

### Chapter 3 STORYTELLING NOTICING METHOD

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**Where to Begin** Storytelling noticing begins with being more aware of the dominant narratives (by family, school, media, etc) being sold to you, seducing you into a rut or a linear pattern. Dominant narratives are usually linear, with beginning, middle, and end; are wholes, with those Septet elements (plot, character, theme, dialog, rhythm, spectacle & framework). The level of literal *re-presentation* by narrative follows from sensory perception, and freely circulating social constructions of reality, and how to make sense of that reality. Narratives make a bridge from the five senses to the outside world. We think in narratives, live and work in narrative scripts. We get lost in the narrative world of TV, video gaming, and all that advertising in the world of spectacle. We are implicated in more than one narrative simultaneously. We become herd animals, and our leadership goes down a narrative pathway. Narrative thinking is a social configuration of knowledge, which becomes a coffin to living story. We become embodied in inventive cultural narrative structures and constructions. We accept leadership narratives unproblematically, unconditionally, with a passive sensemaking. Narratives of leadership become embodied in social and economic representation and usage. Look at the narratives that consumer your time and energy. Narratives are mostly retrospective (backward looking, re-presentations of some kind of chronology sequence of events (sometimes with cause-effect motif). Narratives are often about control of self, and control of others. Narratives are addictive life scripts, patterned ways of responding to life. Leader narratives are works of fashion in what Guy Debord (1968) calls, Society of the Spectacle.

#### **SOME INITIAL DEFINITIONS:**

**Antenarrative:** A prospective (forward-looking) story (known as antenarrative) is a choice among many anticipatory possible ways to story something. Antenarratives are frequent in planning, strategy, foretelling market directions, and innovation; defined as a 'pre-story' (ante) or a 'bet' (ante) that that some anticipatory transformation will ensue (Boje, 2001).

**BME Narrative:** Has Aristotelian characteristics of narrative with beginning, middle, and end plot (often a monologic one), plus is a whole telling, is backward looking (i.e. retrospective) and usually quite short in temporal duration.

**Living Story:** When we say *living story*, we mean a story that is becoming (i.e. prospective sensemaking), is in a state of Being, and is shaping our individual identity, or our organization or tribal identity and future. It is not finished, not whole, and is still alive in the Now and Here.

**Storytelling:** "Storytelling is the preferred sense-making currency of human relationships among internal and external stakeholders" (Boje, 1991: 106).

**Storytelling Organization** is defined as a dynamic action sequences and characters (real or imaginary) that comprise a collective memory network in performed stories, the meaning of which is revised as part of the story work of any organization.

**Narrative Tapestry of Illusion and Spectacle** How to unravel the narrative tapestry of illusion. In the leader theatre we engage we will employ Augusto Boal's image, invisibility, and forum theatre to make us aware of narrative scripts and games that cage our leadership potential. For example, in image theatre, we begin to notice the narrative patterns in non-verbal behavior. In invisibility theatre we look behind the scenes of narrative, and in forum theatre we play with solutions, we create new storylines for our leadership. Unraveling narratives of leaderly control, domination, materialism, exploitation, etc, can unleash creative energy. Unraveling narrative illusions of leadership is work that each person and each organization must do.

**A Narrative Noticing Experiment** As an experiment try for a week to give up a narrative attachment. This will make you more conscious of the cultural narrative adventure you have signed on to. Giving up a narrative addiction is initially a path of suffering, but then something wondrous happens. Narrative fasting is a path to liberation from what Carl Jung calls 'directed thinking.' We start liberating ourselves from narrative attachments and narrative addictions by doing *story noticing!*

**Living Story Noticing** Living story is not linear (unless you are naturally so). Living story is never-ending, ever changing, and always emergent in the moment of being (now & here). Notice your own living story. Our living story identity yearns to be free of narrative control. Notice your day-to-day activities and habits, and the little story moments that really matter to you. Recount living stories that are the basis for introspection, ethical reflexivity, answerability for who you are and what you do in the world. Story from the heart! Living story is expansion! Living story is a stretch, in the moment of being, from your former to your new capacity. As leaders, we are co-creators of the world around us.

Benjamin (1936), for example says, "the art of storytelling is coming to an end" (p. 83) because "the moral world... overnight has undergone changes which were never thought possible" (p. 84). New forms of capitalism changed ancient forms of work community. "Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn" (p. 84). "If peasants and seamen were past masters of storytelling, the artisan class was its university" (p. 85). "It is lost because there is no more weaving and spinning to go on while they [stories] are being listened to" (p. 91, bracketed addition, mine). "The storytelling that thrives for a long time in the milieu of work—the rural, the maritime, and the urban—is itself an artisan form of communication, as it were" (p. 91).

**Table 1 – Garfinkel Ethnomethod Experiment in Reflexivity**

HUSBAND: Dana succeeded in putting a penny in a parking meter today without being picked up.	This afternoon as I was bringing Dana, our four year-old son, home from the nursery school, he succeeded in reaching high enough to put a penny in a parking meter when we parked in a meter parking zone, whereas before he has always had to be picked up to reach that high
WIFE: Did you take him to the record store?	Since he put a penny in a meter that means that you stopped while he was with you. I know that you stopped at the record store either on the way to get him or on the way back. Was it on the way back, so that he was with you or did you stop there on the way to get him and somewhere else on the way back?
HUSBAND: No, to the shoe repair shop.	No, I stopped at the record store on the way to get him and stopped at the shoe repair shop on the way home when he was with me.
WIFE: What for?	I know of one reason why you might have stopped at the shoe repair shop. Why did you in fact?
HUSBAND: I got some new shoe laces for my shoes.	As you will remember I broke a shoe lace on one of my brown oxfords the other day so I stopped to get some new laces.
WIFE: Your loafers need new heels badly.	Something else you could have gotten that I was thinking of. You could have taken in your black loafers which need heels badly. You'd better get them taken care of pretty soon.

Source: pp. 25-26 and pp. 38-39 in Garfinkel, Harold. 1967). Studies in Ethnomethodology.

**Directions:** In the left column write out a narrative or story as spoken or written. In the left column, write exact, actual verbatim narrative-story quotes (dialogue) between you and your client. In the right hand column demonstrate what is missing to make the narrative-story have complete “consistency, compatibility, and coherence of meanings” (Garfinkel, 1967: 30). For the right column, ask yourself, what is it you are expected to know, in order to keep from saying, “explain, give example, or what do you mean?” In the right column add in the unnoticed contents implied by etceteras, indexical expressions, anything left unstated, unspoken such as metaphor or symbol

representations, retrospective or prospective-anticipatory knowledge needed to fill in by you that makes the quotes at left seemingly rational, accurate, clear, and coherent narrative-story.

STORY NOTICED (verbatim)	STORY UNNOTICED (et ceteras)

Story noticing requires “any social setting be viewed as self-organizing with respect to the intelligible character of its own appearances as either representations of or as “evidences-of-a-social-order” (Garfinkel, 1967: 33). In self-organizing complexity, the assumption is that there are forces that sustain and forces that resist (countervail) concerted tell-a-story-about-for-all-practical-purposes (Paraphrase, p. 33-34).

**Many Ways of Storytelling Noticing** There is no one perfect route to story noticing. Initially one dualizes narrative and story in the early stages of noticing. Narrative control can be good or bad; certainly control is necessary sometimes. Stories can be good or bad; many of us grow up in dysfunctional families, so our stories are that way too, full of melodrama, excuses, victim and blame. There is however the possibility for a more elegant solution that duality of narrative and story. Story and narrative are in a dynamic, interactive, mutually defining, and morphing relationship. A narrative can become a story and story can become narrative. The important point is that they are inter-relates. For

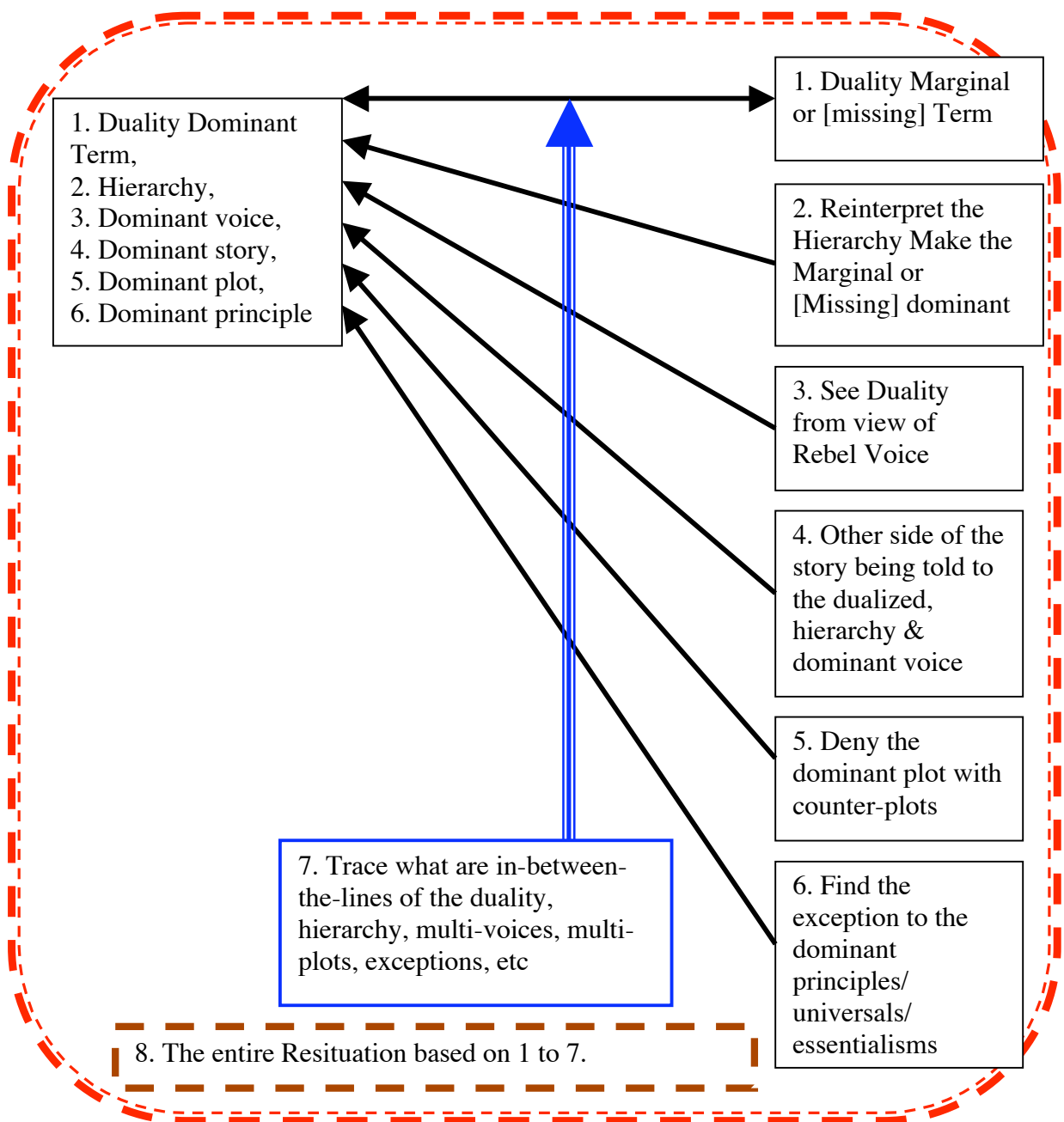
example, the need of narrative to be form, to control story, can marginalize our living story. The need of story content to find its narrative form (poetic comedy, tragedy, romance, satire) can lead to the marginalization of living story. “The need to control the story as we are walking it stops the natural expansion process” (Sams, 1991: 122). (Double) narrative seeks to imitate story, into include story in the dialogue quoted by another, by an author. Narrative can stop story expansion, and story can get stock in narrative aspiration.

In deconstruction, which Robert Dennehy and I (Boje & Dennehy, 1993), treat as a story research method, it is important to trace exclusions in relation to prevalent inclusions (Boje, 2001: 21).

1. Duality Search
2. Reinterpret the Hierarchy
3. Rebel Voices
4. Other Side of the Story
5. Deny the Plot
6. Find the Exceptions
7. Trace What is Between The Lines
8. Resituation

<b>Story deconstruction (Boje 2001: 21)</b>
1. <b>Duality search.</b> Make a list of any bipolar terms, any dichotomies that are used in the story. Include the term even if only one side is mentioned. For example, in male-centred and/or male-dominated organization stories, men are central and women are marginal others. One term mentioned implies its partner.
2. <b>Reinterpret the hierarchy.</b> A story is one interpretation or hierarchy of an event from one point of view. It usually has some form of hierarchical thinking in place. Explore and reinterpret the hierarchy (e.g. in duality terms how one dominates the other) so you can understand its grip.
3. <b>Rebel voices.</b> Deny the authority of the one voice. Narrative centres marginalize or exclude. To maintain a centre takes enormous energy. What voices are not being expressed in this story? Which voices are subordinate or hierarchical to other voices (e.g. Who speaks for the trees?)?
4. <b>Other side of the story.</b> Stories always have two or more sides. What is the other side of the story (usually marginalized, under-represented, or even silent)? Reverse the story, by putting the bottom on top, the marginal in control, or the back stage up front. For example, reverse the male-centre, by holding a spotlight on its excesses until it becomes a female centre in telling the other side; the point is not to replace one centre with another, but to show how each centre is in a constant state of change and disintegration.
5. <b>Deny the plot.</b> Stories have plots, scripts, scenarios, recipes and morals. Turn these around (move from romantic to tragic or comedic to ironic).
6. <b>Find the exception.</b> Stories contain rules, scripts, recipes and prescriptions. State each exception in a way that makes it extreme or absurd. Sometimes you have to break the rules to see the logic being scripted in the story.
7. <b>Trace what is between the lines.</b> Trace what is not said. Trace what is the writing on the wall. Fill in the blanks. Storytellers frequently use 'you know that part of the story' Trace what you are filling in. With what alternate way could you fill it in (e.g. trace to the context, the back stage, the between, the intertext)?
8. <b>Resituate.</b> The point of doing 1 to 7 is to find a new perspective, one that resituates the story beyond its dualisms, excluded voices or singular viewpoint. The idea is to reauthor the story so that the hierarchy is resituated and a new balance of views is attained. Restory to remove the dualities and margins. In a resituated story there are no more centres. Restory to script new actions.

Deconstruction is a story method, as we use it, focusing on that which is marginalized, tracing the rules of inclusion and exclusion in use in constructing narrative representations. Telling one side of the story is what Herbert Marcuse (1969) calls *One-Dimensional*. If only the positive side of the story is told, it can be a logic of domination, and a catastrophe for liberation from oppression. Living story becomes an act of countering the dominant official narrative (Boje, 1995).



**Figure 1: The Deconstructive Resituation**

**Antenarratives Before Story and Before Narrative** Before narrative, there is what is not yet narratable. Before story, there is what is not yet storyable. This is what I have called antenarrative (Boje, 2001). An ante is a bet and a before, a bet that story can become narrative, or narrative can become story, and it is a before-story, and a before narrative. Before I story events of my life into experiences of wisdom, I just reenact events, feeling the joy or rage, but without understanding. Story is a shaping of events into the wisdom of personal experience. Narrative is also a shaping of events into

experience, but at the level of cultural memory, at the level of deep structure, models, and frameworks (frames). The stretching adventure of living story stops when we know the narrative plot, when we know exactly what to expect in the dialogue, when the rhythm is predictable, when all the septet (poetic) elements are routine, in a rerun rut. In story noticing, we become aware of then story is not yet storyable, and when story is not yet stable, in the manner of narrative.

**Breath Work** Focus on the breath. Breach out the toxic busy-hurry-worry, and breath in the good energy to shift consciousness to higher planes. For example, in meditation it is possible to move to higher planes on consciousness, from the push and pull of ego competition to more spiritual planes. There is magic in story mindfulness. In the modern world of leaders and organization hierarchy, we have grown adept at narrative skills. We are taught to focus on the sensory (5 senses), the perceptual, and to ignore other senses. We are educated in narrative forms. Our entire life becomes a narrative mess. We are no longer fully present, engaged now and here in each moment of story life. We are taught to fashion identity out of narrative forms, without doing story work. In breath work, one can release narrative forms, and replace them with living story possibilities. We can tune in, by Tai Chi, Zen, or Quantum Dynamics of breath-energy work. What we learn is mindfulness, to tune into emotional depths.

**Dream Journal** Keep a dream journal. There are stories coming our way when we are open to seeing and hearing them, in our dream states.

**Forgetting** Pierce the veil of story forgetting, by keeping a journal of the story you notice in your life. Include the cultural leaderly narrative you notice. Finally, notice the interplay, the interweave of leader narratives and living story that is your dual identity as leader.