Storytelling Organizational Practices

Managing in the quantum age

David M. Boje

STORYTELLING ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

Once upon a time the practice of storytelling was about collecting interesting stories about the past and converting them into soundbite pitches. Now it is more about foretelling the ways the future is approaching the present, prompting a re-storying of the past. Storytelling has progressed and is about a diversity of voices, not just one teller of one past; it is how a group or organization of people negotiates the telling of history and the telling of what future is arriving in the present.

With the changes in storytelling practices and theory there is a growing need to look at new and different methodologies. Within this exciting new book David M. Boje develops new ways to ask questions in interviews and make observations of practice that are about storytelling the future. This, after all, is where management practice concentrates its storytelling, while much of the theory and method work is all about how the past might recur in the future.

Storytelling Organizational Practices takes the reader on a journey: from looking at narratives of past experience through looking at living stories of emergence in the present to looking at how the future is arriving in ways that prompts a re-storying of the past.

David M. Boje has a doctorate from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and an honorary doctorate from Aalborg University, Denmark. Dr Boje is past Division-chair of the Research Methods Division of the Academy of Management and incoming President of the Board of Governors of the Standing Conference for Management and Organization Inquiry. He is Founding Editor of the *Tamara Journal of Critical Organization Studies* and was Associate Editor (2003–2009) and formerly Editor (1989–2003) of the *Journal of Organizational Change Management*.

David Boje's storytelling imagination burns with the fierce energy of a volcano generating more insights in a few pages than others display in whole volumes. Whether revisiting St George and the dragon or having dinner with Zygmunt Bauman, Boje delights, provokes, subverts, and resurrects. His latest book is a must for every true lover of story, narrative, and antenarrative!

Yiannis Gabriel, School of Management, University of Bath, UK

David Boje is one of the most innovative thought leaders on organizational change and narrative methods. His expository style is equally fluent regardless of the context at hand, be it in the trenches of a distribution warehouse or the ethereal realms of philosophies and life worlds.

Nikhilesh Dholakia, University of Rhode Island, USA

The brothers James would be delighted with *Storytelling*: James because of the weight given to the narrative and Henry because of the central place of pragmatist theory in this new David Boje book. Both would be happy to see the two united within a field unknown to them, which are organization theory and the enlightened placing of pragmatic storytelling in a new era. The contemporary readers, organizational theoreticians, and practitioners alike, will be enriched by its broad historical perspective and the rich imagination of its author.

Barbara Czarniawska, Professor, Managing Overflow,
University of Gothenburg, Sweden

David Boje has written an incredible book. Writing from the perspective of philosophical pragmatism, Boje has laid out the theoretical underpinnings of organizational storytelling. It is a must read for those interested in organizations from a deeper perspective.

Ian I. Mitroff, Mitroff Crisis Management

David Boje's work makes an outstanding contribution to the study of organizations. His distinct perspective has powerfully influenced the way in which researchers engage with and understand organizations, and this book is no exception. In *Storytelling Organizational Practices* Boje provides a comprehensive analysis of the various ways in which storytelling is used and interpreted within the organization: beautifully written and engaging.

Heather Hopfl, University of Essex, UK

Dr David Boje takes storytelling to a stratospheric level in this book; giving his readers an exciting, thought-provoking, and extreme depth of understanding of what storytelling is really all about. He leaves "no stone unturned" in his profound

and gifted way of dissecting and explaining the variety and complexity of story-telling. No book has ever before been published that has given us such a rich and diverse understanding of what storytelling is all about, as does this marvellous and monumental work. David has created a masterwork.

Ed Breeding, Painter/Writer/Documentary Filmmaker, USA

In this book Boje prompts us to see the open-ended nature of possible futures as an invitation to re-story the past and re-imagine the present. The academic formula of quantum age management allows Boje to notice a broad spectrum of contempo-rary storytelling organizational practices. He systematically rejects the mainstream conformism of professional bureaucracies and moves away from Academies of Management, via International Academies of Business Disciplines towards Standing Conferences on Management and Organizational Inquiry (sc'MOI) and towards open sources of responsible civic convivialities.

Slawek Magala, Rotterdam School of Management,
Boje's successor as Editor in Chief of the Journal
of Organizational Change Management, *the Netherlands*

We all love a good story! We all tell stories all the time! No-one tells as good a story about our storytelling – to ourselves and to each other – as does David Boje. In a com-pelling story about what we tell each other as explanation, truth, and possible futures, Boje reminds us, "lest we forget," that the story about one set of interests may over-ride all others - but that it need not be so. In a world that currently supports the interest of the 1% over the needs of the other 99% we might bet that another ante is possible.

Maria Humphries, Associate Professor, Waikato Management School,
University of Waikato, New Zealand

In this ground breaking book, David Boje combines elements from such seemingly disparate areas as philosophy, quantum physics, and Shamanism. He describes how storytelling can and has been used in good and bad as well as ethical and unethical ways by organizations to help them make sense of past events in the organization; including organizational culture and history. Students and professors, as well as the interested organizational reader, will find the book to be challenging, fascinating, and imminently practical.

Jerry Biberman, Professor Emeritus, University of Scranton, USA

Here is the Boje book we didn't know we were waiting for. David emerges as a quantum weaver, applying his deep insight and astounding creativity to connect the strands of theory – his own and those of others – with great clarity in his most approachable work. It is punctuated with significant examples, important stories, and pauses for reflection and action. David engages us with his ideas about what is happening now, and what is possible going forward. He takes us on an inside-out-outside-in journey filled with passion and integrity. If you care about people, stories, organizations, and their dynamics, read this seminal book.

Jo Tyler, Associate Professor, Penn State University, USA,
Storyteller, and Mosaicist

More than anyone else, perhaps, David Boje has sensitized us to the importance of narratives, narrative plurivocality, and storytelling in organizations. In this hugely insightful book, possibly his best so far, Boje goes further: he brings storytelling to the quantum (or post-modern) era – the era of uncertainty, indeterminacy, and complexity. This book is an insightful scholarly story about organizational stories – a masterful achievement.

Haridimos Tsoukas, The Columbia Ship Management Professor of
Strategic Management, University of Cyprus and Professor of
Organization Studies, University of Warwick, UK

David Boje is arguably the leading scholar in organizational storytelling. In this comprehensive new book he synthesizes and extends the storytelling literature to speak of restorying the future. This book breaks new ground by proposing alternate methodologies to explore how many storytellers, not just omniscient managers, may impact alternate future courses for organizations. A must read for anyone interested in storytelling, or simply in the mechanics by which managers choose organizational futures, and the moral hazard this entails for society.

Usha C. V. Haley, Professor of Management,
West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia, USA

Storytelling matters! David Boje challenges us to question what we know about storytelling providing us with a compelling and wide-ranging account on theory and method for a sea-change in narrative research

Anna Linda Musacchio Adorisio, Copenhagen Business School,
Denmark and author of Storytelling in Organizations

David Boje knows everything about narratives and storytelling. This new book presents different approaches to storytelling and takes quantum storytelling to the next level. The book will certainly help and inspire both those who want to know what storytelling is all about and those looking for new innovative ideas and methods. There is so much to learn from this highly original package.

Eero Vaara, Hanken School of Economics, Finland

David Boje's work merges us into the core of the storytelling methods and narratives based on interviews about organizational practices. Although Boje focuses on businesses and organizations, his book's larger scope also addresses situations of human interaction. If storytelling of organizations is undoubtedly interested in the past stories and the present time practices, it is also oriented on the future stories, the antenarrative. Boje emphasizes on the fact that the future is not an extrapolation of the past but is rather a bet, a prediction.

Henri Savall, Professor, Socio-Economic Institute of Firms
and Organizations, France

STORYTELLING ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

Managing in the quantum age

David M. Boje

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

I dedicate this book to Professor Heather Hopfl for her pioneering work in bringing an ethic of goodness and the spiritual power of her caring heart into organizational storytelling.

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

PREFACE

Storytelling practices in the quantum age are pragmatic

Storytelling organizational practices are pragmatic. They are changing in the quantum age.

"*Storytelling*" is the oldest occupation. It is bound up with the very pragmatic functioning of every society, community, family, and organization, as well as your self–identity. When that storytelling changes it is something to notice, to write about. Here I am calling for a reconstruction of organizational storytelling in an ethical and pragmatic way. Sometimes organizational storytelling does not set the record straight. Organizational narratives, in particular, can edit out important detail, leading to a historical record that can be totally backward. Here is an example from dragon storytelling.

Some *organizational storytelling* about this book's cover art

Stan Washburn (1974) gave *The True Account of the Death by Violence of George's Dragon*. The people of the palace were scared by manticores and overgrown rats. "But an itinerant dragon, passing by chance, killed for his own amusement some manticores which he saw in the palace garden. The Duke invited him to dinner" (ibid.: 6). Everyone but the monsters felt much safer. For a time all was well, as the dragon accepted a stipend of food and board in exchange for killing gargoyles and manticores. But once all the monsters were no more there was really no need to keep paying the stipend of rum and honey to the dragon. Pragmatic action caused a turn in the story. The Duke hired George to slay the dragon. Then, like any organizational story, the storytelling took a different pragmatic turn. "Seeking to rejuvenate the tourist trade by attracting free-spending pilgrims, the Bishop petitioned for the dragon's canonization. But the bribes necessary to promote the canonization of a pagan dragon were so exorbitant that the Abbot suggested canonizing George

instead, as an economy" (ibid.: 15–16). In the end there was another pragmatic turn: "The Duke saw no point in setting the record straight. He commissioned monuments reflecting the popular taste" (ibid.: 19).

What is the moral of *The True Account of the Death by Violence of George's Dragon?* Storytelling organizational practices are pragmatic! There is a difference between the historical narrative passed down and Washburn's counter-narrative. Over time, the storytelling changes. And sometimes, as a pragmatic economic move, it's best not to set the record straight.

To title a book *Storytelling* is to make a declaration that it concerns the whole playing field, while story and narrative are just two of several very important sub-domains of storytelling; "*Storytelling Practices*" was not added to "*Organization.*" Rather, "*Storytelling Organizational Practices*" are already a part of pragmatic areas: accounting, strategy, operations, marketing, innovation, leadership, personnel, and management. Storytelling, of course, was societal and personal before being noticed and made popular in recent management and organization texts, and the thesis of the book is that management needs to pay more theory and research attention to all four American pragmatisms, as well as to European contributions to pragmatism. In this book, I will introduce four kinds of American pragmatisms (and some Native American as well as European contributions) that are changing the field of management and organizational storytelling.

Storytelling was and still is the primary sensemaking way of communication in organizations. It constitutes organizations in many ways: from the founding, sensemaking of the past, scuttlebutt about pending action, the annual performance review, the strategic plan, the quarterly operational budget, the annual report, to how to change and adapt. People in every organization are storytellers doing pragmatic storytelling. A short list: a small business, a huge corporation, a city council, a government agency, a school, a university, a fraternity, an alumni association, a hospital, an entire industry, a partnership, a franchise, a non-profit co-op, a senate. All have storytellers doing pragmatic storytelling.

What is a storyteller?

They make sense of their organization and its many environments: ecosystem, market, community, industry, national, and global. At first glance it may seem difficult to find the storytellers in an organization. Here is a short list:

Leader	**Accountant**	**Entrepreneur**	**Marketer**
Mentor	**Client**	**Prophet**	**Coach**
Lecturer	**Mythmaker**	**Historian**	**Reporter**
Architect	**Visionary**	**Trainer**	**Researcher**
Secretary	**Receptionist**	**Janitor**	**Trainee**

Look, listen, and notice! The CEO is not the only storyteller. Everyone in and around an organization is a storyteller, but some simply have more power, more voice, more influence, and more awareness than others.

What is storytelling?

Listening	*Interpreting*	**Telling**	**Visioning**
Understanding	**Knowing**	**Reporting**	**Strategizing**
Historicizing	**Producing**	**Accounting**	**Designing**
Futuring	**Entrepreneuring**	**Selling**	**Marketing**

At first glance it may be difficult to see each of these as answering the question "What is storytelling?" Of all these skills, *listening* and then *interpreting* to an audience are the two most important storytelling competencies.

Storytelling necessarily has a dark side as well: storytelling in organizations is also gossip, rumors, lies, purposive distortions, exaggerations, cons, and witch hunts. However, the most skilled pragmatic storytellers see past the "surface ripples" of gossip and rumor to the "massive under current that courses below" (Stevens 2002: xvi).

Walter Benjamin (1936) wrote, in my opinion, the most important article on pragmatic storytelling in organizations. He observed that storytelling competence is declining for two reasons. First, as society moves to more simplified narratives, there is less attention to the subtle details of story, how it resonates with context. Second, as organizations became more compartmentalized, in cubicles, workers no longer had time to sing songs and tell tales to one another as part of the work process. Workers were no longer practicing their storytelling skills while working. Rather, managers are the ones sitting around in meetings, swapping tales. The narrative ways have simplified the storytelling in our novels, in Hollywood movies, and in organizations. They were a disaster for pragmatic storytelling.

The industrial revolution, with its mechanized forms of work, and the way we work in separate rooms and cubicles all helped to suppress unions. These facets of work also meant fewer opportunities for workers to practice the more subtle and powerful aspects of storytelling (listening and interpreting). To listen beyond the surface ripple, to discern the currents of storytelling, to notice the way the wind is blowing – it takes a lot of practice. Benjamin lamented that the face-to-face listening and story swapping in work groups was on the decline. Sailors did not sing songs and blacksmiths did not share stories while they worked. Of course, Benjamin wrote about the decline of storytelling competencies in organizations before the laptop, desktop, cell phone, iPad, and the mighty Internet. Yet, despite all the Tweeting, Facebooking, and YouTubing, is Benjamin's proposition – the decline of storytelling competencies – still valid? I am going to say "yes."

What Benjamin forecasted is how storytelling would be dominated by the narrative turn, a kind of abstraction, and how storytelling practice was limited through the mechanization of work. When organizational storytelling practice is reduced to simplifying abstract narratives our "living stories" experience becomes oversimplified or is simply ignored and lost. When western narrative displaces, reifies, and replaces what I call the "*living story*" eventness of being, then we are less effective at managing and organizing in the quantum age. Gertrude Stein (1935) made a similar point: the information age of newspapers and novels was taking over narrative writing and the ways of living story fell away.

A lot of narrative information flows and, with search engines, we can find almost any piece of information on the web. Yet it is mostly in the form of fragments, not that quality time and sacred space in which stories are shared, thus learning by feedback from the masters how to listen, observe, and notice the under-currents – in my opinion – those things that are exactly what makes storytelling powerful. More information passing between screens just does not make for more intelligent storytelling.

Storytelling organizational practices happen continually in every office, on every floor, in every hallway, in every field location of every organization. Much of it is very pragmatic. Take a quick inventory of all the pragmatic storytelling undertaken by everyone in and around your organization, from customers, suppliers, investors, and pundits, to janitors, secretaries, technicians, and board members.

- When an accountant is doing ledgers, he or she is storytelling.
- When a strategist is presenting a mission, vision, objectives, action plan, and milestones, she or he is doing storytelling.
- When an entrepreneur gives a pitch to a group of Angels or Sharks, she or he is storytelling.
- When a marketing VIP predicts outcomes of a new advertising campaign in terms of product demand, he or she is doing storytelling.
- When a manager reports on the obstacles to recruiting a replacement for someone who just hopped to another company, she or he is doing storytelling.
- When the controller presents a plan to update the portfolio of investments, that too is storytelling.
- When the CEO delivers a speech or a letter to shareholders, that reporting is storytelling.
- When the trainer shares war stories about worst practices and ones that actually worked, that is storytelling.
- When a customer leaves a message on the answering machine, that is storytelling.
- When the janitor explains to a supervisor why the buffing machine no longer works, that is storytelling.
- When there is listening and interpreting, the two most important skills of storytelling are enacted.

In the last three millennia, since the dawn of organized societies, we have learned that most conversations, problem-solving meetings, strategy sessions, visioning gatherings, the oral, the textual, and the dramatic gestures, even the architecture, involve pragmatic storytelling between the storytellers and the audience. Storytelling is technically a subdomain of conversation, discourse, dramaturgy, and communication, and happens in many mediums: oral, print, gesture, digital, and material practices. We will explore these points further in several later chapters, but for now, let us move along.

Storytelling, in this book, is defined as including "story," "narrative," and one more aspect, "antenarrative," that I will introduce shortly. Figure 1 presents a "Google Ngram" showing how the words "story" and "narrative" have appeared in books over the centuries. Many books use the words interchangeably, but storytelling is a less frequently used word than either story or narrative. However, I hope to change that.

We will treat story as "aliveness," so we will be using the technical term "living story." Narrative has a structured form, a plot that since Aristotle (1954) must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The term I use for the beginning, middle, end narrative is *BME narrative*. Since Aristotle, narrative has a set of six elements that define it which appear in a particular hierarchical order: plot > characters > theme > dialogue > rhythm > spectacle. For Aristotle, the epic poem and the history included complex simultaneous events, whereas the narrative had a single, simplified, and linear plot of events (aka BME narrative). Keeping it short, the narrative could be performed in a day, in theatre, and these days in a couple of hours. Nowadays, the order is reversed in action cinema: the spectacle of car crashes and bullets everywhere takes over the dialogue and sometimes we struggle as an audience to identify the theme or find any liveliness in the characters, while the plot too often appears to be no more than an add-on. Aristotle would be horrified!

We are approaching a more technical explanation of what constitutes pragmatic storytelling practices in organizations. I need to define one more term. To living story and BME narrative I add a term that I coined in a book published in 2001 (republished as a handbook by Routledge in 2011). This new storytelling
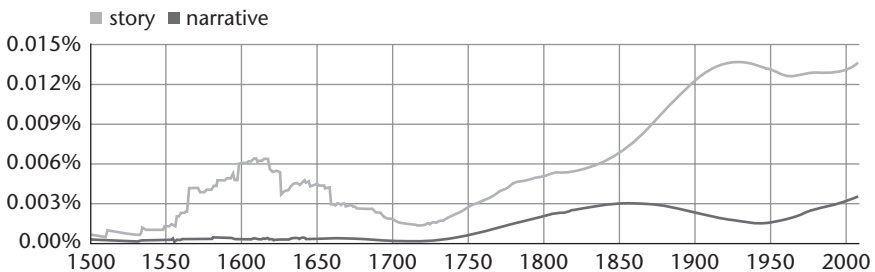
FIGURE P.1 Google Ngram of how "story" and "narrative" appeared in books

concept is called "antenarrative." The word "*ante*" has two meanings: *before* and *bet*. Antenarrative, therefore, defines two things: (1) the process of storytelling "before" the narrative takes the form of BME, and (2) "bets on the future." Antenarratives describe various relationships between different sorts of narratives and living stories. With these three terms, living story, BME narrative, and antenarrative, I can tame George's dragon. There was no need for George to slay that dragon. The dragon had its own living story. The counter-narrative – of the good dragon and the practical Duke and Abbot – shows us one important lesson: storytelling changes over time in pragmatic ways owing to the economy of what I call the "storytelling organization."

Storytelling occurs in storytelling organizations, which are part of every organization or company. By itself that is not saying anything new. To this we add that storytelling in organizations is a combination of living stories, narratives, and antenarrative connections. A little better, but saying that one thing has three parts does not help much. The contribution of "storytelling organization" is in the understanding of the *sensemaking* that takes place in pragmatic ways between storytellers and their audiences. In previous work I wrote about the "storytelling organization": How all storytellers are undertaking storytelling sensemaking to audiences 24/7 and how the storytelling organization is its own system of backward- and forward-looking sensemaking processes (Boje 1991, 1995, 2008a). Indeed, if I am famous for one idea, it is that storytelling is the preferred sensemaking practice in organizations. We can put this all together as follows:

A storytelling organization is formally defined as the collective performance of backward-looking BME narratives (institutional memory, aka retrospective-sensemaking stuck-in-the-past) always distorting the people's living stories (aka individual memories of lived experience) and connecting forward-looking antenarrative (aka prospective-sensemaking of many possible paths) before BME narrative fossilization fuses into just one antenarrative bet on the future (Boje 1991: 106, 2008a: 263).

For example, in *True Account of the Death by Violence of George's Dragon*, we read about the overturn of the BME narrative (George slayed the dragon to protect the people of the palace). We learn a living story omitted in the BME narrative: that the dragon had been hired by pragmatic leaders to rid the palace of monsters. The economy shifted when the dragon killed off all the monsters, which changed the antenarrative, making the dragon less essential to the economy. When the monsters were gone, the pagan dragon was no longer needed, so George was hired. Then the palace needed tourist revenue. It turned out to be cheaper to canonize George than the dragon. So the record, until Washburn's book, was not set straight. I visited the memorial to George slaying the dragon in Berlin. Many such memorials exist in many town squares, keeping the BME narrative fresh in the audience's vision. This is an example of the storytelling organization: a collective performance of retrospective and prospective sensemaking in a dance of omitted living stories, BME narratives, and the antenarrative processes making systemic connections in ways that change the dynamics of the pragmatic economy and its outcomes.

Storytelling, in sum, is a pragmatic sort of sensemaking, a combination of backward-looking narratives and forward-looking antenarratives, both of which distort and even omit living stories unfolding now. The pagan dragon's living story is still unfolding thanks to Stan Washburn's overturning the dominant BME narrative. Now that unleashes new antes, new bets on the dragon's future. Perhaps George will be forgotten, and the dragon will become the hero, as this new plot is disclosed. Then the living story of the dragon may become a counter-narrative and its own BME narrative.

We are going to use the term "pragmatic" to describe a variety of concepts that have important technical and economic differences from the vulgar "whatever works" pragmatism that characterizes George's dragon with George as hero. *Managerialist pragmatism* is defined here as embedded vulgar, utilitarian, instrumentalist, sometimes Machiavellian practices situated in American capitalism and its globalization. I seek an ethical pragmatic storytelling that is "after managerialism" (Taptiklis 2005). Taptiklis (2005: 2) writes of the "depth of managerialism's resistance to a complexity-based view of organizational life." This comes through in the preference of pragmatic storytelling for the dumb and simple over the complex and intelligent. I will assert that managerialist pragmatism is deeply rooted in what my colleague Henri Savall calls the "TFW virus." TFW stands for Taylorism, Fayolism, and Weberism. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries TFW was an embedded "whatever works" pragmatic influence upon accepted practices in the US and Europe. Lest we act, "whatever works" TFW becomes the global pragmatic managerialist practice. Globalization, of course, dates back to imperialism, where the ideology of managerialism got its start (Klikauer 2013: 20). It is time to unmanage the ideological control of organizational storytelling so that we open it up to the unspoken knowledge (Taptiklis 2008), by which I mean the knowledge that is in the complexity that is itself inside what Shotter (2005) calls "inside the moment of managing," rich in expressive-response dynamics that do not make it into the managerial narratives.

An interesting aspect of TFW organization storytelling practices is the way in which a fictive characterization builds up over the years in a person's personnel file, competing with any sort of lived, embodied "living story" of the person. People work hard to cultivate their fictive narrative character and to emplot themselves in BME normalized ways in order to convey what the organization's surveillance and observation apparatus expects to see.

An example of the fictive organizational narrative is Wells Fargo. Norwest Bank bought Wells Fargo – the entire chain, including its history – and then appropriated its stagecoach, strongbox, and Wild West history and superimposed it onto not only Norwest but also every bank chain acquired over the years. Anna Linda Musacchio Adorisio came to Las Cruces, New Mexico, from Italy to study storytelling with me (Adorisio 2008, 2009, 2011). She and I conducted interviews locally among employees of a community bank that Wells Fargo acquired. Teams of professional writers went state-by-state writing histories of how each acquired bank figured in the larger Wells Fargo history. Ironically, Wells Fargo was owned by Norwest, and Norwest took Wells Fargo's history as its own. This kind of organization storytelling

is called "storytelling branding." The banks in question are branded with Wells Fargo history. After a month or so of memorizing Wells Fargo history, employees of the acquired community banks (which have histories of their own) go through a "flip," in which they flip over to the Wells Fargo storytelling and are disciplined, even fired, if they continue to convey the community bank's lived experience and history to anyone. This is an example of "whatever works" pragmatic organizational storytelling. Ironically, I am the endowed Wells Fargo Banking professor at my university and have met with Wells Fargo to talk of my alternative pragmatic storytelling. I am complicit in the Wild West fantasy.

Thus, on Friday October 26, 2013, I sat at the Wells Fargo table at the Business College scholarship luncheon, and we talked of the new developments, such as Wells Fargo's doubling in size since I had last visited them. According to Steve Denning (2012), Wells Fargo practices "radical management." Wells Fargo is a "positive story about a big bank … Wells does what banks are supposed to do: Take deposits and then lend the money back out" (ibid.). The strategies of Wells' CEO John G. Stumpf increased the bank's net income from US$15.9 to US$81 billion. Denning's view is that the bank is extremely safe because it has transparency, is not following the greedy herd, and is taking steps to deal with underwater mortgages. Besides, says Denning, CEO Stumpf's office door is always open. I suspect a more complex storytelling is needed here.

I did some more research: Wells Fargo has US$1.5 trillion in variable-interest entities. Its maximum exposure, should the bets fail, is only about US$60 billion (40 percent of its capital reserves). Wells Fargo's other ante-up was to acquire Wachovia National Bank in 2008, including its 3,300 retail financial centers in twenty-one states and six Latin countries. At the time Wachovia was the fourth largest bank holding company in the US. What Denning is not telling is that Wachovia was about to fail, and the government forced its sale. In the 2007–2009 subprime mortgage crisis, Wachovia was reporting an anticipated US$8.9 billion loss plus another US$40 billion in punitive damages, partly from its money laundering of drug money and a further payout of US$7 million to a whistleblower. However, Wachovia ended up paying only US$144 million and did not have to admit any wrongdoing. Wells Fargo agreed to buy it for US$15.1 billion with an offer of US$7 per share when the stock was listed at only US$1 a share. Besides the doubling of Wells Fargo's size, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation allowed a write-off of US$42 billion of Wachovia's riskiest mortgages. In sum, Wells Fargo got a bargain.

Then Wells Fargo integrated the IT, changed the Wachovia signs, and put in the stagecoach logo. I asked the Wells Fargo people at my luncheon table "how is it going?" Their reply was unanimous: Wachovia had to adopt the cultural values and ethics of Wells Fargo. And the Norwest culture still persists beneath all the Wild West costume and spectacle.

"There's something about the stagecoach – the way it signifies service, security, and settlement of the western frontier."[1] Yet, is there something deeper going on beneath the "flip over" of Wachovia, once a South Carolina company, to the stagecoach branding? We are talking about a bank with alleged widespread unethical banking practices integrating its practices with those of Wells

Fargo, which means that it has to be a shift from "whatever works" banking to a different way of making those bets on the future.

A paradigm is defined as theory, praxis, and methodology all rolled into one. In this book I contribute a paradigm shift from any old "whatever works" pragmatic storytelling in organizations, which, by the way, is extremely unethical, to an *ethical* pragmatic storytelling. We will address four pragmatic storytelling paradigms (critical pragmatic, ontological pragmatic, post-positivist pragmatic, and epistemic pragmatic) as the theme of the book. We refer to these pragmatic paradigms by the acronym COPE. Here we will look at their separate influences and their action in combination. By the end of the book it will be evident that they are pragmatic alternatives to the vulgar pragmatism of "whatever works." The introduction is not the place to unfold COPE pragmatisms and all the many differences with "whatever works." For now it's enough to ante, to bet, that a pragmatist storytelling paradigm shift is a contribution to storytelling in organizations.

What is pragmatic storytelling?

Pragmatic storytelling can be at the level of vulgar "whatever works," or can seek out a more ethical ground. Pragmatic storytelling is defined as to notice, interpret, and tell about something or someone in a changing economy of values, so different antes get made. Pragmatic storytelling in organizational practices is not just listening to and interpreting what is happening. Rather, it is an ethical questioning of the dominant BME narrative that has cohered.

In *The True Account of the Death by Violence of George's Dragon*, one plot, characterization, and theme had cohered into a BME narrative. Then, somehow, the living story of the dragon broke through this dead shell to reanimate the pagan dragon as a hero, a caring sort of character, while the theme was what happens in many organizations: that is, it is too costly to the economy to set the record straight. In many ways Washburn's book combines all four pragmatisms: he is critical in overturning the BME narrative, breaking that shell, to hatch a new living story. His book is ontological, since the primordial life of the dragon, its being-in-the-world of the palace, was the result of an agreement with the Duke to keep the palace safe from monsters and rats. It is post-positivist in terms of an exploration of metaphysical questions about pagan dragons and economies of the castle without appealing to transcendental a priori arguments. Finally, it is epistemic: we learn a whole different standpoint with which to listen to and interpret the story of the pagan dragon. It, too, has become a BME narrative, and likely some new storyteller will step forward to hatch a different living story that will change all the antes, and we will make different bets, and form yet another BME narrative. The dynamic interpretation, according to the epistemic pragmatic paradigm, always has the force of becoming a final interpretant. And the final interpretant always has the force of coming undone. Eventually the secrets are disclosed by someone.

Besides pragmatic storytelling, this book has a second theme, quantum storytelling.

What is quantum storytelling?

In storytelling practices in organizations, managing in the quantum age is quite different than managing in the Newtonian age. The world of pragmatic storytelling practices in organizations is undergoing a change as dramatic as those of the Industrial Revolution.

The game of storytelling in organizations is changing in the quantum age.[2] The pragmatic storytelling game rules have changed: the game of storytelling in organizations is being played by new rules and it will take a paradigm shift to keep pace.

This book has sections on the new pragmatic theory, praxis, and methodology for that paradigm shift. Playing the new game of storytelling in our quantum age means that we have to stop, look, and *notice*! There are new rules and new practices: new storytelling competences are emerging. Yes, Benjamin was right – the face-to-face interactions of a workgroup in the same place and time are no longer there, and now we are in different places, at different times, connected through the Internet. Yet, I suggest, new competencies in storytelling *are* emerging in the quantum age. Some are somewhat "whatever works" and quite vulgar, yet COPE alternatives offer new practices in pragmatic storytelling in organizations and in society, one of which is certainly what I am calling here "quantum storytelling."[3] As a part of this change, John Dewey (1929) read the work of Werner Heisenberg (1927), then still in German, and figured out that it meant that American pragmatism would shift. As a result he switched paths and started looking at how the Observer Effect and the Uncertainty Principle meant new pragmatic ways of intelligent action not just for education but for all forms of organization. Then he went beyond anything that Heisenberg had imagined. He is not alone. George Herbert Mead (1932) read other quantum physicists such as Bohr and Planck, and decided that time is not linear and could well be moving from future to present, instead of from past to present to future.

There is controversy here. Do we stay within the physics of quantum, or venture into quantum metaphysics? Compare the quantum physicist's explanations, such as those of Brian Cox (Cox & Forshaw 2011), with those of quantum physicists who take quantum physics into the metaphysics: for example, Amit Goswami (1993), Fred Alan Wolf (1981, 1991, 2001, 2011), and Lothar Schäfer (2013). I will assert that the American and European pragmatists, as well as the Native American pragmatists, are already crossing the divide between strict quantum mechanics and quantum metaphysics, and so is management scholarship.

Pragmatic metaphysical assumptions

Here are five key pragmatic metaphysical assumptions that make the quantum age different than the Newtonian age in terms of managing organization storytelling practices:

Assumption 1: We are energy bodies in an energy universe. Therefore, our organizational storytelling will be more about energy and momentum than about fixity and stability. Max Planck calculated the smallest bit of reality to be a millimeter divided by a hundred thousand billion billion billion. We are just beginning to understand subatomic particles that small.

Assumption 2: Our organizational storytelling is more about quantum energy and about momentum in something called waveforms. Therefore, quantum storytelling is agential in its effects. The energy and momentum of Planck's subatomic infinitesimals is being understood as quantum vibratory frequency waveforms (QVFW) that interconnect by momentum of events, forming a path that our families, our schools, our organizations, and we, are on. The hearing frequency is between 20 Hz and 20,000 Hz. Above and below that we don't hear, yet the waves are there.

Assumption 3: Organizations are composed of linear, cyclic, spiral, and rhizome antenarrative processes that are quite infinitesimal. An antenarrative is that the storytelling process that comes before the rigidity and petrification of narrative is in place. Antenarratives are also bets on the future done through storytelling, such as in strategy, planning, and visioning. Corollary: The double spiral antenarrative has both updraft and downdraft currents in organizations that have agential effects on organization actors' opportunities and limitations. Updraft and downdraft are ontological concepts from Heidegger (1962). A double spiral is something I teach in my small business consulting class. It has upward and downward paths, as well as left and right movement. A double spiral has both upward and downward momentum forces in motion simultaneously. It is not an either/or.

Assumption 4: Quantum storytelling "space" refers to all possible places of co-location of a waveform-matrix. When collapsed by the "Observer Effect," the possibilities of the waveform-matrix become probabilities of a few manifesting actualities of our organizing. This is what Karen Barad (2003, 2007) calls the "agential cut," the way the observing instrument measures or "cuts" the possibilities into probabilities. A waveform-matrix is defined as all possible outcomes. The Observer Effect collapses the waves of potentiality into a small number of actualities. Those waves are infinitesimally small energy vortices, what I call energy vibrations "or vibes," for short, that are assumed to be influenced in subtle ways by the storytelling.

Assumption 5: Quantum energy vibes between organizational storytelling and organizational materiality itself can be changed at the level of potentiality of waveforms. For example, in actor–network theory (Latour 2005), both actors and actants (things) are agential. Unlike the social constructivist paradigm after the linguistic turn, where materiality is just rhetoric, in quantum storytelling there is a subatomic material wave/particle world in which actors and actants are connected, tapping into what I will call the "storytelling field."

Are these ideas incommensurate with American and European pragmatism? You be the judge.

Here are some ways in which quantum and pragmatic storytelling seem related:

1. Quantum storytelling, particularly in terms of the Observer Effect and the Heisenberg Principle of Indeterminacy, makes a contribution to managing storytelling in organizations. The Principle of Indeterminacy says that an increasing accuracy of observation of momentum means that we sacrifice some accuracy of position, and vice versa. Pragmatism – for example, Peirce's infinitesimal theory (a sign can keep being divided and divided), William James' (1907: 98) notion *things tell a story*, and Dewey's (1929) ways of going beyond the Observer Effect and Indeterminacy in what he calls *pragmatic intelligent action* that changes mindless *habits of action* – has gone beyond the basics of the physics of quantum mechanics. For example, for James, "*pragmata*" was about the story of things in their "plurality" (1907: 44).

2. The model of pragmatic storytelling, happening simultaneously in various rooms, offices, hallways, and digitally across the spaces of an organization, is a process of repeated observation effects that abides by Bohr's Principle of Complementarity. The Principle of Complementarity says that the quantum Observer Effects of our sense experiences are complementary to classic physics. At some point the many possible futures collapse into one enacted course of action. In later chapters we will look at Peirce's Abduction Experiment, where he focused on pre-conscious awareness, and guess, in a whodunit situation, the thief of his Tiffany watch.

3. The natures of space, time, and materiality in organizations are in relation to quantum aspects of pragmatic storytelling such as Observer Effect, entanglement, colocation, superposition, collapsing the wave, and so on. Since materiality is energy, and our bodies are energy, we are energy beings in an energy universe. Charles Sanders Peirce, John Dewey, and William James, as we shall explore in the book, made the profound observation that the connection between us anticipates quantum metaphysics. For Peirce, it may be because our mattering (particles) comes from stuff as old as the universe that abductive inference is possible. For Dewey, the Observer Effect meant that theory and action are not separated. For James, plurality was a way to move beyond closed systems thinking (see Chapter 3). Each used pragmatism to inquire into metaphysics.

How might we manage quantum storytelling in pragmatic ways? There are some suggestions relating to how Observer Effect (the observing instrument) participations in organizations can help find a more ethical practice than "whatever works" utilitarianism. First, some history.

Interest in quantum physics applications to organization practices began with writings by Capra (1983, 1996), Wheatley (1992), Senge (1990), and Zohar (1990, 1994). Senge (1990: 239) says: "at a quantum theoretical level of accuracy, the observing instrument and the observed object participate in each other in an irreducible way." He wrote early on about quantumness, about how the observing instrument distorts the experiment (ibid.), citing Heisenberg, Bohr, Bohm, and Einstein.

Zohar (DanahZohr.com) offers several fundamental properties and transformative principles of quantum physics:

* quantum holism and "entanglement";
* quantum contextualism;
* quantum emergence;
* quantum indeterminacy;
* Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle;
* the Principle of Complementarity
* the participatory universe;
* the quantum vacuum.

From these early writings a myriad of quantum organization (Youngblood 1997; Kilmann 2001) approaches, variously labeled quantum-leadership (Deardorff & Williams 2006; Dargahi 2013), quantum-administration (Overman 1996), and quantum-learning (DePorter & Hernacki 1992; Chrisley 1995) sprang up, mostly focused on quantum-as-metaphor. For example, Mark Youngblood (1997) builds upon Capra, Wheatley, Senge, and Zohar to develop a theory of "quantum organization." He conceives of an organic model of living systems (after Capra) that he proceeds to use to declare Microsoft, Cisco Systems, Intel, Whole Foods, Starbucks, and Harley Davidson the nimble quantum giants forging new paths on the edge of chaos.

Ralph Kilmann (2001) also wrote a book on quantum organizations, but has a different list of elements than Zohar's, above. Kilmann's thesis is that we have moved from well-defined problems that specialists could solve to complex, fragmented, swirling, intermingling, and interconnected problems rooted in social, economic, political, biological, psychological, spiritual, and environmental realms. Quantum organizations are compared with other types: bureaucratic, fearful, and courageous organizations. For Kilmann, quantum organizations are facing an interconnected and highly fragmented world.

In my opinion, the above works are pioneering, yet do not go much beyond the quantum metaphor. We have to get beyond metaphor to the storytelling itself, to how leaders, workers, customers, suppliers, and everyone else are doing the quantum storytelling. Otherwise, it is just pouring old wine into new bottles. It is not that we are *animal narrens* (storytelling animals); rather, it is that our pragmatic ways of storytelling are changing with the quantum age. We are *quantum narrens*. How can we develop pragmatic quantum storytelling organization practices in a quantum age?

The quantum age is itself changing, getting more liquid. Zygmunt Bauman's "liquid modernity" thesis has an important implication for storytelling. As we move into the liquid modern, storytelling once suited to the Weberian iron cage of modernity is grossly out of touch with consumerist society. Storytelling is going through two related shifts, one form a quantum understanding of our existence

as energetic, and the other a consumerist unreflexivity about the consequences of consumerism for the death of the life of future generations on this planet.

Summary

Important concepts to remember

- Storytelling is everywhere, done by everyone in every organization.
- Storytelling is not just recounting history, it is also forecasting, even foretelling, the future.
- Storytelling is a combination of retrospective and prospective sensemaking.
- Storytelling includes individuals' living stories, organizations' BME narratives, and the antenarrative connections.
- Antenarrative has a double meaning: *before* BME narrative coherence, and *bets* on the future.
- One of the many antenarratives places and collapses the storytelling field into yet another BME narrative.
- Quantum storytelling includes the Observer Effect of collapsing many antenarrative futures, all the possible bets, into just one, which becomes a further BME narrative.
- Competence in storytelling in terms of the ability to stop, look, and listen to the under-currents beneath the surface waves of gossip and rumors takes lots of practice.
- The game of storytelling is changing in the quantum age.
- There are new rules for the game of storytelling in the quantum age.
- These rules are very pragmatic.
- The two most important skills of storytelling are listening and interpretation.
- Both these skills are also pragmatic.

Storytelling exercises

1. **The Observer Effect storytelling exercise.** Choose a partner. *The storyteller.* Please discuss some event from your past, a narrative-past that is still vibrating (with emotional energy) in your life today. Pick one comfortable to discuss. Give only a few details. *Observer.* Use muscle testing. Have the storyteller hold out their dominant arm while you apply gentle downward pressure as you ask the questions. Ask only yes/no questions, such as: Is the narrative-past vibrating energy in your energy body today? Is the narrative-past to do with family? with social relations? with economics? with spirituality? with ethics?
2. **Back-to-the-future.** You are in the time machine Delorean car. You go five years into the future and arrive at some international airport (nearby). You encounter a friend you have not seen in five years. In pairs, share what three goals you accomplished five years from now (i.e. 2018). After both have shared,

find someone else in the room and share with them, and repeat until "time" is called. Then write down your three goals in your storytelling notebook.

3. **Collapse the wave.** List all possible futures, each a quantum storytelling scenario, and the paths for getting to those futures. Collapse these many possible waveforms into probability paths and give each a number based on its probability (e.g. a 42 percent likelihood that this will happen). Use the Observer Effect to observe these probability paths; what actions are in place to increase their probability?

4. **Double spiral.** In pairs, storyteller and observer, share examples of upward spiral (antenarrative) experience. Then repeat, but, this time, share downward spiral (antenarrative) experience. Write them down in your notebook after both have shared both types. Discuss the current updrafts and downdrafts acting on the double spiral. Write that result in your notebook.

5. **Material storytelling.** Observe and inventory all the materials that you have with you: clothing, stuff you carry, stuff you have arranged in the personal space around you. Discuss within a small group the emotional or other entanglements this stuff has with your quantum storytelling. Which stuff has most positive energy for you? Write your answers in your notebook.

Notes

1 See IPubviewer.com, http://ipubviewer.com/print.php?pages=50,51&issue_id=83041&ref=1 (accessed January 2014).

2 My colleague Mike Bonifer looks at changing the "Game of Storytelling" in small and large organizations. Mike Bonifer is the CEO and co-founder of GameChangers, LLC, which uses improvisation techniques, game structure, and quantum storytelling to help its clients improve communication and build brand narratives. For more on Bonifer's GameChangers and Quantum Games of Storytelling, see http://www.gamechangers.com/ or http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mike-bonifer/ or http://socialmediaweek.org/blog/event/the-quantum-physics-of-storytelling/ (accessed January 2014).

3 Anete Strand (2011) calls it "material storytelling." I have been working on something I call "quantum storytelling," where there is a "storytelling field" that extends between people and subatomic material in organizations. I was an examiner for Strand's most excellent thesis, which argues that all discourse and all materiality are in an intra-active and intra-penetrating relationship with each other.

PART I

Introduction to pragmatic storytelling

Part I covers the "what is storytelling" question: its rich and diverse history, the COPE model of organizational storytelling, and how storytelling is adapting to the quantum age. COPE stands for Critical, Ontological, Post-positivist, and Epistemic (see Preface). I believe there are four kinds of ethical pragmatisms interacting with the degenerative "whatever works" vulgar pragmatism. I am calling for a reconstruction of organizational storytelling through observation and experiment, combining spiritual with material ways of storytelling and thus bringing about a posthumous storytelling that is sustainable, as human-centric storytelling is not making people or the planet healthier.

I will use the term "quantum-liquid" as the combination of Newtonian physics agential cuts with the new agential cuts of quantum physics, still wrestling with quantum metaphysics. The challenge is to connect theory and practice in storytelling, since, as Justice Holmes (a participant in the Metaphysical Circle of the American Pragmatists) says, "theory is the most practical thing" (as cited in Dewey 1920/1948: xli).

Pragmatist storytelling is made up of many paradigms; the storytelling paradigms of several pragmatisms are reuniting, going through a radical revolution, in the quantum-liquid age. Not only are we in a time of quantum indeterminacy, with wave/particle duality, colocation, and entanglement, we are now what Bauman (2011) calls the *Liquid Modern World* of consumerist materialism. Consumer markets are being colonized and exploited in acts of storytelling choice. In liquid modern times the ethical answerability for our storytelling choice has fallen from the organizations to the individual, who is "now appointed to the position of chief manager of 'life politics' and its sole executive" (ibid.: 12). That is a major paradigm shift in storytelling in which, in our consumerist society, we expect consumers to make what Dewey (1929) called individual "desire" a "desirable" outcome for everyone.

The paradigm called materialism has changed its character identity many times since the ancient pre-Socratic atomism of Democritus and later in Aristotle's *Physics* and *Poetics*. Over two millennia later, around 1913, there were storytelling paradigms ranging from materialist through poetic, linguistic, symbolist, futurist, structuralist, and formalist to our focus, contending pragmatisms. By 1929, Dewey had embraced a more ontological and quantum pragmatism, while Peirce remained with epistemic pragmatism (semiotics) and James with post-positivistic pragmatism. Fast forward to 2014 and varieties of COPE pragmatisms (Critical, Ontological, Post-positivist, and Epistemic) are coping with the quantum and liquid modern age of late modern capitalism.

These storytelling COPE pragmatisms are wrestling with how to treat narrative and story in relation to a legion of materialist approaches. The linguists, formalists, structuralists, and some pragmatists have distanced themselves from materialist storytelling, declaring it irrelevant, and it was not until Karen Barad (2003, 2007) declared that the linguistic turn had gone too far that Anete Strand (2011) could revive "material storytelling." "Quantum storytelling" does not mean the dismissal of the metaphysical, spiritual nor the ethical from the playing field.

1

WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL STORYTELLING?

Let's define storytelling

We need to create a technical language, to define terms, in order to inquire into how the genres and domains of storytelling inter-play in organizations.

Genres of storytelling

A storytelling genre is defined by similarities in form, function, and style. The genres of storytelling are the BME narrative, living story, and antenarratives (Boje 2001, 2008a, 2011a–d).

What is BME narrative?

The BME narrative genre is defined by a style that is abstract, a function that generalizes, and a form that tries to annihilate living stories' content. BME is beginning, middle and end.

Its poetic style began before Aristotle (1954: 1450b: 25, 233) and has become the ultimate in managerialist storytelling. Aristotle is not to blame, however. Aristotle placed BME narrative in relation to epic stories and to a worked-out history. Narrative, according to Aristotle, requires a story to be a proper "imitation of an action that is complete in itself, as a whole of some magnitude … Now a whole is that which has beginning, middle, and end" (ibid.).

There are BME narratives and counter-narratives. There are BME grand narratives (Lyotard 1984) and master narratives (for convenience, I will just call them all BME). A master narrative, or dominant narrative, can silence the living stories. There are also more complex narratives that are not simple-minded BME. Dennis Mumby (1987) writes about the political aspects of organizational narrative – how

it limits what gets told by organizations. Clair (1997) writes about embedded narratives: what it means to be Lakota in Native American narrative, nested within Western culture narrative, and nested again within the US nation narrative.

Walter Benjamin's 1936 article (mentioned above) contends that storytelling has lost important competencies as a result of changes in capitalist production processes that did not allow workers to practice important storytelling skills as they had in days of old:

> The art of storytelling no longer thrives. The ability of the storyteller to weave and spin has been lost. The ability of the listener to engage in moral reflexivity has been lost. It takes community to grow the competencies of tellers and listeners. And these are skills best honed in a "rhythm of work" among craftspeople, in the "milieu of work – the rural, the maritime, and the urban … artisan form of communication".
>
> *(Benjamin 1936: 91)*

Benjamin recognized how storytelling was changing with capitalist ways of production. The rhythms of work had changed how people interacted. Workers had to sit in cubicles, or otherwise separated from one another in rows, doing assembly in silence. They could no longer practice not only story *telling* skills but also those of *listening* and *reflection*. Managers, on the other hand, sit around in meetings, executives sit in boardrooms, and they get the practice in organizational storytelling. Benjamin, facing backward and looking at the destruction of storytelling, missed the ways that managers and their leaders began to reduce all storytelling to tidy BME narratives suitable for branding, for stump speeches, and for the hard sell.

There is a difference between those tidy BME narratives that banks tell about themselves and what we call "living stories." As I write this (October 21, 2013) a living story is unfolding about what happens to a bank that does "whatever works" vulgar pragmatism.

Here is a BME narrative: "JPMorgan Chase is using its scale, resources and expertise to make a positive impact in the communities where we live and work" (JPMorgan Chase and Company 2013: 1). Its quarterly corporate responsibility report begins with how it is helping tornado victims, runners in the marathon, and small-business owners.

The living story of the entire world financial crisis continues to unfold, however, with no end in sight. JPMorgan Chase and Company reached a US$13 billion settlement with the US Justice Department concerning the bank's alleged bad mortgage loans sold to investors that brought on the global financial meltdown. This can be understood as a set of nested narratives: the narrative of loss of home by the home own, nested within the narrative of JPMorgan Chase narrative, nested within the speculative investment market for derivatives, in turn nested within the global financial meltdown.

JPMorgan Chase is one of five banks that account for 95 percent of the US$648 trillion derivatives market. A derivative is a bet on the future with "variable

interest entities" – the biggest casino game in the world, where banks need not have the assets to back up their antes. The four big players and their antes are: JPMorgan Chase (US$70 trillion), Citibank (US$52 trillion), Bank of America (US$50 trillion), and Goldman Saks (US$44 trillion). Keep in mind that total US gross national product is about US$85 trillion. It is alarming that, despite the trauma of the 2008 bailout of banks, the derivative market is actually larger now than it was before.

John Van Maanen (1988) provides a relevant typology from ethnography: the realist tale, the impressionist tale, and the confessional tale. A realist narrative genre is like a snail's shell. On the outside, the shell may appear empty of life. Yet, inside, a living being may reside, with impressionist and confessional tales. The BME narrative shell is the dwelling place of a second major genre of storytelling, the living story.

What is living story?

"Living stories are not whole, often without beginning or end, and just unfolding in the middle" (Boje 2012e).[1] The living story genre is defined as the unfolding living process that is "in the middle," not yet ended, perhaps without beginning or ending. Living stories are ontological, thereness, and now-ness. By ontological, I am referring here to both Heidegger's being-in-the-world and Bakhtin's distinction between Western narrative and story. As Bakhtin (1973: 13) put it, "narrative genres are always enclosed in a solid and unshakable monological framework," whereas, on the other hand, we can notice the "polyphonic manner of the story" (ibid.: 60). By "polyphonic," Bakhtin means the diversity of voices that radiate uniqueness, like refracting rays of light:

> It is as if rays of light radiate from my uniqueness and passing through time, they confirm historical mankind, they permeate with light of value all possible time and temporality itself as such, for I myself actually partake in temporality.
> *(Bakhtin 1993: 60)*

In Bakhtin (1990, 1993) the ethical answerability that takes place in once-occurring being-as-event-ness is a compelling action – that is, an ethics of living story that is quite pragmatic in ways that John Dewey (1929) calls "intelligent action." If we have the intelligence of action we cannot claim the bystander role and stand by while people suffer, are mistreated, or suffer financial ruin. Heather Höpfl contends that organizational textbooks, with few exceptions, do not deal with the issue of gender. The result is a patriarchal, masculine conception of organization in abstract, rational, purposive behavior terms. I want to make some storytelling contentions between Höpfl's work and my own.

First, I believe that Höpfl's concern with patriarchal, masculine abstraction can be extended to organizational narratives. Second, Höpfl develops the "maternal organization" as a way to "restore the m/other to the text and thereby, give emphasis to the organization as embodied experience" (Höpfl 2008: 349). Third, for me, the living stories are embodied and ontological, and a way to restore the m/other. Höpfl also privileges the present moment in her living stories (ibid.: 353). Finally,

we both are followers of Julia Kristeva. Kristeva worked on Bakhtin's concept of intertextuality (how one text is referencing a text of the past or anticipating one yet to be written). Höpfl follows Kristeva in that ethical concern for the "discourse of maternity" as a new "emergent paradigm of organization which gives primacy to embodied present-centered experience" and needs to counter the often-male centric organizational narrative (Höpfl 2008: 352).

Pratt's thesis (2002, 2003) argues that the American pragmatists exchanged pragmatic ideas and practices with Native American pragmatists. If that is the case, then they learned pragmatic practices from each other. For instance, Kaylynn Twotrees (2000) provides rich insight into how living stories are materially situated in the life-world of the Lakota tribes, in practices such as the Medicine Wheel, in what she calls the seven directions: four cardinal ones, plus up, down, and looking within oneself.

When Kaylynn does organizational storytelling, it is not the typical half-day or two-day workshop. It takes four months to a year for an organization to understand living stories and how they can be developed by participatory practice into an organization storytelling. That storytelling may not include the living story of *every* person, but the rays of light, as Bakhtin calls them, refract to each person. This book is about how COPE pragmatic storytelling, done at an organization level of intervention, can change the embedded "whatever works" organization storytelling praxis.

Jo Tyler (2010: 62) participated in the same 2006 conference that Twotrees, Ken Baskin, and I facilitated, and she wrote about living stories as having "story aliveness." During the conference Tyler says that she "arrived at the threshold of the idea that stories are alive" and "alive whether or not we tell them" (ibid.: 64). We (Tyler & Boje 2009) produced a piece on living story in relation to workaholism for the *Journal of Business Ethics* in which we said: "Living story recognizes the plurality of selves that constitute our identity, and our reflexivity" (ibid.: 173).

A banking example of BME narratives

Jamie Dimon, Chairperson and CEO of JPMorgan Chase and Company, shares a simple BME narrative in a corporate social responsibility report:

> **B** → If we can help our clients grow around the world,
> **M** → they will in turn generate the jobs, small business growth and other economic activity that builds strong, vibrant communities
> **E** → and generates more sustainable economic growth and prosperity for all.
> *(JPMorgan Chase and Company 2013: B M E, my addition)*

It can be a good thing to focus, to laser in on a simple BME narrative to close a presentation or to let the busy customers know what's happening. Include some Q & A:
   Question:

> In the wake of the financial crisis, your industry continues to face high scrutiny and low trust. How is society better off because of what JPMorgan Chase does?

Dimon's answer:

> I can understand why the financial services industry has lost the confidence of many people. Like all companies, we've made mistakes. What is most important, however, is that we need to learn from them, continually improve and become a stronger company. We also shouldn't let our mistakes distract us from the critical role large banks play in driving economic growth …
>
> *(ibid.: 3)*

> When it comes to complying with the rules and regulations that govern our industry and our company, there is no room for compromise … There is no piece of business, no deal, no revenue stream that is more important than our obligation to act responsibly, ethically and within the rules.
>
> *(ibid.: 62; excerpt from March 2013 message to all employees from the firm's Operating Committee)*

The problem is when the pat answers become the totality of organizational storytelling. In our lectures, Tyler and I have also been critical about some very popular organizational storytelling consulting models. For example, Tom Peters, in *Thriving on Chaos* (1987: 482, 492-93), began telling executives that they could get control of complex corporations using a three-minute "stump speech." It is actually an elevator pitch, something you can tell someone in the time it takes for an elevator ride.

This reductionism is not limited to corporate storytelling: the pat answers – the BME narrative – are part, too, of political storytelling practices. A memo by political consultant Frank Luntz (2002a) to the Republican legislators and to oil gas industry lobbyists was leaked in 2003 in the British newspaper *The Guardian* (Burkeman 2003). There is a pragmatic "whatever works" sort of rhetoric to the storytelling strategy that is presented.

> FIRST POINT: "Assure your audience that you are committed to 'preserving and protecting' the environment, but that 'it can be done more wisely and effectively.' Begin by emphasizing your commitment to 'a balanced approach' between our national energy needs and maintaining a clean, safe and healthy environment. *Tell a personal story from your own life that demonstrates an interest in a clean environment.* Since many Americans believe Republicans do not care about the environment, you will never convince people to accept your ideas until you confront this suspicion and put it to rest."
> SECOND POINT: "Talk in terms of the future, not the past or present. The environment is an area in which people expect progress, and when they do not see progress being made, they get frustrated."
> THIRD POINT: "The three words Americans are looking for in an environmental policy are 'safer,' 'cleaner,' and 'healthier.' Two words that summarize

what Americans expect from regulators and agencies are 'accountability' and 'responsibility'."

(Luntz 2002a: 108; italic, my emphasis)

Luntz (2002a) then moves on to "the perfect one-minute sound-bite" in the form of an elevator pitch – what we call the BME narrative pitch:

BEGINNING: "Demand for energy in the United States is outstripping supply, and will continue to grow as our 21st century high-tech economy expands. Higher energy costs are squeezing family budgets, undermining farms and small businesses, jeopardizing jobs, and threatening the long-term health of our economy."
MIDDLE: "Our energy problems are largely the result of shortsighted domestic policies. The problem has been years in the making, and it will take years to solve. I am committed to the dependable, affordable and environmentally clean production of energy for America's future. I am committed to an energy policy that enhances national security. I know we can do it. We have the best scientists, the best engineers and the best technicians in the world."
END: "We will put them to work to develop a 21st century energy program that leads America toward energy self-sufficiency and is the envy of all other nations."

(Luntz 2002a: 109)

Luntz's storytelling advice, particularly the inclusion of a positive personal story to win over the audience, is the quintessential elevator pitch, coupled with pragmatic persuasion reduced to just one sentence:

Americans want a "common sense, comprehensive, long term approach" to energy policy. They do not want a single solution or a single energy source. You succeed when you sell your energy policy as a complete package – a diversity of sources and solutions. In a single sentence, *Americans want a "balanced, comprehensive plan that includes conservation measures, advanced technology, and a diversity of energy sources."*

(ibid.: 111; the relevant sentence is in italic)

I want to make the case that this sort of political "whatever works" storytelling is not only unethical but is also the role model for organizational storytelling consulting. Let's look at one of the hot new storytelling approaches, the springboard.

Stephen Denning (2001, 2005a, 2005b, 2007) developed the elevator pitch by a new name, the *springboard story*. He (2007) claims that the "springboard story" is the vehicle for organizational change: "If the company is facing a major change, springboard stories will be needed to spark the change" (ibid.: 111).

The coaching advice is to have CEOs (actually their staff members) construct "springboard" stories, "a story that enables a leap in understanding by the audience

so as to grasp how an organization or community or complex system may change" (Denning 2005c: xviii). The characteristics of a springboard story are: (1) a story from the perspective of a single protagonist in a prototypical business predicament; (2) an explicit story familiar to the audience; (3) a story that stimulates their imagination; (4) the story must have a positive or happy ending (ibid.: xix, 124, 126, 198). Denning's bibliography lists works by Polkinghorne, Bakhtin, and other scholars that he does not in fact use. It does, however, rely on Descartes, which is not terribly pragmatist. American pragmatists, by contrast, want to overcome the dualities of mind and body, subject and object, in Descartes. Denning's book contains six main stories he used in consulting to the World Bank: one about Zambia, one about Yemen, one from fellow consultant John Kotter, one about the Central Africa Republic, a prayer by Seth Weaver Kahan, and one about the Pakistan government. John Kotter's bestselling book *Leading Change* (1996) is a retrospective BME narrative prison story, an eight-step linear model of how to change an organization, with beginning steps and middle steps to bring about end steps. The lock-step approach draws on Lewin, treating change as if some combination of frozen molecules can be unfrozen, moved, and refrozen. It is storytelling for the Newtonian age.

I would like to challenge the claims for the elevator pitch, the stump speech, the springboard story, branding storytelling, and the political consulting storytelling (which will we get to shortly). Yes, they are widely popular, the basis for a billion dollar consulting industry in organizational storytelling. The problem is that they exclude a focus on living stories. All these storytelling practices do not fit the criteria we are using to develop COPE pragmatic storytelling approaches that go beyond "whatever works" managerialist utilitarianism.

Denning's work of 2005(b), for example, is a decidedly "whatever works" managerialist orientation producing the ultimate BME narrative: "leaders using narrative to inculcate a positive set of corporate values and beliefs in the hearts and minds of employees" (ibid.: 10); "plugging into an archetypal narrative patter – the hero's journey" (ibid.: 57); using "narrative archetype – the story of David and Goliath" (ibid.: 80); getting people to work together using "narrative to Get Things Done Collaboratively [since] Stories are the language of communities …" (ibid.: 149); or using "narrative tools that would help me deal with, control, and tame the grapevine" (ibid.: 203). Denning's springboard approach is decidedly Aristotelian:

> On my return from Jonesborough, I educated myself on the principles of traditional storytelling. More than two thousand years ago, Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, said stories should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. They should include complex characters as well as a plot that incorporates a reversal of fortune and a lesson learned…
>
> *(ibid.: 7–8)*

There are important alternatives to "whatever works" storytelling. My work on living stories (Boje 2001, 2005, 2006, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2011a, 2012a, 2012d, 2012f) continued to apply Twotrees' ideas of place, time, and mind. For