Present Transitions: Organization F and Unit 7

Organization F: Espoused Perception vs. In-use Reality in UCaPP and BAH Transitions

Organization F did not intend to be in the business in which it now finds itself.

> The company was a design firm. They found that they were having a really difficult time [doing administrative functions] … so they decided to put together our own little internal tool that can do this. … It reached a point that they realized, this little tool we've got here, this is something special. I think there's a lot of people out there that could really use this. (Aaron-1-25)

Although some might call it idealistic, Aaron expresses the original essence of Organization F's culture with respect to economic objectives, and the relationship between work and life:

> Profits have never been what anybody's been in this for. The money is just there to remain sustainable because we all truly like and enjoy what we're doing, and like working with each other, and it sounds like a lot of crap, but, you know, we're all kind of these people where work is just part of life. (Aaron-1-25)

> It's almost kind of a European thing, we're not living to work, we're working to live. ... Work is important, and everyone's got to care about what they're doing, but life comes first. (Aaron-1-31)

During our first conversation, Jeff describes the early stages of the entrepreneurship as being "like family," and as it grows employees are, "all buddy, buddy, and that's the way it's still now, maybe not as much to the full extent, but pretty much everyone here's like friends" (Jeff-1-51). He also notes the workflow and managerial delegation processes, such as they are: "They're not like bosses. They're not going to say, Jeff do this. Jeff do that. I just knew what had to be done" (Jeff-1-

51). These analogies – comparing the business environment to being with family and friends, and Jeff just knowing "what had to be done" – are characteristic of a very different type of organizational behaviour than exhibited by the two, previous BAH organizations.

Leading a New Organizational Culture

Matt, the CEO, confirms Jeff and Aaron's impressions by describing the founding culture of the organization, a culture that relies on maintaining the "value set" and "retaining the intimacy … [as] an opportunity and a challenge, and to me that's energizing" (Matt-1-71):

> We have sort of a culture of fostering trust, and people rely on each other. And part of fostering trust is in trusting people, giving them responsibility. So yeah, as quick as we can, if we find someone who has an area of expertise, we try to let them run with that. … [I] do what I can to get out of the way, and get the rest of the organization out of the way, so that those people can pull in that direction. … It rubs off on the organization, and it all comes together, fits together, so long as people are headed in the right direction. (Matt-1-95)

Matt describes his role as leader of the organization, expressing the espoused theory of the organization's leadership model:

> My role is to set the course. … I basically try to be responsible for getting nothing done, but helping to facilitate other people getting what they need done in as ideal a fashion as possible, … generally making sure that their activities are aligned with those of the organization as a whole. (Matt-1-7)

He subsequently self-ascribes the particular leadership attributes he deems to be strategically crucial to success as an entrepreneur:

> I'm the sort of person who will see things, or know things for how things are going to be. Where they're headed. I tend to live six months

> down the road, but if not further, in my head. And the things that are concerning me today are the things that are going to be issues in six months…
>
> At the end of the day, I can probably push through any decision I like, but I like to make sure that people understand it, that I've gotten their feedback, because I'm often not spot on, or there's a better way to look at things, so [I] take counsel from those around me inside and outside the organization, and trying to refine and clarify my vision of things and where things should go. (Matt-1-11)

Matt claims that he encourages an organizational culture in which "difference is a core value at Organization F. I think that just being able to disagree at any time lets people assert themselves as individuals, and they feel heard, and they feel like it's a trusting environment" (Matt-1-123). He concludes his description of the espoused leadership model in terms that are quite contemporary[1] in their reference to collaborative contributions of ideas to create a shared vision and sense of purpose:

> I like to think of Organization F as a relatively organic organization, where there's a series of small insights that lead one to a path, and then, more insights are layered on top of that, and I don't know if consensus is the right word, but people work towards a more shared vision of things, and you choose to execute on something. (Matt-1-13)

Aaron's description of the ideal way to grow the organization captures the spirit of autonomy and collaborative coordination that seems to characterize Organization F as a UCaPP organization, at least initially:

> Well I would like to think that as long as you just kept all of your people in small, relatively coherent units with very well-defined responsibilities, and let them sort of self-organize, and let them come up with their own directions and own solutions to their own problems, and have one leader within that group who got to choose the members

---

[1] See, for example, Maccoby and Heckscher (2006), who frame leadership in terms of collaborative community, and Schrieber and Carley (2006), who speak to participative leadership as a means to increase social capital among all members, enabling more effective adaptability.

> of that group with the blessings of the other members of the [larger] group. Because that's basically the way it works here. … That's to maintain the really close dynamic. (Aaron-1-43)

Jeff agrees that this is the best way to foster mutual trust throughout the organization as it expands:

> If you've screened and hired the right person, I would trust them, like, this guy is my friend. … It's less realistic in terms of scalability that you know all hundred people [in a future organization]. … It might not be scalable in the future, but that's the way I would like to do things. … Generally that's how the culture is now. (Jeff-1-315).

In describing the hiring of the new marketing manager, Matt emphasizes the importance of beginning the integration and cultural socialization processes as part of the hiring process.

> We spent a lot of time and energy investing in … setting expectations, listening to, understanding really some of the emotional concerns around stuff. … They knew this person. They've been exposed to this person. They did work with this person, so it wasn't like a, just drop somebody in and just deal with it. There were relationships that existed before. There were positive experiences. We tried to nurture those kinds of things. (Matt-1-103)

In these comments, Aaron, Jeff, and Matt touch on a key issue that may differentiate BAH and UCaPP organizations: creating and fostering trust. In particular, they each identify the importance of incorporating mechanisms that socialize the entire organization for strong trust when introducing new members—processes that may obviate, or at least lessen the need for, traditional mechanisms of control.

As discussed in the first chapter, among the characteristic aspects of a more-UCaPP organization are connection and collaboration. It thus makes sense to create

those circumstances from the very beginning of developing the relationship between the potential new member and the organization as a whole. When a new member joins an organization, there is often the impetus to perform, to produce, to prove oneself relative to task and completion of objectives. This traditional personal impetus, the drive-to-action, so to speak, naturally lends itself to instrumentality and interactions that are more transactional in nature. What better time is there than during an extended hiring process to focus on creating strong relationships with the new member and conveying the sense of the organizational culture? Encouraging cultural integration from first contact, as it were, seems to be an optimal way to facilitate a sustainable UCaPP environment as the organization grows. However, there are other, conflicting influences that might impede sustaining a culture that Matt might have underestimated: "For me, retaining that intimacy is *just* a challenge" (Matt-1-71; emphasis added).

The Cultural Challenges of Becoming a Small Company

As the organization expands, Aaron perceives the pressure of a presumed need to become isomorphic with conventional, corporate organizations (See DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hinings, 2003). Given that the organization's founding culture seems to be based on creating strong relationships of trust, he reflects on its seemingly inevitable demise:

> We know full well that won't be a sustainable culture as we continue to grow, because, obviously, every time you add a person to the organization, the number of relationships within that organization, they increase exponentially, you know, and so as we continue to add more and more people, we recognize that's not going to be possible. (Aaron-1-31)

Jeff confirms Aaron's observation of a gradual transition to a more BAH-like structure, seeing clear distinctions among individuals performing separate functional responsibilities: “I can see a distinction between marketing now and development and support. I can imagine in the future maybe it will be on a different floor or a different department, and I can see communications being more difficult” (Jeff-1-115). As the organization seems to be passing the proverbial knee in the organizational growth curve (at twelve people), it is becoming more formal, structured and fragmented, perhaps to be “a lot more scalable’ relative to future growth.

The issue might not be scalability *per se*, but rather a received conception of *how* an organization scales, responding to the demands of internal growth through assigned division of labour, separation of supervisory and direct task responsibilities, and instituting consistent procedures and processes throughout the organization—in other words, enacting bureaucracy. Larry Greiner (1972/1998), for instance, posits that there is a certain inevitable evolution of phases of stable and steady organizational growth, each phase ending with a characteristic crisis and “revolution” that heralds the next phase[2]. Such a stepwise model is consistent with the contingency theories and structural typology models that I described in the earlier section on “the instrumental, institutional, and managerialist 20th century”—the paradigmatic environment from which Greiner’s evolution model emerged. As we will see with

[2] According to Greiner, a young, entrepreneurial organization evolves through “creativity” until it faces a crisis of leadership; subsequent evolution through a phase of explicit “direction” ends with a crisis of autonomy; a phase of “delegation” ends with a crisis of control; this leads to a phase of “coordination” that results in a crisis of “red tape”; ending with an organization that finds its stability in collaboration. Greiner notes that the solution to a previous phase’s crises itself becomes problematic at a certain future time as the organization grows.

more-UCaPP organizations, changing the notion of *what it means to scale* changes the corresponding conception of how an organization responds to that growth.

Jeff confirms that the perceived need to adopt a more formal, BAH structure in response to growth demands was based on outside advice: "The advisor worked for one of the big companies. She's now a consultant. And basically when we were growing she whipped us into shape. Like defining roles and creating, like, persons we're really missing" (Jeff-1-245). He frames the change from a relatively *ad hoc* collaborative arrangement that is consistent with UCaPP behaviours, to a more formal, BAH structure—what Jeff refers to as an inevitable, "necessary evil":

> I notice things are changing and these changes have to occur … I understand they're for the better. It's like changing diapers to using the potty. That's the norm, and that's what we, from her experience is what we should do. (Jeff-1-253)

Knowing the theme of my research investigation, a number of colleagues have personally shared their own experiences of participating in very small organizations through a period of growth. Based on many of these shared anecdotes, among many start-up and grassroots organizations, and certainly consistent with Organization F's experiences, a small and new organization often tends to naturally adopt impetus and coordination mechanisms that are more collective and equitable, based on collaboration, consensus, and lack of status, class and hierarchical privilege[3]. In the absence of an externally imposed structure to the contrary, it is not unreasonable to conclude that these mechanisms that are consistent with more-UCaPP behaviours are

[3] See also Leung (2003) and Matherne (2007) for analyses on how this situation changes as an organization grows out of its start-up phase.

more consistent with naturally occurring, humanistic inter-personal dynamics. In contrast, the more-BAH structure that is considered “the norm” is a socialized, learned response, but arguably not a “natural” way of organizing. Aaron observes:

> As you move to this kind of heavy, over-organized structure that I feel we’re gravitating towards, you’re forgetting these people are people. You’re forgetting that they have different strengths, different things that they’re good at, and different desires. You’re just trying to take people and put them into this totally unnatural structure. (Aaron-1-93).

Although Matt and Jeff claim to want to preserve the small-organization, UCaPP-like culture, the pressure towards organizational isomorphism with larger organizations seems to be compelling. Aaron muses,

> …I don’t know that it’s being implemented to get power, so much as it’s just being implemented because “that’s just the way you do things when you grow,” you know? And so, I don’t know that maintaining our kind of unique organizational structure was ever in the cards. (Aaron-1-101)

Jeff, almost in denial about the seemingly inexorable pressure to change, explains:

> It’s kind of like a military operation where you have soldiers who are not organized, there’s no command structure, to now there’s a command structure, and by doing so we can all be more productive. … So the hierarchy is there on paper, but it doesn’t really exist in our company. (Jeff-1-259)

Within nine months of this conversation, the emergent hierarchy “on paper” is actualized and explicit. At the time of the first Organization F conversations, there was almost no bureaucracy but there was most certainly a traditional hierarchy of authority. One would expect that the hierarchy would likely crystallize and be made explicit over a relatively short time, exemplified by the emergence of administrative

procedures and processes (that can be rationalized and justified in terms of efficiency), leading to more bureaucratic structures and practices throughout the organization. This is, indeed, what transpired over the ensuing nine months to the second set of conversations.

For a variety of reasons and justifications – including a felt pressure towards organizational isomorphism, the socialization of both legitimate and thought leaders in the organization to traditional control structures, and an appeal to efficiency and productivity – Organization F transitioned from more-UCaPP behaviours in its entrepreneurial phase to more-BAH behaviours. Part of the motivation may be Organization F's self-identification as a legitimate, "small company," having matured and eschewed the label of start-up. Over the nine months between the first and second conversations, Aaron laments:

> I do feel like we've gone backwards a lot from that new school sort of approach, to, in a lot of respects, we may as well be an industrial era company at this point. We're a staff of just over twenty, and about one-third of the staff is in management. (Aaron-2-4)

All new employees in Organization F are oriented by beginning in support. For an organization that espouses the primary importance of customer service throughout its business, such a placement as a mandatory initial assignment accomplishes the objective of connecting every employee directly to the organization's customers. "It's based on belief that, if you're going to be working on the product, you need to have an intimate understanding of our customers and their needs, and their pain points" (Matt-1-41).

It may appear as slightly odd that a novice who would likely have never had occasion to use Organization F's application would be asked to provide support to customers seeking assistance with the application. One might be moved to ask whether this is truly indicative of the espoused theory of customer focus, or whether it simply fulfils the organization's instrumental interest by serving up the customers as training fodder for new employees. This duality potentially offers opposite readings of the alignment between espoused and in-use theories relative to customers and service. However, if one considers the *intended organizational effect*, this is indeed an appropriate strategy. Organization F intends to empathize with the challenges of small business owners, its target market. Having every employee speak directly with customers over a period of time is important, so that everyone in the organization can contextualize their eventual "real" work and role in that visceral experience.

In addition to reinforcing organizational values of customer service, everyone answering support calls creates the impression of levelling the relative power and status hierarchy, as front-line call answering is often equated to lower status in many organizations. During the first conversation, Aaron specifically mentions that those who take support calls are often able to effect remedial application changes very quickly—everyone is empowered to help customers. These dynamics are consistent with UCaPP behaviours; specifically, everyone knowing what to do so that organizational impetus is emergent, yet coherent and consistent towards common effect.

In contrast, by the time of the second conversation nine months later, customer support has evolved to become more BAH in its realization. The discourse of

"everyone does support" as a matter of organizational culture gives way to more "practical," expedient, and instrumental considerations:

> Everyone does support, and there is a tier of dedicated support people who train any new employee, and give them a lot of information on how to use the ticketing system [which administratively mediates between the 'dedicated support people' and the developers who were previously empowered to directly fix problems]. And we hired our first dedicated support person, 'Faith,' and we're going to be hiring a few more people. Even though everyone is still going to do support, but they're going to be like the experts, specialists in support. (Jeff-2-97)

With a relatively lower status, functionally decomposed support group, there is far less direct empowerment of individuals to fix problems in favour of a mediating administrative, "ticketing system," and less frequent direct involvement of more senior organization members.

Privileged Specialists

As the organization grows, Matt specifically identifies the value of role specialization in task focus: "I can tell you that organizations as they grow, they need some more specialization, they need some more role definition. It's been my experience to just make things clearer and smoother for everybody" (Matt-1-77). This, according to Matt, becomes especially important to manage organizational changes imposed by growth in the business.

Specialization in function and the apparent emergence of a hierarchical bureaucracy seem to have resulted in diminishing coordination among the newly emerging specialist departments.

> I think that they [marketing] are largely out of sync now with what happens in the rest of the company. I think that the rest of the

> company has no idea of what marketing does, and I think that marketing largely has no idea of what the company does. … They're just kind of out of sync with what it is that we do here, and they're out there selling an absolutely incredible product that doesn't really exist. … There's not a whole lot of communication between, you know, the different parts: our development team and our support team, and our marketing team, and those employees that don't really have a team, so we kind of call them, like operations. (Aaron-2-78/80)

As Organization F appears to have transitioned to become more BAH over this period of growth, there are two tacit assumptions demonstrated in Matt's assertion with respect to the value and importance of role specialization, and its reification at Organization F. First, task or subject-matter specialization necessarily implies bureaucratic and hierarchical organization, essentially becoming isomorphic with traditional organizations. Bureaucratic structure, in and of itself, will necessarily accomplish the requisite internal communication and coordination functions that are enacted among the leaders of those specialized role groupings, that is, among the managers.

The second tacit assumption is that the task of management is a privileged subject matter, distinct from the technical subject matter of developing and running the application service itself. The role separation of "those who do" from "those who think" or manage is, of course, a construct that dates from the earliest conception of scientific management, and the advice of Taylor and Fayol that has informed a hundred years of management practice.

Thus, as one might expect, with the hierarchical stratification of Organization F, the senior management structure has become more formalized into a steering committee:

> None of us are even privy to what happens at those steering committee meetings. There's "Lee" [CFO], … there's "Mick" [outside consultant, who] just kind of facilitates a lot of stuff. … I suspect that's where a lot of this, oh, this is just how you do things, originates. (Aaron-2-92)

Additionally, "Casey," the newly hired development manager, attends the steering committee meetings. Casey's hiring and inclusion as a member of the steering committee has had the effect of moving the technological decision process from being highly consultative to being exclusive and privileged within the span of nine months.

Matt acknowledges there is a hierarchy of expertise in the organization that provides legitimation for influencing decisions, and a separate hierarchy of legitimation by virtue of organizational rank.

> Said another way, there are people at all levels of the organization that have outright ownership or domain expertise in various areas, and for the most part, if the decision is going to have anything to do with them, that person will be the go-to person maybe to set the course, and we listen to them. Or, we're certainly taking it into account. And then there's other, organizational higher-level decisions, that we get the feedback and then we decide within the steering committee, if that makes sense. (Matt-1-27)

In all cases, it is the *legitimation* of hierarchical position, either through knowledge-status or rank-status, that confers the value of an individual's opinion—a defining characteristic of BAH. There is, of course, a consequence on the morale of people like Aaron who were specifically attracted by the UCaPP nature of the organization's earlier incarnation:

> I actually care about the results and the outcome and the health of the company, and I actually think about what I'm doing, and that's a problem, because somebody's already done the thinking for me, you know. We hire thinkers from outside to sit up top, and I'm just supposed to be a doer. (Aaron-2-48)

The nominal reason for dispensing with a more collaborative approach is its perceived lack of efficiency, weighed against the (presumed) limited amount of time available to bring features and functions to the market.

> A lot of the feedback [on the collaborative approach] was great and everything was working well. So I was thinking, wow, this is really good for the product. This is a good method to work, however, it's very time-consuming. … Is that the way we should spend more time working on these [collaborations], or maybe spend less time and get it done faster and move faster? (Jeff-1-69)

Without having a well thought-through, consensus-creating process, Organization F began to slowly move away from collaborative consensus, and more towards a hierarchical and bureaucratic model of responsibility and decision-making, in which the CEO "comes up with" the specifications and design:

> Right now we're a growing business, we're expanding, and we can't really have time like that. … I pretty much go to each person and get their opinions [on] what our CEO came up with … and generally if they all fall into place, and everyone is kind of saying, yeah, yeah, and everyone is going in that direction, that's great, it's pretty much done. (Jeff-1-65)

In the second conversation with Jeff, he describes how even this process became too cumbersome. In admitting there is less participation and involvement in decisions, primarily because "the technology hasn't caught up," Jeff describes what appears to him to be the logical solution:

> Currently, I would say that there is less democratic say, but only because we haven't developed a system to do it better. … [The] plan is to build a system to prioritize features, and anyone can add votes. Matt might have some infinite vote, where he can just make something go higher. (Jeff-2-65)

In fact, design decisions have become the almost exclusive realm of the steering committee, with its hierarchical status and class decision-making privilege, consistent with a more-BAH organization. Note how Jeff acknowledges the reification of Matt's *de facto* overriding influence on decisions to be taken. Jeff confirms that this envisioned system is a way of obtaining limited input from various constituencies on design features and product direction without actually having to engage and consult with them. It implements a nominal form of the more "democratic" processes that originally existed in the start-up without requiring the CEO to cede control—an excellent example of a (somewhat dysfunctional) socio-technical[4] approach that would be characteristic of a more-BAH organization.

What might be called consultative processes in BAH organizations would be expected to have an instrumental, if not perfunctory, quality to them. They equate merely giving participants a chance to speak, with participants truly being heard, or better yet, actively participating in a collaborative, consensus-building process. It is telling that Jeff describes what is perhaps a quintessentially bureaucracy-like response to a disagreement:

> I think there is one person who disagreed with something wholeheartedly. Take it away. We shouldn't do this. And I made sure that I spoke to him, got his opinion. I wrote them down and made sure [to tell the] CEO, this person didn't like it for these reasons. As long as he understands them. Are we going to do anything about it? Like,

---

[4] The proposed voting system crosses an organizational technical subsystem with the social system of nominal collaboration in order to achieve a potentially optimal balance between the technical and human requirements of the organization. The fact that its proposed implementation is such that the CEO has an infinite override is a not-well-veiled instantiation of BAH leader control under the guise of a form of more participatory organizational democracy.

> maybe. Or, like no, but at least have them heard, on the record, and *included on a piece of paper*. (Jeff-1-87; emphasis added)

From the inception of the organization, and at the time of the first conversations, there had been a culture not only of "everyone doing support" and taking trouble calls from customers, but also of empowering the front line people to fix problems. One might easily explain this apparent empowerment in terms of many of the "support" personnel being, in fact, the developers. Nonetheless, there was a casual leeway permitted throughout the organization that enabled discretionary and empowered autonomy among those employees with the appropriate technical skills to indeed fix problems.

By the time of the second conversation, nine months after the first, the reported differences in experience between Aaron and Jeff are remarkable. Jeff seemed reluctant to admit directly that the organization's renewed emphasis on "growth, growth, growth" seems to have shifted priorities from responding to customer-reported problems to adding new features. His cautious account nevertheless tends to corroborate Aaron's assertions:

> I do not feel remotely empowered to resolve customer issues anymore, whereas there was a time that I did. I feel that as we've added more resources, they've become a lot more difficult to harness, because we've added a whole lot more bureaucracy and red tape, and so whereas before I was okay with the fact that we sometimes couldn't fix things because we just didn't have time or the ability. Now I feel like, we *choose* not to improve the quality of what it is that we're doing and, so I don't really feel empowered to do my job. … I'm not really satisfied with working for that sort of organization, where we're now putting growth ahead of quality. (Aaron-2-6)

The inconsistency in perception between Jeff and Aaron is not necessarily surprising, since Jeff is vested in his sense-making of the organization as a

collaborative, participatory family, and would tend to minimize or rationalize any evidence that is inconsistent with that sense-making (Argyris, 1994; Weick, 1995). Aaron, on the other hand, had recently tendered his resignation just prior to the second conversation; as such, he had far less vested in what remained of the organization's espoused theory.

Questioning Questioning

Being able to assimilate diverse opinions, and resolving conflicts by promoting and enacting processes of dialogue (Bohm, Factor, & Garrett, 1991), polarity management (Johnson, 1992), and integrative thinking among diametric options (Martin, 2007) are characteristics that tend to mitigate the hegemonic effects – culturally coerced groupthink – that often colonize the culture of BAH organizations. An indication of how effective that mitigation may be – not to mention how well the organization is able to make sense of its environment – lies in how well the organization fosters a culture in which inquiry is welcomed and valued as reflective practice. Unfortunately, to the BAH-minded organization, inquiry often appears as dissent, or worse, as personal threat:

> I've been sat down by the CEO a couple of times about my "attitude," because I'm too negative and critical, and I've been asked if I value criticism, or if I'm willing to shelve it for the good of the organization, and that question right there was kind of when it dawned upon me that I was in a place that had its priorities wrong… (Aaron-2-8)

As Organization F moves away from its entrepreneurial, UCaPP personality in favour of more BAH-like behaviours, Aaron describes how inquiry became increasingly shunned, and the consequences of that transition:

> There's not enough value placed on—I don't even think it's criticism. I think it's just introspection, asking questions. … In this organization, I have often stood alone in asking questions in the past. And, if nobody asks questions, the company gropes about blindly and makes mistakes, because nobody's thinking about the reasons behind what we're doing. And a lot of the questions that I ask are, why are we doing this? Is it just because this is what we see others do? Have we thought about whether it actually makes sense? (Aaron-2-18)

As was clearly seen in Organization M, a BAH organization will often circumvent the possibility of self-questioning by appealing to supposedly objective metrics that seem to confirm success, without actually measuring the intended effects. Organization F primarily values customer service as a key element of its organizational identity. According to Aaron, there is a degree of self-deception occurring as the organization sets its metric to ensure reporting of excellent customer service:

> It's said that the only question that you need to ask your customers to gauge their true end satisfaction is, on a scale of one to ten, how likely are you to recommend us to a friend or colleague. And if the answer is nine or ten, it's a yes. Anything else is a no. Well, when we asked our customers that question, did we give them a scale of one to ten? No. We gave them a yes or no. And so, 99% of them said yes. If I were to guess, none of those people are actually referring friends. In fact, if we look at our numbers, none of those people are actually referring friends. So it's kind of a meaningless statistic that we've used to puff out our chests and feel good about ourselves. And I think everybody here is genuinely convinced that every one of our customers is ecstatic and everyone who checks out the software loves it, and everyone who doesn't, just doesn't get it. (Aaron-2-68)

As Aaron previously mentioned, Matt shepherds ideas through a steering committee that helps provide strategic and tactical guidance in his decision-making process. Rather than authentically seeking collaboration in decision-making, Matt's approach seems to be a way of bridging an espoused collaborative and consultative process with an in-use theory that reflects his self-identified role of "setting the

course" (Matt-1-7). He admits that he could "probably push through any decision I like, but I like to make sure that people understand it" (Matt-1-11). As such, difference is invited – even valued – but as a way of enabling Matt to discover dissenting opinions in order to effectively neutralize them with a minimum of conflict. In the following excerpt, note how he does not mention attempting to understand and appreciate the source of the dissenting opinion; rather his interest seems to be more consistent with pushing through his ideas, albeit softly:

> In other cases, there will be disagreement. If I really believe in [my idea], and something needs to be done, then I'll invest time in that individual to help describe to them … diving deeper into this, so they really understand where I'm coming from, and usually once they do that, … *once they get into the set of shoes I need them to be in*, it's usually a lot easier to convince them that, in fact, this is what we need to do" (Matt-1-21; emphasis added)

From both Aaron and Jeff's descriptions of their experiences during their first conversations, I have little doubt that the early years of the start-up organization saw little difference between the espoused and in-use theories of leadership and impetus in Organization F. They both describe the organization as highly participatory, with considerable, lively engagement among all the employees, especially with respect to debating the future of the organization's offerings. However, as the organization transitioned from its UCaPP origins to becoming a self-described small company, adopting many BAH behaviours in the process, the leadership model seemed to transition as well.

Aaron's subsequent experience – and to a lesser extent, Jeff's[5] – of the in-use leadership model in Organization F is, to paraphrase King Louis XIV, *l'organisation, c'est moi!* "It was almost just more like it's very tribal, I guess. He's the chief of the tribe. You know, everybody has input. Everybody has autonomy, but if he says the word, that's the word" (Aaron-1-115). During the second conversation, Aaron is even more explicit about what he perceives as a more autocratic leadership practice:

> It took me a while to see it, but this is our CEO's company. There are a lot of euphemisms to suggest otherwise. … I suspect that he thinks he is hiring people to do things exactly the way that he would do them. I certainly have enough [experience] to know that it is usually very important to let your people do things their own way, and it may not be exactly the way you would have done them, but that does not make it wrong. And it makes me feel like what I do is not particularly valuable. (Aaron-2-24)
>
> I've had [Matt] sit me down and ask me if I thought I could do what he did. And if I'd answered yes, I wouldn't have had a job anymore. [chuckles] But that, in and of itself, illustrates just how autocratic it is. The organization has not been set up as a living, breathing organism. It has been set up as an extension of *one* living, breathing organism. (Aaron-2-28)

Matt's use of the word, "convincing," and Aaron's experiences in expressing dissent, may be crucial distinguishing factors in placing Organization F along the BAH-UCaPP spectrum, and suggesting the direction of its transition. In the more-BAH organizations, decisions made by those with legitimate power, relatively higher in the hierarchy, can be disseminated and enforced throughout the organization with

---

[5] In several instances, Jeff uses a military metaphor to express these ideas; for instance: "I feel it could be like a military structure where … for example, Matt said to me, do this, and I didn't agree with it, and I let him know that I don't agree with this for so-and-so reason. … Even though I don't necessarily agree, as long as he understood those things, I'm going to carry out those words, whatever" (Jeff-1-87).

little need to "convince" other organizational members of their necessity or propriety. Coercive influence is sufficient to ensure compliance, as is the experience in Organization A and, aside from the employment protection provided by the union grievance procedure (Stan-1-67), Organization M.

On the other hand, as we will see in the next two organizations, decisions in a more-UCaPP organizational context that are not unanimous will cycle back through the collaborative decision-making process for reconsideration if they turn out to be problematic. Where there is legitimate power via a nominal hierarchy in a more-UCaPP organization, those higher in the legitimating hierarchy must make a specific effort to ensure that they are honestly listening to, and truly considering, opinions and situation analyses that differ from their own. Techniques that specifically invite and integrate diverse contexts, drawn from the contemporary organization development repertoire and mentioned earlier, take on an increased importance in a UCaPP environment to ensure that the legitimate leader is honestly and authentically consulting, not merely convincing.

Organization F is an organization that seems to espouse UCaPP principles but is struggling with BAH isomorphism as it grows. Matt's approach to convincing someone of the correctness of his vision and ambitions might be a sign of in-use theory separating from espoused theory in what is nominally collaborative decision making, but in fact is the legitimate leader increasingly exerting his will—even if he honestly believes otherwise. "The business continues to grow. It will be a challenge to retain [our culture] and to continue to deepen it, because the status quo is not acceptable, in my opinion" (Matt-1-71). One is left to wonder whether the "status

quo" to which he refers as being "not acceptable" is the quickly vanishing culture of the UCaPP start-up.

Unit 7: The Game of Organizational Culture Change

Unit 7 began its corporate life as an extremely BAH organization, enacting some of the worst dysfunctions of that organizational form:

> In October 1996, a group of five partners … found[ed] LLKFB, an independent direct marketing agency. … Over the next four years, LLKFB attracted an impressive roster of clients and exhibited steady revenue growth. In November 2000, LLKFB was acquired by Omnicom [DAS division] for stock and a four-year earn-out[6]. Along with four of the five original partners, LLKFB's eighty-five employees joined DAS. … After a disappointing financial performance in 2001, LLKFB … "ended 2002 with our highest revenue ever, a 110% increase over 2001, and we delivered a 46.4% profit margin before bonuses" [according to Loreen Babcock, one of the original partners. However,] "people were overworked and under constant pressure; there was little positive recognition. Our saving grace was that the quality of the work was excellent," says Dr. Mark Spellman [then a consultant doing consumer behaviour analyses]…
>
> "Our bottom-line focus was so stringent," said Loreen, "that if you needed paper clips, you were asked how many you wanted … and a single digit was always the right answer. … Unfortunately, we had become a pretty unlikable company. As practitioners, we had become so focused on the numbers that we had lost sight of the client. … [Our process consultant's] insight was that we had some of the best processes they had ever seen, but none of them were connected. The reason that we were disconnected was an absence of collaboration among the leaders of the firm…"
>
> [Mark Spellman adds,] "There was a culture of fear in the agency, which showed itself at its worst as saying, 'either fit in, or get the hell out of here.' … And the belief that fear was a motivator cast a cloud over even those who did not fundamentally believe that. My experience with Loreen was that she had always tried to motivate people by pride

---

[6] A financial arrangement for the acquisition of a company in which a significant amount – often 40-60% – of the purchase value of the target company is earned over a period of time based on meeting certain financial performance targets.

> in the highest quality work and in the highest quality relationships with clients. However, her enforcement of those high standards was sometimes interpreted negatively because it occurred within a wider culture of fear." (Maher & O'Brien, 2007, p. 2-5)

A UCaPP Leader

During my initial conversation with Loreen, she identifies how the purchase of the company by Omnicom – and especially the ensuing financial incentive of the earn-out – distracted attention, focus, and effort from what were the original goals of the organization. At the time, ironically, what is typically an effective extrinsic motivator – linking individual financial performance and compensation to one's sense of self-worth and relative value to the organization – was actually counter-productive.

Her epiphany came with the realization that recreating relationships among people, rather than maintaining an exclusive focus on objectives, goals, and outcomes, was the key to healing the organization's many dysfunctional aspects.

> While the company needed to rebuild, a strict focus on the revenue wouldn't have put the health back to the company. So I sought out different views on how to rebuild cultures, or to create a culture. … The defining moments of that work were that the rules of the game really became about what would be acceptable behaviour and standards. It did lead to some revenue, the revenue goals, but the required moves of the game, and the forbidden rules that had dire consequences, [i.e., termination] had everything to do with the behaviour. (Loreen-1-27)

Loreen changed her own perception of what it means to be an organizational leader. Similar to Organization F's CEO, Matt, Loreen understands her role to be an environmental enabler in the organization. Notably unlike Matt, Loreen does not see herself as being responsible for ensuring people are aligned:

> How I perceive [my role] is the responsibility to create an environment where people feel like they can learn and prosper. So I feel that a big part of my responsibility is to help people know how to work in the environment so they can achieve those goals, they can feel good about the people they are working with, and those people are making a contribution, as are they, and those people are helping them learn as they are helping other people learn. (Loreen-1-5)

Loreen established the organizational ethos of Unit 7 that attaining objectives, achieving goals, and indeed, attaining overall business success all are emergent from the appropriate environment. This is not a surprising stance, considering that, “we didn’t have an environment to speak of, and we very much had an abrasive command and control way of running the business. There was a lot of induced fear” (Loreen-1-17). In enacting that ethos, Loreen describes how she continually and actively senses the organizational environment:

> I’m often in sessions where I’m in collaboration with people, so I can observe the strengths of people and how they contribute, and that helps give me a gauge of where else they could contribute in the organization, and what challenges they would be valuable on. (Loreen-1-7)

What strikes me as noteworthy in Loreen’s reflection is how she views her role in terms of learning, of discovering individuals’ untapped potential, and of actively creating new opportunities to which individuals can contribute. This description is in stark contrast to the two organizations I identify at the BAH-end of the organizational spectrum. Additionally, in comparison to Matt, Loreen does not speak about setting the direction for the organization or coordinating (aligning) individuals’ activities or ambitions with those of the organization. Rather, she asserts,

> We have a practice here of making sure that people are vested in this being a place that they want to come to and work in, and that they can grow in. … That it’s not all about what I create for them. It’s also about how they help create it. So we’ll often invite them in to design a way of

> working in an area they feel would greatly enhance their experience at Unit 7. (Loreen-1-7)

As a notable departure from conventional ideas of organizational leadership that suggest individuals align their values with the espoused mandate of the organization (Bass, 1990; Kent, Crotts, & Azziz, 2001; Krishnan, 2002), for Loreen, it is important that the more senior members of the organization understand how members' personal values are mutually aligned as a way of creating the organization's collective values. She expresses this idea in terms of what individuals wish to accomplish *for themselves* that the Unit 7 environment can facilitate:

> Part of nurturing the environment is to allow yourself to understand what the needs are of all the individuals that come into your company. Why are they here. For a lot of people, it's a job. But the bigger question is, why are they *here* then, because they could have a job in many places. What do they want to learn? What do they want exposure to? What are their goals? What are their goals in their life, that they think they'd like Unit 7 to satisfy? It's a good starting place for us to make sure we can meet those expectations. But that understanding of what is important for them to accomplish – goals for their life versus strictly what we need them to accomplish – is nurturing. And they will in turn pass that on to the people around them. (Loreen-1-167/170)

Like many good leaders, Loreen seeks counsel for the myriad decisions that must be made. Unlike many other leaders, she takes counsel not from a select cadre of trusted, senior advisors. Instead, she extends the notion of trusted advisors to everyone who shares a vested interest in the success of the organization, irrespective of rank, status, or tenure. Loreen seeks out diverse opinions, not for the purpose of neutralizing dissent, but rather to prevent homogeneous thinking and the stagnation the comes from the predictability of the metaphorical echo chamber:

> [You want to be] sure that you're opening up to the perspective of a variety of people who have a much different perspective than you have.

> So it wouldn't be uncommon for most major decisions, for me to be in a room with five to seven other people in a conversation. Sometimes they tend to be the same five to seven people, depending on the level of decision, but more and more I find myself making sure that I have a more appropriate diverse group in the room so I'm benefiting from much different ways of thinking. (Loreen-1-77)

Some of that diverse group comes from various seniority levels throughout the organization:

> What's non-traditional about it is the level of contribution [more junior employees] have in almost every decision of the company. They're often amazed that they're at the table in those kinds of conversations of these kinds of decisions. I'm starting to branch out beyond the typical five to seven because it's occurring to me that pretty much I'm hearing the same thing, even from myself. So it is time to be true to a true collaborative model and be sure that we have enough diversity in the room, and so where those same five to seven people did make up that diversity for a period of time, we've become a little bit homogenous in how we think through all the decisions that have to get made on an organizational level. So now we're benefiting greatly from making sure we create that diversity with different *types* of people. (Loreen-1-81)

In gathering together an ever-changing group of advisors drawn from all ranks and all areas of the organization, Loreen accomplishes two things. First, by changing the people who are involved in senior-level decisions in the organization, more members gain exposure to a wider breadth of organizational issues and concerns. Organizational knowledge is shared widely through active engagement with live, complex issues, rather than through passive acceptance of received wisdom. Equally important, diverse contexts and perceptions contributed by diverse members encourage a type of creative disruption of organizational status quo.

> They bring whole new ways of us looking at things. They'll ask a question and we'll say, gee, we've never thought about it that way. It might be somebody who joined the company two weeks ago as an account coordinator, an entry level position. They might have had an experience through a parent who has told their stories at work, or

> something they've learned at college, or they had an internship, or they're very well-read or connected, and they put a question on the table that completely changes the way you think about it. And that's what we're working very hard not to dismiss, is how much we can learn from anybody, versus it has to be the same five to seven people, because they're at a certain status. These decisions are no longer driven on status. (Loreen-1-83)

Collaborating on Common Sense Leadership

Leadership embodied in an individual faces the risk of homogeneity, predictability, and routine over time: knowledge, context, insight, ability, and specific skills are necessarily limited in any one person, or indeed, in any one group comprising a leader and a management board, steering committee, or the like—especially if such exclusive participation is "driven on status." In contrast, one can consider leadership as an emergent process that involves environmental sensing via diverse perceptual sensors. Sensing a UCaPP environment means perceiving multiple, continually evolving contexts, from which resulting decisions are measured against emergent, organizational values that represent a mutual alignment of its members' values. In addition, both the sense-making process and ensuing decisions must be open to continual scrutiny and challenge in what one could characterize as a *culture of inquiry*[7]:

---

[7] The term, "culture of inquiry" is widely used among those exploring education reform, the history and philosophy of science, and the so-called learning organization, among others. Several of my participants among multiple organizations use the term to suggest an organizational culture in which questioning and inquiry is specifically invited and welcomed as a means of introducing diverse standpoints, interpretation of events, and reflective analyses of both current and proposed courses of action. The concept is integral to Senge's (1990) work as the basis of organizational learning, and Bohm, Factor, and Garrett's (1991) proposal for the process of dialogue. It is explored in the context of required skills for contemporary managers by Thompson (1993) who suggests, "the twin challenges of exploding complexity and mounting diversity require us to become experts at inquiry" (p. 101).

> If you're not constantly willing to doubt that you have the right answer. If you're not willing to ask yourself everyday, is there a different answer that I haven't thought about, and a lot of times that's going to require a different perspective around you. Now you may get a lot of that from someone you know consistently helps you get to new perspective. But, it was a big insight for me in the leadership team to realize at what point did that become a homogenous group. And it wasn't that we're homogenous people—we had gotten to a homogenous way of working through issues. (Loreen-1-101)

Diversity of voices, in Loreen's opinion, is the way to counter this risk. "We just started to hear the same thing. It became very predictable how we would address an issue. It became *very predictable*. And I believe that true collaboration takes that predictability out of the equation" (Loreen-1-108). Whereas bureaucratic and administrative procedures, by definition, ensure consistency and predictability that would tend to be anathema to innovation, more-UCaPP behaviours – Loreen's "true collaboration" – become the stimuli for new ideas, new insights, and innovation.

Loreen did not come to these realizations overnight. She, too, had to "unlearn" behaviours acquired during the LLKFB years. Cindy reports that Loreen transformed from a more forceful and directive approach to one that is more consistent with a culture of inquiry—a culture that seems to be a necessity in a more-UCaPP organization.

> She's really changed her way of leading by trying to lead with questions instead of by telling. Lead with questions and allow people the opportunity to think. It's a slower process, but it was very effective. Having people understand why they wanted to do what they wanted to do. Why? Why are we doing this? What's the end result you want, and then leading, beginning with the end in mind. (Cindy-1-108)

This, of course, makes sense. "True collaboration," in Unit 7's parlance, requires the type of deliberative, common understanding of contexts and meaning-

making that only the authentic practice of inquiry can accomplish[8]. The ethos that Loreen encourages throughout her organization is to create authentic engagement among diverse groups of individuals. These engagements invite a sufficient range of environmental sensing to inform decisions and directions in ways that potentially discover new and innovative insights, understandings, and approaches to Unit 7's business—*predictability is "taken out of the equation."*

In involving so many individuals in what is traditionally senior-level decision-making, there is a fine line to be walked between leading-by-consensus and enabling honest engagement with the issues. Even when an organization explicitly uses consensus decision-making (as we will see with Inter Pares), decisions are not taken simply by either calling for members to give up their positions, or working to convince others to give up theirs. The key element at play in more-UCaPP organizations is a fully realized *sense-making* – as distinct from *decision-making* – process. When an appropriate common sense[9] can be made of a situation with respect to the totality of its environmental context, the appropriate decision for the organization becomes a shared volition to action—evident to all, if not simply "obvious."

---

[8] Balancing inquiry and advocacy in order to reach a collaborative understanding (although not necessarily agreement) is intrinsic to the process of dialogue as described by Bohm, Factor, and Garrett (1991); see also Laiken (1997).

[9] I use the term *common sense* here in its original, Aristotelian connotation. The *sensus communis* was considered to be an integrative, perceptual sensibility, the meaning-making sense that unites perceptions from the five other senses to provide consolidated meaning that, in turn, enables cognition (Gregoric, 2007).

Collaboration at Unit 7

Loreen asserts "that collaboration really has to become part of the fabric of the company and how the company works, as opposed to someone making sure that the collaboration happens" (Loreen-1-93). In draping that fabric, she draws a clear distinction between collaboration and the more commonly enacted construct, teamwork:

> I think [collaboration is] a very misunderstood way of working. That if anyone were to look at that as a vernacular shift … it's completely different from teamwork. I often will ask how we got to a strategy, how we got to the answer to the question. And they know that what I'm asking is, what is the process they used to get there? And so a typical response could be, oh we definitely collaborated—we had everyone in the room. Everyone from the team was in the room. That's a meeting. It's not a collaboration. This is also a realization of a more definitive definition of what collaboration is, it's going to be through experience, not through words. If I walked into a space, and I saw five people who don't work on that account routinely, and there wasn't one person driving, or judging all of the statements they were making, that to me would be a true collaboration. (Loreen-1-95)

Teamwork[10], as Loreen distinguishes that term from "collaboration," is consistent with a primary-purposeful organization in which the overall objective is functionally decomposed, ultimately into discrete, individual tasks. Hence, every

---

[10] Laiken (1994a, 1994b) distinguishes between *effective* and *ineffective* teamwork, whose behaviours correspond closely to what Loreen calls "collaboration" and "teamwork," respectively. Many people use the two terms – collaboration and teamwork – interchangeably despite, for example, Loreen's astute observation of the discursive difference between the two. In personal conversation with Marilyn Laiken (January 11, 2010), she agrees that the vast majority of people neither practice effective teamwork, nor are able to distinguish between effective and ineffective teamwork, despite the importance of understanding and enacting that distinction to create a "high-performing team" (1994a). Because several of my participants draw that distinction using the differentiating language of teamwork vs. collaboration, and because it has also been used in the cited literature (Adler & Heckscher, 2006), I have chosen to use that terminology throughout this thesis to distinguish a BAH model of purposefully – if sometimes only nominally – working together (teamwork) from a UCaPP form of consensus-based cooperation, often with an emergent purpose (collaboration).

member of the team is present by virtue of what skills, capabilities, and experiences they each can contribute based on a pre-determined understanding of the team's requirements. Loreen sees that approach as limiting, if not problematic, since it often leads to stifling creativity, and precluding new ideas:

> It's very typical once they start giving their ideas that we'll spend the majority of our time letting them know why that isn't possible—let me give you the history of the client. But the purpose of actually inviting people into a collaboration is, well, to use some of your words, to let us hear what we haven't been hearing. So maybe they don't have the entire history, but if we allow ourselves not to get caught up in what they don't know and listen to the contribution that they're providing, it's just a different place to live in, in terms of hearing what it is they're really saying, and how it could contribute to addressing the challenge we've just been given. (Loreen-1-99)

When one is working to a tight timeline, with a hard deadline imposed by the client, it appears efficient to adopt a just-in-time mentality in which people become involved at precisely the right time for their (instrumental) contribution, and no longer. This is, for example, a typical mode of operation for a project team, or a classic BAH model of input-process-output workflow. Loreen sees this as problematic for her organization and explains how coordinating via a collaborative, as opposed to a(n ineffective) teamwork, model proves to be more efficient in the long run:

> How do you mobilize the agency *now* to address that [client] challenge? So there are times, for example, that someone's going to have a strength being at the front, helping them think through a way to approach the challenge. That may be their primary strength, and five minutes with them might set the whole thing on a course that could take half the time even of the deadline. Because that's also going to give insight into who should be at the table, when should they be at the table. They've already got a running start on the best way to approach it. Now, unfortunately, that person may not be brought in until it's time to approve something, which is the exact wrong time to get that person involved, because they're probably not going to agree. (Loreen-1-121)

By involving more diverse people in various initiatives, collaborative thinking is explicitly encouraged as an organizational value. Roger observes the business benefits in hearing from unexpected individuals throughout the organization:

> You kind of look at that person a little bit differently. Okay, maybe he's just an account coordinator [one of the lowest ranks in the agency]. There's some good processes going on there. How can we tap that now for other pieces of the business? So, it helps bring people in a room that normally we don't hear from. … It allows people to contribute that don't normally contribute. … It takes all silos out of the agency. (Roger-2-16)

Roger identifies one of the key elements that enables complexity and emergence in organizations: creating connections among people where instrumental situations that might otherwise create such connections would not exist. Just as Loreen identifies the value of creating heterogeneous consultation groups to inform and advise her own decisions, every aspect of the agency's internal operations can be similarly informed. As Roger observes, "It's bringing diverse people together. What I like about it most is I hear people speak that I never heard speak before. And I think that's showing people, hey, we value what you're thinking. Speak more!" (Roger-1-141).

Conflicts of a Collaborative Culture

An intrinsic aspect of Unit 7's new culture is welcoming dissent and divergent opinions, but not as an opportunity to find the "strongest" idea in a competitive sense (Organization A), nor as a way of nominally espousing participation in decision-making while actually stifling opposition (Organization F). Rather, inviting diverse opinions "to the table" is consistent with holding the tensions of polarities (Johnson,

1992) and discovering new, integrative approaches (Martin, 2007), without feeling the need to resolve them to a single voice (Organization M)—clearly, a UCaPP distinction. This discipline appreciates the nuanced differences of various approaches. Loreen expresses it as follows:

> When looking to create a culture of true collaboration, you have to be willing to be non-homogenous, which means you're going to bring together a lot of people who think very differently, who are very different, and that it's not about whether or not you're going to have conflict. You're *going* to have conflict. It's about how you develop the skill to work through the conflict. (Loreen-1-47)

Thus, true collaboration is more than reaching agreement. Being honest and authentic in the process of resolving contentious issues is crucial both to enabling effective collaboration, and to creating a culture relatively free of ongoing enmity, petty power politics, and sabotage. "You try and get that stuff on the table at the moment so you're not harbouring, and not agreeing to things and then walking out saying I can't believe that person can even think that way" (Loreen-1-269).

In staking this claim on what has become a core value for Unit 7, Loreen acknowledges that the cultural change which promotes collaboration is threatening to some, and that fear has the potential to undermine the organization's transformation: "it's actually a challenge to their confidence in terms of their ability to fulfil their role" (Loreen-1-261).

Among the more challenging, if not obscured, issues for any organization attempting either to make the transition from more-BAH to more-UCaPP or to struggle with retaining UCaPP aspects under BAH-isomorphic pressures, is how to decouple status, responsibility, content expertise, and one's sense of identity.

Traditionally in the BAH mentality, status and organizational identity – one's social station in the organizational hierarchy – is associated with the office one occupies. The right to that office originates in possessing, or being believed to possess, particular ability, content expertise, or both. That ability and expertise may be rooted in a technical subject matter pertinent to the organization's specific purpose and needs, or it may originate in the subject matter of management itself.

The status ascribed to an individual holding any particular office is often jealously protected as a matter of individual *identity*. Since the office is inextricably tied to a set of skills and capabilities manifest in one's responsibilities in the primary-purposeful organization, anyone else potentially impinging on those responsibilities threatens not only the status, but the identity of that office-holder. As well, in some organizational contexts, many people hold the belief that even the act of seeking or accepting assistance is a sign of one's lack of competence—behaviours reflecting attitudes that Adam reports in Organization A.

Unit 7's culture change means that one's position is explicitly not in jeopardy if they seek assistance, support, or in any way demonstrate a lack of knowledge or skill—in fact, a primary qualification for a job at Unit 7 is precisely the willingness, ability, and mindset to seek collaborators for any endeavour. As Frances explains:

> It leads to a question of who's best for the task, and who needs support, and who can we each call on to team up with, because generally things are done as a team. And, sometimes saying that you're not the right person for this job, do you want to switch out. (Frances-1-19)

Effecting a change in organizational culture requires a serious commitment from the organization's legitimate leadership not only to *enforce* the change, but to

actively *participate* in the change themselves, especially if it means changing their own behaviours with respect to the perceived threat to their hierarchical entitlements. Cindy speculates on the source of resistance to Unit 7's cultural transformation:

> People who have been resistant are the ones that want to hang onto the hierarchy. … I don't know if it's their jobs *per se*. Maybe it's the pride. Ego. You know, sharing that [status]. Whoever wants to be a [game] leader has the opportunity to rise and claim that. … Why would [senior managers] feel threatened? Because they're certainly not going to lose their job over it, by collaborating. Because the culture of the company is collaborating, their job will be more threatened by not collaborating, than by allowing the collaboration within each game design. (Cindy-1-94)

It seems that so-called resistance to *change* may actually be resistance to *change of identity*. In many organizations, repressed insecurity over one's position often leads to gamesmanship as a form of manipulation. At Unit 7, the collaborative organization is all about gamesmanship.

Game Design: A venue for culture change

As an explicit mechanism to signal change from the LLKFB way of operating to the new culture of Unit 7, Loreen adopted the vocabulary of designing a board game based on consultation with a business anthropologist. Loreen describes the discursive and practical mechanics of what essentially became an exercise in organizational redesign:

> It involves a set of questions, including the point of the game, who the players are, how they are expected to behave, what moves are allowed, and what happens if the rules are broken. I decided to apply the approach to LLKFB in April of 2005, so I brought five people together for three days to design how to play our game. We started by understanding the game we had been playing, which was a necessary, but painful, exercise. After that, we designed the game for the

> organization that we wanted to become, and identified what learning we would take on that year in order to win our game. (Maher & O'Brien, 2007, p. 10)

Game design is now used to define appropriate and inappropriate behaviours for the agency as a whole, and to direct individual, mostly infrastructure, projects. Cindy, an Executive Assistant at Unit 7 and a game "owner," describes the game-design metaphor:

> It's fun for people to participate and make change happen, and the idea was to get everyone's involvement. Those people, you know, complainers, can get involved in a game, and help design and make the change in Unit 7 that you want to see. Invite people in, and within the game, you do check-ins, and you learn how to plan. You learn what's really involved in trying to carry out an initiative. You use the same principles as you do in a task force, except in the game design, there's no hierarchy, and that's kind of fun. Anyone can be a leader, and so you're in there with very junior people, and then very senior, and then people like me, an executive assistant is able to [laugh] lead the group. (Cindy-1-15)

The specific behaviours that game design enacts correspond not only to those that are desirable in the new culture. They also represent behaviours that are consistent with UCaPP organizations: collaboration, elimination of traditional rank and status hierarchy, inclusive and full participation among heterogeneous participants, a sense of personal responsibility for effecting collective change, referent as opposed to legitimated leadership, and the use of checking-in as a coordinating practice. Cindy sums up the effect of game design on Unit 7's members: "It's empowering. Anyone can get involved and work with senior management and get something done in the agency. Their voice matters—they're contributing" (Cindy-1-76).

In Unit 7, the game-design metaphor is a critical element in effecting cultural change. It serves as a transitional change mechanism from traditional, hierarchical leadership to a non-hierarchical, non-status, participatory model that parallels the existing function-oriented managerial roles in the organization. A large part of organizational change must necessarily be discursive, modifying and evolving the behavioural and cultural vocabulary that creates one's social location in the organization, and therefore informs expected normative behaviours. For example, the nominal purpose of the game-design metaphor is "a way to make getting things done at Unit 7 fun" (Cindy-1-5).

Perhaps of greater importance, game design resocializes organization members by subverting the common, division-of-labour expectation that management is solely responsible for ensuring that things get done, or more generally, initiating change. In doing so, it provides a coherent structure in which the effects that some feel over the loss of legitimated hierarchical status can be mitigated. For example, Frances describes what became a major initiative throughout the agency—for organizational members to experience, as closely as possible, what it feels like to live with Type 2 Diabetes[11]:

> It also strikes me, as I say, it was not delivered top-down. You know, it wasn't something that Loreen worked on, or that Loreen and I worked on, and said here's the program. It was an idea she had. It could bubble

---

[11] The "B-Roll Diabetes Initiative" was a 3-month project, named after a recently deceased, and well-liked, member of Unit 7 whose nickname was "B-Roll." Over half the agency voluntarily modified their diet, adopted exercise regimes, and attended lunch-time education programs to experience the lifestyle changes necessitated for those diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes. Not only was it an education about the disease, but also about advising their pharmaceutical clients. As Loreen explains in some amazement, "I can't believe how instantly I felt like I knew nothing. And how many years I've been actually guiding clients on how to create useful behaviour interventions to help people be more successful. Suddenly I find myself not knowing a thing" (Loreen-2-54).

> up, and it wasn't the leadership, or people perceived as leadership. The beauty of it was, the traffic manager, a production manager, a creative guy, you know, a bunch of people involved, me. And, it was seen as—How do I say this? You know, the working class, a bad phrase, but it wasn't imposed. It was created. (Frances-2-90)

Game design's initial use on organizational infrastructure issues means that the transitional leadership model can be rehearsed in the context of the business without directly or indirectly risking, or adversely affecting, the revenue-producing aspects of the business. The game-design metaphor includes language describing required, permitted, and forbidden moves for various undertakings and initiatives throughout the organization. For the all-encompassing game of Unit 7 itself, called *Collaborative Invention*, Loreen describes how seriously they consider playing the game:

> We have three forbidden moves, and the forbidden moves have a consequence of dismissal—that they could not be tolerated within the organization because they were the very moves that got us to where we were. … So, suddenly I did find myself making decisions about very senior people, C-level people, not on performance – some of them very high performers – but because they were not playing by the rules of the game in effect, playing the forbidden moves[12]. (Loreen-1-29)

When taken in the context of the rules of game design, one can see that in Unit 7's game structure which prescribes inclusiveness, check-ins, elimination of hierarchical privilege, and referent leadership within the group, impetus is emergent from the processes rather than from an individual leader. This form of emergent, collaborative leadership is neither anarchic, nor is it strictly democratic in the sense expressed by Organization F's Jeff. As Cindy explains,

---

[12] The forbidden moves are, "triangulation," that is, going behind someone's back to undermine them; enacting command-and-control by "pulling rank"; and physical, verbal, or non-verbal abuse, or failing to respond when made aware that such abuse is occurring.

> …the rules are that the customer and owner[13] have to agree where they're going. So they have to go together, and then everyone, even the co-collaborators, we all have to agree on where we're going. So we can disagree, but we have to wait until we all agree before you just go ahead. That's why I know how important it is to bring people on board. And it was such a new initiative, such a different way of thinking, that people had to let go of their regular, their normal way of getting things done. And because it was a slower process, people are impatient with that. They want to just get things done quickly. But this process requires thinking, taking a little more time, and so, learning something new. (Cindy-1-52)

A critical risk to the ultimate success of this process – and indeed, a risk to effecting a transformation of organizational culture overall – is an appeal to efficiency and expediency—a deadline-focused, time demand that seemingly cannot tolerate inclusive deliberation and consensus. Such a risk seems to be evident in Organization F, for example, that is moving away from inclusive consultation to a form of representational consultation in which permanently installed representatives are exclusively those with higher rank and status. Additionally, as I described in that case, achieving consensus seems to be taking on characteristics of either subtle coercion, or backing away from approaches that differ from those of the boss.

Another risk to the type of transition represented by the game-design metaphor lies in individual resistance among those who previously held – or, in the context of a more conventional organization, would expect to hold – legitimated power and authority. The resistance is typically manifest through individuals

---

[13] Although "customer" and especially "owner" might be considered as being analogous to a team leader or project manager, suggesting an implicit status hierarchy, the rules of the game design preclude acting on that hierarchical implication. As they are enacted, owner and customer are more akin to subject-matter coordinating roles for the game's theme, be it for coordinating client workflow through the agency, or redesigning the lunchroom facilities.

expressing their hierarchical entitlement through what could be characterized as passive-aggressive behaviours directed towards the game owner.

A foundational operating theory of BAH is that the formal organization structure represents a form of meritocracy—an individual occupies an office and assumes its status and rank by virtue of being qualified for that office. Having a responsibility that may "rightly" belong in one's legitimate bureaucratic domain usurped by a game owner of lower corporate class may well be perceived as a punishment or chastisement for inadequate performance. The usurped person may act out if s/he feels unjustly treated. Such inappropriate acting out can be exacerbated when that person is supported by another, hierarchically senior individual in ways that undermine the game design process:

> Some people are having a very hard time operating within the game because they want to operate from their position and title. And so, what I ran into was someone in a position who wanted to protect a position of a person who really should be over that area. … She took it from me. Didn't even want to operate within the game. But the thing is, she would never have started the project if it hadn't been for the game design. But now, she's wanting to take it over, and take it out of the game design. She could accomplish it within the game design, but she's taken it over, for her own purpose and personal accomplishment. (Cindy-2-2)

The Culture Change Venue

As we have seen in Organizations M, A, and to an increasing extent, Organization F, traditional inclusion criteria for team membership focus primarily on individuals' functionally determined or hierarchically privileged roles. In contrast, among other things, Unit 7's extraordinary ethos of inclusion, irrespective of nominal rank or role, encourages unanticipated contributions in the construct of its game-

design metaphor. The game venue therefore enables unexpected influences in organizational interactions to occur that encourage continual emergence, from which innovation is born. More important, Unit 7 actively demonstrates how it values its members' contributions through enacted process in the culture, rather than by a more perfunctory, formal acknowledgement—for example, through an exclusive – and often exclusionary – recognition event. At Unit 7, full participation in game design and embracing its underlying ethos is a form of organizational currency—not only an expression of values, but an embodiment of one's recognized *value*.

In contrast to a BAH organization like Organization M, for example, in which Stan laments that his potential cannot be perceived, and therefore he is not provided the opportunities to contribute as he might desire, conditions in a more-UCaPP organization enable and *encourage* impetus to emerge from anywhere in the organization. In Cindy's case, for instance, being owner of Unit 7's workflow process game enrols her prior expertise in project management and current enthusiasm; she can both perceive the opportunity and avail herself of an enactment venue.

Thus, the game-design metaphor strongly and visibly embodies the attributes that characterize the cultural change that Loreen initiated in creating Unit 7 from LLKFB. Game design is a venue of performative behaviour that encompasses the new ethos and organizational cultural norms to which the organization aspires. The organization's legitimate leaders not only support this venue through tangible commitment; they also fully participate, thereby reducing the traditional, hierarchical power differential in the eyes of other members, being seen as willing to learn.

In effect, game design at Unit 7 creates a quasi-artificial environment within which traditional hierarchy is set aside in favour of in-game roles in a way that is not dissimilar to online gaming environments with its concomitant effects on construction and expression of self-identity (Williams, Hendricks, & Winkler, 2006). In a sense, it can be considered a transitional structure that enables class-diverse collaboration without suddenly disrupting the expected power dynamics among traditional actors—it is a *venue of culture change*.

The importance of a specific, structured, culture change venue – a performative social location in an existing organization in which new cultural practices can be enacted – is often overlooked, or dismissed as time-consuming, distracting, irrelevant, or gimmicky. Simply announcing new cultural practices is insufficient to effect sustainable culture change. Conversely, even simple enactments may be effective, so long as they are valued and sustained. For example, with the departure[14] of the Chief Strategy Officer, Loreen was able to signal the end of hierarchical structure by deliberately not naming a replacement to that position. Instead, as Frances relates, "nobody is the boss, myself included, and we're all practice leaders, and yet, all of us have different areas of expertise. So the issue is calling on one another for support" (Frances-1-19), an obvious encouragement towards collaboration.

---

[14] One of the casualties of playing "forbidden moves." Loreen holds very real coercive power that seems to negate the UCaPP ideals of no enacted hierarchical rank. There are two considerations that mitigate the exercise of that power so as not to undermine Unit 7's BAH to UCaPP transition. First, the rules of the game are explicit and well-known among all members; in effect, it is not the legitimated leader doing the firing, but the result of an individual deliberately defying the rules in a contemporary recollection of Mary Parker Follett's "orders given by the situation" (1926/1992, p. 153). Second, Loreen's use of executive power – a BAH artefact – was accompanied by significant and severe misgivings (personal correspondence, October 8, 2007) that effectively checks its arbitrary or authoritarian use.

However, as both Loreen and Roger point out, collaboration is not an intuitive skill for most people. Collaborative practices must be deliberately enacted, and their value must be accepted by all participants in the collaboration for the restructuring initiative to work. Perhaps not surprising in retrospect, but unexpected at the time, the suddenly leaderless strategy group did not automatically adopt new behaviours. By leaving the strategy group to its own devices in attempting to create a collaboration out of a team, the content part of people's individual work truly becomes more individual and isolated from the other members of the group. The process aspects that mandate collaborative coordination through checking-in and offering mutual support in a specific venue of knowledge-sharing were largely ignored among the strategy staff. The lack of knowledge sharing – referred to as "socializing information" by Inter Pares, another UCaPP participant organization – precludes emergent collaboration, especially in the absence of specifically mandated cooperation. As Frances observes,

> …the group's not functioning as a traditional group, so I feel like I have to do all my work alone. … The weekly meetings were sort of discarded. … There's a dynamic where, in a traditional sense, if people are expected to be cohesive, they figure out a way to be. If you're not expected to be cohesive, then some people will and some people won't. … When I reached out to help, there's a feeling like it will take so much time to bring me up to speed, it's not worth it. (Frances-2-32)

The weekly meetings, newly instituted by Frances, could be considered as a simple form of culture change venue for the strategy group. However, they quickly fell by the wayside because they appeared to be extraneous when compared to exigent client demands and deadlines. It was never understood that these meetings coordinated activities, socialized information, and began to create the particular form of relationships among the group that are necessary for changing to a more-UCaPP

model for the strategy organization. On the contrary, deadlines and similar demands impose an instrumental focus that tends to reinforce long-engrained, BAH practices. Combined with an inability to recognize and appreciate the value of a form of culture change venue that would inculcate collaborative practices within the group, the meetings appeared to be superfluous and an unaffordable luxury of time. The result is a less effective group.

When a venue of cultural change is endorsed, it must take precedence over other concerns to truly effect lasting and sustainable change, lest it be marginalized in the name of expediency to support the comfort of the status quo. Persistence in pursuing the effects of creating change is necessary, but not necessarily sufficient; strength is often required. It is perhaps ironic that coercive, legitimated, and hierarchical leadership is occasionally needed to enforce the transformation away from coercive, legitimated, and hierarchical leadership.

Unit 7's game-design metaphor is disruptive to traditional, BAH power dynamics not only because it eschews traditional hierarchies and the ascribed superior abilities of those who hold particular job titles. More important, it mandates processes that actively undermine the forces that provide BAH structures their coherence, their circular logic, and the dominance of individual, independent performance and task-orientation over almost any other consideration. In addition, game design reinforces referent leadership as the working assumption in Unit 7. As Cindy notes, "people like me, an executive assistant, is able to lead the group. But all the other people in the group have to agree that you can lead and own it" (Cindy-1-15).

Game design brings an interesting polarity tension to light. Loreen identifies a number of behaviours required to enact true collaboration: questioning, offering advice, and eliminating hierarchical status. For collaboration to occur these must be offered in the context of a safe environment that neither tacitly nor explicitly impinges on individuals' competence and ability. However, the person who may be less confident – perhaps someone who is more junior in nominal rank – often feels very unsafe *because* of these very behaviours that are strongly encouraged in the environment. Thus, a paradox arises in the minds of people whose nominal hierarchical positions construct them as more junior, and therefore more vulnerable to traditional power dynamics. Unless appropriately mitigated, the polarity tension creates an insecurity that inhibits collaborative dynamics and processes. Cindy explains:

> They don't want to think they're doing something [for which] maybe they're going to get in trouble. You're a real junior person, and you think that person has kind of power over… or maybe being able to approve a raise for you, or someone who could fire you… So, because a junior person doesn't have enough experience, emotionally and intellectually, to handle that kind of problem-solving skill, where you're open to looking at how you're doing things, and working with someone in authority to work something out, because you're not really equal. Even with true collaboration, you're always going to have people with perceived status. (Cindy-2-64)

Therefore, to reduce the inhibitors to collaboration that are introduced from previously socialized, power-oriented behaviours, there need to be legitimated, very visible, and explicitly valued resocializing constructs to reinforce the desired transformative behaviours. In Unit 7's case, the game-design metaphor, and how it has been integrated into the cultural vocabulary, the day-to-day way of working, and

even the employee evaluation process serves this reinforcing purpose. As a culture change venue it has the effect of transforming the extant organizational culture, as well as providing guidance and reassurances for more-junior staff via its explicit rules and roles. Even those who have had limited employment experience nonetheless have grown up learning that hierarchical privilege and power are the context of the working world—questioning suggests incompetence, ignorance, or both, and therefore begs the question of one's worthiness for the position. In the traditional, BAH world, a culture of inquiry is misread as a culture of inquisition.

Realities, Responses, and Challenges

As one might imagine, the reaction to such a drastic change in organizational culture is not overwhelmingly positive, especially among those who value status and hierarchical rank as an expression of self. Roger explains:

> We actually had a lot of staff leave because of the process[15], which is fine, because they weren't right for this process. … I had an employee come to me. This person was an excellent employee, and we miss the value that they bring, but they said to me, I need the spotlight to be on me. (Roger-1-189)

A large part of effecting change throughout the organization involves appropriate recruiting. The large turnover that accompanied Loreen's introduction of Unit 7's new, collaborative, and non-status culture created an opportunity to repopulate the organization with those who more intuitively embody the new values. Roger explains: "I'll interview people where I'll have no experience in what they do,

---

[15] Turnover between 2005 and 2006 was 59% as those unwilling to play the new game were encouraged to move out of the company at considerable cost in severance, recruiting, and maintaining client relationships (Maher & O'Brien, 2007).

but just getting to know who they are for the cultural fit. That's really important for us, obviously" (Roger-1-205). Loreen describes how new employees receive some orientation in Unit 7's culture expressed as game design:

> We are making sure that everybody who walks in the door is personally presented with the game, and explained the game of Unit 7, so they understand, what are the required moves, what constitutes doing well at Unit 7. We need to fine-tune this, because it's clearly an area that we need to put some attention on. The Human Resources director will facilitate it, but it will be a combination also with myself. I think it would be important for them to hear it from the very senior levels of the company, because it is important for people to understand the level of commitment throughout the entire organization. (Loreen-2-68)

Despite best intentions at orienting new members, it is one thing for a person to hear about the organizational values embodied in the concept of game design explained by one or more senior people within the organization; it is quite another to experience those values during the hiring process and initial orientation period in the organization. Senior members must especially be cognizant of the delicate balance that exists in the intersection of espoused and in-use theories with respect to hierarchy and status. New employees who might hold a hierarchical/status model of management must understand the commitment to Unit 7's organizational values held by senior members. Additionally, it is equally important for them to actually experience that commitment. As Loreen observes:

> One of the things that I have learned is that it just takes a lot of repetition and patience—it is very new to people, and they need to hear it a lot. But also importantly, they need to see it demonstrated, actively demonstrated on a daily basis. Let's take very veteran, senior people, [at the] top of their game. [We have experienced] some new learning [about] what it's like to take those into the company and have them sign up for a way of working that is completely different than they've been trained most of their career. (Loreen-2-82)

Cindy agrees:

> I think there needs to be more done in the hiring process to get people up to speed on what the culture is. Unit 7 itself has a game that outlines the whole culture of the agency. Unless a new employee gets that so they understand right up front when they're interviewed, this is what's expected of me, they're going to have a problem. (Cindy-1-142)

The embodied experience of being inculcated into the organizational culture from the beginning of the hiring process, more than just the initial orientation period, seems to be essential to acculturating new members. This seems to be true irrespective of whether the organization is on the BAH (Organization M) or UCaPP (Inter Pares, as will be seen in the next section) ends of the spectrum. Organizations must be deliberate about representing their intrinsic nature and values through both the hiring and orientation processes.

As one might expect, cultural values are fundamental to the annual review process. Like many contemporary organizations, the annual review at Unit 7 situates achieving specific accomplishments as its foundation. That one's goals and objectives are set by individual members (rather than by top-down decomposition) is not particularly unusual. What *is* telling is the specific vocabulary used—goals and objectives are framed as "promises." Cindy explains:

> You say you're going to do something, or maybe you want to grow in your position, and then you set up promises that the employee will make, that I will do this and this and this by a certain date. So Loreen will give these people an opportunity within the company to do something. Maybe take an initiative and make something happen. There are check-ins, and people might be given a raise based on this new initiative. (Cindy-1-170)

The process of sense-making for individual evaluation is consistent with sense-making throughout the organization. Key to making sense at Unit 7 is gaining a holistic appreciation of the total context of the environment in which the individual finds him/herself. Thus, one makes promises *in relation to that total context*, rather than simply setting objectives that are a strict subset of the organization's overall objectives delivered from on high. In addition, the language itself is indicative of a relational orientation in the organizational psyche: one makes promises to other individuals; goals and objectives are institutional, and therefore impersonal. Compared to more-BAH organizations, such as Organization A, for which goals and objectives are defined quantitatively, "keeping promises" can be evaluated using a more descriptive, subjective, and qualitative form.

> Promises are a way of having your mind think in terms of setting goals and milestones in a fun way—it's not a checklist at all. In fact, it takes a lot of work, because you have to write a story in the front. What the story right now has to do with your situation, where you're at. What you've accomplished in the past. Where are the opportunities for growth? Where are areas of improvement you need to make? And Loreen will craft these beautiful written stories … and she's helping teach some people how to write these things. … It's a very different way for a goal process—more time consuming, and it takes a lot more thought. (Cindy-1-172)

Beyond conventional metrics and more than delivering on promises, employees are evaluated on the basis of spontaneous, peer-reported assessments of collaboration and group contribution:

> We're very clear with people what the expectations are for them in the environment. So a lot of the measurements become what myself and others hear about these people, and from who[m]. Are we hearing, on a routine basis, this person is, valuable to me, they're a great contributor, they're always willing to do whatever. Do I hear from five to ten people, in a six month period that, wow, I'm so glad that they've committed,

> that they've joined my collaborations on X occasions because they always provide such great value. Am I hearing enough that the person is a good collaborator? That's the primary metric. (Loreen-1-155)

This particularly reflexive assessment of team leaders' performance is considerably different – and sometimes unsettling – to more (conventionally) experienced individuals. Especially in the advertising industry, people are measured quantitatively, according to their business and fiscal performance relative to predefined organizational objectives. Loreen explains how she translates Unit 7's values of a relational, rather than instrumental, view of people into the evaluation process, especially among more senior members:

> High performance for them is, you know, they have good relationships with clients, they're bringing revenue into the company, or sustaining more organic growth of the current clients. That's what they're going to consider performance. It's all important, and I factor that into performance, but the performance of how they're nurturing the environment, and the people in the environment is equally, if not more important, than the financial performance. (Loreen-1-162)

It comes as a surprise to those who might nominally hold a higher organizational rank that members at a relatively low rank may rate them poorly, and this ranking carries more weight with the CEO than does their business performance:

> That is a difficult place for people to live, especially very senior people. They could be very high performers, but when the conversation is on the table – to work with you is not inspiring, they're not learning, they don't have exposure in developing client skills – that takes us to a place of, I must hear from your team that they're feeling different about your leadership or you may need to seek a new environment. It is completely unsettling to some people that I wouldn't take their performance over what they would consider very junior people on their team to be saying about them. (Loreen-1-161)

Although Frances was not a member of LLKFB, she expresses the simple rationale behind embedding collaboration in the formal evaluation process:

> Companies where it's all revenue-based, and decisions are made purely based on revenue, can be very unpleasant at times. So, in my experience, collaboration is the way things work best. … I think it's interesting reframing it as a business objective—something that I think is really good to elevate and make really clear. (Frances-1-147)

With a primary relational view of people, the value of collaboration predominates at Unit 7 as it becomes both the *de facto* way of working and an explicit business objective. However, this relatively unusual orientation presents an interesting and challenging dilemma with respect to engaging the clients. Advertising agency clients in general are socialized to expect a purely instrumental view of people—a person's value is strictly calculated in terms of a (usually high-priced) hourly worker. However, unlike the conventional teamwork model, instrumentalism is incompatible with true collaboration. Hence, there is an inherent contradiction in creating a collaborative environment internally while maintaining the existing economic (billing/value) model externally. As Frances asks,

> …if five people from Strategy are involved in one account, how does it get billed? Why does the client pay the five-times premium to educate five people, when in the normal course of events, there's only one person. … And it's a legitimate concern on their end. … You know, that can't work in the traditional model, because clients are trained on a value-per-person basis. (Frances-2-52)

Nonetheless, she can identify at least one instance in which the client has been "invited in." In an example of how the boundaries between nominally distinct organizations can be dissolved, Frances describes some of the coordinating activities between Unit 7 and its client, Account R:

> It's actually a fantastic example, one of the healthiest examples that I've seen. The account team is really enmeshed with the client. Two of the team spend at least two days a week out there, and I think the account executive at least as much. And the client has been here quite a bit as

> well. … Account R treats us as full partners, and that's terrific—a fantastic example of the way it can work. (Frances-1-172)

The emerging practice of consistently aligning organizational behaviour with respect to both internal and client (external) matters demonstrates the growing pervasiveness of the collaborative culture at Unit 7. Roger notes that the transition away from people working independently, calling for assistance instrumentally, was slow:

> It was definitely gradual because we all had to learn it. I mean, I had to think about who to invite in, and by now it's more natural for me for most things. I think we all have to learn how to collaborate, who do we talk to, and how to really think about other people's feelings, *what they would want*. (Roger-1-139; emphasis added)

Notably, Roger identifies the importance of "thinking about other people's feelings" in the context of collaborative behaviour—whether someone else would want to be invited to participate, rather than whether the project leader would want them to participate. This framing represents a significant reversal in one's typical organizational orientation – of self in relation to the organization – that will be explored in greater depth in a later chapter.

Checking-In on a Culture of Inquiry

A large aspect of individuals' perception of caring is entwined with the culture of inquiry—a distinguishing characteristic of a UCaPP organization, and central to Unit 7's transformation. An important consideration in establishing a culture of inquiry involves distinguishing the practice of checking-in from the discipline of checking-up:

> The practice of checking-in is different than the discipline of making sure. Making sure will have a pretty strong positioning of, "I'm pretty sure you haven't [done something] so I'm just here to make sure." But checking-in is a sincere checking-in—so, where are we at? Where are *you* at? Do you think you're on track? Do you not? What else would you need? So, that sincerity of checking-in for the sake of helping versus of judging. And also, taking assumption off the table. I've just learned that, if you do it consistently, checking-in is just one of the most powerful behaviours for yourself and for everyone involved. [It is] the core to collaboration. (Loreen-1-281)

As espoused in the organization's values, the emerging culture of inquiry requires a leader to approach checking-in from a place of humility, opening her/himself to learning. Checking-in behaviour stands in opposition to checking-up that originates in a place of authority, power, and wearing a mask of omniscience. The common socialization of checking-up is manifest in the assumption that the boss will fix the problem – even if it means "fixing" the employee – when things go wrong:

> How [checking-up] will be construed is when you act on that, it will be easily perceived as, you're going to fix their problem. That I'm going to just come and fix their problem. That I've concluded that they can't do it… Now maybe they can't do it the way they've been doing it. But, the action's probably going to be swifter, it'll probably be more higher-profile because there will be a reason that we have to be in that place, and there will be people brought to the table now. But instead, those people [could have been] brought to the table before the breakdown, which is very proactive, that we can catch by checking-in. (Loreen-1-285)

At the core of a culture of inquiry is how power differentials must be decoupled from the act of inquiry through this process of checking-in rather than checking-up. People of unequal power in an environment of insecurity perceive questioning as a challenge or threat, thereby hampering collaboration. In response, individuals – and occasionally entire organizations – enact what Chris Argyris calls "defensive reasoning," "defensive rationalizing," and "organizational defensive routines" (Argyris,

1994) to prevent embarrassment. “So it is important to have the ability to let go of hierarchy—where the power is coming from on the questions” (Loreen-2-112).

Check-in provides a non-judgmental, relatively safer way of notifying that a project is going off the rails, to enable more resources to be brought to bear in collaboration. BAH organizations regularly implement checking-up disciplines that theoretically prevent errant human judgment from damaging systematic processes, or impeding progress towards achieving the organization’s objectives. But equally, they have socially built-in protection mechanisms that tend to obscure problems before they reach breakdown and then hide, minimize or otherwise obfuscate the breakdowns themselves—the previously mentioned “organizational defensive routines.” Collaboration in an authentic culture of inquiry works in the converse, acknowledging as axiomatic the limitations on human judgment, knowledge, and the reality of unpredictability, mitigating the ensuing effects through a genuine practice of checking-in.

What’s the Matter With Kids Today?

The fundamental change in power dynamics that Unit 7 has enacted through cultural transformation is consistent with the expectations demonstrated by people who have recently entered the workforce. What may appear to be an inflated sense of entitlement among some younger people, I characterize as having a refreshing sense of empowerment that rejects the hegemony of traditional BAH practices and expectations. Loreen brings an intuitive understanding of this principle to her reflection on the generation newly entering the workforce:

> If you were to take some of the newer generation coming through, they want responsibility and exposure beyond their primary function. So, they seem to have a respect and understanding they're going to come in at entry level. While they accept that, they don't want to be isolated to the scope of that role. They want to have exposure, they want to make a bigger contribution than what that role will require. I've been paying a lot of attention to that, and that's why the game design has become very powerful here, because it's a way for them to contribute to the environment, which they like—a lot. It's actually the younger generation that gets much more engaged in that proposition than most people. (Loreen-1-171)

Loreen's insight provides considerable guidance in negotiating between the received reality of a traditional corporate environment, and the lived reality of a generation bringing a context of collective life-experience in the connected world. Many among contemporary youth have already experienced being valued for contributions unrestricted by externally and (in their view) arbitrarily imposed structures. Unit 7's game-design metaphor enables these individuals to satisfy their life-expectation of not being arbitrarily restricted to the limitations of a predefined role, while simultaneously being able to accept entry-level task responsibilities delimited by actual experience, knowledge, and expertise. In effect, Unit 7 has decoupled specific subject matter expertise and the ability to contribute to, and fully participate in, the organization's operational infrastructure. As Roger confirms,

> …being involved in things that [young] people aren't normally involved in, having strategy sessions for the direction of the company, and having lower-level people, like really getting rid of that hierarchy. Making people feel that the company is there for them and cares about them. (Roger-1-135)

Involving people who are at junior levels in the company provides an especially strong reinforcement of the organization's values and ethos. Not only do people feel valued and appreciated; people who, by virtue of their rank, are not typically involved

in strategic decisions become involved at the earlier stages, thereby facilitating the common sense of organizational "ownership"—people care about an organization that demonstrably cares about them. Loreen continues:

> What I'll hear routinely that I think is very powerful is, yeah, I'm going to go home at five o'clock. I've been here since nine o'clock. I'm going to go home at five unless you give me a reason to stay. But if you think that I'm going to stay because you think I should know to stay, because that's the way the game is played until I get to a certain place, no, I'm not going to do that. But *if you give me a reason to stay that is meaningful to me, that I know I'm making a contribution*, I'm in. It's not about, I have to leave at five. It's about, *is it worth me being here?*" (Loreen-1-203; emphasis added)

This sentiment contrasts with the resentment-building controlling attitude that Loreen identifies as explicitly problematic, but embedded in the BAH hegemony:

> I think where the problem is, and I think not just our company but many companies have to work through, is how to get out of, we paid our dues so you have to pay your dues. And how we stay very conscious of, what is the value to them for them being here, not just what is the value to me? (Loreen-1-205).

Loreen frames these considerations in the distinction between the "boomer" concept of work/life balance – "how many hours you're not at work" (Loreen-1–197) – and what I call *work/life integration*. For the generation that has been socialized in the BAH-workplace world, 'what I do defines who I am.' In contrast, for the generation socialized in the UCaPP world, 'the effects I create, and how those effects are experienced by others, define who I am.' As Loreen has experienced, for these newer members of the organization, work is but one aspect that is to be integrated into the entirety of their lives, based on how they experience and perceive being valued by the organization.

In this case, that experience is facilitated by a UCaPP culture premised on a well thought-through, well-enacted collaborative culture:

> When it's real collaboration, when people have real creative freedom – the authority – to make decisions that have a potential of living, there's air. There's air and light that comes into that. And you feel it. You feel the difference. (Frances-2-138)