



Journal of Organizational Change Management

Managing organizational change: paradoxical problems, solutions, and consequences

Kimberly Stoltzfus Cynthia Stohl David R. Seibold

Article information:

To cite this document:

Kimberly Stoltzfus Cynthia Stohl David R. Seibold, (2011), "Managing organizational change: paradoxical problems, solutions, and consequences", Journal of Organizational Change Management, Vol. 24 Iss 3 pp. 349 - 367

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09534811111132749>

Downloaded on: 25 November 2015, At: 11:41 (PT)

References: this document contains references to 58 other documents.

To copy this document: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

The fulltext of this document has been downloaded 5935 times since 2011*

Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

Gabriele Jacobs, Arjen van Witteloostuijn, Jochen Christe-Zeyse, (2013), "A theoretical framework of organizational change", Journal of Organizational Change Management, Vol. 26 Iss 5 pp. 772-792 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-09-2012-0137>

John Edmonds, (2011), "Managing successful change", Industrial and Commercial Training, Vol. 43 Iss 6 pp. 349-353 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00197851111160478>

Tony Manning, (2012), "Managing change in hard times", Industrial and Commercial Training, Vol. 44 Iss 5 pp. 259-267 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00197851211244997>

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by emerald-srm:478307 []

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

*Related content and download information correct at time of download.



Managing organizational change: paradoxical problems, solutions, and consequences

Managing
organizational
change

349

Kimberly Stoltzfus

*Seaver College Communication Division,
Pepperdine University, Malibu, California, USA, and*

Cynthia Stohl and David R. Seibold

*Department of Communication,
University of California, Santa Barbara, California, USA*

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine how paradox emerges during a planned change initiative to improve and dramatically transform inter-agency information sharing. Based on interviews with key decision makers, the authors interrogate the relationships among institutional contradictions, emergent dualities, the communicative management of related organizational stakeholder paradoxes, and the consequences of enacted solutions.

Design/methodology/approach – Interviews with government leaders serve as the data source. These decision makers are from justice agencies participating in planning an information-sharing program to better protect citizens and their agencies' workforce.

Findings – The data suggests that Seo and Creed's institutional contradiction "isomorphism conflicting with divergent interests" gave rise to three interdependent dualities: stakeholder self-interest/collective good, stakeholder inclusion/exclusion, and emergent stakeholder consensus/leader driven decision making. These dualities were implicated in the enactment of paradox and its management. No matter what strategy the managers used, the consequences themselves were paradoxical, rooted in the same dualities that were originally present.

Research limitations/implications – The authors sought to trace the outcomes of how leaders managed the poles of dualities, and found evidence of unintended consequences that were intriguing in their own right and were linked to stakeholder considerations. The paper underscores the importance of communication in the representation of paradoxes and how they were managed, and the unintended consequences of the solutions.

Practical implications – Leaders' articulations of paradox can be tapped for improving change efforts.

Originality/value – Whereas, institutional contradictions have been examined in reference to emerging paradox, and while paradoxical solutions have been studied widely, little research has investigated how institutional contradictions become simultaneously embedded in the process and the outcomes of organizational change.

Keywords United States of America, Organizational change, Communication management, Stakeholder analysis, Information management

Paper type Research paper



1. Introduction

Planned organizational change efforts are central features of an organization's operational strategies (Lewis, L.K., 2000). A common managerial approach to these purposeful interventions is the transformation of technological systems. Upper management,

in a quest for improving client services, may, for example, decide it is useful to share budgeting data across departments and will default quickly to online technology for what they understand is its fast, cost effective methods for meeting their business needs. Yet, technological and managerial decisions associated with projects like the establishment of shared discretionary databases, information repositories, and other communal informational public goods (Fulk *et al.*, 1996) are not straightforward. Implementations are often fraught with contradiction and paradox as the complex task of weighing the risks, costs, rewards, and benefits of change, including but not limited to sharing information, are calculated by a diverse set of organizational stakeholders (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2010; Bledow *et al.*, 2009).

Based on interviews with the USA Government leaders whose departments are pursuing initiatives to improve and dramatically transform inter-agency information sharing, this study addresses the challenges decision-makers experience in the process of planning organizational change. Drawing upon theories of institutional contradiction (Seo and Creed, 2002), the strategic management of organizational dualities (Seo *et al.*, 2004) and related communication tactics (Barge *et al.*, 2008), we explore the ways in which decision-makers communicatively construct and manage paradox. We examine how particular strategic responses to institutional contradictions embody dualities that lead to unintended consequences, ironically constraining, and maintaining paradox. Our work extends previous work on stakeholder paradox (Goodpastor, 1991; Lange, 2003) and is consistent with several calls for more research on the dynamics that underlie paradoxical responses to organizational change (Smith and Lewis, 2011) and the conditions under which institutional change produces inadvertent procedural consequences (Cortell and Peterson, 2001). Whereas institutional contradictions have been examined in reference to emerging paradox, and while paradoxical solutions have been studied widely, little research has investigated how institutional contradictions become simultaneously embedded in the process and the outcome of organizational change.

Since the late 1980s, paradoxical thinking has been central to a great deal of organizational theorizing. Indeed, the vitality of paradox as a construct for understanding organizational processes continues to grow. Extensive reviews of the voluminous literature on organizing and paradox are soon to appear in *The Academy of Management Review* (Smith and Lewis, 2011) and *Human Relations* (Fairhurst and Putnam, 2012). Across the literature, three fundamental organizing propositions are posited:

- P1. Paradox is inevitable.
- P2. Paradox arises and is experienced at multiple levels – individual (Leonardi, 2009; Lewis and Seibold, 1996), dyadic (Argyris, 1988), group or project team (Smith and Berg, 1987; Stohl and Cheney, 2001), organizational (Cameron and Quinn, 1988; Barge *et al.*, 2008; Harter and Krone, 2001), interorganizational (van Reine, 1996), and institutional (Kraatz and Block, 2008).
- P3. Engagement rather than avoidance with paradox is associated with organizational effectiveness (Cameron and Quinn, 1988; Poole and Van de Ven, 1989).

This case study focuses on the prospective development of an interorganizational information-sharing system. Within the context of establishing communal databases, potentially incompatible tensions associated with multiple stakeholders have been

identified, including: trust, reciprocity, social network dynamics, and reward/incentive systems (Kalman *et al.*, 2002; Monge *et al.*, 1998). As change agents plan and interact with each other and with those affected by the change, a delicate balance is required between competing and often incompatible institutional demands and situational requirements. To explore the dynamic emergence of paradoxes and the unintended consequences that stem from implementers' struggles among agency, stakeholder representation, and institutional pressures for conformity, we utilize Seo and Creed's (p. 223) duality framework to chronicle the "ways in which institutional formation and change." These dualities result from struggles among social actors seeking a foothold of stability and power during organizational change. Seo and Creed identify "institutional contradictions" related to legitimacy, adaptability, intrainstitutional conformity, and interinstitutional convergence. Their recognition that organizations "are increasingly exposed to multiple and contradictory, yet interconnected institutional arrangements and prescriptions" (p. 228) is salient for understanding paradox, dualities, and contradiction in response to the processes of organizational change.

We suggest that an extension of Seo and Creed's (2002) typology of institutional contradictions to organizational stakeholders is especially useful for understanding change efforts associated with the development of communal informational goods. In these endeavors change is framed as beneficial to diverse stakeholders, that is, to those who are affected by or can affect organizational practices (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholder acceptance of and willingness to participate in the new information-sharing system are necessary conditions for the communal good (Fulk *et al.*, 1996). Kim and Mauborgne (1997, p. 17) note that institutional success is often dependent on diverse stakeholders (individuals, departments, and organizations) sharing knowledge with one another, but they observe that this organizational change is quite different from others: "unlike the traditional factors of production – land, labor, and capital – knowledge is a resource [. . .] that [cannot be] forced out of people." For organizational participants uncovering, managing, and integrating multiple stakeholder needs and perspectives into the array of communicative activities and decisions that constitute this type of change are fraught with tensions and challenges. In this study, we interrogate how paradox is contained in the communicative processes of decision makers as they contemplate the extent of their participation. In the case analysis we report, we show how institutional contradictions led to dualities which created a paradoxical situation that was managed through the establishment of new paradoxes.

Dualities, contradiction, and paradox

Dualities, contradictions and paradox have all been identified as central elements that contribute to organizational change (Cameron and Quinn, 1988; Ford and Backoff, 1988; Seo *et al.*, 2004; Stohl and Cheney, 2001; Van de Ven and Poole, 1988). However, conceptual distinctions among them often are fraught with ambiguity and, pragmatically, what one person sees as a duality another may experience as a paradox. In this analysis, we rely upon distinctions identified by Stohl and Cheney (2001), Fairhurst and Putnam (2012), and Smith and Lewis (2011).

In contrast to dilemmas, which can be resolved by weighing the costs and benefits of each choice and deciding which one is most advantageous, dualities embody the yin and yang of social forces. In and of themselves, dualities are not paradoxes, because they merely may be complementary influences within a greater whole. However, they can

become paradoxical when framed as oppositional tendencies (Fairhurst and Putnam (2012)). Dualities associated with organizational change include pairs like self-interest/collective good and dependence/autonomy. Both of these dualities embody potential conflict with each other, but they are not necessarily contradictory or paradoxical. However, once they are simultaneously embedded in a particular social practice, then the likelihood for paradox to emerge is greatly increased. Consider the duality self-interest/collective good. A worker may see it in her self-interest to slow down the implementation of a new technology (e.g. she is comfortable with the old way of doing things, she likes to physically leave her office space and go over to the next building to talk with people to get confidential information, she prefers to maintain possession of particular knowledge for political reasons, and so on), but it may be in the best interest of her division to implement the change quickly (e.g. there has been a recent crisis which could have been avoided if different departments had pooled their information, there is competitive or political pressure, and so on). It is only once the technology begins to be introduced and the worker perceives that her self-interest is best served by both impeding and facilitating the implementation (e.g. she can have her interpersonal needs met/she will be rewarded by management for contributing to the collective good) that the duality becomes a contradiction that may be paradoxical to observers.

Contradictions, on the other hand, immediately reflect incompatible opposites that negate each other and exert tensions within a process (Stohl and Cheney, 2001). They often can be seen in the interactive inconsistencies embedded in dualities, and they may hamper and encourage organizational development (Lewis, M.K., 2000, p. 761), but in this case, the two poles are inherently contradictory. For example, the contradiction critique/compliance has been found in “voluntary” worker participation programs where management repeatedly asks for workers’ critical assessments and input regarding workplace practices, while also reminding workers that the “ideal worker” is one who is compliant and goes along with the system (Stohl and Cheney, 2001).

With regard to paradox, the dilemmas/dualities/contradictions are dependent and reflexively imposing on each other, and the outcome of a situation entraps or makes the situation seem bankrupt of choice (Fairhurst and Putnam (2012)). Reflecting on its Greek origins, “para” meaning “contrary to” and “doxos” referring to “opinion or expectation” (Merriam-Webster, 2009), paradox exists when our realities and our ideas about our expectations of what we perceive to be reality do not coincide (Koot *et al.*, 1996). Hughes and Brecht (1975) conceptualize logical paradox as a statement or set of statements that, taken together, are contradictory and sustain a vicious circle of reasoning. Paradox involves the simultaneous presence of contradictory and mutually exclusive elements (Putnam, 1986; Stohl and Cheney, 2001; Van de Ven and Poole, 1988), and in which there is no choice – “the consequences of which are unknown and conflict is the perpetuation of one alternative at the expense of the other” (Westenholz, 1993, p. 41). The paradoxical enjoinder to “be spontaneous” and the edict to a new worker “I am ordering you to be independent” offer poignant examples. Paradox contains contradictory, yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time. Such elements seem logical when considered in isolation, but irrational, inconsistent, even absurd, when juxtaposed (Lewis, L.K., 2000). In organizations that tout themselves as participatory and democratic, for example, workers are oftentimes “forced” to volunteer on task forces to ensure that the system remains democratic (Stohl and Cheney, 2001).

In this study, we address pragmatic paradoxes that arise from ongoing relationships rather than outgrowths of deductive reasoning or grammatical form. Pragmatic paradoxes develop over time through the accumulation of messages and activities, which create a cycle of self-reflexive contradictory alternatives.

Within pragmatic paradoxes, dualities embody opposing forces at work at the same time and often create seemingly inexplicable conflict that can be hard to overcome (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995).

2. Communication, institutional contradiction, change, and paradox

The centrality of paradox in organizational change processes has resulted in a plethora of studies that address institutional contexts (Hargrave and Van de Ven, 2006; Luscher and Lewis, 2008). As suggested above, the work of Seo and Creed (2002) has been particularly useful in this line of research. They describe how institutional arrangements create tensions and inconsistencies within and between social systems, delineate how those contradictions mold organizational members into agents of those institutional arrangements, and how the contradictions further affect the change process. Specifically, Seo and Creed (2002) identify four sources of contradiction that result from over-time processes of institutionalization:

- (1) Legitimacy that undermines functional inefficiency.
- (2) Adaptation that undermines adaptability.
- (3) Intrainstitutional conformity that creates interinstitutional incompatibilities.
- (4) Isomorphism that conflicts with divergent interests.

Next, we discuss in detail one institutional contradiction that is most salient for change grounded in the need for diverse participation and which was strikingly evident in the analysis we report, isomorphism that conflicts with divergent interests.

Isomorphism that conflicts with divergent interests recognizes the production and reproduction of institutional arrangements as influenced by political prowess and power (Benson, 1977). When common practices become perceived as normal and legitimate, any disruption becomes perceived as intentional and threatening. Efforts to change shared expectations often are resisted because “they threaten individuals’ sense of security, increase the cost of information processing, and disrupt routines” (Moen *et al.*, 2008, p. 399). This is particularly so in changes that require information sharing. As Kalman *et al.* (2002, p. 2) observe, “Special difficulties arise when users must themselves stock the database with discretionary information.” Information is discretionary if it is “initially under the control of one organizational member, who can choose whether or not to make it available to others” (Connolly and Thorn, 1990, p. 219). Under these institutional conditions it becomes likely that a contradictory interactive system emerges that shapes organizational paradox.

Seo and Creed’s (2002) work is especially important to this study because they explicate how institutionalism and agency can exist simultaneously when viewed as opposing poles of duality. Their conceptualization is critical to uncovering contradictions that can be hidden in the sub-context of change (Hatch and Ehrlich, 1993). There is, however, an opportunity to extend and thereby deepen the Seo and Creed model by examining a paradox associated with these institutional contradictions and exploring how paradox emerges in response to the dualities. We propose two related research questions:

RQ1. How do underlying institutional contradictions give rise to paradoxes associated with planned organizational change?

RQ2. What is the relationship between institutional contradictions, strategies used for managing organizational change paradoxes, and the outcome of those strategies?

3. Communication and management of paradox in planned change

Recognition of paradox is a powerful framework for examining plurality and for “capturing its enlightening potential” (Cameron and Quinn, 1988, p. 763). Decision-makers’ articulations of paradox can be tapped for their potential to illuminate and even to improve change efforts, but more work is needed to understand how the communicative management of paradox during the change initiative may give rise to new paradox. Studies of the management of dualities constituted in change have often emphasized the use of dialogue (Medved *et al.*, 2001; Smith and Berg, 1987) the role of language (Robichaud *et al.*, 2004; Taylor and Giroux, 2005) and discourse (Fairhurst and Putnam, 2004). Here, we are exploring the unintended consequences of stakeholder solutions that are embedded in the contradictions and dualities that gave rise to the initial paradox of change.

According to Seo *et al.* (2004), four strategies are used to manage dualities associated with planned change: selection, separation, integration, and transcendence. For example, a prominent duality among participants in planned change efforts intended to foster interorganizational collaboration is the tension between being connected yet remaining autonomous. The simplest mitigation of this tension is selection of one pole while ignoring the other, which disregards the inter-relatedness in the dichotomy (Poole and Van de Ven, 1989). Separation entails dividing attention paid to poles of the duality or segmenting activities when attending to each pole. The third strategy is integration, in which the poles in a duality are combined by creating “balance in that both ends of the continuum are legitimate” (p. 76). The full extent of either characteristic is never fully realized because each pole’s intensity is diluted (Seo *et al.*, 2004). Lastly, transcendence requires a perspective adjustment in order to see the deeper, shared connections between tensions that inhere in the duality.

The communicative enactment of the strategic management of paradox, specifically by implementers of change, has been studied by Barge *et al.* (2008). In their analysis of the pursuit of technological innovation in a tribal community network, Barge *et al.* found that a number of paradoxes evident in the planned change initiative were managed communicatively by demonstrating “connection.” Dialogue and other communication practices enabled change agents to set the context in and across phases of the change process through three tactics reflective of the connection strategy: “commonplacing”, “bounded mutuality,” and “reflexive positioning.” Illuminating the ways in which communication enables and constrains strategies for managing dualities that emerge during planned change, as Barge *et al.* do so well, is an important step in understanding change and paradox.

We build upon this approach, and explore how the links among:

- institutional contradictions;
- associated paradoxes;

- strategies for managing them;
- communicative manifestations of these strategies;

are tied to:

- change outcomes.

Concerning the last element in our analytic framework, planned change initiatives rarely are characterized by a single sign of finality but by waves of stability and flux as well diverse outcomes. Tracy (2004, p. 120) finds that organizational members “can react to contradiction in various ways, and the framing of workplace tensions can have various personal and organizational effects.” Furthermore, there is always the possibility that change efforts will have consequences that are unintended. Finally, as Lewis, M.K. (2000, p. 774) observes, paradox “may fuel reinforcing cycles.”

4. Method

We adopt a case-study approach, which is useful for investigating process-oriented phenomena in real-life organizational events and helpful for analyzing actual managerial processes (Yin, 2003).

The case

Our analysis draws upon the case of justice agencies in a large county government in the USA seeking to improve information sharing through technology that facilitates data integration. The need for shared accessible databases and other communal informational goods that transcend organizational and jurisdictional units across the entire justice cycle has become part of a federal, state, and local agenda in the USA. To protect confidentiality, we refer to this program as the criminal justice regional information system (C-JRIS).

The C-JRIS program was launched in 1999 by a justice oversight body, the Justice Advisory Group (JAG). Comprised primarily of elected officials who oversee the justice operations in the area, the JAG, recognized that adult and juvenile criminal justice programs needed to improve information sharing through integrative technology to better protect the public and to enhance the effectiveness of those working in the justice field. The interagency C-JRIS program includes law enforcement, criminal investigation, the court system, prosecution, public/criminal defense, criminal sentencing, social welfare, and revenue audit agencies and programs. Each relies on the others for critical information that supports its own operations.

To lead and coordinate the interagency change initiative, three working groups (called committees) exist to advise and guide the program from planning to implementation. One group is expected to direct technical components of the program, such as choosing the optimal architecture for the system; the second group makes decisions pertaining to business and operations, such as what problems in information sharing are occurring that need to be addressed and in what order; and the third committee steers security policies and technical requirements. These committees typically meet once a month to present their agencies’ information sharing needs, to establish standards for planned operational objectives for the entire region, to select priority functionality for the system, to decide on distribution of funding towards program development, to choose technology to meet their program goals, and to serve

as communication agents for their respective departments. Each committee is comprised of top- and mid-level managers of many of the justice agencies in the region, some of whom are elected officials. A number of members serve on multiple committees. Some have been members since the inception of C-JRIS, while most are replacements for former members or they joined when the committees expanded to include members of social welfare agencies and local police departments.

Despite its ten-year longevity and a number of smaller successes, the C-JRIS has yet to institute a fully integrated information-sharing system that enables immediate access to what members term “need to know” information. One program has exited the 17-agency collaborative project. Although this technology initiative is stalled, it remains the highest priority of the C-JRIS program.

Data collection

A total of 15 interviews were conducted with agency executives and other leaders from justice agencies (such as criminal investigation, the court system, prosecution, public/criminal defense, social welfare, and revenue audit agencies) through their membership on the three working groups of C-JRIS. These data were obtained as part of a larger project undertaken by the first author.

Interviewees were solicited using a snowball sampling approach in order to obtain a relevant sample (Goodman, 1961). The public safety agencies, in this research program are difficult to access because of data sensitivities and approvals required. The first author spent nine months gaining the confidence of C-JRIS leaders and members. Those participants were able to recruit additional participants, all of whom spoke with the first author in one to two hour, semi-structured interviews.

Prior to conducting formal interviews, discussions with three government executives charged with leading similar but smaller organizational change efforts was undertaken. These discussions helped shape the focus and development of specific questions. The final interview protocol included questions about organizational change history, stakeholder identification and prioritization, features and frequency of interaction with others, decision-making process and protocol, situations of conflict and decisions in tension, and management of tensions.

Data analysis

The qualitative analysis involved over 100 hours of reading and re-reading the transcript by all three authors. Informed by the work of Miles and Huberman (1994), the iterative analysis generated categories and themes that emerged in the data and linked them to empirical findings and theoretical contentions in the literature. Within the context of inter-organizational planned change involving information sharing, tensions associated with stakeholder interests have been specifically identified. Our thematic analysis connected the interview data with stakeholder issues, as well as dualities, institutional contradictions, and paradox that have previously been identified in the organizational change literature.

The analysis was grounded in several readings of the interviews by all three authors. The first step in the analysis was for each reviewer to read through the transcripts to develop an initial understanding of the cultural significance of the organizational change effort and highlight interviewee comments that reflected the domains of interest of the study. This phase was especially important because institutional contradictions

are often embedded in the cultural system and are, accordingly, hard to detect without attention to the larger context (Hennestad, 1990).

The researchers then met and compared any highlighted text and identified key themes. Reviewing the transcripts in relationship with each other, enables a deeper interpretation of the themes (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). Finer distinctions as well as broader connections can be made. At the next iteration of interpretation, the transcripts were re-read by all three researchers and specific dualities and strategies based on commonalities among the informants' responses were identified (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This step initially was done independently, then in collaboration to ensure the reliability of the analysis. Discussions between researchers confirmed similarly identified themes and resolved any differences in interpretation.

After the dualities and strategies were identified and the second phase of data analysis was completed, i.e. we had a set of dualities that represented the managers' experiences as related through the interviews, the transcripts were reviewed again by the researchers in order to examine the communicative outcomes of the dualities. We examined the solutions that were discussed, and again examined the role of the dualities in these actions. Tracking these institutional contradictions and associated dualities revealed program leaders' choices for managing dualities, the communicative tactics used in relation to strategies, and their outcomes.

5. Results

As noted previously, Seo and Creed (2002) identify four sources of institutional contradiction that are fundamental forces creating and driving institutional change – change that is often associated with four forms of strategic management of one or both poles of dualities emanating from those four institutional contradictions (Seo *et al.*, 2004). In turn, as Barge *et al.* (2008) show, strategies for dealing with dualities associated with planned organizational change are accomplished communicatively and have a variety of effects (including unintended consequences). Our analyses of C-JRIS tracked these institutional contradictions and associated dualities, particularly those involving stakeholder paradoxes revealing the improbability of maximizing the interests of all constituents (Goodpastor, 1991). When the data revealed them, we also analyzed program leaders' choices for managing those dualities (especially when their discourse revealed that they were aware of the dualities), the communicative tactics utilized to enact those strategies, and their outcomes. In many instances, we simply note how institutional contradictions permeated their change efforts and created paradoxes that they appeared neither to fully comprehend nor responded to in a reflective, strategic manner. Not surprisingly, the latter instances also were associated with unsuccessful management of the dualities embedded within the planned change efforts. However, even when awareness of the dualities was explicitly acknowledged, the solutions tended to embody the paradox. Below, we provide discursive examples of two contradictions noted by Seo and Creed (2002). We have selected them for their clear representation of the paradoxes, strategies, and interactive consequences.

Isomorphism conflicting with divergent interests

Evident in the mission of C-JRIS is the institutional contradiction isomorphism conflicting with divergent interests, embodied when institutional structures are created out of the political contestations among diverse groups with unequal power (Seo and Creed, 2002).

The resultant misalignment between the institutional arrangements and diverse interests sets the stage for change. In the case of C-JRIS, the change project itself, designed to create isomorphic institutional arrangements (i.e. a unified information-sharing system), is positioned to benefit the entire justice system but sharing data within the larger system simultaneously conflicts with divergent stakeholder interests.

Rooted in this institutional contradiction are three interdependent dualities: stakeholder self-interest/collective good, stakeholder inclusion/exclusion, and emergent stakeholder consensus/leader driven decision making. These dualities arose within the discourse of the C-JRIS Business Steering Committee. Embedded from the very beginning of the project, we can see how these dualities played out throughout the interaction.

When C-JRIS was conceived, the change initiators recognized the “strength of weak ties” (Granovetter, 1983) in the sense that the smallest units had unique information that was needed by the larger units. For the communal information system to work, all those with relevant information needed to contribute. According to several interviewees, the initiators of the project “went with a broader stakeholder base” to make sure that all interests were protected and considered. But as the project began to take shape, the issue of diversity and representativeness of one large stakeholder group was raised. In several instances, the dualities were explicitly recognized by leaders and participants; in more instances, the tensions “simmer” below the surface. Consider the discourse surrounding the stakeholder self-interest/collective good duality. Even as the executive of development and modernization (Statement 18) explained that:

We’re trying to avoid the silos. We’re trying to avoid everyone just looking at their piece of the pie.

He also noted (Statement 88):

There’s a lot of “my turf” type thing. You’re invading my turf[. . .] So, there is [sic] a lot of issues in the background that are simmering. It’s hard to tell where things are at.

Similarly, the executive of administrative services (Statement 54) indicated:

People have to look out for their own to be able to survive.

But also remarked (Statement 64):

It’s more a mission on behalf of what we need to do to be successful as a community. [. . .] And most of the projects that we’re doing. They don’t benefit us.

This tension between stakeholder self-interest and collective good was also associated with the duality, stakeholder inclusion/exclusion. The C-JRIS program executive explained how the project needs to benefit more than one type of stakeholder, and relied upon (Statement 18):

[. . .] leveraging resources to further the functionality that we currently don’t have [. . .] Even the smaller players need to share data.

He followed with (Statement 31):

[. . .] some of the smaller players get overlooked [. . .] there’s different players that need to be consulted with too.

However, he also contended that the largest four units (a regional law enforcement agency, the court system, correctional agency (X) (renamed to protect confidentiality),

and criminal prosecution and defense agency (A) (renamed to protect confidentiality) are the “core players,” the most important stakeholders, and therefore are most important, influential and participative.

As the project proceeded, there was increasing attention to the interests of selective stakeholders and the collective good. The C-JRIS program executive noted (Statement 95) that:

[...] it was brought up by the committees that we really need to include the other municipal law enforcement agencies in the county.

The Business Steering Committee acknowledged that the institutional separation of jurisdiction and administrative arrangement precluded any single law enforcement agency from being able to represent the diversity of interests. Here, we see how the paradoxical situation arose in the interaction. The committee discussed the need to include specific stakeholders, but the institutional arrangements created an interactive contradiction that resulted in a “stakeholder paradox.” This is very similar to that described by Lange (2003, p. 218) in his analysis of an environmental collaboration: “It is both impossible and necessary to have all the stakeholders present or represented.” An important difference, however, is that unlike the collaborative context Lange describes, in which it is vital for all stakeholders to be present but to identify all the relevant stakeholders is fraught with political and logistical contradictions, in this case the stakeholders were known, but the institutional arrangements prevented it from happening.

This stakeholder paradox was reinforced in dualities associated with funding and institutional mandates. The duality of inclusion/exclusion was framed as oppositional tendencies which were expressed repeatedly in the interviews. The executive of administrative services (Statement 210) reported:

Our whole funding stream is completely separate from the county. [...] but all those other agencies are still a part of county. So that dichotomy is one of the challenges that we have here. And that right there probably sums up a lot of why are the things that you see.

The C-JRIS program executive (Statement 55) also noted that although the original idea was to share was to share data across the region:

We need to get our act together first here in the county before we start because it’s complicated enough just in the county. When you start to add more and more players and stakeholders it gets even more complicated.

Yet, the unique information these agencies have is essential for the communal informational good to be effective. Another duality emerging from the institutional contradiction of isomorphism conflicting with diversity of interests is “emergent stakeholder consensus/leader driven decision making”. Both poles of the duality permeated a great deal of leaders’ talk about group process, and they often were set against one another. Stakeholder consensus was viewed as a prerequisite for successful change, but several C-JRIS leaders noted that consensus cannot operate within a system of such diverse interests. For example, the Court System technical expert (Statement 192) indicated:

You can’t always do things with consensus,

And the executive of development and modernization (Statement 131) stated:

The way I work things is that you are NOT going to the meeting to come up with an agreement. You are going to CONFIRM an agreement.

Here, we see a second type of stakeholder paradox emerging from the oppositional positioning of the dualities. The inclusive nature of the process and the need to have all relevant stakeholders who hold critical information participate necessitates including stakeholders who intend to and will subvert the process. Note the executive's response to this paradox: he has derived a way of including everybody, but he no longer needs consensus – an attempt to transcend the paradox arising from the dualities embedded in the institutional contradiction. The problem does not need to have the agreement of everyone, although the entire project has to be based on voluntary willingness to share information (Kalman *et al.*, 2002). Thus, at the same time that he separates the two poles, attending to one and then the other, his management of the paradox is rooted in the initial institutional contradiction that gave rise to the duality in the first place. His solution is merely one among several where we see the contradictions play themselves out in the solutions as well, ironically thereby maintaining the stakeholder paradoxes.

Duality, management strategies, and communication

In general, the data reveal that throughout the history of the C-JRIS program, these dualities enabled and constrained change. The dualities between stakeholder interest/collective good, inclusions/exclusion, and emergent stakeholder consensus/leader driven decision making created interactive tensions and paradoxes that had to be managed communicatively.

In some instances, a selection strategy (Seo *et al.*, 2004) was chosen to address the duality of self-interest/collective good and the manager chose to enact the self-interest pole. For example, as the Court System technical expert (Statement 30) stated:

You have two agencies that are competing for resources within the county, and there's a self-preservation means to it, and you're motivated by – yes, you know that you're going to help the county and the community, you will. That's always one of the top two priorities when you're dealing in an environment like this. But the number one thing is you've got to preserve yourself. I mean that's so, you know, the court or me representing the court, there is no, we are our own ship that's sailing, you know? And either you're on our boat or I'm sorry we're leaving you behind and we'll give you a little window to look at.

On the other hand, later the same interviewee, still using a selection strategy, communicatively enacted the collective good pole. The chief described chastising recalcitrant stakeholders by saying to them (Statement 274):

You were thinking about yourself instead of the community as a whole. And, sometimes you just have to remind people of that.

In another response to the dualities, and in order to make the committee more representative of stakeholder interests, planners made the representation more narrow in terms of types of stakeholder groups yet broader within a particular type of stakeholder (i.e. law enforcement agencies). Paradoxically, the strategy for increasing representativeness was limiting the number of stakeholder groups being represented, once again feeding back into the institutional contradiction of isomorphism conflicting with diversity of interests.

However, perhaps ironically, the leaders' strategic choices and their tactical communicative enactments of those choices concerning the paradoxes noted above led

to a number of short term and enduring and unintended outcomes that varied in their degree of success (as gauged by alignment with objectives sought and C-JRIS goals in general).

For example, a reporting committee was created at the onset of the program to report to stakeholders all information technology advances made by other C-JRIS participating agencies. A manifestation in part of the underlying contradiction of focus here (isomorphism conflicting with divergent interests) and one of the attendant dualities (inclusion/exclusion), the reporting committee was structured to include members of all 17 participating agencies. When the diversity of members' interests led to the committee's inability to satisfy the information technology-related needs of all participants, let alone stakeholders in their agencies who were not on the committee, regular attendance at committee meetings fell to only representatives from four or five agencies. Faced with the dilemma of mandated and desired full participation versus probable and problematic limited participation, C-JRIS leaders chose a selection strategy (Seo *et al.*, 2004): they selected one pole over the other and excluded non-participating agencies and their stakeholders. Not surprisingly, the resultant lack of critical mass on the reporting committee and members' failure to meet the broad range of stakeholders' needs led to dissolution of the committee. As its chair reported (Statement 12), there was "a conscious decision to have that committee fold." In some ways this is reminiscent of the My Lai Vietnam war rationale, "we had to destroy the village to save it."

Ironically, however, the unintended consequences of this strategy were surprisingly positive in at least two senses. First, many of the non-participating agencies' unmet needs led them to send representatives to meetings of the C-JRIS Technical Committee, which then expanded its scope of practices to include many of the activities of the disbanded reporting committee. Second, and in an instance of what DeSanctis and Poole (1994) term ironic appropriation, stakeholders found their way to key members of the reporting committee and worked individually with technology specialists in those agencies to appropriate best practices from them, outside of C-JRIS. In response to the query from the first author (Statement 7), "They just used the programming and said, 'Okay, there you go!'", the former chair of the reporting committee indicated (Statement 8), "Yep and you just populate the data right in there [demo'ing the system]. In fact, they just published that view out and a lot of agencies use that." That ironic outcome was precisely one of the goals sought by C-JRIS. More support for the organizational change came through abandoning the search for support.

6. Conclusion

Summary of specific findings

In this study, we addressed two questions concerning the relationship between institutional contradictions and the emergence and management of organizational paradox. We chose to focus on one major contradiction identified by Seo and Creed (2002), isomorphism conflicting with divergent interests. Several of the interviewees were quite cognizant of the contradiction, articulating strategic responses they felt would enable them to move forward even if they did not resolve the issue. Other interviewees were less aware and less sanguine about the entire process. Their discursive strategies, were not consciously formulated to address contradiction, yet they were embedded in the contradiction. Interestingly, strategies emerged from the moment,

the tensions and frustrations that they experienced without their connection to the larger institutional framework in which they operated.

RQ1 asked whether and how underlying institutional contradictions give rise to paradoxes associated with planned organizational change. We found that respondents were struggling with reconciling differences among stakeholder groups involving institutional mandates, varied budgeting processes, differential reward systems and control systems, among other factors. The C-JRIS change program was framed as beneficial to all stakeholders, and indeed, like all communal informational goods it was dependent upon the cooperation of virtually all stakeholder groups. However, the push and pull of the various constituencies created stresses and paradoxes in the system that remained unresolved. Three interdependent dualities emerged from the contradiction: stakeholder self-interest/collective good, stakeholder inclusion/exclusion, and emergent stakeholder consensus/leader driven decision making.

RQ2 concerned the relationship between the institutional contradictions, emergent dualities, strategies used for managing organizational change paradoxes, and the outcome of those strategies. The data suggest at least two paradoxes pertaining to stakeholders that were rooted in the dualities that interactively emerged from contradictions. Each paradox was based in attempts of stakeholder groups to simultaneously meet their own needs and what they saw as the mission of the change effort. We articulate these paradox as:

- It is both impossible and necessary to have all the stakeholders present or represented.
- To make the system work it is necessary to include stakeholders who intend to and will subvert the process.

As leaders tried to manage strategically and communicatively the paradoxes that arose, the solutions fed directly back into the institutional contradiction and the dualities. In this case, only two of the strategies proposed by Seo *et al.* (2004) were used, selection and separation. Three findings are worth emphasizing. First, is the simultaneous enactment of two distinct and oftentimes conflicting strategies. The seamless transition, for example, of one respondent selecting one pole and then the opposite pole to manage the self-interest/collective good paradox coupled with separation strategies which serves neither one's self nor collective interests. Thus, strategies for coping with paradox often become paradoxical themselves. Second, the management of paradox in and of itself is rooted in the institutional contradictions that Seo and Creed identify as leading to organizational change. Stakeholder concerns were framed within the institutional contradictions and we see how the stakeholder strategies and solutions were also tied to the same contradictions. Third, the data suggest a number of short term and enduring outcomes that varied in their degree of success (as gauged by alignment with objectives sought and C-JRIS goals in general). Of note, we found evidence of unintended consequences that were intriguing in their own right and aligned with program goals but not in ways that leaders designed.

Implications

This investigation is unique for the broader theoretical and empirical perspectives brought to bear on understanding paradox and planned change. Most research in the area provides rich and evocative images of dualities associated with planned change.

In some studies, intriguing links have been offered between how those dualities have played out and the effectiveness of the planned change. Our analysis has been both broader in empirical scope and more deeply rooted in theory. Specifically, drawing on institutional theory and institutional contradictions illuminated by the theory (Seo and Creed, 2002), we traced the implications of those contradictions for paradoxes at the level of practice surrounding this C-JRIS planned change. Furthermore, and drawing on theory concerning five strategies for managing the dualities most often associated with planned organizational change (Seo *et al.*, 2004), we found empirical evidence of two of those strategies in this case (separation and selection). Finally, and going beyond most studies of paradox and planned change, we sought to trace the outcomes of how leaders managed the poles of these dualities, and found evidence of unintended consequences that were intriguing in their own right.

Our study also underscores the role of communication in the representation of paradoxes surrounding planned organizational change. Perhaps, more significant, and consistent with the work of Barge *et al.* (2008), we examined how leaders' strategies for managing paradoxes were enacted communicatively and tactically.

Most novel among our findings were the dynamics associated with the leaders' strategic responses to institutional contradictions and embodied dualities that led to unintended consequences, ironically constraining and maintaining paradox. Indeed, the data revealed how out of institutional contradictions arose dualities that created a paradoxical situation that was managed through the establishment of new paradox also rooted in the contradiction. Our findings, thus elaborate research on stakeholder paradox (Goodpastor, 1991; Lange, 2003) and respond to calls for research on the dynamics undergirding paradoxical responses to organizational change (Smith and Lewis, 2011) as well as the circumstances within which institutional change produces unintended consequences (Cortell and Peterson, 2001).

Future research

With a fuller analysis that parallels the approach taken in this study, there is the potential to link paradox management strategies, communication tactics, and outcomes related to planned change initiatives. Those results would be rich for theory building in the area of paradoxes associated with planned organizational change. Furthermore, it would be useful to pursue the analysis of the full range of stakeholder paradoxes (Goodpastor, 1991) associated with planned organizational change. The findings can have important practical implications for those charged with leading planned change efforts.

References

- Andriopoulos, C. and Lewis, M.W. (2010), "Managing innovation paradoxes: ambidexterity lessons from leading product design companies", *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 43, pp. 104-22.
- Argyris, C. (1988), "Problems in producing usable knowledge for implementing liberating alternatives", in Bell, D.E., Raiffa, H. and Tversky, A. (Eds), *Decision Making: Descriptive, Normative, and Prescriptive Interactions*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 540-61.
- Barge, J.K., Lee, M., Maddux, K., Nabring, R. and Townsend, B. (2008), "Managing dualities in planned change initiatives", *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 36, pp. 364-90.

- Benson, J.K. (1977), "Organizations: a dialectic view", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 22, pp. 1-21.
- Bledow, R., Frese, M., Anderson, N., Erez, M. and Farr, J. (2009), "A dialectic perspective on innovation: conflicting demands, multiple pathways, and ambidexterity", *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, Vol. 2, pp. 305-37.
- Cameron, K.S. and Quinn, R.E. (1988), "Organizational paradox and transformation", in Quinn, R.E. and Cameron, K.S. (Eds), *Paradox and Transformation: Toward a Theory of Change in Organization and Management*, Ballinger, Cambridge, MA, pp. 12-18.
- Connolly, T. and Thorn, B.K. (1990), "Discretionary databases: theory, data, and implications", in Fulk, J. and Steinfield, C. (Eds), *Organizations and Communication Technology*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA, pp. 219-33.
- Cortell, A.P. and Peterson, S. (2001), "Limiting the unintended consequences of institutional change", *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 34, pp. 768-99.
- DeSanctis, G. and Poole, M.S. (1994), "Capturing the complexity in advanced technology use: adaptive structuration theory", *Organization Science*, Vol. 5, pp. 121-47.
- Fairhurst, G.T. and Putnam, L.L. (2004), "Organizations as discursive constructions", *Communication Theory*, Vol. 14, pp. 5-26.
- Fairhurst, G.T. and Putnam, L.L. (2012), "Paradox, contradictions, dialectics, and dualities", working paper, *Human Relations*.
- Ford, J. and Backoff, R. (1988), "Organizational change in and out of dualities and paradox", in Quinn, R. and Cameron, K. (Eds), *Paradox Transformation: Toward a Theory of Change Organization and Management*, Ballinger, Cambridge, MA, pp. 81-121.
- Freeman, R.E. (1984), *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, Pitman, Boston, MA.
- Fulk, J., Flanagan, A.J., Kalman, M., Monge, P.R. and Ryan, T. (1996), "Connective and communal public goods in interactive communication systems", *Communication Theory*, Vol. 6, pp. 60-87.
- Granovetter, M.S. (1983), "The strength of weak ties", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 7 No. 8, pp. 360-1380.
- Goodman, L.A. (1961), "Snowball sampling", *Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, Vol. 32, pp. 148-70.
- Goodpaster, K.E. (1991), "Business ethics and stakeholder analysis", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 1, pp. 53-73.
- Hargrave, T.J. and Van de Ven, A.H. (2006), "A collective action model of institutional innovation", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 31, pp. 864-88.
- Harter, L. and Krone, K. (2001), "The boundary-spanning role of a cooperative-support organization: managing the paradox of stability and change in non-traditional organizations", *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 29, pp. 248-77.
- Hatch, M.J. and Ehrlich, S.B. (1993), "Spontaneous humour as an indicator of paradox and ambiguity in organizations", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 14, pp. 505-26.
- Hennestad, B.W. (1990), "The symbolic impact of the double bind leadership: double bind and the dynamics of organizational culture", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 265-80.
- Hughes, P. and Brecht, G. (1975), *Vicious Circles and Infinity: A Panoply of Paradoxes*, Doubleday, Garden City, NJ.
- Kalman, M.E., Monge, P., Fulk, J. and Heino, R. (2002), "Motivations to resolve communication dilemmas in database-mediated collaboration", *Communication Research*, Vol. 29, pp. 125-54.

- Kim, W.C. and Mauborgne, R. (1997), "Value innovation: the strategic logic of high growth", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 75, pp. 103-12.
- Koot, W., Sabelis, I. and Ybema, S. (1996), "Epilogue", in Koot, W., Sabelis, I. and Ybema, S. (Eds), *Contradictions in Context: Puzzling over Paradoxes in Contemporary Organizations*, VU University Press, Amsterdam, pp. 208-12.
- Kraatz, M. and Block, E. (2008), "Organizational implications of institutional pluralism", in Greenwood, R., Oliver, C. and Suddaby, R. (Eds), *Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, Sage, London, pp. 243-75.
- Lange, J.I. (2003), "Environmental collaboration and constituency communication", in Frey, L.R. (Ed.), *Group Communication in Context: Studies of Bona Fide Groups*, 2nd ed., Lawrence-Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ, pp. 209-34.
- Leonardi, P. (2009), "Why do people reject new technologies and stymie organizational changes of which they are in favor? Exploring the misalignments between social interactions and materiality", *Human Communication Research*, Vol. 35, pp. 407-41.
- Lewis, L.K. (2000), "'Blinded by that one' and 'I saw that one coming': the relative anticipation and occurrence of communication problems and other problems in implementers' hindsight", *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 28, pp. 44-67.
- Lewis, L.K. and Seibold, D.R. (1996), "Communication during intraorganizational innovation adoption: predicting users' behavioral coping responses to innovations in organizations", *Communication Monographs*, Vol. 63, pp. 131-57.
- Lewis, M.K. (2000), "Exploring paradox: towards a more comprehensive guide", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 25, pp. 760-76.
- Lindlof, T.R. and Taylor, B.C. (2002), *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*, 2nd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Luscher, L.S. and Lewis, M.W. (2008), "Organizational change and managerial sensemaking: working through paradox", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 51, pp. 221-40.
- Medved, C.E., Morrison, K., Dearing, J.W., Larson, S., Cline, G. and Brummans, B.H.J.M. (2001), "Tensions in community health improvement initiatives: communication and collaboration in a managed care environment", *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 29, pp. 137-52.
- Merriam-Webster (2009), "Online dictionary", available at: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paradox (accessed 3 August 2009).
- Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994), *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Moen, P., Kelly, E. and Magennis, R. (2008), "Gender strategies: socialization, allocation, and strategic processing shaping the gendered adult life course", in Smith, M.C. and DeFrates-Densch, N. (Eds), *Handbook of Research on Adult Learning and Development*, Routledge, New York, NY, pp. 378-411.
- Monge, P.R., Fulk, J., Kalman, M., Flanagan, A.J., Parnassa, C. and Rumsey, S. (1998), "Production of collective action in alliance-based interorganizational communication and information systems", *Organization Science*, Vol. 9, pp. 411-33.
- Poole, M.S. and Van de Ven, A.H. (1989), "Using paradox to build management and organizational theories", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 14, pp. 562-78.
- Putnam, L.L. (1986), "Contradictions and paradoxes in organizations", in Thayer, L. (Ed.), *Organization-communication: Emerging Perspectives*, Ablex, Norwood, NJ, pp. 151-67.
- Robichaud, D., Giroux, H. and Taylor, J. (2004), "The metaconversation: the recursive property of language as a key to organizing", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 29, pp. 617-34.

- Seo, M. and Creed, W.E.D. (2002), "Institutional contradictions, praxis, and institutional change: a dialectical perspective", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 27, pp. 222-47.
- Seo, M., Putnam, L.L. and Bartunek, J.M. (2004), "Dualities and tensions of planned organizational change", in Poole, M.S. and Van de Ven, A.H. (Eds), *Handbook of Organizational Change and Innovation*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, pp. 73-107.
- Smith, K.K. and Berg, D.N. (1987), *Paradoxes of Group Life*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Smith, W.K. and Lewis, M. (2011), "Toward a theory of paradox: a dynamic equilibrium model of organizing", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 381-403.
- Stohl, C. and Cheney, G. (2001), "Participatory processes/paradoxical practices: communication and the dilemmas of organizational democracy", *Management Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 14, pp. 349-407.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998), *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed., Sage, London.
- Taylor, J.R. and Giroux, H. (2005), "The role of language in self-organizing", in Barnett, G.A. and Houston, R. (Eds), *Advances in Self-organizing Systems*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ, pp. 131-67.
- Tracy, S.J. (2004), "Dialectic, contradiction, or double find? Analyzing and theorizing employee reactions to organizational tensions", *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 32, pp. 119-46.
- Van de Ven, A.H. and Poole, M.S. (1988), "Paradoxical requirements for a theory of organizational change", in Quinn, R. and Cameron, K. (Eds), *Paradox and Transformation: Toward a Theory of Change Organization and Management*, Ballinger, Cambridge, MA, pp. 19-63.
- Van de Ven, A.H. and Poole, M.S. (1995), "Explaining development and change in organizations", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 20, pp. 510-40.
- van Reine, P.P. (1996), "Globalization and the local development of models for management and organization: the periphery talks back", in Cornelis, W., Koot, J., Sabelis, I. and Ybema, S. (Eds), *Contradictions in Context: Puzzling over Paradox in Contemporary Organizations*, VU University Press, Amsterdam, pp. 87-111.
- Westenholz, A. (1993), "Paradoxical thinking and change in frames in references", *Organizational Studies*, Vol. 14, pp. 37-58.
- Yin, R.K. (2003), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Further reading

- Lewis, L.K. and Seibold, D.R. (1993), "Innovation modification during intraorganizational adoption", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 18, pp. 322-54.
- Quinn, R. and Cameron, K. (1988), *Paradox and Transformation: Toward a Theory of Change in Organization and Management*, Ballinger, Cambridge, MA.
- Seibold, D.R., Lemus, D.R., Ballard, D.I. and Myers, K.K. (2009), "Organizational communication and applied communication research: parallels, intersections, integration, and engagement", in Frey, L.R. and Cissna, K.N. (Eds), *Routledge Handbook of Applied Communication Research*, Routledge, New York, NY, pp. 331-54.
- Zorn, T.E., Page, D.J. and Cheney, G. (2000), "Nuts about change: multiple perspectives on change-oriented communication in a public sector organization", *Management Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 14, pp. 515-66.

About the authors

Kimberly Stoltzfus is a Visiting Instructor of Communication at Pepperdine University. Her research covers organizational change, decision making, stakeholder identification and prioritization, and government modernization. Her dissertation research on problems of inter-governmental information sharing is funded through two fellowships and received additional data support from the Center for Technology and Government. She was named a 2008 Graduate Fellow of The American Academy of Political and Social Science. Kimberly Stoltzfus is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: kimberly.stoltzfus@pepperdine.edu

Cynthia Stohl is a Member of the Department of Communication at the University of California, Santa Barbara and a Faculty Affiliate of the Center for Information, Technology, and Society at UCSB. Her early research focused upon communication networks, organizational paradoxes, memorable messages, and issues of quality in global manufacturing groups. Her most recent work explores the changing communication partnerships among civic, NGO, and multinational organizations in the new media environment. The author of an award winning book and more than 80 articles, Professor Cynthia Stohl has been the recipient of several research awards including the International Communication Association's Outstanding Article Award in 2006-2007.

David R. Seibold is Professor of Communication, Division of Social Sciences, College of Letters and Science and Co-Director of the Graduate Program in Management Practice, Technology Management Program, College of Engineering at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He conducts research in the areas of group interaction and decision making, workgroup temporality, structuration, communication and organizational change, and technology management and innovation. Author of more than 125 publications and numerous research awards, he is a Distinguished Scholar in the National Communication Association and a Fellow of the ICA.

This article has been cited by:

1. Linda L. Putnam, Gail T. Fairhurst. 2015. Revisiting “Organizations as Discursive Constructions”: 10 Years Later. *Communication Theory* **25**:10.1111/comt.2015.25.issue-4, 375-392. [[CrossRef](#)]
2. Namrata Malhotra, C.R. (Bob) Hinings. 2015. Unpacking Continuity and Change as a Process of Organizational Transformation. *Long Range Planning* **48**, 1-22. [[CrossRef](#)]
3. James Olumide Olufowote. 2015. Preparing Future Physicians in Medical Ethics: A Tension-Centered Study of Institutional and Situational Dualities. *Communication Quarterly* **63**:3, 254. [[CrossRef](#)]
4. Cate Watson. 2013. How (and why) to avoid making rational decisions: embracing paradox in school leadership. *School Leadership & Management* **33**, 256-269. [[CrossRef](#)]
5. Aurelie Leclercq-Vandelannoitte. 2013. Contradiction as a medium and outcome of organizational change: a Foucauldian reading. *Journal of Organizational Change Management* **26**:3, 556-572. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]
6. Jorge Humberto Mejia-Morelos, François Grima, Georges Trepo. 2013. Change and stability interaction processes in SMEs: a comparative case study. *Journal of Organizational Change Management* **26**:2, 370-422. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]