

**Our Organizations Were Never Disenchanted:  
Enchantment By Design Narratives vs. Enchantment By Emergence**  
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**Abstract**

**Purpose** –We propose a typology of enchantment approaches that are related to storytelling practices in organizations: enchantment by design and enchantment by emergence.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The authors explore this enchantment framework in a storytelling drawing on examples of living storied spaces and narratives from hospital studies.

**Findings** – This essay asserts three aspects about enchantment: that mainstream organizational narrative, rooted in classical structuralism and modernity, seems intend on disenchanting life within them. Second, despite such narratives, organizations, such as hospitals we studied, were never disenchanted because enchantment resides in many living storied spaces. Finally, many forms of ‘enchantment’ and ‘disenchantment’ are taking place in organization action and its storytelling.

**Practical implications** - The article equips managers with a deeper understanding of how storytelling in organizations can encourage enchantment or disenchantment within the organization and in its relations with their environments (community, nature, humanity).

**Originality/value** – The value of the essay lies in its theoretical contributions, integrating enchantment-disenchantment perspectives with a theory of storytelling.

**Introduction**

We contrast design-oriented approaches to enchantment with what we are calling “enchantment by emergence.” In this article, we take a posthumanist approach to enchantment that balances these two.

“Enchantment by design,” which assumes that enchantment is imposed by a social narrative, has two themes: (1) the recovery of some lost paradise of enchantment, as humans distanced themselves from spirituality/religion; (2) some spectacle to evoke enchantment for the purpose of attracting consumers to return when novelty wears off. “Enchantment by emergence,” where the sense of enchantment arises as each person lives in a specific context opens our understanding of a special relationship between organizational complexity and storytelling.

Our presentation begins with a review of work on enchantment by design and enchantment by emergence, followed by our theory of storytelling. Then we explore the issue of enchantment/disenchantment in organizations as storied spaces, illustrating with examples from a hospital study where we explore the storytelling propositions.

For organizational managers and consultants, the issue here is whether people *experience* their workplaces as enchanted – places of wonder in which they are full participants – or disenchanting, as well as what that means for their organizations.

### **Enchantment by Design**

Enchantment, to use Bennett's words (2001: 156), "is a feeling of being connected in an affirmative way to existence; it is to be under the momentary impression that the natural and cultural worlds *offer gifts*" (author's italics). The experience of enchantment is characterized, as Berman (1981: 77-78) notes, by full participation in one's life: one is neither separated subject nor object, but a part of the larger whole of life. As a participant, one has power to affect the surroundings. In a disenchanting world, control is mechanical, the act of an observer from the outside; in an enchanted world, control is affected as an organic participant.

The literature suggests two basic approaches to the question of enchantment, design and emergence. What we call "enchantment by design" reflects a view of stable social entities in which the individual's experience is shaped by the group's dominant narratives. In this way, Nietzsche (1996) and Weber (2009), who first commented on disenchantment, celebrated the way it freed humanity from the dead hand of the past, a time of superstition and unreasonable fear. More recently, writers such as Berman and Moore (see below) have lamented the way that the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, Science and Capitalism, eliminated wonder and meaning from the world, leading to the alienation, psychosis, McDonaldization, and self-destruction of the Modernist era. All these writers "make enchantment dependent on a divine creator, Providence, or, at the very least, a physical world with some original connection to a divine will" (Bennett, 2001: 12). For them, modern life is radically changed because society's dominant narrative no longer holds forth the wonder of an enchanted world.

Among the lamenters, Morris Berman, Thomas Moore, and George Ritzer seek ways to reenchanted forms of modern capitalism that have separated people from nature,

through the Cartesian/Newtonian worldview. Berman's (1981: 16) thesis is that "the view of nature which predominated in the West down to the eve of the Scientific Revolution was that of an enchanted world. Rocks, trees, rivers and clouds were all seen as wondrous, alive and human beings felt at home in this environment." "For more than 99 percent of human history," he later adds, "the world was enchanted and man saw himself as an integral part of it" (p. 23).

Berman's approach to *re*enchantment advances a post-Cartesian worldview that encourages participating consciousness, and draws on the quantum mechanics of Werner Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, such that our observing consciousness has material consequences. In quantum physics, Berman contends, enchantment is in the embodied consciousness of every material phenomenon (not just humans, but stone, earth, water, etc.). Berman (p. 146-7) adopts Gregory Bateson's theory of "Mind with a capital M": "The falling stone, the earth, and the Mind that participates [in] this event [form] a relationship, and this, not some 'spirit' in the stone or some 'rate of acceleration,' would be the subject of scientific inquiry" (p. 149). Berman locates 'Mind,' in neither animism nor in a 'God, but, rather, in the cybernetic 'system', which moves out of nonparticipating consciousness into a more participative one (p. 183). For Berman, the whole system is alive: "Mind is abstracted from its traditionally religious context and shown to be a concrete, active scientific element (process) in the real world' and that in this way, participation exists, but not in its original, animistic sense" (1981: 270).

Unlike Berman, Moore looks at enchantment as a "holy imagination," a "mystery" that has "some kind of transcendent vision" (1996: x). Moore does agree that humans have separated themselves from nature, and then obliterated nature. His thesis is that enchantment is still available, despite Newtonian Physics and Cartesian mind-body dualism, but we have forgotten to notice it. He wants to restore enchantment to life by "returning to its sense of time and space, its extraordinary cosmology, and its creative physics..." (p. xvi), all situated in nature and its natural rhythms: "Enchantment is to a large extent founded in the spirituality inherent in earthly nature" (p. 3). For Moore, the entire world is enchanted; however, in the industrial age, business contributed to a disenchanted world. According to him, "it is enchantment that is a story's greatest gift" (p. 246), and he worries that commercialism has destroyed that gift:

Stories themselves are often deprived of enchantment, as when, on television and in the movies, they follow a proven formula, a zigzag pattern in which first the good characters succeed, then the evil ones dominate, then the good characters thrive, and then the evil ones return, and so on (p. 242).

In a world where society endlessly repeats such disenchanting, formulaic narratives, he seems to ask, how can individuals even hope to live lives of wonder and enchantment?

Moore's Re-enchantment Project has business rediscovering its role within nature: "An enchanted life is good for business, even though it requires a considerable turnabout in values and vision" (p. 11).

A different approach to enchantment by design is that of George Ritzer (2005: 93), whose thesis is that cathedrals of consumption must be continually reenchanting. Like Berman and Moore, Ritzer sees enchantment as part of the normal human condition (p. 60). Attempts to disenchant the work place are part of a *conscious management strategy*, less a matter of rationality replacing wonder than the attempt to control employee behavior. At the same time, organizations are trying to *design* enchantment, by emulating 'cathedrals of consumption,' such as Disneyland, Las Vegas, and McDonalds. However, the cathedrals of consumers become disenchanting "to the jaded consumers they have been designed to attract" (p. xi). Disneyland was once a novelty, but the exhibits began to look dated. Disneyfication over time does not attract consumers. The same is true of Las Vegasization and McDonaldization. "Such cold, mechanical systems are usually the antitheses of the dream worlds associated with enchantment" (p. 89). In sum, Ritzer concludes that cathedrals of consumption continue to expand in an increasingly spectacular Schumpeterian process of 'creative destruction' (p. 207). Each creative destruction of the spectacle machine is more spectacular than the last.

An alternative approach, to which we now turn, is what we call "enchantment by emergence; for thinkers such as Jane Bennett and Karen Barad, rather than being imposed from a cultural narrative, enchantment arises in individuals in response to the specific conditions in which they live and work.

### **Enchantment by emergence**

Bennett looks at materiality as enchanted. Like Moore, her “contention is that enchantment never really left the world but only changed its forms” (2001: 91). For Bennett, and enchantment by emergence as an approach, enchantment is intensely personal, “a state of wonder” in which the world “comes alive as a collection of singularities” that enable one to “be both caught up and carried away” (p. 5). “The disenchantment of modernity is,” she explains, “a powerful and rather pervasive narrative,” which insists that we have left behind “a time when nature was purposive” and “God was active in the details of human affairs . . .” (p. 7). Actually, “enchantment never really left the world but only changed its forms” (p. 90).

Whereas Berman looks to cybernetics systems theory, Bennett turns to Prigogine and Stengers’ (1988) take on complexity theory, and its materialist ontology. “Prigogine and Stengers identify classical dynamics with the disenchantment of nature and their own explorations with its enchantment” (p. 101). In Prigogine and Stengers’ “far from equilibrium” thesis, Bennett explains, successive repetitions (cycles or lines) swerve. “In enchantment, a new circuit of intensities forms between material bodies” (p. 104), she adds, and enchantment is a sort of “agency or swervy vitality” (p. 105) that is a materiality.

Unlike Berman, Bennett does not dismiss spirituality. Ecospirituality, for Bennett, is an important movement because it raises ethical questions, such as the environmental violence resulting from treating “nature-as-sacred” versus the emergence of “nature-as-resource-for-exploitation” (p. 91). And unlike Ritzer, she sees complexity aspects to even bureaucratic organizations that can be enchanting. Organizational “stories reveal what is uncanny about the experience of institutional complexity,” Bennett explains (p. 106). As with Moore, Bennett looks to storytelling to explore enchantment-disenchantment. “One way to call into question the diagnosis of disenchantment is to recall alternative stories about the nature of things” (p. 84).

Of all these approaches to enchantment, Barad’s “agential realism” seems the most radical, as she defines reality in opposition to the “metaphysical individualism” and subject/object distinction of Newtonian physics (2007: 137-141). Barad derives her “ontoepistemology” – “the study of practices of knowing in being” (p. 185) – from Niels Bohr’s quantum mechanics, as opposed to Heisenberg’s Heisenberg’s Uncertainty

Principle states that, as experimenting subject, one cannot know the position and momentum of a quantum particle, as object, because measuring one *from the outside* will change the other – that is, one cannot *know* both. On the other hand, Bohr’s Indeterminacy Principle insists that “subject” and “object” are part of a seamless reality where position and momentum of a particle are the result of *measuring them with different apparatus*. Refuting metaphysical individualism, Bohr suggests that particles cannot exist as separate entities, with specific, measurable qualities, *except* as examined through an apparatus. It is the apparatus that makes the “cut” between subject and object and creates meaning/measurement (pp. 115-118).

As a result, reality is not made up of individual entities; rather, it is composed of “phenomena” whose boundaries are created by the “apparatus” through which one examines the world (p. 185). To apply this theory to social life, Barad equates apparatus with the “discursive practice by which we . . . actively reconfigure the world in its becoming” (p. 207). As in Baskin’s storied space theory (see below), the way anyone experiences the world depends on those discursive practices/storied spaces – a complex network of organizations, professions, nations and so forth. Contrary to metaphysical individualism, the characteristics that define any person result from activities within those practices; meaning arises as an agent “intra-acts” – as opposed to distinct individuals *interacting* – within the practices’ defined boundaries. Barad assumes (181-2) discourse and materiality are intra-playing, and not separated, as in classical approaches to mechanistic physics or to classical narrative. This is an “enchanted” world in which “we are part of the world in its differential becoming” (p. 185); people are participants in an ongoing process of creating meaning, drawing elements from an overabundant reality, constantly in flux, and reading the world they create as a result of the relationships and apparatus/discourses of those practices in which they are seamlessly embedded. Although Barad does not put it this way, her theory of apparatus/discourses suggests that whether people experience their worlds as enchanted emerges depending on how they read their environments through those discourses.

While Barad does not look at storytelling per se, her theory of discourse does have some implications, especially to extend Czarniawska’s (2004) ‘petrified narratives’ concept. For Barad, “Time is not a succession of evenly spaced identical moments” (p.

180) as it is conceived in classical narrative. As a result, time does not leave its mark in a petrified trail (in our case of narrative) sedimentation of external change, but rather "sedimenting is an ongoing process of differential mattering" (Barad, p. 181). The past and future in storytelling are not sequential, linear; they are enfolded participants in matter's iterative becoming. Second, the petrification metaphor does nothing to "interrupt the persistent assumption that change is a continuous process through or in time" (p. 182). Petrification narrative is a troubled notion since a "discontinuity queers our presumptions of continuity" and cannot be therefore the opposite of a continuum of petrified narrative stability (p. 182).

Storytelling is producing and produced by this intra-active becoming. It is neither a petrified nor an ideational affair, but a material practice. In sum, there is intra-play in an open space of agency as storytelling changes the conditions of possibility in intra-action with materiality. As a result, *"iterative intra-actions are the dynamics through which temporality and spatiality are produced and iteratively reconfigured in the materialization of phenomena and the (re)making of material-discursive boundaries and the constitutive exclusions"* (p. 179; author's italics). Agential realist storytelling looks at "timespacemattering" as a congealing of agency where material and storytelling are mutually implicated, complicit. It is critical to analyze the inclusions and exclusions that are agentially significant in the storytelling from report to report; for the exclusionary nature of storytelling practices is an intra-activity of the contested social, economic, and political forces enfolded in the production of material-storytelling.

From an agential realism perspective, storytelling is an intelligibility and materiality of becoming, or in Boje's terms, an antenarrative futurity, set in the discursive storied spaces of Baskin. This radical departure from classical narrative representationalism is a paradigm shift away from the reflexivity of social constructionism. Agency is cut loose from the humanist orbit of social constructionism to be able to embrace a posthumanist storytelling, to which we now turn.

### **Storytelling Theory**

Storytelling is a special agency for enchantment-disenchantment. We theorize storytelling as intraplay of retrospective narrative (Weick, 1995; Czarniawska, 2004), living storied space presentness (Baskin, 2008; Brewer & Dourish, 2008), and

antenarrative – a fragmentary story with the double meaning of before-narrative, and a bet on future meaning – shaping the future (Boje, 2001, 2008).

In fact, the disagreement between proponents of enchantment by design and those of enchantment by emergence reflects attitudes toward storytelling. Bennett (2001: 4), one of the former, for instance, asks how we can break free of the “narrative of disenchantment,” as if that narrative controlled individuals. Morson (1994: 172), one of the latter, on the other hand, insists that our lives “have not been authored in advance, but are lived as we go along.” Morson thus suggests that people make enchantment-disenchantment choices each moment in what Baskin (2008) and Brewer and Dourish (2008) call “storied spaces.” Storied space theory draws on a growing body of research in neurobiology and evolutionary anthropology that suggests that the human brain evolved to transform our experience of the world as a more or less comprehensive, symbolic field of stories (see, for example, Deacon, 1997; Donald, 1991 and 2001; Wexler, 2006; Wilson, 1998). The key perception driving this idea is that human beings do not experience events in a raw, unmediated manner. Rather they experience – that is, perceive, feel, respond to and think about – events in terms of *the stories their brains are structured to create to explain* those events.

The most immediate storied space, which resembles Barad’s discourse (2007: 334), shaping the antenarratives any of us create is personality, the interpretation of how a person must behave. In this storied space, any individual may present him- or herself, adaptively, as attractive or homely, intelligent or slow, honest or dishonest. Personality, as a storied space, is shaped by the full variety of other storied spaces that every person becomes embedded in at some time in his or her life, including:

Storied Space	Adaptive Behavior	Narrative
Individual	Personality	How I must interact with others
Small group/family	Dynamics	How we interact
Organization/community	Culture	How we “do things around here”
Market/profession	<i>Discourse</i>	How we perform specific tasks
Nation	Culture	How we interact with each other and those in Other Nations



Religion/philosophy	<i>Episteme</i>	How we know what is “real”
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**Table 1: Scales of Storied Space**

The most immediate of these spaces are the small groups, starting with family, to which any person belongs. As children go out into the world, they become parts of other small groups, whose values may differ or even conflict. Each progressively more inclusive scale of storied space shapes and is affected by those within it.

For Baskin (2008: 4), “storied space appears to be an intensely complex nested network of less inclusive storied spaces that function as the human equivalent of complexity study’s complex adaptive systems.” Storied spaces are a “network of spaces – family and work group, organization and community, profession and nation –in which membership depends on the acceptance of negotiated stories by which each grouping defines the nature of the world and how people in the group must respond to prosper” (Baskin, 2008: 1). Brewer and Dourish (2008: 7) describe stories spaces as set in places known to people who tell of them, and embodying moral lessons. For Baskin (2008: 7),

All of these storied spaces are swirling, dynamic environments, much as Dervin’s process of sense-making (2003) or Boje’s Tamara (1995) describes them—the interactions grounded in different people telling different stories about the same events—a process whose products are forged in the inevitable conflict that occurs when people, with their varied functions, desires and experiences, live and work together.

Storied spaces relates to work by Bakhtin as well as Derrida and Calvino.

Bakhtin’s (1973: 6) approach to dialogism is concerned with the more “polyphonic manner of the story,” a blending of many voices and viewpoints. Derrida (1991: 287) looks at story as a homonym (not a synonym to story):

Each “story” (and each occurrence of the word “story” (of itself) each story is at once larger and smaller than itself, includes itself without including (or comprehending) itself, identifies with itself even as it remains utterly different from its homonym.

Calvino (1979: 109) similarly pursues a plurality of stories. Gabriel (2000: 42), for example, says a story emerges from a complex collage of forces, and that earlier narrative fragments become the seed of a “proto-story.”

Storytelling then is the intra-play in storied spaces of dominant narratives and antenarratives. *Antenarrative* is a “non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted, and pre-narrative speculation, a bet... a proper narrative can be constituted” (Boje, 2001: 1), the very currency of living story. “Stories are ‘antenarrative’ when told without the proper plot sequence and mediated coherence preferred in narrative theory” (2001: 3). “Forward-looking antenarratives are the most abundant in business, yet the most overlooked in research and consulting practice” (Boje, 2008: 13).

Our first proposition is that storied spaces reflect the intra-play of dominant narratives (fixed or petrified accounts of past events) and antenarratives people tell to explain emergent phenomena. The field of narrative studies, in particular, emerged from Aristotle’s (350 BCE: section 1450b: lines 1-20: pp. 232-233) conception that narratives *must* be coherently plotted, with beginning, middle, and end (BME). “We have laid it down that a tragedy is an 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” (1450b: 25-30: p. 233). For Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1973: 12) “narrative genres are always enclosed in a solid and unshakable monological framework.” Bakhtin’s work is contrary to coherence narrative that posits mono-system-wholeness, mergedness, and finalizedness. Jacques Derrida (1991: 261) says of narrative:

A demand for narrative [is] a violent putting-to-the-question an instrument of torture, working to wring the narrative out of one as if it were a terrible secret . . . [with] archaic police methods . . . psychiatric, and even psychoanalytic [methods].

Most organization narrative theorists, such as Czarniawska (2004: 38), argue that strong corporate cultures have coherent, *petrified* BME narratives. In Czarniawska’s early work (1997, 1998), narratives must have a plot and be retrospective.<sup>1</sup> Weick (1995) presented a narrative sensemaking in a chapter on organization control, and is about Perrow’s (1986) third-order managerial control, which Weick sees as being worked out narratively in retrospectively shared values and meanings. Weick’s (1995: 127-129) short discussion of retrospective narrative-sensemaking stresses: “people think narratively

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<sup>1</sup> “A story consists of a plot comprising causally related episodes that culminate in a solution to a problem” (Czarniawska, 1997: 78). Elsewhere, “For them to become a narrative, they require a plot, that is, some way to bring them into a meaningful whole” (1998: 2).

rather than argumentatively or paradigmatically”; “organizational realities are based on narration”; the “propensity for inductive generalization [of] noteworthy experiences” becomes an “empirical basis” where “people try to make the unexpected, hence manageable”; “impose a formal coherence on what is otherwise a flowing soup” i.e. “the experience is filtered” by “hindsight”; “typically searching for a causal chain”; “the plot follows – either the sequence beginning-middle-end or the sequence situation-transformation-situation”. In recent years, some critics have moved away from the retrospective position. For instance, Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) suggest that sensemaking could also be prospective (forward-looking).

Our second proposition is that this mainstream concept of dominant petrified narrative reflects a notion of enchantment by design, where controlling narratives must be told from the top of the hierarchy, disenchanting or reenchating the work place, perhaps best expressed by Schein when he insists that “*the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture*” (1991: 2; author’s italics).

A key problem is that people learn to experience their living stories as if they were like the narratives with which they create meaning, with discernible beginnings, middles, and endings (BME narrative). Sometimes this is to design enchantment, other times to exorcise it. However this BME narrative only works when there is one authorial standpoint from which to view all the elements of a situation. The power of dominant narratives is that they emerge as a matter of *survival*. Thus, personality emerges in a person’s early years as he/she defines how to behave with his/her parents, *on whom the child literally depends for survival* (Baskin, 2003); organizational culture emerges as people in that entity learn how they must behave to succeed in their markets (Baskin, 2008); professional *discourses* emerge as people in them define how to do their tasks in a redefined environment (see, for example, Foucault, 1973 on the beginning of modern medicine). Such narratives can therefore come to be taken for the realities they explain.

Our third proposition: given this survival value, people most often make sense of events by fitting their antenarratives in the context of their dominant narratives. This is what Weick (1995) refers to as sensemaking. While this can be a productive strategy in many cases, understanding it as the *only* strategy for sensemaking can create obstacles to exploring the full nature of enchantment/disenchantment/reenchantment.

In what follows, we explore these propositions of storytelling specifically in the context of organizations as storied space, and then illustrate our conclusions by citing the experience of employees in three American hospitals. We will assert that the ability to live an enchanted work life seems to depend on the ability of people in an organization to integrate new living antenarrative, especially when the realities they communicate are disturbing and integration demands that they allow those dominant narratives to evolve.

### **Organizational enchantment**

Consider two comments. In one case, a nurse, explaining the frustration she felt in working with the hospital's doctors, said, "Sometimes I think the doctors are waiting for me to drop a pen so they can yell at me." In the other, a mechanic on the floor of a bottling company warehouse was explaining how much he and his fellow workers disliked their previous manager, a recently minted MBA, who acted as if no one on the crew had anything he could learn from. "We got rid of him in six months," the mechanic noted with a wink (Baskin, 2005).

The nurse had become disenchanting with her work. She felt objectified and powerless, the victim of Others who appeared to ignore her, just as her fellow nurses felt. These nurses, for example, agreed that the hospital's chief financial officer (CFO) never came to their floors to observe; on the other hand, members of the senior executive team were *certain* that the CFO made regular visits. Whichever version was "true," the nurse's feeling of powerlessness, of working in an environment in which she was not a participant and had little power to affect her surrounding, illustrates the experience of disenchantment. For the mechanic, however, the workplace was enchanted, if only because he and his fellow workers experienced the power of being able to get rid of a manager he described as incompetent. In spite of the objectifying behavior of their manager, they experienced themselves as full participants in their work life. Like the nurse, the mechanic was subject to the power of Others; unlike her, he experienced himself as a powerful participant even in an organizational situation in which he had little *formal* power. Both exist in the same "disenchanted" Western culture; yet, different circumstances leave the nurse in a disenchanting work world, while the mechanic's world is enchanted. Their sense of enchantment/disenchantment, then, is emergent.

On the other hand, mainstream management theory reflects enchantment by design or, perhaps more accurately, *disenchantment* by design, which it aims specifically to create, by imposing mechanical control. As Morgan (1986) points out, the movement toward “scientific management” that began with Taylor early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has led to thinking of organizations as machines. Even management theorists who intended to assist leaders in encouraging organizational “change” discuss organizations as mechanically integrated entities that must be operated by leaders who stand outside and decide what must be done. As a result, the vast majority of literature on organizational culture (Schein, 1991), storytelling (Weick, 1995), and these two together (Czarniawska, 2004), pictures organizations as driven by the dominant historical narratives of management.

For the co-authors of this essay, managers who want to reenchant organizations that are disenchanting will profit from understanding both types of enchantment. The decision to live with a sense of enchantment or disenchantment is personal and emergent. Some people prefer to live disenchanting, preferring a rule-bound work life, where they don’t have to experience the uncertainty of a wonder-full life. Others will live enchanted, no matter how disenchanting management tries to make their organizations. It seems to us that most people *prefer* an enchanted work life, but are capable of living either way and will respond to the storied spaces in which they find themselves. As a result, while the dominant narrative of the traditional management discourse emphasizes control/disenchantment, people in organizations will work very hard to recapture their sense of meaning, purpose and power in their work.

Some organizations, on the other hand, have evolved dominant narratives that make them highly likely to be enchanted places to work. Such organizations hire people who want to participate, train managers to encourage such behavior, and install systems that support participation. The parade example is 3M, whose dominant narrative invites employee antenarratives about new products: from 3M executives telling stories about rebels who pushed products that would eventually become successful, to informal networks for recruiting help and resources, to rewards and promotions for such initiative. As a result, the company has a long list of successful products developed informally, from its first successful product, Wetordry sandpaper, to Post-It notes (Baskin, 1998: 81-

83). At 3M, enchantment by design encourages enchantment by emergence. However, cultures where the encouragement toward enchantment are so thoroughly integrated across a company are rare. In most cases, the choice to live an enchanted or disenchanting work life emerges as a result of the dynamics of an organization's storied space.

### **Nursing disenchantment**

A particularly poignant example of people striving for an enchanted work life experience is nursing. The *discourse* for the nursing profession, after all, insists that nurses need to be full participants in the care of their patients – that is, that they experience their work places as enchanted. As Benner and Wrubel (1989: 7) note, a significant part of nursing practice extends beyond providing mere technical care to “helping people cope with the stress of illness.” Doing so demands that nurses *participate* in the condition of their patients. Yet, at the same time, a variety of conditions are making it increasingly difficult for nurses to experience that caring and participation (Gordon, 2005). Consider several cases from Baskin's (2007) study of work groups in three American hospitals.

In one case, two ICU (intensive care unit) nurses with more than 30 years at one of the hospitals loved their work, but were troubled at the changes of the last decade. Taking care of the critically ill, they explained, “requires dedication,” if only because “we have to be ready to make life and death decisions every day.” As a result, both nurses had been socialized into an enchanted ICU storied space whose dominant narrative emphasized intense dedication to patient care. In recent years, however, the conditions in their storied space had changed so drastically that one of them was faced with the need to change her personal dominant narrative about being a nurse or retire. In addition to the pressures of cost-cutting and reduced nurse-to-patient ratios, improvements in technology meant that their “patients are sicker,” and while the physicians “don't want the patients to die,” the nurses had to “think of their comfort.” “We hurt them all day long to keep them alive” one explained. They didn't even have the support of fellow nurses because the new generation of nurses was adapting to these new conditions, rather than the old nursing dominant narrative, and they didn't have the time needed to socialize the new nurses to their narrative. As a result, one nurse was at a crisis point: “I almost have to lower my expectations of myself. I can't get it all done. I have to let things go.” She could no

longer enact the dominant nursing narrative by which she had constructed her identity; she was nearly in tears because she would have to adapt to the new disenchanting narrative or leave (Baskin: 2007: 6-7).

At a second hospital, a group of nurses from several departments also felt the powerlessness and detachment characteristic of disenchantment. (The nurse's quote earlier in this paper was made in this group.) All these nurses desired a storied space in which they could focus on their patients, but found obstacles everywhere. As one noted, "Everybody [in the hospital] has problems about what we do, but no one supports us." Not only were many of the physicians "very negative," but they insisted that the nurses deliver bad news that the physicians should have brought, as when a patient fasted the day before his surgery, only to have the surgery postponed for the next day so that he'd have to fast again. Similarly, the nurses felt nearly abandoned by the administration. "All they care about is keeping those beds warm," one said. "They don't care about the nursing shortage. They never send notes of appreciation." These nurses even felt unsupported by fellow nurses. "Nurses don't seem to care," one said. "They complain but expect other people to do the work." Another described "my worst day in years." Patients were being discharged and new ones coming in so fast that she was unable to get her paperwork finished. "Fifteen minutes before the end of the shift, nurses from the next shift were sitting around watching TV," she reported. "None of them offered to help me. They refused to come on the floor until all the 'Ts' were crossed." Even their nursing managers were part of the problem. So when one of the nurses came to her manager with some problems, she was told, "You'll just have to live with it." The resulting disenchantment had become so serious that even nurse interns from the local nursing college weren't interested in positions there. In terms of storied space, no one would listen to their antenarratives; even though they had negotiated a shared narrative of their work place, no one supported them (Baskin, 2007: 7-8).

Yet at the same hospital, an interview with one nurse stood out as clearly the most enchanted attitude toward nursing. She had recently been hired into the hospital's 18-month-old birthing center. This job, she explained, was both exciting and challenging:

At first, the nurses who trained me would answer questions, and if I needed help, they'd be there. But we have so much to juggle that the nurses were constantly asking if they could help. I was surprised at how much I could juggle. Then after

awhile, conditions would arise where I couldn't get help. The new nurses who can swim under these conditions get respect; the other nurses know that you really need help when you ask.

In the birthing center, nurses were expected to exercise considerable autonomy, because, as one manager noted, "things happen so quickly in the unit." Those who couldn't, including several traditionally trained obstetrics nurses, left. As opposed to the hospital nurses who were felt so controlled by physicians, birthing center nurses were encouraged to call on doctors only when they really needed help. These nurses experienced themselves as empowered participants, fully enchanted. Why, then, did these nurses experience enchantment while the other nurses at the same hospital felt so disenchanting?

The *organizational* culture, after all, was the same. As the CEO explained, the hospital was moving toward a more service-oriented culture in which everyone could feel respected and therefore respectful to patients. The key difference appears to be that the disenchanting nurses belonged to storied spaces that had been stable for decades, at a time when the old medical narrative, which, as Foucault (1973) notes, elevates the technological knowledge of the doctor far above the care provided by the nurse, was dominant. Even though management was trying to move a new narrative that balanced technology and care, the storied space in which the disenchanting nurses worked was still enacting that old dominant narrative. Nurses in the birthing center, however, operated in a storied space that was now, after only 18 months, becoming stable. It had been established with a newer medical narrative, staffed with that narrative in mind, and operated according to it. The power of this storied space was demonstrated by the trouble some of the more established physicians were having in a workplace where nurses had so much autonomy. The contrast between these two groups of nurses illustrates emergent enchantment, where a person's choice reflects multiple circumstances, reflected in their various storied spaces (Baskin, 2007: 7).

Finally, it's important to note people can attain a level of enchantment even in storied spaces where the dominant narrative drives disenchantment. One group of nurses in the third hospital were under enormous pressure. This "nursing resources" group served as a clearinghouse for resolving problems throughout the hospital, a task complicated because their hospital focused on trauma and indigent patients. As a result,



the problems they faced included more than the difficulties of ensuring proper nurse staffing at a time of patient shortages, but issues ranging from flashers to shootings. In addition, the nurses perceived hospital administration as indifferent. As one of them noted, “We’ve offered our nurses bonuses for coming in when they’re supposed to be off. Management is now talking about killing those bonuses. Instead, we’d bring in agency nurses. But if you spend that money on your own [people], you make a statement about their value.”

In spite of these pressures, the group demonstrated a strong sense of unity and pride; they had to work hard at it, but they still experienced their work place as enchanted. Many of its members attributed that to their current manager. “She’s allowed us to take ourselves off schedule for weekly meetings,” one of them explained. “When we asked for a retreat, she said OK.” Another added, “We meet once a month, have dinner, and drink a lot. It really helps to know that once a month I can vent all I want without repercussions.” As opposed to the disenchanting nurses at the second hospital, they felt that someone was listening to their antenarratives, supporting them and giving them the opportunity to negotiate their storied space’s developing narrative (Baskin, 2007: 8).

The major difference, we believe, between supporting an enchanted or a disenchanting attitude in the work place is here, in the issue of whether people in a storied space experience support and encouragement of their antenarratives of ongoing, sometimes-painful events. Those that feel their antenarratives are listened to and supported are much more likely to experience the power and sense of participation that characterizes emergent enchantment. In fact, disenchanting nurses were often bitterest about managers who “listened” to their antenarratives and then did nothing about them. With this in mind, we turn to the issue of what management can do to encourage an enchanted attitude.

### **Encouraging enchantment**

Few organizations have cultures like that of 3M, where the storied space evolved to encourage people to enact their antenarratives. But for managers and executives who want to encourage their employees to reenchant the work place, at least two options are possible.

The first, and most thorough, option is to thoroughly restructure the existing culture. Georg Bauer, for instance, took over as CEO of Mercedes-Benz Credit Corporation, the financing subsidiary of Daimler-Benz of North America, in 1992, when all the conditions of the market were about to change. His response was to develop an environment in which employees could restore the culture, recreating its dominant narrative by negotiating their antenarratives from a position of power and full participation. To do so, Bauer set up project teams from across the company that collected an enormous amount of data, much of it in conversation with employees, customers, and dealers, in effect gathering antenarratives. These teams recommended ideas for implementing 19 initiatives. Those ideas were then presented to Bauer and his senior team, which sent all the ideas to a pilot stage to learn if they'd work. Five years after beginning this process, Bauer was certain that all of the 19 initiatives had been implemented successfully. Facing a level playing field for the first time, MBCC continued to lead its market for financing Daimler Benz products in both market share and customer *and* dealer satisfaction, having restored the company's dominant narrative. Unfortunately, the merger with Chrysler ended this experiment in recreating a storied space (for a full discussion, see Baskin, 1998: 177-88).

A less extreme alternative is to tweak the organizational culture so that managers and executives are encouraged *to listen* to employee antenarrative. This is very different from the approach taken in most of the literature on storytelling, which insists only that managers learn *to tell* the company's story (see, for example, Denning, 2001). Our point is that if management wants its employees to experience an enchanted work life – to feel powerful and participative – then it is more important that managers *listen* to their people's stories. How any organization does so should reflect its dominant narrative so that it is more likely to be widely accepted. For example, the CEO could simply begin listening to the antenarratives of people around the company, making sure to get back to them to explain how she had followed up. Or it might be effective to have periodic “story inventories,” where a team from the organization or a consultant could schedule interviews with a wide variety of work groups. Again, it's critical to keep people informed about what management learns and what it plans to do about it. However, the way to encourage people to feel like full participants is to treat them that way.

The desire for an enchanted work life is, as noted earlier, not universal. A person in accounting, for instance, seems likely to need less of a feeling of power and full participation than one in, say, marketing. Yet, in markets that are changing as rapidly and are as competitive as ours today, a workforce that experiences enchantment can contribute at a higher, more fully involved level. To create that sense of power and participation demands developing the feeling that the organization's storied spaces are open to anyone who wants to participate. And the best way to open those spaces is for management to listen and then offer the feedback that allows people to realize that the organization's storied spaces are shared by everyone in it.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

We proposed a typology of enchantment approaches that are related to storytelling practices in organizations: enchantment by design and enchantment by emergence. We explored this in the hospital setting. We found that three aspects about enchantment: that the narrative-form, rooted in classical structuralism and modernity has resulted in the abstraction and erasure of enchantment from hospital practice. Second, despite such narrative-form, organizations, such as hospitals we studied, were never disenchanting because enchantment resides in many living storied spaces. Finally, the findings point to the varied forms of so-called 'enchantment' and 'disenchantment' are taking in organization action and its storytelling.

Our first proposition was that storied spaces of the hospital are in interplay with dominant narratives (e.g. national culture, fixed or petrified accounts of past events) and antenarratives people tell of emergent phenomena. Our second proposition explored how dominant petrified narrative reflects a notion of enchantment by design, where controlling narratives must be told from the top of the hierarchy, disenchanting or reenchanting the work place. Finally, our third proposition looked at survival value, how people most often make sense of events by fitting their antenarratives in the context of their dominant narratives.

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