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Ken W. Parry*

Viewing the Leadership Narrative through Alternate Lenses: An Autoethnographic Investigation**

This conceptual-theoretical article revisits the work of Parry and Hansen on the nature of the organizational story as leadership. The present article is written in the autoethnographic style. The original narrative work is re-examined through the lenses of autoethnography, narrative theory, metaphor/discourse, critical realism and conventional quantitative research. The insights provided by this methodological triangulation are examined. The conclusion is that organizational stories will reflect leadership if they are plausible to the intended audience, give all organizational members an empowered part in the story, have a moral to the story, and have a happy ending. The overarching theme that is proposed is of leadership as the generation of individual hope for a better existence.

Key words: **organizational story, leadership, autoethnography, critical realism, metaphor**

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This is an autoethnographic investigation of organizational phenomena. Boyle and Parry (2007) have stated the case for a greater use of the method of autoethnography in organizational research. Indeed, a chapter of the 2008 *Sage Handbook of Organizational Research Methods* dedicates itself to organizational autoethnography. From very humble beginnings, the use of autoethnography in organizational research is increasing. By its nature, autoethnography is a reflexive and emotive personal narrative. It is not conventional leadership research. The subject of this particular investigation is a reflection upon the generation of the theoretical argument put forward by Parry and Hansen (2007), which was based upon the notion of the organizational story as leadership. In particular, I look at this notion of the 'organizational story as leadership' through four research lenses, each of which has gained a level of popularity in organizational research and is gaining greater popularity in leadership research. I hope that by using this rather non-conventional discursive approach, and by triangulating these various perspectives on how we developed theory, I can shed more light on the essential nature of leadership, at least insofar as it pertains to followers in organizations. The data used in this investigation is of course the self-narrative, which traditionally is seen in autoethnographic research. This narrative includes discourse about a quasi-field experiment that I undertook recently. However, this certainly is not a piece of quantitative leadership research.

Part one - a realisation: narrative and leadership

It was a few years ago that Hans Hansen and I realized that our two literatures covered a very similar area of scholarship. Hans researched discourse and organizational stories. I researched leadership. Of course, Hans researched much more besides, but it was these two bodies of literature that seemed to be saying much the same thing. We had a few chats over coffee. Then we sat down and compared the two literatures. We tried out our ideas at the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism in Nova Scotia. We ran our ideas past some colleagues. Ultimately, our collaboration resulted in the article in the Sage *Leadership* journal (Parry & Hansen 2007). The essence of the argument is that people follow organizational stories as much as they follow people, so organizational stories can be considered as leadership. The organizational story creates a narrative. The narrative generates an outcome that people can work toward. People join with the narrative, rather than follow the leader. Therefore, the leader need not be a person. The aim of this article is to revisit this narrative research, and to look at the phenomenon of 'organizational story as leadership' through alternate perspectives on organizational research. Those perspectives are autoethnography, discursive method, critical realism, and finally a more traditional quantitative method. As I have explained, *autoethnography* is relatively new to organizational research, and to leadership research in particular. The *discursive* method is not new to leadership research. However, to the extent that discourse, narrative and leadership are axiomatic of our 2007 article, it must be a lens through which to examine this issue. *Critical realism* has long been a lens through which to look at organizational phenomena. However, its contribution to leadership research thus far is negligible. Finally, I shall attempt to triangulate the validity of my findings by putting my emerging findings under the microscope of traditional *quantitative method*. I shall examine each perspective in turn, com-

mencing with some introductory comment on the narrative component of the organizational story as leadership.

Some comments on the narrative

In our *Leadership* article, we were not proposing that storytelling is synonymous with leadership. There is a considerable literature to that effect, and we did not contradict it. Nor did we propose that the author of the story is the leader. There is also a literature to that effect and we are not denying that either. However, what we were proposing is that when a story displays leadership, namely when people base their actions around and follow a story, we can view that story as a leader. Our discussion concentrated more specifically on organizational stories. As such we are implicitly drawing upon functionalist or unitarist understandings of organizational leadership. Much of our literature has an organizational underpinning. In effect, an organizational story may 'do' things that we often recommend leaders do, such as inspire followers. A story can do this without any active intervention by a person, whether author or storyteller. In order to enhance understanding and knowledge about this phenomenon, I will now look at our research experience through the various lenses, starting with that of autoethnography.

The contribution of autoethnography

Since Hans and I completed that article, I have been looking at organization studies via the methodology of autoethnography. Autoethnography is a self-reflexive genre of research. It is very subjectivist, and the role of emotion is very important in the unpacking of the phenomenon under investigation. Maree Boyle and I have guest edited a special edition of *Culture & Organization* journal on the topic of organizational autoethnography. This article is written in an autoethnographic style.

Boyle and Parry (2007) contend that the prime focus of an organizational autoethnographic study is to illuminate the relationship between the individual and the organization. Maree and I propose that the study of organizations and culture can be significantly enhanced by the inclusion of work conducted and located within the autoethnographic genre. In particular, the intensely reflexive nature of autoethnography as an autobiographical form of research, allows the researcher to intimately connect the person with the organization through a peeling back of multiple layers of consciousness, thoughts, feelings and beliefs.

The autoethnographic method allows for insightful, culturally- and emotionally-rich readings of organizational life. This approach enables the researcher to gain an insight into the construction of culture, narrative, leadership, identity and other organizational phenomena. Within autoethnography, the individual and their social structure are connected intimately.

A central feature of autoethnography is the use of an aesthetic style of text, which can take a variety of forms – personal essays, poetry, short stories, journals, stream of consciousness, detailed unstructured interview narratives and other forms of fragmented writing (Parry/Boyle 2008). For example, Yarborough and Lowe (2007) used the analogy of a move script to convey their message effectively to the reader. This aesthetic 'grab' is part of the impact of autoethnography as a research method. An-

other way that it has impact is with emotive narrative. Whether ironic, anguished, pensive, comic, sublime, inspiring, or even ugly, the emotional impact of the narrative helps to impart knowledge to the reader.

I have found that organizational life is occasionally harrowing or traumatic but always intensely personal. Perhaps the emotive affect of the narrative might be less powerful in the less-traumatic narratives, but from every individual experience comes a level of meaning for the reader. By its very nature, autoethnography is characterized by personal experience narratives (Denzin 1989), personal ethnography (Crawford 1996), lived experience (van Maanen 1990), reflexive ethnography (Ellis/Bochner 1996), ethnobiography, (Lejeune 1989), and emotionalism (Gubrium/Holstein 1997). It is a powerful research method. Nevertheless, the use of autoethnography in organizational research, including leadership research and in research methodology is still in its infancy.

An autoethnography does not begin and end at the personal level. There are constant reminders throughout the narrative of how the individual self interacts with, resists, and shapes and is shaped by the organizational and institutional context in which s/he is situated. Of course, this context includes leadership and the influence of competing narratives. I contend that much of the value of autoethnography comes from the emotive impact that facilitates an understanding about organizational processes and therefore the subsequent cognitive impact upon individual identity within organizations.

An increasing use of the first person in the write-up of organizational research indicates heightened acceptance of the self-narrative as a form of sense-making within organizational life. Boyle and Parry (2007) identify that the strength of organizational autoethnography is demonstrated through its ability to weave the extant literature into the narrative that the author presents. To do so is normally proscribed in mainstream organizational research methodologies. However, in organizational autoethnography, it is a strength.

Duarte and Hodge (2007) have already used the autoethnographic method to investigate their experience of undertaking research. It is within this spirit that I have reflected autoethnographically upon the experience of researching with Hans Hansen.

Metaphor and discourse

As a form of discriminant validity, I wanted to look at our 'story as leadership' thesis through a different lens. Because Hans and I looked at the story of leadership, discourse and narrative were axiomatic of what we found. Moreover, the notion that a story is leadership reeks of metaphor. Therefore, I felt that the lens of metaphor and discourse would be relevant through which to look at our research experience.

I have also been researching metaphors for organizations. There is a large extant literature on metaphors in organizations. Oswick, Keenoy and Grant (2002), Cynthia Hardy (Hardy/Palmer/Phillips 2000) and Joep Cornelissen (2008) have been at the forefront of researching the role of metaphors in organizational discourse. Metaphors are one form of discourse. Mumby and Clair (1997) contend organizations only exist in so far as we create them through discourse, with organizations existing as a collection of all the stories, often competing, that are their make up (Boje 1995). The collec-

tive sum of our discourse becomes the narrative about organizational life. In fact, David Boje (2001) has published a textbook on the narrative method for organizational research. Consequently, the lens of metaphor and discourse is a relevant lens through which to examine our thesis about the organizational story as leadership.

For many years now metaphors have been the subject of research and research data. They also now appear as the methodology for research, as suggested by Conger and Toegal (2002) and in as yet unpublished work I am doing on qualitative questionnaires that integrate metaphor questions with traditional attitude surveys on leadership and culture. They also emerge as the outcomes of research (e.g. Kempster 2006).

I have already mentioned that the notion of 'story as leadership' is a metaphor. Such a suggestion becomes important if we look at leadership through the discourse lens. Part of what Hans and I proposed is that the story is a metaphor for leadership. An objective reality is highly problematic (Dachler/Hosking, 1995); arguably there is just reality to the individual. Hence, the metaphor becomes that person's reality. A metaphor is intensely personal, just like that person's own self-reflexive story (their autoethnography).

The more I revisited our story-as-leadership thesis, I realised that the language of the research was riddled with metaphors. Organizational culture is a metaphor. Culture is actually a term borrowed from anthropology because organizational scholars could find no other term to articulate what they meant. Organizational stories use metaphors as the universal language to articulate meaning to a lay audience. The notion of story as prophet, discussed again shortly, is another metaphor which generates sense-making. Our inability to agree on a definition of leadership even suggests that 'leadership' is actually a metaphor. Perhaps it is a metaphor for doing things well. I don't wish to restate the literature on organizational metaphors. I will say that consideration of metaphor and discourse must be axiomatic of any consideration of organizational stories and of leadership.

Discourse entails a duality in that it constructs as well as represents reality. We make sense of experience by constructing representations that we can share with others, but our constructions are all we know of 'what happened'. So in constructing stories to make sense of something, we help to make the thing itself, which is both created and represented by the story. We do not know events in any objective sense. Rather, we know our version of events through building a discursive story that explains what happened and what actions we took or want to take. When we tell stories about ourselves to others, they know us not only by those stories, but 'as' those stories.

I have also looked at leadership research through the lens or frame of critical realism. Steve Kempster got me interested in critical realism, and we are working on an article that looks at grounded theory research though the frame of critical realism. I also looked at our 'story as leadership' theory through the lens of critical realism.

Through the lens of critical realism

Critical realism examines underlying issues within organizational life often associated with power asymmetries and the privileging of particular narratives. Critical realists

draw upon the notion of underlying power structures that may not be conscious to people yet have influence on the production of social reality.

Most extant leadership research has probed effectively into observable, aural and experienced aspects of reality. It has been researched as a socially constructed phenomenon, the nature of which is malleable and pliable and which changes within the social context that it finds engaged in at the time and place of research. However, critical realists suggest that the 'deep' level of reality has not been explored effectively thus far. An epistemological issue for critical realists is associated with the 'domain of the deep', reflected in causal powers that shape agency actions that may not be observable. Gordon (2002) has already identified the problematic influence of deep power structures upon leadership. By implication, he has also identified the difficulties encountered by extant methodologies in researching these constructs.

Therefore, the epistemologies relevant to critical realism must be relative rather than absolute. The logic of why epistemology is relative rests on the notion that discourse generates knowledge and discourse is a socially constructed, transient and what Rorty (1982:92) would call a "changeable artefact". Reality is thus seen through the lens of discourse "and although the truth may be out there we may never know it in an absolute sense", said Sayer (1992: 162).

For critical realists the answer appears to lie in what Sayer called 'practical adequacy'. An associated criterion is that of plausibility. Such a view leads to the notion of developing a more adequate explanation of reality that reflects 'tendencies' for causal powers to operate in other contexts, rather than universal truths (Fleetwood 2004). A question becomes whether or not the explanations thus provided give epistemic gain and are 'practically adequate' to the context from which they are drawn (Sayer 1992).

The analytic technique used is that of retroduction. Retroduction differs from both induction (theory follows the data) and deduction (data test theory) in the sense that it involves suggesting a theory that seeks to provide causal explanation of what has not necessarily been empirically deduced or induced, but has been synthesized and inferred from available and related concepts. Retroduction is a form of logical inference. An example provided by Lawson exemplifies the contrast between deduction, induction and retroductive inference:

> If deduction is illustrated by the movement from the general claim that 'all ravens are black' to the particular inference that the next one seen will be black, and induction by the move from the particular observation of numerous black ravens to the general claim that 'all ravens are black', retroductive or abductive reasoning is indicated by a move from the observation of numerous black ravens to a theory of a mechanism intrinsic to ravens which disposes them to be black (Lawson 1997: 24).

Retroduction is argued by Bhaskar and Runde to connect the examination of a phenomenon with our *a priori* lived experience, related concepts and metaphors. To this end, I am suggesting that the integration of autoethnography and of a metaphor/discourse based approach could prove to be hugely illuminating. In essence, retroduced realist theories need to be anchored within the tolerance of an external reality (Sayer 1992). Examples of epistemological comments that reflect such reality might be, 'That makes sense to me', 'that's helpful' or 'You've captured the essence of the issue'. For Bhaskar (1989) these comments represent a form of theoretical test. He in-

corporates the notion of test within a framework. The criteria for this test are practical adequacy, plausibility and logical inference. In other words, we generate theory that might guide human practice if the postulated theory makes sense to the context and to the individuals from which it is drawn.

This result is currently in stark contrast to much mainstream leadership research, where justification of the validity of the theory is judged against positivist epistemic claims. Insufficiently do researchers demonstrate that they have tested their theories for practical adequacy to see how plausibly useful are the explanations. In support of this perspective, Dachler and Hosking (1995) have already proposed the need for alternate paradigms with which to investigate leadership phenomena. More recently, Henry Mintzberg (2004) even questioned the hegemony of mainstream scholarship about the dominant role of the 'leader' in 'leadership'. Perhaps he might agree with the critical realist perspective of the work of Hans Hansen and I wherein there might be no such thing as a leader; that there are only stories that people follow. Calls such as this have not been ignored, but a critical realist perspective does not figure prominently in mainstream leadership research methodology. I am not trying to remedy ills of the past. Rather, I see this as a relevant perspective with which to revisit the work that I have done.

To my mind, organizational life is intensely individual. There are as many stories out there as there are people in any organization. Every story, and therefore every reality, and therefore every leadership experience, is intensely personal. Autoethnography turns this individuality into an epistemological research strength. Additionally, individuals bring something of themselves to the enactment of organizational life, causing relationships, practices, narratives and associated meanings of leadership to become modified over time. This process is described by Archer (1995) as 'morphogenesis' and has an argument for the temporal and processual manifestation of leadership. In effect, our organizational stories are a 'moving feast', and are continually being reconstructed with each telling.

An axiomatic but explicit assumption for critical realists is that any understanding and explanation of reality is fundamentally socially constructed. A critical realist would eschew the notion that there is some absolute reality for leadership. They would say that there is only the reality that works for people. There is only the plausible or 'practically adequate' notion of leadership. There is the 'logically inferred' notion of leadership. *Inter alia*, there is the notion that the story is the metaphor for leadership.

The critical realist might say that there are no leaders, just stories. We embed ourselves in stories until we find the story that makes sense, and that gives us power; and generates a positive outcome, as determined by the positive emotional impact. Looking at leadership through the lens of critical realism might suggest that *all* that people follow is the story. After all, after 60 years of research, and thousands of books being written about leadership, there is still no agreed definition of leadership. To all intents and purposes, there is no objective reality of leadership. There is only what *works* for people. Therefore, in a sense, Hans and I have already looked at leadership through a critical realist lens to articulate a practically adequate explanation of the theory of 'organizational story as leadership'. It works for us. It worked for three reviewers, two editors and several of our other colleagues. We hope it works for you.

Finally, I was originally trained in quantitative methods. I have even won a few awards for quantitative research. My point is that each of these approaches to research looks at the subject of the research through a different lens. Each puts a slightly different frame around the phenomenon of leadership. My aim here is to continue to revisit my 'story as leadership' argument, and to look at it through the different frames that these approaches provide.

The four lenses of autoethnography, the discourse/metaphor approach, narrative method and critical realism I see as 'sibling' approaches to organizational research. They are siblings because they all derive from ideographic origins and share a common interest in discourse, narrative and emotion. All appreciate a relativist approach to reality. By contrast, I also look through the nomothetic, quantitative lens. I do this partly because I can, and partly because it provides a contrast, and possibly a degree of discriminant validity for the explanation that will ultimately emerge. In effect, I am triangulating these five perspectives about the nature of leadership. I do this to see whether there might be any integration or commonality forthcoming.

At this point, before I look through the quantitative epistemological lens, it is necessary briefly to revisit the literatures surrounding the nature of leadership and the characteristics and effects of organizational stories, in order to highlight the conceptual similarities between the two constructs.

Part two - of leadership and stories

Hans and I compared these two bodies of literature using the frame of narrative method to get a better perspective on their similarities and differences. We proceeded to detail the literature about the nature of stories and how stories provide a plot for employees to follow. Without reproducing here the similarities in the two literatures, I can say that we did draw some conclusions. One conclusion we drew at this point was that organizational stories seem to have a general theme about overcoming adversity.

Another conclusion was that an important aspect of stories is that they take the listener from the past, to the present, and on to the future. Stories reflect meaningful past and future experiences. They are not necessarily good experiences, but meaningful ones. The story is meaningful and has an impact upon the listener. This impact reflects a cognitive as well as an affective outcome.

A third conclusion was that these sequential and temporal aspects of organizational stories reflect the processual nature of them. To the extent that stories can be told and retold, and that they can lapse and later be rejuvenated, and that with every telling, they change and transform; stories can be bestowed with an 'organic' analogue. Each telling of a story is individual and different, but all versions of the story are genetically similar. One aspect of the narrative of leadership is that of the story as prophet.

The story as prophet

We discussed the notion of story as prophet. Followers develop dependency on the leader to deliver them in moments of crisis. Could we say the same things of stories? We contend that we can. There is a dependency on stories to deliver people in crisis.

For example, a prayer could well be an appeal to the story about delivery from a crisis situation.

To this extent, leaders are dealers in hope. Confucius and Napoleon have been widely quoted as saying that leaders are dealers in hope. A similar notion is that leaders are also purveyors of hope. Yes, I know, more metaphors! Bennis and Nanus (1997) have said that leaders are purveyors of hope. Warren Bennis was still saying it in the lead-up to the 2008 US Presidential election. Luthans and Avolio (2003) have said that leaders are purveyors of hope. The purveyor of hope or the dealer in hope is the metaphor for a leader. If the story is purveying hope, then the story is providing leadership. The critical realist approach might tell us that there is no such thing as leadership – there is only hope. What we think of as leadership might actually be the generation and provision of hope. Certainly, leadership is involved with more mundane things like problem-solving, emotional support, taking responsibility and the like. However, these important and pragmatic aspects of organizational leadership can be achieved if the macro-narrative is one of hope.

In some cases, leaders victimize, judge, punish and even kill people. We stepped outside the organizational domain temporarily to posit, perhaps as a mater of ontology, that stories do the same. For instance, a racist story may act as the prompt for lynching, we speculated, but is it the story that does the killing? Well, Weick (1995) says that stories can be prophecies. Weick's notion of sense-making provides a rationale for action. In this case, the sense-making provided by the story amounts to a rationale for an action. The processual nature of the story makes an outcome inevitable, and in so doing, provides a justification for the action that it generated. The organic nature of the story means that it is told and retold until the desirable outcome is achieved. The racist might say, 'I am right. I am good. My goal is inevitable. I shall prevail'. This story becomes the leadership that is enacted. I am not sure what exactly is their story, but I suspect it is something like this. They will get to tell us their story in court or wherever. In fact, I am just telling what I understand is their story. However, such a story is plausible to me.

On the other hand, the witness to the racism might say to the racist, 'You are wrong. You are bad. My goal is inevitable. I will fight your evil until right prevails'. This story becomes the leadership that is enacted by the witness to racism. In both cases, the story is told and re-told and extended and customized until the ultimate outcome is realized for the benefit of followers – until hope is provided.

I know that people are not literally lynched in organizations. We used lynching as an extreme example, for the sake of polarity, in order to make a point. I do know that people are metaphorically lynched in organizations - thousands of them, thousands of us, every day. The dominant story makes the 'lynching' acceptable. The victims narrate their own story in order to give themselves hope.

Let me give you another example. In both world wars, German soldiers had inscribed on their belt-buckle 'Gott mit uns', God is with is. The soldiers on the Allied side were also encouraged by the story that God was on their side. Religious leaders on all sides encouraged their soldiers to kill the enemy. What is generally the same story moulds to its context to achieve the same outcome. Soldiers of all sides were en-

couraged to follow the story that they were doing right, and that their cause was good, and that the inevitable outcome would be to their favor. Indeed, it could be said that they followed a story-line that generated for each individual a hope for a better existence. Sure, soldiers followed the Prime Minister, of the Führer, or the Emperor, or the President. But, these people were just characters in the larger story about the role that these soldiers played in the inevitable achievement of a better outcome for them.

Fables and parables as leadership

The ultimate exemplars of organizational stories might be sayings, parables and fables. People learn through following the morals inherent within the parable of the boy who cried 'wolf' or the fable about the goose that laid the golden egg. We proposed that these messages are metaphors for behavior in organizations. After all, we all know of someone who metaphorically cried 'wolf' and we all know of examples of how an organization has killed the goose that laid the metaphorical golden egg.

The instrumental and utilitarian approach to leadership would have us believe that by learning those moral maxims, people follow a course of action that is expected and rewarded within the organization. This learning gives people knowledge about how to act, for the better, and for a noble outcome. That noble outcome is the benefit of the organization. At least, it is for the instrumental and utilitarian leader.

By contrast however, each telling of the story actually is slightly different from the last. With each unique telling of the story, people build a role for themselves within the macro story that is unfolding around them. They keep unfolding the story until it provides for them an inevitable better existence for them as individuals. The person who is the wolf is doing organizational society a service by weeding out the weaker members and the non-performers and making the organization strong by doing what it does well. The person who is the shepherd is attempting to bring to the attention of others the dangers that lurk all around them, and to keep others in a state of vigilance. The person who is the sheep is the innocent victim who is removed from the hell that was their organizational existence, and can now pursue a better existence with another organization, and in so doing, realize their inevitable better existence.

There is an implicit moral rectitude in all these stories. They are all micro-stories within the macro-story of the metaphorical organizational boy who cried 'wolf'. The same process unfolds for all the micro and macro-stories that we hear narrated around us every day.

Charismatic leadership and a test of practical adequacy

A particular conception of leadership, that we examined in our *Leadership* research, is that of charismatic leadership. Boas Shamir (1992) said that charismatic leadership can only exist within the attributions of followers. Hence, charismatic leadership resides not so much in the content of the message but upon the impact that the message has on followers. Hans and I contended that it is the story of the charismatic leader, as much as the story told by the charismatic leader, that people are likely to follow.

Charismatic leadership also enhances the self-concept of followers, who generate an emotional attachment to the leader (Howell/Shamir, 2005; Shamir/House/Arthur 1993). The self-concept of followers is by its nature a noble construct. It is also a per-

sonal and an individual thing. The emotional attachment to the charismatic leader is axiomatically a positive emotion.

Moreover, Gabriel (2000) asserts that one of the characteristics of stories is that they can appeal more to emotion than reason. Charismatic and visionary leaders often inspire followers using emotion where rational appeals cannot be made because future states or projected outcomes are unclear. This is not to exclude the cognitive impact of reason or rational appeal. Rather, it is to say that charismatic leadership leans toward emotion and away from reason. The point is that reason and emotion are both outcomes of the story that influences followers. It is just a matter of balance.

An autoethnographic test of practical adequacy. I have already said that the study of leadership is unable to generate much scholarly consensus. The study of charismatic leadership generates even less scholarly consensus. In order to try to generate some personal understanding of this problematic construct, I looked for a metaphor. I wore the hat of the critical realist. My hope was that a metaphor might generate for me a plausible or practically adequate explanation of the reality of charisma. I knew that the reality was out there somewhere. At this point I was the subject of the research. I wanted to uncover a reality that captured the essence of the issue for me.

After years of testing possible metaphorical understandings of charisma, I came upon the analogy of love. After all, is love not a close attraction for another, in much the same way that charisma is a close attraction? Does love not make you see someone else in a better light than others might see her? Does love not make you follow that person – sometimes to the end of the earth? I thought so.

I had a feeling that love and charisma were closely linked. At least, the non-romantic aspect of love was closely linked. However, intuition was not enough. So, I looked up the definition of love, and tested for myself whether the definition of love would fit with my (and others') implicit understanding of charisma. It turned out that love was 'to have a great attachment to and affection for'. Yes, that fitted charisma quite closely. Love was also 'to have passionate desire, longing and feelings for'. OK, the passionate aspect was not entirely plausible, but this was also a close proxy for charisma. Love also is 'an intense emotion of affection, warmth, fondness, and regard towards a person or thing'. Yep – charisma. Love is 'adore, adulate, be attached to, be in love with, cherish, dote on, have affection for, hold dear, idolize, prize, think the world of, treasure, worship'. Yes, except for being in love with and perhaps cherish, this is quite close to my implicit understanding of charisma. The dictionary gave me some more categorizations of love, and they also were very close to my understanding of charisma.

My emotions were positive about the strong link between love and charisma. The link was plausible. However, the quantitative researcher in me needed more reason and rational argument. I used Shamir and Kark's (2004) single-item graphic scale for the measurement of organizational identification. Essentially, it was scale from zero (no commonality between constructs) to 6 (complete commonality). It was a ratio scale. It would give me solid data. I tested the level of commonality that I saw between each definitional aspect of love and my understanding of charisma. The average

score was 4.9. To my mind, that represented a correlation in excess of 0.80. In other words, I was talking about love and charisma being the same underlying construct.

The autoethnographer in me felt fairly happy about what I had experienced here. My emotions were still positive. To my mind, there was a close link between love and charisma. It was more than just an analogy - charisma was more than 'like' love. To my mind it was a metaphor - charisma was a form of love. I was hoping that you, the reader, would feel the same way. My emotions were positive, and they were strong. The years of thinking about and mulling over the true nature of charisma had culminated in me doing this small and very subjective quasi-experiment with an 'n' of one. I was genuinely moved by this realization. My emotions spanned across relief, optimism, triumph, elation and thrill. These were all emotions consistent with the higher-order emotion factor of 'joy', according to Shaver et al.'s (1987) taxonomy of emotions. As far as I was concerned, I had made a contribution to theory. I had hoped you might agree.

The quantitative researcher in me wanted to test my theory more widely, even though the autoethnographer in me was perfectly happy with my single-subject case study. The critical realist in me realized that I had to take this explanation to some other subjects to ascertain if my explanation possessed sufficient plausibility and practical adequacy for other research subjects. So far, it was only my reality. It needed to be their reality also. I conducted my test with some MBA students and several colleagues. I found the same correlation between love and their implicit understanding of charisma. I even obtained a sound inter-rater correlation. Discussion with the audience indicated that the commonality was with the following of charismatic leadership, and *not* with charismatic leadership itself. This finding confirms Shamir's theory that followers are the key to understanding charisma.

My joy was even greater. I was overjoyed. More importantly, the new found reality of the link between love and charisma was clear to me. I found a reality that previously had only been hinted at. Some readers might not be so delighted. After all, 'charisma' is a Gift from God, and God is full of love, by definition. To them it might seem obvious. However, to me it was a discovery, and this discovery brings me closer to reality about charisma and love.

OK, my 'experiment' was not scientifically rigorous and it probably would not get published in a psychology journal. However, I had come to a realization that was entirely plausible to this case study subject and that also enjoyed plausibility and practical adequacy. I had arrived at an explanation that in all probability could never be tested psychometrically. But, I was hoping that it sounded pragmatic to you and I was hoping that you might absorb some of my emotional energy.

By looking at charismatic leadership through the lens of discourse, I had generated and seen for myself an understanding via the metaphor of love. The autoethnographic lens highlighted the emotive and cognitive impact of my personal experience, and generated further learning. The quasi-experiment that I undertook provided additional psychometric support to what I had found to be a practically adequate explanation. In effect, charismatic leadership was a love story, of sorts. I had never seen that notion published in a management or organizational publication.

Leadership and stories as a source of power

The final area of overlap that Hans and I found between the literatures on leadership and organizational stories is the role of power. David Boje (1995, 2001) contends that some competing narratives are more hegemonic than others and thus marginalize other narratives and silence some constructive voices. Ray Gordon (2002) found that stories are one of the deep power structures through which leadership is dispersed, often problematically, in organizations. Hans and I warned that we should be conscious of the power relations we construct with stories. Examples are the behaviors that are encouraged or discouraged in our organizational stories. For instance, we could ask whether risk taking and creativity are rewarded or punished. We could ask who is benefiting from the enactment of various stories, and who authored the stories and for what purposes. Similarly, we could ask what underlying assumptions are seen in our stories. For example, are leaders in our corporate stories all white men who value work over family? Are they therefore the people who control power and wealth?

I suggest that we must all be part of a powerful story. At least, we all must have a powerful role to play in the story. If not, we participate in an alternate story, and we keep creating and recreating that story until the story ultimately gives us a powerful role. Part of the power of a story lies in the magnitude of the audience for the narration of that story. The chief executive can access a large audience by narrating again and again at meetings, in emails, in documents, in press releases and in annual reports. Such a large audience gives this story great power. By contrast, the disempowered clerical worker will access only a few colleagues at the lunch table. Such a small audience gives this story comparatively less power. More importantly, the chief executive's story must give the clerical workers a powerful role to play within that power-laden story. To not give them such a role will be to put their following at risk.

Stories can be instruments of oppression and mystification as well as instruments of contestation and rebellion. Sims (2003) provides examples of how middle managers 'story' or narrate their lives in an environment where those stories are contested and resisted. We posit that if you are not allowed to narrate yourself in some way, it is the same as not being allowed to live that way. For example, if women cannot be storied as leaders, they cannot be leaders. We must all be part of the story. Moreover, our role in that story must have some power attached to it. Specifically, we must have some power over our role in that story. That role must have a positive emotional outcome. Otherwise, like the women who are not storied to be leaders, they will continue to tell and retell that story until eventually the day emerges where the story gives them a positive outcome with a positive emotional impact.

Whereas Sims is discussing story-telling as much as the nature of the story, the point is well made that a story can be contested by another story, just as one leader can be over-ruled by a more powerful or persuasive leader. Power and influence are central in leadership. Dahl (1957) said power was getting someone to do something they otherwise would not have done, and Yukl (2002) has concluded the obvious point that the utilization of power is axiomatic of leadership.

The similarities between the literatures on leadership and organizational stories provide an important background. However, to add some utility to this argument, it is

probably necessary to apply a practical focus. Hence, it is necessary to examine the potential application of these insights about the similarities between leadership and organizational stories, now that I have examined them through the lenses of narrative, autoethnography, metaphor/discourse, critical realism and quantitative method.

Part three - on making stories and making leadership

Toward the end of our article, Hans and I put forward the proposition that perhaps we should move from story-telling to story-making. We did this rather than to suggest story-writing because the latter is such an instrumental thing to do. I now suggest the characteristics of a story that might best reflect leadership. These characteristics reflect the conclusions drawn from the preceding discussion. The characteristics of a story might be:

1. make it a plausible story
2. give all people a part in the story
3. give them power
4. have a 'moral' to the story – which provides meaning and sense-making
5. have a happy ending

Let me explain each component in turn.

Make it a plausible story

To be effective, stories should build a world that is experienced by the reader as plausible and believable despite the potentially fictional nature of the story (Phillips 1995). I take a lead here from the methodology of autoethnography. In autoethnography, it is the reading, or the listening, that generates the meaning in the mind of the reader/listener. Of course, the story that is told is ostensibly not fictitious. However, the story that the reader takes away is purely a creation of the reader. Critical realism tells us that the plausibility of the world that is experienced by the reader is reality for them.

Barry and Elmes (1997) concluded that effective storytellers manage to achieve two fundamental outcomes: credibility (or believability) and de-familiarization (or novelty). Kouzes and Posner (1987) argue that credibility is one key to effective leadership, and we know that a plausible explanation in the minds of a listener is more likely to reflect reality for them. Novelty is conceptually akin to Kouzes and Posner's (1987) leadership factor 'challenging the process', Bass's (1985) leadership factor called 'intellectual stimulation', and Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe's (2001) transformational leadership factor of 'critical and strategic thinking'. Yes, a story must be plausible to generate following.

Give all people a part in the story

Gardner and Avolio (1998) explored how leaders use stories to influence future behavior and use stories to articulate an organizational vision, one that challenges the status quo and aligns followers' values and aspirations. This gives them a meaningful and powerful role to play in the story. In providing an idealized vision, stories can make followers' work more meaningful and provide them with a deeper sense of purpose (Gardner/Avolio 1998), even activating followers' higher-order needs by appeal-

ing to their desire to contribute to the collective good (Bass 1985; Shamir 1995). Meaningful work comes from internalizing the moral to the story, and when activating one's higher-order needs, the individual creates hope for a better existence in the future.

Stories should be loose scripts, suggesting specific behaviors without imposing inflexible rules. Similarly Conger (1991), in an assessment of the 'language of leadership', concluded that leadership need not be prescriptive. Good stories should plot events that make sense and be concrete enough to provide a vision for collective decision and action (Wilkins 1984) where people can see their roles, and know what actions are called for, yet flexible enough to allow followers to construct their own lines of actions that fit within the story as they enact the story in fulfilling the vision it provides.

Context may need to be closely coupled with story content when conveying a specific message. Such a goal relies heavily on contextual knowledge. Stories told out of context might lose much of their meaning, so a follower's sensitivity is heightened to attempt to 'place' where certain leadership behaviors might be effective. While stories can be evoked in any context to support a specific teller's agenda, if the story is widely shared among members, there might be less chance that the specific messages and values the story represents can be 'spun' to meet competing agendas. The story is widely shared when all people have a role in the story. Therefore, all organizational members must have a part to play in the plot of the organizational story.

Give them power

A story cannot champion itself, and stories are just as susceptible to 'spin' as any event. Organizations have rumor-mills, grapevines and informal stories. There are comprehensive literatures that detail the nature of these constructs. Stories cannot defend themselves against restorying, while people in leadership roles can make efforts to maintain a consistent message in storytelling. However, we contend that one management role can be to clarify the moral (or meaning or purpose) of those unanticipated but entirely predictable stories. This clarification represents leadership. Moreover, anyone who clarifies the moral (or meaning or purpose) of those stories is demonstrating leadership. Just as the witness to racism will keep telling and re-telling the story, so will members of organizations. They will keep clarifying and re-telling and re-positioning the story until each person has a role in the story that gives them a hope for a better existence.

So, by giving people a powerful role in the dominant story-line, even a relatively minor role, the leader is defusing the need for conflicting stories to emerge. Underlying power structures are less likely to emerge, and people are less likely to participate in alternate stories. Martin Luther King gave black people an equal role in his dominant story-line. By contrast, Malcolm X provided an alternate story-line in which black people had to take back power by force. Ultimately, Martin Luther King's story-line was followed by more people for longer, and is now universally the dominant story-line. Malcolm X's story-line, with its inherent disempowering of black people, was followed by a minority of people, and ultimately it ceased being told.

Thinking about stories as leadership focuses our attention on context. Some contemporary leadership research is attempting to incorporate the temporal and contextual nature of leadership. Until recently, much of the mainstream research has accounted for leadership success as a set of behaviors only, largely removed from temporality or context, and has provided models that leave users with little to judge about transferability. However, with a story, content comes wrapped within a context that provides much of the meaning to the story (Hansen 2006). Stories emerge fused with context (after all, they are hard to tell without setting the stage for the story). Thus, followers can determine how well a particular story represents the situation they face, and allow them to make judgments about using the content.

If a role is available for them, followers can project themselves into a story and still make autonomous decisions to enact an organizational story. This allows followers to judge for themselves, attuned to their own context, how they might best contribute their individual knowledge, skills, and abilities in moving a story forward to fruition, and hopefully in fulfillment of an organizational goal or vision. In effect, they can tell their own micro-story as part of the dominant story-line. This notion is supported by French & Simpson (2006). They noted that many successful leaders of business organizations downplay *their* personal leadership role while telling the story of their organization. Accordingly, the roles of other people expand to fill this void. In effect, people are influenced more by the story that is told and re-told, and less by the leadership example that the person in the leadership position has provided. This influence process frees up the individual from bearing the leadership burden. Therefore, in summary, organizational members must have a part which provides them with power or some degree of control over their own destiny.

Have a 'moral' to the story – which provides meaning and sense-making

Stories help organizational members leverage the experience of others, which help them fill gaps in their own understandings and sensemaking, providing conclusions or suggesting actions (Boje 1995). Stories help them make sense of unfamiliar situations by linking them to familiar ones (Weick 1995). These are just complex ways of saying that every story has a 'moral'. When I take classes or executive programs I ask, 'What must there be for every story?' The answer – there must be a moral for every story. David Boje (2001) also differentiates the narrative from the antenarrative. The antenarrative is merely the listing of the facts of the story – the story-line, if you like. The narrative is the point to the story, or the sensemaking, or the moral of the story.

In leadership theory, Smircich and Morgan (1982) would call it the management of meaning. Weick (1995) and Pye (2005) would call it sensemaking, and they all would list these as the 'essence' of leadership. So, I contend that one crucial element of every story is the key to both effective narrative and effective leadership. That is the moral of the story.

If successful, stories will have an impact on an audience that is in line with the leadership aims of those who are creating the story. We suggest that there is no right or correct story. Rather, there is the meaning that the audience takes away. That message, or the 'moral' of the story, represents sense-making and is the key to the leadership impact of the story. Moreover, plausible and effective stories have a moral di-

mension to them. This moral dimension represents the 'authenticity' of the story (*vis-à-vis* the inauthentic or 'shaggy dog' story, for instance). This authenticity reflects the criterion of plausibility or practical adequacy that critical realism bestows upon the reality that people experience. Such authenticity represents the sensibility of the story and of the message.

By telling the story (and of course by specifying the moral to the story), the teller releases the leadership within the organizational community so it can do its work. The moral of the story is in effect the essence of the meaning that the listener might take away. After all, critical realism tells us that there is no objective reality. There is just the reality that the listener or reader will take away. Therefore, the moral of the story must be clear to the audience. If one leaves it to the audience to work out the moral of the story, the risk is that a dysfunctional meaning might be concluded.

Just as Meindl (1990) conceptualized leadership as a social contagion, the story multiplies and proliferates throughout the organization with each retelling. In effect, the leader(ship) is unleashed and set free to spread among the organizational community. The story achieves that effect, not the author of the story and not each teller of the story. In effect, there is no one story, just as there is no one self-reflexive experience. Not only are there multiple stories, there are multiple experiences of those stories by the listeners. Every story must have a 'moral' and a 'happy ending'!!

Have a happy ending

Stories should have a happy ending. I say this because I have written an autoethnography of the generation of my leadership identity within organizations. I methodically worked through my experiences, and investigated the emotional impact of each stage of this story. My identity became complete, and my story was complete, when positive emotions dominated. When emotions become positive, I have arrived at my destination. The intensely personal nature of the autoethnographic narrative is also an intensely emotional narrative. I found a tendency to continue telling and re-telling the story until the story seemed 'complete' in my mind. Completion of the story coincided with a move to fully positive emotions, and an elimination of negative emotions. Therefore, it is entirely plausible to me that a story will not be complete until it arrives at that positive emotional state. In other words, it needs a 'happy ending'.

The second implication of this discussion is to further the debates about the distinctions between 'leader' and 'leadership'; and between 'person' and 'process'. The person is just a character in the story, even if that person is the general manager who tells the organizational story frequently. As leadership is a process, so too is a story. It is not a discreet thing. It is a process that goes on and on. It is told over and over. The development and growth and morphosis of the story goes on and on, and over and over, until the emotion becomes positive. After all, 'process' is just a metaphor. It is a manufacturing metaphor, and every process has a completion point. The process is complete when the product is complete. The leadership/story process is complete when emotions are positive and negative emotions have been diminished.

Finally, I must reiterate that Hans and I said that stories can include conflict. The happy ending does not preclude the presence of conflict or adversity. In fact, conflict is often necessary to move the plot forward. The implicit overcoming of adversity is

another characteristic of effective story plots. In the story, roles can be inter-changed and value judgements can be suspended. The story is a symbol or a metaphor for the reality that people are experiencing, and that reality invariably includes conflict and adversity. This means that not only do stories allow multiple voices and ideas, these multiple voices and ideas can be represented in story without the compulsion to resolve differences in order to avoid impeding forward movement towards goals. Therefore, in summary, if the organizational story generates a positive emotion, or the expectation ultimately of a positive emotion, people will follow. The minimum positive emotion is hope.

An organizational example

We wrote about a contemporary UK example of organizational story as leadership, which came from Rippin (2005). This case exemplifies the absence of the five criteria of a story that represents leadership. Rippin examined the narrative about organizational change that spread through and about Marks and Spencer. What emerged from analysis of the organizational story was that it was based on the metaphor of the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty. The metaphor of the legend enabled greater sense to be made of the impact of this narrative on the actions and motivations of followers. Of course, people did not follow Sleeping Beauty, with its inherently gendered characteristics of male domination and misogyny. Rather, they followed the Marks and Spencer story. Rippin proposes that this story reinforced perceptions of misogyny, aggression and patriarchy within the change process. As Rippin (2005: 591) said, "Marks and Spencer's employees and other stakeholders have colluded with a culture of symbolic violence in their toleration of bullying and their impatience with and expulsion of less aggressive leaders …". In effect, Rippin contends that this was the organizational change leadership that this organizational story displayed.

No doubt the story that was told was told and re-told countless times by every person in the company. Each time it was told it was slightly different and unique. It will never be told the same way again. Each person tells their own story. The dominant paradigm story was about organizational change and dominance and success. There was no mention in the dominant story of bullying or of wanton misuse of power. However, some people were marginalized from the story. They had no role or they had a powerless role, and the story gave them little chance of a happy ending. The five characteristics of a leadership story were missing from the Marks and Spencer story. In particular, people had no empowered part in the story and there was no apparent happy ending for them. Leadership was not reflected. The people did not follow that story.

So, they told their own story. They might have said something like, 'Marks and Spencer turned itself around successfully. Financially it was a success. But I left Marks and Spencer. I wanted no part of bullying. I didn't want to be bullied and I didn't want to bully others. I left and went to a job where I had power and dignity and I had a better chance for my career.' The antenarrative facts of the case are essentially the same but the microstory details are very different. The moral of the story (narrative) is different. The outcome of a better existence is ultimately there, even for the people who claimed that they were bullied and who had to leave and work elsewhere.

An overarching leadership theme

It would be inappropriate for me to not draw a conclusion about the nature of leadership, as it has evolved from the preceding discussion. I have revisited the work that Hans Hansen and I did on the links between the nature of the organizational story and the nature of leadership. I re-examined this work on narrative and discourse through the lenses of autoethnography, critical realism and even the lens of nomothetic quantitative research. Having posed five propositions about the most effective leadership impact for organizational stories, I need now to identify a theme about the nature of leadership that has emerged.

Sense-making, plausibility, individual role and individual power must be considered in tandem with the integrating thread of emotion. All these characteristics of the story are beneficial for the individual, and they also reflect a generation of positive emotion for the individual. The emotion that seems to be most resonant is the emotion that culminated from my autoethnography. That emotion is hope. It is a factor of the higher order emotion of joy. These characteristics of the leadership impact of organizational stories also differentiate the welfare of the individual from the welfare of the organization. Therefore, I would have to conclude that leadership involves the generation of hope for the individual members of the organization.

Also, there is a greater value judgement implicit in this discussion. The hope is for a 'happy ending'. More specifically, that ending is for a happiness based on a foundation more substantial than hedonistic pleasure or short-term delight. The hope appears to be for a better existence for the individual members of the organization. Accordingly, I would have to conclude with an overarching theme about the nature of leadership that is inherent within effective organizational stories. *This overarching theme is that leadership is the generation of individual hope for a better existence.*

Some limitations, strengths and a future research agenda

This article was essentially about organizational narrative and autoethnography. The content of that narrative and methodology was based around leadership, but this was not a 'leadership' article. Within the framework of narrative and autoethnography, I revisited work that a colleague and I had already done on leadership. Therefore, this is a conceptual article amore than a theoretical article and definitely not an empirical article.

I will not restate here the pros and cons of subjectivist research *vis-à-vis* objectivist research. These have been discussed in great detail over the years. The advantages of both have been discussed at great length over the years. Moreover, the benefits of undertaking cross-disciplinary research and methodological triangulation have been explained in detail. I have not attempted to go as far as to undertake cross-disciplinary research. What I have attempted to do is to look at the same phenomenon through the lens of several epistemological frameworks. In so doing, I have highlighted not only the differences between the various epistemological traditions, but more importantly the beneficial complexity and value that can come from examining phenomena in different ways concurrently.

For leadership scholars, perhaps the greatest innovation that I am bringing is the use of autoethnography with which to investigate leadership phenomena. The emotive and affecting role of leadership is most powerfully brought to life with the use of the ultimate subjectivist methodology. The full impact of phenomena was brought to life for me through autoethnography. I hope that readers can experience and learn from that impact by reading not just my autoethnography, but autoethnographical treatises of various genres. I believe that every scholar should publish an autoethnography at some stage in their career.

Critical realism helps to open new research vistas upon the reality of how phenomena operate in organizations. This is not just objectivist or subjectivist. It is not a research method. Instead, it is a different and more complete explanation of what is happening in peoples' lives. I don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. We can use our existing methodological strengths, but we can also look at the emerging findings through a critical realist lens. Indeed, by building upon our existing methodological strengths, we can be free from the constraints of positivism that might well have stopped leadership research from realizing its full potential. Hence, the emergent explanation of reality might well be more persuasive and plausible to an audience.

Leadership researchers, and indeed all organizational scholars, can relish the freedom that I hope I am providing with this perspective on research. My colleagues have brought levels of analysis to leadership research. They have also brought hierarchical linear modeling, structural equation modeling and with-and-between-analysis, among others. These are commendable innovations. However, they are very much tinkering with a well worn positivist tradition. I hope that autoethnography, critical realism and greater use of metaphor and narrative will move leadership researchers to a new level of explanatory power about reality, effect and affect. In the present case, I hope that my emergent theme of leadership as the generation of individual hope for a better existence might resonate with a readership.

Metaphors and other forms of discourse figure prominently in critical realist perspectives. As I have already explained, metaphors already occur as data in organizational research. They also occur increasingly as method, and as findings. My final hope is that I have given metaphors, and other forms of discourse, and narrative method generally, a rejuvenated lease of life through the increased use of autoethnography and critical realism. In so doing, we can augment the formidable research heritage that has been accumulated thus far.

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