NETWORKING

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This chapter examines networking as a career intervention. I begin by setting out the historical background, drawn from the extant literature from the 1970s to date, as a prelude to the presentation of a practical application. The purpose and nature of organizationally initiated networking as a career intervention for a minority group are explained, the models underpinning the method are articulated, and the materials and resources needed and populations involved are highlighted. I then set out a case study example to illustrate this career intervention in practice. The chapter concludes with references that act as a resource for researchers and practitioners in this field.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

I begin this section by defining networking. I then review the extant literature addressing various issues and dimensions involved in networking. These include structural context, gender, organizational networking, network quality, and international issues.

Definitions

The origins of the word *network* are unclear, although the juxtaposition of *net* (a mesh used in fishing or hunting to catch prey for survival) with *work* (to operate, act, have influence, accomplish) indicates a deliberate strategy that requires effort to achieve a successful gain in resources. The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998) defined the verb *network* as to "interact with other people to

exchange information and develop contacts especially to further one's career" (p. 1246); the *Chambers Dictionary of Science and Technology* (1999) stated, "To build or maintain relationships with a network of people for mutual benefit" (p. 779). These definitions indicate that networking can be practiced for personal and mutual gain. The degree of reciprocity is, however, unclear. As Gouldner (1960) noted, exchange of benefits may be equal, one individual may give more or less than received, or one individual may give nothing back for any received benefits. An equal exchange represents full reciprocity, potentially an idealized exchange between the parties, but this is rare in social relationships. The one-sided approach envisages a strategy in which contacts are hunted, captured, and used for short-term career survival. However, with no reciprocity offered, networking solely for personal gain is more likely to be detrimental to an individual's longer term career outcomes (Jolink & Dankbaar, 2010).

Wolff and Moser (2009) defined networking as "behaviors aimed at building and maintaining informal relationships, that possess the (potential) benefit to ease work related actions by voluntarily granting access to resources and by jointly maximizing advantages of the individuals involved" (p. 1). Networks thus act as relationship conduits. These conduits create social capital owned by both parties: "Social capital is captured from embedded resources in social networks" (Lin, 1999, p. 28). Social capital amounts to goodwill (Adler & Kwon, 2002); once one party withdraws from a relationship, the social

capital connection breaks. In essence, as Burt (1995) stated, "Social capital is the final arbiter of competitive success" (p. 9). Successful networking is built on developing mutual benefit through a two-way exchange of commitment, cooperation, credibility, integrity, and trust (de Klerk, 2012).

Over the years, the extant literature has considered aspects such as the structural nature of networks and the ties that link individuals within them, as well as disadvantaged groups and the factors that limit their access to and career outcomes from organizational networking. It has also explored networking for employees within and between organizations, providing examples in different industry sectors and professions, by organizational size, and in various geographical regions, job levels, and roles. Knowledge creation and transfer through networks and human resources interventions to facilitate networking have also been examined. In this chapter, I review the literature with respect to individual networking as a career intervention. Organizational alliances and networks and the use of social media by individuals are excluded from this exposition.

Structural Context

To set the scene, an understanding of the social structures in which networking takes place, without which no discussion of networks as a career intervention would be complete, is required. Granovetter's (1973, 1983) seminal works have indicated that weak ties with acquaintances are critical to providing opportunities for individuals to integrate into other communities. Weak ties provide a bridge for individuals to access contacts within different social groups and, by association, these contacts' dense and cohesive networks of strong ties with close friends and colleagues. Paradoxically, he suggested that although strong ties and high network density create local cohesion, they lead to overall fragmentation. Burt (1995) explained that dense networks are made up of strong, cohesive relationships between contacts. Contacts share information and thus know similar things. As a result, a dense network has a high level of redundant contacts. Maintaining dense networks requires time and effort, but the cohesion between members of the network cluster results in each person gleaning only similar information.

Sparse networks, by contrast, have low network density and fewer redundant contacts. They are also less intensive to maintain, and hence the opportunity cost derived from them is greater: They can present greater information advantages.

Burt's (1995) analysis recognized differences in tie strength as identified by Granovetter (1973, 1983) but argued that information is expected to cross these bridges regardless. Strong ties operate between individuals within network clusters (although not uniformly among all); some individuals also have weak ties to other networking groups. Burt stated that structural holes, defined as the connecting relationship between two nonredundant contacts, exist within and between network clusters where disconnections exist, and it is these holes that provide additive benefits: entrepreneurial prospects for individuals who can exploit them and so gain information advantages, such as access, timing, and referrals, as well as control benefits, such as by acting as the intermediary or broker between unconnected players in the network. The size of the network does not reflect its utility; rather, it is the number of nonredundant contacts within it that provides the greatest richness of structural holes and results in the highest efficiency. In essence, there is less to be gained by cultivating people linked to existing contacts and more to be gained by developing nonredundant contacts. A further principle concerns network effectiveness. To optimize network benefits, the individual must focus on primary, nonredundant contacts that can provide entry to new clusters.

In summary, individuals with high structural autonomy (their networks optimize structural holes) reap the highest returns on their investment because they have information, play a part in its transfer, and can control more rewarding openings. Brokerage across structural holes in itself becomes a source of social capital (Burt, 2004). As Seibert, Kraimer, and Liden (2001) found, weak ties and structural holes "positively relate to the level of social resources embedded in a person's network" (p. 232), with social resources, in turn, positively related to career success in the form of things such as salary, promotions, and career satisfaction. Yet, as Burt (1998) noted, although entrepreneurial

networks are linked to promotions for early-career men, this is not the case for women; social capital is gendered.

Gender

Kanter (1977) drew attention to gender differences in networking opportunities within corporations. For example, women's predomination in administrative staff roles, rather than in line management, and in noncore functions reduces their access to social contact and communication within the organization's principal operations and increases their likelihood of exclusion from informal peer networks. Yet, women are not denied entry into informal networks; indeed, men and women appear equally able to build them. The issue concerns the separation of male and female networks. Given that men form the dominant coalition and determine promotions, centrality within the male network is necessary for career success. Hence, women are disadvantaged (Brass, 1985; Nicholson, 2000).

Ibarra's (1992) research into the effect of gender on network structure, interaction, and access has indicated that men form stronger homophilous ties across multiple organizational networks than women, meaning that men have a greater tendency to form male network relationships. They also gain greater individual and positional returns from similar resources than do women. Women build networks through functional differentiation. In effect, they "navigate a course between two different social circles" (Ibarra, 1993, p. 74), building networks within both their (female) social group and the more senior (male) managerial group. This is problematic in that, because it is difficult to maintain relationships within two differing work-related social groups, women can feel pressure to demonstrate their allegiance to both while effectively finding that intergroup sanctions prevent them from fitting into either one. Splitting time by engaging in such different networking strategies is less productive. Ibarra (1997) suggested that women with high potential for advancement may need more resources to be derived from close and external ties or from a wider range of network types than men. In her consideration of race, Ibarra's (1995) findings revealed that high potential for career advancement relates to

network ties with Whites or balanced networks of same- and cross-race contacts.

The nature of networking behavior undertaken affects career outcomes. Forret and Dougherty (2004) found increasing internal visibility to be particularly helpful in achieving promotion and total compensation (but more so for men than for women) and perceived career success (more so for women than for men). Engaging in professional activities is related to total compensation (positively for men but negatively for women) and perceived career success (again positively for men but negatively for women). Socializing is only marginally related to perceived career success, whereas career outcomes are not significantly affected by networking behaviors such as maintaining external contacts (low-intensity relationships or those lacking reciprocity) and participating in community activities. Networking style can result in deepening or broadening networks (Vissa, 2010). A focus on internal networking leads to promotions and changes of employer, whereas external networking relates only to changes of employer (Wolff & Moser, 2010). Individuals use covert behaviors such as the creation of obligation to achieve extrinsic (promotion, compensation, status) and intrinsic (personal satisfaction, self-worth) career rewards (Harris & Ogbonna, 2006). This raises an ethical dimension; unethical behavior includes the abuse or misuse of trust and power, opportunism, cronyism, and corruption (Melé, 2009).

Different cultural agendas can also be in play. For example, Travers, Pemberton, and Stevens (1997) suggested that women's networking behaviors differ in the United States, United Kingdom, and Spain. In their study, women in the United States were found to be more instrumental, using networks as a forum for self-projection. By contrast, women in the United Kingdom placed more emphasis on using networks for development of self-confidence and networking skills. In Spain, women focused to a greater extent on social aspects of networking. Travers et al. suggested that such cultural differences in the use of networking for instrumentalist, development, or social practices and motives can lead to barriers to cross-cultural networking.

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Organizational Networking

As early as the 1970s, Kanter (1977) noted the decline of organizational bureaucratic careers and the increasing prevalence of professional and entrepreneurial careers whose locus lay not within the heart of an institution but within individuals' own professional network. Arthur and Rousseau's (1996) seminal work on boundaryless careers is of particular relevance to the forms that inter- and intraorganizational networking might take given that they highlighted careers becoming less "bounded" by a traditional sole organizational career path but increasingly taking a range of forms across a spectrum of employments. With increasing emphasis on individuals driving their own protean careers (Hall, 1996) as organizations restructure, decentralize, and globalize (Hall, 2004), networking is thus recognized as taking place within organizations, the vertical sector, and externally, the lateral sector (Kaplan, 1984). Although network ties make up the sum of an individual's interpersonal ties, they are usually considered to exclude traditional mentors, defined as trusted advisers of unequal status or power who provide developmental assistance to their protégés (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2010). Yet the interconnected nature of mentoring and networking is becoming increasingly apparent. As Higgins and Kram (2001) highlighted, mentoring support is extending externally, out from organizations, as individuals draw on wider, multiple sources. Traditional one-on-one mentoring is insufficient today. The creation and cultivation of developmental networks in the form of small groups of mentors is needed for career success (Kram & Higgins, 2008) as career responsibility becomes less firm but more self-reliant (Forret & Sullivan, 2002). The unique career developmental opportunities that flow from peer relationships (Kram & Isabella, 1985) are thus enhanced through developmental networks.

Network Quality

Lambert, Eby, and Reeves (2006) reported that network quality depends on diversity and information value. Although diversity of network ties increases self-efficacy and innovation (Martinez & Aldrich, 2011), a further issue to consider relates to the nature of the transfer of information. For example,

Hansen (1999) found that although weak ties speed up the sharing of useful knowledge between project teams across subunits in multiunit organizations, the transfer of complex knowledge is impeded by them. If career progression hinges on knowledge transfer, strong network ties will better facilitate this. Durbin (2011) reported on the importance of tacit knowledge in today's organizations. Women's restricted network access has an impact on their involvement in the creation and transfer of tacit knowledge and, as a consequence, their access to organizational resources and power.

International Issues

Given that the extant literature has identified international experience as a prerequisite for career growth in today's global business environment (Altman & Shortland, 2008), women's minority status as expatriates compounds their workplace disadvantage. The term *expatriate* indicates "employment outside one's native country" (Edström & Galbraith, 1977, p. 249). Women's low participation in expatriation is attributed to a range of factors, including family circumstances, host country reception, and informal and potentially biased selection processes (Shortland & Altman, 2011). Yet, female managers' lack of access to appropriate networks, as well as mentors and role models, and hence their reduced awareness of international opportunities also play a part in explaining why they miss out on expatriate appointments (Linehan & Scullion, 2008). Linehan's (2001) research found that female expatriates view the benefits of networking in international management (either through formal or informal channels) as being more valuable than those in domestic management. Once one is on assignment, networks support adjustment and the building of contacts and friendships because of the absence of family and friends (Linehan & Walsh, 2001). Besides emotional support, network ties with the right people while in the host location are also essential to gain critical information resources (Farh, Bartol, Shapiro, & Shin, 2010).

Cross-gender networking reduces female managers' intentions to quit (Ng & Chow, 2009), and businesswomen prefer male networks, yet cultural issues can limit cross-gender networking interaction

(Alserhan & Al-Waqfi, 2011). These issues are particularly problematic for at least three reasons. First, expatriates' developmental networks are set in cross-cultural contexts (Shen & Kram, 2011). Second, cultural differences can be large, and the population from which support is drawn is transient (Hartl, 2004). Third, the male-dominated expatriate workforce maintains its power by excluding women from male networks (Linehan & Scullion, 2008). Hence, although women are encouraged to network to increase their visibility, gain access to expatriation, and aid their adjustment (Linehan & Scullion, 2004), they need help. Caligiuri and Cascio (1998) urged employers to assist women through the provision of in-country network support. Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly (2006) pointed out that networking interventions within structures that embed accountability, such as where diversity committees, taskforces, departments, and diversity managers hold responsibility for them, have the potential to reduce bias against disadvantaged groups. Yet, although there is some literature concerning human resources interventions that can support and encourage interorganizational networking (e.g., Jolink & Dankbaar, 2010), little information is available on organizational policy and practice demonstrating employer provision of networking specifically to assist minority groups intraorganizationally.

Hersby, Ryan, and Jetten (2009) proposed that network initiatives that aim to address issues such as gender inequality must be framed by their collective benefits to encourage women's participation; they must also signal organizational desire for positive change for women. They argued that tackling women's exclusion from the old-boy network, for instance through the creation of an alternative women's network, must go beyond aspirations of gender equality to provide a practical career intervention within a suite of organizational initiatives addressing inequality. In the following section, I take this idea forward to describe, theorize, and explain how a women's network can be developed. As a practical illustration, a case study is presented, giving an example of an organizational intervention of a women's network as it is interpreted by a minority group, namely female expatriates in a male-dominated industry (Shortland, 2011).

NETWORKING FOR DISADVANTAGED AND MINORITY GROUPS

Organizational network interventions possess the potential to enhance the careers and status of disadvantaged and minority groups by facilitating their access to contacts, development, opportunities, and experiences within their professional domains. Although such interventions can aim to promote networking at an individual or a collective level, networks specific to particular groups can, in effect, provide both individual and group career enrichment benefits. For example, a collective network strategy for the career enhancement of women can provide individual status improvement as well as benefits for the group as a whole, acting as a vehicle to change women's status within the organization and bring about lasting structural change in gendered relations (Hersby et al., 2009).

Models

Hersby et al.'s (2009) research suggested that two main factors influence women's support for collective and individual network strategies to achieve status and career enhancement: the effects of the permeability of male and female group boundaries and the stability of male and female intergroup relations. One might expect that the legitimacy of male–female intergroup status differences would be taken into account (with legitimate group status differences less likely to be challenged than illegitimate differences), yet Hersby et al. found no support for this. Following Hersby et al.'s findings, a model is depicted in Figure 26.1 that links women's differing network strategies to the permeability of the male–female group boundary and the stability of relations between men's and women's organizational groups. As Hersby et al. suggested, when highly permeable boundaries are perceived between men's and women's organizational position (see the *y*-axis in Figure 26.1) but highly stable intergroup relations mean that women are unlikely, as a group, to secure future status improvements (see the *x*-axis in Figure 26.1), this encourages women's aspirations and action at the individual level, rather than at the collective level, to improve their mobility and status. These findings are represented graphically in the top

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right-hand corner of Figure 26.1. Where intergroup relations are unstable but status improvement is anticipated because intergroup boundaries are highly permeable, individual and collective strategies are endorsed. These findings are represented graphically in the top left-hand corner of Figure 26.1. Yet, when impermeable group boundaries are perceived, regardless of the stability of intergroup relations, Hersby et al. found that collective strategies are used: The impermeability of the group boundary results in women working together to change their lot. These findings are represented graphically across the *x*-axis and at the lower level of the *y*-axis in Figure 26.1.

Organizational interventions to address networking involve a number of people management practices. For example, Jolink and Dankbaar (2010) proposed a range of people management factors relating to human resources management (recruitment and selection, training and development), work climate (rewards and recognition, supervisory support, rules regarding knowledge disclosure), and work design (time pressure, collaborative programs, projects), linked with organizational factors (perceived supervisory support, perceived costs and benefits) and psychological factors (personality, self-efficacy), as influencing interorganizational networking by employees. Figure 26.2 draws on Jolink and Dankbaar's framework for interorganizational networking to propose a model applicable to intraorganizational networking interventions for minority groups. Although it similarly suggests a range of

people management practices that can support network interventions, including human resources management, work climate, and work design, as can be seen in the left-hand box in Figure 26.2, diversity management, education and training, and career management and development are identified as particularly relevant human resources management interventions; supervisory support backed up by top management and knowledge disclosure and transfer are highlighted key components of work climate; and time pressure and collaborative links are considered as critical factors in work design. The central box in Figure 26.2 highlights the emphasis that is needed to champion diversity at the most senior levels of the organization, identifying the importance of perceived management support, as well as the resources needed to support networking if it is to be sustained through the inclusion of perceived costs and benefits. As with Jolink and Dankbaar's framework, the relevance of psychological factors (personality and self-efficacy) is also recognized and included in Figure 26.2.

Method

Following Hersby et al. (2009), any organizational network intervention aimed at making a difference to a disadvantaged group's career outcomes must be seen as viable and able to provide the group with the insight, tools, and support to advance and, as Kalev et al. (2006) noted, accountability is also required. Shortland (2011) further added that engagement by top management is necessary, robust and rigorous
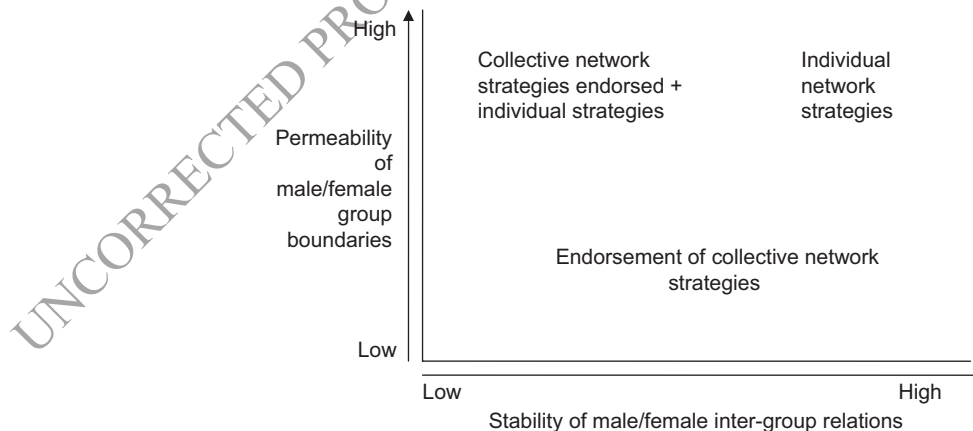
FIGURE 26.1. Conditions suggesting women's endorsement of different network strategies.

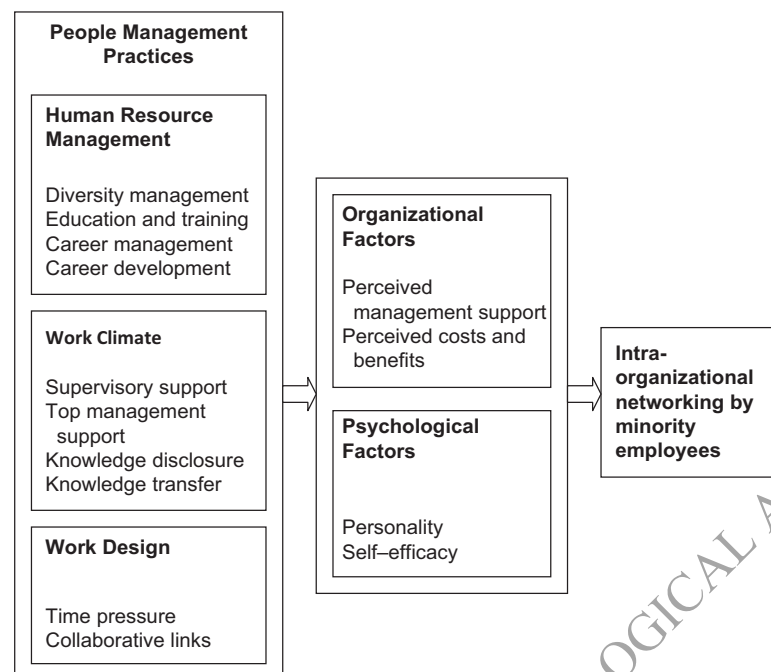**Source: Drawn from Hersby et al. (2009)**

FIGURE 26.2. Organizational support for network interventions for minority employees. From "Creating a Climate for Inter-Organizational Networking Through People Management," by M. Jolink and B. Dankbaar, 2010, *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 21*, p. 1439. Copyright 2010 by Taylor & Francis Ltd. Adapted with permission.

Source: Adapted from Jolink and Dankbaar (2010, p.1439)

processes must be in place and followed as standard, and the diversity agenda must echo both social responsibility and business strategy.

Aligned with the preconditions for a successful career intervention, as depicted in Figure 26.2, it is envisaged that any method undertaken to introduce a collective network for a disadvantaged or minority group must begin by being grounded in ethical business principles, with human resources policies and practices to underpin them. Protocols that individuals are obliged to follow must be in place. Staff education and training programs addressing statutory and behavioral perspectives are required to ensure focus on the application of equality of opportunity in both internal and external dealings. Career management and development processes must recognize diversity implications. To address the issues of accountability and viability, network career interventions must be championed at the highest organizational levels to ensure that support is provided at all levels; network interventions must also have a clearly articulated aim.

With respect to the perceived viability of networks and their ability to provide insight, tools, and support, it is suggested that the purpose of the network also be clearly articulated, those who will run or manage the network's formal activities on a day-to-day basis at the senior level be identified (to further reinforce accountability), and their remit be disseminated. Feedback loops to ensure network activity is supported also need to be set up and monitoring put in place.

Materials

Networking does not typically conjure up the need to devise specific materials. It is usually envisaged as conversational and often spontaneous. Yet, to reap the benefits, costs and time pressures are involved and must be taken into account and supported by management at supervisory and senior levels. For example, for networks to operate as formal career interventions set up, managed, and run within (and between or among) organizations, the media to be used to underpin collaborative links must be given

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forethought. The facilitation of networks might involve, for example, the provision of corporate space (offices, meeting rooms) to enable face-to-face discussions; support for teleconferencing (equipment, studios, information technology [IT]); provision of access to telephones, potentially with speaker facilities; access to Internet links and the availability of associated hardware and software (webcams, associated IT networks and forums); and financial support (the cost of the investment in terms of specialist IT staff time and necessary equipment). Those running formal networking interventions will also need to consider the suitability of providing agendas and the issues and topics to be discussed (if these are predetermined). Consideration also needs to be given to knowledge disclosure and the level of privacy required versus open access by members of the networking group. The amount of time that network members may take out from work schedules to participate in networking activities (such as in preparation, attendance, and feedback) also requires forethought and agreement.

Populations

The coverage of networking activity should also be determined, for example, whether the intervention will apply to one main group or potentially to subgroups or splinter groups drawn from this main body. As indicated by Jolink and Dankbaar (2010), psychological factors also need to be considered, including personality and self-efficacy. Individuals may feel uncomfortable with networking and, as a result, not everyone will want to become actively involved. Some may prefer to wait to see how the intervention develops before joining in. The location of the populations involved also requires forethought; when locations are widely geographically spread, this will affect the methods and media used to facilitate networking. The extension of the network, deliberately or inadvertently, beyond the boundary of the organization operating the intervention and the implications of this also require consideration. As discussed earlier, the involvement of individuals at senior levels to drive the network intraorganizationally and to be held accountable for its operations and outcomes in tackling disadvantage is required, and this support should be

communicated so that employees recognize that this backing is in place.

CASE STUDY: A FORMAL WOMEN'S NETWORK AS ADOPTED BY FEMALE EXPATRIATES

To understand the relevance of the model presented in Figure 26.1 and the implications for methods, materials, and populations highlighted in Figure 26.2, it is helpful to assess an example of a formal network in practice. The following case study is taken from Shortland's (2011) research into an organizational intervention to establish a women's network in a case study firm set within the backdrop of the "predominantly white Anglo-Saxon male mindset . . . commonplace in the oil and gas sector" (p. 279).

In relation to the model presented in Figure 26.1, women are a minority group in the oil and gas industry, particularly with respect to holding senior positions and working as expatriates in male-dominated exploration and production environments well known for their harsh and remote geographies. The permeability of the male–female group boundary is low, which would predict endorsement by women of a collective networking strategy to promote their career advancement. This is expected to be the case, irrespective of the high stability of intergroup relations, because low permeability suggests that the future holds little promise of status improvement for women as a group in the oil and gas sector. Yet, as Hersby et al. (2009) indicated, before engaging in collective action in an attempt to get ahead, women and any subset, such as female expatriates, must believe that change is possible. This rests not only on group cohesiveness but on the organization's taking a positive approach to tackling gender inequality and with respect to creating change for women as a group.

Following the people management practices as depicted in Figure 26.2, in the oil and gas case study organization "a structured, maintained, and audited set of business principles that adopt and incorporate a framework of equality of opportunity" were in place (Shortland, 2011, p. 279). The organization also placed emphasis on a five-stage employment proposition:

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to ensure that people are in the right job at the right time and are clear about their accountability levels; to provide a platform for personal development; to provide a platform for career development; to provide reward at the right internal market level; and to engender an organizational society that allows these to happen with all contributing equally to it. (Shortland, 2011, p. 279)

To support this, the firm trained staff not only in their statutory obligations but also in appropriate behaviors. Its business principles underpinned all of its processes (including, e.g., recruitment and selection and career management and development), and all employees were obliged to follow them. The firm had set up a diversity and inclusion committee and, as part of this, executive vice presidents and human resources directors globally, strategy project managers at headquarters, and subsidiary field managers worked together, with their aim being "to leverage and build sustainable value through an environment more accommodating to minorities" (Shortland, 2011, p. 280). As such, there was involvement of, and support from, personnel at the highest levels of the organization across the world.

To mitigate the potential problem that giving everybody responsibility for diversity interventions such as networking can result in no true accountability, the organization's diversity and inclusion committee's remit encompassed the launch and monitoring of this initiative. The aim and purpose of the women's network were defined. For example, the main aim was "to assist women in their career development through a better understanding of the organisation," although it also aimed "to provide role models to provide examples of career development possibilities for women." Its purpose was described as "to enable women to leverage value through networking with others to understand how things are done and can be achieved within the organisation" (Shortland, 2011, p. 280). As can be seen, the networking intervention specifically focused on advancing women's careers. The network was also managed by five nominated senior female leaders who had first-hand global experience; these

women reported to the diversity and inclusion committee. Their remit involved ensuring a cascade of information flowed down through the organization and out to all of its worldwide subsidiaries and that women at all levels and in all disciplines and locations had access to the network. Thus, the network leadership team's responsibility was to disseminate, facilitate, monitor, and report back to the diversity and inclusion committee to ensure that the intervention worked not only for women but also for the organization, such that its aims could be fulfilled.

The women's network was launched via the organization's intranet with encouragement given to holding meetings on business premises with the use of IT to facilitate communication between network members around the world. Although the networking initiative was set up for women generally, its remit did not preclude splinter groups running with the initiative and setting up their own subnetworks. Given that the organization's expatriates are based across the world, the women's expatriate network (subsequently set up under the umbrella of the main network initiative) involved examples of the use of video conferencing of network meetings. For instance, network meetings held at headquarters were advertised on the intranet, and those based locally were able to attend. Speakers were invited and panel discussions held on research projects and issues of interest to assignees. Recording of such proceedings took place, and the organization supplied technicians to operate camera, sound, and IT equipment and to broadcast the proceedings to subsidiaries so that they could be viewed in real time across the world and so that female expatriates could participate from abroad by joining in the discussions via teleconferencing. Recording and posting of events on the intranet also enabled employees who were unable to participate in the events live because of time zone differences or work commitments to download them later when convenient.

Shortland's (2011) research revealed a number of benefits from the setting up of the women's network for the minority female expatriate group. Expatriation, while exciting, was also considered daunting. The women's network, as applied to the expatriate subset, was considered to be particularly valuable in terms of sharing knowledge and gaining an

understanding of the destination countries, locales, and associated lifestyles. Both single and partnered women welcomed the network for its ability to provide them with social support. Building social networks was considered to be particularly difficult in certain cultures, especially where women's reception, acceptance, and ability to engage in freedom of movement and activities (such as in certain countries in the Middle East and North Africa) were restricted by both sociocultural and security constraints. A woman's perspective on managing societal cultural issues and how these were manifested in the workplace, as well as in wider society, was especially valued. The female expatriates also appreciated the information and advice they could secure from other women in the network on dual-career, family, and children's issues.

With respect to career development, Shortland (2011) reported that female expatriates noted that their organization was heavily networked and that these informal networks were male dominated. Hearing about career-enhancing vacancies in subsidiaries in different world locations, and back in the home country upon repatriation, often relied on being plugged into these networks. This was particularly true at the senior management level. Although informal networks were thus regarded as critical, the female expatriates also recognized that formal networks presented them with considerable advantages with regard to learning about career opportunities as well as the provision of professional support and being able to share complex knowledge, thereby enabling them to remain up to date. These benefits were particularly significant given the female expatriates' geographical distance from headquarters and potential isolation from professional peers in their work-group disciplines and because the career management and development support mechanisms were sometimes less well developed in remote locations than was the case at headquarters or main regional offices. The women's network was therefore considered helpful in maintaining and developing professional contacts and career paths. Its formal nature meant that women did not have to rely on overly used contacts or luck to make connections to receive knowledge, career advice, and support.

Nonetheless, although the provision of, and support for, a women's network was welcomed, the female expatriates did express some reservations about its gendered nature. In particular, given the male dominance of the organization and, especially, its expatriate operations (only around 11% of the expatriate population was female), concern was raised that women might be disadvantaged if the network was perceived as exclusionary. They feared that their male colleagues might set up their own male network in response to the perceived network image of female solidarity. This might result in further lowering of the permeability of the male–female group boundary, with an increase in male–female stereotyping of expatriate roles as an unintended and unwelcome consequence. Although the female expatriate minority group was, on the whole, positive about the set up, intentions, and potential outcomes of the organizationally sponsored women's network on both a practical and a career level, they still saw the value of individual network strategies, particularly for career advancement. The senior positions in the organization were dominated by men, men made the bulk of the career management process decisions, and expatriate appointments in host locations were also typically under the control of male subsidiary organization managers. Developing and maintaining individual networking opportunities were therefore actively pursued by female expatriates while they also supported the collective networking intervention.

These findings present a potential challenge to the model shown in Figure 26.1 in that women may not endorse a collective network strategy—even when permeability of male–female group boundaries is low and significant organizational support is given to assist minority groups—if they view the outcome of their attempt to improve their career prospects as a group as being undermined by male backlash, thus cementing their disadvantage. The implications of this finding suggest that further organizational intervention may be required to redress such an unintended diversity imbalance. In essence, as Shortland (2011) noted, "Care must be taken to ensure that initiatives that ostensibly aim to promote gender diversity do not end up doing the exact opposite to that intended" (p. 287).

CONCLUSION

Networks act as conduits in social relationships to transfer, obtain, and share information, creating social capital. Networking enables individuals to use this social capital to develop their careers via their contacts in social structures within and between organizations. Yet, social capital is gendered, and women have fewer organizational networking opportunities than men. As globalization continues apace, the requirement for international experience for career growth strengthens. Minority groups, such as women, hold relatively few expatriate positions, and their increased participation in international mobility is hindered by their lack of appropriate networking opportunities. Organizational interventions specifically to facilitate networking for minority groups can assist the widening of workplace diversity in the international arena, particularly when such actions are supported at the senior management level and accountability for their success is required.

The literature suggests that whether women will engage in collective or individual network strategies to further their careers depends on whether they believe that they can break through the male group boundary and on the stability or the fixed nature of male–female intergroup relationships. Organizational networking interventions can assist minority groups if appropriate people management practices and organizational support are provided. Yet, despite the apparent benefits of women's networks set up and suitably underpinned by accountability and necessary resources, which have the potential to effect real change in women's status within organizations, women are unwilling to buy in to workplace diversity interventions if they fear male backlash. Further consideration is therefore necessary to address the unintended consequences of organizational networking interventions for minority groups.

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