**Treasure Hunting Truth through Self-Correcting Methodology of True Storytelling**

Dr. James R. Sibel

**Abstract**

Truth is the telos of research – the ultimate treasure. All depends on it. However, it is often an elusive and difficult objective for the researcher. In a world of increasingly overwhelming levels of accessible information, false presumptions may often appear validated by those skilled at increasing the volume - fake news, special interests, all utilize their unique versions of “truth” toward enhancing their own interests. In the philosophical science of ontology, an unwavering quest for truth, much like that of reality, while ever evolving, serves as the bedrock of all research and theory. To that end, self-correcting method storytelling research is fast becoming a preferred methodology for researchers utilizing narratology as it surpasses the limitations of the structured and semi-structured interrogatory style dialogic in developing a deeper understanding of the *whole* story. This allows researchers to travel beyond the confines of the linear, structured, investigation, offering admission into the deeper *life* of the story. Every story has its own continual, ever expanding life force comprised of all voices and influences melded from the past, present and future. Built on the foundational work of Charles Sanders Peirce, through the use of induction, (later enhanced with abductive and deductive processes) the self-correcting method leads to a path of discovery by utilizing a broader less constrictive socio-narratology based method that encourages interpretation through an abductive-inductive-deductive view of the conversational based relationship. Developing further with the preliminary step of deconstructing the existing narrative, seeking antenarrative and carefully considering the stories “around” the story being researched (which comprise the aggregated components of the whole) the resulting understanding provided to the researcher often invites entrance into the guarded domain of the study participant, gained only through thoughtful conversational interaction (not interrogation) based on an understanding between the researcher and participants as can only be built upon a foundation of mutual respect, honesty, and trust. There are inherent challenges to this methodology, the primary one being the necessity for skillful non-specific indirect exchanges of dialogue required for the mastery of conversational storytelling interviews, while resisting the almost natural interrogatory interviewing tendency of many western trained researchers. There are countless stories living and evolving within every story, each with multiplicities interwoven that are interdimensionally dynamic with one another. With diligence and intuitive awareness of this, the use of self-correcting storytelling methodology serves researchers well in narratological studies.

**Keywords:** Abduction; storytelling; deconstruction; self-correcting; antenarrative

**Self-correcting Method - Storytelling Research Methodology**

**Introduction**

Your research project is to study the lives of contemporary native Americans relating to the issue of alcoholism within a particular reservation. What methodology would you use to go deep, to find the “truth” about the problem – a survey monkey questionnaire? Perhaps a structured interview with coding and subsequent statistical analysis could work? A linear semi-structured interrogatory interview, which is then “interpreted” through western trained methods, coding and recoding, seeking “p-value” validation to confirm a version of reality that conforms to the researchers often predetermined theory? Can the depth of “truth” be brought out through utilizing these modalities of research without knowing far more than the contemporary narrative? Consider for a moment that your research participants are the living stories of their ancestors, those who lived for thousands of years on their sacred lands, spoke their own unique language, abided and honored customs and traditions taught to them by their revered elders over countless generations. They knew and respected the mountains and rivers as the givers of life and their belief system was based on honoring all things – whether an animal, plant, or a rock. Out of nowhere, invaders arrived with unimagined weapons and exterminated the People through warfare and disease, waging relentless government sanctioned genocide. They took the land and forced relocated survivors to live in internment camps, as they ravaged everything else for its resources. Survivors were forced to speak the Colonizers new language and worship their strange God. Everything changed as the “old ways” began to disappear, and with them, the culture changed as hope for a better future became clouded by sadness and despair.

To comprehend the “now” story requires an intimate knowledge of the “before,” and neither are static. Is there a single linear story in this scenario, one that honors the “stories that were already there” and encompasses the before, between, beneath, of the story web, far deeper than that which many Eurocentric historians might presume as “truth” when they assert that Manifest Destiny was ordained by God? What is the “truth” in the story of these research participants? How can an outside researcher possibly understand the whole story, seeking the “truth,” without an intimate knowledge of the past and the effect it has on the now and future? To further deepen the researcher’s task, many native languages have far more phonemes than English; words often do not exist in the English language to convey the complex meanings that are able to be expressed in indigenous languages. In such circumstances, how are the “true” stories to be told and understood? What living web of past, present, and future stories comprise the entire narrative? What is their “truth” and how is it conveyed to the researcher? To nurture and develop these stories, an exchange of dialogue is simply not enough; it must be further enriched by antenarrative (Boje, 2019) – the vast web of dynamic interconnected events unrestricted by linear time. The ability to facilitate such an exchange between researcher and participant is difficult to teach and is often gained only through diverse life experiences; it requires mutual trust and honesty combined with active listening and an intuitive understanding of the nuance of language, history, psychology, philosophy, diversity of cultures, and nature. The researcher and participant must reach deeply into the core – seeking to understand the truth that builds the ever-evolving living story. How can that be achieved?

**The conversational storytelling approach with self-correcting method**

What is self-correcting method of storytelling research? For purposes of this chapter, the best starting point in explaining self-correcting method would begin with what it is and what it is not. Self-correcting method allows the researcher to travel beyond the confines of the linear, structured, investigation; it offers admission into the *life* of the story. Every story has its own continual, ever expanding life force comprised of all voices and influences; the self-correcting method seeks to discover a deeper understanding of the story by utilizing a broader less constrictive socio-narratology based method that encourages interpretation through an abductive - inductive -deductive (AID) study of the dialogic based relationship. Consider how you would tell the story of your own life. How would you start? Can you even contemplate the infinite influences and forces, both known and unknown to you, that were present and interacting to make you the person you are? The deeper you go, the more rapidly you may realize that you do not even know where it began – your story *is* and continues to *be* dynamic in all directions and dimensions. Your ancestors, do you really know their stories? Stories are never static; they are dynamic – simultaneously alive in the past, while continually influencing and affecting the present and future. Consider how the dynamic nature of a revelation from the “past” story of an ancestor could change when infused with new information from a contemporary source such as a genetic profile provided by *23andme* after your discovery of a love letter from the old country, written to your great grandmother, was found in the lining of a dust covered overseas trunk when cleaning out your long-deceased mother's attic. What impact could this kind of event have on “your” story? Is your story about the past or about the future – is it that simple? Do you now conduct your own life with consideration for those yet unborn for whom you will be their ancestor? That future story is also a part of both your story and theirs – happening now and when (not yet then). Stories are never static – they are alive, ever evolving, interacting, and changing.

**Linear narrative is not enough.**

Effective self-correcting method research aimed at understanding and interpreting a story cannot be confined to a sterile analysis of the linear narrative counter-narrative narratology possessing a defined beginning, middle, and end, utilizing structured or semi-structured interview questions. That interrogatory methodology might work for a detective when coercing a confession from a criminal regarding a particular event on a defined timeline. However, understanding a *story* is infinitely more than that. The indoctrination, into the restrictive linear and defined (thereby structured) mindset, may have begun for many as young children with stories that started with “once upon a time . . .” and ended with “and that’s the end of the story.” It created a clear delineation, a beginning, and an end with no room for anything else. Further, these stories often came with a very clearly defined “moral of the story'' discouraging consideration of antenarrative and what was before, beneath, between, and bets on the future (prospective sensemaking) (Boje D. M., 2001a). Carrying that mindset forward into research, stories, with their linear and narratological constraints, were then interpreted using heuristics and critical methodologies to glean the principal message - to define and isolate *a* meaning (i.e., a singular message) rather than allowing for an understanding that all stories are dynamic and in a constant state of dialogue *with one another* as societies, language, cultures, and experiential forces meld them under continuous reinterpretation (Frank, 2010). Dialectic narratological principles (such as those evident in many of the works of Bakhtin) (Holquist, 1990) were often not adequately considered as a fundamental foundational framework. As a result, research was frequently focused and conducted utilizing a linear modality without seeking to expand beyond the limits of the singular “meaning” of the story.

**Once upon a time . . . and that’s the end of the story.**

Having been conditioned since childhood on the linear, structured framework of storytelling, it is logical that many Western researchers were trained to utilize structured and semi-structured interviews in an effort toward understanding the narrative stories of those being observed or studied for purposes of research. One fundamental shortcoming of that interviewing methodology was it excised only a portion of the story, a finite segment of a timeline, and ignored the rest as though it never existed or will ever exist. It has become apparent to many researchers that outcomes from such Western based methodologies do not fully or adequately provide an understanding of the deep, rich, and often guarded domain of the interview participants. The results of many structured, thereby directed, interrogations provided inadequate information and frequently led to incomplete results or erroneous conclusions. A barrier to entrance into the guarded domain of the subject, gained only through thoughtful conversational interaction (interrogation differs significantly from interaction) based on respect and understanding between the participants, was often the lack of an established foundation of mutual respect, honesty, and trust, such that would allow deeper, more meaningful exchanges. As was determined through the Hawthorne Studies in 1924-27, direct interrogatory interviewing, while perhaps providing for simplicity of analysis in quantitative and rigidly conducted case studies with each response to standardized questions boxed into a coded category for an often-predictable outcome, was not providing enough insight to achieve optimum results. The Hawthorne group evolved in their understanding of conducting interviews to recognize the benefit provided by an “indirect approach” of uninterrupted conversational interviews (akin to telling stories); they modified their methods to facilitate this novel change of approach and the results improved markedly (Roethlisberger, 1939). The entire process of interviewing began to shift and continues to evolve toward conversational storytelling as a science.

The benefits of conversational interviews (storytelling) having been thoroughly demonstrated and increasingly acknowledged, evolved over time into what is now becoming the *science* of a storytelling methodology of which a fundamental component is the “self-correcting” method to seek and verify theory developed from this process. Initially built on the foundational work of Charles Sanders Peirce (Kapitan, 1975), the self-correcting method, through the use of induction, later enhanced when coupled with abductive and deductive processes (reordered for the sake of a proper acronym to – AID), constitutes the basic framework of the methodology. Through four successive waves of evolving process toward seeking *true* grounded theory utilizing this expanding methodology, the final 4th Wave (Boje, 2019) of self-correcting process is combined with, among others, dialogic and dialectic methods, introducing into the exchange the undefined ever evolving variables in the *now* and in the “fore-having (before), for-conception (beneath), for-structure (between), fore-telling (bets), and fore-caring (becoming)” of the antenarrative processes (Boje, 2019). Without these broadened ontological underpinnings, bare narrative often remained only a linear recitation of the past, void of the immense riches that develop deeper more profoundly significant meaning.

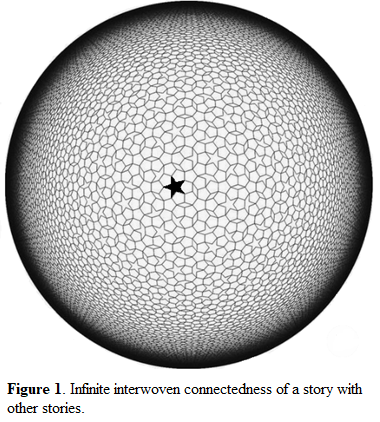
**How do you interpret something that cannot be spoken?**

For centuries, ethnographers have attempted to bridge culture and fieldwork, placing themselves between two worlds, attempting to decode one culture and recode it within another (utilizing classic Western methodology) for the interpretation by others’ stories – they told what they observed to be the stories of the subjects or groups they studied. No one would refute the value of such work having been done long ago in an attempt to record many now extinct cultures and their human interactions. Present civilization is enriched by having glimpses of the past, no matter how narrow and structured they tended to be, there is little else left to study from those people living in ages long gone. However, such studies often routinely failed to encompass the deeper meaning of what was not readily observed, what could not be seen, what needed to be sensed, or what was just too private and sensitive a subject to be openly shared when exposed to rigid linear interrogatory interviewing methodology (Barthes, 1977). An excellent example of this is observed in the reading of *Ishi – in Two Worlds*, referred to as a biography of the last wild Indian in North America (Kroeber, 1961). Much of the story never entered the biography as it was too sensitive or culturally impolite for the subject (Ishi) to speak of with a stranger (defined by his culture as a non-Yahi). Protocols forbid him to speak his own name unless properly addressed with the required salutation, (which could *only* come from another Yahi) resulting in his use of ‘Ishi’ (translated as “man”) rather than his given name. How much more of that story remained untold – unable to be spoken out loud.

**Narratology Research methods are evolving toward conversational storytelling.**

To exemplify, from a historical perspective of cultural relativity, the profound effect of evolving and differing storytelling analyses can make in creating beliefs about a culture, reference the anthropological work written in 1981 by Dr. Gilbert Herdt “Guardians of the Flutes” on the gender identity and male initiation ceremonies and customs of Sambian people living in the highlands of New Guinea (Herdt, 1981). Herdt was far ahead of the contemporaries of his time in understanding narrative, and equally advanced in utilizing what would later be characterized as antenarrative (Boje, 2019), and the immeasurable benefit the use of an expanded ontological methodology can provide in the immense wealth of cultural knowledge to scholars studying his work. Compare it to the previous work of Mead (Coming of Age in Samoa, 1928). Mead broke ground in both her profession (by ignoring professional gender bias) and through her study of children in different societies and the stories they were told to create the human artifact of societal culture within the group (Mead, 1928). The work of Herdt and Mead goes beyond imposing culturally biased Freudian Western stereotypes – their research of “person-centered ethnography” laid its foundation upon developing an understanding of their *being in the world,* as understood and experienced by the individuals, a prerequisite to comprehending their unconscious significance of a unique culture and expands into a 360-degree view of *being* a Sambian or Samoan youth becoming an accepted adult male or female in their societies. Contrary to the interrogatory work of others, they both attempted to capture what could be viewed as the beginnings of what ‘storytelling’ does, in its optimum utilization; it captures a wider more encompassing understanding by enhancing from within what were previously the linear focused models of the sciences (e.g., ethnology, anthropology) with an ontological foundation of underpinnings, gaining in the process a sense of *being in their world*. Similar studies of cultures and customs were undertaken by both Mead and Herdt, but their research opened a door to the emerging evolution of methodologies previously seeking validation. The difference exemplifies the immense benefit of conversational storytelling and how it can lead to a deeper understanding as it melds into a living interpretation of *being in the world*. Such an expanded approach may not be easy for Western trained researchers as it requires senses attuned *with* (i.e., from within) and not *to* (i.e., from outside looking in) the story by encompassing history, beliefs, culture, and the personal experiential world of ever evolving stories of past, present, and future, into its fabric. The ability to facilitate such an understanding between researcher and subject is difficult to learn and is frequently dependent on a broad spectrum of diverse life experiences. Combine this with the ability to actively listen and a sensitive perception of nuance and the indirect approach of conversational interviewing becomes a methodology that reaches deeply into the core truth of the story, allowing both the researcher and participant to go where few other methods permit. (Rosensohn, 1974) Critical to an understanding of the ‘true story’ is antenarrative “the fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted, pre-narrative speculation, a bet” (Boje, 2019).; that is where real ‘truth’ is formulated and validated, it is the stitching that binds the tapestry together.

**What is a ‘story’?**

Contemplate for a moment how you perceive the definition of the word “story.” How do you view it in your mind? Is it a single event? Is there a point of beginning and end in a clearly linear timeline – are you thinking in terms taught to you as a Western child – once upon a time . . . and that’s the end of the story? Further consider whether there can ever be a singularly isolated “story” about anything. Is it possible for such a thing to exist? Think of a story about a long past event in your life. Can you remember all of the context, other participants, timing, emotions, what had occurred leading up to it and what occurred after into the present and future? Has that story changed over time with the retelling? A story cannot exist in a static state; it continuously evolves. Infinite other stories comprise the integral parts of “you” story – to contemplate only defined components of it is to disregard the infinite value and contribution of the whole. (See Figure 1) The way you understand the construct of a story has a profound effect on your approach to storytelling science research. There are always countless inner stories living and evolving within every story, all with multiplicities interwoven that are interdimensionally dynamic with one another (see figure 1) – a tapestry of unique *being* with every component having meaningful effects on the whole as they continuously change and evolve. To endeavor to understand the effect multiplicities of stories have on the subject of your research should remain constantly in the forefront of your conscious effort when conducting conversational storytelling interviews.

To the researcher, untrained in the science of storytelling, hearing the random, incoherent, fragmented, parts and pieces of stories related to a research question from a study participant, or participants, could be much like sitting in the audience and hearing the warmup period of an orchestra prior to the concert – just so much conflicting noise coming from all directions and no “music” in any of it. However, when the maestros' arm is raised, hands leveled, and the motion of the baton begins – *truth* is brought to all the “chaotic” sounds of the instruments. Like magic, it becomes a symphony. The symphony *is* True Storytelling and it is achieved by utilizing the “self-correcting” method through conversational dialogue to validate research seeking to arrive at the fundamental *truth*,which is the foundation upon which all else is built. That process is further explained within the following pages.

**Self-correcting Storytelling Method**

What is the goal of self-correcting method for storytelling? In the previous example of Mead’s work when compared to that of Herdt, there are profound differences of meaning that can be drawn from the comparison of the two works; the subjects of the stories have many similarities but the methods of arriving at the conclusions provide the researcher with different messages. Are both adequate to reach an accurate understanding, a conclusion upon which Substantive Theory could be proposed, tested, and legitimately validated? Of course, the work of ethnographers and anthropologists are meant to provide information free of their own biases allowing subsequent researchers the latitude of interpreting these “stories” within their own realms of knowledge – building upon them and attempting to develop theory. As we all know, biases (particularly implicit ones) are extremely difficult to excise from our psyches and affect everything. How can you know that interpretations of stories develop into accurate and reliable theory? Utilize a methodology through which you can test, retest, adjust, retest, until arriving at a validated outcome. Stories are everywhere and encompass every aspect of our lives, in every organization and in every person. Our personal stories began long before our birth and will continue infinitely after our physical bodies are shed. An ethical scholar is morally bound to honor both the story (as a living thing in and of itself) and the provider of the story, through accurate interpretations and conclusions that are *true* to the ones providing them.

The self-correcting method is a mechanism through which substantive and ultimately validated theory may be developed from Storytelling. The evolution of the process can be viewed as developing and progressing through four distinct waves of which much is written in various other chapters of this book. For purposes of expounding on the process of the self-correcting method, it is the 4th wave (Boje, 2019) which will be referenced here. 4th Wave Grounded Theory adds many critical contextual elements to the previous waves including “embodiment and materiality.” To begin, a contextual understanding of the distinction between the terms: abduction, induction, and deduction are critical to the understanding of this process.

Abduction: the speculative guess that could be based on some largely intangible intuitive hunch about the subject of the study. It can be arrived at through more of a ‘gut-feeling’ than anything else and constitutes the starting point – a proposition and set of assumptions. According to Peirce, it begins with an observation or set of same and then seeks the most likely or easiest unverified conclusion – a “likely” solution. For that instant, you presume it to be correct and work toward testing its validity.

Induction: the analysis and assimilation of empirical data gathered through the various details of the conversational interviewing of the participants into a working generalization to be tested for confirmation or repudiation through further interviews while testing propositions and assumptions.

Deduction: the process through which an existing theory (an explanation of some particular phenomenon that has been substantiated through repeated testing) is developed in order to arrive at a hypothesis (a proposed explanation of something that can be tested) that can be further tested in support of the substantive theory.

The process begins with a proposition and or assumption of an existing story based on an observation that is generated “from within.” It then undergoes testing for validity or repudiation through the self-correcting method of storytelling science utilizing the abduction, inductive, deductive (AID) analysis supported through conversational storytelling interaction with others.

It is critical for the researcher to remain diligent in guarding against what could be the conditioned tendency of Western trained scholars toward morphing from conversational storytelling interviewing into semi-structured interviewing. Be aware that the core of this methodology is fully dependent on a properly conducted conversational storytelling interview. That cannot be overstated; it is imperative. The imposition of a structured or semi-structured interrogatory does not provide for the changes that evolve through each iteration of the AID analysis and stifles the ‘evolving story,’ which is, for the most part, what the researcher is truly seeking. Ideally, the researcher engages in dialogic (actively listening diligently for the implicit meaning and intention of the words used and the stories already associated with them) free flowing conversations, remaining keenly tuned into the exchange for relevancies as they relate to the “existing story assumptions” looking for validation, repudiation, or modification, observing nuance and progressively building meaning.

Start with your research question or observation as a point of beginning. Contemplate your observation about a particular subject of interest that requires deeper clarification in your mind, of which you may have a “hunch” about the answer but remain uncertain and cannot find research supporting a hypothesis that would provide an acceptable or reasonable resolution. Define the ‘story’ you have about the subject. What is the fundamental structure of your hunch, what are the details? Write your own story on the topic in advance of beginning the AID process. There are those, me being one, that firmly support the initial process of story “deconstruction” as a prerequisite to the starting point of self-correcting method.

**Story Deconstruction**

There are numerous methodologies for deconstructing a story. Herein I elaborate briefly on the Boje methodology of Story Deconstruction (Boje, 1995) that allows the researcher to closely analyze and objectively view both the story of “others” and their own reality of the subject matter.

For example, relating to characterizations of contemporary American politics at the time of this writing, a person somewhere might have developed a belief, through personal observations and conversations, perhaps further embedded in their own psyche through implicit or confirmation biases, that undocumented Mexican immigrants threaten American jobs. Numerous American fringe groups promote their hate doctrine focused on immigrants, particularly “Mexicans'' (Mexican being a term used by these groups that encompasses all Brown people from any nation, particularly Latin America) with rhetoric meant to build their base and expand their influence, some even exerting sufficient strength to effect influence on National party politics. For these people, “Mexican immigrants threaten American jobs”' is the story. The first step to story deconstruction would be to gather data that represents and supports their story. Who are the people promoting these doctrines? What is their story? Why do they believe it to be correct? What journey are these people on that has led them and continues to lead them along the path of supporting this story? Some common core principles might emerge as fundamental to their Mexican immigrant rhetoric. Undocumented “Mexicans'':

Take away job opportunities for Americans

Drive down wages by working for such low wages

Take advantage of entitlement programs

Do not pay taxes on their earned income

Are criminals and rapists

Erode American culture

Do not support trade unions

Expand on the reasons for those perceptions or observations. Thorough research is required in advance of starting any conversational storytelling with subjects. Take the assumptive story and begin to gather data. Do undocumented Mexican immigrants fit those core principles of the story? Understand why those holding an affirmative belief that undocumented Mexicans threaten opportunities by taking jobs, driving down wages, are criminals and rapists, erode American culture and so on; what supports that story? Or, if those are your own beliefs, consider through personal reflection, why you hold those beliefs? What led you to that place? Build your research on the assumptions and begin to widen your view of the subject. After sufficient research, a “story” will become evident; it is truth? Is it falsehood? Or is it a blend of both? What is the true story? Once you have a clear understanding of ‘the story,’ it is time to enter the deconstruction phase of the process (see Figure 2). Once it is constructed, you need to break it down and examine the Diagram

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the different components so as to provide more than just one side – you want the entire view, from all sides. The Bojean Method Deconstruction is shown in Figure 2.

Define the Dualities – does a duality exist? Are there opposing or contrasting concepts at play? Does the storyline sustain validity when tested under 360-degree scrutiny? If not, define the duality that is observed.

Reinterpret - The acknowledgement of a duality requires a reinterpretation of the storyline. If rhetoric is no longer aligned with reality (created by the acknowledged duality) then the ‘real world’ is different. If the rhetoric was unreliable and the storyline false, everything was subject to reinterpretation. Acknowledgement that the baseline values of the storyline could not withstand sustained critical scrutiny and may be false. Reinterpreting the storyline allowed for validity of an alternative storyline: a reconstructed set of values.

Rebel Voices – identify and research those who related to the reinterpreted storyline as well as those who adhered to the original story. Understand what forces were at play to create those voices on both sides. Hear what is being said and what is not being said by these voices.

Other Side of the Story – is there an “other” or counter side to the story? In previous waves of analysis, you would assume the “story” (initial propositions and assumption) is the thesis, and seek to define the antithesis? In the methodological model of Hegel, build the thesis–antithesis and consider the overall deconstruction as a whole as you seek to arrive at synthesis. In 4th wave analysis, don’t stop there; dig deeper into the “real” story seeking the evident and more importantly, the hidden “other” side that is obscure or without adequate voice and therefore not evident. Use the “W” line of analysis – *Who* is speaking in the story (and why are others remaining silent or are they)? *What* is their motivation and what is the story trying to achieve or represent? Is *When* significant – how much does timing and contextual staging affect the story? *Where* – context, meaning, what surrounds the ‘where’ and is it meaningful? Dig as deeply as you are able into the periphery and keep expanding. *Why* – continuously examine the *why* of everything. Do not focus on the center point, deeply examine the periphery of everything.

Deny the Plot – find the exception; what are the exceptions that make the flaws evident? Find the exception to the storyline and identify the dualities. Once the duality is identified, the rebel voices are heard and acknowledged as credible, the storyline is critically examined, denying the plot becomes a matter of looking deeper into the analysis to expand on the original storyline.

What is Between the Lines – is what is printed or spoken the entire story or are there other messages being sent that need to be searched for and identified? What is said is critical; but what is not said (and needs to be sensed) is equally important. If the silent voices were heard, what would they be saying?

Resituate – having identified dualities, reinterpreted the “point of view” of the story, acknowledging that “rebel voices” may be equally valid components of the overall analysis, examined the ‘other side of the story’ (unheard voices or meaning) and found exception in the plot that delegitimizes - what is the “new” story that emerges?

A proper story deconstruction requires considerable time and effort to develop, through research, a 360-degree understanding of the *entire* story, deeply examining as many aspects as possible and how they came into being is the goal. The outcome will provide immensely diverse and rich material on the subject matter relating to the research question. Most importantly, it prepares you for the Self-Correcting Method of storytelling science that will be conducted in the next step of the process. Upon completion of the deconstruction, consider the data gathered as the core research standing as support knowledge providing a wider and more broadly informed understanding so as to begin your conversational storytelling interviews with “existing story assumptions” that are strengthened by your understanding of the “other side of the story” shown in the resituated story. In the case of the example, “do undocumented Mexicans threaten American jobs?,” a thorough deconstruction would provide a resituated story. While the story told by members of Nationalist fringe groups about undocumented Mexican immigrants may be widely circulated among these groups as truth, the resituated story is in direct contradiction on all counts (Sibel, 2019). With the knowledge of both the original story assumptions, propositions and the deconstructed story gained by your pre-conversational storytelling interview research, you begin your interviews with Group 1 and let the stories take on their own flow and direction.

**AID Self-Correcting Method Process**

In the case of this example, the interview participants were nine undocumented long-term Mexican immigrants living in the United States. Moving from the initial “existing story assumptions” through the AID process of the first three participant conversational interviews of Group 1 (See figure 3), abductive assumptions are confirmed, revised, refuted, modified, or validated, while continually building inferences developed through an analysis of each conversation, all the while testing inductively and deductively.

The AID process is tested with each subject interview; after concluding interview 1 with subject 1, an AID analysis is conducted prior to engaging subject 2, and the same prior to engaging with subject 3 interview. The resulting revised assumptions and propositions that exit the Group 1 phase of three interviews and three evolving analyses utilizing the AID process are examined Diagram

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seeking hypothesis or substantive theory. After consideration aimed toward developing revised assumptions and propositions, any abductive hunch or observation is noted and included into the process before being put through another phase of conversational storytelling interviews with Group 2 (consisting of three different undocumented Mexican residents of the United States).

Beginning with the revised assumptions and propositions developed in the first three interviews, move on to Step 2 (see figure 4) interviews and follow the same pattern as conducted in Step 1. Conversational storytelling interviews allow you to build inferences and test them as you proceed to validate or discount emerging assumptions or propositions. In the interviews, everything is in play – the body language, disparity of cultural mores between the participants and Diagram

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the researcher, the comfort or discomfort of the participant about some aspect of their story; conversely, their eager willingness of relating very personal aspects might be a signal of something requiring further depth of discussion; not all portions of all stories are grounded in truth; everything is subject to review through testing and validation. Keep listening and exchanging – give and take conversations relating to the subject matter or vaguely relevant to it could lead into a periphery that opens up entirely new relevancies, slowly circling, building the mutual trust and confidence it requires to delve into the real *heart* of the story. At optimum, you will actually *sense* the moment when barriers shielding the guarded stories begin to loosen and are expanded, allowing a deeply meaningful and rich conversation to begin to take place – the real *core* of their story. Move from subject 4 to subject 5 after having done an AID analysis to build new inferences, assumptions, and propositions. And from subject 5 to 6 having done the same. Contemplate your analysis with abductive hunches and test them as you proceed from one interview to the next. Diagram

Description automatically generatedAfter completing interview 6, a set of revised assumptions and propositions will have emerged. Ideally, you will begin to evolve a hypothesis that encompasses these propositions that you have tested and refined. View them abductively and take the new set of propositions on to interview 7 through 9, (see figure 5 – step 3) utilizing the same AID process of progressive analysis after each interview until your proposition becomes supported by the AID testing and refinement serving to verify or aid in the building of substantive level theory (Charmaz, 2012). Should further testing be required to validate substantive theory, it is limited only by the number of interviews you are willing to conduct, keep repeating the AID cycles (see figure 5 – step 4).

Allowing the self-correcting tendency of the AID process utilizes “a series of repeated samples from a population, each calculating the prediction, then verifying the results in each successive sample” so as to formulate a hypothesis and develop theory (Boje, 2019). If a hypothesis is perceived, to include the repeated application of abductive propositions, the Peircean process is continued, fine-tuning until a “region of certainty” and a conclusion can be reached as shown in step 3 and step 4 diagram.

**Test, Retest, Fine Tune, and Validate your Findings**

To further affirm and validate emerging substantive theory, repeated rounds of interviews can be conducted. This can be accomplished by re-interviewing Group 1, or selecting an entirely new set of interviewees, (limited only by time and available participants) testing, retesting, and abducting as you move closer toward theory, further validating it through cycles of the AID process. The key to arriving at verifiable theory is to keep sampling, continually making propositions through each phase of the process, adjusting and readjusting, constantly finetuning, through the AID method until you are able to arrive at substantive or generalizable theory.

**Conclusion**

Utilizing the self-correcting methodology of Storytelling Science can be an exciting and fulfilling process for the researcher. There are inherent challenges to the process, the primary one being the necessity for skillful non-specific indirect exchange of dialogue required for the mastery of conversational interviewing. There are few ways of mastering this interviewing technique other than experience and intuitive awareness coupled with constant diligence toward resisting the almost natural interrogatory interviewing tendency of Western trained researchers and consultants. Entering the domain of the subjects requires developing what is almost a personal relationship with them, built on trust, safety, and honesty; it is a challenging and long-term process for many researchers in their quest for the real story – for *truth*. Conversational storytelling, coupled with a deconstructed AID analysis guided by the Seven Principles of True Storytelling (Larsen, 2020), facilitates a methodology through which “truth” may emerge. Truth is the ultimate goal of the research – the ability to move from the periphery of the story into the depths of its living web core; that is the reward.

Storytelling Science is evolving as a preferred methodology for constructing theory through 4th wave analysis (Boje, 2019) utilizing the Abduction-Induction-Deduction self-correcting process and will serve researchers well through its use in future research studies.

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BIO

Dr. James R. Sibel is currently active in both the corporate world and as a scholar practitioner of organization development and change (ODC). Corporately, current positions are that of CFO of a multi-national data technology company and CEO of a privately held financial services company, with over 40 years’ experience in various elected, appointed, and advanced leadership functions, holding licensure and certifications in numerous states throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. Sibel holds an MA in Law and a PhD in ODC and is a founding member of both the Institute of Interdisciplinary Leadership Education and Development (I-Ilead) and the True Storytelling Institute (TSI) serving on the Board of Directors of numerous industry leading organizations. Sibel is an author, speaker, and lecturer, having traveled throughout the United States and Europe presenting at professional conferences and seminars on Corporate Social Responsibility, Team Building, Leadership, and the Power of True Storytelling to create positive organizational and social change.