

Dialogic in Management Research

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It is unfortunate that management research has not proceeded beyond basic approaches to polyphonic dialogism. This is because management studies have taken a narrow view of dialogic as just dialogue: the immediate here-and-now communication between stakeholders. Dialogic is not dialogue (interaction among stakeholders in one time and place). Dialogic is defined as modes of expression (verbal, written, architectural, etc) that are intertextual answers to prior or anticipated across times and places. Dialogic, for example can be intertextual answers (anticipatory or respondent) to societal (Fairclough, 1992) or environmental discourse (Christian, 1995). There are several dialogic types: polyphonic, stylistic, chronotopic, and discursive (or architectonic).

Polyphonic Dialogic - Bakhtin's (1973) polyphonic construct is a derivative of orchestration of voices that are fully embodied, with often quite disparate points of view. Monologic denies consciousness outside the narrator's any equal rights (Bakhtin, 1973: 292). The challenge to management is to move from monophonic and monologic to polyphonic (many voices) and polylogic (many logics) communicating and organizing. For Bakhtin this is not about finding/imposing consensus; polyphonic dialogism is letting the disparate logics inform and shape each other.

Hazen (1993, 1994) called for polyphonic organization. Mumby (1994) accused management research texts of being monophonic; he stresses that in polyphonic text each voice is equally valid. Barry and Elmes (1997) challenge management strategy to move from monologic (single authored) to polyphonic (multiple authorship) strategies where stakeholders meet as equals to craft strategy that is dialogically unfinalized. Barry and Elmes (1997: 442) add "strategists adopting this method would be less focused on promoting their own strategy and more concerned with surfacing, legitimizing, and juxtaposing differing organizational stories." They give Semler (1993), Boje (1995), and Smircich, Calas, and Morgan (1992 a, b) ways to juxtapose dialogically linked views/stories.

Despite these calls, moving from polyphonic to more complex forms of dialogic has been a challenge to management studies. Polyphony becomes used as a metaphor in order to colonize dominant discourse. Palmer and Dunford (1996), for example, focus on ways that authorities stylize dialog by reframing context in order to sustain managerialist influence over business practices. Along this vein, Phillips (1995: 628-629) explores example how a dominant character in a text can bring in another point of view without the sense of closure of an omnipotent author. Payne and Carlton (2002) apply dialogic to stakeholder theory using a polyphonic approach; the challenge in dialogic research is to move from theories of one (stakeholder) consciousness (be it omniscient narrator or research) reading various other consciousnesses.

Bate (1997, 2000) picks up Hazen's call for "polyphonic organization" in study of change in a hospital, from hierarchy to networked community. Methodologically, he does not study the way the voices (heard) are dialogically dynamically intertextual *in situ* to one another. Instead Bate collects a plurality of subculture voices, and culls out *emotion schemas* within the narratives/stories he collects.

Barry and Elmes (1997) argue that strategic narratives are moving from monophonic to polyphonic. Just how this is done remains a management research challenge. For example, Ng and de Cock (2002) argue that they do not want to give a polyphonic interpretation to collected boardroom (strategic) narratives, since it would compromise the story they (as researchers) prefer to tell. This seems to replace one hegemony with another. One possibility is suggested by Roth and Kleiner (1998), who view Van Maanen's "jointly-told tale" as polyphonic fieldwork, "sharing authorship" and giving "equal validity" to two (or more) meaning systems.

Oswick et al (2000) looked at how a team player developed consensus around a univocal narrative in a hegemonic exercise of power. More accurately, it was not only monologic but homologic. A homophonic text is one where "all aspects of plot, dialogue and characterization are subordinated to the monologic will of the author" (Gardiner, 1992: 27).

In sum, polyphonic studies are finding that stakeholder dialogues are hegemonic, and polyphony is applied metaphorically without attention to equal rights of participation. Besides, polyphony, Bakhtin imagined several other types which have yet to be research in management.

Stylistic Dialogic - defined as when different stylistic modes are juxtaposed in ways that are dialogically intertextual. There are five stylistic modes Bakhtin (1981: 262) provides:

1. Artistic style – that comes from the voice of a narrator (examples: storied bits from a CEO letter to shareholders).
2. Skaz – taking a fragment of someone else's everyday narration, and narrating another narrator's intention (e.g. a corporate one) through it (examples: "I'm lovin' it," or Nike's "Just Do It!").
3. Everyday narration (example: a letter, a diary, a report).
4. Scientific, Non-artistic narration (examples: a scientific statement, a chart of numbers from an account, an ethnographic description, or a philosophical treatise).
5. Characters speech acts of individuals or organization that is official narrations.

Here is the challenge; if one can read the five styles, and step back to see how the modes interact.

Chronotopic Dialogic – Chronos means time, and a chronotope is defined as the interaction of time and space. As the definition implies, it is Bakhtin's (1981) way of paying homage to Einstein's theory of Relativity. Chronotopicity is the study of the

hierarchy of narrative over event, how events are constructed, and how they are temporally and spatially relativized in various chronotopic choices. Barry and Elmes incorporate two of Bakhtin's chronotopes (Greek romance adventure & chivalric romance adventure) into their typology. There are ten ways to conceptualize time/space in Bakhtin (1973, 1981): four adventure chronotopes (romantic, chivalric, everyday & auto-biographical) and five folkloric types of chronotopes (clown-rogue-fool, reversal of here-and-now time/space, Rabelaisian, grotesque, & idyllic); plus a tenth chronotope called 'Castle,' a special living room where dialogues become important because the character's passionate ideas are revealed, and a key idea is the omnipresent power of a new owner of life: 'money.'

Discursive Dialogic – A discursive type of dialogic is defined as multiple discourses that interanimate one another. Bakhtin (1990) began to study this problem, which he called "architectonics" in his earliest published writings. There are four adventure chronotopes (romantic, chivalric, everyday & auto-biographical) and five folkloric types of chronotopes (clown-rogue-fool, reversal of here-and-now time/space, Rabelaisian, grotesque, & idyllic). A tenth chronotope is called the Castle. There are few discursive dialogic studies. Boje (1995) developed language-based discursive model of organization where Disney people are treated as "discursive beings" in Tamara-land. Disney, for example is analyzed as a managerialist group wielding their power by reading context as if it were one story with one perspective (management's). In a dialogic Disney, there is a diversity of counter-official stories and perspectives, negotiating a Tamara of stories in ongoing dialogues among various subcultures. Disney is replete with dissensus, not consensus. Christensen (1995: 600-661) emphasizes that "any utterance is in dialog with prior dialogue" so that as Bakhtin's work suggests the discourse of the general culture is intertextual related to the dialogue within an organization.

Kenneth Boulding (1956) saw that an open system with its information processing (input-sender-feedback loop) was not very high up on the scale of system complexity (he gave it a 4). Each time you move higher up, you get into Bakhtin's territory, into languages, symbols, and into multi-brained systems. As management research moves from polyphonic studies of people or subcultures in dialogue to stylistic, chronotopic, and discursive dialogics we approach Boulding's higher orders of system complexity. The highest level is to look at the dialogism of these four types of dialogic.

Management studies can begin to attend to stylistic modes of dialogic communication, to the polytemporality and poly-spatiality of chronotopic dialogism, and to the discursive dialogism of architectonics.

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