Joanna Beth Sinclair

A STORY ABOUT A MESSAGE
THAT WAS A STORY

MESSAGE FORM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO KNOWLEDGE FLOW

A Story about a Message that was a Story: Message Form and its Implications to Knowledge Flow

Key words: storytelling, narrative, knowledge flow, message form, public relations

Joanna Beth Sinclair
Hanken School of Economics
Department of Management and Organisation
P.O.Box 479, 00101 Helsinki, Finland

NORDIC ENVIRONMENTAL LABEL

441   002
Printed matter

This one's for the greatest storyteller I know, my Dad

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

TABLES

FIGURES

"My knack is spoken with my name", he said. "Taleswapper. I have a knack for stories."

"For making them up? We call that lying, hereabouts."

"I have a knack for remembering stories. But I tell only those that I believe are true sir. And I'm a hard man to convince. If you tell me your stories, I'll tell you mine, and we'll both be richer for the trade, since neither one of us loses what we started with."

Seventh Son by Orson Scott Card, 1987

1. INTRODUCTION – MY STORY

Dear reader,

Thank you for your interest! I have done my utmost to write this doctorate in an understandable form. My greatest aspiration is that most any layman could be able to read this piece of work and understand (lots of) it.

This thesis starts with my story. I explain how and why I originally got interested in the subject of storytelling and how I luckily ended up at the best work environment that I have ever had the privilege of belonging to: the Department of Management and Organization at Hanken, affectionately known as FLO. My hope is that starting with my own story will ease your journey into this thesis and help position both me as a researcher and the research I have completed.

So, without further ado, here's my story:

I used to be a workaholic. I got my first job at the age of thirteen washing dishes at the café on the second floor of Leppävaara's Maxi Market. From thereon I have always worked alongside my studies. I've sold shoes and hammocks, waited tables, assisted line chefs, cleaned offices and stores, worked as a personal helper/cleaner/nurse for a retired 90% invalid, been a sales secretary, an assistant at a consulting firm, translated what to me seems like a small bookshelf of text, worked as teacher and trainer and wrote somewhere around three hundred commercial articles as a freelance writer.

I often let work get in the way of my studies. My master's degree is a good example of this. The years I spent studying at the University of Helsinki passed me in somewhat of a haze. I devoted most of my waking hours to a consulting firm I worked for, with hectic days and stolen hours cramming for exams.

As it happened, I worked for the consultancy for just over four years, almost exactly the time that I spent on my master's degree. When I look back at that time, I can remember

endless hours, days, weeks and months of conducting interviews and reports for the consultants, and very, very little of the University.

I remember the exams, of course. Memorizing lists of rules of thumb written by great thinkers. Studying charts, models and theories in the wee hours of the morning. If pressured, I probably still could list great thinkers in the field of political science and summarize their main points. I know my Habermas, my Weber, my Mills and Marx. I cannot, however, remember fellow students or social gatherings. In an attempt to succeed in my studies and my work I forgot to live.

I graduated as a master of political science in the year 2000 with a major in administration, and minors in communication and management and organization from HKKK, the Helsinki School of Economics.

After graduation I took a brief breather of two weeks to figure out what I wanted to do with my education. I knew by then that consulting was not for me. The crazy hours put into reports that where then far too often buried and forgotten seemed pointless. A more important reason for not wanting to go into consulting was my master's thesis. In it, I set out to find out why public sector managers hire consultants. My research showed that one of their main reasons was to get a rubber stamp for their own decisions and somebody else to blame if things went wrong. I didn't want to end up as a professional scapegoat!

At this point of my life, the idea of applying to the public sector did not seem appealing either. Even though I could, on demand, quote and summarize great thinkers in the fields of political science and organizational theories, I had no burning desire to seek work where I should eventually try and implement anything on those subjects. The only subject that I had truly loved during my studies was communication.

So, armed with a full 37 study weeks from the topic of communication, I applied for a position in a PR firm. It was the spring of 2000. Business was booming, especially business with foreign clients in the aftermath of the Great IT Bubble. Hence, the first firm that I sent an application to hired me. It had nothing to do with my education and everything to do with the fact that I'm bilingual. They desperately needed an employee that they could market as a native English speaker. Strictly speaking, it's slightly pushing it to claim that I'm a native. But my name sounds foreign and my English is a lot better than the average Finns.

So, there I was – a PR professional overnight. I got a flashy title and a heavy workload. Before my first client meeting, my boss pulled me aside and told me that there was no need to let anybody know that I was a complete novice when it came to working with

the business press. I believe this approach is called throwing them in the deep end and seeing if they float.

I was 24 (well *almost* 25, trying desperately to look at least 30). I was dressed to impress and had way too much of an ego to let anybody know exactly how lost I felt. Let's just say that I can float. Just and just.

I learned quite a bit and rather quickly. It's actually amazing how much you can learn in the time span of just one single evening if you are panicking – say for instance that you have to give a two-hour lecture on a vaguely recognizable topic to a group of clients the following day.

The job called for long hours. To make matters worse, I was a painfully slow writer, so I spent most of my evenings and countless weekends finishing work that a true professional could have done during the working week. When I had an occasional free Sunday, I often put in the hours and tried to brush up on mass media theories to fill the whopping voids of ignorance in my newly found field of expertise. But in the end, the books only helped me so much. My best source of information was by far my colleagues.

These amazing, hard-as-steel professionals felt sympathy towards the newcomer and they helped me out of many a jam. They found time in their overworked schedules and patiently explained how things were done – and more importantly, why.

My knowledgeable colleagues did not quote textbooks to me. They told me stories. Stories about PR stunts that went bad. Stories about successful campaigns and complete flops. They told me about clients of theirs that had really "got it" and who enjoyed good relations with the press. Tales of the clients who refused to take any advice from the PR professionals they had hired and how they failed time and again in getting their message through to the press – and naturally blamed either the consultants or the press for their problems.

I soon noticed two things. Firstly, when I was face to face with a client, I could not remember my textbook examples, let alone explain them in an understandable way. I did, however, remember many stories about other PR ventures that my colleagues had told me about. I often ended up telling a few example stories to customers and then we would use these examples as a guide to create a PR game plan together.

Secondly, I noticed that taking advice from my colleagues worked. I did what they said and I got press coverage for my clients. The textbook advice? Let's just say that when I

sometimes attempted to conduct my work according to it, the results were not that good.

In my mind, the difference between the textbook answers and my colleagues' advice on how to deal with the media was, in short: storytelling.

When explaining things to me, my co-workers had strong opinions on how to do things. My colleagues did not call it storytelling – they called it including the human-interest factors, giving the big picture, or putting issues into the grander context of the current news agenda. But when you got down to it, it seemed to me that what the truly good professionals were doing, was packing their clients messages into a narrative form.

Moreover, I noticed that clients of mine who would meet up with journalists and stick to numbers and business jargon hardly ever got good media coverage. The ones who knew how to explain a situation going on in their business, especially one that linked in to some larger conversation going on in the press – they got coverage. The clients who told anecdotes and tales about themselves or their organizations, be it their hobbies or something unusual that the organization was doing – they got coverage.

It took me some time to understand that there was a common denominator between putting things into a larger context and simply telling seemingly meaningless anecdotes or trivia about your company. But when it hit me, I started telling clients:

"Put this into a story form", "If you are talking to journalists, tell stories".

The problem was, not all of my clients were willing to take my word for it. The one group of clients that I had the most difficulty with were the characteristic Finnish engineers. The engineers loved their numbers – and they had a hard enough time taking advice from a young woman as it was. Her telling them to tell stories was way too much for many. Time and again, when I tried to convince engineers into using storytelling, they would ask the same question: Where's the research to prove it? Who has studied that? Show me the numbers and I'll consider it.

I knew there was something to it. The problem was that I just could not find any proof. I went back to the library of my Alma Mater and searched, and searched and searched. There is a lot of great work on storytelling, but I could not find anything directly linking storytelling to managerial communication, official organizational communication, or public relations – let alone image or profitability, which are the primary reasons why a company would want to tell their stories in the first place.

I wanted to find proof, but I was rather busy. Weeks turned into months in a blur of press conferences, media training sessions and heaps of customer magazines that needed to be created in atrocious schedules. After a few years, however, the idea of taking a slight brake from the rat race and finding proof to my idea about storytelling started growing on me.

By then, I had failed in lots of things. My whopping ego had shrunk considerably, but I still had life-size ideas of my own abilities. I figured a doctorate could not possibly take all that long to do. A few years perhaps?

The first clue should have been writing up a research proposal. I reckoned it would take a few weeks. I thought I could do it after work, which in my line of business meant sometime between 8 pm and midnight. This was my first hardy helping of humble pie from the academic world.

I tried working on the research plan for a long time, but eventually had to admit that I needed a study leave to conduct it. Luckily, I had switched to work for another PR firm a few years earlier and my new boss was happy to give me a leave of absence. I know it was primarily due to the fact that business was not booming anymore, and I was by no means irreplaceable, but in the end, it is the outcome that matters. I had my leave.

The leave of absence was a turning point in my life. I had free time! I took a long vacation and started keeping contact with friends. I was genuinely happy for the first time in years and, to my surprise, much more productive in my work.

I spent days reading about subjects that I was interested in and felt happy writing. At this point I discovered knowledge management and found a great deal of interesting work regarding storytelling in an official organizational setting. Most of the ideas came from practitioners, but some ideas were avidly discussed in academic papers as well.

After finding knowledge management I wrote up a research plan that summarized my goals: I wanted to conduct research that would explain why storytelling works in business communication. I wanted to prove that even though stories sound like something fun and childish, something that you usually associate with free time, Disney and the likes, stories could be beneficial for companies. Stories could help companies "get their message through", be it to stakeholders or members of the organization itself.

When I finished my research plan I sent it to my old department at Helsinki University. I thought it would just be a matter of waiting for an answer, but fate would have it otherwise.

By coincidence, a client of mine had what we used to call "a PR situation" and they asked me to take a small break from my study leave to come over and work with them. The company was amongst my favorite clients, they had followed me when I changed jobs and I liked my contacts there. So I went over to see what the situation was. While we were working, I happened to mention that I had sent out my application for doctoral studies.

I remember the conversation like it would have happened yesterday. The senior consultant I was speaking with listen intently and then she said:

"Joanna, seriously, you really should send that plan to Hanken. Helsinki University is great, but there is a professor at Hanken, who would be perfect for your subject. His name is Karl-Erik Sveiby."

I had heard of Karl-Erik, but I had no idea that he was working in Finland as a professor. I did not think that my chances of getting accepted as a doctoral student to a Swedish-speaking work environment were very high, but I figured I had nothing to lose. So, almost on a whim I printed out another copy of my research plan and posted it to Hanken. Looking back, that whim was probably one of the best decisions I have made in my entire life.

Sometimes one gets the feeling that the universe is gently trying to nudge your life into a certain direction. The final stage of my application process was one of those times.

Hanken accepted me as a doctoral student on a Thursday. That particular Thursday happened to be Thanksgiving, which my half-American family always celebrates. I got the news of my acceptance that morning and in the evening I announced to my family that I was going to start as a doctoral student at Hanken in the beginning of the year. When I got a letter from Helsinki University accepting me as a doctoral student a few days later, it was too late for me to change my mind. After all, I had spent most of Thanksgiving telling my family about Hanken and how wonderful it was.

As for the rest of the story? Hanken turned out to be amazing. Research-wise and professionally, it has been outstanding in so many ways. My professors Martin Lindell and Karl-Erik Sveiby have helped me find my path, guiding and offering expertise along my way. I am especially grateful to Karl-Erik and his knowledge about storytelling and extensive experience from his years leading business journalists back in Sweden – I could not have hoped for a better thesis supervisor. Add into the package his patience for my newly found joie de vivre and sporadic tendency of prioritizing my family, friends and free time over long office hours, and the result has made my experience of being a doctoral student thoroughly enjoyable. The only thing that I wish Karl-Erik

would not have done is tell me to graduate. I have loved my years as a FLOster, and I hate to see them end.

Drama makes a long story, whereas happy times are easily summarized in a few short sentences. In my mind FLO equals happiness. I have been blessed with wonderful friendships made at FLO that have completely changed my life and who I am today.

Academically, FLO has given me more than I ever hoped for. The eclectic fields of study combined in one department at FLO produce a wonderful mixture of ideas. The years spent doing research amongst people knowledgeable in gender studies, wellbeing, international business, entrepreneurship, work-life balance and many other disciplines have broadened my understanding of organizations and work life considerably.

But alas, I could not procrastinate my doctorate forever in an attempt to stay put in my happy place. And eventually, I did find answers to the questions that I came looking for!

That pretty much sums it up. I have told my story in detail in an attempt to explain where I come from and why I decided to study storytelling. I included the bit about choosing Hanken over Helsinki University for Finnish readers – I think they find it unusual? At least I have been asked time and again how a non-Swedish speaker ended up at Hanken.

I decided to end my introductory story with another story. One that explains what I have been doing for the past years and roughly outlines my research. I chose to do so simply because I believe reading the rest of my doctorate will be a far easier task, if you know what to look forward to.

When I began my work at FLO, I started out by conducting interviews with PR professionals and business journalists, to get a better picture of how they felt storytelling affected knowledge sharing between the two parties.

I found out that PR professionals and journalists have somewhat mixed conceptions of what they think makes good PR: in a nutshell, both groups tend to claim that concise, clear cut data is often the best way to communicate. However, when giving examples of press releases or PR initiatives that they deemed "good", I at least noticed that stories were often mentioned.

I had been planning on conducting some kind of an experiment in the second phase of my research, but these results crystallized what I wished to do next: I wanted to test how people react to different kinds of communication instead of asking them how they

react. It seemed to me that everyone is subjective, even toward his or her own behavior – and thus testing would provide an interesting contrast to asking.

I ended up setting up a web-based experiment that mimicked a traditional lab test. In it, I had 137 business journalists read and rate the newsworthiness of different press releases. I describe the research design, methodology and data analyses in chapters 4 and 6, but as a doctorate is not a mystery novel, I will reveal the outcome here:

My research shows that when business journalists are presented with different versions of the same press release, they consider the story versions to have the highest newsworthiness.

This result is by no means the only interesting bit of information in this thesis. I introduce a fair number of fascinating research findings along the road, but they are creations of greater minds than mine. My contribution comes down to two things: the finding I just described and my theoretical contribution regarding knowledge flow and storytelling.

Typically, a doctoral thesis will follow a given structure that allows readers to bounce about between chapters in any which random order they choose, and yet the work will still make sense. Methodology is solely under methodology, conclusions are under conclusions etc. As I am intentionally breaking some traditions regarding academic writing in this thesis, I will end my introduction with this keen request: **please read this thesis as if it were a novel**. Start from the beginning and keep on reading pages in the order they have been printed. I am attempting to tell a story, with a beginning, a middle and an end, and I fear that the plot might be confusing to a reader following traditional academic reading style. To ease your path, here is a short overview of the chapters and their aims:

Chapter 2 introduces the world of knowledge management and the specific area of study that I am interested in – knowledge flow. It points out how the concept of "the message" is not adequately dealt with in current literature and presents my research question: *Does message form have an impact on the perceived usefulness of a message?*

Chapter 3 is a lengthy one, as it is devoted to giving an overview of story and storytelling, and explaining how this message form has been studied in the past. I attempt to do so by covering issues such as the history of narrative research, storytelling as a form of communication, organizational storytelling, storytelling as a chief sense-making device, and finally as a pivotal way in which humans remember, communicate and understand.

Chapter 4 acts as an introduction to the two chapters regarding empirical research that follow. I explain my epistemological and ontological stance – symbolic discourse – and provide an overview of my inductive research design: I first approach the phenomena I am studying through strictly qualitative means, and then move on to assess some of the findings from my initial qualitative research with a larger experiment, which, although leaning towards a more qualitative investigation in the end, still has many quantitative aspects to it.

Chapter 5 depicts the process and findings from the first stage of my empiric research based on 12 semi-structured interviews. The aim of this chapter is to take a first look at how storytelling might affect knowledge flow when a deliberate choice is made to utilize it as a form of communication.

Chapter 6 covers the process and findings from my web-based lab-test. It also pulls together the findings from both empiric stages of my research – and finally links my findings to knowledge flow theory.

Chapter 7 In the final closing chapter of my thesis I reflect on the research process and the many limitations of my research and, as you do, offer ideas of managerial implications and suggestions for future research.

So, here goes: in the following pages you will find the result of many happy years as a FLOster – my take on why storytelling is a great way to communicate and why organizations should make the most of it when they attempt to share knowledge.

2. THE KNOWLEDGE ERA?

Is knowledge merely a buzzword in business and management studies – or have we gone through a radical shift and become a knowledge society? It depends on how you look at it.

The first signs of intangibles arising interest have often been traced to the 1960's, to a time when Fritz Machlup spoke of the *knowledge industry* (1962) and Michael Polanyi discussed tacit knowledge (1966), soon after Peter Drucker had first used the term *knowledge worker* in1959.

Earlier references naturally exist. The British Whig Party's general adviser Nassau Senior wrote of *intellectual capital* as early as 1836 (Marr, 2005: 213), and some might pinpoint the origins of knowledge awareness as far back in history as to give credit to enlightenment philosopher John Locke and his integral definitions of knowledge from 1689 (Wallace, 2007: 96).

Likewise with most any change, the roots of thought can be traced back in history, but the widespread acceptance of a new understanding is harder to recognize. As Drucker explains (1993: 19), a fundamental revolution of thought occurred a long time ago and transpired almost abruptly:

*"This transformation was driven by a radical change in the meaning of knowledge. In both the West and Asia knowledge had always been seen as applying to **being**. Then, almost overnight, it came to be applied to **doing**. It had become a resource and a utility. Knowledge had always been a private good. Almost overnight it became a public good."*

Drucker depicts a revolution that has gone through several stages. First, between 1750 and 1900, capitalism and technology rapidly conquered the globe, although neither was by any means a new idea. During this stage, knowledge was applied to tools, processes and products, creating phenomena that we now refer to as the Industrial Revolution, the alienation of the new classes and with it, Communism. Drucker pinpoints the second stage of this revolution between 1880 and the end of World War II – a time during which knowledge in its new meaning was applied to work. The third phase, which we are living in still, is one where knowledge is being applied to knowledge itself. This time is what Drucker refers to as the Management Revolution, when *"knowledge is fast becoming the sole factor of production, sidelining both capital and labor"* (ibid: 19-21).

Akin to Drucker's prediction, management thinking relating to knowledge boomed during the 1990's. Baskerville & Dulipovici (2006: 83) quote Shoesmith (1996), Benson (1997) and Ruggles (1998) in explaining how the idea of knowledge management achieved a buzzword status by 1996 and was in common use amongst human resource managers by the next year. They describe an extreme shift, where in a matter of months most every executive was suddenly calling "leveraging organizational knowledge" their key responsibility.

But these are all indication of a knowledge awareness, of a shift in thinking. They are not marks of a knowledge society, although many choose to already call our era by that name (Housel & Bell, 2001, Van Beveren, 2002). In the beginning of our millennium, Drucker saw the knowledge society as the *next society*. A society that had not "quite arrived yet", but one that had progressed far enough for action. The markings of this time would be knowledge as a key resource, knowledge workers as the dominant workforce and corporation's consisting chiefly of top management, as all other workers could be outsourced (Drucker, 2002: 237, 291-292). In a sense, he envisioned the knowledge era corporation being run like a modern-day film set, where managers play the part of casting agent and producer and all other staff is hired according to production.

To answer my own question: is knowledge merely a buzzword, or *have* we became a knowledge society – or indeed reached what Toffler(s) coined as the Third Wave (1984) – I imagine both are true.

Perhaps every generation likes to think that they are living examples of the winds of change. Nevertheless, I believe we are at the gates of a new epoch. As of now, we are still too tangled in the change to see it clearly and give the actual shift precise historic dates[1]. A society can only be labeled in hindsight. But, perhaps, in 50 years time, people will look back at the turn of the millennium and see our time as the starting point of a revolution – the beginning of the knowledge era.

But be it a buzzword or a novel step for society, I feel safe in claiming that knowledge and its management is a timely topic. And as it is the academic area of discussion that this thesis is built upon, I sincerely hope you find it interesting.

---

[1] *Trying to pinpoint the beginning of the knowledge society reminds me of an assignment I chose to do for my high school history class during the very beginning of spring term, 1992. I wanted to explain the collapse of the U.S.S.R, what was happening in the Baltic countries, the home-arrest of Gorbatsôv, his resigning from presidency and all. But all this was taking place around us. In January 1992, neither teachers nor the media were able to give a coherent picture of what had occurred the previous autumn – the events were still too close and history was in the making. Today, anyone can Google the fall of the Soviet Union and get a description of what took place (or at least our common consensus of it). It seems that one needs a certain distance to be able to tell the tale of a revolution.*

I will soon move on to discuss both knowledge management as a discipline and my specific area of interest within it. Before doing so, I wish to go through some of the key concepts that I will be referring to throughout this title and provide readers with my understandings of the terms.

2.1 Introducing key terms: knowledge, information, explicit, tacit and knowledge flow

Knowledge is such a clever word. Multifarious and mellifluous, it brings to mind connotations of wisdom, understanding, insight and skill. Bookshelves of texts have been written in hope of defining it and interpretations are as abundant as definitions.

To explain knowledge, I feel the best place to start is to explain what it is not. Knowledge is not information. I largely understand information as "potential knowledge", as described by Sveiby (1994: 30). It is something that humans produce when they attempt to communicate their knowledge. Yet information is not a synonym to knowledge nor does communicating information ensure that knowledge is shared. Moreover, communicating information is by no means the only way in which humans attempt to share knowledge.

Why? Because knowledge is much more than information stored in human minds. Knowledge is a noun that typically refers to something embedded in the human mind – in essence, an awareness – or, as is it commonly defined: knowledge is *a justified true belief* [2](Nonaka et al, 1995: 86, 2006: 15).

Still, there is more to knowledge than mere belief. Knowledge is an understanding that we base our behavior on; as Sveiby and Skuthorpe define: *knowledge is a capacity to act – know-how and competence can be regarded as synonyms* (2006:176-177). Accordingly, cognitive science suggests that knowledge usually lies either in the mind of the beholder(s) or in the situation at hand [3].

Definitions that see knowledge as a justified true belief or the capacity to act explain the act of knowing at large. But at least to the bewildered doctoral student, these

---

[2]*Defining knowledge as a justified true belief has been criticised, most notably by Gettier (1963) and Chisholm (1982, 43-49) as one can imagine scenarios where a justified true belief does not constitute as knowledge. However, although a justified true belief need not always be knowledge, knowledge can largely be determined with these words.*

[3]*Classic cognitive science theory suggests that knowledge in the mind consists of mental representations (Thagard, 2005, 4). A multitude of ideas have emerged from established approaches, such as Clark's (1989) "007 principle", which suggests that: "..evolved creatures will neither store nor process information in costly ways when they can use the structure of the environment and their operations upon it as a convenient stand-in for the information processing operations concerned. That is, know only as much as you need to know to get the job done". (p. 64) whereas the newest trends in cognitive science suggest that knowledge is situational (The Cambridge Hand book of Situational Cognition, 2009, 7-9).*

definitions explain only part of the puzzle. First, I believe that knowledge should be seen both as a justified true belief <u>and</u> a capacity to act. And second, knowledge should not be defined without regard to its form. In knowledge management, dividing knowledge into two forms: explicit and tacit, has become (a criticized) standard of the field. Thus, before providing my own understanding of knowledge, I fear I must first explain how I comprehend the terms *explicit* and *tacit*.

As far as I have understood, when an individual is largely aware of what gives her the capacity to act, she has *explicit knowledge* and is thus better equipped to try and communicate it to others. Correspondingly, if this capacity to act is not entirely understood by its beholder - or is understood on such a level that one is not able to fully communicate the meaning to others - it is *tacit (*van Winkelen and McKenzie, 2007b: 529).

In knowledge management the word tacit refers to silent knowledge. A kind of knowledge where ones capacity to act is not such that one does not fully realize its full scope and thus cannot explicitly communicate it to others, for one cannot deliberately communicate what one does not explicitly realize.

Tacit and explicit are not opposites nor does the presence of one mean elements of the other are not incorporated in an act of knowing. On the contrary, automatic, unconscious tacit knowledge is present in most all repertoires of action and thought (Baumard, 1999, 76) and the agility that allows us to slip from one knowledge mode to another, from explicit to tacit and back, has become a crucial strategic asset to an organization (ibid, 228).

Tacit knowledge sharing and knowledge creation often takes place through shared experience (Sveiby, 1997:50), which allows other people to interpret the body language and behavior of their peers and gain an insight towards their tacit knowledge. Most likely, they will not be able to comprehend or articulate the knowledge any better than the original source, yet they will internalize it, i.e. gain the capacity to act.

With these definitions in mind, the time has come to provide readers with a definition of how knowledge is understood in this title.

In sum, knowledge is a mental construct; an idea that an individual has and believes to be true and which she has internalized in such a way that she can act upon it. Often times, knowledge is tacit and action-oriented (Sveiby 1997: 29-31). Thus, in my understanding, ***knowledge is a capacity to act, which can be either explicit or tacit or a combination of both to the individual in whose mind the knowledge exists***.

But the buck does not stop here. I have communicated my understanding of information, knowledge, tacit and explicit. In order to lead readers into my research, I must now tackle the hardest definition of all: knowledge flow.

Knowledge flow is fuzzy term with many definitions. Thus I will begin my explanation with a brief introduction of the connotation of the terms: *knowledge transfer*, *knowledge sharing* and *knowledge flow,* in order to set the stage for a definition.

These three terms are used interchangeably by some, whereas others perceive a difference between the meanings. As Mäkelä (2006: 20) discusses, *knowledge transfer* can refer to knowledge exchange on an organizational level between groups and units. *Knowledge sharing* is a close concept, yet denotes knowledge exchange on an interpersonal level. In her definition *knowledge flow* and *knowledge exchange* are considered neutral terms, which can be used to discuss all knowledge movements within an organization.

In the Encyclopedia of Knowledge Management (2006: 542-543) knowledge transfer is defined as:

"The focused, unidirectional communication of knowledge between individuals, groups, or organizations such that the recipient of knowledge (a) has a cognitive understanding, (b) has the ability to apply the knowledge, or (c) applies the knowledge."

Knowledge sharing (ibid: 542), on the other hand, is defined as:

"The exchange of knowledge among individuals within and among teams, organizational units and organizations. This exchange may be focused or unfocused, but it usually does not have a clear objective."

Following Schwartz (2007: 250) and his explanation of there being no universal agreement on the definitions of *knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing*, nor: *"any extreme clarity as to the distinction between the two"*, The definitions provided by the Encyclopedia of Knowledge Management will be adopted with some modifications to describe knowledge transfer and sharing, which, in my understanding, together constitute knowledge flow.

I will first address the definition of knowledge transfer. The only change I wish to make to the definition provided by the Encyclopedia of Knowledge Management is as follows: instead of claiming that knowledge transfer would be the focused, unidirectional

communication of *knowledge*, I see knowledge transfer as **the focused, unidirectional communication of *information*, which leads to the recipient (i) gaining a cognitive understanding, (ii) having the ability to apply what they learned, or in fact (iii) applying what they learned.**

Similarly, I choose to define knowledge sharing as: **the exchange of *information or a shared experience* among individuals within and among teams, organizational units and organizations, *which leads to knowledge sharing*. This exchange may be focused or unfocused, but it usually does not have a clear objective.**

These distinctions to the definitions provided by the Encyclopedia of Knowledge Management are due to how I understand the word knowledge. As explained above, knowledge is not an object. It cannot be transferred as such. Knowledge is a mental construction. It can be created alone or in a group – most of our understanding of the world is socially constructed. Knowledge can be shared, absolutely – but not straightforwardly in a sense of directly giving the other person the capacity to act. In order to share knowledge, one needs to either communicate by sharing information that the other person may interpret, (and/or) experience something together with another person, (and/or) provide another person with the means of experiencing something (van Winkelen and McKenzie, 2007a: 172).

Taken together, these two – knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer – create part of we call knowledge flow. Knowledge flow is not limited to cover only the sharing and transfer of knowledge. It may and often does include other elements as well, as knowledge is rarely transferred as such, but often transmutated and socially constructed, as noted above (ibid.). The main point I wish to make with the definitions I have provided is that when a deliberate choice is made to *attempt to make knowledge flow*, information – the flow of messages – is often used as a means to achieve the end.

2.2 Knowledge management

Now that the terms information, knowledge and knowledge flow have been defined, the time has come to move on to look at the bigger picture. What does it mean to speak about *knowledge management*?

With the knowledge era at hand, it implies a great variety of things, for much research is conducted around the idea of managing knowledge.

Knowledge management research can be categorized in any number of ways. The most relevant separation is plausibly one between research looking upon how to manage

humans and research looking at technical solutions relating to knowledge intensive organizations. Sveiby refers to these two tracks of research as the *people track* and the *information technology track*[4].

Under these tracks, several schools of thought can be distinguished. A Scandinavian stream of research was originated by Karl-Erik Sveiby in 1986, when he first wrote about managing knowledge workers and the know-how company [5] His early work set the path for two intertwined disciplines, *knowledge management* and *intellectual capital*[6], both of which have produced prolific research, first in the Nordic countries and gradually across Europe and the rest of the world as well.

An Asian stream of knowledge management stemmed from innovation research and was made renowned by Nonaka and his various co-authors (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995). Nonaka's theory of knowledge creation and his interpretation of Polanyi's original work on tacit knowledge are among the few globally acknowledged principles that most streams of knowledge management refer to as seminal[7].

While the *people track* has largely been led by Asian and Scandinavian authors, North-American scholars such as Verna Allee and David Teece have also created considerable contributions to this area of research. A prominent example is Thomas A. Stewart, whose title: *Intellectual Capital: the New Wealth of Organizations* (1997) ultimately marked the beginning of a new discipline for many North American scholars – many of whom were initially intrigued by the idea as a result of Stewart's popular article from 1991 [8]

The *people track* shares many understandings with another academic paradigm that was growing concurrently in the 1990's – research regarding the learning organization. Parallels between ideas held by the KM people track and influential organizational learning authors such as Argyris, Schon, Schein and Senge are evident (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2003: 126-127, Gao et al. 2008: 11).

---

[4] *This useful division can be found on Sveiby's website: www.sveiby.com*

[5] *Published in Swedish under the title of:* Kunskapsföretaget

[6] *Notable examples include Edvinsson and Malone's fundamental work on intellectual capital (1997) and the Meritum Group's work on setting up standards for intellectual capital (2002); Danish research on intellectual capital reporting (Mouritsen 1998), work-related well-being (Ahonen 2000).*

[7] *Nonaka's titles are widely cited. For example, his 2005 title: The Concept of "ba" Building a Foundation for Knowledge Creation, co-authored together with Noboru Konno, was marked in Google Scholar as having been cited by 1444 authors in February 2009.*

[8] *Fortune, June issue, 1991: Brainpower: How Intellectual Capital is Becoming America's Most Important Asset.*

The information technology track of knowledge management mostly stems from North American research, with roots deep in information management and artificial intelligence (Wiig 1988: 209-233, Stewart 2001: xv).

Gao et al – who concur with Sveiby by labeling the two main approaches to knowledge management research into the "hard track" (IT) and the "soft track" (People) – mention instigators such as Boisot (1995) and Davenport & Prusak (1998) as exemplary contributors to this track, which they construe as a decidedly technology-driven stream, where knowledge management is largely looked upon as an advanced level of discussing technology, data mining and other technical advancements (2008: 10):

"Typical terms used by this group are: capture, codify, store, diffuse, reuse, transfer… The basic assumption is that information technologies can accelerate the flow of knowledge."

The division of knowledge management research into two tracks is useful, but plausibly leaves out some of the subtle differences between contributors to the softer track – and may give too much scholarly esteem to some of the more IT focused research with a practitioner-based motivation. Moreover, an IT-focus or background does not indicate that a scholar would not acknowledge the importance of people issues or ultimately shift their research toward a people focus. As Wiig (1999: 164) points out, technology only goes so far – people are the true intelligent agents.

Although distinctions are necessary to explain a field of interest, labeling can prove exasperating in our time. Authors with a theoretical background in organizational culture (Graham & Pizzo 1996, De Long & Fahey 2000) can readily be placed under the heading of people track, whereas knowledge management researchers with a background in strategic management (Conner & Prahalad 1996, Eisenberg 1997) or capabilities and competencies (Leonard-Barton 1992), may be slightly harder to label (Baskerville & Dulipovici 2006: 87). Similarly, authors interested in knowledge transfer may belong to either or indeed neither (Markus 2001 / information technology, Hansen et al. 1999 / people track, Kostova 1998 / international business).

The Management Revolution that Drucker predicted has (be it a fact or merely hype) influenced most every domain of management related studies. Research regarding issues such as knowledge sharing or intangible value is by no means restricted to the field of KM. These topics provoke widespread interest in fields such as marketing (Simon et al 1993, Srivastava et al. 1998, Grönroos 2004), communication (Deephouse 2000, Fombrun 2001) and international business (Nahapiet & Goshal 1998, Youndt et al. 2004). Cross-disciplinary research collaborations, the online accessibility of

academic publications and ease of information retrieval have, in a sense, made many academic boundaries ambiguous and more political than practical.

All told, the heritage of the Management Revolution can be perceived as both a widespread awareness amongst management researchers regarding the indispensable importance of knowledge as an asset; and new academic disciplines such as knowledge management and intellectual capital research, which consider the management of knowledge and its fiscal or organizational implications their primary focus.

These fields have brought forth much new understanding, such as Nonaka & Takeuchi's spiral of knowledge creation, also known as the SECI model (1995), the knowledge based theory of the firm (Barney 1991, Grant 1996, Spender 1996) and Sveiby & Simons' findings linking collaborative climate and knowledge work effectiveness (2002). Jaspahara's interdisciplinary framework that conveys KM as a field with three principal pillars: organizational learning, systems and technology and culture and strategy (2005: 136); and finally, Nonaka et al.'s further developments on the Process Theory of the Knowledge Based Firm, including their adaptation of Aristotle's notion of *phronesis*[9] (2008).

Notwithstanding the fact that the field's theoretical development is still in the making – or the actuality that there is a lack of plain, unified foundations in knowledge management (Nonaka & Peltokorpi, 2006: 81, Lyles & Easterby-Smith, 2003: 644) – the bequest of knowledge related theory produced by these disciplines is already notable. As Nonaka (2006: 1191) describes the legacy of the theory of the knowledge creating organization: *Leadership is about enabling knowledge creation, - not controlling and directing it.*

This opening account of the origin and growth of knowledge management brings me to a topic, which I consider to be my theoretical contribution: discussing certain oversights in a particular niche of knowledge management, theories regarding knowledge flow.

2.3 Oversights in knowledge flow – where did the message go?

It has always struck me as odd how organizations communicate so very differently depending on whether they are trying to sell something or transfer knowledge.

Marketing uses countless approaches to gain a receivers' attention. It borrows from psychology, communication theory, semiotics, aesthetics, sociology – most any field

---

[9] *Phronesis, a term originally brought forth by Aristotle, is the ability to grasp the essence of a situation in process and take the action necessary to create change, (Nonaka et al. 2008: 4-5). It is, in essence, practical wisdom.*

that gives insight into how human desire works. The key objective is to establish a craving in the consumer and encourage her to act upon it. Making a message attractive to the receiver is the underlying purpose of this line of communication.

In internal communication – where organizations do not directly pay for the media used and cannot easily asses the cost productivity of the communication – there seems to be considerably less emphasis on making the message attractive. Might this be connected to some limitation in managerial theory regarding knowledge sharing?

It is a conceivable explanation, as there seem to be two oversights in knowledge flow theory – at least when examined from the perspective of a doctoral student with roots in communication.

First, knowledge flow theory does not directly address the message or its encoding, i.e. message form [10] as a factor influencing knowledge flow. This oversight is connected to another – current theory does not sufficiently consider the myriad of messages an individual faces at any given time. Messages, which often compete for an individual's attention with message form.

I will first take up the issue of message form. A number of contributors to knowledge flow theory do not sufficiently address it in their work. I shall begin this argument by looking at two notable sources; Szulanski and Gupta & Govindarajan – not because they are the only contributors to knowledge flow theory who leave message form out, but because they are examples of authors who claim to have based their work on communication theory, yet their work shows no sign of a central building block of communication theory – the message – being considered.

Szulanski's (1995, 1996, 2003) developed the influential theory of Knowledge Stickiness by building on the work of von Hippel (1994). The primary idea of knowledge stickiness is that there are certain factors, which may make knowledge "sticky" and therefore impair the flow of knowledge. Szulanski proposes that knowledge stickiness is affected by four elements: *the knowledge, the source, the recipient and the context*. These elements are further derived into nine variables, which he hypothesizes will predict stickiness. They include causal ambiguity, unproven knowledge, the lack of motivation of the source, the lack of credibility of the source, the lack of motivation of the recipient, the lack of absorptive capacity of the recipient, the lack of retentive capacity of the recipient, barren organizational context and the arduous relationship between source and recipient (ibid. 2000: 22, 2003: 59 & 97).

---

[10] *As explained in The Communication Handbook (Cleary, 2004, 3), encoding refers to the act of making an idea accessible to others; of putting an idea into a code so that it becomes perceptible to the receiver. This can be done using a verbal code – language, whether spoken or written, or a nonverbal code – a code without words or language. I have chosen to use the term "form" instead of encoding as I find it better describes the issue at hand. To me, "encoding" brings to mind a rather strong image of IT and coding.*

Szulanski quotes the early mathematical model of communication by Shannon and Weaver, and explains that it is a starting point to most research in knowledge transfer [11]. He maintains that their fundamental elements of communication are a basis from which he has derived knowledge stickiness theory (2003: 59):

"The other elements of this typology are derived using Shannon's SRMC, i.e. source, recipient, message and channel (Rogers, 1994) as organizing metaphor."

Shannon's Mathematical Theory of Communication from 1948, and his and Weaver's subsequent model of communication, are widely considered a foundation from which a large number of current theories relating to communication have been derived. The model was based on studies conducted in Bell telephone laboratories during the Second World War; where researchers aspired to assess the most effective method to utilize communication channels, namely telephone lines and radio waves. The model has since received widespread criticism for perceiving communication as a manipulation process, where the sender of the message is considered to hold main responsibility for the communication and the receiver's interpretation is not considered (Fiske, 1990: 19-24).

While Shannon and Weaver's model is receptive to criticism, much can be said in its defense. Namely, that even though they are missing several elements of communication, the ones that they *do* include are imperative for the process. Without a source, a channel, a message, and recipient, there is no communication. As mentioned above, Szulanski only took three of these elements into consideration when looking at knowledge stickiness: the source, the recipient and the context. As knowledge stickiness theory regards barriers of knowledge flow, Szulanski suitably adds "knowledge" as a fourth element to this group, but does not explain omitting the message [12].

Gupta and Govindarajan (2000: 475) look at effective cross-border transfer of organizational knowledge and quote a more recent understanding of communication as

---

[11] As Szulanski explains (2003: 31): *"The mathematical theory of communication (Shannon and Weaver, 1949), the theoretical underpinning for the signaling metaphor, has been deemed the most important single stimulus for the development of other models and theories in communication (Serevin and Tankerd, 1988). It served as the 'paradigm for communication study, providing single, easily understandable specification of the main components of the communication act: source, message, channel, receiver' (Rogers, 1994:438). This theory has been the main reference in the study of knowledge transfer.*

[12] *Szulanski has seen the problem in his early theory and is working to correct it. Wharton Marketing Faculty publishes researchers' work-in-progress online for others to comment on and there you can find a yet unpublished article by Szulanski, Winter, Cappetta, and Van den Bulte, called "Opening the Black Box of Knowledge Transfer: The Role of Replication Accuracy", which addresses almost exactly this issue. The papers can be read at http:// mktgsun.wharton.upenn.edu/ideas/currentresearchpapers.html.*

the basis of their theory [13] which includes the key elements of: a message, a sender, a coding scheme, a channel, transmission through the channel, a decoding scheme, a receiver, and the assignment of meaning to the decoded message (2000: 475).

Gupta and Govindarajan propose five forces that may have an impact on knowledge flow: 1) the value of the source unit's knowledge stock; 2) the motivational disposition of the source unit; 3) the existence and richness of transmission channels; 4) the motivational disposition of the target unit, which essentially refers to the NIH-syndrome[14]; and 5) the absorptive capacity of the target unit. They state that they look at procedural types of knowledge, not declarative and quote Daft and Levin's ideas on Media Richness by mentioning the richness/bandwidth of communication links – as captured in aspects such as informality – and the openness and density of communications, as well as elements relating to the richness of the transmission channel.

Gupta and Govindarajan take communication theory into consideration much more comprehensively than Szulanski and offer a commendable theoretical understanding of knowledge flow – apart from omitting the message[15].

The concepts of information and messages are by no means completely overlooked in knowledge flow literature. McKenzie and van Winkelen (2006:56) mention "consistent and comparable" information as one of the key areas that senior managers seeking to improve knowledge flow concentrate on. Likewise, Kogut and Zander take the form of the message into account in their 1995 study on knowledge transfer speed, where they showed that the form of the message has an impact on knowledge flow. As they proposed and verified (80 & 87):

Proposition: The more easily a capability can be communicated and understood, the shorter the times to transfer or imitation – Conclusion: The transfer of manufacturing capabilities is influenced by the degree to which they may be codified and taught.

---

[13] *To quote them directly on this matter: "As Krone, Jablin, and Putnam (1987) have observed in their review of communication theory, even though different communication scholars have focused more (or less) heavily on different elements of the communication process, virtually all of them recognize the following as the basic elements of any two-person communication: a message, a sender, a coding scheme, a channel, transmission through the channel, a decoding scheme, a receiver, and the assignment of meaning to the decoded message. Consistent with these ideas from communication theory, we conceptualize knowledge flows (into or out of a subsidiary) to be a function of the following five factors…Barriers or facilitators to the transfer of knowledge can manifest themselves in any or all of these five factors."*

[14] *NIH= not invented here. The idea is that people may not want to accept knowledge that they have not thought about themselves. I will come back to this term in much more detail later on in the thesis (p.97)*

[15] *Gupta and Govindarajan's earlier contribution on knowledge flow from 1991 has the same oversight. They state that information is one means by which knowledge is shared (773) and then proceed to disregard attributes of the information as possible barriers or enablers or knowledge flow.*

Bresman et al. made a similar point (1999: 447), when they stipulated that knowledge transfer success is also affected by its articulability, or the extent to which knowledge can be verbalized, written, drawn or otherwise articulated. They concluded that explicit knowledge transfer was positively associated with articulability and that tacit knowledge transfer was negatively associated with articulability – thus making a strong case for the notion that message form should be taken into consideration when looking at knowledge flow.

A number of early contributions to knowledge management theory included the message and highlight its relevance to knowledge management (e.g. Quintas et al. 1997: 385, Wiig 1999: 163). Leonard and Strauss (in Drucker et al. 1999: 118) pinpointed the importance of a message well:

"Forget the golden rule. Don't treat people the way you want to be treated. Tailor communications to the receiver instead of the sender. In a cognitively diverse environment, a message sent is not necessarily a message received. Some people respond well to facts, figures, and statistics. Others prefer anecdotes. Still others digest graphic presentations most easily. Information must be delivered in the preferred "language" of the recipient if it is to be received at all."

Yet today, much research regarding knowledge flow either overlooks the message or mentions it in passing without specific consideration. A good example comes from a comprehensive review of possible barriers to knowledge sharing within a corporation, conducted by Riege et al. (2005: 23). They cover three-dozen barriers to knowledge sharing, providing a wide-ranging assessment on the topic. Riege et al. mention poor written or verbal communication skills as a possible barrier to knowledge sharing, stating that: *"Effective communication, both verbal (the most common vehicle of sharing tacit knowledge), and written, is fundamental to effective knowledge sharing"*. The idea of message form as a barrier to knowledge transfer may be embedded in this notion, but it is not spelled out or discussed further.

Another prominent example is Argote and Ingram (2000). Their conceptual framework on knowledge transfer as a competitive advantage has been influential[16] in scoping the understanding many scholars hold of knowledge flow today. Their work *nearly* disregards the message.

Argote and Ingram mention message form in passing on page 157 when they present an interesting interpretation of Kogut and Zander's findings, stating that: *Explicit, codifiable knowledge that is embedded in technology has been found to transfer more*

---

[16] *Google Scholar lists Argote & Ingram's work to as being cited by over 600 authors. In Contrast, Szulanski's ideas on stickiness from 1996 have been cited by over 2000 authors. Gupta and Govindarajan's article from 2000 has been cited well over 800 times and their early contribution from 1991 also ranks up high with over 600 authors citing it.*

readily than knowledge not embedded in technology (e.g., see Zander & Kogut, 1995). Later on in their article they mention message form again in two instances: *"As noted previously, codified knowledge transfers more readily than knowledge that is not codified"* (160), and again in passing while mentioning Hansen's 1999 study (162). Their conclusion does not include a mentioning of any features relating to the form of the message as an influencing factor in knowledge flow.

Subsequent research discussing knowledge flow without regard to the message is plentiful. For instance Hislop (2002) discusses the problems in utilizing information technology in knowledge sharing without any mentioning of the message. Other similar examples include, for instance, Goh (2002), Kalling (2003) and Ardichvili et al. (2003.)

2.4 Explicit knowledge is everything but – until it is conveyed through messages

Why does knowledge flow theory to pay so little attention to the message? The answer might lie in the fact that a large body of knowledge management literature is concerned with finding best ways of sharing tacit knowledge[17]. And as theorists such as Nonaka (1994: 6) and Sveiby (1997: 50) have suggested, tacit knowledge is best shared through experience and tradition. Perhaps somewhere along the line, some scholars failed to remember that while tacit knowledge is ideally shared through experience, information is still largely used when individuals attempt to share knowledge?

Alternatively, the oversight might be due to a misreading of Nonaka. Nonaka was one of the primary forefathers to take Polanyi's concept of tacit knowledge and bring it to the attention of 21st century scholars. He explains that knowledge can be divided into tacit and explicit and as tacit resides within individuals, it is difficult to verbalize and codify – and is thus often acquired through imitation and practices. As he states (1994: 6): *One important point to note here is that an individual can acquire tacit knowledge without language.*

This insight has triggered a great deal of interest and valuable research (Haldin-Herrgård 2005), but perhaps it has also misled some to underestimate the importance of concepts such as language, tone, genre, and other features included in the term message, as they tend to relate to explicit knowledge?[18].

---

[17] *However, even if overlooking explicit knowledge and the message in knowledge flow theory were, in general, due to extended focus on tacit knowledge, the theories criticized earlier were not created to examine the flow of solely tacit knowledge. See: Gupta & Govindarajan (2000, 491) and Szulanski (2003, 59).*

[18] *There are, of course, notable exceptions in other academic disciplines, even though scarce in the field of knowledge management. For instance Barner-Rasmussen & Björkman 2007 address issues such as language fluency as a factor influencing shared vision in a multinational context.*

If one reads her Nonaka slightly further, two notions become quite evident. First, explicit knowledge forms one of the cornerstones of transferring tacit knowledge and second, both forms of knowledge are vital in new knowledge creation:

"The process of articulating tacit knowledge as explicit knowledge is externalization. When tacit knowledge is made explicit, knowledge is crystallized, thus allowing it to be shared by others, and it becomes the basis of new knowledge." (Nonaka and Teece, 2001: 17)

"In organizations knowledge is created and expanded through social interaction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge" (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995: 61).

But exemplifying that explicit knowledge is important in both knowledge creation and the transfer of tacit knowledge is not my main point. The primary misconception troubling me is the way in which explicit knowledge – and the means by which its sharing is often attempted, a message – is overlooked in knowledge flow theory in general. It is disregarded to such an extent that it makes one wonder if some scholars perhaps consider explicit knowledge straightforward to transfer? Nonaka makes no such suggestion. He quotes Polanyi (1994: 3) in explaining that "explicit" knowledge refers to knowledge that is transmittable in formal, systematic language. It is important to note that the term Nonaka uses is *transmittable*, not *transmitted*.

Knowledge, however explicit, is rarely explicit to others as such without some kind of communication process involving information. In Nonaka's (1994: 15) words:

"Information is the flow of messages, while knowledge is created and organized by the very flow of information, anchored on the belief and commitments of its holder."

2.5 Knowledge flow without a message is like basketball without a ball – communication theory explains why

To grasp the relevance of why the message and its form are vital to knowledge flow, one needs only to go back to the bare bones communication theory. All the fundamental theories on human communication, whatever their specific area of focus, take into consideration the following components: the participants in the communication process, their motivational and cognitive characteristics, the message itself, and the channel by which it is shared (McLuhan 1964, Blumler and Katz, 1974, Brown and Levinson 1987, O'Keefe 1989).

Communication inherently involves a message. As Littlejohn (1999: 101) explains, *"Communication is a message-centered process that relies on information."*

The roots of communication theory lie in early contributions of information science, such as Shannon's Mathematical Model of Communication. As explained earlier, the model has since received considerable criticism, but some of its main features have largely influenced how communication is regarded today. One of its most important contributions is Shannon's idea of information as entropy. Figure 1 is borrowed from Shannon's Mathematical Theory of Communication (1948)[19] and illustrates most of the basic elements of his theory.

34   *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*

INFORMATION
SOURCE   TRANSMITTER   RECEIVER   DESTINATION

SIGNAL   RECEIVED
SIGNAL

MESSAGE   MESSAGE

NOISE
SOURCE
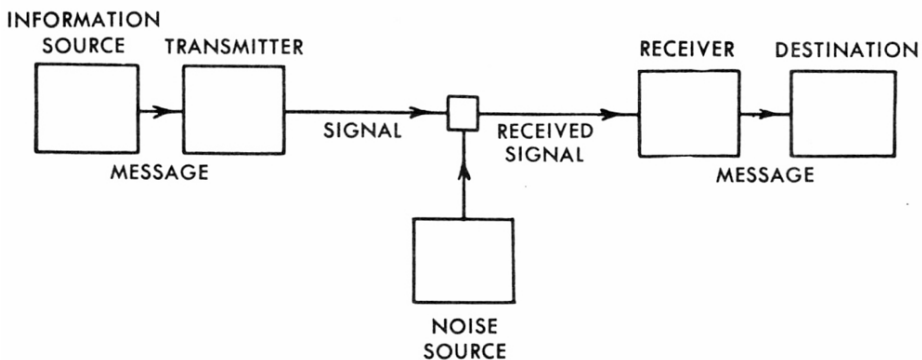
Fig. 1. — Schematic diagram of a general communication system.

Figure 1: Shannon's mathematical model of communication

What the model depicts is a mathematic model of the process of information sending and receiving *after* the receiver has made the choice of paying attention to a message. Shannon notes that interference may occur during the communication process as well (noise), but more importantly, the theory measures information in terms of entropy:

"Information is, we must steadily remember, a measure of one's freedom of choice in selecting a message. The greater this freedom of choice, and hence the greater the information, the greater is the uncertainty that the message actually selected is some particular one. Thus greater freedom of choice, greater uncertainty, greater

---

[19] *Reprinted by ACM SIGMOBILE Mobile Computing and Communications Review 2001, vol 5, issue 1, Special issue dedicated to Claude E. Shannon.*

information go hand in hand." (Weaver in Shannon and Weaver 1959, quoted from Sveiby 1994: 30)

Sveiby (ibid) – concurring with Sotto (1993) – depicts that Shannon sees information as *potential knowledge* rather than knowledge, and thus:

"By articulating our knowledge into facts or information we move into potentiality, over which we have no power. In this light information should not be seen as knowledge when communicated via media, information is meaningless itself. Meaning is constructed by the receiver." (Ibid)

As Berlo (1960:174) explained, meanings are in *people* not in the message. They are, however, derived from how the receiver interprets the message *if* they choose to interpret it.

The message is "the actual physical product from the source". When we talk, the message is speech. If we communicate in writing, the message is the text. When we paint, the illustration we create is the message. And when we gesture, the movements of our arms and expressions on our face are the message (ibid: 54).

There are many communication theories that focus solely on different aspects of the message. For example, *Traits explanations* focus on the relationship between particular personality type and certain sorts of messages. *State explanations* look at how certain states of mind affect the sending and receiving of messages. And *Process explanations* look at *how* individuals actually send and receive messages, in an attempt to capture mechanisms of your mind. Interesting theories also include examples such as Rhetorical sensitivity – the tendency to adapt messages to audiences (Littlejohn, 1999: 101-103).

Much communication research revolves around how individuals and media audiences choose messages, why they choose to pay attention to certain media and for what reasons. Typical examples include effects research, uses and gratification research and reception analyses (McQuail, 2005: 55-58). Although differing in their points of interest, all see receivers as active participants in the communication process. Reception analyses serves as an adequate example of some of the underlying assumptions that audience research holds. McQuail illustrates the field as follows:

"Like cultural studies, reception analysis speaks of media messages as culturally and generically coded discourses, while defining audiences as agents of meaning production. Like U&G [Uses and Gratification] research, reception analysis conceives

of recipients as active individuals who can do a variety of things with media in terms of consumption, decoding and social uses." (Ibid: 60)

In essence, there seems to be an epistemological difference between knowledge management theories regarding knowledge flow and communication theory.

The latter may focus on the message, context, channel, sender or the receiver, but whatever their specific area of interest, they realize that all of these elements have a crucial role in communication. Most all current communication theorists, without regard to their research topic – be it organizational communication, interpersonal communication, mass media, etc. – presume that in all communication, both sender and receiver have reasons for choosing to communicate and to pay attention to communication. In regard to the receiver, communication theories reason that frequently, a choice is being made between a variety of different forms of communication, and that often times these different messages compete for the receiver's attention. And finally, communication theories generally acknowledge that all human communication results in interpretation (Fiske 1990: 1-4, Hargie et al. 2004: 1-5, de Bens et al, 2005: 55, Miller, 2005: 6-9).

Knowledge flow theories grasp many of these underlying assumptions, but they focus too heavily on the source of knowledge and its relation to the receiver as focal issues affecting knowledge sharing. The communication skills of the knowledge source are rarely mentioned[20], and the receiver's role is often reduced to two general components that are not linked to any specific act of communication: 1) the receiver's capability to absorb knowledge and 2) the receiver's motivation to absorb knowledge (Gupta and Govindarajan, 2000).

But this is only part of the predicament. As I stated early on in this chapter, I have two concerns regarding knowledge flow theory. The first is the absence of the message. The second dilemma is the scope of communication that prevalent theories focus on.

2.6 Are we forgetting information overload?

It is indeed a curious thing. Although the paradigm of knowledge management has bloomed during the information era, and comments on the excess of messages are common (McCune 1999, Van Zandt 2004), knowledge flow theory doesn't aptly address the abundance of messages that compete for an individual's attention – or the fact that receiving and interpreting communication is always a matter of choice.

---

[20] *Examples of work that do discuss this issue include, Riege (2005, 23), and Parent et al. (2007, 81-93) who attempt to address this gap in research in their article: A systems-based dynamic knowledge transfer capacity model. They conclude that for knowledge transfer to succeed, the system must possess knowledge generation, dissemination, absorption, and adaptation and responsiveness capacities.*

Many studies on knowledge flow concentrate on studying the transfer of best practices and look at a single or selected transfer process(es) at a time. Thus it is understandable that they do not address multiple messages, even though it is plausible that multiple messages might influence the sharing of the studied practice. I have no strong objection to best-practice sharing research focusing on a limited number of communication processes at a time. But the lack of interest toward this area in general is troubling.

Serenko, Bontis and Hardie (2007 [21]) include the idea of information overdose in their investigation of organizational size as an influencing factor to knowledge flow. As they conclude, information "pollution", i.e. large amounts of irrelevant information, inevitably leads to individuals finally ignoring incoming messages, as the receivers have no means of processing them.

The volumes of messages that are competing for an individual's attention are not, however, addressed thoroughly in knowledge flow theory. Sveiby illustrates the importance of this question in his 1994 title, where he explains how increased volumes of information do not increase potential knowledge:

"The effect of the large and increasing number of sources sending out information today is rather the opposite; that chaos and entropy increases in the world as a whole" (1994: 104).

By and large, when the issue of information overload is mentioned in knowledge flow theory, it is often addressed as a problem that should be dealt with primarily by eliminating competing messages. For instance Kanawattanachai and Yoo (2007: 110), suggest that knowledge flows should be simplified by eliminating parallel flows.

Information overload and its effect on an individual's "message screening" behavior are of specific concern in many other disciplines. A good example is the study of marketing communication, which ardently tackles the issue. As Yeshin (1998: 69) illustrates:

"Whereas the average consumer was subjected to about 300 commercial messages a day in 1995, today that figure has risen to around 3000. Whether the information is orchestrated by the marketer or the media in general is less relevant than the fact that there is simply too much information for the average consumer to process effectively. The inevitable consequence is that much of the material is simply screened out and discarded."

---

[21] *Unfortunately I was only able to access this article in e-format, which does not provide page numbers. Information pollution was discussed under the header of Connective efficacy.*

On the whole, if knowledge flow theory wishes to constructively assess barriers and enablers of knowledge sharing; more emphasis should be put on information overload and possible solutions to the hindrances it causes. Reducing the amount of information shared in an organization is a very applicable idea – one that would undoubtedly be useful to most any organization. Combining this notion with efforts toward increasing the appeal of the messages might also provide beneficial results in terms of knowledge flow.

2.7 Introducing my research question

I believe that the form of a message will affect many things in any given situation relating to human communication. It will affect your interpretation. It will play its part in making you make up your mind whether the message might influence your beliefs. The form of the message will certainly shape your disposition toward paying attention to the message, the value you give to the information it shares, and of course your memory of the message – if you choose to pay attention to it.

I strongly believe that message form should be taken into consideration when examining knowledge flow. First and foremost, because I think that the form of the message may influence the flow. And second, because the form of the message might also influence an individual's choice to decide to try and participate in the communication process coined as knowledge flow.

The intention of this research is to shed some light on how the form of a message might affect the subjective usefulness of its content. But before moving on to introduce my research question, I wish to give an example of how message form may affect memory.

Some messages do not change all that much when they are shared. Their contents are passed from individual to the next in surprisingly similar form. A notable example comes from Kalevala, the Finnish National Epic.

When Elias Lönnrot set out to collect Finnish folk poems in the 1830's, he found the same songs, same poems and same storylines in village after village. The wording hadn't changed, because they were sung in an unusual, archaic trochaic tetrametre, which had been part of the oral tradition among speakers of Balto-Finnic languages for two thousand years[22]. It means that you sing a story in rhyme, where you always say the

---

[22] *According to the Finnish Literature Society, www.finlit.fi*

same thing twice in a row with different wording. For example: "It is my desire, it is my wish, to set out to sing, *to begin to recite*[23]"

I believe that I can reasonably argue that Lönnrot would not have found the amount of recurrence of the same story-rhyme-songs from village to village, had they not been particularly memorable.

The purpose of my research is to look at a specific way of formulating a message, storytelling. My aspiration is to see if communicating a message in the form of a story has an impact on the perceived usefulness of the message content. Thus, the research question I aspire to answer in this thesis is:

DOES MESSAGE FORM HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF A MESSAGE?

I hope that answering this question might contribute to two separate areas of interest within the discipline of knowledge management: studies regarding storytelling and research regarding knowledge flow. Ideally, it might help bridge the gap between these two.

I start my journey by examining the form of a message this doctorate is concerned with: a story. The following chapter is a lengthy one, as it is devoted to giving an overview of story and storytelling, and explaining how this message form has been studied in the past. I attempt to do so by covering issues such as the history of narrative research, storytelling as a form of communication, organizational storytelling, storytelling as a chief sense-making device, and finally as a pivotal way in which humans remember, communicate and understand.

The main aim of the chapter on storytelling is to set the stage for my empirical research, in which I examine if communicating a message in the form of a story can have an impact on how useful the receiver finds the message. The proposition I hold when entering into my empirical investigation is that story may well be a worthy way to create a message that others will receive, believe and remember, as much research suggests that stories are constructed in a way that is apt for the human mind.

---

[23] *Translation of the Finnish original: Mieleni minun tekevi, aivoni ajattelevi, lähteäni laulamahan, saa'ani sanelemahan. English translation from: The Kalevala: Or Poems of the Kaleva District, by Elias Lönnrot, compiled by Jr. Francis Peabody Magoun 1963. On a personal note, I find the Finnish version is much, much more compelling and far easier to remember. Something was lost in translation.*

3. Natural born storytellers – theory and research on how humans think, understand and communicate with stories

Let me tell you a secret. The emperor has no clothes. Plain as day, there he goes, bare from the top of his head to the tips of his toes!

Sometimes it takes a lone voice of reason to point out something that everybody can see, but refuse to acknowledge. In the case of storytelling research, there have been many voices of reason. Some shouting, others whispering, but all pointing out the same thing – that if you stop and listen, you will notice that your world is built of stories.

In the 21st century, the study of storytelling is everywhere. It is not limited to any specific academic paradigm. Research in sociology, psychology, education, organizational studies, theology, history, and many, many others, touches upon, and often times concentrates on storytelling. Thus painting even a partial picture of storytelling research is fairly challenging.

Donald E. Polkinghorne made an excellent attempt at this in his title: Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences (1988)[24] . Polkinghorne's objective was to explain how stories relate to the way humans experience life. While doing this, he essentially created a handbook of storytelling studies, where he accurately describes and discusses many of the most relevant fields of research that deal with storytelling.

Covering authors such as Barthes, Levi-Strauss, Morgan, Propp and Ricoeur, Polkinghorne creates a story of storytelling – an understanding of the role of storytelling in modern day human sciences. Today, storytelling is understood as both a method and an object of study. Research and philosophy alike have made us realize that human consciousness, memories and self-image are arranged in narrative form. To humans, there is no concept of time and life lived without stories. We become the stories that we tell ourselves, our memories of the past are retrieved in story form and when we experience new things and learn, we often do so by comparing new knowledge to the stories in our minds in an attempt to reason and verify if we wish to accept the new and add it to what we already know.

---

[24] *I feel I must start with praise for Polkinghorne, as he has been my literary guide into the field of narrative. I oftentimes go back to his work to clear my thoughts and find new paths to explore. I have utilized his excellent title as an idea-roadmap of where to go next, and then promptly headed off to find the original work to study, enjoy and often enough also quote. Regrettably, this leaves Polkinghorne somewhat under-quoted in terms of how much guidance his title has offered me.*

3.1 Picking cherries off the cake – explaining theoretical choices

Polkinghorne's effort readily illustrates, how difficult – and indeed pointless – it is to try to set clear boundaries between various fields that study storytelling. Most areas of storytelling research interlink with each other in some way or another. And all great storytelling scholars have, in turn, wandered off to neighboring paradigms in search of new insight to add to their own. Yet there is no common consensus. Even within a specific field of storytelling research, elusive boundaries exist, and narrative research is far from being united. Perceptions of the meaning and role of story are often contradictory, and at their best, eclectic[25].

For a doctoral student, the widespread interest in storytelling is a mixed blessing. There are always new exiting things to learn about storytelling – lack of choice or boredom could never trouble a storytelling scholar. But the variety of alternatives and abundance of possible paths to follow can easily leave one in a situation that Finnish people call "runsaudenpula". There is no English equivalent for the word, but the meaning is this: when facing a smorgasbord of options, a true plethora of pickings, you have trouble choosing anything. In the end you are at risk of getting nothing, as you have spent all your time admiring all the possibilities.

In short, choosing which theoretical paths to follow in this framework and which to leave out with no reference has been a predicament. The theoretical framework chosen for this thesis borrows from various academic fields, but naturally overlooks many.

My main criterion for including a theory or set of research results for discussion is:

The theory must be relevant to the ongoing debate in knowledge management. Hence, it must fulfill the following conditions:

- Relate to human communication or the prerequisites of communication, i.e. how humans think, remember and organize knowledge in their minds

- The theory must look upon storytelling as an object of study or an explanatory factor for the object of study, and not only as a method

Within this set criteria, I have followed two paths in order to include relevant references - one set by three pivotal authors in the fields of organizational storytelling - Donald Polkinghorne, Jerome Bruner and Barbara Czarniawska, the other based on

---

[25] *This does not make storytelling unique, not by any means. In my years at academia I have not once stumbled across a path of research that would agree on terms, methods of study, or virtually anything that have to do with the rules of the game. Perhaps there are no rules.*

academic feedback received at conferences, seminars and other academic gatherings where I have presented my work.

Polkinghorne, Bruner and Czarniawska worked as my literary guides to the field of narrative. At the time of writing up this framework in 2010 Polkinghorne's Narrative Knowledge and the Human Sciences had well over 2500 quotes in Google Scholar, Bruner's Actual Minds, Possible Words was quoted by over 7000 sources and his perhaps best known article on narrative - Life as Narrative - had been quoted as well by over a thousand academic sources. Czarniawska is widely quoted as well, with e.g. over 700 quotes regarding Narrative Approaches to Organizational Studies.

I utilized these three authors systematically whilst putting together this framework: when relevant research fitting my above mentioned criteria was mentioned by two out of three of these authors, I would strongly consider including it - and when all three covered a piece research it was always included in my review. When coming across research on storytelling that was not included by these authors but which I felt highly relevant to my topic, I presented it a minimum of three different academic settings - conferences, seminars, workshops for doctoral students - to gain feedback from academic peers on the relevance of the research in question. [26]

I am purposefully introducing a diverse collection of research, which comprises examples of structuralism, storytelling theorizing, research classics on organizational storytelling and a few side steps into faraway fields such as neurology and AI research, before I present storytelling as it is understood within knowledge management. This seeming pandemonium of theory has a rationale – I believe that in order to illustrate the vast array of understandings academics hold of storytelling today, one should at least make an attempt to show a glimpse of the cacophony of stories about stories that are out there.

But to ease readers in to the subject, I feel it best to first introduce the field by providing a brief history of storytelling research and some examples of the lively discussion concerning definitions – and, of course, my own understanding of the word story.

---

[26] *Of these academic settings I am referring to, one requires a separate acknowledgment, both in terms of the frequency of which I made use of peers from this group and also in terms of the knowledge base of the academics involved: The Intellectual Capital Group, led by Professors Guy Ahonen and Karl-Erik Sveiby has acted as the foremost important audience, critique group and source of ideas and motivation in the process of choosing references for this chapter.*

3.2 From religious metaphors to organizational sense-making – the history of story

Who was the first scholar to notice that much of our world is run by stories? It appears that the study of stories did not start with historians looking at ancient, preliterate civilizations, although one would think that the idea should have occurred to someone.

No, storytelling study started with theology, as Czarniawska explains in her coverage of the history of storytelling studies (2004: 1). The roots of storytelling research are namely in the hermeneutic studies of the holy books of great world religions, such as Bhagavad Gita, The Talmud, The Koran and the New and Old Testaments of The Christian Bible, which have all been studied as such for centuries.

It took a long time for storytelling research to break free from the boundaries of religion. Specifying exactly when or where it happened is of course debatable, but many scholars trace the origin of modern studies to 1920's Russia (Czarniawska 2004: 1, Wertsch, 2008: 123).

It was there that Vladimir Propp first started studying the structure of Russian folktales and thus conducted groundbreaking work in a field that was later to be known as structuralism. As often occurred in earlier days, Propp's research remained unknown to most of the world for decades. He originally published his work in 1928, but Propp's contribution to the field of storytelling study only became significantly recognized in the late 1950's and 1960's, when his title was translated into French and English (Czarniawska, 2004: 1).

Meanwhile, while Propp remained unknown to the west, structuralism was gaining popularity in Europe. As Czarniawska illustrates, the origin of this research can be traced back to thinkers such as Ferdinand de Saussure, who is widely considered the "creator of the modern theory of structuralism and father of 20th century linguistics" [27]. Saussure was followed by other well-known names, such as Roland Barthes and anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who all in turn touched upon narratives in one form or another in their work.

---

[27] *Saussure's tale is well worth a sidetrack: Saussure published his only book, his PhD thesis, in 1879. Although "Memoir on the Original System of Vowels in the Indo-European Languages", was considered a great contribution to comparative linguistics, his influential role to the field of linguistics and many other disciplines is a result of his years as a teacher. After Saussure's death, two of his students published a book based on his lecture notes. The publishing of "Course in General Linguistics" in 1916 is frequently considered the starting point of 20th century linguistics. The twist that makes this an interesting tale is the legend of the missing manuscript. Before he died, Saussure had told friends that he was writing a manuscript. However, no evidence of this was found and for decades, Saussure's legacy was based solely on the writings of his two students. In 1996, a manuscript in Saussure's handwriting was discovered in the orangerie of his family house in Geneva. Experts assured that the manuscript was indeed the work of Saussure himself, and the long lost book was published in 1996.*

From these early lines of structuralism, narrative study slowly grew to what it is today: a widely debated manifestation of how humans think, which is studied or utilized as a method of research in a multitude of disciplines. While describing the history of narrative study, Czarniawska fittingly mentions one academic above others, the philosopher Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur studied how humans experience time (temporality) and came to the conclusion that this only occurs through thinking of time in a narrative form, i.e. through creating stories. Quintessentially, Ricoeur made the world realize that storytelling is ever-present. Wherever humans make sense of their lives, there will be narrative (Time and Narrative, volumes I, II & III, 1983-85).

Ricoeur's insights have been influential to storytelling study and its expansion to countless fields during the last few decades. The invasion of storytelling thinking was, however, well on its way when Ricoeur published his main title *Time and Narrative*[28]. As Czarniawska puts it, by the end of the 1970s, the trickle of storytelling research gathered strength and became a stream:

"Walter R. Fisher (1984) pointed out the central role of narrative in politics and of narrative analysis in political sciences; Jerome Bruner (1986) and Donald E. Polkinghorne (1987) did the same for psychology; Laurel Richardson (1990) for sociology; while Deirdre McCloskey (1990) scrutinized the narrative of economic expertise. By the 1990s, narrative analysis had also become a common approach in science studies (see, e. g., Curtis, 1994; Silvers, 1995)" (2004: 3).

3.3 Put two academics in a room and you'll get three opinions: a plunge into the sea of definitions

I don't believe that there is a child alive who doesn't know what a story is. When we grow up we give different kinds of stories distinguishing names, such as "anecdote", "legend" or "saga", but if someone uses the word story, most everybody will know what they are talking about. As the Cambridge Companion to Narrative points out, at first sight, nothing seems easier to define than a story (Herman, 2007: 23).

However, even though a word may seem self-explanatory, it must be defined meticulously to at least attempt a common consensus of the topic at hand. The following pages discuss various understandings of the words "story" and "narrative", in an effort to explain what each means.

---

[28] *Although Time and Narrative is widely considered Ricoeur's most prominent work, one can trace his influence to narrative studies back further. For example, in The Rule of Metaphor (1975), Ricoeur argues that there is a linguistic imagination that "generates and regenerates meaning through the living power of metaphoricity." For him, fresh metaphors, metaphors that have not been reduced to the commonplace, creatively transform language. Thus they have genuine cognitive import in their own right and are untranslatable without remainder into literal language (Stanford Encyclopaedia on philosophy/Ricoeur).*

Defining narrative is not simple, but different fields of narrative research tend to have some consensus about the term – within their field.

A commonly cited definition of narrative is one by Labov & Waletsky, who defined narrative as "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred" [29] (1967: 359-360, quoted from Franzosi 1998: 519).

Franzosi concludes that Labov's definition can be seen as a building block of future definitions, as it has survived more or less intact through the years and through the number other authors who have in attempted to reshape it in one way or another (1998: 519). He clarifies that Labov's influence can be found in Rimmon-Kenan's definition: *"… narrative fiction … [is] a succession of events"* (1983: 2-3); in Cohan and Shires point: *"The distinguishing feature of narrative is its linear organization of events"* (1988: 52-53); and also in Toolan's position: *"A minimalist definition of narrative might be: 'a perceived sequence of nonrandomly connected events"* (1988: 7). Franzosi concurs with Czarniawska, as he too sees the similarity in these definitions coming from the fact that they are all, at least to some extent, based on the work of Russian formalist such as Propp (1968) and Tomashevski (1965) (ibid).

Although Labov's definition is fairly widely cited as an exemplar attempt to formalize narrative (in addition to Franzosi, see McQuillan, 2000 and Johnstone 2007) many other definitions naturally exist.

The following table gathers some recognized definitions of the words story and narrative. I do not attempt to claim a thorough grasp of all the existing understandings of narrative and story, nor am I trying to summarize the essence of existing definitions. I simply wish to provide an overview of some of the existing interpretations before moving on to discuss the understandings of these terms.

---

[29] *Labov & Waletsky's definition troubles me, as it appears to be saying that there is no such thing as a fictional narrative.*

Source	Definitions of story and narrative
The Oxford English Dictionary	Narrative: 1 an account of connected events; a story. 2 the narrated part of a literary work, as distinct from dialogue. Story: 1 an account of imaginary or real people and events told for entertainment. 2 an account of past events, experiences, etc. 3 an item of news. 4 a storyline. 5 informal a lie.
Czarniawska (1997: 78)	"A story consists of a plot comprising causally related episodes that culminate in a solution to a problem"
Ricoeur (1980: 169)	"I take temporality to be that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity, and narrativity to be the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate reference"
Labov & Waletzky (1967: 359-360)	"One method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred"
Boje (1991 a, quoted from 1995: 1000)	"By a story, I mean an oral or written performance involving two or more people interpreting past or anticipated experience"
Prince (2003: 58)	"The representation (as product and process, object and act, structure and structuration) of one or more real or fictive events communicated by one, two, or several (more or less overt) narrators to one, two, or several (more or less overt) narratees"
The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative (2007: 279) Glossary	In informal use, narrative is a synonym for story. More technically…a narrative is a representation of (i) a structured time-course of particularized events that (ii) introduces conflict (disruption or disequilibrium) into a storyworld (wether that world is presented as actual, fictional, dreamed etc.), conveying (iii) what it's like to live through that disruption, that is the qualia (or felt, awareness) of real or imagined consciousnesses undergoing the disruptive experience.
Genette (1982: 127)	"One will define narrative without difficulty as the representation of an event or sequence of events"
Scholes, (1981: 205)	"A narration is the symbolic presentation of a sequence of events"
Onega and Landa (1996: 3)	"The semiotic representation of a sequence of events, meaningfully connected in a temporal and causal way"

Table 1: Some definitions of story and narrative

As mentioned above, the chart illustrates merely a portion of the many understandings scholars hold of narrative. What these definitions share in common is that they all see narrative as a distinct form of communication – something that can be separated from other forms of writing or speech. A much broader understanding is, of course possible. As Polkinghorne points out, in everyday conversation, the term narrative is equivocal, meaning that the most inclusive meaning of narrative refers to any spoken or written presentation. Polkinghorne himself does not take this stance, as he defines narrative as the kind of organizational scheme expressed in story form. He uses the term story as an equivalent of narrative and defines the term "story" according to the American Heritage Dictionary: the narrating or relating of an event or series of events, either true or false (1988: 13).

Czarniawska (2004, 1) sees eye to eye with Polkinghorne when she discusses various definitions of narrative. She also acknowledges all-encompassing definitions[30], but stipulates that more bound reasoning is usually adopted. Czarniawska concludes that a narrative is normally understood as a *spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected* (ibid, 1). She also quotes Goody (1986) in pointing out that it is easy to say what is not a narrative even if it is a text: a table, a list, a schedule, or a typology.

3.4 What's in a name – are story and narrative the same?

Scores of scholars have spent countless hours pondering over the interchangeability of the words story and narrative (Boje, 2001, 1; Gabriel, 2000, 2; Abbot, 2007, 39). Some skip the issue and simply do not speak of stories at all, but choose to only, or at least mostly, use the term narrative (Ricoeur, 1992).

Are the words story and narrative synonymous? As is probably the case in all definitions at the end of the day, there may be as many views as there are scholars. In the following pages, I will present some educated opinions on the matter, to shed light to this predicament.

Some scholars, such as Polkinghorne (1987) and Weick (1995) use the terms narrative and story as synonymous. Yet many are not satisfied with this outlook and choose to make a distinction between story and narrative. Gabriel (2000, 22), for example, defines stories as *"narratives with simple but resonant plots and characters, involving narrative skill, entailing risk, and aiming to entertain, persuade, win over"*, which clearly separates the two concepts at least to some extent from one another.

Abbot, a literary theorist, takes the notion that it is important to separate story and narration, but that story is a part of narrative. As he explains, the analytically powerful distinction between story and its representation can be seen as the founding insight of the field of narratology. He regards the terms "story", "plot" and "narration" as the "three principal components of the overarching category "narrative" (2007, 40).

---

[30] *According to Czarniawska, the perhaps most inclusive definition of narrative encountered in texts on narrative analysis is the following much-quoted passage by Roland Barthes:* "*Narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative…narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (Barthes, 1977: 79)*

Abbot's idea can perhaps be clarified by the figure below, which is borrowed from John Kim's description of story and narrative in role playing games (2003 [31]). As Kim points out himself, the picture is over-simplifying in many ways. Yet, it gives a sufficient steppingstone from which one can start understanding the interpretation process of story communication and why some authors choose to separate story from narrative.
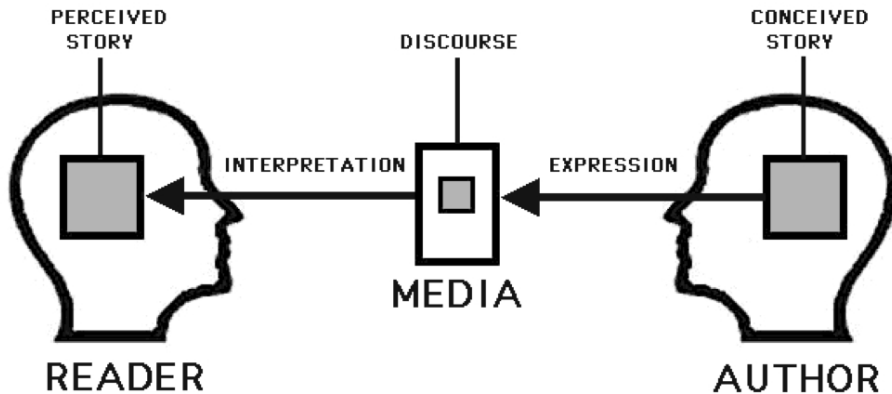
Figure 2: Kim's illustration of the interpretation process of a story

Kim's explains the idea of this illustration through four steps of communication: conceived story, perceived story, media and discourse. In the first stage, the story is but a mental construct in the mind of the author. An author may choose to convey the story in a variety of forms, through discussion, writing a book or a screenplay for a movie – the channels of communication are vast. Media comes into turn when the author chooses which medium she will use to communicate her story, such as her voice, a film etc. Discourse refers to the form of expression of the story. As Kim puts it, in the simplest of terms, the story is the *what* in the narrative that is depicted, discourse is the *how*. Discourse could be broken down into "text" (the concrete product" and "narration" (the inferred process of expression). The perceived story is again, a mental construct in the mind of the reader. Like the conceived story, it is typically a non-verbal picturing of events (ibid).

---

[31] *Retrieved online, unfortunately preventing quoting with page numbers. These issues were discussed under the header Story and Static Narrative. Kim's contribution can be retrieved from: http://www.darkshire.net/jhkim/rpg/ theory/narrative/paradigms.html*

In this line of reasoning, a story is not considered indistinguishable from narrative, but rather something that exists prior to, within, and as a result of narration. A narrative is a story told, be it written, verbal or portrayed though, for example, film, radio or theatre. This perception of narrative is evident in Merriam-Webster's dictionary definition: *a narrative is the representation in art of an event or story.*

The problem with this view is that it sees a story only as an imaginary construct, a mental image or model. The idea is that through the tool of a medium, an author may try to portray this image - the story - to a receiver and this is the act of narration, during which the story becomes a narrative.

It is plausible that narratives can be understood solely as represented stories. I have no problem with this definition. Seeing stories as only a mental image or something different from narrative is, however, troublesome. The separation of story and narrative may serve the purposes of literary theorists, but it can arguably perplex scholars from other backgrounds. Although it is somewhat common practice for scholars to take a widespread word and give it another meaning, I find it questionable whether they can expect to be understood, let alone followed, when they choose to do so.

Surely, there is often a mental idea of a story in anyone's mind before telling it[32]. This idea state is a sort of epiphany, which could be given many names. Why choose to call it a story? Would it not be simpler to give various states of pre- and after stories names of their own and leave the term "story" alone?

Story and narrative are considered synonymous in everyday communication. Take, for instance, the following definition of a narrative from the Oxford English Dictionary: *a narrative is an account of connected events; a story.*

3.5 The alpha and omega of storytelling: Aristotle's definition

As the discussion above depicts, definitions and understanding are abundant. As in most definitions, there is no right or wrong, there is only choice of how to interpret a word. Accordingly, as Tietze et al. (2003: 56) explain, there is no common consensus of story and/or narrative, or whether or not the terms can be used interchangeably:

"We can see then that there is no one accepted definition of a story or narrative. Most pieces of writing use a wider definition of stories and include other forms of text such as narratives, dialogues and exchanges within their definition."(ibid)

---

[32] *The only near- exception to this that I can think of is someone desperately trying to come up with a coherent story while conveying it, usually the case when one is lying.*

In this thesis, as a definition of story, I am keen on keeping to a description that has survived a considerable test of time: **I understand a story as a verbal or written description of true or fictional events, which are structured by a plot.**

The natural question to arise from this definition is, of course: what is a plot? A plot is best defined in Aristotle's Poetica: **the arrangement of incidents that (ideally) each follow plausibly from the other.**

As for the terms "story" and "narrative", whilst I recognize that many prefer to separate these two terms and give them different meanings, I choose not to. In this thesis the terms are treated as synonyms.

3.6 Squeezing stories into form – attempts at taming storytelling with structure

After defining what is meant by the word story, another question quickly arises in the mind of a scholar: do stories follow certain rules? Surely there are some patterns that can be identified, labeled as the formal structure of a story and used to henceforth disregard everything that does not fit this pattern as not-a-story!

The question has been studied for decades. Indeed, as mentioned before, many of our current definitions of story come from research conducted or influenced by structuralism. I will not attempt to draw a coherent picture of research conducted within this paradigm, but I am keen on giving some examples of ideas from within this line of interest. It portrays the great amount of work that has been done in an attempt to formalize stories and, in a sense, bend them into following some sort of given structure.

One cannot speak of structuralism without mentioning Roland Barthes, who in his earlier work claimed that all narratives share structural features, albeit that each narrative weaves these features together in different ways (Pentland 1999: 711-724). Another much quoted example is Greimas, who sought to create a group of "actantial roles", to which all actors in a story could be fitted into. Greimas' narrative actors were reduced to: subject, object, sender, receiver, helper and opponent (Herman, 2007: 13)

Not all structuralists attempt to categorize story into quite such overarching conditions. Russian formalists, for instance, have distinguished three aspects of a story: the *fabula*, the *sjuzet* and the *forma*, which can be translated as theme, discourse and genre. Fabula and sjuzet have be seen as the timeless and sequenced aspects of a story: the fabula is the mythic predicament that the story is about, such as jealousy, ambition, unanswered love or other plights that can be seen as universal to humans. The sjuzet,

i.e. the discourse then realizes the timeless fabula in to the form of a plot and language (Bruner, 2004: 696).

Propp's well-known work has already been discussed, but a more detailed description of what he did is perhaps now in order. Propp attempted to structurally scrutinize narratives by identifying an invariant pattern of 31 functions, which could be found in Russian folktales. These functions included, for instance: the hero leaves home, the villain is introduced, hero requires use of magical agent, hero and villain join in direct combat, etc. According to Propp, the content of a folktale or how the story is told will not impact these functions – all Russian folktales will exhibit at least some of the basic 31 functions Propp described (Franzosi, 1998: 524).

Propp's typology has been criticized by many, perhaps most famously by Levi-Strauss who reviewed Propp's Morphology of Folktale in 1960 and notably insulted Propp by questioning why he had not chosen to analyze myth instead of folktale (Dundes 1997 [33]). Propp's typology may not fit all folktales[34], but it does give a base for understanding the structure of narratives and features that many narratives have in common.

Nekvapil (2003: 70) quotes Schütze (1984) and Schütze & Kallmeyer 1977) in explaining how a narrator is obliged to follow three basic principles when telling a story. These principles of "Kondensierungszwang" (Condense), "Detaillierungszwang" (Detail) and "Gestaltschliessungszwang" (Closure) translate as follows: a) "Kondensierungszwang", is an obligation to increase the density of a story, for instance by not telling everything that can be remembered but choosing relevant experiences for what is to be told; b) "Detaillierungszwang", is an obligation to give detailed background information about emotional constellations, motives and connected events so that a foreground can come to existence; and c) "Gestaltschliessungszwang", can be described as an obligation to fit parts into a larger whole that gives some form of closure to the story as an entity.

According to Schütze, these three narrative principles are a mixture of what a story is (or is supposed to be) and what it means to tell a story. These principles are driven by the structural features of stories and are predispositions into making a story plausible and intelligible to one's audience. Schütze argues that a speaker should follow these principles, or otherwise she will not be telling a story, but rather giving a 'description' or engaging in 'argumentation' (Nekvapil 2003: 70).

---

[33] *Binary opposition in myth: The Propp/Levi-Strauss debate in retrospect, retrieved online: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3732/is_199701/ai_n8752224/?tag=content;col1*

[34] *Indeed, Brown University has a "Proppian Fairytale Generator" on their website, where you can try to fit Propp's typology to either your own story or a well-known classic such as the Grimm Brother's Hansel and Gretel.*

Mishler (1986) concords with this view at least in part as he reasons that an instrumental understanding of story structure is necessary to comprehend the nature of a story. He maintains that narratives should include four components: 1) the abstract that often encapsulates the point of the story, 2) orientation that contextualizes it, 3) the complicating action that defines the plot, 4) and resolution.

Pentland, in turn, follows Bruner (1990) and Barthes (1977) and identifies several features that all narrative texts commonly include (1999: 712-713). The first of these is a sequence in time, meaning that a narrative should include a beginning, a middle and an end. Second, a narrative typically includes a focal actor or actors as stories are always about someone or something. Third, a story will always include an identifiable narrative voice, as a story is something that someone tells. Multiple points of view are, of course possible; the essence here is that there must be at least one. Fourth, a story will have some kind of canonical or evaluative frame of reference, such as a moral in a fairy tale. And finally, a story will also include what Pentland coins as "other indicators of content and context", which mean other indicators used in a story that do not necessarily advance the plot, but which may be essential to the interpretation of the events – for instance, if the reader knows that a scene is a wedding scene, it will give an entirely new meaning to someone uttering the words "I do".

Overall, the structure and features of stories have been studied in abundance. Propp, Barthes, Todorov and their likes have been in turn commended and cited, condemned and critiqued. For researchers coming from outside the realm of structuralism, the main lack in this line of research is its stance on stories: it approaches narrative formally, as an object, with little or no regard to narrative as a mode of social influence (Fisher, 1987: 90).

My personal disposition toward story structure studies is two-fold: surely, there are universal themes that are present in most stories, both in terms of structure and in terms of content. However, it is probably impossible to ever come up with a set of rules that apply to all stories. After all, we are all storytellers and able to make up tales. Any given set of boundaries can be "proved wrong" by making up a tale that does not comply with them. However, the efforts of structuralism have created helpful tools for understanding many forms of narrative, and should be commemorated for that. Be it as it may that they provide less value for scholars looking at everyday, spontaneous storytelling – such as the storytelling that happens in organizations.

3.7 Once upon a time there was a clear-cut research result: people believe stories

I have thus far given an overview of the history of storytelling research, explained how I understand the word story and also offered a glance into research that focuses on

understanding the structure of stories. The time has come to move on and introduce research regarding storytelling as it relates to humans. I will start with a classic.

Around the time that I was born, the mid-seventies, many academics were studying storytelling. They were particularly interested in finding out why and how stories work as forms of communication in organizational settings. Some of them came up with rather reasonable answers. One of the best examples of research carried out during the seventies is a study conducted by Martin and Powers[35]. (Martin 1982).

In this study, Martin and Powers assessed how MBA students reacted to different types of written communication. The test itself was fairly straightforward. They provided students with material regarding the winemaking procedures of an American winery that was attempting to use traditional French methods to ensure high quality. One fourth of the students received an advertisement about the vineyard, which included an abstract policy statement about the methods they used for producing wine. The other three groups received the same policy statement with additional material supporting the claim in either the form of a story, data or both. After the MBA students read the material, they were asked to answer a number of questions, such as how reliable they thought the company's claim was. The students were also asked to remember the exact wording of the policy statement (ibid: 273-274).

As a result of this test, Martin and Powers deduced that stories have a powerful impact on both cognition and attitudes. They found that people are just as willing to make predictions based on a story as they are based on data. Moreover, they found that a story has a significantly stronger impact on belief than data does. And finally, this particular experiment showed that people exposed to a story were significantly more likely to distort their memories of a policy statement in a direction favorable to the organization.

What is the legacy of this early study? Scholars concerned with organizational storytelling have by and large overlooked these results, claiming that early research of this sorts treated stories as objects, and ripped stories from their natural performance contexts (Boje, 1998).

---

[35] *I often start teaching storytelling to students by presenting this particular piece of research. Usually, people find it very convincing. After all, it proves that stories have a powerful cognitive impact. However, I recently had a bachelor student dramatically point out to me that the world has changed. "I'm sure that in the early 80's, people still believed stories. Nowadays, we rely on data!" After this comment I asked around and it turned out that not a single student in the group was even born in 1982, when the study was published. The youngest student in the group was born in 1990. Perhaps to generation Y, the early eighties are ancient history and apparently not a worthwhile point of comparison to today's world? Fortunately, I conduct a similar memory test to students during the lecture and they get to experience the power of storytelling themselves. This convinced them. Many seemed really surprised that the human brain had not evolved to appreciate data more than stories, although the information age has been going on for quite some time now…*

I believe these results should not be disregarded, even though Martin and Powers did, in this particular research, take stories out of context and treat them like objects. The research has clear merits: it showed that the form of communication one chooses to use has consequences. It proved that stories have a powerful impact on belief, more so than data. And what is more, it also showed that although MBA students believed stories, they did not think that they would. As Swap et al. point out (2001: 106):

"Even though these quantitatively oriented MBA students indicated that they thought the data condition would prove to be a more persuasive advertisement, those who had read the story were more convinced of the truthfulness of the policy statement than were those in the other conditions. According to the availability heuristic, or the "vividness effect," the story made the new procedure more easily imaginable and, hence, judged more likely to be true."

The relevance of Martin and Powers early research does not lie only in proving some of the impacts that stories can have on human cognition. It also lies in the fact that they proved our prejudice towards stories compared to data, when they tested the perceived persuasiveness of the text. In my mind, their key result was the fact that the subjects were significantly more likely to rate data as persuasive.

The supposed dichotomy between story and data is interesting. Martin and Powers assumed a conflict between these forms of communication already in the way in which they set up the experiment. Why are we comparing stories to data? Are they opposites? Do they rule each other out as forms of communication? Does story need to triumph over data in order to be regarded a valuable form of communication? The understanding of story and data as some kind of Lévi-Straussian binary opposites is puzzling.

Wouldn't it be more interesting to look at stories and try to understand what is it about stories that make them an essential part of human communication? I will attempt to do so in the following sections of this work. But before this, I will discuss one more aspect of the stories versus data debate: the difference between man and machine.

3.8 Have you ever tried reasoning with a computer?

"The computer is a moron"
P. Drucker (The Effective Executive, 1966)

Some of the most vocal advocates of storytelling research come from an unexpected (?) source – academics studying artificial intelligence, AI. This is due to the fact that while attempting to get computers to understand language, researchers finally had to stop

and think how the human mind works, instead of focusing on the outcome of its working[36]. Roger C. Schank is perhaps the best-known author in this area. He believes that our interest in telling and hearing stories is strongly related to the nature of human intelligence. According to Schank, the basic understanding problem between humans and computers is that humans simply are not set up to understand logic (1995: 15).

Schank declares that human memory is largely based on stories[37]. His main argument is that – to the human brain – stories are especially interesting prior experiences, ones that we learn from (ibid: 12). He demonstrates that people tell stories because they know that others like to hear them. But the reason why people like to hear stories is not obvious to most. According to Schank, our interest in hearing stories is due to the fact that people need a context to help them relate what they have heard to what they already know:

"We understand events in terms of what we have already understood. When a decision-making heuristics, or a rule of thumb, is presented to us without a context, we cannot decide the validity of the rule we have heard, nor do we know where to store this rule in our memories. Thus, what we are presented is both difficult to evaluate and difficult to remember, making it virtually useless. People who fail to couch what they have to say in memorable stories will have their rules fall on deaf ears despite their best intentions and despite the best intentions of the listeners" (ibid: 15)

In parallel work Schank and Abelson (*Knowledge and memory: the Real Story* 1995), state that the human brain essentially works through stories. They describe how human knowledge is based on stories constructed around past experiences. They also claim that new experiences are interpreted in terms of old stories, leading to the content of story memories depending on whether and how they are told to others. These reconstituted memories, in turn; form the basis of the individual's remembered "self".

Schank & Abelson conclude that when it comes to interaction in language, all of our knowledge is contained in stories and the mechanisms to construct them and retrieve them:

---

[36] *According to Mueller (1999) much research on the problem of in-depth story understanding by computers was performed starting in the 1970s, but interest shifted elsewhere fairly soon as the problem was deemed too vast to tackle. He introduces to origins of the dilemma as follows: "In 1976 John McCarthy wrote a memo discussing the problem of getting a computer to understand the following story from the* New York Times*: A 61-year old furniture salesman was pushed down the shaft of a freight elevator yesterday in his downtown Brooklyn store by two robbers while a third attempted to crush him with the elevator car because they were dissatisfied with the $1,200 they had forced him to give them. The buffer springs at the bottom of the shaft prevented the car from crushing the salesman, John J. Hug, after he was pushed from the first floor to the basement. The car stopped about 12 inches above him as he flattened himself at the bottom of the pit." In 1999 the problems raised by McCarthy remain unsolved. No computer could understand the above story at a level anywhere near that of a human reader.*

[37] *Or rather, the part of human memory that has to do with conscious verbal learning and memory retrieving. Schank is not discussing the brain as it relates to the visual perception system or motor output system, which evidently functions through experimental learning, as was found by Pavlov's experiments with dogs.*

"From the point of view of the social functions of knowledge, what people know consist almost exclusively of stories and the cognitive machinery necessary to understand, remember and tell stories." (ibid: 63)

Schank and Abelson's explanation is intriguing. But can you really confirm how humans think by comparing the human line of thought to machines? We have a rather good idea about how computers work, since we built them. Basically, they store bits of data in registers, and then make comparisons between the data in different registers and store new data as a result. No storytelling involved.

The differences between the abilities of humans and computers suggest that we do not store memory as bits of raw data. Therefore, we must use some other method. It could be something related specifically to storytelling. But could it be some other method that just happens to give us superior ability to understand stories? To answer that, we should look at what we know about the human brain itself. Surely someone has studied stories by looking at the brain?

3.9 Do humans have a storytelling brain? A side-step into neurology

While writing up my theoretical framework on storytelling, I was happy to find that interesting research regarding how humans think in stories has been conducted in the field of neurology.

Now, I am not a neurologist, nor do I attempt to claim any expertise in the area. Fortunately, many academics are crossing the old intangible borders of science and collaboration is occurring between surprising fields, allowing us to learn from one another. A good example is work done by Young & Saver (2001), who combined neurology and English literature studies in an attempt to gain broader awareness to a fact that neurologists have apparently long ago proven: the human brain stores certain types of information – memories and understanding of who we are – in a narrative form.

In their article, the Neurology of Narratives, Young and Saver attempt to answer the question *"What is it about the nature of the human brain that necessitates that the memories we draw on as evidence for who we are work as narratives"* (2001: 75)

They study the question by looking at four different types of focal brain injuries that cause what Young and Saver call Dysnarrativia: an injury, which manifests itself by not allowing the brain to create stories.

The first two types that Young and Saver look at are forms of global amnesia, which means the loss of the ability to form new memories. These patients have unharmed language, visuospatial and executive function, and an intact immediate attention span. But due to their brain injury, they can only register and hold new ideas for 30-39 seconds. These patients' autobiographic experience is limited to memories that they acquired up until or a few years before their injury. Young and Saver call this form of dysnarrativia *arrested narration* (ibid: 75-76).

In addition to arrested narration, various brain injuries may cause *unbound narration*, a state where individuals generate self-stories, which they themselves generally believe to be true, although they are not bound by real events. As Saver and Young describe this condition:

"Unaware of their memory disorder, they also generally appear unaware they are creating fictitious responses to fill in memory gaps. Often within the space of a few minutes they will provide several mutually contradictory narratives in response to the same question. Confabulating amnestic individuals offer an unrivalled glimpse at the power of the human impulse to narrative. The astonishing variety of plots they create arises not from a desire to impress, entertain, instruct or deceive, but simply from a desire to respond to another human being's query with a story, albeit in unusual circumstances." (ibid: 77)

Young and Saver also consider a form of dysnarrativia called under-narration, in which individuals are, as a result of brain injury, no longer able to consider the multitude of potential outcomes or response options in given situation, i.e. they are no longer able to construct and explore "as-if" narrative scenarios.

Patients suffering from this condition tend to make *under-narrated* choices. They fail to mentally model a variety of potential responses and their likely consequences – to frame the many possible stories that would result from one choice or another. Instead they abruptly settle on the first response that appears immediately gratifying. They make under-narrated choices, which often lead to disastrous financial and social consequences (ibid: 77).

Young and Saver also point out another form of under-narration, a more subtle condition, in which patients have suffered ventromedial frontal damage[38]. As a result, they are unable to connect their brains emotional and reasoning systems. Affected individuals are able to construct abundant internal stories regarding response options, but fail to invest the resulting scenario with affecting tones (ibid: 77 quoting Damasio

---

[38] *The ventromedial frontal is a part of the brain that interweaves emotional limbic centers with highly abstracted and integral information in another part of the brain, the dorsolateral frontal area. Apparently.*

1994, and Saver & Damasio 1991). As a result: *"Their over-reasoned, but emotionally undernarrated choices are frequently self-deleterious."*(ibid: 78)

The final form of dysnarrativia that Save and Young describe is suffered by patients with injuries to the mesial sectors of the frontal lobe. They lead *denarrated* lives. They are alive and aware, but they cannot organize experience in an action generating temporal frame. Their behavioral repertoire is reduced and they become apathetic, with apparent indifference to events around them (ibid, quoting Blumer & Benson, 1975).

According to Young and Saver, this form of dysnarrativia illustrates the inseparable connection between narrativity and personhood:

"Brain injured individuals may lose their linguistic, mathematic, syllogistic, visuospatial, mnestic, or kinaesthetic competencies and still be recognizably the same persons. Individuals who have lost the ability to construct narrative (who suffer from denarration), however, have lost their selves" (ibid: 78).

Are Young and Saver right? Do Schank and Abelson have a fair point? Do humans think in stories? Many academics believe so. The following section will discuss some of the key figures in this line of thought.

3.10 Great minds think alike – the human being is a storytelling animal

A great number of great minds have proposed that humans are storytellers by nature. The main argument that these thinkers share is the notion that whether we realize it or not, one of our main forms of communication is storytelling – it is in the human nature to communicate with stories. A recognized example of this trend is Walter R. Fisher (1984), who posits that humans are by nature storytellers, *homo narrans*, and that stories are meant to give order to human experience.

Fisher has received much praise – and criticism, with his notion of the Narrative Paradigm, in which he claims that all humans communicate to others in the form of stories. Fisher states that many metaphors have been used to explain the essential nature of human beings. He lists the terms: Homo Faber, Homo Economicus, Homo Politicus, Homo Sociologicus, the psychological man, ecclesiastical man, Homo Sapiens and the "rational man". He suggests that the term Homo Narrans should be added to this list (1989: 62).

"The narrative paradigm proposes that human beings are inherently storytellers who have a natural capacity to recognize the coherence and fidelity of stories they tell and experience. I suggest that we experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing

narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends. The various modes of communication – all forms of symbolic action – then may be seen as stories, interpretations of things in sequences." (1989: 24)

Fisher argues that his idea of homo narrans builds on Kenneth Burke's definition of humans as symbol-using, symbol-making, symbol-misusing animals. He claims that humans, as storytellers, create and communicate symbols as stories that are meant to give order to human experience. As Fisher puts it: *"We induce others to dwell in them in order to establish ways of living in common in intellectual and spiritual communities, in which there is confirmation for the story that constitutes ones life" (1989: 63).*[39]

Alongside Fisher, Jerome Bruner is often mentioned as one of the leading advocates of the idea of humans as storytellers by nature. Bruner (1986, 1990, 2002, 2004) argues that stories are instinctual – meaning that humans intuitively understand how stories work. He claims that we rarely take time to reflect why they compel us and why they have such power to shake our assumptions and disturb our peace of mind, but that they are, nevertheless, the building blocks of human experience. In essence, Bruner sees stories as essential components in the mélange that we call the "self" and our guideposts for interaction with others (1986: 16, 1990: 56-64, 2004: 691-695).

Bruner says that a life lived is what happens in actuality, a life experienced consists of images, feelings, sentiments, desires and thoughts, and a life told is a narrative. Bruner's reasoning runs in line with Ricoeur's, as he claims that humans seem to have no other way of describing "lived time" apart from the form of a story. Bruner declares that a life led is inseparable from a life as told. His main point is that a life is not "how it was" but rather how it was interpreted and told to both oneself and others (2004: 708).

"The heart of my argument is this: eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience...we become the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives." (2004: 694)

Polkinghorne also describes a larger meaning of storytelling in his conclusion of Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences. He states that human beings exist in three realms: the material realm, the organic realm and the realm of meaning. This final realm is the reality of stories and storytelling, built up in the consciousness of the human mind (1988: 183).

---

[39] *Actually, Fisher himself sees parallels in his own thinking and that of both Kenneth Burke and Martin Heidegger. According to Fisher: "One's life is, as suggested by Burke, a story that participates in the stories of those who have lived, who live now and who will live in the future". Heidegger receives Fishers agreement with his notion:"we are conversation . . . conversation and its unity support our existence". Fisher adds that viewing all discourse in terms of the narrative paradigm accommodates this insight (1989: 863).*

In fact, our natural tendency to shape our experiences through story has led many scholars to believe that stories form the very bases of our identity. As Rimmon-Kenan (2002) depicts:

"A resemblance between "narrative" and "identity" has been suggested in many disciplines... I share with Ricoeur, MacIntyre, Bruner, Widdershoven, and others a nonessentialist view of identity. I also share their general contention...that we lead our lives as stories, and our identity is constructed both by stories we tell ourselves and others about ourselves and by the master narratives that consciously or unconsciously serve as models for ours. Hence, "narrative identity.""

The notion of narrative identity is one of the most commonly discussed views on storytelling in relation to human sciences. Most supporters claim that without a narrative account of who you are, you are not you. Ricoeur (1992: 158) accentuates this idea:

"How, indeed, could a subject of action give an ethical character to his or her own life taken as a whole, if this life were not gathered together in some way, and how could this occur if not, precisely, in the form of a narrative?" (1992: 158)

The notion of narrative identity does not suggest that one has a story and remains the same, but that humans continuously build and rebuild their identity based on narrative accounts of themselves and the world around them. As Ochs and Capps explain in *Living Narrative*, narratives of personal experience do not present objective, comprehensive accounts of events. They present perspectives on events. The authors point out a view brought forth by Kenneth Burke: that narratives can be seen as selections rather than reflections of reality (2001: 45).

There is certainly something inherently compelling about stories for the individual. As Barbara Hardy illustrates in her much-cited quote:

"We dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative" (Hardy 1968).

Hardy's quote is compelling, yet there lies a danger in it – assuming that the omnipresence of stories means that all communication is storytelling. For example Gabriel (1998a, 2000), has criticizes organization studies for a tendency of labeling everything as a story. As Gabriel himself puts it:

"I am concerned about the increasing tendency to view every sign, every snippet of conversation, every image and every cliché as either being a story or telling a story. At times, the concept of story is stretched to encompass virtually everything that is not a fact." (2000: 2)

Salzer-Morling and Strannegård (2004: 229) make a similar observation regarding the overuse of the word story in branding. If all branding is labeled under the message form of story, other critical aspects – namely visual images – are overlooked.

Although it is possible to see all communication as storytelling, I fear this approach unnecessarily blurs the picture. There are copious amounts of message forms being used in communication. Labeling everything a story is, in a sense, an easy way out. If everything is a story, we can once again disregard message form.

For example, Gabriel argues that the undifferentiated use of the term "story" makes it very hard to make any distinction between stories and other types of texts. He claims that this may cause stories to disintegrate into *"chic clichés into which meaning disappears"* (1998a: 86), consequently making stories into ineffective tools for social research and no longer useful as windows into the cultural and emotional side of organizational life.

3.11 Stories are all around us...

Although stories are by far not the only way in which humans communicate, they are used frequently – it is inevitable that stories are told most anywhere people meet. One of the more studied forums for storytelling is the modern organization, which has provided researchers with a plethora of stories to collect and to study.

Unfortunately, the omnipresence of stories has occasionally led to research with not much other evident purpose but to show the multitude of stories. Czarniawska explains the phenomena vividly:

"Many young scholars, fascinated by the presence of stories, proceed to do studies that show this presence...A similar phenomenon happened in economics...when the economists were informed...that economics uses metaphors in its writings. The result was a series of...'Look, Ma, there is a metaphor!' studies. The same thing is taking place in narrative studies: many of them are of the 'Look, Ma, there is a narrative!' type. Yet pointing out that science uses stories and metaphors, and so do other types of human activities, cannot be the whole program. The point is: what are the consequences of scientific rhetoric and what are the consequences of storytelling – for those who tell the stories and those who study them?" (2004: 41)

As Czarniawska demonstrates, studies showing that stories are told in organizations are abundant. Studies regarding what kind of stories are told, why they are told and what does this denote to the organization are seemingly plentiful as well. They generally perceive storytelling as a social and cultural phenomenon that people (unknowingly, in most cases) use to make sense of their life, the organization they work in and the world they live in (Czarniawska 1998, Gabriel 1995 & 2000, Orr 1990).

Researchers looking at organizational stories do not - or should not - as Czarniawska points out, simply collect and analyze any stories that are told within organizations. They study *organizational stories*, a particular type of story that is shared by many members of an organization.

Organizational stories have certain defining characteristics (Brown 1990: 165), such as a sense of temporality; i.e. the past is brought into the present. Also, stories have a definite story grammar including a preface, the story lead-in, the recounting of the events, and a closing sequence, which may include the point or moral of the story.

Martin (2001: 72) has created a clear characterization of what makes a story an organizational story. As she puts it, an organizational story will fulfill the following conditions:

1. The central elements of an organizational story are known by a large number of people. For this reason, organizational stories are more informative about cultural context than are personal anecdotes about a storytellers experiences, which are not known to many other employees.
2. An organizational story focuses on a single event sequence. In contrast, an organizational saga (or the biography of a company founder or leader) summarizes years of events and is far more lengthy than a single organizational story.
3. An organizational story's central characters are members of the organization. An organizational story does not concern people or events outside the organization, restricting attention to narratives that are more likely to be informative about a particular cultural context.
4. An organizational story is ostensibly true. Organizational stories implicitly claim to be an accurate representation of "the facts". Of course, others may disagree.

Interestingly enough, it seems that people are inclined to concentrate on certain subjects in organizational storytelling. As Martin, Feldman, Hatch and Sitkin (1983: 440-445), explain, organizational stories told by employees tend to cluster within familiar archetypes. In their paper "The Uniqueness Paradox in Organizational Stories" they divided corporate stories into seven types that occur regularly across a variety of organizations. These seven common stories are: 1) The rule-breaking story; 2) Is the big

boss human?; 3) Can the little person rise to the top?; 4) Will I get fired?; 5) Will the organization help me?; 6) How will the boss react to mistakes?; and 7) How will the organization deal with obstacles?

Martin et al. present three explanations why these seven types of organizational stories can be found in most organizations: these stories deal with issues of value conflicts, offer ways of taking credit for positive situations and laying blame for negative situations, as well as give an organization the feeling of uniqueness with which its members can identify. They are all chief sense-making and communication devices of organizational culture, which enable employees to share and understand organizational values. In sum, all these story types relate, in one way or another, with sense making, organizing and the very raison d'être of the organization (ibid: 452).

One of the most widely quoted researchers in the field of organizational storytelling is David Boje[40], who has coined the idea of organizations as storytelling systems. As his work is recognized as key to the development of the field of storytelling research, I will try to explain his central ideas with some detail.

Boje's holistic view includes not only the organization, but also many other relevant storytelling parties who contribute to the ongoing debate of any known organization – a debate that exists and transforms based on the stories that take part in it (Boje 1999, 2001). What sets Boje apart from many other scholars is the manner in which he acknowledges media, interest groups, consumers and countless others, who all together create stories, or narratives and antenarratives, both within and outside the organization.

Boje sees the organization as a complex storytelling system, which he depicts with a theatrical metaphor. According to Boje, an organization resembles a theatrical play "Tamara"[41].

What makes Tamara unique is its design of presenting several interwoven stories to the audience, while giving each the choice of which line of stories to follow. The play is set not on a single stage, but in a house. In the beginning, the audience gathers in one room to watch the play. They watch the actors perform the first scene, but then they

---

[40] *The problem with Boje is that he has published too much. Over 100 journal articles, countless books, chapters and endless web pages. The fact that he publishes everything he can online is, in theory, commendable. In practice...downright difficult to quote! I thoroughly agree with things he has online and spend hours trying to find the appropriate academic quote to pinpoint what he explains in his teaching material. To make things even more interesting, Boje also readily contradicts himself and admits mistakes he feels he has made in his past work whenever he finds them. Refreshing! (and again, hard to quote – does he still agree with himself? Will my quote be outdated?) So, this reflection introduces my understanding of some of Boje's theorizing as of autumn, 2008 – expiration date estimation: spring 2009.*

[41] *This Hollywood based play is reportedly the longest running play in Lost Angeles, perhaps because people tend to come and see it over and over again to get all different sides of the story.*

must choose which character they will follow to the next room to see the second scene. On they go, from room to room, always choosing whom they will follow to the next room after each scene. When the play is over, everyone in the audience has seen a unique combination of the several stories that intertwine and end up in the grand ending scene. In Boje's words (1999: 999):

"If there are a dozen stages and a dozen storytellers, the number of story lines an audience could trace as it chases the wandering discourses of Tamara is 12 factorial (479,001,600). For example, when attending the play I followed the chauffeur from the kitchen to the maid's bedroom; there she met the butler, who had just entered the drawing room. As they completed their scene, they each wandered off into different rooms, leaving the audience, myself included, to choose whom to follow."

Boje calls Tamara a discursive metaphor, which highlights the plurivocal interpretation of organizational stories (1995: 1000). His main notion lies in the concept of plurivocal interpretation, in realizing that there is no one view or truth of an organization, but many. In fact, Boje concludes that it is pointless for organizations to attempt to adopt a single voice, such as stories told exclusively from the perspective of a single leader, as they are quickly opposed by counterstories. As Boje puts it, it is virtually impossible to sustain a monological account of social reality *(*Boje 2006: 218, quoting Bryant & Cox, 2004, who in turn where citing Oswick & Keenoy, 2001).

Although Boje originally introduced his notion of organizations resembling the Tamara play in an article discussing the stories of one individual organization, Disney, his notion is by no means limited to the boundaries of an organization. To Boje, Tamara represents the multitude of stories that are told of companies. These stories have their origins both within and outside a company, and portray a vast array of messages, often times with conflicting content. The assembly of story sources a company can have was highlighted in Boje's studies of the global athletics company Nike. As Boje states (2001):

"My thesis is that stories are intertextual, the currency of storytelling organizations, that are colluding and competing in their storytelling ways, in transorganizational networks that are global... Nike is described by Cheryl Cole (1996, 1997) as a postmodern organization, attempting to control its virtual corporate marketing and PR machine by celebrity storytelling, while outsourcing its sweaty labor across the globe. To me it is the dark side of the postmodern enterprise, one pursued by media, NGOs, and me."

3.12 ...but do organizations use stories consciously?

In Storytelling in Organisation (2000: 240) Gabriel argues that although storytelling can be seen as a principal sense-making device in organizations[42], a more cautious view may be more accurate:

"Unlike the pub, village square or family table, organisations do not appear to be natural habitat of storytelling, as most people in organisations are far too busy appearing to be too busy to be able to engage in storytelling...In such an environment amidst the noisy din of facts, numbers and images, the delicate time consuming discourse of storytelling is easily ignored or silenced."

Gabriel's point is valid. In our era of information overload, the members and stakeholders of organizations are faced with constant attempts to catch their attention. E-mails, meetings, phone calls, text messages, hallway discussions, training sessions, press releases, company newsletters and memos overwhelm with their abundance (McCune1998, van Zandt 2004). However, it may well be that people are merely busy appearing to be busy – perhaps in an attempt to upkeep an image of being an important employee – which I believe is Gabriel's notion.

Be that as it may, one of the major challenges organizations are facing today is how to make communication captivating, setting it apart from the overflow of mundane messages. The academic discipline of knowledge management was one of the first to recognize the problem and seize the notion of storytelling as a possible solution to it; consequently taking storytelling in to a managerial context[43].

Concurrently, practitioners and consultants are embracing the notion of storytelling and making varied use of it in organizational settings (Denning, 2000 & 2006, Simmons, 2002, Snowden, 2003). Although the debate regarding storytelling in the field of knowledge management has been mainly led by practitioners, it is by no means limited to them. Important research regarding the use of stories in knowledge sharing has increased during the past decade (Marr, Mouritsen and Bukh 2003, Schreyögg and Geiger 2005, Sveiby and Skuthorpe 2006).

Even so, when discussing knowledge management, practitioners cannot be dismissed. The perhaps best known example is Denning (2000) who has contributed to both

---

[42] *Gabriel explains that if organizations are par excellence jungles of information, stories come to the rescue of meaning (2000: 18).*

[43] *Knowledge management is an interesting field. It seems that one hand does not know what the other is doing. I am referring to the fact that while knowledge flow theorists forget message form and information overflow, as discussed in chapter 2, KM researchers looking at storytelling have been focusing on exactly these issues.*

research and practice with his ideas regarding storytelling as a tool for enhancing organizational change, and namely, his idea of springboard stories[44]. As Denning puts it, the interest in storytelling has been arising from the fact that knowledge sharing is increasingly seen as the sine qua non to survival in the new knowledge economy. Traditional hierarchical organizations cannot cope with fast-changing client demands unless they are able to agilely share knowledge among employees, partners, and clients. And, according to Denning, storytelling is an effective method of achieving this.

In more recent work, Denning has also brought up the role of negative stories as possible obstacles blocking the flow of organizational change or harming stakeholder relations if management disregards them:

"[There is a risk that] substantial divergences between the overt official strategies and plans of the organization on the one hand and the covert negative stories being told and retold by the employees on the other, will constitute a significant impediment to the work of the organization…It is also likely that the employees' covert negative stories will eventually flow out of the organization and have a corrosive effect." (Denning, 2006: 85)

The contribution that practitioners have provided to knowledge management's understanding of storytelling is perhaps best described by giving practical examples of how storytelling is being used as a knowledge management tool in current day organizations. I have decided to include two: Snowden's *Story Construction* method and zur Bonsen and Maleh's *Appreciative Inquiry*, both publicized in 2001 (Thier and Erlach, 2006:128).

In Snowden's method, an organization creates fictive stories out of different story fragments that occur in a company. These stories are then used to "manipulate" the listener and open up their minds for new ideas and change concepts, by means of showing possibilities and chances in a positive light. The aim here is to communicate key messages such as vision and mission statements to employees. Zur Bonsen and Maleh's approach does not involve story construction or the collecting of existing organization stories. Instead, employees are taught how to interview each other with a resource oriented guideline. Staff members are encouraged to remember and tell valuable experiences of project work, any animating factors, positive pictures or situations or, if possible, to explain any other positive resources they can think of. The idea behind this practical application is that by sharing this kind of information through peer interviews, individuals will gain both additional work motivation and a broader perception for positive resources of other co-workers (ibid.).

---

[44] *www.stevedenning.com*

Why did I choose to include examples of practitioner publications and practical applications of storytelling as a managerial tool in my theoretical framework regarding storytelling? Simply because the correspondence between practitioners and scholars is lively in knowledge management, with both groups learning from the other. Often times this cooperation had led to meaningful contributions to the academic field.

For instance, Mouritsen and his partners have worked on the frontier of research and practice with their concept of knowledge narratives, a sort of story that organizations may use in their intellectual capital statements to illustrate knowledge management activities (2002: 14). The idea of their knowledge narrative is to portray the real value that a company's services provide to their customers.

The authors present their idea through example cases of knowledge narratives, most interestingly with an organization called Coloplast. In its knowledge narrative, Coloplast portrays that it is: *not merely a producer of complex plastic products; it is a "Producer of Quality of Life"*. (ibid: 15). Mouritsen et al explain the effect of Coloplast's knowledge narrative as follows:

"The product - which is a "plastic bag" - is a mechanism to collect bodily fluids. This is the product, but thinking about the value-to-the-user, the plastic bag is situated in the situation of its consumption...When providing this perspective, the plastic bag suddenly is a much more complex thing than - well, just a plastic bag. It is possible to visualise for oneself how such a plastic bag becomes a critical element in people's lives and how it contributes to making life as normal as possible." (Ibid: 15)

Another good example of storytelling research driven by practice comes from Sims et al (2009: 386), who showed that in a certain setting – a manager giving a change inspiring presentation – stories rich in detail work best. According to them, seeming ambiguities in stories, causal chains in *'critical non-essentials'* enabled listeners to extract snippets and re-fabricate them in a new form, which they could then relate to their own understandings. In essence, audiences in Sims et al.'s study tended to react more favorably to stories that were rich in detailed description and feeling, but contained little information about what a manager actually did, only the basic necessary facts. The detail led audience members to paint a picture, or rather, movie, in their mind that they could easily play back and recall at a later time.

Still keeping to the more managerially oriented storytelling research within knowledge management, Perret et al. (2004:34) see stories as an important tool that organizations can harness to externalize tacit knowledge. They explain that an estimated 80% of organizational knowledge flow occurs through expressive communication in informal groupings, which are generally the kind of networks that organizations have little

awareness of – and no control over. Typical settings for such knowledge sharing include hallway conversations, informal meetings, ex tempore storytelling and e-mails between co-workers that are not strictly of a business nature. As the authors explain:

"Organizations clearly rely on instrumental communications, but the role of expressive communications is less clearly understood, with perceived value varying from irrelevant to vital to the accomplishment of work."(ibid.)

As practically oriented representatives of the IT-track of knowledge management, Perret et al. examine and suggest the use of storytelling groupware based on traditional literary and journalistic narrative structure, TELLSTORY.

Many storytelling advocators amongst knowledge management corroborate the value of stories with best practice findings; showing that stories are useful for commencing organizational change and sharing knowledge, especially in situations where most communication fails, such as attempts to convey strategy, organizational culture or social practices (Morgan & Dennehy 1997, Swap et al. 2001, Ready 2002).

Two interesting case studies examining how stories are and can be used in knowledge sharing come from Meyer, Connel and Klein, who in their book chapter *A Narrative Approach to Knowledge Exchange* (2006) look into two contrasting case organizations, one in which communication is predominantly technology driven and another were technology is rarely used in communication. As they explain, much of the more influential knowledge management research dealing with stories is based on an assumption of knowledge being social in nature and that it can only be shared if shared frames of reference are available (ibid:107). Their study of two cases emphasized this view, as technology was not found to be essential or in any particular way aiding to knowledge sharing through stories, which in itself was a common means of sharing insight in both case organizations. As the authors note:

"It was believed that IT offers solutions to distributing knowledge widely. However, it appears that this is only the case if shared (tacit) knowledge structures are already in place. Within the IT-company, it does not appear to be a useful tool to share all knowledge via such a medium. Hence, we are tempted to suggest that traditional means of sharing knowledge, i.e. face-to-face communications, are still preferable."(ibid: 114)

The storytelling research conducted in the realm of knowledge management has been criticized perhaps most severely by Boje, who in 2006 published a book review essay in Academy of Management Review, commenting on several major practitioner authored titles on storytelling in organizations. His purpose was to try and bridge the gap

between academics and practitioners (which he does, although in the process, he also shoots down much work done by practitioners and scholars working hand in hand with them).

Boje portrays problems in practitioner led KM regarding storytelling as essentially coming down to one problem: *Turning a blind eye to the scholarship on the system complexity of storytelling*. And when KM authors fail to note the complexity of the system, they assume that stories can be treated as tools and storytelling systems easily changed through management actions. As Boje describes, what is missing from the realm of storytelling studies within knowledge management is a holistic perspective, where storytelling is treated as a socioeconomical act of performance that crosses organizational boundaries and interacts everywhere with context and indeterminately consummates systemicalness. (Boje, 2006: 222- 223)

However, not all scholars in the field of knowledge management look upon stories as possible managerial control tools. Others take a more holistic stance and regard stories as enablers of knowledge sharing, which should be studied to gain a wider understanding of how they can be used to help employees share knowledge throughout the organization.

A good example of this line of research comes from Sveiby and Skuthorpe (2006), who illustrate the power and longevity of storytelling as a chief knowledge-sharing device in their studies of the Australian Aboriginal Nhunggabarra. The Nhunggabarra are a non-literary society that built and retained knowledge through storytelling and created the longest continuous record of actual historic events and spirituality known to humankind.

In their research, Sveiby and Skuthorpe show how lifelong learning through the deduction of multiple meanings from stories was central to the Nhunggabarra education system. The Nhunggabarra stories include vivid facts of events that archaeological evidence supports, dating back as far as 40-60,000 years ago. As Sveiby and Skuthorpe explain, no written record or database could plausibly survive the test of time that stories prevail[45].

Sveiby and Skuthorpe's study explains a phenomenon that has long fascinated researchers studying world mythology: the similarities that seem to link stories from around the world. Many of the same images - such as a universal flood, an egg from which the cosmos hatched - constantly reappear in folklores of different cultures all over the globe (Littleton, 2002: 6). Indeed, the universal recurring stories acted as an inspiration for Jung, when he created his theory of the "collective unconscious" (ibid:

---

[45] *Although I do believe some of the cave paintings in southern France are 40,000 years old.*

7). Sveiby and Skuthorpe's explanation of the perseverance of stories and their degree of consistency throughout thousands of years, helps explain the perplexing spread of collective stories throughout humankind.

Despite interest from knowledge management researchers and practitioners alike, storytelling is still a far underused form of communication in official organizational settings and rather virginal territory within knowledge management research. It has great potential to be made much better use of, both in terms of research and practice.

The future of storytelling is unknown. Some have suggested that the era of storytelling is coming to an end and that this ancient tradition will soon be forgotten. As Ricoeur stipulated in 1985, in the second volume of Time and Narrative:

"Perhaps, indeed, we are the witnesses –and the artisans- of a certain death, that of the art of telling stories, from which proceeds the art of narrating in all its forms" (1985: 28)

However, in more recent years, contrary beliefs have been stated – hand in hand with our society's turn to value intangibles. A much-quoted passage comes from Rolf Jensen's Dream Society (1996: 9):

"The highest-paid person in the first half of the next century will be the "storyteller". The value of products will depend on the story they tell. Nike and many other global companies are already mainly storytellers. That is where the money is – even today."

Perhaps storytelling is a dying form of communication, or perhaps it has yet to reach its finest hour? Time will tell. The underlying predicament that preoccupies me is *why* storytelling is still so often overlooked in education, organizational - or most any kind of "official" communication. Could storytelling's disesteemed position a result of people not wanting to think that they believe stories? As Baumard (1999, 27) points out, organizational culture is above all a "tacit system" of knowledge, conversion and regulation. Yet a large part of organizational knowledge escapes discourse, standardization and generalization, because organizations tend to privilege formalization and combination. They do so even though their critical resources rest upon the versatility and renewal of their tacit knowledge (ibid, 206). Perhaps we suffer from some sort of prevalent conviction that everything entertaining or enjoyable is inherently morally wrong? It often appears that in order to be taken seriously (!) in our culture, one has to be serious.

From a researcher's point of view, an equally relevant question lies in the endurance of the so-called narrative turn in social sciences. Will it persist? Will knowledge

management ever truly embrace storytelling, both as an object of study and a method, or will it lean toward more managerial focuses of research, consequently forgetting the *knowledge* in knowledge management?

I believe that the answer to this question lies in whether or not scholars will grasp what storytelling is. Boje is right in criticizing knowledge management for its largely narrow-sighted outlook toward stories as tools – but likewise, Boje can be criticized for not acknowledging that stories may indeed also be used as tools. As Czarniawska (2004:41) has pointed out, the widespread use of stories in organizations often surprises individuals. Might this be due to the fact that storytelling has been collectively seen as a form of communication reserved solely for unofficial settings? If so, it makes perfect sense to *also* study storytelling as a managerial communication tool.

3.13 A summary on storytelling

The aim of this chapter was, in short, to explain storytelling. This proved to be quite a challenge – presenting even an introduction to a topic with a known history of research spanning over two thousand years, a ongoing and seemingly never-ending debate going on over its core definitions and a long tradition of research attempting to explain everything from the very essence of the issue being studied to the various implications storytelling has to how humans think, understand and communicate.

Thus I shall end this chapter with a summary of sorts – an explanation of why I chose to present storytelling the way I have. There is a logic in the chapter – it follows the same chain of questions that I have found answers to throughout my years as a doctoral student, in almost exactly the order that I found answers to them (with the exception of storytelling research within the realm of knowledge management, which was both my starting and finishing point).

In the early days of being a doctoral student, after reading my first articles on storytelling – practitioner oriented works in the field of KM – my first question had to do with history. KM articles hinted towards a longstanding research tradition, but I wanted more. I wanted a broader picture of storytelling research: the story behind storytelling? Where did it originally come from? Who first started studying the subject? – As this was the first question that came to my mind when introduced to the field I felt it would be a good place to start this chapter at. History gives perspective and context and sets the stage for readers less familiar to a field.

The next question that I started looking into as a doctoral student was one that I ran into regularly: after but a few months of studies, I soon realized that even though I felt that the word "story" was self-explanatory, the one question I could be sure to receive

in every academic debate was, inescapably: *what is a story?* – I attempt to illustrate what a story is by first giving an array of examples of other understandings and then presenting my own, which is based on Aristotle's definition: *a story is a verbal or written description of true of factual events, which are structured by a plot*. Definitions, I have learned, are at the heart of any discussion when one is communicating with an academic. Thus definitions came second, as soon as the stage was set with history.

The third subject area I presented in this chapter was structuralism. Again, I was following a path of trying to address issues in the same order that they hit me as questions during my studies. It seems that after asking for definitions, the next inevitable question in seminars would be, simply put: *are there any rules? Do stories follow some kind of pattern?* Structuralism provides a good answer to this predicament, showing how many stories do, in fact, fall under a set criteria, although it is not possible to come up with an all-encompassing formula. Thus structuralism was the first field of storytelling study that I chose to cover in this chapter.

What followed structuralism in this chapter seems logical to me, but may strike a reader as an unusual combination, and thus explanation is in order. I wanted to present storytelling research relevant to my study – a study looking at stories as a form of organizational communication, but not from an organizational viewpoint as such. I have always been more interested in how individuals react to and use storytelling than what is accomplished with the act of storytelling within an organization – and yet the reasons behind me wanting to know this are markedly managerial. Thus the rest of the research I have covered in this chapter follows two broad lines:

- **study and theorizing relating to how individuals use stories**: how they react to communication presented in story form (Martin, 1982), ideas about how the brain might work with stories (Schank and Abelson, 1995), specific research looking into what happens to human brains if they cannot use stories (Young & Saver, 2001), and classic theory regarding the human being as a storyteller by nature, or *homo narrans* (e.g. Fisher, 1989, Bruner, 1986)

- **research looking into storytelling in organizations or from an organizations (managerial) viewpoint**: what kind of issues does research looking into organizational storytelling study (e.g. Czarniawska 1998, Boje 2001) and what kind of aspects of storytelling does knowledge management look into (e.g. Simmons 2001, Snowden 2002)

The research regarding how storytelling relates to individuals had one key point that I wished to bring forth: that a story is a prevalent form of a message that everyone uses

most all the time – if not in communicating than as a minimum in their thoughts. I wanted to highlight that there is nothing about stories that should link them merely to fiction and free time – on the contrary, stories are such a commonplace form of communication that their absence in official organizational communication is bewildering.

The two sub-chapters dealing with storytelling from an organizational and managerial standpoint are meant to be interlinked, but as this connection may not be self-evident, it requires an explanation. The realm of organizational storytelling research is broad and in the sub-chapter covering it one gets only a foretaste of the discipline. My main motivation for including it was to offer a benchmark to the following sub-chapter that dealt with storytelling research in knowledge management. I felt that the best way to underscore why more research is needed in KM would be by exemplifying just how multifaceted organizational storytelling research in other disciplines is and what an array of human social behavior and sense making it covers. I feel that knowledge management has a lot to learn from organizational storytelling research – after all, knowledge management is by no means a discipline limited to managing knowledge, it is very much about managing knowledge workers. And as Drucker points out in his 2002 title: *They're not Employees, they're People.*

And finally, when I moved into knowledge management, my attempt was to offer an overview of how stories are understood within the field of knowledge management from both a practitioner (Denning) and scholarly perspective (e.g. Sims et al, Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006) and illustrate why more research is indispensable to the discipline; in essence, provide additional arguments to why this research is needed.

Have I explained storytelling? Absolute statements are dangerous in doctorates, but I am perfectly confident in claiming that I have not. I have provided a glimpse into the field from three different angles, which can be summarized as: *what is a story, what is a story to an individual* and *what is a story to an organization.* Each angle was but touched upon – but for the purposes of this research looking into stories as a form of communication, this glimpse will suffice.

4. MY TAKE ON THE WORLD AND HOW IT CAN BE STUDIED: THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of my research is to assess whether utilizing story as a message form may have an effect on knowledge flow. Although my aspiration is to contribute to the current understanding of the knowledge flow in general, my research focuses on a specific topic: communicating to the Finnish business press and assessing if the form of a message – in this case a story – can have an impact on how receivers, journalists, perceive the usefulness of the message.

Business journalists were by no means a self-evident choice. A similar research design to mine could have been carried out with members of a case organization or, for example, MBA students. As I discuss in the final chapter of this thesis, my decision to conduct my empirical research within the realm of business media can be seen both as a limitation and a contribution – by concentrating on such a specific group of professionals, my results are not wide-ranging, but rather provide an interesting example. Yet there were a number of reasons that compelled me to make this choice.

First, my own professional background: understanding how business journalists react to stories was the original motivation that triggered my interest in writing a doctoral thesis. But while personal preferences did initiate my interest in studying business journalists, the choice also has sound academic motivation: in order to address my research question, I wished to conduct a study among professionals who indisputably represent knowledge workers. Business journalists constantly assess the usefulness of communication as they appraise the newsworthiness of incoming press releases. A single journalist can have hundreds of press releases sent to her on a daily basis, which she needs to quickly consider and then decide if the message is of interest to her media and its readers. Thus journalists are prime examples of modern knowledge workers who continuously select messages from an overwhelming flood of information – what is more, they directly affect organizational knowledge flow by acting as gatekeepers who decide whether to discontinue or facilitate knowledge flow from the organization to the media and finally the larger audience (Curtin 1999, Carroll & McCombs, 2003)[46].

Another choice that requires clarification is my decision to concentrate on external knowledge flow – sending out messages and telling the world about the organization. It is an area of knowledge flow that is often left outside both theory and empirical research. This is probably largely due to the fact that knowledge management's sister-discipline, intellectual capital research, deals with these issues a great deal (e.g. Marr, Mouritsen and Bukh 2003). In fact, external knowledge flow is, if not the core of intellectual capital research, its *raison d'être*. Nevertheless, there is no reason why

---

[46] *Interestingly, two influential initiators of the field of knowledge management were both working as business journalists, albeit in management positions, when they first published their thoughts on knowledge being a primary asset of a company. I am referring to Karl-Erik Sveiby and Thomas A. Stewart.*

external knowledge flow should be left outside when studying knowledge flow. Above all since it plays a pivotal role in the success of knowledge work – work where your results are oftentimes intangible and all you have to show for yourself is your image.

Alvesson makes this point clearly in Knowledge work: ambiguity, image and identity (2001). As he explains, the success of knowledge-intensive work is more contingent upon rather loose *beliefs* about the company being able to offer something specific to clients and customers. He claims that it is difficult to substantiate knowledge intensive companies and knowledge workers as distinct, uniform categories, and thus *the claim to knowledge-intensiveness* is perhaps one of the most distinguishing features (ibid: 864-866). Alvesson does not limit the importance of image to merely outside stakeholders. On the contrary, he sees image as a key molding factor of corporate identity, which in turn is a valuable resource for knowledge-intensive workers. At the heart of Alvesson's argument is the idea that employee identity is strongly connected to corporate identity in knowledge intensive firms (ibid: 878-879).

4.1 Where do I fit in?

My research approach toward social science is positioned more toward subjective than objective (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 2-4), as the ontological assumptions driving this work are best described as perceiving reality as a realm of symbolic discourse (Morgan & Smircich, 1980: 492). The central notions behind this ontology can be portrayed as follows:

"The social world is a pattern of symbolic relationships and meanings sustained through a process of human action and interaction. Although a certain degree of continuity is preserved through the operation of rule-like activities that define a particular social milieu, the pattern is always open to reaffirmation or change through the interpretations and actions of individual members." (ibid: 494)

Thus, I believe that social reality is an exchange of sorts, a negotiation, among the subjective interpretation of labels that are attached to humans, things and situation, which lead to social rules. Reality is *"derived from the system of meaningful interpretation of reactions to these labels"* (Abnor & Bjerke, 1997: 31).

Often times, symbolic discourse draws on metaphors of theatre (Silverman 1970) or culture (Pondy & Mitroff 1979). The underlying assumption of symbolic discourse is that social situations should be researched in such a manner that reveals their inner nature. Hence, when studying organizations, focus is often placed on studying the role that language, symbols, myths and other narratives play in shaping our interpretations of reality. In accordance to this epistemological stance, I do not believe that findings

obtained through social science research will be universally generalizable. I do, however, regard research findings as a means of providing insightful and significant information about the nature of the social world (Morgan & Smircich, 1980: 497).

4.2 Research design – a roadmap for reading the following chapters

My empiric research design takes an inductive approach to the topic. I first approach the phenomena through qualitative means, and then move on to assess some of the findings from my initial qualitative research with a larger experiment.

When I started collecting empirical data, I wished to understand more of how stories work in communication. Thus I decided to study communication between PR professionals and the media. In essence I wanted to understand how PR professionals seek to influence the business press into telling stories about their client companies and how journalists in turn react to the story material sent to them by PR departments. The data for this contribution was collected during 2005, interviewing six Finnish business journalists and six PR professionals with the help of semi-structured interviews. The respondents were selected using a snowballing method (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006: 80); with the first journalist and PR professional chosen through my own social network and consequent interviewees found through the recommendation of already interviewed parties[47].

In my interviews, I asked questions concerning the kind of information that is sent to journalists; as well as questions attempting to clarify if the form of the message seems to have an impact on what information they make use of. I also asked respondents what sort of issues they consider newsworthy, what kind of approaches the PR professionals felt to be most useful in terms of gaining press coverage, and how the information the journalists receive could be improved to better serve their journalistic objectives.

I chose to analyze the data by means of qualitative content analysis, as the aspiration of this stage of my research was to produce qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2000), to use as a basis upon which I could design a quantitative test. The data, analysis and results are discussed more thoroughly in chapter 5, but some of my main interpretations are best introduced here to ease explaining the next step of my research design.

One of the main conclusions I made from this data was that business journalists react to a story in different ways depending on how it is presented to them. When approached with a straightforward story, respondents tended to claim that they would only use it as background information, as they did not want to be "manipulated by the

---

[47] *As professional circles are small, many, but not all, of the respondents were individuals with whom I was already acquainted with.*

PR people". But when they were sent a "hidden story" i.e. a story that is embedded in the midst of a press release, a story that essentially surprised them – they were much more prone to view the information as valuable. Respondents differed in how useful they found facts presented in story form, but all respondents seemed to have a tendency to believe that traditional press releases where most useful when the item discussed was "real news".

In sum, when asked, both PR professionals and business journalists tended to maintain that they perceived storytelling as a means of giving background information, except in the case of the hidden story, which some business journalists supposed might considerably add to the newsworthiness of an issue that they would otherwise consider only moderately newsworthy.

To test the initial findings from the first stage of my empiric research, I designed a web-based experiment, which I hoped to be able to carry out in collaboration with Finnish business journalists. I was granted access by the board of the Finnish business journalists' association (Taloustoimittajien yhdistys) to complete a test with their members in the end of 2007 and I conducted this experiment in the first quarter of 2008.

In this study, participants were directed to a web page containing three press releases, which they were asked to read and thereafter assess. The primary measure to be obtained was the reporters' rating of how likely they thought they would be to write about a press release, i.e. cover the issue in their respective media. The reporters were asked to read each press release and then rate it on the following five-point scale:

1. Not newsworthy
2. Very unlikely that I would find this newsworthy
3. Possibly newsworthy, might interest readers
4. Very likely to be considered newsworthy
5. Definitely newsworthy!

After this assessment the respondents were asked to appraise the coverage they would give the issue, if they had deemed the subject newsworthy:

1. Not worthy of much coverage, a short passage or online news
2. Possibly worthy of lengthier coverage – at least worth calling for extra information.
3. This could definitely lead to lengthier coverage!

The clue of this test lay in the fact that there was not one website, but three. They all contained the same three press releases, but they were written in a different manner for each site, in order to test if message form has an impact on perceived newsworthiness.

Thus all of the press releases used in this study were written in three different forms: as a traditional factual press release with no apparent story, as a press release with a clear story, and as a traditional press release containing an embedded, i.e. hidden story.

These press releases were grouped together into three different web pages, to which the respondents were randomly directed. Each web page contained one press release in story form, one so-called normal press release and one containing a hidden story. Thus each respondent evaluated three press releases. The respondents did not know how the experiment was designed[48]. The test design is illustrated in figure 3.
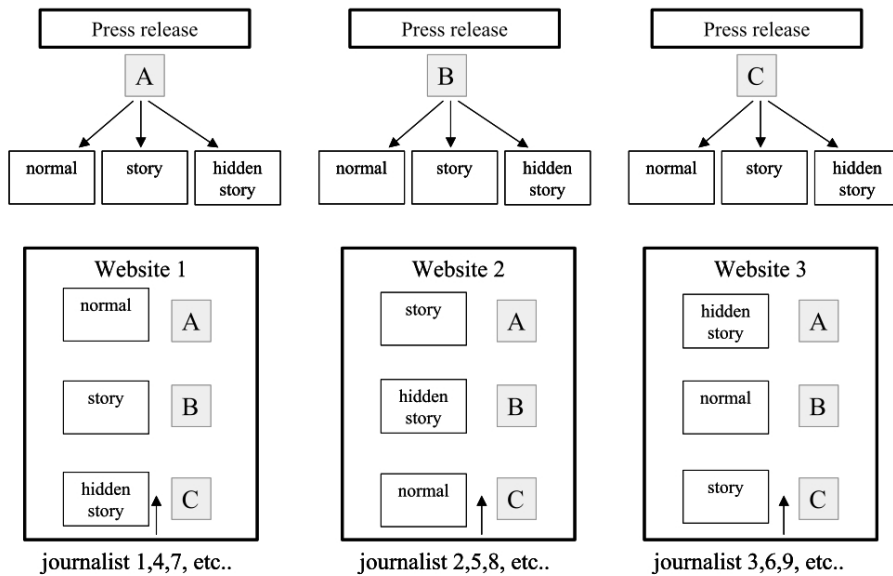
Figure 3: Illustration of the web-based experiment

The intention of the second stage of my empiric research was to mimic a classic lab experiment, which may appear contradictory to my previous claim of approaching research from an epistemological standpoint of symbolic discourse. However, I believe

_____

[48] *Having respondents take part in a test where they are not aware of the real issue being tested is highly problematic from an ethical standpoint. The Board of Directors of the Finnish Business Journalists' association gave this matter careful reflection before allowing the test to take place. In the end it was concluded that fully informing the respondents might affect their answers and thus was not an option. As very little information regarding the identity of the respondents was collected (age, gender, years in journalism, possible work experience years in PR), no respondent could be identified from the gathered data. Taking these issues into consideration, the Board allowed the test to take place.*

this choice is readily explained: I wished to provide new insight that might be considered by most all academics, regardless of their epistemology. And as I believe our very being is shaped by how we interpret symbols, I felt it was important to try to create information in such a manner that it could not be straightforwardly disregarded due to the method in which it was produced. Depending on one's standpoint, the results of a lab test can be taken in many ways: as interesting examples, feasible explanations – or even hard facts. I myself find results obtained from tests to be engaging illustrations of how people may react in test situations – and believe the results obtained from such experiments can plausibly be used as rather powerful arguments in terms of contradicting existing assumptions.

The data was gathered during January-February 2008, with an initial response of 65 answers and a second round of 72 answers, totaling 137 answers, i.e. approximately 35, 5% of the members of the association [49]. The data was mainly analyzed with one-way analyses of variance with repeated measures (Winer, 1962: 261-269). The test, how the press releases were written and assessed for comparability, the quantitative analysis and my interpretations of the results are explained in chapter 6.

As I hope to have now outlined the research design used in this thesis, the time has come to dive into the marvelous world empiric investigation. The next chapters read as follows: first, I depict the process and findings from the first stage of my empiric research based on 12 semi-structured interviews. In the following chapter, I explain the process and findings from my web-based lab-test, and also attempt to pull together the findings from both empiric stages of my research – and link my findings to my theoretical framework.

In the final closing chapter of my thesis I reflect on the research process and the many limitations of my research and offer ideas of managerial implications and suggestions for future research.

---

[49] *A total of 386 emails were sent out, i.e. to every member belonging to the association in February 2008.*

5. AN EMPIRIC INVESTIGATION INTO STORYTELLING IN ACTION – HOW PR PROFESSIONALS ATTEMPT TO LURE BUSINESS JOURNALISTS INTO TELLING STORIES

By now, I hope to have portrayed my epistemological and ontological beliefs. I see society as a constant negotiation of meaning, a symbolic discourse. Many message forms are used in this negotiation – for instance facts, figures, symbols, rituals and various kinds of narratives such as anecdotes, metaphors, parables, legends and myths. I believe that storytelling is a particularly intriguing form of communication, which all humans use to make sense of themselves and the world they live in. Stories are a part of our everyday life, but often times we use them without thinking. We rarely make a conscious choice to employ storytelling as a means of communication.

The aim of this chapter is to take a first look at how storytelling might affect knowledge flow when a deliberate choice is made to utilize it as a form of communication. I accomplish this by studying how stories receive media coverage. More exactly, I examine how PR professionals might seek to influence the business press into telling stories about their client companies – and how journalists in turn react to story material sent to them by PR departments.

As explained in the previous chapter, I had a specific reason for choosing this context. Business journalists handle hundreds of messages each day, which they need to assess for newsworthiness. Thus they can be considered extreme examples of modern day knowledge workers, who continuously deal with information overload.

I entered this phase of my research hoping to find if stories are being used while communicating to the business press, and – if stories are used – whether journalists prefer story form in comparison to others. My premise was that journalists would show a strong tendency towards favoring story form. This assumption was based on the fact their own key task at work is creating stories for the media, but that most of the material sent to them is presumably rather factual, i.e. press releases.

This assumption is best explained by a point brought forward by Harris (1994:38). Quoting Kintsch (1977), he explains how a very general script or schema exists for stories in the media, at least in western cultures. Media viewers and readers learn this narrative script implicitly during their early years, by hearing stories from their parents and teachers. These stories are composed of episodes, each of which contains an exposition, complication and finally, a resolution. Harris states that both television and print media draw on this narrative script to make their stories readily understandable. Finally, Harris quotes Meadowcroft and Reeves (1989) who found that children obtain well-developed story schema skills by the age of 7 and that these skills led to a better

memory of central story content, a reduction in processing effort and a greater flexibility of attention-allocation strategies.

Consequently, I presumed that journalists would prefer messages in readily exploitable story form. I hoped to demonstrate that sending a receiver a message in a form that is effortlessly reusable for them in their own line of work might enhance knowledge flow.

To approach this issue, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 6 journalists from the Finnish business press and 6 Finnish PR professionals. I chose to approach the topic through interviews primarily because the data I was interested in generating was not feasibly available in any other form (Mason, 2002: 66). Semi-structured interviews seemed an appropriate choice as I intended to interview each respondent only once and presumed the respondents to be professionals facing time pressures and expecting a certain level of structure on my part (Bernard, 2000: 191).

I held no presumptions of the material collected being *"an appropriate substitute for the observation of actual behavior"* (Heritage, 1984, quoted from Silverman 2005: 239). On the contrary, my aspiration was to gather individual accounts of how respondents perceive interaction between PR professionals and journalists; the material PR professionals send journalists (and other ways in which they contact them) and journalists' perception of how they react to both PR professionals and various kinds of material they send them.

I conducted the interviews during the latter half of 2005, and carried out initial data analysis alongside data collection. I chose to conduct initial analysis early on to ensure that I was not unnecessarily restricting the themes of discussion or preventing new avenues of inquiry from developing (Pope et al. 2000: 114). I felt this was a useful approach, as I added on a number of questions, especially after my first interview.

The interviewees were derived from two sources: key informants and snowball sampling, where key informants were asked to identify other knowledgeable individuals to interview. Snowball sampling was chosen as it is appropriate when a study is primarily explorative, qualitative and descriptive (Atkinson & Flint, 2001 [50], quoting Hendricks et al 1992).

The respondents from the business press (2 females, 4 males) represent three major Finnish media: Kauppalehti, Taloussanomat and Yleisradio financial news. Kauppalehti is Finland's leading business magazine, with 6 weekly issues and a monthly supplement, Optio. Taloussanomat is one of Kauppalehti's main competitors. During the time of my data collection Taloussanomat had a similar publishing structure

---

[50] *Social Research Update, issue 33, retrieved online: http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU33.pdf*

and readership demographics as Kauppalehti[51]. Yleisradio is Finland's national broadcasting company and produces financial news used in a variety of media, including their Internet, television and radio news.

The PR professionals (1 male, 5 females) represent 2 middle size Finnish PR firms, which are both specialized in business related public relations, and one PR Manager of a large adult training institute. The PR professionals' experience covers handling public relations for a broad range of industries, including IT, banking, management consulting, logistics and entertainment.

5.1 The trials, tribulations and triumphs of qualitative analysis

A choice of methodology should not be made according to personal preference. Rather, it must be based on what you are aspiring to find out (Silverman 2005: 5-6). In Silverman's words: *"there are no right or wrong methods. There are only methods that are appropriate to your research topic and the model with which you are working" (ibid: 112)*. Likewise, following Maione (1997), analysis tools should be looked upon as ways of organizing data into meaningful units – something that serve and fit the researcher's research questions and epistemological standpoint.

As noted earlier, the goal of this stage of my empiric research was to produce a qualitative description (Day, 1993: 36-40, Sandelowski, 2000: 335) of how storytelling may be used when PR professionals communicate with the business press. My aim was to understand what types of messages PR professionals employ and how journalists perceive their usefulness. I hoped that this insight would allow me to design an experiment where I could test how receivers react to various kinds of messages – and thus attempt to answer my research question.

Qualitative content analysis is a reasonable choice to reach this aim. Although qualitative content analysis is not restricted by a particular sequence of analytical steps to the same extent as its quantitative version (Krippendorf, 2004: 88[52]), certain overarching phases can be identified (Alasuutari 1994: 30-39[53]). As in most all qualitative analysis, two major steps can be distinguished in the process of qualitative content analysis, *purifying the observations* and *unriddling the puzzle*.

---

[51] *Taloussanomat went through a major organizational change during 2007 and is now published solely on the Internet.*

[52] *Who himself questions the validity of a separation between quantitative and qualitative content analysis, as ultimately, all reading of text is qualitative (ibid: 16).*

[53] *I am quoting a Finnish-language title by Alasuutari. The same distinction and explanations can be found in English in Alasuutari's 1995 title: Researching Culture, Qualitative Methods and Cultural Studies, from page 13 onwards.*

In the first phases of purification, the data is themathized by reading through it while holding a certain theoretical-methodological stance, and with only this perception in mind. Here attention is paid to the essential aspects of the chosen theoretical framework. This approach allows a researcher to reduce the amount of data to a more utilizable array of separate "raw observations".

In the next stage of "purification", the data is reduced still by means of combining observations, i.e. categorizing them according to a common denominator. The starting point of this combination is that all observations are examples or specimens of the same phenomenon. It is important to note that the idea here is not to produce average examples or stereotypes; quite the opposite, in qualitative analysis a single exception is enough to break a "rule". The second part of Alasuutari's explanation of the qualitative research process refers to providing an interpretation of the findings – hence the title "unriddling".

Qualitative content analysis is not an exceedingly complex method of analysis, but it has its hindrances. As Gillham (2005: 137-142) explains, in qualitative content analysis, there are few, if any straightforward tasks. Every step can (and often will) be backtracked and redone as the analysis advances. As he describes, certain key steps of qualitative content analyses – finding the substantive statements of a text and deciding on categories – are processes where the researcher is necessarily always questioning her choices:

"Neither is a once-and-for-all process: you move back and forth, changing your mind, reviewing and revising while working through different transcripts. This iterative process is the heart of the matter: not linear, rather untidy, but from which emerges an organization of the common meanings derived from different accounts" (ibid: 137).

Accordingly, many of the early decisions I made while analyzing the data were revisited and altered. For example, my initial idea was to conduct two separate analyses, one of the journalists' answers and the other of the PR professionals' responses, as I perceived them as representing opposite sides of "the PR Game". This soon proved an unworthy choice, as separating the data took my focus off the respondents' shared views and prevented me from finding evocative larger patterns.

Gillham (ibid) recommends starting analysis by creating broad initial categories, which can then be sub-divided into sub- and even sub-sub-headings depending on the extent of the material. Miles and Huberman, on the other hand, suggest starting with coding the material, and gradually working up towards larger patterns (1994: 55-69).

After conducting the interviews, I strongly felt that I had been influenced more by some respondents than other, due for instance to their personal charisma and storytelling skills. Thus I thought it necessary to start the comprehensive analysis in such a manner that it would allow me to assess *what* had been said in general and thereafter pinpoint *who* was behind the statements to appraise if I was giving too much emphasis toward some individual respondent.

As a result, I decided upon following Gillham, and conducted what Mason (2002: 147) refers to as *identifying categories*. In essence, I first read the interview transcripts through as an entity and made notes of themes that came up in the text. I then went through my list of themes and grouped them into the following broad headers: *nature of work, attitude towards material sent to journalists in general, attitude towards ready-made stories, general attitude toward the "opposite side"* (referring to PR professionals when interviewing journalists and journalists when interviewing PR Professionals) and *identified gatekeeper(s).*

After reading the material under these broader categories[54], it was apparent to me that my initial hunch was correct. I was emphasizing one respondent's strong views to such an extent that, at the outset, I supposed them worthy of broad categories. Namely, one of the interviewed journalists had expressed very strong attitudes toward PR professionals in general and the various kinds of material they sent. In fact, most all of the quotes in two categories involving "attitudes" were dominated by the answers of this respondent. Only the category that involved attitudes towards ready-made stories included quotes from a large number of my respondents.

Thus, after this assessment, I resolved to remove the "General attitude toward the 'opposite side'" category and rename and recode "Attitude towards material sent to journalists in general" into "Types of materials sent to journalists". After this, I was left with the following broad categories: nature of work, types of materials sent to journalists, attitude toward ready-made stories, identified gatekeepers.

I subsequently re-read the material under these broader themes and created the following sub-categories: *creativity of journalism, time pressure at work, and preference toward the form of received material.*

---

[54] *I utilized Weft QDA in the analysis. It is a freely available software tool designed for qualitative research, much like a basic version of NVivo. After creating the first broad categories by reading all the printed interview transcripts, I exported the material to Weft QDA and indexed it by assigning codes to paragraphs, as they seemed to refer to an issue under one of these chosen broad categories. Indexing is best explained by the following quote from Mason: "The central idea of indexing (some writers and researchers call it categorizing, coding, assigning nodes, or 'code and retrieve') is that the researcher applies a uniform set of indexing categories systematically and consistently to their data…These are likely to function in the same way as headings or subheadings in the chapters of a book, giving a descriptive sense of what each section of text is about, and may be useful as a way of directing the readers eye through an individual text (Mason, 2002: 150-151).*

This stage of analysis was crucial, as I first noted the difference between ready-made stories and "other stories". The data was troubling me, as the answers under *"attitude toward ready-made stories"* were more on the negative side (with some exceptions), whereas *"types of materials sent to journalists"* and especially *"preference toward the form of received material"* held interesting accounts by both journalists and PR professionals on stories receiving media coverage; they were just not ready-made stories. Additionally, most of the answers regarding creativity of journalism and time pressures at work were evolving around ready-made stories. Creativity was often being mentioned as a reason to disregard these stories, and time-pressures as a reason for using them.

Consequently, I created a new broad category called *story type*, under which I first coded all accounts involving the word story, as well as phrases where the respondents were otherwise discussing stories. I re-read this material in an attempt to identify other story-types apart from a ready-made, clear-cut story. At first, it seemed to me that two types of stories were mentioned in the material: ready-made stories and ideas, or indications of stories. However, some of the accounts focused on stories that were quite developed, ready stories, just not presented to the journalists upfront. They were not left open ended or presented vaguely; they were simply stories that were for some reason or another hidden in the communication.

After one more reading, I regrouped the material under the "story type" theme into three sub categories: 1) ready made stories that were offered to journalists directly either in a press release or by other means 2) stories that were only implied or hinted towards, not spelled out and 3) clear stories that were hidden in the midst of a press release or interview or otherwise not presented upfront, thus leaving the receiver to realize that the material actually included a clear story.

As a result of this categorization I felt that I had identified something interesting. The answers under these sub categories differed in what seemed to be the interviewees' attitude. Respondents speaking of hidden stories appeared more enthusiastic, and did not show much negativity towards being manipulated, while positive accounts of stories were almost as a rule explained by laziness or time-pressure. Indications of stories seemed to lie somewhere in between these two, with PR professionals speaking of them rather avidly but journalists admitting to using them, but not willing to give much credit to the PR professionals for indicating the idea.

As a final point, I ended up with only two main themes that I decided to focus on in my analysis: gatekeepers and story type. The latter was the main focus of my research, but I felt that identifying and understanding gatekeepers was crucial in order to appreciate how the news selection process might work. Even though my analysis included

identifying the gatekeepers in the process, I will not present that portion of my study here. While I felt this part of the analysis important when I first conducted it, the direction that the next phase of my research took emphasis away from these issues[55].

The findings of the analysis are presented below, with discussion presented alongside relevant quotes from the interviewees. When the interview transcripts are directly quoted, the respondents are identified by a gender-neutral alias and years of experience, for instance: Hayden, 7 years in PR. Some of the respondents held work experience from both journalism and PR. In these cases they are identified by an alias, followed by work experience from their current position as either journalist or in PR, followed by their years of experience in their former field, for example: Sage, 10 years in journalism, 4 years in PR.

5.2 A business journalist recognizes a story when she sees it

Today, storytelling is a rather common tool in public relations, providing a valuable method of communication that is recognized by journalists and PR professionals alike.

"It became wildly common during the IT boom that everyone had a story to tell, a well rehearsed story...they started to appear sometime in 98-99, everyone had something. Although they were young guys, boys, usually... who hadn't really done much anything in their lives, but they brought up such interesting stuff about their pasts in a great way... Stories were in the air already before this, but this is when it really started... A story is, after all, our basic building block, that's what it's all about, a good piece of news is a good story...I think business people have realized this too...you get your message through much easier if you can tell a story." (Kendall, 21 years in journalism)

Storytelling has, in fact, become such a common phenomena, that journalists could pick out trends in business storytelling.

"The heroic stories that everyone was pushing five years ago are not around anymore. It's not about great leaders any longer. Now everyone is pushing these stories on the collective firm and their phenomenal group work and spirit and whatnots...What PR firms have completely forgotten is the grass root people, I'd love to see more of them. The nerd with the bad skin working in his lonely cubicle... The normal people behind the business and the success... I strongly feel that the readers of the business press want to read about people they can relate to and understand." (Jessie, 14 years in journalism, 2 years in PR)

---

[55] *I have previously published these findings together with the analysis on gatekeepers and overview of gatekeeping theory in: EJKM, The Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management, 2007, volume 5 issue1: Journalists, the Makers and Breakers of Relational Capital.*

In essence, news is storytelling. Being a journalist and creating news inherently makes you a narrator.

"Many seem to think that journalists just sort of reflect what's happening in the world but it's not like that at all. A journalist creates his own stories within the news format and always tries to tell some story there." (Devon, 24 years in journalism)

5.3 Ready-made stories create emotions – mostly negative ones

According to Gans (2004: 80-83 [1979]) journalists are in constant search for new ideas and often pressed for time. As they make hundreds of choices regarding news selection each day, they base their decisions on what they themselves best describe as a hunch, or gut reaction. Pressures of time, immediacy, and deadlines require reporters to make direct and indirect use of prepared information.

Hence it is reasonable to assume that PR professionals would at least at times attempt to pitch ready-made stories to the media. However, when asked about stories, many of the PR professionals and business journalists stated that although they are useful in some situations, they often decided against using them.

"Stories are tricky. It's what they (journalists) are after in the end, but... as my colleague who used to be a reporter always tells us, you should never ever send material that is too ready made. You have to leave journalists with room for ideas." (Taylor, 9 years in PR)

One reason for disregarding stories created by others is the need to produce news that is coherent with the media's concept.

"This is a real problem. A lot of PR firms would send us ready articles or stuff that has been over processed. We can't use them. We always need our own point of view in our magazine. I guess there are a lot of general newspapers that they could offer these ready stories to, but there is simply no point in sending them to a highly focused business press. Freelance journalists make the exact same mistake." (Casey, 5 years in journalism, 1 year in PR)

Both PR professionals and journalists commonly stated that ready-made stories often feel too positive. Finnish business journalists are notorious for their negative outlook on "advertising" any commercial organization. It is considered unethical. Thus journalists typically shun away from news that seems like it would be beneficial for a [large profitable] company, should it receive media coverage.

"The stories have to be written skillfully, so the journalist doesn't immediately think that ok, now they're just advertising themselves again…it has to be written so that you feel that you could get the same kind of answers if you made an interview on the topic yourself…otherwise you get this reaction that NO way." (Jamie, 6 years in journalism)

One of the most prominent features that the interviewees in both PR and journalism spoke about had to do with the journalists wanting to find news themselves. This tendency might readily be called a journalistic take on the so-called NIH (Not Invented Here) syndrome.

Originally, NIH was defined as *the tendency of a stable research group to believe it possesses a monopoly of knowledge in its field, thereby rejecting new ideas from the outside* (Katz & Allen, 1982, quoted from Jain & Triandis 1997: 36). Today, as Herzog (2008: 100) describes, NIH is commonly used[56] to describe any members of an organization that view internal knowledge as superior to knowledge that lies outside the organization.

The NIH syndrome I am referring to in this case is plausibly caused by how journalists view their occupation. They see journalism as being inherently a very creative job that they take pride in. Most of the interviewees stressed that they never merely reflect the outside world and tell things as they occur. Their work involves a great deal of interpretation and decision-making.

"Creativity is probably the key word…often enough people seem to think that news work is very non creative but it gets quite creative… It reminds me a lot of an artistic process, when we start thinking about what we will do and how will we introduce and develop the story…It's a surprisingly artistic process." (Devon, 24 years in journalism)

However, many respondents claimed that it is useful to send stories, for they are utilized often enough, especially as background information.

"I read them. If they are well written I'll read them. I'll certainly not use the material itself at all if I run a story, but it might lead to me getting a kind of a 'ah, I get it' reaction and then if I run something related in a few weeks I'll contact the people that were mentioned in the ready text, because they already told one version and parody is always easy to make." (Jessie, 14 years in journalism, 2 years in PR)

---

[56] *Herzog and Leker quote a number of sources on the matter, including Clagett (1967: 11), Katz & Allen (1982: 7), Cohen & Levinthal (1990: 133) and Leonard-Barton, (1998: 159).*

Some of the PR professionals emphasized the importance of sending out ready made stories, due to the increasing pressure journalists' face in meeting deadlines and producing news quickly. Lack of time (or using it as an excuse) makes stories appealing for some journalists:

"It depends so much on where you're working, when you're on the news desk it's incredibly hectic, upstairs at the features they can mull over things and ponder all they want, but in our work it's all about minutes, if not seconds." (Riley, 6 years in journalism, I year in PR)

"It's a bit overstated to say we have a lack of time... Many have all the time in the world and it's just a sort of laziness because we are forced to write something new every day and if your lazy it's of course easier to do something with information that is ready made and filtered...easier for us journalists to make a living." (Kendall, 21 years in journalism)

Thus far, my analysis seemed to indicate that ready made stories do not hold a great appeal to either business journalists or PR professionals, but they may be used as background information, or occasionally used as such, especially when pressured for time. Many of the journalists noted that their reaction to ready made stories is due to their being in business news, and stated that other fields of media may well be more appreciative of ready material. This also was apparent from the interviews conducted with PR professionals, who noted that journalists working in areas such as entertainment (movie's, record releases, concerts etc.) seem much more enthusiastic toward ready-made stories and quite often print them as such or utilize considerable parts of them, but that stories were often not suitable for the business press, which is more facts-oriented.

5.4 PR professionals favor indications of stories – is it better to hint than to spell it out?

PR professionals have many ways in which they seek to influence the business press into covering their clients in the news. They often attempt to offer an interesting story slightly indirectly, as to allow the journalist room for interpretation and the joy of "finding" the news themselves. Commonly, they will either contact an individual journalist or media with a certain story or tailor make it in a manner that they feel will fit different media wishes. As one journalist explained:

"The biggest challenge at the moment is that every media house has such diverse needs ... TV news, internet news, radio, magazines with five different special

supplements and different concepts for the weekend issues, monthly glossies and so on…each media or newspaper house is everything but a homogenous unit. Realizing this and packaging the same story in different forms for all these different receivers, I'd say that's what makes the successful PR people these days. The ones who know how to package the story in say, 5 different ways for different units in the same house, they are the ones that seem to be doing well." (Jessie, 14 years in journalism, 2 years in PR)

Accordingly, many of the PR professionals saw indications of stories, which they also referred to as hints or even bates, as their preferred method of attaining media coverage for their story. The indications of stories were often fully or nearly thought out stories that the PR professionals deliberately only hinted toward or portrayed in a somewhat vague fashion, thus letting the journalist make the realization of there being an idea of a story in the message they were receiving.

"Well, unless I'm just sending out a press release, I always approach journalists first with a story suggestion. It has an idea of a story in it but it has some loose ends so they can tie it up in a fashion they like. I send it by e-mail and call after they have a chance to think about it for a while…Sometimes I've wondered should I write the stories more ready, but I have this gut feeling I should let the journalist have the joy of finding." (Sidney, 10 years in PR, 2 years in journalism)

Avoiding an excessively positive tone or "advertising" was a key issue that interviewees often referred to when discussing how they use indications of stories. Many PR professionals stated that they generally choose topics that can be linked to a current discussion in the media or spoke of trends in the industry.

"I'd say some of the best PR successes our firm has had have been when we take an issue that is not straightforwardly tooting our clients horn… usually something to do with a trend that's going on…I'd say it's best if you just hint to a journalists about a story like that. When you do it right, you can be pretty sure they will go for it." (Carson, 12 years in PR)

Often enough, when recognizing a phenomenon that they felt could make a story, PR professionals will simply pitch this to a picked journalist who they consider would be interested in the matter, without developing the full story. Hence the appeal of indications of stories to PR professionals may also lie in the fact that they take less effort to create.

"Sometimes we throw a bait. When there's something interesting going on at a client of ours, but it's not really news and there's really no point in sending it out as a press

release. It can be kind of an idea, like this company is unique because it offers such flexible working hours to its personnel. Stuff we could write up as a full story, but it's easier to for instance arrange for our client and some journalist to have lunch together and just sort of... discuss this topic. They often like it better anyway when they [the journalists] can figure out for themselves how they want to write the story." (Taylor, 9 years in PR)

5.5 Giving the press the joy of finding – are PR people purposefully hiding stories?

Many journalists noted that they were accustomed to "searching for the hidden news", although it usually applied to cases where companies were reporting something negative. For example listed companies who have an obligation to publicize all relevant information were mentioned several times as being in the habit of hiding bad news.

"Profit warnings are often hidden there...first they tell about everything else possible and then in the end there's one paragraph that states that the company is giving a profit warning. It gets on your nerves. We <u>will</u> find the news; hiding the bad stuff just makes us angry." (Devon, 24 years in journalism)

Correspondingly, some journalists spoke about stories that can best described as "hidden". By this they meant a story that is not brought up straightforwardly, but that they can themselves find amongst "PR jargon".

"We had this PR firm send us a usual press release on this large private hospital chain and it went about how they had expanded and how they were doing well and then just casually mentioned that here in the private sector, anyone can rise to become a manager...then it had a small example of this 33 year old occupational health nurse who was now the head of their operations in one of their major branches and how she was running four medical stations and was the boss of all these doctors. Then it implied that 'would this be possible in the public sector?'... It was really just a few short lines in the midst of the text. Not hard to guess that our management pages called them right away to run a feature on it." (Jessie, 14 years in journalism, 2 years in PR)

One journalist speaking of these hidden stories explained that he assumed PR professionals were "slightly hiding the beef" on purpose, to get journalists excited about finding it, but that he still found the hidden stories appealing.

"Well, smart PR people know how to pitch stories for journalists in a sly manner... they don't pop up right away, so we get like, this is my story, I invented this! There

have been ones who knew this as long ago as in the 80's...got us believing that we found the story ourselves." (Kendall, 21 years in journalism)

Another reason for hiding a story may be that presenting it openly could cause journalists to reject it, as they believe that their competition will cover the same issue in a similar manner.

"My first reaction is that if something is written in a really fascinating manner...how some firm has advanced from here and here and this is the outcome...Then I notice that hey, this same stuff has been sent to everyone. And then I realize that I can't use this as it is. I just have to forget it...can't take ready-made packages...and moreover, it's sort of stealing my job. I'm useless if all I do is copy paste." (Riley, 6 years in journalism, 1 year in PR)

Interestingly, it appears that journalists were more willing to cover stories that plausibly would be directly beneficial to a company's image if the story was hidden. It seems that when journalists find the story themselves, concerns of "advertising" disappear.

"If say, a company says that they have recruited this and this many people, then we take the bait when we see it and realize that hey, they must be doing very well... Then we make it into our own thing." (Riley, 6 years in journalism, 1 year in PR)

5.6 Overall, does the story form matter?

In sum, discovery and interpretation seemed to be key issues affecting the knowledge flow from PR professionals to business journalists, as the analysis pointed towards indications of stories or hidden stories being more appealing to business journalist than ready-made stories.

It appeared to me that the journalists seemed more willing to tell positive stories of commercial organizations when they felt that they had found the story themselves – most evidently so if presented with a hidden story – but also when presented with an indication of a story, which gives them the chance to be creative and fit in the missing pieces. The argument is illustrated in table 2.

Story type	Appeal to business journalists
Indication of a story	Appealing to a business journalist, especially if not obviously helping a commercial enterprise improve their image.
Hidden story	Appealing to a business journalist even if the story would clearly improve a commercial enterprise's image
Story	Appealing to business journalists as background information that might trigger a later story. Sometimes used as such, for instance when pressed for time.

Table 2: Interpretation of the data: different story types' appeal to journalists

There is however, one important distinction between these story types, in addition to how they are presented – the number of people receiving the story. Whereas stories and hidden stories were often sent to a number of journalists at a time in the form of a press release (and sometimes they were even sent as ready articles, marked "freely printable"), the indications of a story mostly referred to cases where a journalist was approached individually, and offered an exclusive opportunity to cover an issue or at least an issue from a certain angle.

Thus the appeal of the material cannot be pinpointed toward the form of the message, as it might plausibly be more of a result of the offered exclusiveness. Any material offered to only one journalist should be more intriguing, as media is constantly fighting over who gets a "scoop".

Where the indications of stories might be appealing due to their promise of exclusiveness, stories and hidden stories fight for attention on the same levels as all other material that journalists receive. Journalists go through a decision process with each message they notice: 1) will I read/listen to this (often based on the title and sender of a press release), 2) do I think this material is newsworthy in general 3) do I find the material newsworthy for my media. If all three questions receive a positive answer (and the journalist is looking for a story to cover), the journalist might assess

what kind of coverage they personally feel that the matter receives – and this is where the ready-made story was most criticized.

As noted above, most respondents felt that a story will be so easy to cover that everyone else might cover it as well. This takes away most chances of uniqueness or a scoop and consequently makes the story less attractive. In addition, some respondents noted that public relations should be based on facts, not stories.

"Some stories feel somewhat false, or not good for daily PR. Better for background information. I mean that it would be good for a company to have the story, but then use more facts in basic pr, at least when they are sending out press releases." (Alex, 7 years in PR)

5.7 Linking initial results to theoretical assumptions – close, but no cigar [yet]

Thus the results did not fully support my assumptions of message form impacting knowledge flow. On the contrary, my interpretation of the data was, to a large extent, in line with the theories regarding knowledge flow that I criticized in chapter 2. As my main examples of knowledge flow theorists – Szulanski and Gupta and Govindarajan – proposed issues relating to the source of the message affected knowledge flow. Correspondingly, much of the reasoning provided by the respondents regarding rejecting stories were plausibly linked with the NIH, or *Not Invented Here* syndrome. Overall, the main result of the analysis was that both PR professionals and business journalists perceive storytelling as a means of giving background information, except in the case of the hidden story, which some business journalists suppose might considerably add to the newsworthiness of an issue that they would otherwise consider less interesting.

Although the results did not support my critique of the knowledge flow theories directly, some linkages to message type were found. Both PR professionals and journalists valued messages that allowed discovery and interpretation, which might be an indication of message source influencing knowledge flow, yet might also relate to message form. But more importantly, the difference in reactions toward stories and hidden stories was intriguing.

The discrepancy between how these message forms were assessed in terms of usefulness was noteworthy – and certainly directly related to message form. In addition, many respondents compared using stories to using plain facts and used this dichotomy as a basis of preferring one or the other.

"Of course it's easier for us if the stuff we are sent is slightly ready chewed, it's the lack of time, so if something looks interesting its more likely it will go through [receive coverage] than if it's just plain facts"(Kendall, 21 years in journalism)

As expressed earlier, the intent of the first phase of my empiric research was to produce a description of factors influencing a certain type of "bargaining" between journalists and PR professionals, with the aspiration of later looking more closely into some of the issues that emerge from this stage by means of a quantitative experiment. Combining methods, triangulation[57], is suggested as a method of raising research result reliability, a way of creating research synergy, if you will. By combining more than one method a researcher will be able to counter balance the strengths and weaknesses of others (Jick, 1979: 604 & 608).

As a result, I decided to further investigate some of these initial findings with an experiment that would allow me to compare respondents' reactions to 1) a story, 2) a hidden story and 3) so called normal communication, in this case a factual press release with no apparent narrative included. Hereafter, I will be referring to these three message forms as 1) story, 2) hidden story and 3) no story. The next chapter is devoted to describing the outcomes of this test.

---

[57] *Jick (1979, 602) quotes Denzin (1978, 291), in stating: "Triangulation is broadly defined…as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon."*

6. USING BUSINESS JOURNALISTS AS GUINEA PIGS

What do laboratory experiments tell us about the real world? This question was posed by economists Levitt and List (2006: 1), who try to unravel why experimental designs have increased in popularity within economics. Quoting Holt (2005), they call experimental economics a "boom industry," as:

"Publications using the methodology were almost non-existent until the mid-1960s, surpassed 50 annually for the first time in 1982, and by 1998 there were more than 200 experimental papers published per year. The allure of the laboratory experimental method in economics is that, in principle, it provides ceteris paribus observations of motivated individual economic agents, which are otherwise exceptionally difficult to obtain using conventional econometric techniques."

Although increasing in popularity, it is important to note – as Levitt and List emphasize – that an experimental design does not inherently produce results that would be robustly generalizable, nor should one draw any kind of sharp dichotomy between experiments and data generated in a natural setting. As they conclude, each approach has a different set of strengths and weaknesses, making the combination of the two likely to provide more insight than either in isolation (2006: 42, 44).

The aspiration of the second phase of my empiric research was to investigate the same question I already studied through data generated with interviews, i.e. if the form of a message might have an impact on how the receivers' subjectively appraise its usefulness. Thus the goal of phase two was purely to investigate the same issue with a quantitatively analyzable experimental design.

I designed an experiment – with considerable help from a source exceedingly more knowledgeable in experimental design than I am [58] – with the intent of developing a method of comparing how business journalists would assess the usefulness of the same press release, depending on the form of the message in which they received it: as a story, a hidden story or as a normal press release with no obvious story.

In this specific context I assessed usefulness through two separate measures, by examining how newsworthy respondents found a press release and how much coverage they supposed they would give a press release. The three message forms in which the press releases were written are hereafter referred to as *story*, *hidden story* and *no story*.

---

[58] *Dr John David Sinclair, recently retired senior researcher at the National Institute of Health and Welfare, i.e. my Dad*

As explained in chapter 3, three separate web pages were set up for this test. They all contained the same three press releases, A, B and C, but they were written in a different manner for each site, in order to test if message form might have an impact on how useful respondents perceived the message.

Website 1 had a *no story* version of press release A, a *story* version of press release B and a *hidden story* version of press release C. Website 2 contained a *story* version of press release A, a *hidden story* version of press release B and a *no story* version of press release C and website 3 contained the remaining versions of the three press releases, a *hidden story* version of press release A, a *no story* version of press release B and a *story* version of press release C.

The topics for the press releases were picked together with a group of PR professionals to ensure that they were typical items on which press releases would be sent out. These were: A) Winter vacations to the south nearly sold out, B) Package Houses buys Ecodes (A manufacturer of prefabricated houses acquires an ecological design firm) and C) A new line of healthy ready-made meals for busy career parents is launched to the Finnish market.

The journalists were invited to take part in the study with the following email[59]:

A short survey for business journalists
Business journalists receive many kinds of press releases from companies: rigid facts, excessive campaigning and everything in between. Does the form of the message influence the subjective newsworthiness of a press release?

By participating in this short survey you will help a doctoral researcher study the matter. Answering will take approximately 5 to 10 minutes. Thank you for your help!

(link to the survey and instructions on how to act if the link does not open)

Your email was obtained from the association of Finnish Business Journalists, whose Board of Directors have approved the research design and the sending of this email to members of the association.

On the opening page of the survey, the respondents were instructed with the following text:

---

[59] *All the original texts in the survey were in Finnish. The translations are my own.*

__Survey for business journalists__

It is a typical workday at your office. You are reading press releases, browsing through titles and beginnings of the texts.

You are looking for newsworthy items for both yourself and two journalist trainees, who have been given the task of putting together a news-in-brief page. The trainees just started working for your media and you feel they do not quite know how to do their job yet.

You have decided to go through a bunch of press releases that have arrived within the last hour and choose if they go straight to the bin or if there is something newsworthy among them.

You are nearly finished, and only have three more press releases to go...

__Please note!__ All the companies mentioned in the press releases have been invented for the purposes of this survey. To assess the press releases, please act as if the following statements were true: you have heard of all the companies before, but you have not personally written a story on any of them. None of the companies are market leaders, but they are all noteworthy competitors in their field of business. Your own perception of these companies is neutral.

6.1 Ensuring comparability

To ensure that the different versions of the press releases used in the experiment were comparable, I had a test audience of 7 individuals – four PR professionals and three PhD researchers – read them and verbally assess their comparability. I altered the texts to some extent as a result of the first four individual assessments, but as the last three readers found the texts comparable, I felt confident to run the experiment.

However, after conducting the experiment and receiving the data, I had second thoughts. The problem was that the data presented interesting results; so interesting that it led me to doubt whether the material I had the respondents assessing was in fact as comparable as I thought?

Hence, to further ensure the comparability, I had an additional group of 5 researchers – two Professors in knowledge management and three doctoral students from the department of Management and Organisation at Hanken – read and assess the texts for "factual weight". By this I mean that I asked the respondents to read all 9 texts and count the number of facts they found in each separate text. In the first case I told the

reader what I was looking for, but after she pointed out to me that knowing what I was assessing might affect the answers, I had the remaining 4 individuals conduct the comparability check with no information about what I was after.

In almost all accounts, respondents felt that the *story*, *hidden story* and *no story* versions of each individual press release had maximum differences of 0-2 facts per text. To test if the texts were comparable, I set the following preliminary hypotheses:

H) There will be no significant difference between evaluations regarding the amount of facts in the assessed press releases

To test this hypotheses, I analyzed the ratings with a *one-way analysis of variance* for repeated measures first by analyzing each group of press releases separately, that is to say by first comparing the results for the amount of facts in the *story*, *no story* and *hidden story* versions of press release A, then conducting the same calculation for press release B and then C. After this, I conducted the same analysis to the press releases as a whole, grouping all assessments of *story* versions, all assessments of *hidden story* versions and all assessments of the *no story* version. These two analyses showed the following probabilities of there being a significant difference between the amount of facts in the different versions of the three press releases: press release A, p= 0.89, press release B, p= 0.69 and press release C, p=0.73 and the probability of there being a difference in the amount of facts when message types were grouped and analyzed as an entity of *story* press releases compared to *hidden story* press releases and *no story* press releases: p= 0.73.

This proved my preliminary hypothesis to be correct: none of the analyses proved significant, which indicates that all three groups of press releases have corresponding amounts of facts and no certain type of press release generally contained more or less facts than the others. With this assessment of comparability in addition to the consensus of my original trial audience, I felt secure of my results.

Before going on in to the data analysis, I feel it best to provide readers with a translation of the three versions of one of the press releases. Below you will find the three different versions of the press release titled: Winter vacations to the south nearly sold out[60].

---

[60] *Please note that you will be reading the press releases in the same way that my trial audience and additional group of five individuals conducting the comparability assessment did. The journalists taking part in the test did not assess three versions of the same press release.*

Winter Vacations to the South Nearly Sold Out

> This winters vacation packages to the sun have nearly sold out. Only limited packages are available for those who wish to spend their skiing vacation in the most popular sunny destinations.

> Yet again, long distance destinations have been very popular: for instance Thai destinations Bangkok, Hua Hin, Cha-Am and Phuket have practically already sold out. In addition to far away destinations, trips to Madeira have been selling well. The Canary Islands are the only destination with plenty of room on the more popular vacation weeks.

> "Although most of the vacations have already been sold, sunny destinations are still available. The Canary Islands are always the last to sell, because the familiar destination does not attract the early birds as much as the more exotic long distance destinations", says Marketing Director Mike Green from Travelboom Ltd.

Winter Vacations to the South Nearly Sold Out

> This winters vacation packages to the sun have nearly sold out. Only limited packages are available for those who wish to spend their skiing vacation in the most popular sunny destinations.

> Yet again, long distance destinations have been very popular: for instance Thai destinations Bangkok, Hua Hin, Cha-Am and Phuket have practically already sold out. The Canary Islands are the only destination with plenty of room on the more popular vacation weeks, as the islands do not attract Finnish travelers as they used to.

> "The Canary Islands are not so appealing to Finns anymore, or at least the destination has not sold like it used to during the past few years. I doubt if we will be offering it as a destination next year", says Marketing Director Mike Green from Travelboom Ltd.

> "People have apparently explored the Canary Islands from side to side and now want something else", Green continues.

Canary Islands No Longer Good Enough for Finns

> Travelboom Ltd contemplates ending vacation sales to the Canary Islands, as Finnish winter travelers are no longer interested in the destination.

> "The Canary Islands are not so appealing to Finns anymore. People have apparently explored the Canary Islands from side to side and now want something else", says Marketing Director Mike Green from Travelboom Ltd.

> "I doubt if we will be offering it as a destination next year," Green continues.

> With Canary Islands no longer tempting travelers, long-distance destinations have yet again been very popular this winter. Only limited packages are available for those who wish to spend their skiing vacation in the most popular sunny destinations. For instance Thai destinations Bangkok, Hua Hin, and Phuket have practically already sold out.

6.2 An overview of the data

I was granted access by the board of the Finnish business journalists' association (Taloustoimittajien yhdistys) to conduct a survey/test with their members in the autumn of 2007. The three internet sites were set up during the first days of 2008, after which the secretary of the Finnish business journalists' association sent out an e-mail to members, telling about the survey and suggesting that they participate.

The e-mails were sent out in three randomly compiled groups, and were otherwise identical but for the variation of web sites the respondents were directed to via a link in the e-mail.

The first e-mail generated 65 answers during ten days. After this, the association sent out a reminder together with a personal appeal from the association's chairperson, urging members to participate. This e-mail aspired 72 additional individuals to take part in the experiment. Thus the total number of respondents rose to 137, i.e. approximately 35, 5% of the members of the association. One of the respondents had omitted answers to questions regarding press release B completely. This respondent was removed from the data, making the final number of responses analyzed 136.

The primary measure to be obtained in the experiment was the reporters' rating of how likely they supposed they would be to write about a press release, i.e. cover the issue in their respective media and what kind of coverage they would consider giving the issue, should they deem it newsworthy. With these results, I hoped to be able to answer my research question. In short, if these analyses showed significant difference in the ratings that journalists gave the three different forms of a press release, it would indicate that message form has an impact on how a receiver perceives its usefulness.

The results of my quantitative analyses complied in part with the conclusions I drew from my qualitative study, but also contradicted my earlier results. The data was analyzed using a combination of both one-way analyses of variance with repeated measures and/or independent samples, 2-factor analysis of variance with repeated measures on one factor, Pearson product moment coefficient, and multiple t-tests, where appropriate for the data type and hypotheses (Winer 1962: 261-269, Girden 1992: 2, Rutherford 2001: 18, 60-63, Urdan 2005: 75-84)[61].

---

61 *All of the data was analyzed using VassarStats: http://faculty.vassar.edu/lowry/VassarStats.html*

6.3 Step one – analyzing if message type affects appraised newsworthiness

As stated in chapter 3, the primary research question I wish to answer is: **does message form have an impact on the perceived usefulness of a message?**

I attempt to answer this question by addressing a number of hypotheses derived from my theoretical framework and qualitative research. I present these hypotheses alongside explaining the data analyses and results, as I wish to illustrate not only the analyses I conducted, but also the process, which led me to run the tests that I did in the order that I did. In a sense, I am attempting to tell a statistical story.

My first hypothesis stemmed from the critique I presented toward knowledge flow theory. As I suggested in chapter 2, a number of contributors to knowledge flow theory do not take message form into consideration when discussing the various factors that might affect organizational knowledge flow. I believe this to be an oversight, as communication theory suggests that message form is a seminal component of all communication (Littlejohn, 1999: 101). To assess if message form affects knowledge flow in the case of business journalism, I set the following hypothesis:

H1) The form of a message will have a significant effect on how journalists appraise the newsworthiness of a press release.

This hypothesis was approached by conducting a one-way analyses of variance with repeated measures[62] (Winer, 1962: 261-269) of the following three groups: all assessments of newsworthiness of the press releases written in *story* form; all appraisals of the press releases written with *no story* and all the ratings of newsworthiness of the press releases containing a *hidden story*.

This analyses showed that the form of the press release had a highly significant effect on appraised newsworthiness: $F(2,270)=9.841$, p= 0,000075. This result indicates two things, first, the three different forms of press releases had received ratings that were significantly different from one another and second, it is unlikely that the differences in the ratings of the three types of messages were purely based on chance.

Consequently, the data supported the first hypothesis. The form of the message has a significant effect on how business journalists rate the newsworthiness of a press release, when comparing press releases written in *story*, *hidden story* and *no story* form.

---

[62] *The central idea of this form of analysis (and the experiment design it requires) is that each individual taking part in a study serves as his or her own control (Girden, 1992, 2).*

To further strengthen this result, I ran additional tests to assess if the form of a message influences how different subgroups among the respondents rate newsworthiness, namely, if the results would vary among female and male respondents and if prior work experience might affect the results.

To study if there was a significant difference in how men and women appraised the newsworthiness of the different press releases, the data was divided into two groups according to the respondents' gender and a two-factor analysis of variance with repeated measures on one factor was conducted to this data set. This analysis showed: $F_{(1,135)}=0,27$, p= 0,604, indicating that there was no significant difference between how females and males assessed the newsworthiness of the different press releases, thus showing that both groups had given the different message types significantly varying ratings of newsworthiness.

Also, the test showed that the interaction between gender and newsworthiness failed to reach significance, meaning that there was no significant difference in the order in which women and men appraised the newsworthiness of the *story*, the *hidden story* and the *no story* press releases. To put the same result in layman's terms, whichever message forms were rated least and most newsworthy by the women, were probably also rated least and most newsworthy by the men as well, or at least the difference in the order of appraisal between genders was not clear enough to prove significant in the test conducted $F_{(2, 268)}= 2,11$, p=0,123.

I also tested the data in terms of work experience, to see if journalists who had previously worked in public relations might rate the different forms of press releases differently from those journalists who did not hold any work experience from PR. I had asked for this demographic information and was interested in running this particular analysis due to my previous qualitative research. While analyzing the qualitative data, it had seemed to me that the journalists who had worked in PR in the past had a much more lenient outlook on PR professionals and the material they sent, whereas journalists who had never been in PR themselves felt less sympathy toward the PR professionals and their efforts toward promoting their customer companies.

 The data divided according to prior work experience was analyzed with the same test used to assess if gender would affect ratings, a two-factor analysis of variance with repeated measures on one factor. This test showed: $F_{(1,135)}= 1,67$, p=0,198, indicating that work experience did not have a significant effect on how the respondents rated the newsworthiness of the different press releases. As in the previous assessment, the interaction between work experience and newsworthiness was not significant $F_{(2, 268)} =0,52$, P=0,595, thus showing that there was no significant difference in the order in

which the two groups of respondents rated the newsworthiness of the three message forms.

Thus, hypothesis 1 was fully supported. The form of the message has a significant effect on how journalists appraise the newsworthiness of a press release.

This analysis alone answers my research question, albeit still on a superficial level. More analysis will follow to emphasize how the form of a message might influence a receiver's appraisal of its usefulness, yet the primary answer I was seeking for with this test was now found: **the message form significantly affects how a receiver perceives the usefulness of a message.**

To put this result in simple terms, it proves something I would suspect that most everybody knows and realizes on a personal level, but which knowledge flow theory largely overlooks: that when you communicate, the form in which you choose to communicate – the language you use, the structure, the choice of wording – will influence how others react to your message. To give an example of this phenomenon that is highly relevant to me at this time, Statistics in Plain English (Urdan 2005) contains virtually the same information as the Handbook of Statistical Methods for Engineers and Scientists (Wadsworth, 1997), but I would personally rate their usefulness quite differently.

6.4 Story, no story or hidden story? Which do journalists prefer?

The next question I wished to address was how the journalists rated the different press release types. Previous research regarding storytelling that I covered in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis had originally led me to believe that receivers would show a strong preference toward storytelling. My qualitative research that I described in chapter 6, however, had indicated something else. It suggested that journalists would rate a *story* version of a press release as less newsworthy than a *normal* or *hidden story* press release. In order to look into this matter, I set the following hypotheses:

H 2) The press releases containing a story will have a lower appraised newsworthiness than the press releases with a hidden story and no story

At first look at the data, it seemed that this hypothesis would not be supported, as can be shown by examining the means of the appraised newsworthiness: 2,558 for the *no story* press releases, 3,007 for the press releases with a *hidden story* and 3,125 for the press releases with a *story*.

Thus the data indicated that the initial assumptions derived from my qualitative study might be incorrect, should the differences between the above mentioned means be significant. Consequently, to answer hypotheses 2, I set the following three additional hypotheses:

*H3) There is a significant difference in the journalists' assessments of the **no story** and **story** versions of the press releases*

*H4) There is a significant difference in the journalists' assessments of the **no story** and **hidden story** versions of the press releases*

*H5) There is a significant difference in the journalists' assessments of the **story** and **hidden story** versions of the press releases*

To address these hypotheses, the means of the appraised newsworthiness of the different message forms (*no story*, *hidden story* and *story*) were analyzed using multiple t-tests to see if the differences between these ratings were significant.

In the first test, I compared the assessments of the newsworthiness of the *no story* and *story* versions of the three press releases. This t-test proved significant: $t(135)=4,164$, p= 0,000055, thus showing that there is a significant difference in appraisal of newsworthiness between *no story* and *story* messages.

Next, I conducted a t-test comparing the assessments of newsworthiness of the *no story* and *hidden story* groups of press releases. The difference of assessments between these two groups also proved significant, showing: $t(135)=3,31$, p=0,0012, consequently illustrating that there was a significant difference in how business journalists rated the newsworthiness of the *no story* and *hidden story* groups of press releases.

Third, I analyzed the appraisals of newsworthiness of the *hidden story* and *story* versions of the press releases. This t-test did not show significant results: $t(135)=0,89$, p=0,376, thus indicating that the assessments of newsworthiness between the *hidden story* and *story* versions of the press releases were not significantly different from each other.

The results of these t-tests were clear. They supported hypotheses 3 and 4, and showed that the difference between appraisals of newsworthiness between the *no story* and *story* press releases were significant, as was the difference between the *no story* and *hidden story* press releases. In more reader-friendly terms, the tests proved that the average newsworthiness ratings that the journalists gave to these different message types were not only different from each other; they were also in a certain order. Most

journalists had rated the *no story* press releases as significantly less newsworthy than either the *story* press releases or the *hidden story* press releases.

The tests also showed that hypothesis 5 was not confirmed, meaning that although the journalists thought that both the *hidden story* and *story* press releases were more newsworthy than the *no story* press release, the order in which they rated the usefulness of the *story* and *hidden story* was not significant. On average, they had rated the *story* version as more newsworthy than the *hidden story*, but the difference was not large enough to be statistically significant.

Consequently, hypothesis 2 that I had derived from my qualitative study was not correct. The means of appraised newsworthiness showed that journalists had rated the *no story* versions as least newsworthy and the multiple t-tests proved that the difference between the ratings of *no story* and *story* and *no story* and *hidden story* were significant. The results are disclosed in figure 4.
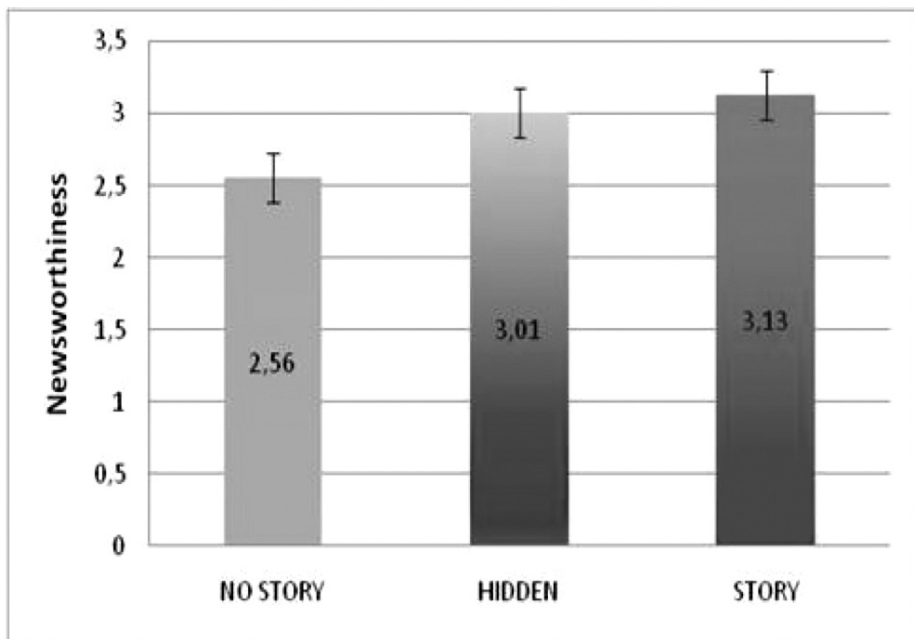

Figure 4: Journalists' ratings of the newsworthiness of press releases

In sum, the second stage of my data analyses proved that my presumption – stemming from results generated from phase I on my empiric research – of *story* press releases having the lowest newsworthiness to be incorrect. On the contrary, these analyses

showed a general, significant trend of reporters rating both *story* versions as more newsworthy than the press releases containing *no story.*

To illustrate the "story effect", I conducted an additional t-test, where I compared the respondents' assessments of the *no story* versions to the combined average of their ratings of both of the story versions. This test also proved significant: $t(135)=4,28$, $p= 0,000035$.

At this stage of my analyses I felt both victorious and defeated. My data showed that the form of a message has a great impact on how useful respondents find the message itself – at least in the makeshift circumstance of an internet based "lab-test". However, my data also showed that respondents' prefer press releases containing a story, be it apparent or hidden, to press releases with no apparent story, even though my qualitative data suggested something quite different.

Thus I felt that I was in a strong position to criticize knowledge flow theory for overlooking message form, but also began to wonder if my point regarding hidden stories could be supported in any way by my quantitative data?

6.5 Hidden stories, anybody?

The analyses I had conducted so far showed that as a whole, the respondents rate both of the *story* versions as more newsworthy than the *no story* versions, and that there are no significant differences between the assessments of the respondents, when divided by gender or prior work experience in PR and tested with a two-factor analysis of variance with repeated measures on one factor.

However, I had yet to test if the respondents' age had an effect on the way they assessed the newsworthiness of the press releases. To look into this, I set the following hypotheses:

H6) The respondent's age affects the way in which they rate the newsworthiness of the different press releases

To study this hypothesis, I needed a measure that would indicate a respondent's tendency of rating one of the message versions higher than the others.

To achieve this, I first assigned each respondent a value indicating their tendency to rate *story* versions as higher than *no story* versions. I calculated this value by subtracting each respondent's newsworthiness rating to the *story* version from their newsworthiness rating of the press release with *no story*. Thus, the smaller the value,

the greater the respondents tendency was to rate the *story* as having higher newsworthiness than the *no story* version.

Accordingly, I created a second measure that would allow me to assess if respondents had a tendency of rating the *hidden story* press releases as more newsworthy than the *no story* press releases by subtracting each respondent's *hidden story* assessment from their *no story* rating.

I then compared these values to the respondents' age to assess possible correlation with two separate Pearson product moment tests.

The first test was not significant, quite the contrary, it showed that age has no connection to a respondents tendency to prefer *story* versions to *no story* versions, r (134)=0,011, p=0,90. Thus a person's tendency to prefer story versions is in no way linked to their age.

However, the second test, which looked into a possible correlation between the respondent's age and tendency to prefer *hidden story* press releases to the *no story* press releases, indicated that there is a tendency of preference toward *hidden stories* increasing with age, r(134)=0,166, p=0,054, but was not statistically significant.

Consequently hypothesis 6 was rejected. Age was not a statistically significant indicator of how a respondent rated the different message types in the test. However, age might have something to do with how people appraise hidden stories, as the results indicate a tendency that just fails to reach significance.

Alas, my data analysis was troubling me greatly at this point. I had found the answer to my main research question; I had also found interesting new support for previous research on storytelling by proving that both of the *story* versions were considered significantly more newsworthy than the *no story* messages, yet I was still unable to find any conclusive difference between the *hidden story* and the *story*.

Perhaps there was no difference? A story is a story, wherever you place it. But if this is the case, why did my respondents in my qualitative study speak so much more favorably about *hidden stories* than *stories*? Why did both PR professionals and journalists so strongly claim that clear stories would be useful only as background information in the media game? I wished to look further into this issue before starting my analysis on how message type might affect coverage.

I went through the demographics I had asked the respondents to provide and decided to conduct a few more tests to see if I could find a group who had a significant difference in how they had rated the *story* and *hidden story* press releases. I wanted to

take another look at gender and also investigate if the combination of gender and work experience might show significant results. Thus, I set one more hypothesis concerning newsworthiness:

*H7) No respondent group shows a significant preference of rating **hidden story** as more newsworthy than **no story** and **story**.*

In order to investigate this hypothesis, I needed to be able to measure if respondents had a tendency to rate press releases containing a *story* and *no story* as less newsworthy than the *hidden story*.

To achieve this, I allotted each respondent a value indicating their tendency of rating the *story* and *no story* press releases, by calculating the mean of each respondent's assessments to these two press releases. I then conducted a number of t-test, comparing the ratings respondents had given to the newsworthiness of the *hidden story* to the mean of their ratings of the *story* and *no story* versions.

The results provide interesting ideas for future research, but should be only taken as possible indications of trends for two primary reasons. First, multiple t-tests are criticized as a statistical method, as they increase the probability of finding significance (Urdan 2005: 101) and second, when dividing the respondents according to gender and prior work experience most of the analyzed sub-groups become too small for statistical reliability.

Nevertheless, I decided to report these tests, as I believe they might help explain why hidden stories were discussed so favorably in my qualitative interviews.

Hypothesis 7 claims that no respondent group would show a significant preference in rating *hidden story* over *story* and *no story*. To verify this, I first conducted t-tests on the respondents divided by gender and then assessed the sub-groups of gender and prior work experience combined.

In these multiple t-tests, male respondents showed a significant tendency toward rating *hidden stories* higher than the mean of *no story* and *story* t(73) =2,355, p=0,0211. (The means of the male respondents' ratings: no story=2,43, hidden story=3,12, story=3,05) Females, however, do not and show a weak, non-significant tendency in the opposite direction t(61)=0,550, p=0,584. (The means of the female respondents' ratings were: no story=2,70, hidden story=2,87, story=3,20). The difference between males and females is significant t(134)=2,03, p=0,044.

The tendency toward rating hidden stories higher than *story* and *no story* press releases is particularly common in males without prior work experience in PR: $t(52) = 2,558$, p= 0,0135.

Females with PR experience, females with no prior experience in PR and men with prior PR experience showed no significant tendency toward rating hidden stories higher than the other press releases, as the following results indicate: men with PR experience: $t(20)=0,535$, p= 0,598; women with PR experience: $t(20)=0,578$, p= 0,569; women without PR experience: $t(40)=0,289$, p= 0,773.

Consequently, hypothesis 7 was not confirmed – but whether it was proved false in a manner that is considered statistically reliable depends on ones stance toward multiple t-tests. Winer (1971: 196-201) claims that multiple t-tests are acceptable after the initial analysis of variance proves something not significant; Hayes (2005: 378-379) claims the opposite. If I take Hayes' stance, I cannot reject the hypothesis based on the t-test result showing that men have a significant tendency toward rating *hidden story* messages as more newsworthy than *story* and *no story* press releases.

In cases where statisticians do not agree, I feel it best for a doctoral student to steer clear of the conflict. Consequently I will not attempt to prove hypothesis 7 wrong based on the t-test conducted on gender.

However, men without prior work experience in PR also showed a significant tendency towards rating *hidden stories* as more newsworthy than the other tested message versions. Although the sub-groups assessed with the t-tests were not large, this was the largest group, consisting of 53 respondents, which should be considered a large enough group to allow one to draw statistical conclusions from a total sample of 136 respondents. But again, the sub-group of gender and work experience was compiled as a combination of two groups that had already been tested for this matter with a one way analysis of variance for repeated measures and proved not significant. Ultimately, I decided to label hypothesis 7 unresolved. It was, if not proven false, at least strongly challenged.

My hesitancy over hypothesis 7 concludes the first stage on my quantitative analysis regarding message form and newsworthiness. With these results affirmed, I moved on to analyze how message form might affect coverage.

6.6 The next steps of the analysis – pinpointing if message type affects coverage

Overall, the results of the analysis of coverage were in compliance with the results regarding newsworthiness. In this section of the web-test, respondents were asked to appraise how much coverage they would give a press release if they had found the original press release to be newsworthy, i.e. if they had appraised a press release's newsworthiness as 2 or over on a scale from 1 to 5.

However, three respondents had neglected the directions to leave these parts blank if their original appraisal to the newsworthiness was 1 (not newsworthy). All three had answered that they would give only little coverage to the press release they were appraising. These answers were removed. Additionally, 15 respondents who had appraised a press release having little newsworthiness 2 (very unlikely that I would cover this issue), had not appraised the coverage they would give the press release. Also, three respondents had given a press release a newsworthiness value of 3 (possibly newsworthy, might interest our readers) and yet not appraised the coverage they would give the press release. Thus there were 18 respondents with missing data regarding coverage.

The first question I wished to assess in terms of coverage was identical to that which I looked into when I started analyzing the data regarding newsworthiness – if the form of the message might affect how useful a receiver found the message. Only this time I was assessing usefulness in terms of coverage instead of newsworthiness. To look into the matter, I set the following hypothesis:

H8 *The form of a message will have a significant effect on how much coverage journalists will give a press release.*

The missing data led me to conduct two separate analyses to answer this hypothesis. I first conducted a one-way analysis of variance with repeated measures where I gave all missing data a value of 0. This value was assigned to both the missing data and all respondents who had appraised newsworthiness with a 1 (not newsworthy). This analysis gave the following result: $F_{(2,270)}=14.91$, $p=0,000000721$, indicating that the form of the message had a highly significant effect on the extent of coverage a journalist would consider giving a press release.

Although assigning missing data a value of 0 is a commonly used solution in statistics, it should be treated with caution (McKnight et al, 2007, 180; Weiss, 2005, 173-174). As the probability I received for the first test seemed unrealistic, I decided to conduct another test, a one way analyses of variance with independent samples, where the

missing data was left out. This test also proved significant, but gave rather more believable results, showing: $F_{(2,328)}=5.93$, $p=0.00295$.

These results confirm hypothesis 8 and show that just as in the case of newsworthiness, coverage is also significantly affected by the form of a message.

My next hypotheses were again, a repetition of the hypotheses I set when looking at newsworthiness. I wished to see if the respondents' assessments of the coverage they would give the *story*, *hidden story* and *no story* press releases differed from one another significantly. Accordingly, I set the following three hypotheses:

*H9) There is a significant difference in the journalists' assessments of the coverage they would give to the **no story** and **story** versions of the press releases*

*H10) There is a significant difference in the journalists' assessments of the coverage they would give to the **no story** and **hidden story** versions of the press releases*

*H11) There is a significant difference in the journalists' assessments of the coverage they would give to the **story** and **hidden story** versions of the press releases*

To answer these hypotheses, I first looked at the means of the coverage ratings that the journalists had given the different press release types. With zero entered for missing data, the means of the appraised coverage with all respondents were: 1,08 for the normal press releases, 1,45 for the press releases containing a hidden story and 1,64 for the press releases written in story form [63]

To verify the hypotheses, I needed to see if the difference between these assessments was significant. I followed the same route as I had while analyzing newsworthiness, and conducted three separate t-tests on the data set with zeros added for missing values, comparing the following three pairs of answers: *no story* and *hidden story*, *no story* and *story*, *story* and *hidden story*.

These t-tests showed that the form of the message has a significant effect on the extent of coverage that journalists consider they would give a press release when comparing coverage assessments between *no story* and *hidden story* versions: $t_{(135)}=3,68$, $p=0,0003$ and *no story* and *story* press releases $t_{(135)}=5,31$, $p= <0,0001$, but not when comparing assessments between the *hidden story* and *story* press releases $t_{(135)}=1,79$, $p=0,075$.

---

[63] *The means of these appraisals when calculated from the data version where missing data was left out read as follows: no story = 1.413, hidden story = 1.743 and story = 1,956.*

Thus the results regarding coverage tell the same story as did the ones regarding newsworthiness. Hypotheses 9 and 10 were confirmed and hypothesis 11 was proven incorrect. The coverage that journalists would allocate a press release follows their assessments of the press releases newsworthiness, with no surprising results.

Journalists will give the *no story* press release significantly less coverage than they would give the *hidden story* and the *story* press releases and the difference in the coverage they would give the *hidden story* and *story* versions does not reach statistical significance.

This final stage of my analysis was conclusive for me. Up until now, I had supposed that there might be some interesting differences between *story* and *hidden story*. Perhaps the journalists would choose to give a hidden story lengthier coverage than they would one that is plainly offered to them? But the analysis conducted on coverage shows that this is not the case.

To come to the point, coverage offered me no new explanations regarding *hidden stories*. Apart from this setback, the analyses of coverage fulfilled my objectives and confirmed my findings from the initial analysis of newsworthiness. The order of appraisals showed the *no story* version to be considered least worthy of coverage. The tests I ran did not show any significant difference in the appraisals that the journalists had given the *story* and *hidden story* press releases in terms of coverage, and all in all this stage of analysis verified the answer to my research question **message form significantly affects the journalists' appraisals of the usefulness of a message.**

6.7 Discussion of the results – is there some kind of inherent distrust toward stories?

My internet-based "lab-test" showed a number of interesting results. If nothing more, it certainly showed that in the case of this particular test, message form clearly influenced the appraisals that journalists gave.

I believe there are two interlinked areas of research to which my results offer a contribution: knowledge management and storytelling research in general. I will first address the case of knowledge management.

The message matters. One can discuss knowledge without taking communication theory into consideration, but when research touches upon the subject of knowledge flow, careful consideration should be given to the central prerequisites of communication.

Without a source, a channel, a message, and recipient, there is no communication. All of these factors influence communication and thus, inevitably, knowledge flow. There are many other aspects that play a part in this process as well, but without taking these factors into consideration, I believe that it is hard to find sustainable examples of best practices or efficient methods of influencing knowledge flow.

My experiment showed that the form of the message had a significant effect on how business journalists appraised both the newsworthiness and coverage of press releases. Business journalists are prime examples of modern day knowledge workers who as one of their main tasks at work try to find relevant information amidst information overload. They assess messages and look for new knowledge for a living. If business journalists react differently to messages presented to them in different message form, it is plausible that so will many other knowledge workers within an organization or amongst its stakeholders.

This brief idea concisely sums up my main point to knowledge flow. As I stated in chapter 2, knowledge flow without a message is like basketball without a ball – a researcher looking into the game might come up with peculiar explanations to what is occurring on the court if they forget to take into account characteristics of the ball itself: how much air is in the ball, how it bounces, can one easily grip it or is it slippery to ones touch. Along these lines, knowledge flow theory should include the message as a factor influencing knowledge flow – and future research should take message form into consideration when studying knowledge flow. It need not be the focus of research, but it needs to be acknowledged.

My results also contribute to storytelling research, be it conducted under the realm of knowledge management or some other discipline. When it comes to storytelling, I think there are two main findings that can be derived from this research. One is evident, while the other is fuzzy and vague at its best, but I feel compelled to include both.

First, when appraising three message forms, a *story*, a *hidden story* and a press release that contained *no story*, business journalists rated both the *story* and the *hidden story* as significantly more newsworthy and worthy of coverage than a press release with *no story*. This result adds to the considerable amount of research that has claimed that there is something inherently appealing about storytelling, something that makes humans enjoy it, use it and value it, even though we do not often consciously think about it. My results are but a raindrop in an ocean, but I am happy to add my contribution: **business journalists value stories too.**

And this leads me to my second contribution to storytelling. It is a small but significant amendment to the contribution I just stated: **business journalists value storytelling too – but they may claim that they don't.**

This claim requires explanation, so I wish to go back to the multiple t-tests I conducted while I was trying to find a group of respondents that would value the message form of *hidden story* as significantly higher than *story* in terms of newsworthiness.

What did these additional analyses say about the way in which journalists react to press releases presented to them in the form of a *story*, *hidden story* and *no story*?

 In short, they do not have an impact on my findings from my "lab-test", which clearly shows that respondents rate both *story* versions as more newsworthy than *no story* versions. The additional analyses do, however, help explain the results I acquired from my qualitative study.

In my qualitative study, respondents as a whole all reacted at least somewhat skeptically toward clear-cut stories. Many stated that they were of no value apart from being used as background information. Their reasoning had much to do with letting journalists find the story themselves and fear of sending material that was considered too "ready made". Hidden stories, on the other hand, were mentioned as an interesting way of getting a journalist to react favorably to a story.

In fact, my qualitative data had led me to assume that respondents would consider the *story* press release as least newsworthy and show a preference toward either the *no story* versions of the press releases or the *hidden story*.

Now, the ideas I derived from my qualitative study might have to do with a gender bias. I interviewed 6 journalists and 6 PR professionals. Four of the journalists were male and five of the PR professionals were female. Although hiding stories and the idea of hidden stories was mentioned by both men and women as a phenomenon, I went back to read through my original qualitative data and found that the comments in favor of hidden stories compared to stories all came from male respondents. The multiple t-tests I ran on my quantitative data told the same story: they indicated that there are respondents who will prefer a *hidden story* to a *story* and that in all likelihood, these respondents will more often be male and probably do not hold prior work experience from public relations.

To check this assumption, I returned to the original data from my lab-test and went through each response individually. All in all, 43 respondents had given a *hidden story* press release a higher value of newsworthiness than the *story* version. Out of the 43

respondents 28, i.e. 65 % were male. Although business journalism is a somewhat male dominated field, the gender distribution of my respondents as a whole was rather even, with 54,7 % of respondents being male.

Thus the gender bias in my qualitative study might help explain why hidden stories came up so frequently in my interviews. But it does not explain the near hostile outlook that my interviewees took towards direct storytelling. By and large, they all held an adamant outlook on clear-cut stories. Yet none of the analysis I conducted indicated the slightest tendency toward respondents valuing the *story* messages least. The analysis of variance, the correlations, the multiple t-test all told the same tale, respondents showed absolutely no tendency toward valuing a message with *no story* over a message with a *story*.

This led me to think that perhaps people are in some way biased towards assessing which kind of information they like when they are put into a professional setting? It might have something to do with an outlook toward communication that we learn throughout our school years and continue to believe in at work – a belief that entertaining information is neither educational nor useful. Perhaps because it makes learning, communication and knowledge flow so easy that it seems effortless.

Could it be that when asked about their preferences, people have a tendency of claiming that they do not like stories in comparison to other communication?

I am by no means the first to present this idea. As discussed in chapter 5, Martin and Powers (1982) had noted a similar phenomenon when testing the reactions of MBA students to different forms of material. As Martin and Powers found, MBA students favored stories when tested but assumed that they had favored data (1982, 274).

Again, communication theory may help explain this phenomenon. A classic theory, the Spiral of Silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) suggests that people have a tendency to remain silent when they feel that their views are in the minority. Noelle-Neumann's model is based on three premises – first that people have a quasi-statistical organ, a sixth sense, which allows them to know the prevailing public opinion even without access to polls; second that people have a fear of being isolated from the majority and know what behavior will increase their likelihood of being socially isolated; and third that people are reticent to express their minority views primarily because of their fear of being isolated.

Perhaps the interviewees were not expressing their own opinions but rather the opinion that they thought would be socially acceptable? In our fact and figures centered society

expressing a preference towards stories might feel like the actions of an outcast. If this was the case, Spiral of Silence theory provides a plausible explanation.

When I discussed PR material aimed at business journalists during my qualitative research, both reporters and PR professionals spoke highly of factual information and emphasized that stories were of little value as such. They referred to this kind of more factual information as messages with *no story*, as I had expressed that I was interested in stories. Thus they were drawing a clear line between storytelling and other kind of communication, and many stated that the stories were not very useful. They clarified this by stating that they wished for more facts, less adjectives and to-the-point information. This same trend reoccurred in the answers I received for the open-ended question I had at the end of my "lab-test" [64]. Strong opinions were posed in these open ended answers, at times speaking heartily on behalf of data and against softer, more describing style, although the word storytelling was not used directly:

"The most pleasing ones contain clear and honest communication that brings forth the issue with facts and no stupid big words and descriptions."

Everyone knows that *for example is no proof*. Yet, however true this proverb rings, examples do raise questions and serve well as points of argument in one's final discussion. Thus I decided to end this chapter by presenting some examples of individual quotes to illustrate my point.

I must, however, underline that the comments I received at the end of the lab-test do not provide an ideal data set to be analyzed in relation to the data, as the open-ended question itself was general: *feel free to provide additional information regarding press releases, what do you think about them in general, what do Finnish companies do well, what do they do badly – what annoys you, what pleases you –* and the respondents who provided additional information at this point wrote about a variety of different topics.

All in all, 102 respondents wrote something in this field, but many offered comments with no relation to the matters I was looking into. Some wished me good luck with my doctorate, or wrote about interesting issues that were irrelevant to my research, for example: *"The biggest problem in writing about companies is dealing with arrogant CEO's with egos that are about to burst."*

---

[64] *I had placed the open ended question at the end of the test with the notion that answers might give me interesting ideas for possible future research. Also, I wanted to give respondents some place to write comments if they chose to stay anonymous and not contact me directly. The open ended question appeared at the end of the survey and respondents were prompted to share their thoughts about press releases and communication to journalists in general, if they felt that they could still spare a few minutes of their time.*

A total of 67 respondents provided additional information regarding what they find appealing or annoying in press releases and wrote about issues dealing with message form. Only one respondent used the word story; it was given as an example of things that annoy her: company success stories. One respondent used the term poetry *"Thank goodness there is rarely any empty poetry in press releases"*. But otherwise message form was dealt with by mentioning things such as clarity, facts, jargon and the length of the text. Finnish equivalents to the terms advertising and marketing were brought up 13 times, in each occasion as something negative that annoys journalists. Many, but not all respondents who mentioned facts and figures emphasized preferring them in comparison to other information, as the following quote shows: *"A professional style, facts and managerial insights interest me."*

However, a total of 14 respondents gave answers that I interpreted as containing the following assumption: the form of the message only matters in terms of clarity. Adjectives and description such as storytelling lessen the newsworthiness of a message, whereas facts and figures increase its value, for example:

"Facts, such as numbers, make me happy, as does all kind of "hard" knowledge. Empty comments from managers in the lines of 'we are strengthening our know-how' or 'this made us very happy' etc. bug me, because they contain no real information and it just takes time to read them!"

I could not help but wonder if these 14 respondents assessed the newsworthiness of the press releases according to their claims? Did they practice what they preached?

At first glance, this did not seem to be the case. For example, a female, 20 years in journalism, answered web-test A, where the press releases were in the order 1) no story, 2) story, 3) hidden story. The estimation of newsworthiness on the scale of 1-5 and coverage on the scale of 1-3 that this respondent gave was as follows: no story: newsworthiness 2 / coverage 2 – story: newsworthiness 4 / coverage 2 – hidden story: newsworthiness 4 / coverage 2.

The same respondent gave the following open answer at the end of the test: *"I find it annoying that all financial facts are cut away from product PR (numbers, percents, competitors, market position) everything is good and beautiful. This is especially exasperating in products that a journalist does not have the foggiest idea about based on his or her day-to-day life – like software, hydraulic drills or sewage systems."*

As this example shows, emphasis is given to facts and "everything is good and beautiful" is a negative thing. Yet newsworthiness was rated: no story 2, story 4, hidden story 4. Some additional similar cases are presented in the table below.

	Newsworthiness	Coverage	Quote:
No story	1	1	"There is no point in imagining that you could allure a professional journalist into covering a certain issue by writing the press release in some kind of especially smart way."
Story	5	1	
Hidden story	3	2	
No story	1	1	"It is unnecessary to paint a vivid picture of an issue, you should get straight to the point. I could not care less how much money and sweat some products development has taken. Unclear goals are of no interest. Press releases should be more concrete and have more facts."
Story	4	3	
Hidden story	4	2	
No story	3	1	"Sugary adjectives and illustrations are nothing but annoying and they take up space and time from facts. The news is always most important…nobody has time to read unnecessary blabbering…We are looking for fast, useful knowledge."
Story	3	2	
Hidden story	4	3	

Table 3: Examples of individual assessments of newsworthiness

The examples illustrated above seemed to be in line with my idea. Some people will claim a strong dislike toward stories, yet rate the usefulness of stories in a similar manner to other respondents.

To double-check this notion, I calculated the means of the assessments that these 14 individuals gave to the newsworthiness of the different types of press releases. They were: **2,5** for the *no story* version (the mean of all respondents was 2,558), **3,357** for the *hidden story* press releases (all respondents gave an average assessment of 3,007) and an even **3** for the *story* version (the average assessment for story versions was 3,125 when looking at all respondents).

Statistically, this calculation tells us very little – a group of 14 is too small to allow for a comparison of statistical significance measured up to the respondents as an entity or to be analyzed on its own, especially as the group consisted of 14 individuals who volunteered a viewpoint in an open ended question where one could freely speak ones mind about near anything. Looking into the means of their answers proves but one thing – on average, these respondents did not assess the newsworthiness of the *no story* version higher than the two story versions although one could have easily assumed this to be the case after reading their statements.

This led me to wonder: if some people have a tendency towards claiming that they do not find stories useful, what do they emphasize in an hour-long interview when they start discussing the stories used in press releases and suddenly notice that they have covered many issues based on a press release story? Perhaps they will emphasize the stories that were not *stories* as such. Perhaps they will emphasize something much more eloquent than a plain story. A hidden story.

In this idea might rest a more thorough answer to my research question. It seems that the form of the message will influence how useful a respondent finds the message, but that some people have a tendency to claim that they will prefer different kinds of messages than they actually do in test-circumstances – at least when it comes to storytelling.

7. THE GRAND FINALE – CLOSURE

I have a sign posted up above my office desk at Hanken. It contains a quote from Mark Twain:

"Education is the path from cocky ignorance to miserable uncertainty."

Many a time I have looked up at this text and thought that it sums it all. We start our processes as doctoral students so full of great ideas and daydreams of world changing doctorates. Mr. Twain's notion of cocky ignorance rings true and reminds me of the state of mind, which I was in way back when I was drafting my first research proposal.

In it I stated that I wish to explain what storytelling is to an organization. To create an all-encompassing overview of anything and everything that storytelling denotes to knowledge management. Ah, the folly of youth.

If there is one key lesson that I learned time and again throughout my years as a doctoral student it is one of the beauty of simplicity and clear aims. The more concrete and precise your aim is, the more probable it is that you will be able to achieve it.

Of the many less admirable traits that I must confess to, overreacting is one of my strongest characteristics. Thus I ended up with a fairly narrow aim for my doctoral studies and one simple research question that I wished to unravel.

To keep to Mark Twain, I believe that at least ignorance has been swept from my being, so education has definitely had its benefits. But is *miserable uncertainty* the result of my years of studying and research? Perhaps it is due to my upbeat disposition, but with all respect to Mr. Twain, misery is not a word I would stir together with the notion of education. I would rather call the state one reaches at the end of one's doctorate *refined uncertainty*.

I have learned enough to realize that there is no possible way that I could learn it all. That one cannot master storytelling, one cannot master knowledge management, in fact one cannot master any field. Uncertainty always remains when limited resources meet fields of debate that are constantly evolving.

But what one can do, is produce a very, very educated guess. And this is what I aim to provide in this final chapter of my doctoral thesis. I shall first discuss some of the many limitations of my work, ponder over probable managerial implications and suggest ideas for future research on the topic. As a final note, I shall discuss my research and leave it up to my readers to decide if I have reasonably met the goals that I set for this doctorate.

7.1 Hindsight 20/20

This research has a number of limitations and the amount of choices that I would change, should I have the power to go back in time, are considerable.

First and foremost, my research set-up does not satisfactorily correspond with the theoretical body I am aiming at contributing to. The main argument I presented whilst criticizing existing knowledge flow theory was that it leaves out a central piece of the underlying communication theory, the message. And yet I decided to try to contribute to knowledge flow theory by conducting research that leaves out an integral component of it: reference to social capital, organizational closeness, in essence, the human factor. For example, Szulanski's (1996) research on knowledge stickiness – which I criticize – showed that three main components affecting knowledge stickiness were lack of absorptive capacity of the recipient, causal ambiguity of the knowledge transferred and difficulty in establishing personal interactions between the source and the recipient (Pettigrew et al. 2002:150). My critique would have been on a much more solid base should I have chosen to study knowledge sharing in such a manner that, for example, the absorptive capacity of the recipient or the connection between the source and recipient could have been taken into consideration. In essence, what I have done is to first criticize research for forgetting a piece of the puzzle, after which I proceeded to do the exact same mistake while trying to prove that my critique was valid.

As a result, my research contributes to the knowledge flow theory in a very limited manner – by showing that the form of the message can have an effect on knowledge sharing. Yet, as I left out other components of knowledge flow theory, this result is questionable at best.

A second major limitation comes from the fact that I chose to study knowledge sharing between PR professionals and journalists and use this context to try to contribute to a field of study dealing by and large with knowledge sharing within an organization. The context I chose to conduct my research in does encompass knowledge flow. It looks at a process where messages are sent from a source – an organization – to a recipient – a journalist – who, if willing, will choose to interpret and send out the message to a larger audience. But it is clearly not within the focus of knowledge management research. Should I have made more educated choices regarding my research context, I could presumably have contributed to the theory in a more substantial manner. Yet, although I see this as a limitation, I feel the fact that it *is* one, is actually due to a limitation in knowledge management. As Alvesson (2001: 864) and McKenzie and van Winkelen (2006: 45) have stipulated, there is no reason for knowledge management's strict confinement within the boundaries of an organization. On the contrary, the field would

benefit from a more holistic view, where the media, customers, analysts and other stakeholders were taken into account.

My choice of context brought forth other limitations as well. Most importantly, it is quite possible that I targeted a group of professionals with an atypical reaction toward storytelling. After all, *news* is all about stories. In essence, a journalist's livelihood is built upon their own ability to create stories. Thus their reactions towards stories as such might well be very different from that of an individual knowledge worker communicating ideas. Journalists might be partial toward stories or even more opposed to them if they felt that their job was being done for them if they were communicated to by means of stories.

A further limitation comes forth from my choice of studying a phenomenon – or a form of a message if you will – called storytelling in order to look into knowledge flow. My reasoning was based on work life experience and a personal interest in stories. Problems arose from my choice to combine the two in my research. If I would have chosen only one of these phenomena for my doctorate, pieces would perhaps have fitted together more smoothly. Knowledge flow could have been studied with any kind of different messages, without going through the extensive lengths of trying to understand and convey stories. And, likewise, storytelling as a form of communication could have been studied in any manner of ways without mixing organizational knowledge flow as such in the equation.

In hindsight, my empirical study might have made a much better fit for a doctorate with theoretical background in PR theory, communication or mass media studies. And likewise, in hindsight, my theoretical underpinning of wanting to contribute to the field of knowledge management might have been served better by a study conducted amongst, for example, members of a Community of Practice and looking into how they react to different forms of communication, how useful they feel it is.

I also wish to reflect on my research data. One of my main concerns with the data has to do with the set up of the test. I chose to use only 3 different topics (press releases) that each had three different versions (no story, hidden story and story), which respondents assessed for newsworthiness. My reasoning for the limited number of topics was based on practicality; I wished to create a short concise test in order to ensure that respondents would not decide against answering the test based on the estimated time it would take them. Yet I was well aware of the fact that the more topics I included, the more reliable my results would be. In a balancing act of trying to create an appealing test that would induce the largest possible amount of people to answer, I compromised my data by leaving the number of assessed topics near to the bare minimum.

Another concern I have with this research has to do with my response rate. I fear that I did not go through the process of gathering the data in a manner that would have ensured the best outcome. The response rate I received for my web-based test was approximately 35, 5 %. While it was a large enough sample to conduct the statistical analyses on and get statistically significant results, the sample was by no means ideal and limits the reliability of my results. Yet in my eagerness to get my hands on the data and start my analysis, I made a regrettable decision: to only have two letters sent out to the respondents: an initial one informing them about the test, which was followed up by one additional reminder letter. Looking back, this haste was uncalled for. I could have waited and sent out at least one more reminder to increase the response rate to strengthen the reliability of my results.

Finally, before moving on to managerial implications, I wish to address a limitation concerning the practical value of my research. I studied how individual business journalists assess the newsworthiness of messages of different forms. I found that message form does matter and significantly affects newsworthiness. But does such a test tell us something of how message form would affect a press releases probability of ending up in the news in real life? The process of creating news is rarely an act of one individual making a decision. Rather, it is a group effort, where a number of people act as gatekeepers. Research looking at individuals' assessments may be interesting, but when it is examining a phenomena that in reality is conducted by both groups and individuals in a decision making hierarchy, its practical value is debatable.

7.2 What's in it for managers?

According to knowledge management practitioner Stephen Denning, storytelling can communicate values and visions and be used in to ignite action and change. On the other hand, organizational researchers such as Czarniawska and Gabriel have shown that management actions are a source pool for organizational stories. Combining these two insights already gives managers a broad scope of the impact of storytelling in their occupational setting – stories can be used as vehicles of communication and actions should be looked upon as constant feeding ground for organizational stories with longstanding impact on most any organizational aspect: culture, employee motivation, change management, strategy implementation and so on. Add on to this picture Ricoeur's notion of narratives and identity – who we are is essentially built by the story within our mind. With these three aspects in mind, a manager may grasp the magnitude of implications that storytelling has to both an organization and to the actions of individual managers.

In the main, stories can be used as communication tools, a managers action will lead to stories, which will build culture, and ultimately, the story in a manager's mind will impact how they see themselves and conduct their professional life.

When we add even more to this puzzle and take into account knowledge sharing, be it within the organization or between the organization and, say, a stakeholder group such as the business press, the sphere of managerial implications one can come up with becomes near overwhelming. I will now attempt to bring some forth.

Firstly, the form of the message matters and affects communication. In our day and age of split second decisions and emails, it would seem obvious that the most important managerial implication would be to stress the importance of communication and make sure management is well trained and skilled in not only both verbal and written communication, but into how nuances of style or culture differences may affect interpretation. Far too often, communication skills, whether they relate to sharing knowledge or interpreting it, are taken as a granted within organizations. But merely knowing how to speak, read and write hardly constitutes a professional touch. Years of practical work will hone most anyone's skills in communicating, but whether this leads to improved knowledge sharing is questionable, if not followed and measured. My first practical suggestion is that managers be regularly assessed by their employees in terms of communication skills and training would be arranged according to needs that come forth from such assessments.

Secondly, stories are all around us. I feel confident in assuming that no such organization exist where stories would not be told, or a manager who has not been the laughing stock, villain or hero of at least one organizational story. This leads me to argue that management should be trained to appreciate the far reaching implications of their everyday actions. The decision whether to open a door for the janitor or slam it in his face might haunt a manager as an organizational story for decades to come.

Third, an important role all managers hold is that of not only role model, but of a mentor. Should a manager master the skill of storytelling, she would be better equipped in this task, as suggested by, for example, Swap et al. (2000). If we take this idea further, a manager who has used storytelling as a form of communication in mentoring will be in a better position to determine if storytelling could be used elsewhere within the organization as a formal method of attempting knowledge transfer, for example in a community of practice, training, or for example the employee newsletter.

Stories or storytelling are used as a mode of communication in, for example, communities of practice, exit interviews, knowledge narratives of intellectual capital reports and learning histories, to name but a few practical applications. This

withstanding, as my fourth point, I wish to emphasize that storytelling is but one method among many others that can be used for knowledge sharing. Sole and Wilson (2002:6) suggest a typology of: storytelling, modeling, codified resources, symbolic objects and simulations as a partial list of knowledge sharing modes that are broadly used in organizations. My research suggests that whichever of these options is made use of, the form of the message may impact the receiver's perception on its usefulness. Although I chose to study stories as a message form and studied them within what Sole and Wilson label codified resources, i.e. text, my research does not indicate that stories would be superior to any other message form, nor does it look into comparing one mode to another. What managerial implication lies in this? A simple but important one: one should not look only into the mode of knowledge sharing, but also the message form, when planning knowledge sharing actions. A symbolic object such as an altitude map is of little use to someone who has not been taught how to interpret it – correspondingly, storytelling might be suggested as a useful mode within a community of practice, but prove to be of little use if the members are not comfortable with, or used to communicating knowledge sharing stories.

Finally, I wish to discuss managerial implications that have to do with dealing with the business press. It is important to note that this research did nothing to prove that stories would be deemed useful by any of the receivers mentioned in previous managerial implications. That has been done by previous research in the case of organizational stories (e.g. Gabriel 2000) and suggested by practitioners when it comes to communicating values and vision (e.g. Denning 2000), which I merely built upon. The case of the business press is however, clearer from a managerial perspective. Using narrative form in press releases and having thought out example stories in mind for meetings with journalists should, according to this research, lead to more publicity if one is dealing with an individual journalist who has relevant decision making power within her media.

However, as these are managerial implications, I am not bound to only suggesting ideas based on research, my own or others. I am also entitled to give an educated hunch. I believe that while the message form matters and storytelling seems to attract individual journalists, the best thing to do to gain good publicity would not be to tell a story, but to act in such a manner that it creates a great story – and tell no one of it. Be it a sole manager or the organization as an entity, it would be advisable to time and again silently play the part of the hero and let a journalist find you doing this. And naturally never let anyone know that you are doing this on purpose.

As a final practical note, I wish to end this managerial implication by stressing that my research suggests *more* publicity gained through using stories, not necessarily favorable publicity, which I believe is linked directly to organizational actions.

In addition to these general managerial implications, the following practical issues regarding press releases came up the in open ended answers to my web-test. Although small and practical, they are well worth mentioning and explaining:

67 of the respondents who answered the open ended comment box at the end of my "lab-test" wrote specifically about issues dealing with the form of the message. Without prompting11 of these respondents volunteered the information that they dislike firms that try to cover up bad news either by hiding it in the midst of a press release or by sending it out at a time that will guarantee less publicity. As the following quotes illustrate, actions like these may give a company bad reputation amongst journalists and lead to negative or less publicity in the future:

"The thing that irritates me most of all is when certain companies send their bad news in the evening, in order to get away with less publicity and a fewer amount of journalists calling them up for comments that day."

"At times you come across press releases which have clearly been made with the intention of deception. They can have a page of pure advertising text and then the next to last paragraph finally reveals that the company is about to give a financial warning, redundancies or similar. Companies like these are quickly black-listed."

In addition, closed cell phones and statements such as "nothing to add to what has already been stated in the press release" were mentioned as behavior that might provoke bad publicity as managers get in journalists' bad books.

7.3 Three ideas for future research

I will limit my suggestion for future research to three, and present them in what I feel is an order of straightforwardness – the easier the research would be to set up, the higher the suggestion is on my list of three. I dare to claim that the order also reflects on value of the contribution the suggested research might have.

1. This research dealt with a subjective aspect of knowledge sharing – the usefulness of a message, which was looked into in terms of how newsworthy journalists found different types of texts. But what is the use of knowing what impacts knowledge flow if we do not take into account if people are able to make use of the knowledge? From a knowledge sharing point of view, a natural follow-up would be a similar study looking into how different message forms affect recollection and ability to share ones interpretation of the message

further on with others. Ideally, such a study should be conducted with longitudinal data, where respondent recollection would be tested not only immediately after communication in a certain message form but also after some time has passed after the initial communication. As testing for recollection right after the first communication has taken place might presumably strengthen future recollection, this research would be even more interesting if a number of respondents were tested for recollection only in the second longitudinal test.

2. As I stated in my limitations, my own research dealt with individual reactions to different forms of messages. As knowledge sharing is a social process, a natural suggestion for future research comes from looking into this issue. Will people react differently to different message forms if in a group where others see their reactions or in a face-to-face communication situation where respondents know that a certain message form is being utilized? I trust this would be a topical and important matter to look into, and believe that findings presented in this thesis suggest that this might be the case. As I described in the previous chapter, respondents seem to be hesitant towards openly admitting that they are partial toward stories when interviewed, although reactions were quite different in a test setting. I suggested the phenomena might be explained by a classic communication theory – the spiral of silence. Do people alter their opinions – and reactions – toward different message types when they are in a situation, where others will see what their reaction is? It takes quite a bit of confidence to admit that you prefer stories to, say, pie charts.

3. And finally, a natural follow up on this research would be testing knowledge flow in such a way that takes all the components of existing knowledge flow theory into consideration. Conducting a similar experiment within a case organization would allow a researcher to look at not only at how the form of the message may impact knowledge flow, but also to take into account other essential components of knowledge flow theory, such as the five components suggested by Gupta and Govindarajan (2000:475): 1) the value of the source unit's knowledge stock; 2) the motivational disposition of the source unit; 3) the existence and richness of transmission channels; 4) the motivational disposition of the target unit and 5) the absorptive capacity of the target unit. I would find such research especially illuminating, if the study were set up to *test* the subjective value that receivers put on these suggested forces instead of asking respondents how important the find different mechanism to be.

7.4 My contribution – bridging storytelling and knowledge flow

As I stated early on in this doctorate, I do not believe that findings obtained through social science research are, or should be universally true. Rather, I take a stance that Morgan & Smircich (1980: 492, 497) label Symbolic Discourse, and consequently regard research findings as a means of providing insightful and significant information about the nature of the social world, which in itself is, in essence, a network of subjective meanings (ibid: 494).

Did I answer my research question? To stay in accord to my own beliefs, I gather that I provided *an answer*, which although grounded in research, is still subjective.

The sole research question I wished to address in this research was: **does message form have an impact on the perceived usefulness of a message?**

In short, my answer is **yes**. I set up a test that showed that in a certain situation, the form of the message *can* have an effect on how useful a recipient feels communication is. Thus I feel confident in arguing that in any research touching upon communication, the presentation type – message form – may matter.

Knowledge is an elusive concept, knowledge flow even more so. I believe that in order to grasp the essence of knowledge flow, one needs to not only have a comprehension of what knowledge is, but also the mechanism through which it can be shared. At times, I have felt as is the entire point of my doctorate is to point out the self evident: knowledge flow should not be discussed without taking into account all basic components of communication – and there is no communication without a message.

Yet I realize that what is self evident to me may be unclear or irrelevant to others. My keenness to simplify complicated issues in order to make sense of the world we live in may give a naïve picture of the underlying meaning of this work. I do by no means mean to oversimplify the complex and multifaceted process of knowledge flow, nor do I attempt to bring it down to mere communication. On the contrary, when knowledge is shared, I gather that much more is occurring than mere communication. Yet the complexity of the process may at times – as has been the case in knowledge flow theory – be so overwhelming that small but essential core elements become obsolete.

By demonstrating beyond reasonable doubt that the form of the message may have an influence on knowledge flow, I believe I have helped bridge the gap between two principally overlapping but theoretically still detached fields of knowledge management: knowledge flow and storytelling. This is a strong statement, and requires

some explanation, which I will try to explain by backtracking my personal journey as a doctoral student:

As I stated in the first pages of this doctorate, I became a doctoral student with a goal of understanding why stories seemed to make journalists want to write about an organization – but that I wanted to study this in such a manner that it would make sense to the organization and ultimately the manager giving an interview or approving a press release. Fundamentally, I wanted to produce a holistic answer that would aid the manager not only in her dealings with the press, but with communication in general. I knew that I could have limited my research to looking at communication with the media, but my interest in stories had not arisen from that. It originated from my colleagues who taught me the trade of PR through stories. It grew stronger when I felt that my own communication – and synergy – with clients was improved by stories. Thus I wanted to find a theoretical home that looked into communication and learning and synergy and – for all intents and purposes, knowledge sharing in general.

But my list of requirements did not end here. I also wanted to find a theoretical home that would see the organization and its surroundings as an entity, appreciate that the primary reason that a commercial organization exists is to make money; *and* that in this day and age, money is simply not made as a clear cut result of tangible production or actions.

Knowledge management seemed to fit the bill. The overarching view of an organization that the field encompassed appealed to me. Storytelling was already discussed as a method of knowledge sharing in this field. Knowledge managements sister discipline of intellectual capital was addressing a number of issues closely related to my interest area. If not financial journalists, then financial analysts were seen as gatekeepers with power regarding a company's value. It was the closest theoretical home I could find.

Yet when I dove into the world of storytelling, I soon found much of the discussion within knowledge management literature repetitive – so much of it concentrated on arguing that stories work well in knowledge sharing, and yet as "proof" of this argument authors cited work conducted under other realms of storytelling research. There was no proof as such, save for one excellent piece of research conducted by Joanne Martin in the late seventies (published in e.g. 1982), which offered what practically oriented knowledge management scholars seemed to be looking for: proof that using story form in communication has a impact on how the receiver interprets the message – in a certain setting and when compared to data and text with no story.

It seemed that storytelling scholars were struggling with a need to prove to others that their research was important. Reading more into knowledge management literature, I

soon felt that I could see why – central theories regarding knowledge flow were not even discussing the theme of "the message", let alone storytelling. And this is when I realized I could make a contribution – if I could show that theory needs to take message form into consideration; grounds would be laid for research looking more holistically into knowledge flow and including storytelling.

My own research showed storytelling to be a powerful form of communicating when dealing with the business press. Future research will hopefully show the same within an organizational setting. Yet did I succeed in meeting the goals I set out to tackle with my doctorate? I shall end my book with a story and let you decide.

Our department of management and organization has a bi- sometimes tri-annual tradition of arranging a progress seminar, where hopeful PhD's in the making tell more experienced scholars about their work, their progress during the last year and get insight and advice.

In these gatherings, fellow students first act as discussants to one another and then the floor is open for input from all staff. I remember having the somewhat intimidating honor of acting as a discussant for a colleague who had near finished his thesis and was presenting for the last time as a student, or "doktorand" as we are referred to.

There was nothing I could point out in his work to offer him new insight. This bright young scholar was a meter from the finish line and had quite clearly done an excellent job. So instead of offering critique, I decided to ask for his advice. I asked him what he would have done differently, if he had the knowledge he has today back when he first started his doctorate. "I wouldn't have decided to write a PhD", came the reply with a chuckle. Stern advice, that. Wise and true. I confess there has been more than one occasion when I have hoped that I could go back in time and choose differently.

At heart, I am not a scholar, I am a storyteller. Perhaps I should have taken a different route and tried to find the answer to my questions via other means than by creating a PhD. Seeing as my goal has all along been to create a more managerial contribution, maybe this elaborate side step into the world of academia was not entirely wise – at least not from a personal career point of view. But what is done is done and as I have enjoyed my adventure in the world of academia immensely, I shall happily write all these years down to experience. And in the end, I do feel that I reached my goal – I rather think I understand *why* storytelling works as a form of communication. But is the result my own, greatly enhanced tacit knowledge of the subject, or did I manage to convey my message in such a manner that others will be able to interpret it?

You be the judge. Thank you again for your time!

REFERENCES

Abbot, H. P. (2007) "Story, Plot and Narration" in: Herman, D. Editor. (2007), The Cambridge Companion to Narrative (2007), Cambridge University Press.

Arbnor, I., Bjerke, B. (1997), "Methodology for Creating Business Knowledge", Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA

Alasuutari, P. (1994). "Laadullinen tutkimus". Tampere: Vastapaino.

Alvesson, M. (2001), "Knowledge work: ambiguity, image and identity", Human Relations, Vol. 54 No.7, pp.863-86.

Ardichvili, A., Page, V. & Wentling, T. (2003). "Motivation and barriers to participation in virtual knowledge-sharing communities of practice", Journal of Knowledge Management, Vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 64-77.

Argote, L. & Ingram, P. (2000). "Knowledge transfer: A basis for competitive advantage in firms". Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 82(1), pp. 150-169.

Atkinson, R., Flint, J. (2001), "Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: snowball research strategies", Social Research Update, Vol. 33 No.1, pp.1-4

Baumard, P. (1999), "Tacit Knowledge in Organizations". Sage Publications, London.

Barney, J. B. (1991). "Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage". Journal of Management, 17(1), pp. 99-120.

Baskerville, R. and Dulipovici, A. (2006) "The theoretical foundations of knowledge management", Knowledge Management Research & Practice, Vol. 4, No 2, pp. 83-105

Berlo, D. (1960). "The process of communication: An introduction to theory and practice". New. York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Bernard, H. R. (2000) "Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative methods". Beverly Hill, CA: Sage.

Blumler J. G. and Katz, E. (1974): "The Uses of Mass Communication". Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Boje, D. M. (1995). "Stories of the Storytelling Organization: A postmodern analysis of Disney as "Tamara-Land"" Academy of Management Journal. August 1995, Vol. 38 (4) pp. 997-1035

Boje, D. M. (1999) "Is Nike Roadrunner or Wile E. Coyote? A postmodern organization analysis of double logic". Journal of Business & Entrepreneurship. Special Issue (March), Vol II, pp. 77-109.

Boje, D. M. (2001) "Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research", London: Sage.

Boje, D. M. (2002) "Critical Dramaturgical Analysis of Enron Antenarratives and Metatheatre". Plenary presentation to 5th International Conference on Organizational Discourse: From Micro-Utterances to Macro-Inferences, Wednesday 24th - Friday 26th July (London)

Boje, D. M. (2006a) "Pitfalls in Storytelling Advice and Praxis" Academy of Management Review, Vol 31 (1), pp. 218-224

Bresman H., Birkinshaw J. and Nobel R. (1999) "Knowledge transfer in international acquisitions" Journal of International Business Studies, Vol. 30, pp. 439-462.

Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1987) "Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Brown, M. H. (1990) "Defining stories in organizations: Characteristics and functions" In J. Anderson (Ed.), Communication yearbook 13, pp. 162-190. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Bruner, J. S. (1986) "Actual minds, possible worlds" Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Bruner, J. S. (1990) "Culture and human development: A new look" Human Development, 33, pp. 344-355

Bruner, J.S. (2002) "Making stories: Law, literature, life" New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux

Bruner, J. S. (2004) "Life as Narrative" Social Research Vol 71: No 3, pp. 691-710. Also in Bruner (1994). Life as narrative. In A. H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community, pp. 28-37. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English. & in Bruner, J. S. (1987). Life as narrative. Social Research, Vol. 54, pp. 1-17

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979) "Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis", Heinemann

Carroll, C.E. and McCombs, M. (2003) "Agenda-setting effects of business news on the public's images and opinions about major corporations" Corporate Reputation Review 16 (1), pp. 36–46

Conner, K. R. and Prahalad, C. K. (1996) "A resource-based theory of the firm: Knowledge versus opportunism", Organization Science, 7.5, pp.477-501

Curtin, P.A. (1999) "Re-evaluating public relations information subsidies: Market driven-journalism and agenda-building theory and practice" Journal of Public Relations Research Vol. 11, pp. 52–90

Czarniawska, B. (1998) "A narrative approach to organization studies". Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Czarniawska, B. (2004) "Narratives in Social Science Research. Introducing Qualitative. Methods" London: Sage

David G. S. (ed.) (2006) "Encyclopedia of knowledge management" Hershey, PA: Idea Group Reference

de Bens, E. Golding, P and McQuail, E. & (eds.) (2005) "Communication Theory & Research: An EJC Anthology" London: Sage.

De Long, D. and Fahey, L. (2000) "Diagnosing Cultural Barriers to Knowledge Management," Academy of Management Executive (14:4), pp.113-127

Denning, S. (2000) "The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations" Butterworth Heinemann

Denning, S. (2006) "Stories that Tame the grapevine" in: Schreyögg, G. And Koch, J. (eds.) Knowledge management and narratives. Organizational effectiveness through storytelling, Schmidt Verlag, Berlin.

Drucker, P. F (1993) "Post-Capitalist Society" New York: Harper Collins

Drucker, P. (1966), "The Effective Executive" Harper & Row, New York, NY

Dundes, A. (1997) "Binary Opposition in Myth: The Propp/Levi-Strauss Debate in Retrospect". Western Folklore, Vol. 56 pp. 39-50

Easterby-Smith, M., Lyles, M.A. (eds.) (2003) "Handbook of Organizational Learning and Knowledge Management" Blackwell Publishing, Oxford

Eisenberg, H. (1997) "Re-engineering and dumbsizing: mismanagement of the knowledge resource" Quality Progress, Vol. 30 No.5, pp.57-64

Fisher, W.R. (1984) "Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument" Communication Monographs, Vol. 52, pp. 347-367

Fisher, W.R. (1987). "Human communication as a narration: Toward a philosophy of reason, value, and action" Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press

Fiske, John (1990) "Introduction to Communication Studies" (2nd Edition) Routledge

Fombrun, C. (2001) "Corporate Reputation as Economic Assets" in: Blackwell Handbook of Strategic Management. Blackwell Publishing

Franzosi, R. (1998) "Narrative Analysis - or Why (and How) Sociologists Should Be Interested in Narratives" Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. 24, pp. 517-554

Gabriel, Y. (1998a) "The use of stories" in G. Symon and C. Cassell (eds.) Qualitative research methods and analysis in organizational research. London: Sage

Gabriel, Y. (1995) "The Unmanaged Organization. Stories, Fantasies and Subjectivity" Organization Studies, Vol. 16/3. pp. 477-501

Gabriel, Y. (2000) "Storytelling in Organization -Facts, Fictions and Fantasies" Oxford University Press

Gans, Herbert J. (2004) "Deciding What's News" (rev. edn.) Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press

Gao, F. Li, M. and Clarke, S. (2008) "Knowledge, management, and knowledge management in business operations" Journal of Knowledge management. Vol. 12, No. 2, pp.3-17

Gillham, B. (2005) "Research interviewing: the range of techniques" Maidenhead, Berkshire

Girden E.R. (1992) "ANOVA: repeated measures" Sage University Papers

Goh S.C. (2002) "Managing effective knowledge transfer: an integrative framework and some practice implications" Journal of Knowledge Management, Vol. 6 (1) pp. 23-30

Graham, A.B, Pizzo, V.G. (1996) "A question of balance: case studies in strategic knowledge management" European Management Journal, Vol. 14 No.4, pp.338-346

Grant, R.M. "Toward a Knowledge-Based Theory of the Firm," Strategic Management Journal (17), Winter Special Issue, 1996, pp. 109-122

Gupta, A.K., & Govindarajan, V. (2000) "Knowledge flows within multinational corporations" Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 21, pp. 473-496

Haldin-Herrgård, T. (2005) "Hur höra tyst kunskap? Utveckling av en metod för studier av tyst kunnande" Doctoral Dissertation Hanken School of Economics

Hansen M.T. Nohria, N. and Tierney, T. (1999) "What's Your Strategy for Managing Knowledge?" Harvard Business Review, March-April

Hardy, B. (1968) "The Collected Essays of Barbara Hardy" (vol. 1). Brighton: Harvester Press. Quoted from: McPartland, M (2001) Moral Dilemmas, Narrative and the Teaching of Geography. Vol 10:2

Hargie, O. Dickson, D and Tourish, D. (2004) "Communication Skills for Effective Management" Palgrave Macmillan

Harris, R.J. (1994) "A Cognitive Psychology of Mass Communication". Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, Hillside, New Jersey

Hayes, A. F. (2005) "Statistical methods for communication science" Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum

Herman, D. (ed.) (2007) "The Cambridge Companion to Narrative" Cambridge University Press

Herzog, P. (2008) "Open and Closed Innovation. Different Cultures for Different Strategies" Wiesbaden: Betriebswirtschaftlicher Verlag Gabler

Hislop, D. (2002) "Mission impossible? Communicating and sharing knowledge via information technology" Journal of Information Technology, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 165-177

Housel, T. J. and Bell, A. (2001) "Measuring and Managing Knowledge" Boston: McGraw Hill

Jain, R.K. and Triandis, H.C. (1990) "Management of Research and Development. Organizations: Managing the Unmanageable" Wiley. New York

Jashapara, A. (2005) "The emerging discourse of knowledge management: A new dawn for information science research?" Journal of Information Science, Vol. 31 (2), pp. 136-148

Jensen, R. (1999) "The dream society: how the coming shift from information to imagination will transform your business" New York: McGraw-Hill

Jick, T.D. (1979) "Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: triangulation in action" Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 24, pp.602-611

Johnstone, B. (2007) "A new role for narrative in variationist sociolinguistics" in Bamberg M. (ed.) Narrative: State of the Art, pp. 57-67, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins

Kanawattanachai, P. and Yoo, Y. (2007) "The impact of knowledge coordination on virtual team performance over time", MIS Quarterly, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp.783-808

Kim, J. (2003) "Story and Narrative Paradigms in Role-Playing Games" http://www.darkshire.net/jhkim/rpg/theory/narrative/paradigms.html

Kogut, B. and Zander, U. (1995) "Knowledge, Market Failure and the Multinational Enterprise: A Reply" Journal of International Business Studies, pp.417 - 426

Kostova, T. (1998) "Transnational Transfer of Strategic Organizational Practices: A Contextual Perspective" The Academy of Management Review, Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 308-324

Krippendorf, K. (2004) "Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology" 2nd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Leonard, D. and Strauss (1999) "Putting Your Company's Whole Brain to Work" in Drucker et al. Editors Harvard Business Review on Knowledge Management

Leonard-Barton, D (1992) "Core capabilities and core rigidities: a paradox in managing new product development" Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 13

Levitt, S.D. and List, J.A. (2006) "What do laboratory experiments tell us about the real world?" Working paper, University of Chicago. Retrieved: http://pricetheory.uchicago.edu/levitt/Papers/jep%20revision%20Levitt%20&%20List.pdf. This work has since been published in the Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol.21, No 2, Spring 2007, pp. 153-174

Littlejohn, S. W. (1999) "Theories of human communication" (6th end) Belmont, CA: Wadsworth

Maione (1997) "Choice Points – Creating Clinical Qualitative Research studies" in The Qualitative Report, Volume 3, Number 2, July 1997. Page number not applicable for online reference, the matters referred to were found under the heading: Choice

Mäkelä, K. (2006) "Essays on interpersonal level knowledge sharing within the multinational corporation" Doctoral dissertation Helsinki School of Economics

Markus, L. M (2001) "Toward a Theory of Knowledge Reuse: Types of Knowledge Reuse Situations and Factors in Reuse Success" Journal of Management Information Systems Issue: Vol. 18, No. 1 pp. 57 - 93

Marr, B (ed.) (2005) "Perspectives on Intellectual Capital. Multidisciplinary insights into Management, Measurement and Reporting" Elsevier Inc., Amsterdam

Marr, B., Mouritsen, J., Bukh, P.N. (2003) "Perceived wisdom" Financial Management, Vol. July/August pp. 32

Martin, J. (2001) "Organizational Culture: Mapping the Terrain" London: Sage

Martin, J. (1982) "Stories and scripts in organizational settings" in Hastorf, A. & Isen, I. (eds.) Cognitive social psychology (pp. 255-205). New York: Elsevier-North Holland

Martin, J., and M. E. Powers (1983) "Truth or corporate propaganda: The value of a good war story" in Pondy, L. R. Frost, P. J. Morgan, G. and Dandridge, T. C. (eds) Organizational symbolism. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press

Martin, J., Feldman, M. S. Hatch, M. J. and Sitkin, S. B. (1983) "The uniqueness paradox in organizational stories" Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 28, pp. 438-453

Mason, J. (2002) "Qualitative Researching" (second ed.) London: Sage

McCune , J.C. (1999) "Thirst for knowledge" Management Review, Vol. 88, No. 4, pp. 10−12

McKenzie, J. and van Winkelen, C. (2006) "Creating successful partnerships: the importance of sharing knowledge" Journal of General Management, Vo.31, No.4, pp. 45-61.

McKnight, P. E., McKnight, K. M. and Figueredo, S. S. A (2007) "Missing Data – a Gentle Introduction" New York/London: The Guilford Press

McLuhan, M. (1964) "Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man" New York: McGraw

McQuail, D. (2005) "Mass Communication Theory" (fifth ed.) London, Sage

McQuillan, M. (2000) "The Narrative Reader" London and New York: Routledge

Meyer, E., Connell, N.A.D. and Klein, J.H. (2005) "A narrative approach to knowledge exchange: an empirical investigation in two contrasting settings" in, Schreyögg, G. and Koch, J. (eds.) Knowledge Management and Narratives: Organizational Effectiveness Through Storytelling. Berlin, Erich Schmidt Verlag, Berlin

Miller, K. (2005) "Communication Theories: Perspectives, processes, and contexts" (second ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill

Mishler, E. (1986) "Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative" Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Morgan, G., Smircich, L. (1980) "The case for qualitative research" The Academy of Management Review, Vol. 5 No.4, pp. 491-500

Morgan, S., Dennehy, R.F. (1997) "The power of organizational storytelling: a management development perspective" Journal of Management Development, Vol. 16 No.7, pp.494-501

Mouritsen, J., Bukh, P.N., Larsen, H.T., Johansen, M.R. (2002) "Developing and managing knowledge through intellectual capital statements" Journal of Intellectual Capital, Vol. 3 No.1, pp.10-29

Nahapiet, J. & Ghoshal. S. (1998) "Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage" Academy of Management Review, Vol. 23(2), pp. 242-266

Nekvapil (2003) "Language biographies and the analysis of language situations: on the life of the German community in the Czech Republic" International Journal of the Sociology of Language. Vol. 162, pp. 63–83

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1984, 1993) "The spiral of silence: Public opinion-our social skin" Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Original theory published in: Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). The spiral of silence: A theory of public opinion. Journal of Communication, Vol. 24, pp. 43-51

Nonaka (1994) "A Dynamic Theory of Organizational Knowledge Creation" Organization Science, Vol. 5 (1), pp. 14-37

Nonaka & Peltokorpi, (2006) "Visionary Knowledge Management: The Case of Eisai Transformation" International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital, Vol. 3

Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) "The Knowledge-Creating Company" New York: Oxford University Press

Nonaka and Teece, (eds.) (2001) "Managing Industrial Knowledge" London: Sage

Nonaka, I., Toyama, R., Hirata, T., (authors) & Bigelow, S. J., Hirose, A., & Kohlbacher, F. (collaborators) (2008) "Managing Flow: A Process Theory of the Knowledge-Based Firm" Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

O'Keefe, D. J. (1989) "Communication theory and practical knowledge: What communicators don't know can help them" in Dervin, B. Grossberg, L. O'Keefe, B. and Wartella, E. (eds.) Rethinking communication (vol. 1, pp. 197-199). Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Ochs, E. & Capps, L. (2001) "Living narrative" Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Orr, J. (1990) "Sharing Knowledge, Celebrating Identity: War Stories and Community Memory In a Service Culture" in Middleton, D.S. and Edwards, D. (eds.) Collective Remembering: Memory in Society, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage

Pentland, B.T. (1999) "Building process theory with narrative: from description to explanation" Academy of Management Review, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 711-724

Perret, R., Borges, M.R.S., Santoro, F.M. (2004) "Applying Group Storytelling in Knowledge Management" Proceedings of International Workshop on Groupware, Costa Rica,. LNCS, Germany, Springer-Verlag

Pettigrew, A., Thomas, H. & Whittington, R. (eds.) (2002) "Handbook of strategy and management" London: Sage

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988) "Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences" State University of New York Press

Pondy, L. R. and Mitroff, I. I. (1979) "Beyond open systems models of organization" in Cummings, L. L. and Staw, B. M. (eds.) Research in Organizational Behavior, Vol. 1. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press

Pope C, Ziebland S. and Mays N. (2000) "Qualitative research in health care. Analysing qualitative data" BMJ. Vol. 320, pp. 114–116

Quintas, P., Lefrere, P., Jones, G. (1997) "Knowledge management: a strategic agenda" Journal of Long Range Planning, Vol. 30 No.3, pp.385-91

Ready, D.A. (2002) "How Storytelling Builds Next Generation Leaders" Sloan Management Review Vol. 43, pp. 63-69

Ricoeur, P. (1984) "Time and Narrative, Vol. I" Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press

Ricoeur, P. (1985) "Time and Narrative, Vol II" Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press

Ricoeur, P. (1992) "Oneself as another" Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Riege, A. (2005) "Three-dozen knowledge-sharing barriers managers must consider" Journal of Knowledge Management, Vol. 9 No.3, pp.18-35

Rimmon-Kenan, S. (2002) "The Story of 'I': Illness and Narrative Identity" Narrative, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 9-27

Rutherford, A. (2001) "Introducing Anova and Ancova: A Glm Approach" London: Sage

Salzer-Morling, M. and Strannegård, L. (2004) "Silence of the Brands" European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 38, pp. 224-238

Sandelowski, M. (2000) "Whatever happened to qualitative description?" Research in Nursing &. Health, Vol. 23, pp. 334-340

Sapsford, R. and Jupp, V. (1996) "Data Collection and Analysis" London: Sage

Saver, J. and Young, K. (2001) "The neurology of narrative" SubStance, Vol. 30, pp.72–84

Schank, R. C. (1995) "Tell me a story: Narrative and intelligence" Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. (Reissue of Schank, 1990)

Schank, R. C. and Abelson, R. P. (1995) "Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story" in R. S. Wyer, Jr (ed.) Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story, pp. 1–85

Schreyögg, G & Geiger, D. (2005) "Knowledge, narrations and connoisseurship: revisiting the foundations of knowledge management" International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy, Vol. 1, pp. 316-333

Serenko, A., Bontis, N., & Hardie, T. (2007) "Organizational size and knowledge flow: A proposed theoretical link" Journal of Intellectual Capital, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 1469-1930

Shannon, C. E. (1948) "A mathematical theory of communication." Bell System Technical Journal. vol. 27, pp. 379-423 and 623-656

Silverman, D. (1970) "The theory of organisations: A sociological framework" London: Heinemann
Silverman, D. (2005) "Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook" (second ed.) London: Sage

Simmons, A. (2002) "The story factor: Inspiration, influence, and persuasion through the art of storytelling" London: Perseus

Simon, C.J, Sullivan, M.W (1993) "The measurement and determinants of brand equity: a financial approach" Marketing Science, pp.28-52

Sims, D. Huxam, C. and Beech, N. (2009) "On Telling Stories But Hearing Snippets: Sense-taking from Presentations of Practice" Organization, Vol. 16, Is. 3, pp. 371-88

Snowden, D. J. (2003) "Narrative patterns: The perils and possibilities of using story in organizations" Oxford: Oxford University Press

Sole, D., Wilson, D.G. (2002) "Storytelling in organizations: the power and traps of using stories to share knowledge in organizations" LILA, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Boston, MA

Spender, J.C. (1996) "Making knowledge the basis of a dynamic theory of the firm" Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 17 No. Winter, Special Issue, pp.45-62

Srivastava, R., Shervani, T., & Fahey, L. (1998) "Market-based assets and shareholder value: A framework for analysis" Journal of Marketing, Vol. 62, pp. 2-18

Stewart, T.A. (1991) "Brainpower" Fortune, No.3 June, pp.44-56

Stewart, T.A. (1997) "Intellectual Capital. The New Wealth of Organizations" New York: Doubleday

Stewart, T.A. (2001) "The Wealth of Knowledge: Intellectual Capital and the Twenty-first Century Organization" New York: Doubleday/Currency

Sveiby K-E (1994) "Towards a Knowledge Perspective on Organisation" University of Stockholm PhD dissertation

Sveiby K-E, Skuthorpe T. (2006) "Treading Lightly – the Hidden Wisdom of the World's Oldest People" Sydney: Allen & Unwin

Sveiby, K.E. and Simons, R. (2002) "Collaborative climate and effectiveness of knowledge work – an empirical study" Journal of Knowledge Management, Vol. 6 No.5, pp.420-34

Sveiby, K-E. (1997) "The New Organizational Wealth: Managing and Measuring Knowledge-based Assets" San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler

Swap, W., Leonard, D., Shields, M., Abrams, L. (2001) "Using mentoring and storytelling to transfer knowledge in the workplace" Journal of Management Information Systems, Vol. 18 No.1, pp.95-114

Szulanski, G. (1995) "Unpacking Stickiness: An Empirical Investigation of the Barriers to Transfer Best Practice inside the Firm" Academy of Management Journal (Best Papers Proceedings 1995), pp. 437-441

Szulanski, G. (1996) "Exploring internal stickiness: impediments to the transfer of best practices within the firm" Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 17 No. special issue, Winter, pp.27-43

Szulanski, G. (2000) "The process of knowledge transfer: A diachronic analysis of stickiness" Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, Vol 82, No 1, pp 9-27

Szulanski, G. (2003) "Sticky Knowledge: Barriers to Knowing in the Firm" London: Sage

Thier and Erlach, (2006) "The Transfer of Tacit Knowledge with the Method of Story Telling" in Schreyögg, G. and Koch, J. (eds.), Narratives and knowledge management: Exploring the links between organizational storytelling and knowledge management, Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, pp. 15-72

Tietze, S. Cohen, L. & Musson G. (2003) "Understanding Organisations Through Language" London: Sage

Toffler, A. (1984) "The third wave. The classic study of tomorrow," New York: Bantam

Urdan, T. C. (2005) "Statistics in plain English" (second ed.) Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum

Van Beveren J. (2002) "A model of Knowledge Acquisition that Refocuses Knowledge Management" Journal of Knowledge. Management Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 18-22

Van Winkelen, C and McKenzie, J. (2007a) "An integrated approach to enabling more effective knowledge flows in an organization" in Kazi, A.S. Wohlfart, L. and Wolf, P. Hands-on knowledge co-creation and sharing: Practical methods and techniques, Knowledge Board

Van Winkelen, C. and McKenzie, J. (2007b) "Integrating Individual and Organisational Learning Initiatives: Working Across Knowledge Management and Human Resource Management Functional Boundaries" *The Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management* Vol. 5 Is. 4, pp. 527 – 538

Van Zandt, T. (2004) "Information overload in a network of targeted communication" The Rand Journal of Economics; Vol. 35, Is. 3

Wadsworth, H. M. (1997) "Handbook of Statistical Methods for Engineers and Scientists" (second ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill

Wallace, D. P. (2007) "Knowledge management: historical and cross-disciplinary themes" Westport: Libraries Unlimited

Weiss, N. (2005) "Introductory Statistics" (8th ed.) Addison Wesley

Wertsch, J. (2008) "The Narrative Organization of Collective Memory" Ethos, vol.36, issue 1, pp.120-135

Wiig, K. (1988) "Management of Knowledge: Perspectives of a New Opportunity" Arlington, TX: The Wiig Group

Wiig, K. M. (1999) "What future knowledge management users may expect" Journal of Knowledge Management. Vol. 3, pp. 155–165

Winer, B.J. (1962) "Statistical Principles in Experimental Design" New York: McGraw-Hill

Yeshin, T. (1998) "Integrated Marketing Communications. The Holistic Approach" Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann

Youndt, M. A. Subramaniam, M. and Snell, S. A. (2004) "Intellectual capital profiles: An examination of investments and returns" Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 41, pp. 335-361
Text

EKONOMI OCH SAMHÄLLE
Skrifter utgivna vid Svenska handelshögskolan

ECONOMICS AND SOCIETY
Publications of the Hanken School of Economics

181. OMAR FAROOQ: Financial Crisis and Performance of Analysts' Recommendations. Evidence from Asian Emerging Markets. Helsinki 2008.

182. GUY AHONEN (Ed.): Inspired by Knowledge in Organisations. Essays in Honor of Professor Karl-Erik Sveiby on his 60th Birthday 29th June 2008. Helsinki 2008.

183. NATAŠA GOLIK KLANAC: Customer Value of Website Communication in Business-to-Business Relationships. Helsinki 2008.

184. ANNIKA SANDSTRÖM: Political Risk in Credit Evaluation. Empirical Studies and Survey Results. Helsinki 2008.

185. MARIA SUOKANNAS: Den anonyma seniorkonsumenten identifieras. Om identitetsskapande processer i en marknadsföringskontext. Helsingfors 2008.

186. RIIKKA SARALA: The Impact of Cultural Factors on Post-Acquisition Integration. Domestic and Foreign Acquisitions of Finnish Companies in 1993-2004. Helsinki 2008.

187. INGMAR BJÖRKMAN et al. (Eds.): Innovation, Leadership, and Entrepreneurship. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Martin Lindell on his 60th Birthday. Helsinki 2008.

188. JOACIM TÅG: Essays on Platforms. Business Strategies, Regulation and Policy in Telecommunications, Media and Technology Industries. Helsinki 2008.

189. HENRIK TÖTTERMAN: From Creative Ideas to New Emerging Ventures. Entrepreneurial Processes Among Finnish Design Entrepreneurs. Helsinki 2008.

190. ANNIKA RAVALD: Hur uppkommer värde för kunden? Helsingfors 2008.

191. TOM LAHTI: Angel Investing in Finland: An Analysis Based on Agency Theory and the Incomplete Contracting Theory. Helsinki 2008.

192. SYED MUJAHID HUSSAIN: Intraday Dynamics of International Equity Markets. Helsinki 2009.

193. TEEMU TALLBERG: The Gendered Social Organisation of Defence. Two Ethnographic Case Studies in the Finnish Defence Forces. Helsinki 2009.

194. JONAS HOLMQVIST: Language Influence in Services. Perceived Importance of Native Language Use in Service Encounters. Helsinki 2009.

195. ENSIO ERÄ-ESKO: Beskattningsrätt och skattskyldighet för kyrkan i Finland. Steuerrecht und Versteuerung der Kirche in Finnland. Mit einer deutschen Zusammenfassung. Helsingfors 2009.

196. PIA BJÖRKWALL: Nyttighetsmodeller: ett ändamålsenligt innovationsskydd? Helsingfors 2009.

197. ARTO THURLIN: Essays on Market Microstructure: Price Discovery and Informed Trading. Helsinki 2009.

198. PETER NYBERG: Essays on Risk and Return. Helsinki 2009.

199. YANQING JIANG: Growth and Convergence: The Case of China. Helsinki 2009.

200. HANNA WESTMAN: Corporate Governance in European Banks. Essays on Bank Ownership. Helsinki 2009.

201. CATHARINA von KOSKULL: Use of Customer Information. An Ethnography in Service Development. Helsinki 2009.

202. RITVA HÖYKINPURO: Service Firms' Action upon Negative Incidents in High Touch Services: A Narrative Study. Helsinki 2009.

203. SUVI NENONEN: Customer Asset Management in Action. Using Customer Portfolios for Allocating Resources Across Business-to-Business Relationships for Improved Shareholder Value. Helsinki 2009.

204. CAMILLA STEINBY: Multidimensionality of Actors in Business Networks. The Influence of Social Action in Pharmacy Networks in Finland. Helsinki 2009.

205. JENNIE SUMELIUS: Developing and Integrating HRM Practices in MNC Subsidiaries in China. Helsinki 2009.

206. SHERAZ AHMED: Essays on Corporate Governance and the Quality of Disclosed Earnings – Across Transitional Europe. Helsinki 2009.

207. ANNE HOLMA: Adaptation in Triadic Business Relationship Settings. A Study in Corporate Travel Management. Helsinki 2009.

208. MICHAL KEMPA: Monetary Policy Implementation in the Interbank Market. Helsinki 2009.

209. SUSANNA SLOTTE-KOCK: Multiple Perspectives on Networks. Conceptual Development, Application and Integration in an Entrepreneurial Context. Helsinki 2009.

210. ANNA TALASMÄKI: The Evolving Roles of the Human Resource Function. Understanding Role Changes in the Context of Large-Scale Mergers. Helsinki 2009.

211. MIKAEL M. VAINIONPÄÄ: Tiering Effects in Third Party Logistics: A First-Tier Buyer Perspective. Helsinki 2010.

212. ABDIRASHID A. ISMAIL: Somali State Failure. Players, Incentives and Institutions. Helsinki 2010.

213. ANU HELKKULA: Service Experience in an Innovation Context. Helsinki 2010.

214. OLLE SAMUELSON: IT-innovationer i svenska bygg- och fastighetssektorn. En studie av förekomst och utveckling av IT under ett decennium. Helsingfors 2010.