to employ behaviors to manipulate space and boundaries against this other group.

The territory management lens forwarded in this paper also highlights the roles of ownership in motivating counter-collaborative behaviors among groups, even when collaboration tools may be in place. The desire for ownership is natural and deeply rooted in people (Brown et al., 2005; Pierce et al., 2001), and this desire may be even stronger over group-level territories because groups are the units by which larger and higher-stake organizational tasks, categories of reputation, and sets of resources are often allocated (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2011; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Owning such territory may be critical for a group's legitimacy to exist within the organization, be the means through which groups demonstrate efficacy, and a source of group identity from which its members may feel pride and draw their self-esteem. As such, even when the 'right' collaboration tools and conditions are in place, members of groups may still engage in territory management.

Jurisdictional Control and Territoriality

Jurisdictional Control

This paper is similar to jurisdictional control research on occupational communities in that it assumes groups exist within an ecosystem of other groups striving for ownership and control. While occupations-based studies in the workplace have used in-depth ethnographic studies into a small number of comparative cases (e.g., Barley, 1986; Bechky, 2003b; DiBenigno & Kellogg, 2014), this paper employs a complementary design capturing a wider range of groups, that converges with the extant workplace studies to find that boundaries among groups in the workplace are perpetually in dispute and that groups and their members have strategies to manage these boundaries. This paper extends extant literature by providing a systematic and empirically-grounded framework of maintenance-oriented and expansion-oriented forms of territory management and describes a continuum of overt to covert behaviors that groups may use.

This paper, however, is also different from jurisdictional control research because this study focally examines organizational groups. Organizational groups are not always divided along occupational boundaries – for example, engineers of one product feature group need not be different from engineers of another product feature group within a software company – and as such, do not necessarily have the

external institutional structures and accompanying differentiated status, differentiated professional identities, and specified expertise that come with occupational group membership. Indeed, this paper argues that organizational groups have to battle out their status, identities, and perceived expertise within their organizations based on the group's ownership over specific territories within a bounded organizational landscape. Such groups are not necessarily concerned about a larger, normative definition of "what people like us do" (e.g., "what nurses do" or "what doctors do"), rather they are foremost concerned with "what we do (or what we are known for; or what we own) in *this* organization."

Further, organizational groups may, on average, experience a tighter perceived interdependence than occupational communities. Professionals from the same occupational community may be distributed throughout an organization (Abbott, 1988), and as such, they may view their day-to-day work as less interdependent compared to members of organizational groups who experience a shared fate in achieving the group's short-term and long-term goals. Members of organizational groups may therefore experience greater pressure within the organization to act collectively on behalf of their groups and their groups' territories.

This paper also focuses on behaviors that are used to contract ownership areas rather than only to protect and gain areas of ownership, which is the general focus of jurisdictional control research. While jurisdictional control research has begun to link ownership-driven behaviors that are oriented toward protection and gain to intergroup conflict, focusing on the full array of behaviors motivated by ownership (including contraction-oriented forms) is important. Understanding the full array of behaviors can provide a more comprehensive picture of how these behaviors may play out between groups, which

Individual Level Territoriality

This paper builds on individual-level territoriality research (Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Robinson, 2011) by extending the territory lens to the group level, and thus allows the use of territory and its associated concepts to inform cross-group collaboration. However, unlike the original theory for territoriality, this paper proposes an empirically-based framework of the content, orientations, forms and continuum of behaviors that groups may employ within organizations.

There are similarities and differences between the behaviors in territoriality research at the individual level and the findings in the current study among groups. Both overt and covert behaviors found in this study correspond with recent empirical work that, post hoc, found individuals engage in reactionary defense behaviors in two ways: direct versus indirect confrontation with infringers (Brown & Robinson, 2011). However, only overt behaviors in this study map onto the concept of marking behaviors at the individual-level, while covert behaviors do not (Brown et al., 2005). The possible reasons for divergence may be twofold. First, the framework in this study was inductive and empirically-grounded whereas theory on individual level territoriality was grounded purely in past psychology and evolution literature. While the theorized individual level territoriality behaviors were later deductively supported in a study of employees protecting physical workspace (Brown, 2009), there may be additional categories of behaviors that are not yet captured, given that territoriality among individuals in organizations is still a nascent area of research (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). For example, it required an inductive study on reactionary defense behaviors to find that there were direct and indirect dimensions to the behavior (Brown & Robinson, 2011).

Second, the framework in this study is focused on struggles among groups over territory rather than struggles among individuals. Complexity increases with higher levels of analysis because, not only are there collective concepts at the higher level of analysis composed of similar concepts at the lower level of analysis (e.g., members' competitive attitudes toward another group may be added up), but there are also phenomena that emerge only at the higher level of analysis (e.g., group ownership, identity, and status cannot be parsed among individuals) (Hackman, 2003). As such, there may be behaviors and orientations at the group level that may diverge from individual level territoriality because of emergent properties when groups interact in organizations.

There is also a divergence between the current study and research on territoriality because the present study focuses on managing territories, as such capturing expansion and contraction orientations to territories, in addition to a maintenance orientation. In contrast, territoriality is focused primarily on protecting territories, and peripherally on gaining new territory (Brown et al., 2005).

Individuals in Cross-group Territory Management

The focal level of analysis in this study was the level of groups inside organizations. To gain a robust understanding of cross-group territory management, however, requires attention to multiple levels (Hackman, 2003). The data from this study hinted at two “entry points” for how individual-level phenomena fed cross-group territory management: ambassador-based interfaces between groups, and trickle down effects from group leaders.

First, in the reported territory management episodes, whole groups interacted and clashed *as groups*, for example, while in the same physical room or in multiple group-wide communications using email. There were also occurrences, however, where the interface of territory squabbles was between individual members, each representing or acting as an “ambassador” for his or her respective group (Li & Hambrick, 2005). For example, although a sales group as a whole required a set of information from the production group as a whole, the actual request took place between a single sales person asking a single production person for the information. The ambassador-based interface is similar to the concept of individuals serving as “boundary spanners” within Ancona and Caldwell’s (1992) research on how teams manage their organizational environments. In their research, boundary spanners are individual members who, among other activities, act on behalf of their groups to secure resources and to protect the team. Similar to Ancona and Caldwell’s (1992) model, which suggests team level strategies arise from a combination of cross-boundary activities at the individual member level, cross-group territory management is also a multi-level phenomenon. Specifically, group level behaviors arise from the (often tacitly) coordinated and collective behaviors of individual members as they interface with members of other groups. The outcome of group level territory management, in turn, affects the entire group, benefiting or harming all individual members within the group.

The proposal that group territory management arises from the tacitly coordinated and collective behaviors of individual members provides another avenue to theorize when cross-group territory management may sometimes be more successful than others. First, in successful territory management, individual ambassadors of the same group reinforce and complement one another in their interactions

with members of the other group. For example, ambassadors from one team may consistently deny members of an infringing team access to a particular resource, even though these interactions happen at the interpersonal level and in separate situations. In less successful territory management, individual ambassadors likely behave in an uncoordinated fashion that sends mixed signals to the other group and that does not adequately execute a group-level behavioral strategy. For example, a single careless or confused ambassador allowing one person from the other team to monopolize a key resource may usurp the ambassador-group's territory management campaign regardless how exacting the ambassador's colleagues had been in their interactions with the other team.

Second, individual level phenomena may also affect group territory management in the form of trickle down effects from the group leader. Some interview accounts suggested that group members observe their leader and behave, as one participant put it, according to the *modus operandi*: "if my leader's going to bat, I will go to bat" (02021.000). This suggests a variety of factors related to how leaders may affect territory management dynamics at the group level. For example, the more frequently group members are exposed to their leader, the more likely members will be influenced by his or her individual tendencies to target territory management behaviors toward a particular group (e.g., our sales VP will not give the information to the production VP; we the group, therefore, will not give the information to the production group). Similarly, the more a leader acts consistently toward a particular group in front of his or her individual members on separate occasions, the more coordinated individual members may behave in their separate territory management actions toward the other group. This, in turn, may increase the effectiveness of territory management at the group level because it helps coordinate ambassador-based interactions. For example, individual members of a group may have different levels of exposure to instances where their group leader is targeting territory management behaviors toward another group. If the leader consistently acts or communicates protectiveness against another group *across* these member exposures, the more these separate members will be coordinated when they separately (from the leader and from other colleagues) interact with individuals from the antagonistic team.

In these ways, individual level factors help us more deeply understand territory management among groups in organizations. This discussion also makes clear that territory management cannot be explained only with reference to a group's component parts (i.e., the individual ambassadors or the leader and individual members), because successful territory management requires collective and coordinated behaviors. Therefore, territory management is an emergent phenomena and "must be studied in [its] own terms at [its] own level" (Hackman, 2003, p. 906), along with appropriate bracketing at lower and higher levels of analysis. A rich avenue for future research will be on how individual level behaviors and roles, such as the ones discussed, are coordinated to the group level to enact cross-group territory management.

Limitations and Future Research

As with all studies, the methodological approach in this study comes with strengths as well as certain limitations. While the breadth of episodes that I collected helped to induce a systematic framework of territory types and territory management orientations, forms, and behaviors, I had to trade off capturing multiple perspectives in each episode. As such, this paper does not aim to theorize a process, but to contribute to theory via classification that is conducive for propositions and future studies on territory management and the escalation of counter-collaborative behaviors among groups in organizations.

The use of single-perspective interview data may also prompt concerns about memory and biases to the data and conclusions, but these concerns may be attenuated for at least two reasons. First, the accuracy of retrospective interview data has been found to be high when the quality criterion of recalled episodes is met (Flanagan, 1954). Specifically, "if the information provided is full, clear, and detailed," as was the case in this study, accuracy can be dependably high (Butterfield et al., 2005, p. 481). Second, the single perspective on each territory management episode is less likely to threaten the validity of this article's arguments because of the large number of episodes included in the analyses. Episodes ranged from perspectives of being on the receiving end of territory management, to the giving end, to simply being a third party observer of the episode. As such, biases to particular perspectives should have been offset by the number of episodes coming from alternative perspectives. The fact that the territory types

and territory management forms and strategies converged despite these perspectives across episodes is a strength of the study.

CONCLUSION

This paper presents a qualitative study on territory management among groups in organizations. The emergent framework aimed to begin mapping and characterizing the orientations and forms that territory management takes inside organizations, the behaviors used to manage territories, and the content over which groups fight when ownership is on the line. This study ultimately aimed to contribute to a more complete theoretical understanding of cross-group conflict and collaboration. The result was a framework that reflects the imperative of groups to engage in ongoing management of intra-organizational territories.

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CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Each of the three chapters brings to our attention the need for groups to remain differentiated from other groups. Ignoring this general need misses the opportunity to better understand ways to help groups navigate balancing their need to remain separate from other groups in the organization with organizational needs for the groups to collaborate. In fact, ignoring this general differentiation imperative can be counter-effective for our efforts to help groups get along and perform well in organizations.

The first essay, Chapter 2, introduced the phenomenon of cross-group flouting, showing how accepted wisdom about the ways to encourage cross-group integration can backfire if groups' natural tendencies to remain differentiated are not adequately considered. Specifically, this paper shows that, driven by their differentiated internal priorities, groups will use one means of cross-group integration – in this case, informal cross-group activities – to bypass another – in this case, formal cross-group processes. The findings illuminate how interdependences between groups translate to resistance between them, and raise the question of when groups might be willing to accommodate one another despite differentiated internal priorities, which are often legitimized by cross-group structures that unintentionally reinforce expectations of differentiated internal group functioning. This chapter further makes the argument that the pursuit of differentiation between groups can have long term consequences on their relations and future collaboration capabilities.

Extending some of the themes raised in Chapter 2, the territory management chapters illuminate an innate drive for groups to maintain separations from other groups for organizationally-situated security. This drive is reflected in the dynamics of group ownership and territories inside organizations. In Chapter 3, the theory of territory management in organizations, I use social psychology, group, and organizational literatures to theorize how groups' seemingly uncooperative behaviors with one another can be traced to their territory ownerships, which satisfy needs for group legitimacy, control, and identity,

and together are sources for groups' existential security in their organizations. The model I propose can be used to understand how and why territory management among groups may become escalated and sustained at high levels in organizations, and how one can intervene to weaken the reinforcing loop. Among other insights, this chapter returns to the reality of interdependence and resistance among groups in organizations that was raised in Chapter 2. It provides a novel explanation for understanding why resistance surfaces and how it might be attenuated among groups in organizations.

Chapter 4, the empirical paper mapping group territory management behaviors and territory content common in organizations provides another angle to understand the territory management phenomenon in organizations. This paper focuses particularly on the territory management behaviors that surface in cross-group conflicts, helping to further situate groups' needs to remain differentiated in the context of cross-group interfaces that are critical for organizational performance. Drawing on the framework in this chapter and on literature, this chapter returns to the theme that differentiation behaviors among groups, especially depending on the orientations and forms they take, can have long term impact on cross-group relations.

As the need for cross-group collaboration has increased in the world, less attention has been paid to groups' needs to remain differentiated inside organizations. This dissertation suggests that, ironically, the greater the pressure placed on groups to integrate and collaborate inside organizations, the more likely it is that groups' needs for differentiation will be unmet and that they will act against integration, stalling the short (and potentially long) term realization of strategic opportunities that require groups to work together.

This dissertation calls for more research to understand how groups' needs for differentiation manifest in organizations, and how to constructively reconcile those needs with the needs of the organization for cross-group integration. For example, future research is needed to investigate the nature and pattern of differentiated internal priorities among groups and how these priorities interact with higher level, organizational goals. Groups inside an organization are likely to have shared goals at some level (likely organizational level) due to being a part of the same organization (Thompson, 1967). These shared

goals tend to orient groups toward the integration of efforts with other groups. Shared goals are a core component of “organizational alignment” necessary for organizational success and are often a primary target (along with incentives) that managers assume will alleviate uncooperative behaviors between groups (Varcoe & Trevor, 2017). However, as suggested in the chapters of this dissertation, high level integration goals may not, in practice, be the most prioritized during groups’ day-to-day efforts. At what level of specificity do organizational integration goals become salient and prioritized within groups without threatening their needs for remaining differentiated? Does specificity of integration goals help or hinder group collaboration given needs for remaining differentiated? Is there a mix of goals that is optimal for groups to feel a balance of differentiation and integration?

Future research is also needed to better understand the boundary conditions for groups needing to feel differentiated at all. Research is needed to understand under what conditions group-based priorities and territories gain or lose importance – particularly with the increasing needs for fast-paced teaming among hyper-fluid workers, the rise of professional experts, and the popularity of “gig work” in today’s society (Edmondson, 2012; Gardner, 2017; Valentine & Edmondson, 2015). Individuals’ sense of affiliation and shared fate with a group is likely a necessary condition for group-based priorities and territories to drive behaviors (Hackman, 2002). Once workers no longer experience a specific group as consequential for their everyday work or outcomes, the priorities and territories that guide behavior are likely to devolve from the group level down to the individual level (i.e., individual level workplace priorities and individual level territories become most important for guiding behavior). At the same time, we know from psychology that people have an innate need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Tajfel, 1978) making it unlikely that group-based priorities and territories will become completely irrelevant even in very temporary groups. Future research is needed to understand in what ways group-based priorities and territories manifest in very temporary groups. How do these priorities and territories differ from those of relatively more stable groups and with what consequences?

Finally, future research is needed to understand the inflection point where the need for group differentiation becomes positive. Research in this area is timely particularly for organizations seeking to

remain relevant and competitive in the modern world, where effective cross-boundary work is a must-win aspect for organizational survival. As a recent interview with Doug McMillon, the CEO of Walmart, illustrates (Ignatius, 2017), even in the context of rapidly changing technologies and competitive environments that bring new and complicated difficulties – such as how to leverage big data or deal with geopolitics – maintaining competitive advantage rests ultimately in the ability to “*figure[e] out how to get people to work together in the right ways*. We [Walmart] have a big team in.... We have [another] in...and another in.... How do we design the company...? *When do we work together? When do we not work together?*” (Ignatius 2017, p. 97, italics added). While McMillon’s questions of “When do we work together? When do we not work together?” could be a query into pockets of noncooperation inside Walmart, it is possible that McMillon meant the questions in wise recognition that there is a time and place where cross-boundary collaboration and integration are beneficial, and a time and place where they are not. Differentiation offers more than just social psychological wellbeing for individuals (Brewer, 1991; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and an opportunity for groups inside organizations to develop deep expertise (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967); differentiation is also a critical way for groups to get what they need done, and a way for an organization to get out of its own way when innovating or executing new strategy (Benner & Tushman, 2003). Skunkworks – the effort of a group inside an organization to work autonomously (and sometimes even secretly) on a project – is a well-known term in organizations that have sought to disrupt themselves, seeking to protect the territory and work of groups so that they can innovate without the constraints that could keep the efforts mired in status quo (May, 2012). Only after a skunkworks’ project has reached a defensible maturity does the project become integrated back into the larger organization. The development of the Android operating system in Google is an example.

Richard Hackman posed the incisive question, “When teams, when not?” in his book *Collaborative Intelligence* (2011, p. 22). He did so to emphasize the theoretical and practical importance of identifying the conditions under which teams are appropriate vehicles to address a challenge and when they are not, cautioning against the indiscriminate use of teams as Band-aids for all organizational issues. A parallel and timely pair of question is posed here, “When integrate and collaborate? When not?” These

questions, along with the needs of groups to remain differentiated but ultimately integrated toward the organization's purpose reveals just how difficult it can be for organizations to strike the right balance navigating their internal cross-group terrain to pursue strategic opportunities and goals.

Taken together, this dissertation takes a first step to show how giving due attention to and understanding the needs of intra-organizational groups to remain separate and autonomous – that is, to remain differentiated – can help us to better understand how to help organizations and their leaders navigate cross-group terrain. This work makes a contribution toward understanding how to help organizations understand the difficulties and dynamics of melding their groups' efforts together to take advantage of strategic opportunities. I hope that leaders and organizations will use this knowledge to perform and do better for their employees, their groups, their organizations, and the world.

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