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Managing Dualities in Planned Change Initiatives

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Dualities play an important role in creating the conditions for change and managing planned change initiatives. Building on Seo, Putnam, and Bartunek's (2003) work, this study focuses on the dualities associated with managing change processes. A case study of a planned change process called the Circle of Prosperity Initiative, a multi-stakeholder dialogue designed to bring information technology to Indian country, was analyzed. Three dualities emerged regarding the structuring and management of the change initiative: (1) inclusion–exclusion, (2) preservation–change, and (3) centrality–parity. The findings suggested that these dualities were managed using Seo et al.'s (2003) strategy of connection. Notably, the strategy of connection relied heavily on the ability of change agents to set context within and between the different phases of the initiative and involved three specific practices for setting context setting: (1) commonplacing, (2) bounded mutuality, and (3) reflexive positioning.

Keywords: *Organizational Change; Organizational Development; Dualities; Connection; Context; Reflexivity; Identity; Simulation Games*

Organizational communication scholars have historically been intrigued by the connection between communication and change. The work done by communication scholars regarding issues of participation in decision making (Seibold & Shea, 2001), emotion (Zorn, 2002), identity (Chreim, 2002), and vision (Fairhurst, 1993, 2007)

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has articulated some of the ways communication may influence the design of change processes as well as their adoption and acceptance. Most recently, research has focused on developing change strategies for managing multiple stakeholders' needs, concerns, and participation during the implementation of planned change initiatives (Lewis, 2007; Lewis & Seibold, 1993, 1996). A key learning from this line of research is that organizational change and communication processes are rarely neat and orderly; rather, change processes are riddled with tensions, paradoxes, and contradictions that must be addressed.

It is not surprising, therefore, that organizational scholars and practitioners have focused on the way that dualities create the conditions for change and managing planned change initiatives (Austin & Bartunek, 2003; Ford & Ford, 1995; Seo & Creed, 2002; Poole & van de Ven, 1989). Dualities refer to the oppositional forces that are typically manifested in a conflict of perspectives, values, or actions (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2003) and are often referred to as tensions (Stohl & Cheney, 2001). Dualities have polar opposites that often work against each other but are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, the proactive-reactive duality highlights the competing pulls that organizations experience as they could clearly develop proactive processes to anticipate possible environmental shocks and initiate changes prior to their materialization as well as reactive change processes that emerge once a threat has occurred. However, the difficulties of simultaneously enacting both poles of a duality create choice points for organizations as they must choose whether to focus on one pole, thereby generating a tension if one pole is emphasized and the other is suppressed, or enact both poles simultaneously when designing, initiating, and implementing change processes.

Planned change research from a communication perspective has tended to explore how communication reveals the dualities constituting planned change processes (Kellett, 1999; Medved et al., 2001). Comparatively little research has explored how change agents may design structures to shape communication processes in ways that manage the dualities associated with change initiatives. We contend that it is important to pay close attention to how change agents invent, conduct, and implement conversational structures that manage dualities during planned change initiatives. To illustrate how communication structures within change initiatives can be designed to manage dualities, we present a case study of a strategic planning process, called the Circle of Prosperity Initiative that was aimed at fostering economic development through the implementation of information technology projects at Native American tribal colleges and universities. We begin by exploring the relationships among dualities, change, identity, and communication.

Dualities of Identity and Communication during Change Processes

Change processes typically have been characterized using Lewin's (1951) theory of unfreezing, moving, and refreezing collective beliefs about who the organization is and what it should do. Grounding change in the collective beliefs that members maintain about the organization foregrounds the importance of organizational

identity within change processes. Organizational identity represents members' shared beliefs and perceptions regarding their sense of who they are as an organization and what they do that is central, distinctive, and enduring (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Hatch & Schultz, 2002). A growing body of literature suggests successful change initiatives are characterized by their ability to reconcile two opposing tendencies regarding organizational identity: the conflicting needs to create continuity and discontinuity between existing and future organizational identities (Apker, 2004; Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2003).

Organizational adaptation may be facilitated by leaders heightening levels of identification to enable the retention of a loyal workforce and decrease turnover (Fiol, 2002). Increasing identification is also likely to provoke anxiety in organizational members, who may try to resist change by using strategies such as denial, rationalization, idealization, fantasy, and symbolization (Brown & Starkey, 2000). As a result, leaders may additionally need to take steps that decrease members' organizational identification to lessen resistance and create the space for them to envision new possibilities for meaning making and action that enable new organizational configurations (Fiol, 2001, 2002). Finding a way to reconcile the continuity-discontinuity duality regarding identity is important because, "Where there is too much discontinuity, there is a dread of fragmentation, splitting, dislocation, or dissolution—dread of the 'not-me'—and where there is too much continuity, there is dread of paralysis and stagnation" (Brown & Starkey, 2000, p. 111).

Communication scholars have also focused on the dualities associated with planned and unplanned change initiatives using communication as a means for both revealing and managing dualities.¹ Medved et al. (2001) observed that several dualities emerged around issues of ownership, change process, progress, homophily, and information use in their study of planned community health improvement initiatives. Their analysis revealed that the opposition between achieving short-term and long-term system change goals must be addressed during change initiatives because going for "easy win" projects and activities to achieve short-term goals could undermine the accomplishment of long-term goals. Kellett (1999) found that teachers, parents, and administrators in a private school discursively constructed a duality around the passionate beginnings of the school, which focused on developing a mission that emphasized novel educational pedagogy and the emergence of overinstitutionalization with its emphasis on rules and procedures, which created a conflict regarding the school's future vision. Using Giddens' structuration theory, Sherblom et al.'s (2002) study of the transformation of the Maine Game Warden Service revealed several dualities regarding the identity of the Wardens such as the opposition between the Warden acting as an individual agent versus needing to coordinate with other law enforcement agencies.

There is a large body of research that also explores how communication strategies may be used to manage change processes (see Lewis & Siebold, 1998, and Lewis, Schmisser, Stephens, & Weir, 2006, as examples). However, the normative prescriptions regarding the selection and application of particular communication

strategies emerging from this line of research typically do not address the contradictory impulses or assumptions constituting change initiatives. For example, two opposing themes regarding the way change agents should use communication emerge from the literature: (1) Leaders should articulate a clear purpose and compelling justification for the change, and (2) employee participation and empowerment is important when implementing change efforts (Lewis et al., 2006). The former emphasizes the importance of leaders centralizing control; the latter emphasizes decentralization. The normative prescriptions for communication strategies tend to focus on solving a single problem as defined by one pole of a duality (#1 or #2) as opposed to articulating the strategies for managing the opposing forces generated by both poles of the duality simultaneously (#1 and #2). Research that has explored how dualities may be managed through communication has typically promoted dialogue as a primary means for managing dualities (Kellett, 1999; Medved et al., 2001). However, dialogue is offered as general panacea for managing dualities, and what is missing is a specific look at how particular dualities influence the way the dialogue is structured.

This limitation is partially addressed in an essay by Seo et al. (2003) that not only identifies a number of dualities associated with the process of change, but also strategies for managing these dualities. They suggest that several dualities are associated with the temporal aspects of change processes and the way change is implemented within an organization. These dualities regard: (a) whether the change process focuses on positive or negative aspects of organizational experience, (b) whether change is viewed as a continuous or an episodic process with distinct stages, (c) whether change processes are proactive or reactive in their handling of problems, and (d) whether change processes are open and participatory including members from all levels of an organization or closed, restricting involvement to a subset of organizational members such as top-level management. These dualities highlight the kinds of choices that change agents need to make regarding how they manage the topics (negative focus/positive focus), length (continuous/episodic), timing (proactive/reactive), and participation (open/closed) within change processes.

Drawing on work from the relational dialectics literature (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), Seo et al. (2003) also suggest five strategies for managing dualities associated with change processes: (1) selection, (2) separation, (3) integration, (4) transcendence, and (5) connectedness. To illustrate these strategies, we use a third-generation organizational development approach known as Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Sorensen, Whitney, & Yaeger, 2000; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999), which utilizes dialogic and affirmative forms of communication for designing and implementing planned change initiatives. Like many approaches to dialogue, Appreciative Inquiry emphasizes the importance of organizational members entering into collaborative conversation with one another and jointly exploring each others' issues, dreams, and hopes. At the same time Appreciative Inquiry is unique with its specific focus on the generative properties of language and organizational life with an emphasis on what works well, strengths, assets, core values, and future dreams.

The strategies of selection and separation maintain a division between a duality's two poles. *Selection* refers to a strategy of selecting one pole of a duality over another and ignoring the other or placing the competing pole in a "cold war" relationship that favors one pole over the other. For example, Appreciative Inquiry adopts a positive focus and ignores the negative; other organizational development approaches such as action research focus on the problems and negative aspects of organizations and neglect positive resources for change. *Separation* recognizes that both poles of a duality exist but separates them through "through levels of analysis, topical domains, or temporal processes" (Seo et al., 2003, p. 76). For example, the positive focus–negative focus tension may be managed by hosting "venting" sessions during a beginning stage of a change process that asks employees to voice the problems they experience in the organization and holding "dreaming" sessions at a later stage that elicit employees' positive vision for the future.

Integration, transcendence, and connection link the poles of a duality using different strategies. *Integration* recognizes that both poles of a duality exist but combines them in ways that may neutralize them or bridges the opposites in confounding ways. For example, change agents may split the difference between creating change processes that focus marginally on both positive and negative aspects of organizational life, but, as a result, they don't realize the full benefits of pursuing either characteristic in depth. *Transcendence* synthesizes the dualities by reframing the polar opposites and constructing a new reformulated whole. For example, the dualism between negative and positive focus may be transformed and downplayed by reframing the issue as how to manage conflict that shifts attention to an integrative–distributive conflict duality. *Connection* recognizes that both poles are crucial and that they must be related in such a way that the contributions of each pole are maintained. The difference between the two poles is preserved but the two poles are connected to each other in a synergistic manner where they become mutually beneficial. For example, connection would cast a positive focus as essential for understanding problems and deficits because it creates a vision for the future that can be used to make judgments about the present and it would simultaneously treat a negative focus as essential to counteract the positive focus' tendency to gloss over and dismiss challenges and concerns (Golembiewski, 1998).

Seo et al.'s (2003) work is important for our present purposes as it articulates a vocabulary to talk about important distinctions among dualities associated with designing change initiatives and strategies for managing them. However, their initial articulation is heuristic and not exhaustive of the various kinds of dualities that may characterize the design of change conversations and the strategies that change agents may use to manage them. We take seriously Seo et al.'s call to continue exploring the kinds of dualities that emerge during change processes and the ways they are managed by presenting a case study that examines the practice of change agents as they structured a planned change initiative. We focus on practitioners because Austin and Bartunek (2003) point out that there is a disparity between the academic and practitioner literatures regarding planned change initiatives and that the two tend to exist separately. Whereas Seo et al. developed their dualities based

on an integration of both literatures, we feel that focusing on the practice of change agents offers a particularly rich opportunity for elaborating and refining the dualities associated with designing change processes. For example, the practitioner literature emphasizes the importance of using stories and narratives to create consensus around images of the future which hints at a possible duality between the use of narrative and non-narrative forms of communication (Austin & Bartunek, 2003). However, this duality is not addressed in any of the dualities associated with Seo et al.'s formulation. This gap led us to the following research question, "How are the dualities associated with the dynamics of planned change initiatives managed?"

The Circle of Prosperity Initiative

The Circle of Prosperity Initiative was co-sponsored by the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities (WHITCU), the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), and the American Indian College Fund (AICF). Conducted from March 1999 to June 2001, the initiative's purpose was to help the 32 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) develop strategic technology plans for their respective universities and the tribal college system as a whole that would foster economic development while respecting and elaborating Native American identity and culture. The strategic planning process was driven by the hope that developing information technology infrastructure and cultivating the technological capabilities of Indian people would reduce the up to 75% unemployment rate existing in Native American communities. In 2000, at the time of the initiative, the digital divide between Native Americans and the rest of the nation was striking. Only 45–50% of rural Native American households had telephone lines compared to a national average of 94.1% ("Tech Firms and Indians," 2000). Furthermore, only 9% of rural Native American households had access to computers compared to 47% for whites, and only 8% of Native American households had access to the Internet compared to a national average of 26.2% ("Tribes Meet Technology," 2000). The technological infrastructure was also poor, with only 50% of the TCUs having access to a T1 connection or better. The overall initiative was planned and organized by a Design Team that consisted of members of AIHEC's technology committee, the committee charged with developing information technology projects and training for the TCUs and providing ongoing education about technology issues. Following an initial meeting by the TCU presidents where they articulated the goals and assumptions that would guide the planning process, the Design Team agreed that a multi-stakeholder dialogue process known as a Prosperity Game would be a useful approach to structure subsequent phases of the initiative. Two external consultants were subsequently hired that had expertise in designing and conducting Prosperity Games and became members of the Design Team for the remainder of the initiative.

Initiative Phases

The Circle of Prosperity Initiative consisted of five phases (see Table 1). As discussed earlier, Phase I consisted of the TCU presidents articulating the planning assumptions for developing a nationwide technology plan. The TCU presidents then met in Phase II to talk about their expectations for the Prosperity Game as well as to articulate their visions for technology development and to determine what assets and resources they had in place to further their vision.

Phases III and IV involved conducting multi-stakeholder dialogues among the TCUs and key constituencies. In Phase III, a subgroup of TCU presidents and representatives from a variety of stakeholder groups participated in a 2½ day Prosperity Game. Developed by Sandia National Laboratories, Prosperity Games use stakeholder teams that represent different constituencies and interests to discuss an issue (see Littlejohn & Domenici, 2000, for a full description). The game is intended to simulate the “real” system in action by having each stakeholder team initially develop its vision and a plan and then subsequently negotiate agreements with other stakeholder teams in order to test out what agreements, proposals, and solutions are possible to address the issue and which are not. Eleven stakeholder teams were constructed for the TCU Circle of Prosperity Game: (1) technology providers, (2) international, (3) public, (4) policy and legislation, (5) tribal colleges and universities, (6) tribes, (7) research and development, (8) funding, (9) special interests, (10) infrastructure, and (11) state and local governments. Players for each team were specifically recruited to represent existing stakeholders. For example, members of the Technology Providers Team belonged to existing technology companies that could develop strategic projects with the TCUs.

Phase IV was a follow-up meeting held a month after the Prosperity Game, where selected participants from Phase III and a few new participants representing different stakeholder groups were invited to deliberate over the action plans that were generated during the Prosperity Game. During Phase V, the TCU presidents met and finalized their strategic technology plan.

Initiative Outcomes

The Circle of Prosperity Initiative was a very successful initiative leading to a variety of significant outcomes that strengthened the information technology capacity at each campus. Strategic partnerships with Microsoft, the National Science Foundation, NASA, Cisco Systems, and the Smithsonian Institute were developed. Tangible infrastructure improvements such as the establishment of wireless grids on campuses, classroom improvements, and Microsoft technician training were implemented. Finally, external funding was secured to send technology teams to each TCU to provide an assessment of their existing campus information technology plan.

Table 1 Phases of the Circle of Prosperity Initiative

Phase	Description	Participants
I: Guiding Principles	In March 1999, TCU Presidents met in Billings, MT and wrote a mission statement, identified planning assumptions, set goals, and defined objectives for the initiative.	TCU Presidents
II: Priorities for Prosperity: TCU Technology Planning	A one-day conference for Tribal Colleges and University Presidents and their representatives was held in Flagstaff, AZ in July 2000. The purpose of the meeting was to build on the priorities set and accomplishments of Phase I. During the July 2000 meeting, the presidents and their representatives reviewed the progress, assessed priorities, and began planning strategies for a comprehensive framework to be considered during Phase III, the Tribal Technology Prosperity Game™. Using a format for highly interactive and systemic dialogue called “C-V-A Analysis,” they explored questions and apprehensions about the initiative and its implementation and, together, discussed visions for the future and specific action steps for achieving a unified information technology vision.	TCU President and their representatives
III: Tribal College Technology Prosperity Game	This event brought together major political and economic stakeholders to develop a coordinated national framework for bringing the information technology revolution to Native America. Through a highly interactive and fast-paced strategic planning event—the Tribal College Technology Prosperity Game™—participants engaged in team interaction aimed at identifying challenges and developing policy options and strategies for the coordinated national framework. This event encouraged collaboration and coordinated action to develop new resources, agreements, options, and plans to be refined in Phase IV. The game was held in Palo Alto, CA during October, 2000.	A selected group of TCU Presidents and as well as representatives from stakeholder groups such as: (1) technology companies, (2) international stakeholders such as nongovernmental agencies and indigenous people from other countries, (3) tribes, (4) research and development, (5) funding agencies, (6) state and local governments, and (7) companies providing infrastructure such as phone companies

Table 1 (Continued)

Phase	Description	Participants
IV: Roadmapping the Circle of Prosperity: Tribal Colleges, Technology, and Tradition	Within weeks of the Prosperity Game™, a smaller “roadmapping team” met in Albuquerque, NM, during November, 2000. Following a highly structured format for roadmapping that included innovative and cutting edge computer modeling and simulation, participants determined the what, who, how, and when of the strategic plans.	A selected group of TCU Presidents and as well as representatives from stakeholder groups such as: (1) technology companies, (2) international stakeholders such as nongovernmental agencies and indigenous people from other countries, (3) tribes, (4) research and development, (5) funding agencies, (6) state and local governments, and (7) companies providing infrastructure such as phone companies
V: Completing the Circle: Molding Opportunity in Indian Country	Tribal College presidents and the President’s Board of Advisors on Tribal Colleges and Universities met February 2001 in Washington DC, to consider the strategic plan and to begin taking action steps for the colleges and the reservation communities they serve.	TCU Presidents and President’s Board of Advisors on Tribal Colleges and Universities

Analytical Approach

Over 500 pages of documents, mostly single-spaced, were collected including detailed meeting agendas, participant workbooks, facilitation guides, brochures, and pamphlets describing the initiative, correspondence between initiative conveners and participants, newspapers articles, and drafts of the strategic plan. Over 80 pages of written participant and facilitator evaluations of the initiative and 12 hours of videotape capturing different planning events were also gathered. Interviews were conducted with six members of the Design Team, the group that coordinated the strategic planning process, which represented a majority of the Design Team. Two additional interviews were conducted with people that subsequently became involved with carrying out particular elements emerging from the initiative. Interviewees were asked to articulate the factors that led to the initiative's success, challenges associated with conducting the initiative, and the way the Design Team managed the process and the emergent challenges. The eight interviews ranged from 25 to 75 minutes producing approximately 87 pages of single-spaced typed transcripts.

Our analytical strategy was informed by the stance taken by the Design Team that grounded the Circle of Prosperity Initiative in a third-generation organizational development paradigm that emphasized the importance of dialogical and appreciative forms of communication (see Seo et al., 2003, for a description of third-generation organizational development paradigms). The Circle of Prosperity was structured explicitly as a multi-stakeholder dialogue where TCUs would be engaged in ongoing conversation with different key stakeholder groups who could influence their ability to develop information technology infrastructure, training, and business in Indian country. Although numerous approaches toward dialogue exist (see Barge & Little, 2002, and Stewart, Zediker, & Black, 2004, for a summary), we found Gergen, Gergen, and Barrett's (2004) articulation of *generative dialogue* as a form of discursive coordination that affirms the significance of others' utterances and establishes mutuality particularly useful because it integrates both dialogical and appreciative strands of communicative practice.

Generative dialogue directs our attention to four key components of communication. First, generative dialogue focuses attention on issues of *participation* by members of a human system, who gets invited to talk about issues, when and where, and from what position. Generative dialogue recognizes that multiple voices, perspectives, and points-of-view constitute human systems that require theorists and practitioners to pay attention to this multivocality and how it is managed. Second, generative dialogue spotlights *collaboration*. Generative dialogue involves relational coordination making it important to explore how actors coordinate their action within one another as they inquire into important issues and what identities and relationships are produced. Third, generative dialogue emphasizes the *capacity building* power of conversation to generate new ways of making sense of and acting into situations. During generative dialogue, persons and groups develop abilities that enable them to see and experience situations in new ways thereby facilitating new forms of meaning making and action. Fourth, generative dialogue stresses the

importance of *affirmation*. Generative dialogue occurs when the process of communication simultaneously affirms the value of some already existing aspect of a human system while introducing a productive difference that creates new meaning and action regarding that aspect.

As is typical with qualitative approaches, we began our analysis by using an iterative process that cycled between the empirical material and the evolving set of interpretations we created (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 2004; Taylor & Trujillo, 2001). First, four two-person teams were created. Each two-person team was given a single component of generative dialogue (i.e., participation) to focus on as they worked through the written documents, participant and facilitator evaluations, and meeting videotapes. Each team was given a broad definition for the component and read through the empirical material to highlight relevant passages reflecting their assigned area. The definitions were broad and no specific strategies or tactics were used to define a particular element. Second, each team member then identified and coded key themes regarding challenges the way they were managed. Silverman (2005) suggests one's analysis should be documented through a memoing process; therefore, each team member constructed a separate analytical memo summarizing his or her results. Third, members within a two-person team explored similarities and differences between their individual analytical memos and coding and then produced a single memo that integrated the insights of both team members. Fourth, each two-person team presented their analysis to the other three teams in a group analysis session and received feedback regarding their interpretations (i.e., what was missing, what needed further elaboration, etc.). At this point, the notion of tradeoffs began to emerge in our reflections on the data, which led us to focus our study on the dualities associated with each component of generative dialogue and the strategies for managing them. Each two-person team then revised its analysis incorporating the feedback from the other teams.

To enhance the credibility of our initial analysis, we followed Creswell's (1998) suggestions to use multiple data sources and member checks for verification. First, we used the interview material to challenge and corroborate our initial analysis, thereby creating a more nuanced interpretation of the case. Our initial analysis based on the written documents, evaluations, and videotapes was well supported by the interview material; however, it also required modification as some portions were challenged by the interview material. For example, during the interviews, several people mentioned the importance of buy-in and credibility as it related to issues of participation, issues not surfaced in our initial analysis, which we subsequently incorporated.

After we revised our analysis in light of the insights generated by the interview material, we then examined the differing dualities across the four components of generative dialogue for repetition and redundancy. For example, the primary duality associated with collaboration was superiority–equality. On one hand, the TCU presidents viewed themselves as needing to be in a superior decision-making position to the other stakeholders as they would be responsible for implementing any change effort, yet any collaborative effort meant that they simultaneously needed to be an equal partner with other stakeholders. The primary duality associated with capacity

building was individual–system—the duality between TCUs viewing themselves as an autonomous actor or being in partnership with other stakeholder groups. Given the overlap and connection between the two dualities, they were combined to form a single duality. Three dualities emerged from this analytical reduction: (1) inclusion–exclusion, (2) preservation–change, and (3) superiority–equality.

Second, we then conducted member checks with two members of the Design Team to assess the credibility of our revised analysis (see Creswell, 1998, and Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, for the importance of member checks in verifying one's analysis). We sent our revised analytical memo to two members of the Design Team, solicited their feedback, and revised the memo in light of their comments. For example, both Design Team members felt that the duality of superiority–equality didn't accurately capture the duality the Design Team confronted. One Design Team member said, "We facilitate collaborative initiatives, but there is usually one party who instigates the process, and who can benefit more than others." They suggested that the superiority–equality duality might be more usefully conceptualized as centrality–parity to capture simultaneously the central role of TCUs in instigating change as well the recognition that any change will depend on TCUs creating equal partnerships with other stakeholders.

Analysis

A central theme that emerged in our analysis was the importance of connection as a way of managing dualities. The strategy of connection was closely tied to the practice of context setting. Context setting creates a frame that influences the way people make meaning of the unfolding interaction (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). Setting a context not only influences the way people make sense of their situation, it also has an effect on the way they are positioned to interact with others. Three context-setting strategies related to Seo et al.'s notion of connection emerged in our analysis: (1) commonplacing, (2) bounded mutuality, and (3) reflexive positioning.

Tension #1: Inclusion–Exclusion

Given the decision to make the Prosperity Game the centerpiece of the initiative, it was not possible for all the TCU presidents to participate in each phase. According to a member of the Design Team, "Originally, when I proposed this idea of doing this Prosperity Game, I thought we could have all of the tribal college presidents there. There would have been 30. Well, Karen and David [the external consultants] in our first meeting said, 'No way.' You know, that'll be half of the group. We just can't do it with that large of a part of a group." The need to exclude some TCU presidents from participating in different phases posed an important challenge to the Design Team because TCUs have a long-standing tradition of using broadly inclusive and consensus-driven decision-making processes. For example, AIHEC, one of the key sponsors of the initiative, had explicitly adopted an inclusive philosophy toward participation and decision making regarding technology development. As one

member of the Design Team put it, “We’ve [AIHEC] always tried to make sure those opportunities are available for every school so that every school can continue to grow and prosper at the same rate and level. We will never leave a tribal college behind.” The duality, therefore, became how to design a process that managed the conflicting needs to be inclusive and ensure participation by all the TCU presidents as well as the need to exclude some TCU presidents during particular phases in the process.

The strategy of commonplacing was used to manage the inclusion–exclusion duality. *Commonplacing* acknowledges that both poles of a dualism are unique and distinct yet attempts to articulate a common thread that connects both poles where they can meet and be woven together (Littlejohn, 2004). The overall design included: (1) an inclusive process that involved all the TCU presidents was adopted for the initial phases setting out guiding principles (Phases I & II) and the ending phase that finalized the plan (Phase V), and (2) a more exclusive process using a small subset of TCU presidents was used to develop and reality test possible solutions and action steps during the middle phases (Phases III and IV). Even though the intact group and the selected subset of TCU presidents performed different tasks in separate phases, the two groups were always connected to one another through a commonplace of shared assumptions, principles, and expectations for the initiative. One Design Team member characterized this commonplace in terms of mission and vision, “We also had a mission—a vision that we believed in. We know what it is with this initiative. You can walk up to any tribal college president and say, ‘What’s the mission of AIHEC?’ They’ll stumble around. You can say, ‘What’s the mission of the technology initiative?’ and the TCU presidents they’ll tell you.”

The Design Team created a set of processes in Phases I and II that allowed the TCU presidents to create a shared vision and mission. The shared vision and mission created by all the TCU presidents established a strong working context for the TCU presidents participating in Phases III and IV as they remained connected to the intact group through a clear shared set of expectations regarding the important assumptions, values, and beliefs. The shared vision and mission became the thread that linked the intact group of TCU presidents (inclusion) with the subset of TCU presidents in Phases III and IV (exclusion). This shared vision and mission was sustained by creating a system of constant communication among all the TCU presidents including the distribution of meeting minutes, progress reports, and updates at other TCU president meetings not directly related to the technology initiative. The TCU presidents not involved in Phases III and IV could see how the subset of TCUs presidents working in these phases embodied the shared values when representing the TCUs to external stakeholders, and the TCU presidents participating in Phases III and IV could receive feedback about their performance from the other TCU presidents. This constant feedback process sustained the connection between the intact group and the subset of TCU presidents by reaffirming what bound them together, the shared context as constituted by the TCU’s vision and mission for the technology initiative.

The ability to create and sustain this commonplace for both the intact group and subset of TCU presidents depended on the TCU presidents having faith in the Design

Team and the process they were creating for the overall initiative. This was accomplished by designing a process that heightened the TCU presidents' initial buy-in to the overall process as well as their trust in the Design Team's decision to exclude some TCU presidents from participating in Phases III and IV. This occurred in two ways. First, the Design Team built the TCU presidents' buy-in by involving them early on in articulating the vision for the Circle of Prosperity initiative. Phase I was designed in a way that sought maximum input from the TCU presidents so they would feel that they owned the process by having them establish a set of guiding principles they felt were important to technology development in Indian country. Phase I created buy-in because it was designed to move the TCUs to articulate the fundamental principles and commitments that needed to be kept in mind throughout the whole process.

Given the Design Team's decision to use a Prosperity Game as the central focus for the change initiative that excluded the participation of some TCU presidents during particular stages, it was also critical that all of the TCU presidents accepted and supported the use of the Prosperity Game if the overall initiative was to succeed. In Phase II, the TCU presidents had significant input into the focus and structure of the Prosperity Game. A Design Team member highlighted the importance of creating buy-in among the presidents during Phase II:

One important objective was to really familiarize the presidents with the gaming process. You know, get them more aware of how the thing was going to go, what the projected outcomes were or could be. And sort of get the presidents involved in the discussion of how most strategically to take advantage of the opportunity of getting all these key people together to plan how to bridge the digital divide. How to make it most useful to the colleges, so it was really important to get the college presidents' input. Otherwise you could say that this whole process was imposed from without. It was to identify key issues that needed to be built into the process. It helped generate more tribal college buy-in for the whole thing.

Second, building buy-in to the Prosperity Game and trust in the Design Team's decisions was also created by having a credible initial sponsor and trustworthy external facilitation. In the majority of interviews, the person who initially brought the idea of Prosperity Games to the TCU's attention was cited as being instrumental in gaining the support of the presidents. Given her long involvement in Indian affairs, she was viewed as being a highly credible sponsor and as having the best interests of Indian people in mind. Her credibility was also bolstered by the fact that the process she was proposing, a Prosperity Game, had been developed by Sandia National Laboratories, a highly respected organization in governmental and educational circles, and was also one she had participated in previously, which allowed her to give personal testimony regarding its effectiveness.

It was also important for the TCU presidents to view the external consultants facilitating the game as credible. As one of the consultants hired to facilitate the process said, "There wasn't a lot of trust from tribal leaders . . . they needed to build trust and they needed to really understand the process that was being used because they were required to spend a lot of time, they came to meetings, they came to the

Prosperity Game, and it was mostly the tribal college presidents, in some cases vice presidents or deans. So for them to spend that much time, they really needed to build trust in us.” As a result, the external consultants traveled to various campuses, interviewed TCU presidents and students and became more familiar with the way technology was being used on campuses and various tribal issues. Such site visits were crucial because the consultants wanted to demonstrate they “weren’t another one of those fat cat consultants that was coming in and going to tell them what to do, and then leave.”

Commonplacing involves articulating a common thread where the poles of a duality can be woven together. In this instance, the Design Team created a set of processes that facilitated the TCU presidents jointly creating a commonplace in the form of a shared vision and mission that connected the intact group of TCU presidents (Phases I and II) with the subset of TCU presidents in Phases III and IV. The commonplace served as a strong context that influenced how the TCU presidents made sense of the need to simultaneously work as an intact group and in subgroups. The ability to initially create this commonplace was supported by creating buy-in and building trust in the facilitators and the process. Without buy-in and trust, the ability for the Design Team to fashion a process that could create a shared vision and mission in Phases I and II would have been diminished.

Tension #2: Preservation–Change

The Design Team and the TCU presidents explicitly acknowledged a duality between sustaining tribal heritage and fostering economic development through the use of information technology. The TCU presidents were well aware that new wealth arises from the development and use of emerging information technologies, yet at the same time recognized that they could undermine Indian culture, which was at odds with the TCU’s mission to preserve and sustain the tribal cultures of their students. According to one Design Team member, this duality was clearly illustrated in the debate over the use of the Internet to communicate cultural and religious information:

There has been quite a bit of expression of concern about what is appropriate to communicate through the Internet, cultural dances, songs, and religious forms of artifacts. There’s real concern about making sure that those get protected and some of those are not intended for people outside the tribe to see or experience. I think there’s concern that the Internet is a place where they could lose some of that important private and sacred cultural knowledge.

The duality of preservation–change reflects the opposing needs to maintain a proud tribal heritage while needing to change the way they managed their tribal heritage and identity in their effort to fight poverty through the adoption of information technology.

The Design Team embraced a strategy of *bounded mutuality* throughout the initiative to manage this duality. Bounded mutuality recognizes that both poles of a duality are connected and can mutually influence one another. Unlike the strategy of

selection where the two poles reluctantly and antagonistically coexist in a mutual influence relationship, bounded mutuality recognizes that the interaction between the two can be generative, yielding new insights, meaning making, and action. However, one of the poles creates a boundary or set of constraints for how the other pole is to be used, managed, and interpreted. The strategy of bounded mutuality reframes the tension between preservation and change from an “either/or” to a “both/and” position whereby new information technologies are viewed as offering exciting possibilities for preserving tribal culture, heritage, and language through ventures such as indigenous digital libraries.

The preservation–change duality became particularly important for the Design Team during the Phase III Prosperity Game as the conversation was broadened to include key stakeholders from outside Indian country such as technology providers and funding agencies. According to Swanson (1999), multi-stakeholder dialogues work well when they take a value attuned approach to decision making which arises from a “communicative ethic . . . based on mutual respect among corporate managers and groups in the community” (p. 518). A value attuned approach emphasizes the importance of inviting divergent voices to participate in the conversation and creating a context that pays attention to differing points of view as they emerge during conversation.

The Prosperity Game reflected Swanson’s (1999) “value attuned” approach to decision making by strategically inviting different stakeholder groups to participate and creating a context that respected multiple voices. According to several Design Team members, the Prosperity Game provided a useful format for creating a value attuned conversation that moved all the stakeholders, including the TCUs, to wrestle with the limits of their own values and perspectives:

One of the reasons for doing a Prosperity Game, I think, is that you have these competing groups that are organized basically get into an argument with each other. And through that discussion, that debate, that tension, trying to come out with some solutions that take cognizance of all those sides. (Design Team member)

I think the Prosperity Game process actually turned out to be a very good one because the process itself was challenging to everybody’s social reality, no matter what stakeholder group you’re in. (Design Team member)

The challenge for the Design Team was to structure a conversational process that ensured that not only were different stakeholder positions and interests represented but that opposing values were respected and thoughtfully considered.

The strategy of bounded mutuality was accomplished in three ways during the Prosperity Game. First, holistic metaphors and language were used to frame the Prosperity Game’s goals and objectives. The mutually enriching relationship between culture and technology is apparent in the titles from brochures and letters advertising the Prosperity Game: “Circle of Prosperity: A Vision for the Technological Future of Tribal Colleges and American Indians” (informational brochure) and “The Circle of Prosperity: Tribal College Technology Prosperity Game” (Phase III title). Each title employs the metaphor of circle, an important symbol in Indian culture. The

metaphor of a circle connects tribal culture and technological development in a living unity (“Circle of Development,” n.d.). Rather than view cultural identity and technology as separate competing entities, the use of the circle metaphor and the connective “and” emphasized the dynamic interrelationship among tribal colleges, tradition, and technology.

Second, the designers set clear contexts during the Prosperity Game that emphasized the interconnection of tribal culture and technology. Each game player was given a Prosperity Gamebook at the beginning of Phase III to explain the purpose of the Prosperity Game and the way it would be structured. At the beginning of the gamebook was a section called “Game Context” that highlighted the importance of the preservation–change duality for gameplayers:

An important goal of the tribal colleges is to preserve and promote tribal culture and language. The emergence of advanced information technologies is both a challenge and an opportunity in this regard. Technology brings greater exposure, arousing concern about what and how to share culture. In general, tribal leaders consider paramount that cultural beliefs, practices, and spiritual objects be treated appropriately as intended by tradition, regardless of the audience of the medium over which the information is conveyed. At the same time, technology can strengthen, enrich, and promote Indian culture.

Concrete examples of the successful integration of tribal culture and technology were provided in the form of existing TCU programs. The combination of setting a clear context that emphasized the integration of tribal culture and technology and providing examples of successful tribal culture–technology integration conveyed to participants that such an integration was not only required, it was possible.

Third, the Prosperity Game was organized in such a way that tribal cultural heritage was presented as the dominant lens through which to view potential technology adoptions. At the beginning of the Prosperity Game, “Dennis Bercier of Turtle Mountain Community College of Belcourt, N.D., lighted the first of four clusters of sweet grass, cedar, tobacco and sage. ‘Open your hearts, minds, ears and souls and speak freely,’ he urged the participants and finished by singing a Chippewa war song” (“Tech Firms and Indians,” 2000). The smudging ceremony was intended to purify and cleanse the participants and is commonly considered in the Native American tradition as a way to chase away bad or negative feelings and bring on thoughts that are good or positive. Beginning the game in this manner was significant as it privileged Native American culture and invited others to approach the game with respect for Indian ways.

There is some evidence that the participants attempted to work with the duality created by the two poles during the Prosperity Game. For example, a majority of the mission statements developed by the stakeholder teams at the beginning of the game emphasized the connection between tribal culture and technology, “Our group has created a vision. Tribal colleges and leaders interconnecting their communities and each other and the world to learn and engaging global problem solving while preserving cultural integrity and enabling economic growth through the application of appropriate technologies” (International Team). At the same time, there were

pockets of resistance among non-Indian participants who perceived the heavy focus on tribal culture as exclusionary. The smudging ceremony at the beginning of Phase III was intended to foster an inclusive spirit and make individuals mindful of Indian ways, but some non-Indian participants experienced it differently. According to one process facilitator, “some experienced the opening and closing spiritual ceremony as meaningful, inclusive and relevant to this game. I know that not all facilitators and certainly non-Indian participants felt this way.” Even though the opening and closing ceremonies were designed to be inclusive, some participants experienced them as exclusionary.

Tension #3: Centrality–Parity

Both the Design Team and the TCU presidents recognized that if meaningful change were to occur in Indian Country it would need to happen through the TCUs acting as equals in partnership with other stakeholders. However, creating shared partnerships had been somewhat difficult in the past as many stakeholders placed the TCUs in a subordinate position when working together, leading the TCU presidents to feel that they were being given the “scraps” from the technology table. Furthermore, TCUs had not been particularly proactive in seeking out partnerships, instead expecting other stakeholders to approach them and initiate joint ventures.

A duality emerged regarding *centrality–parity*. On one hand, the TCUs clearly saw themselves in a central position as they were supposed to be the focus for the strategic planning process and would ultimately be responsible for taking the lead in implementing any technology initiative. On the other hand, they also recognized that the only way to create viable technology projects was to act in equal partnership with other stakeholders. The challenge for the Design Team became how to create a multi-stakeholder process that allowed the TCUs to feel that they remained at the center of the process yet also moved them to recognize that they were part of a larger system in which they needed to be an equal partner.

The Design Team managed the centrality–parity duality by creating a context that emphasized reflexive positioning. The strategy of *reflexive positioning* involves creating a context where participants experience and become aware of the dynamic relationship between the poles of a duality. Reflexive positioning does not try to transcend the poles by redefining the situation; rather, the redefinition allows a reflexive interplay between the two existing poles. To create a context that facilitated reflexive positioning, Design Team members framed Phases III and IV as a learning opportunity using the metaphor of game to create a safe space for the TCUs and all the stakeholders to explore each others’ positions and become aware of their interconnections. They framed the process, not the content, to allow for the connection of the duality. In this instance, it would be extremely difficult for TCUs to transcend simultaneously needing to be at the center of the initiative yet having to be equal partners with other stakeholders to achieve their goals. As a result, TCUs needed to develop an understanding of how the two poles connected and informed

each other which was accomplished through the metaphor of game. For clarity of presentation, we restrict our analysis to those activities comprising Phase IV.

The designers created a three-step pattern for discussion during Phase IV that emphasized reflexivity to generate systemic awareness: (1) prepare, (2) play, and (3) reflect. The process facilitators for Phase IV were instructed to characterize the progression of each step's discussion round to participants as requiring systemic thinking: "Explain at the beginning that we will be moving from focus to breadth and each successive round will require increasingly systemic thinking" (Facilitator Guide). The conversational structure encouraged reflexive practice in that it emphasized the participants being aware of their own position in the process (self reflexivity) as well as their connection to the larger stakeholder system (relational reflexivity).

First, teams in Phase IV prepared by clarifying their own position in the system, identifying the different parties making up the multi-stakeholder environment, and developing a general sense of how to interact with them. Large briefing books that summarized the positions of different stakeholder groups and the ideas they had for developing technology in Indian Country were distributed to participants prior to the meeting. Participants initially were divided into seven teams, each representing a strategic cluster of action plans that had emerged from the Prosperity Game: (1) monitoring and prioritizing, (2) developing resources, (3) education, (4) partnerships, (5) leadership and control, (6) infrastructure, and (7) cultural preservation and community building. Each team worked separately on establishing a small set of governing or overarching action plans and discussed the requirements for implementation—policy, resources, and relationships. The combination of focusing initially on each team's plan and taking into account the kinds of relationships that needed to be nurtured to make the plans a reality facilitated self and relational reflexivity.

Second, the participants played with the opportunities and constraints offered by their position and the positions of others by actively engaging other stakeholders in the system. A process called "Crafting Circles" was adopted. After the initial meeting, two members from each team rotated to two other teams, which meant that each newly formed group would now be looking at three clusters of action plans. In this round, participants from the initial teams could revise their respective plans based on the connections among the three areas represented in the group. It was also permissible for group members to combine or connect their respective plans. Then, participants rotated again to a different table where all seven strategic clusters were represented. During this round each group was asked to nominate a relatively small set of action plans that would constitute the core of a National Framework, establish the necessary implementation requirements for these, and outline the elements of a vision for the National Framework. Participants interacted with other teams to test and refine their plans and were strongly encouraged by the facilitators to revise their plans based on the connections among the areas represented in the group.

Third, the Design Team also developed participants' systemic awareness by creating reflecting processes where stakeholders gave formal feedback to the TCUs and other stakeholders on their plans and actions and reality tested their effectiveness and

feasibility. Feedback was also provided to stakeholders using a process called “Playing Circles,” as they collectively tested the limits of their action plans using computer simulations, plan prioritizing software, and clarification of stakeholder priorities to assess whether the emergent plans would work well. Playing Circles positioned participants as observers to their own experience and allowed them to step back, assess, and refine their plans.

A learning frame was coupled with the metaphor of “game” to construct the activities comprising Phase IV. The learning frame was intended to build the TCU’s and other stakeholders’ capacity for systemic awareness: the ability to be mindful that multiple stakeholders constitute a system, stakeholders are always interconnected, and stakeholders may interpret events and actions in different ways. The metaphor of game, used especially during the process of “Playing Circles,” fashioned a context where participants could grapple with the constraints and opportunities associated with the duality of treating TCUs as a privileged or equal stakeholder rather than becoming fixated on who had the right to make or not make decisions. The opportunity to play in a simulated reality with different positions and strategies created the space for TCUs and other stakeholders to have fun, take risks, and try out new strategies that would have limited consequences if they failed. As was conveyed to the facilitators in Phase IV in their training, “The metaphor of play is being used in the spirit of experimentation and creativity. This period, although it should be fun, is not meant to be frivolous or childish, but is actually a very serious process.” The frame established a space for “serious play” where participants could experiment with different positions and strategies in a focused and structured manner.

Discussion

Our analysis extends Seo et al.’s (2003) initial articulation of dualities by demonstrating that planned change initiatives may be characterized by additional dualities including inclusion–exclusion, preservation–change, and centrality–parity. Perhaps more importantly, our analysis clearly demonstrates how managing dualities through the strategy of connection is related to the practice of context setting. Three context setting strategies for managing dualities emerged from our analysis: (1) commonplacing, (2) bounded mutuality, and (3) reflexive positioning. Our analysis highlights several theoretical implications and practical applications.

Theoretical Implications

First, we were able to discern a number of dualities associated with the management of change initiatives that both parallel and extend Seo et al. (2003). The inclusion–exclusion tension paralleled Seo et al.’s duality of participation. In the design of the Circle of Prosperity Initiative, a key issue became how to manage the participation of the TCU presidents as the logistical constraints of the process prevented all TCU presidents from participating in each phase. It is not surprising that this duality emerged, as a common challenge during planned change initiatives is managing

participation, which suggests that some issues and their associated dualities may cut across organizational contexts.

However, it is likely that dualities are institutionally and culturally specific and these same dualities may not emerge or emerge in radically different ways in different organizations. For example, the tensions of preservation–change and centrality–parity touch very closely on issues of identity management and construction, issues not explicitly addressed in Seo et al. (2003). Identity management and construction center on issues of “who we are” and “what we wish to become,” which have been an important focus in the change management literature (Brown & Starkey, 2000). The preservation–change duality emphasizes the importance of TCUs acting in ways that sustain and promote Indian culture while ensuring that any technology adoption is culturally appropriate. The centrality–parity duality touches on how the TCU presidents and tribal colleges manage their roles as both the primary change agent for the technology initiative as well as partners-in-change during the initiative. The centrality–parity duality also connects to Seo et al.’s concerns with participation, but it foregrounds issues of power and authority within change initiatives to a greater extent.

One reason that dualities associated with identity issues became significant in this study is the ongoing concern with how cultural identity is constructed within Native American communities. A growing body of scholarship recognizes that there is not a single overarching Native American identity; rather, multiple identities exist as numerous Indian nations exist with over 339 tribes being recognized by federal and state authorities (Weaver, 2001). Moreover, there is a strong story within Indian country of non-native peoples, typically white, who have a different cultural orientation than native peoples, and attempt to colonize and dominate native peoples (Clair, 1997; Stuckey & Murphy, 2001). Our study points to some of the difficulties inherent in the struggle between the divergent and sometimes opposing cultural identities between and among native and non-native peoples. There is also a growing recognition that individuals and groups within organizations may also enact different identities and experience change processes in different ways (Corley, 2004; Corley & Gioia, 2004). Future research, therefore, should explore how change processes work with multiple, often conflicting identities, among organizational members and the challenges they create.

Second, although the strategy of connection has been mentioned as one way for managing dualities (Seo et al., 2003), this study is one of the first to empirically establish this idea. The study clearly demonstrates the power of context setting as an important tool for creating connection between the poles of dualities. As Bateson (1972) observes, “no context, no meaning,” which suggests that if change agents wish to stimulate an interplay of a duality’s poles to foster meaning making and interpretation, they need to create a context where such a connection is viewed as important and meaningful. The specific strategies included commonplacing for managing the inclusion–exclusion duality, bounded mutuality for the preservation–change duality, and reflexive positioning for the centrality–parity duality. The findings suggest that a connection approach may adopt some of the typical ways for

managing dualities such as separation, selection, or transcendence, but reformulate them in a way so that there is some mutually beneficial interplay between the poles. Future research would likely generate other strategies for managing dualities within a connection perspective.

Third, our analysis suggests that we also need to pay close attention to the complexity of dualities and the strategies that are used to manage them. According to the relational dialectics literature (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Werner & Baxter, 1994), strategies for managing dualities may range from fairly simple strategies such as separation to more complex strategies such as transcendence. In the present study, the relatively simple strategy of commonplacing was used to manage the duality associated with inclusion–exclusion, and more complex strategies such as bounded mutuality and reflexive positioning were used to manage the dualities of preservation–change and centrality–parity.

One explanation for this finding is that inclusion–exclusion was the least challenging duality to manage given that the logistics of the Prosperity Game precluded full participation during particular stages of the process and involved managing the relationships within a single stakeholder group. Given that the range of alternatives for managing this duality was limited, the relatively simple task of creating processes to encourage commonplacing and create a strong shared context and focus managed this duality. On the other hand, the dualities of preservation–change and centrality–parity were more complex as they represented deeply felt dualities that were not specific to the Circle of Prosperity Initiative, but concerned ongoing issues regarding how the TCUs and Indian people create and sustain their identity and manage their relationships with various external stakeholder groups. Moreover, numerous possibilities for managing these dualities existed. As a result, more complex strategies, such as bounded mutuality and reflexive positioning, that allowed the extremes of the duality to be managed simultaneously were required. This suggests that future research needs to explore how characteristics of dualities, such as their centrality in the production of identities and relationships, connects with the strategies that change agents select to manage them.

Practical Applications

Building on Weick's (1995) notion of requisite variety, Fairhurst, Cooren, and Cahill (2002) contend that it is important to maintain sufficient diversity in planned change processes in order to sense the variety of constituencies that comprise an organization's environment. A central concern for change agents, therefore, is how to bring in the voices of other stakeholders during planned change initiatives in a way that they can be heard, valued, and respected. In the present study, creating a reflexive position where the centrality–parity tension was framed as a “learning conversation” created the space to honor and take into account the different values of key stakeholders. This framing permitted the kind of value-attuned approach to decision making that was needed to take into account the requisite complexity of the TCU's environment (Swanson, 1999). Although it may be challenging to ensure that the

different voices of stakeholder groups are heard and appreciated, practitioners who attend to the importance of building multivocality into the process will be more likely to generate successful change initiatives.

The results from the study also suggest that well-designed simulation games may be useful tools for practitioners when structuring organizing change processes. A common theme emerging from the members of the Design Team was that the unique format of the Prosperity Game was what made this strategic planning initiative succeed where others had failed. There are several possible reasons that the use of simulation games in this case study facilitated change.

First, simulation games may create a safe and comparatively nonthreatening environment that enables organizations and individuals to experiment with new concrete ideas and processes that can lead them to rethink and resituate their identities. Fiol (2002) argues change occurs when individuals alter their existing identity and that this process is enhanced when people engage in active experimentation in concrete activities that allow them to explore new identifications. Given the emphasis on learning and play as well as the compressed nature simulation games, rapid feedback is provided to participants during the game regarding the consequences of experimenting with various concrete actions and proposals, thus accelerating the learning process. Lewis, Hamel, and Richardson (2001) highlight a number of communication strategies that may be used to communicate change to stakeholders and reduce resistance, but do not address the role of simulation games as a method for communicating and working with change. Simulation games may be valuable tools for practitioners to use during change processes as they foster learning and reduce resistance by allowing people to experiment with new ideas and processes in a concrete way that have limited negative consequences if something should go wrong (Kriz, 2003; Ruohomaki, 2003).

Second, well-constructed simulation games move players to experience the complexity of a system's environment as marked by the different, and sometimes opposing, positions and interests of various stakeholder groups (Smith, 2004). What was particularly important in the design of the Prosperity Game was that the players who represented different external stakeholders actually performed the roles they would in their everyday working lives. The group decision-making literature suggests that when working with opposing or dissenting positions and interests that genuine dissent as opposed to contrived dissent is a better predictor of decision-making quality (Schulz-Hardt, Jochims, & Frey, 2002). The Design Team could have constructed a game that emphasized contrived dissent by only having TCU presidents participate and having them role-play other stakeholder teams. However, by involving actual members of different stakeholder groups in the gaming process, their shared and opposing passions, positions, and interests were realistically brought in the process and had to be addressed.

Summary

If theorists and practitioners are to understand how to structure planned change processes, they need to learn how to respond to the dualities associated with designing change initiatives. When we recognize that dualities, contradictions, and paradoxes are “a normal condition of organizational life, not an anomalous problem to be removed or resolved” (Ashcraft & Trethewey, 2004, p. 81), change agents will always need to give attention to the ongoing social construction and emergence of dualities and develop ways to manage them that allow people to participate fully in change processes. Our results need to be tempered with the realization that this case study has focused on organizations within the educational nonprofit world. Although the present research site has some resonance with organizations that are more mission driven and identity focused such as nonprofit organizations and cooperatives (Ashcraft, 2001; Cheney, 1999), future research needs to explore for-profit organizations in a wide variety of business and industries to flesh out the dualities that may arise during change conversations. Learning about and engaging the dualities associated with managing change can create better practices that foster creativity, change, and innovation.

Note

- [1] Given that the defining characteristic of a duality is the notion of opposition, researchers who self-identified their studies as using either dialectics (Medved et al., 2001) or tensions (Sherblom, Keranen, & Withers, 2002) were included in the review. Dialectics may be viewed as a specific form of duality that involves contradiction (see Baxter, 2004), whereas tensions may be viewed as synonymous with dualities as they broadly refer to a clash of ideas, principles, or actions (Stohl & Cheney, 2001).

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