Performing organisational meaning: reflections of a doctoral student (August 2010)

I've stumbled on something innovative and inviting here. *Tamara* is a play that is also a metaphor used to demonstrate the multiple story variations of competing discourses of an organisation. *Tamara* offers ideas about organisation that are discursive, and language based. As David Boje (2020, p.1) writes this is "simultaneous storytelling, as a multitude of participants chase stories from room to room and down the hallways of any complex organisation".

Taking insight from the *Storytelling Organisation* my conceptual research design brings into play colliding approaches for opening cultural data to analysis in ways that invite participants to reflect on their own experiences.

Not everyone shares my enthusiasm. Several colleagues disapprove of this design and, they tell me so. Even a member of my own Supervisory Team.

Meanwhile my Principal Supervisor just keeps on reminding me to respect the conventional while still valuing my own radically different discoveries around some unconventional field sites.

"Why are stories told in organisations?" asks Michael Kaye internationally renowned communication specialist. Michael is at Charles Sturt University conducting a series of seminars that delve further into the intriguing world of organisational myth. "Everyone in an organisation is a storyteller, in that all people have some story to tell about themselves or their experiences" he says. Our workshopping shows how good storytellers will help listeners construct meanings around the story they are experiencing. That a good storyteller builds on existing knowledge and understanding, using analogy, comparison, and metaphor, and involves their audience. It's all there. In this one delicious package!

Back in my office, which I had abandoned so abruptly when running from my detractors, I find on my desk a large document folder. Michael has gifted me the research materials from his recently published textbook *Mythmakers and Story-Tellers*. I am overwhelmed by the momentum, this nod of affirmation, provides.

With thesis draft in hand my supervisor turns to me saying, "I think we have a PhD here". My examiners see it this way too. Their commentary endorsing my conceptual research design and highlighting several elements of the work as "ripe for immediate publication" (Taylor & Carroll, 2010, p. 36-37). I think, this is good and, it may actually be fun figuring out how to publish our work.

Staying open to organisational meaning: reflections of a post-doctoral researcher (May 2018 –February 2022)

"We're going to Prague!" Ivana says, "We'll be presenting our work as a part of a Research Escalator for an Annual International Conference". What a perfect opportunity for gauging a community's reaction to duoethnography as a site for studying feelings of belonging when communicating change.

A Charles Sturt University doctoral project provides the context for Change Practitioner Ivana and her Supervisor to engage dialogic reflection for opening new conversations around how communicating belonging can enhance organisational practice.

"Why not take a more traditional approach?" asks the internationally acclaimed Chair of the Research Escalator. "I don't agree, says the Swedish Co-Chair, "The work has potential for offering something significant". When this happened, we felt surprised maybe even shocked!

Some weeks later Ivana emails me seeking thoughts on *Ubuntu*. A person with *Ubuntu* is open and available to others, is affirming and, does not feel threatened when others are able or good. One *Ubuntu* story goes like this: an anthropologist, studying the customs of an African tribe, calls children around suggesting they play a game. Run to that far tree and the one who gets there first can have all the candy that's in the basket. The children line up and, on the signal, take each other by the hand and run towards the tree. They all arrive at the same time, divide up the candy, sit down and happily munch away. "Why did you all run together when anyone of you could have had the candy all by themselves?" asks the anthropologist. The children reply, "*Ubuntu*, how could any one of us be happy if all the others are sad?". *Ubuntu* is a generosity of spirit that speaks of our interconnection.

Something shifts in me. I recall the words of Norris and Sawyer (2016, p. 13): As the sites of the research duoethnographers "use themselves to assist themselves and others in better understanding the phenomenon under investigation". Writing against the background of *Ubuntu*, a powerful metaphor for inclusion, a series of fluid texts emerge. At the heart of this work is a sense of not belonging. In feeling separation, especially from someone with whom we disagree, there is a lack of connection to their experience. This separation can lead to an arrogance of assuming we do not belong to them and that we are somehow better than them! Could this be a form of discrimination? Our paper was published (Crestani & Taylor, 2021). An outcome that brings further collaborative opportunities as we take up new reviewer roles for the *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*. It's up to each of us to do the work of belonging. Let's think more about who we are and what we do and don't understand about our own perceptions of separation. I am what I am because of who we are (Hailey, 2008). We must keep talking about this ...