"It Doesn't Make Sense: Disruptive Interaction for Innovative Leadership"

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Abstract

Change leadership is a recent addition to the way transformation, or disruption, is addressed in organizational life. It focuses on the "people" side of change: enrolling, fostering, and influencing others during behavioral and organizational shifts. In this presentation I intend to emphasize the role leaders play in making sense of practices, culture, and beliefs. To do this work, leaders must attend to meaning making. I would argue that meaning making occurs between persons in interaction. As people "do things" with language, they create modes for coordinating action. They make action meaningful.

This presentation draws on the author's Ph.D. dissertation, describing the method for transforming coordinated action through disruption of language games as a lever for change in organizational life. In particular, I identify the micro-processes of interaction as a major arena for disruption of taken-for-granted meanings as members in a system "do things" with language.

(145 Words)

Introduction

This paper reflects the research and activities associated with my dissertation written at Fuller Theological Seminary. Discovering the power of disruptive discourse began with three congregations in the midst of their own adaptive challenges. All three were in some way connected to The Missional Network's methodology called the Missional Change Model.[1] The research itself, into the way that congregational shifts occur, was focused on a particular microprocess of change: the language and grammar in use that formed the narratives of the congregation. I use the term "grammar" as Wittgenstein intended: as the entirety of meaning attributed to words and their usage (Baker and Hacker 2009). The paper will review the types of communication practices most closely aligned with reflection on language as a means of changing cultures. The methods used to disrupt language in use, to examine it and determine its future use, are explained and described with examples from the research. Finally, the paper will make some inferences on the implications of language and coordinating meaning for leadership studies.

Setting the landscape

"It's a great place to be," echoed among the seventeen members of the congregation, all of whom were engaged in a focus group discussion about what was they found best about being a part of the church. On this spring day in Denver, the focus groups were eagerly anticipating the process they were about to begin, to change the focus, direction, and behaviors toward a more "Missional" stance.[2] The focus group, led through an Appreciative Inquiry[3] continued to think and reflect on the nature and purpose of their community of faith. Similarly, the research would lead to focus groups in two other churches, where the same Appreciative Inquiry would lead to more awareness of the power of their stories and the language that activated and enlivened them. By the third congregation's initial focus groups, the research methods were beginning to demonstrate the power of disruptive interventions with particular attention to the language and its use. It was clear that the language holds power for creating and sustaining a culture. A series of unheard, sometimes untellable stories would surface.[4] How do stories affect a religious organization or church's ability to change? More to the point, what do the stories about the language *itself* do to hinder or help change? The question during research was always the same: would attending to language also have the power to disrupt reified culture?

It is widely presumed that culture is primarily the patterns of a social system associated with meaning, values and behavior (Weick 1979). Churches and Christian organizations are cultures: they ascribe meaning, determine values, and affect behavior of the individuals that choose to be boundaried by the practices. Beyond meaning, values and behavior, culture is also rooted in the "taken for granted shared assumptions"(Schein 2004:39) of a group of people, forming a certain logic that determines practices (Bourdieu 1992) and the way those practices are communicated.

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[1] The five-stage Practical Theology process engages the community in reflection and action, with experiments that are geared to shift the communal practices, often focused inward, to a holistic awareness of God at work in the world and through (and in) the church.

[2] The church was beginning to work with The Missional Network and its associates on a Missional Change process. The work with TMN would last 18 months, during which the leaders would be coached through the Missional Change Model (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2005), meant to orient the congregation to the work of the Holy Spirit already at work in the world.

[3] Appreciative Inquiry, the process of generating and evoking images to story a possible future (Cooperrider et al., 2008: 204)

[4] Research Notes, St. James Presbyterian Church (Littleton, CO) 11 May, 2010.

Change models, specifically those that follow an event sequence like the Missional Change Model,[5] will often create a need for disruption with a "purposeful enactment" (Weick and Quinn 1988:364) toward change. However, Barbara Czarniawska suggests that such change by and large reacts to information that reproduces what an organization already does, or how it already behaves in different patterns (2008). As living organisms, the church and other religious institutions will not generally look to external inputs for the kind of adaptation necessary when disruption occurs because it involves risk – a risk that ultimately could end in death or destruction of the organization itself.[6] How will leaders make the shift from novel reinterpretation to the generative capacity toward innovation? The paper makes the argument that disruptive interaction can shift the conversation from the constraints of self-reference to disruptive innovation.

Disruptive Interaction and Generativity

The thesis of this paper and much of my research follows that of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, stating that for culture to change, the meaning of language must as well.[7] The impact of communication has long been theorized and discussed as a process for meaning-making in systems. There is new focus on the role and influence of micro-level phenomena such as language and interaction when organizing for change. For the purposes of this paper, the change is one that results in a shift of culture, meaning, habits, and mental models.

Johnson, et al. (2003) linked the insights from institutionalism to Weick's work on sensemaking to demonstrate the way leaders are influenced (and influence) the norms of a people in organizational settings.[8] Schön's research (1979) notes that people naturally see the world through metaphors; a leader that draws the metaphor to the surface will invite new awareness of the role that metaphors play in shaping one's understanding of the culture.[9] Transformative learning theory (Mezirow 1991) involves interaction around the assessments, assumptions, and experience of others to increase the possibility of shared action. Latour (2005) notes that people in organizations speak not only on behalf of their own interests, but on behalf of the larger group. To do so, they must translate their ideas and meaning in ways that can be understood and used by actors outside the network. Attending to meaning making requires a theoretical shift from studying behavior to looking at discourse that motivates action. This would require focus on the way different people activate and collaborate to produce meaning.

Language focus, or attending to discourse, assumes that metaphors, stories, images, and symbols – inherently culturally bound – are constituted in and through the meaning-making force

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[5] Both a Practical Theology model for change (See Branson and Martinez 2011:45) and what Weick and Quinn labeled a teleological change sequence (1988:364).

[6] Czarniawska (2008) attributes this insight to Luhmann (1995) who writes that a social system will struggle to break out of its patterns of behavior and action because they are primarily self-reproducing systems. Luhmann indicates that organizations like the church will tend to focus change on the programs because they are action systems. They reproduce action. This, according to Luhmann's systems theory, is "what … self reference…guarantees" (1995:35)

[7] Wittgenstein's understanding is that language's power isn't in the ostensive nature, some ethereal definition, but rather the way it is being used. Language in his philosophy has a function, arguing that when the function of language shifts, then the concepts of the meanings of the word will change. In this way, meaning and culture shift with the shift in the use of the language (1969:§§64, 65).

[8] Johnson et al. note that institutionalization has historically been focused on macro-level events, activities, and effects. Neo institutionalism has argued for a more balanced approach, recognizing the need to understand the influence of micro-processes in organizational change (DiMaggio and Powell 1991)

[9] Schön's (1979) argument is not that leaders create metaphors for generative purposes, but that metaphors already exist in the organizational culture. For instance, the church in the Introduction had constructed a metaphor of being a relational church. The metaphor extended to constructing a sanctuary space in the round, so that they could see each other. In this way, metaphors have a deep influence on culture.

of interaction. To say this is not to discount the power of history and tradition in culture making, but rather to acknowledge that people interpret meaning, often in idiosyncratic ways, during interactive sequences.

So what is the starting point for examining discourse as a space for disrupting patterns of behavior? The various traditions associated with communication theory would focus on the way meaning is constructed. The table below reflects the portion of the communication perspectives and traditions that most closely address meaning and knowledge for these purposes.

Table 1: Communication Perspectives and Traditions: Meaning and Knowledge (Littlejohn and Foss 2011; Leeds-Hurwitz 1995)

	Hermeneutics	Cybernetic Tradition	Socio-Cultural Traditions
Definition(s)	One's experiences, histories, and traditions provide the lens through which actors understand the world. Experience cannot be separated from language; perspectives that shape our world happen through language use (Gadamer)	Describes human interaction as a set of complex systems, the components of which interact with and are dependent upon each other for understanding and knowledge	Addresses ways that understanding, meaning, norms, roles, and rules are worked out interactively in communication
Principles	- Knowledge is discovered through the interpretation of experience - The meaning of something comes from how a person relates to it, and understand it (Deetz) - Meaning is not found in the text but in the reader (Stanley Fish)	- Systems are sets of inter-acting, interdependent components - Systems need input from outside sources to innovate - Systems are self-regulating, require stability to achieve goals	- Focus on interaction between people rather than mental models ("what do people create together in their social groups, organizations, and communities?") - Identity and culture: made in interaction. Culture: a context for action and interpretation - Symbols are contextually bound and assume different meanings as interactants move or change context.
Method	Phenomenology Hermeneutical Cycle Experience☐Assign meaning ☐ Construct Interpretation ☐ Assign meaning ☐ Test meaning by looking at specifics of event	Feedback loops Mental Models	Ethnography Pragmatics, Communication practice
Role of Language	Language expresses and defines	Language explains and categorizes	Language organizes behaviors in context. Meaning of language depends upon its use.
Theorists	Husserl; Heidegger; Ricoeur	Luhmann; Bateson; Latour	Goffman; Wittgenstein; Mead; Austin; Grice
Critique	Difficult to interpret something by consciously reflecting on it; true understanding comes from a careful analysis of a system and its effects	Helpful to understand relationships; less effective in helping researcher understand individual differences between and among parts of the system.	Useful tool to break down feedback loops; difficult to organize and generalize behaviors within a given episode/situation.

The perspectives overlap and diverge at different places. Hermeneutics provides the basis for Practical Theology (Scheiermacher 1998), using language as a means of defining and analyzing a system's practices and the effects of those practices. The hermeneutical tradition has had an enduring effect on interpretation and meaning, particularly focusing on the cognitive processes associated with perception and experience (Ricoeur 1984:3). To a great degree the research for understanding language use hinges on the Practical Theology cycle, as it makes explicit the actions and behaviors of a people of God in transformative change.

Humans are "gestalt lookers" – we tend to see things as a whole and fill in the blanks with names and labels we know. The words we use are the tools and the signposts that guide how and what to see (Horowitz 2009:135), connecting space between the different networks (Bateson 1972; Latour 2005). The cybernetic tradition focuses on how a system sustains and manages to maintain control through the networks that connect to each other (Littlejohn and Foss 2011). A system knows itself; it is distinctive and distinguished by the way it shapes what and how it regulates itself. To do so, the participants in the organization have to have enough communication transparency to coordinate meaningful action (Luhman 1995:364). Though a study of the system itself would serve to understand the links between the interdependent parts of a church, it is less effective in helping people understand how new meanings, norms, and roles can be worked out interactively between members.

Within the church, members not only influence each other and coordinate action, but the interaction itself helps to orient them toward one another, and define the boundaries of the culture. Language provides the mechanism through which actors in the church *create* the way they choose to live together, not simply describe what their contexts are – or should be - about (Cronen, Pearce, and Xi 1989/1990:3). Sociocultural approaches foreground the micro practices associated with interaction. Communication includes the verbal utterances, as well as tone, expression, and other nonverbal behaviors (Goffman 1974:573).

Wittgenstein's approach focuses on the linguistic rules in place in a system as people "do things" with language (1957). The meaning of language depends on how it is used. The focus is not on personal perception or mental models (Bateson 1972; Senge 1990), but on what people are creating together when they are in conversations (Pearce 2007). It became important for studying language and meaning to make the distinction between what people say when talking about the stories and behaviors associated with those stories, and the words they use to describe the stories and behaviors that make action meaningful.

Two methods, three cases: bringing Bateson and Wittgenstein to church

The pioneer of action research, Kurt Lewin, argued that research experiments must not only express a theory, but do so in a way that the results feed back directly into the situation to impact, inform and integrate behaviors (Lewin 1951). Theory alone, he has noted, does little to create change. Action research has focuses attention on generating knowledge (Eden and Huxam 2006) that is "useful, valid, descriptive of the world, and informative of how we might change it" Argyris, Putnam and Smith 1985:x). Because it takes seriously the value-laden practices of a community, the work of the research is to help participants achieve their goals (Littlejohn and Foss 2011:30). The practical nature of action research, finds the linkage between theory and practice through the interactions of the community involved.

Meaning influences action, and action influences meaning in complex ways. However, meaning is always manifested in episodes of interaction. Whether a communication process is understood as a request, demand, question, or answer is highly dependent upon the rules a community affords its language (See also Bateson 1972). This affirms the contention that outcomes to not just happen, they are made as people choose the contexts that frame their interpretation of what is happening as they interact. In this sense, language is not a lens but a frame: within its syntactical, and semantic borders lies the capacity for communities to organize, act, and even create or change their knowledge of their world.[10]

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[10] Much of the social construction literature is useful for this study primarily because persons-in-community develop practices, and meanings that make sense of their social worlds. However, social construction has several divergent trajectories. Karin Knorr Cetina (1994) explored the variations in the literature, and among the academy; the profile of a

During research, particular attention was paid to the conversational triplet, and the implicative action-responses embedded by the contexts, and the persons in interaction (Levinson 1987; Pearce 2005; Pearce, and Cronen 1986) during a season of change.[11] Because each speech act is unfinished until it has a response, the meaning is contingent upon another speech act in the conversation. This three-turn structure or sequence of speech acts (the conversational triplet Pearce 2007:117) provides a critical moment for study between the interactants, when out of the possible choices of speech and meaning, one chooses a particular response.[12] Appreciative Inquiry ("AI," Cooperrider and Srivasta 1987) provided the initial intervention into discovering what the essential practices of the congregation were, and how they were communicated. Methods have been developed to focus on these processes, including Appreciative Inquiry, to which this paper returns.

Appreciative Inquiry is a model and method for engaging the people of God in generating innovative practices built on the life-giving narratives and stories from the collective memory of the people. Rather than using limited time to solve problems, A-I invites the congregation, or the members of a smaller group, to discover the stories that connect to the congregation's (or institution's) best practices, metaphors, and strengths. By engaging this way, the method captures and generates energy for a future hope: stories that evoke images of possibility (Cooperrider et al., 2004: 205), and guiding future actions for a better world (see Pearce 2005:226).

The strength of AI derives from its ability to create generative conversations through positive, and unconditional questions (Ludema, Cooperrider, and Barrett 2001:56). Though the original authors of AI locate its influence in the "power of the unconditional positive question" (Ludema, Cooperrider, and Barrett 2001:156), Gervase Bushe contends that its real power is in the generative conversations it launches, creating the possibility for beneficial future actions. Bushe's research findings suggest that generativity is necessary for transformation, but positivity or appreciation is not similarly implicated (2007). Branson notes that often congregations that are wrestling with discouragement, anxiety, and doubt lose sight of the rich histories and spiritual vitality from which they may draw (2004:7). Appreciative Inquiry helps the process of reclaiming the generative memories to restory a hopeful future. Appreciative Inquiry serves to lead congregational and organizational participants through stories and narratives of what is best, trustworthy, and helpful.

On the surface it may appear paradoxical to address adaptive challenges with Appreciative Inquiry. AI's efforts at focusing on what Paul suggests is true, honorable, right pure, pleasing, commendable, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8) doesn't prevent the untellable story, but makes it possible to raise in the course of life-giving, and –sustaining conversations.[13] Initially, the research conducted in the churches was intent on discovering these life-giving stories, researching the rigor

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pragmatist-constructivist view is useful for our work with the church. In particular, it acknowledges that our world exists independently from our knowledge of it, allowing the standpoint that truth exists outside the created order. Therefore, the structures, and practices of the church derive legitimacy from the knowledge that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit guide this world, care, and love the world, and redeemed it through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Likewise, the church is a human instrument, constructed in, and through the cultural context of its members, and therefore remains bound by its communicative, and semiotic rules, and practices.

[12] Wittgenstein's focus on the structure of language games is an important distinction during speech acts: there are both verbal and nonverbal cues that are happening as people do something with language. This distinctive in the theory behind Coordinated Management of Meaning was instrumental for disembedding and disrupting the language games.

[13] Grant and Humphries note that the limited critiques of AI that exist in the literature primarily focus on the outcomes it produces rather than the process itself (2006). Due to the nature of action research, the AI phase where inquiry fosters discussion is necessarily generative of stories that either confirm or refute the dominant narrative. As a result, critical engagements with the stories it may uncover are the 'stuff' of this research.

and determining how robust they would be in delivering the kind of change necessary[14]. However, there was always a belief that language itself – the patterns of talk that sustain practice – was essential to the prospect of transformative change. As the stories emerged, it became apparent that images AI often evokes would look through the stories, not at the language people use to describe those stories. Appreciative Inquiry, as a method for changing and reorienting a culture, could be considered language-sensitive rather than language focused (Alvesson 2008:317).

Coordinated Management of Meaning ("CMM"), the second of the methodological tools, draws on Bateson, but also on Wittgenstein, by its pragmatic approach to language and meaning. Pragmatics, unlike Cartesian or Socratic notions of language, is concerned with the situated nature of meaning in context, how people "know" the meaning of words that allow them to act, and participate in that context (Wittgenstein 1957; Levinson 1983:7). For utterances to be meaningful, the language used must make sense to both interactants, and create the possibility for action that makes sense in the context. Pearce writes that CMM "…understands that (a) *every saying and doing is meaningful; (b) every saying and doing is multiply interpreted (not only by different people but by each person); and (c) every saying and doing is always open to reinterpretations*" (Pearce 2006:12). From the perspective of CMM, Appreciative questions foster positive speech acts, which create the possibility of a positive understanding of episodes (or situations) in question.

Episodes are the social contexts in which certain communication acts (both verbal and non verbal) make sense. Bateson (1972) studied kittens when they were playing or engaging in a play-episode. When one of the kittens screamed and ran away, the play episode could no longer be seen as such. A bite on the ear changed the play-episode to something else: a bite episode or anger episode. Bracketing the episode as one thing that turns into another respects the communication itself; paying attention to what "turned" will provide space for telling untold stories.

The Evangelism Episode
The first sense of this sort of episodic shift occurred early in the research. The Hollywood Church allowed us to conduct AI focus groups to orient and give a base to facilitating these sorts of conversations for the dissertation. This church was in the midst of its own change process, as the pastor was working through his Doctor of Ministry in Missional Leadership at Fuller Seminary. It was meant primarily as an AI interview, but there came a moment at which the disruptive capacity of communication practices became clear. Sitting in the classroom with a group of members and staff, the people assembled discussed their hopes and dreams for the future. At one point, a member of the staff was invited to address one of his ideas: the word "Evangelism" as a future hope was put on a piece of paper. Standing at the back of the room, I watched as nervous laughter went through the room. A shift in the attitudes of people happened. The pastor, also at the back of the room, shifted as well. He crossed his arms, and breathed deeper. His mouth turned down at the corners. The episode shifted from "telling our dreams" to "Evangelism is a dirty word."[15] Yet, the episode ended with a call to redeem the word itself. The story told in this context was only part of the living story of Evangelism at this church. Though the pastor attempted to sanction the speaker, though the performance of evangelism in this place was already on the road to redemption.

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[14] The method of Appreciative Inquiry is a four-phase model. The research for the dissertation acknowledges this, and that the intent was not to engage in a full-fledged Appreciative Inquiry. For the study, it would be more appropriate to say that focus groups were engaged in Appreciative questioning rather than an Appreciative Inquiry. The process and interview guide was developed with the assistance and direction of Mark L Branson during my Ph.D. studies at Fuller theological Seminary.
[15] In the research notes for this focus group (10/19/2009), the pastor indeed whispered under his breath, "that's a dirty word around here."

This episode and the discourses around evangelism, highlight the paradoxical relationship of the church's narrative self-understanding and the story fragments that swirl around it: both are technically correct, but they aren't in alignment. Luhmann (1995) denies an automatic correlation between unity in a system and individual acceptance of every action in the system; the diverse perspectives and selective interests add to the complexity of every communication event. This highlights the importance for leaders to understand interaction and the process of communication as a space for exploring and disrupting reified narratives that block change.

The "Friendly Church" Episode

Returning to the Colorado church, the AI protocol[16] was the foundation for the conversations that took place. As the "leader-facilitator" of the group, my attention was drawn specifically to the type of language used to talk about important events or activities happening among the people of God. In virtually every body, every system, there are narratives that give meaning to action. They are activated by key language: words that matter. Narratives serve to "describe strings of activity and interaction" (May and Mumby 2005:213) that tell a remembrance from the past. Generally narratives are sequential and have a particular beginning, middle, and "end" when told. However, CMM practitioners are attuned to the way that untold, unknown, or untellable stories may surface; in fact, it is a goal of CMM to invite those stories to be heard; these "rich silences, and wordless stories" (deCerteau 1984:106) often defy logic because they function between the lines.

At the Colorado church, the key stories were told and focused around the language, "We are Relational." When a story keeps coming up from different places, it generally has durability in the community. Focusing on this language, I asked the participants to pause the AI interviews to talk a bit about the meaning and stories around "We are Relational." Briefly, I make a distinction between the stories and narratives. Stories come from diverse participants that have a particular view of an episode or language game in use. For instance, one person may focus on a particular context or idea that is not a part of the official interpretation (which becomes the dominant narrative). Stories are often fragments of narratives, but may not merge in any way with the narrative agreed in the community. Any time stories are generated that diverge with the narrative understanding, it can create space for negotiating and legitimizing a different narrative. Was it possible to "disrupt" the way people talked about the key language in order to influence its meaning? Facilitating and leading the discussion, I drew attention to the following types of questions to find patterns elsewhere in the system:

- When you talk about being "relational", who comes to mind?
- What does being relational mean in this congregation?
- Are there other ways to understand what being relational means? Does this change the way you would react or act if you heard the word used?[17]

At the Colorado church, patterns of talk began to emerge. The AI interview set up the possibility for generalizing the language use, and it was essential to address the meaning for this word. The deeper questions catalyzed new or buried stories. Finally, after stories of being cared for and cared about, a story fragment was shared about being isolated among a people that cared about each other. This critical moment could have been bracketed and discarded, for it didn't fit into the

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[16] A sample AI interview guide can be found in Appendix A. The same guide was used in each of the church focus groups.

[17] A form of these questions was used in every focus group. The cascading nature of the questioning, from personal to systemic, is meant to capture a variety of stories that can then be further explored. The questions became the catalyst for disrupting the accepted language games in the congregation.

narrative understanding of being relational at this church. A leader's role in that moment, when others attempt to marginalize a story fragment, is to protect it and the speaker; the sense of discomfort and a desire to return to discursive equilibrium was great. However, space was made for other fragments to emerge that indicated being "relational" here was not always a positive thing for people.

The attention to the key language of relationships, and allowing the untold, unheard, and often untellable stories to emerge created space for retelling stories about how the congregation acted into episodes of "We are Relational." In this way, the methods used were significant in supporting the disruption of the taken for granted way of doing things, and allowed leaders to take the stories and experiment with future transformation.

The Blessing Episode

The third congregation in Eastern Washington provided a deep and rich understanding as to the situated nature of meaning and language. Action, and the possibility of coordinating action, occurs as people interact. The way we know that utterances are successful is if they result in actions that display understanding. However, what happens when the resulting action is not what has been expected? Wittgenstein made the case that the meaning of language is found in its use. It is situated, contextual, and meaningful to the extent that it is acted upon in a way that the parties involved can see make sense.

Grice, one of the pioneers in Pragmatics (1957, 1989) distinguished between what he called "natural meaning," and "non-natural meaning" or Meaning$_{NN}$. The puzzling discrepancy between communicated intention and inferred response suggests that the scope of meaning can extend beyond the conventional understanding of what is being said and inferred. The central premise of Grice's theory of Meaning$_{NN}$ resides in the understanding that whatever is meant by the sender's utterance is not exhausted by the meaning of the language used, nor is it justified by what is in the sender's mind. What comes before the interaction, or how a request is communicated are two possible sites for exploring how a respondent could make choices for action that diverge greatly with the sender's intent.

In Eastern Washington, a congregation was developing a keen sense of what it means to be a part of a community. Once again, the pastor was guiding the congregation through a Missional Change as a result of his Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller Theological Seminary. He writes this about an episode that took place as a result of his work:

> One of the interesting experiments at the … church occurred early in its change process. The church leaders were aware of the considerable lack of goodwill between the neighbors around the building, and the church itself. After reflecting on current practices, and informed by scripture, the church leadership sought to create new avenues for engagement, and encounter. They framed this experiment as "blessing the community." This resulted in the church decision to deed a section of their property to Millwood to develop a city park.
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> After [the congregation's] presentation [about the park] was done one of the neighbors stood up in protest, and confronted the presenter. He said in an aggressive tone, 'How would you feel if someone came into your neighborhood, and tried to build a park across the street from your house?' It was a confusing statement because many people would certainly welcome such a development. The neighbor went on to ask in a biting sarcastic tone, 'How would you feel? Would you feel "blessed"? (Goodwin 2010:111)

Though this episode took place between people within a community, having a shared language, shared understanding, and shared context, the meaning of the communicative act was interpreted quite differently. The paradox of communicating in environments that share context often does not recognize the horizons that can allow for contested meaning and understanding. Taking Grice's theory seriously, a leader might find this information both disruptive and a space for innovating. It would inform the participants about the contextual decisions each of the participants *logically* chose with their utterances. However, what they could not be guaranteed of is how those choices would be acted upon. This underscores Bateson's contention that utterances and the subsequent actions that take place aren't "in" a context, rendering them dependent upon that context. Rather, the utterances and actions surrounding the utterances relate to and actually *form* the context (1972). In other words, contexts are learned and enacted through active participation by the members in that environment.

Innovative Leadership and Disruptive Interaction: Making Transformation Happen

Much has been written about the distinctions between management and leadership. Managers lead, and leaders manage, but the terms are not synonymous. We do not teach "management development" in the seminary, but rather the process of leading people in structuring their worlds for the work that is to be accomplished. This may mean that leaders guide, teach, mentor, learn, serve, and organize people. The work of leadership is primarily focused on people. Management refers most often to the tools, implements, and structures used to keep the process of organizing on track and under control. As Bass and Stodgill note, not all managers are leaders, and not all leaders are managers (1990:383).

Leader*ship*, the activity that people engage in to make progress on difficult issues (Heifetz 1994), is closely aligned with negotiating the terrain of culture change. The work of a leader moves beyond using the implements of authority and structure to enlisting the people affected in the process of change. Kotter (2011) notes that leadership is the fuel that energizes the work of change; however, it may be that there are patterns of and aspects of leadership that will make change more effective, more transformational, and more likely to adapt behavior and culture than others.

In my research, and specifically relating to leadership's role during ambiguity and change, attending to the communication practices of the community becomes significant. Ultimately, the leader will be the key to facilitating and maintaining the disruption necessary to allow stories to help restory the framework in existence. This is challenging and important work. In times of ambiguity that often accompanies change, leaders have a wealth of options for supporting the transformation of action and behavior by creating opportunity for communal storytelling. Every "little story moment" (Boje 2011:4) provides leaders with the opportunity to disembed taken-for-granted narratives that prevent novelty and innovation. As seen in all three of the research sites, there were sanctioning authorities, people who attempted to maintain the narrative whole by marginalizing the disruptive story fragments. Just as Heifetz and Linsky note that leaders have to hold steady in the face of real fear of losing something dear in change (2002), so must they hold the line when allowing the stories on the margins to be heard and to be discussed.

Heifetz (1995) describes how leadership and authority diverge during times of change. Authority tends to promote the activities associated with equilibrium and management: norm setting, preventing conflict, provide protection, orient the organization, and provide direction (1999). In short, those with authority are often tasked equilibrium. Equilibrium does not invite novelty: the cultural toolkit from which the community draws is known and stable. Innovation and novel approaches are not encouraged, even when the pressures from outside are destabilizing the status quo. Leadership pushes into the status quo, inviting people out of the taken-for-granted way

things are done. There are methods describing change, and one of the influences in congregational settings is the reflection-action cycle of Practical Theology. What my research demonstrates is the importance of reflecting on the language itself: a Wittgensteinian approach to language game disruption supported a more robust and tighter timeline for action and change.

Building on both Parks (2005) and Schön (1987), leaders must become experts at not only noticing when disruptive interaction may signal generativity, but learn how to create disruptive episodes to that end. Both Parks and Schön, each in different ways, demonstrates the importance of practicing the art of reflection in the midst of action: noticing the verbal and non-verbal signals that create opportunity to stop, and engage together.

Implications for Leadership Training and Education: for further discussion

A leader's role is to guide congregations through the often-murky waters of dissonance and disequilibrium in order to discover a new future. Equipping leaders who can attend to the patterns of talk, and who can reflect in and on action as it happens in the moment, can also deconstruct taken for granted meanings. As we train and educate leaders for a world we can't begin to define, and a space that likely will be disrupted and disruptive for the forseeable future, the ability to attend to micro practices like interaction and language use will be helpful for leaders who will need to be agile and innovate through uncertain times. Students are already aware of the changes in the institutions of the Church and religious non-profits. Both experience pressures from within and from the environments in which they reside. Though in a nascent phase, a large Christian non profit is signaling its belief that perhaps this is a kairos moment for leadership: that God is calling the Church in all its forms to a deeper degree of boldness and humility. Preparing leaders for this, and engaging in the changes necessary to prepare people for faithful practice, should consider the way language is implicated in shifting minsets, habits, and narratives.

Change requires leaders and authority figures. Leadership practices necessary for the work ahead will include listening deeply, developing curiosity, paying attention to patterns and episodes of talk and interaction, and learning how to catalyze storytelling.

In organizational life, most of our leaders are attending to the problems in the system, rather than what is good, right, honorable, and praiseworthy. The evidence shows that Appreciative questions generate stories of future hope, while also uncovering shared stories of communal memories. However, a more dynamic picture emerges with the questions that broadened the range of acceptable responses and interactions around language used in the congregation.

If there is a goal to understand and transform action, leadership is necessarily going to be attending to the way the community makes action, behavior, and narratives meaningful. Attention to language itself and its use (particularly when meaning is shifting during change) can be an important tool in the work of change. The challenge will continue to be that groups often view "reflection" as incidental, and therefore marginalize both its promise and its effects. Reflection itself can become a catalyzing agent when leaders stop a conversation, disrupt the patterns of talk and focus on the interactive reflection that follows. In this way, novel and innovative stories can arise.

Innovation causes friction: friction is the fuel for misunderstanding and novelty. A leader that holds space for friction must attend to conflict. Leadership education should, as a matter of course, attend to a biblical orientation toward conflict, and provide tools for managing and transforming conflict during disruptive episodes of change. Though innovation requires a level of agility, this concept was not discussed in this paper. I believe it will be an important aspect of leadership education and leading others through disruptive times.

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Generic Appreciative Inquiry Interview

Name (Please Print): _____

Name of Interview Partner: _____

If there are questions we have and would like clarification, may we contact you?

    Yes   No

Phone: _____   E-Mail: _____

You and your partner are going to be reflecting on the following questions. In the space provided you will be writing down your partner's answer. If you need additional space for writing, please turn this sheet over. If you use additional space on back, please indicate which numbered answer you are writing about.

1. When you think about our church at its best, what comes to mind? _____

_____

2a. When were you most energized to participate with some aspect of the church's life and activities? How did you get involved? What was your role? What stands out about it? _____

_____

_____

2b. Think about how your church engages its neighborhood (or the neighborhoods of the members) - and a time when you were most involved and encouraged by this engagement. What was happening? How were you involved? What most impressed you? _____

_____

_____

3. Can you think of three things - activities, projects, events, conversations - that get you excited about the future of this church?

_____

_____

4. This question will take some creativity on your part: it's 5 years from now, and you are still a part of this church. What are your wishes for your church, your church's community engagements, and yourself?

_____

_____

_____