6

Narrative Logics

Where to begin? So much has been written on the role of narrative in leadership and organizations that there are wide avenues of choices for a single chapter. However, this chapter will focus on the relevance of narrative for leader–member exchange theory and research (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Its strong social-psychological emphasis in the leader–member relationship, early narrative history, and a 30-year track record of mostly survey research make it an ideal subject.[1] This chapter will also continue the previous chapter's efforts to examine intersecting views of discourse and Discourse; hence, the title "Narrative Logics" addresses itself to the use of narrative in social interaction as well as the narrative resources that various Discourses make available to communicating leaders and members (for a brief overview of narrative analyses, see Appendix A7).

Leader–Member Exchange Theory

Leader–member exchange (LMX) theory is based on a simple premise: leaders discriminate in their treatment of direct reports or 'members' in forming relationships. However, in the early days of LMX research, this premise was somewhat counterintuitive when stacked against leadership-style research, which typed leaders in terms of their initiating structure (task behavior) and consideration (relationship orientation). Such typing was made famous in the Ohio State studies and led to the unwarranted, yet understandable, conclusion that 'style' meant that leaders treated everyone pretty much the same (Bass, 1981). Thus, the individual differences among members that could impact the leader–member relationship were not seriously considered, and deviations in the average member perception of the leader were treated as error variance (Katerberg & Hom, 1981). By contrast, LMX asserted that leaders exchange their positional and personal resources for a member's performance

(Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In high quality LMXs, leaders and members exchange high levels of mutual influence, trust, and support and an internalization of common goals. There is extra-contractual behavior by the member—a willingness to exceed role expectations—that is duly recognized by the leader in social capital. Oftentimes, this takes the form of decision-making influence, inside information, valued task assignments, task autonomy, and leader support and attention (Graen & Scandura, 1987). In low quality LMXs, there is formal authority, contractual behavior exchange, role-bound relations, low trust and support, and economic rewards. High versus low LMX differences also mirror a host of relational outcomes in job satisfaction, performance, communication frequency, turnover, productivity, and job problems, to name just a few (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997).

There have been a number of reviews of the LMX literature, many of which point to measurement problems associated with the LMX scale.[2] In particular, scholars have raised questions about the ever-evolving nature of LMX measurement and its psychometric and theoretical soundness (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Schriesheim, Neider, Scandura, & Tepper, 1992; Vecchio & Gobdel, 1984). Suffice it to say that the vast majority of LMX researchers use surveys and 7-point scales to retrospectively query, "What is the nature of this relationship?" Interestingly, Robert Liden (personal communication, April 2004), an LMX researcher who studied with George Graen in the early years of LMX research, indicates that initial LMX scale measurement was derived from stories told by leaders and especially members[3] in which they shared what life was like in the in- or out-group (Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982).[4] How ironic that we return to the narrative roots of LMX after letting it lie dormant for some 30 years (Fairhurst & Hamlett, 2003).

NARRATIVE POSSIBILITIES

Because LMX is a social exchange theory, it operates on an information processing model for its actors that suggests a rational calculation of resources expended to resources received (Roloff, 1981).[5] LMX scale items are designed to elicit this rough calculation. However, according to Bruner (1986, 1990), there is an *information processing mode* of rational analysis and paradigmatic thinking (akin to the LMX scale judgment), but also a *narrative mode* in which actors continuously narrate experience in order to make sense of it.[6] Influenced by Bruner (1990), Weick (1995) underscores the ways in which sequence and temporal form are the source of sense for equivocal events:

> The requirements necessary to produce a good narrative provide a plausible frame for sensemaking. Stories posit a history for an outcome. They gather the strands of experience into a plot that produces that outcome. The plot follows either the sequence beginning-middle-end or the sequence situation-transformation-situation. But the sequence is the source of sense. (p. 128)

For Weick (1995), stories can (1) aid comprehension because they integrate the known and the speculative, (2) suggest a causal order for unorganized or unrelated events, (3) enable actors to call forth the absent to talk about the present in order to construct meaning, (4) serve as mnemonics that help people to reconstruct prior complex events, (5) guide action before routines are formed or reinforce existing routines, (6) contribute to a database of experience with which to form mental models of how the world works, and (7) convey shared values and meaning (p. 129). In short, through narrative we understand the world and remember it.

As mentioned at the start, there is already a narrative presence in the organizational sciences (Boje, 1991; Boje, Alvarez, & Schooling, 2001; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1997). Unlike more traditional studies of narrative in cognitive psychology or literary narratology that focus on generalized types and categories of narrative structure (Edwards, 1997), the organizational discourse literature focuses primarily on the ways that narrative performs social actions in-the-telling. It has moved well beyond the days of stories as mere artifacts of organizational cultures (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985; Schein, 1985) to focus instead on narrating as organizing or as a means of control. We see this in research on narrative as *storytelling performances* in naturally occurring conversation, which can signal organizational subgroup differences, decision making, or turbulence and change (Boje, 1991; O'Connor, 1997; Orr, 1990); narrative as *ideological control* that (re)produces the interests of dominant groups by reinforcing key values and reifying privileged structures (Helmer, 1993; Mumby, 1987, 1988); and *narrative modes of knowing and organizing* through the episodic ordering of speech acts that nest and build into larger structures (Cooren, 2001; Fairhurst & Cooren, 2004; J. R. Taylor & Van Every, 2000). In the leadership literature, the role of life stories in organizational learning is fast emerging (Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005) and is an area to which we shall return.

The Narrative Basis of LMX

According to Fairhurst and Hamlett (2003), the extant LMX literature underplays the experience of LMX, particularly as the leader–member relationship is forming. This is due partly to the use of survey methods where the format (as compared to interviews) precludes the ability to qualify answers, supply crucial details, or challenge questions. For example, elsewhere I have argued that the LMX literature assumes that successful relationships progress on a path that is unidirectional and cumulative, moving toward increasing levels of closeness or fusion, relational stability, and transformation beyond self-interests (Fairhurst, 2001). The three-stage process of the leadership-making model (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Uhl-Bien & Graen, 1992) is a case in point, but the same might be

said of other LMX developmental models (Bauer & Green, 1996; Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). In the leadership-making model, participants progress through an initial 'stranger' stage of role-finding, which is formal and contractual. If both want to improve the relationship, they progress on to a second, 'acquaintance' stage of role-making where there is a lot of secret testing and feeling out of one another. If test results are mutually satisfactory, a select few make it to the 'mature partnership' stage where there is an in-kind exchange of resources, as described earlier for 'high quality' exchanges. Thus, in successful relationships there is a putatively simple progression to an increasingly close, stable, and mutually satisfying relationship.

However, this contradicts work in dialectical approaches to relationship development (Altman, Vinsel, & Brown, 1981; Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Such work questions the assumption that relationships are stable because even healthy relationships possess tensions in the form of dialectical oppositions that create simultaneous pulls to fuse with and differentiate from another. In other words, relational bonding implies fusion and separation, closeness and distance, interdependence and autonomy. Too much of either pole creates a need to shift toward the other. Moreover, Baxter's (1988, 1990) work suggests that it is the strategic responses to contradiction in message behavior that forms the basis for understanding how relationships are forged. Thus, when interviewed, a member whose leader leaves her alone might characterize it as 'isolation' (indicating a low quality LMX), or conversely, she might say it is 'autonomy' and reframe it as a form of connection with the leader (indicating a high quality LMX) (Fairhurst, 2001).

Unfortunately, few LMX studies focus on discourse (Fairhurst, 1993b; Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989; Sias, 1996), and except for Lee and Jablin (1995), even fewer question the assumption of relational stability. According to Fairhurst and Hamlett (2003)

> It follows that if relational stability is assumed, there is scant attention to tension, contradiction, dynamism, and flux in relationships-as-they-happen that serve as prompts for sensemaking. Narrative as a mode of knowing would be obscured because of a requested ratings judgment that takes a single snapshot of the relationship as effective or ineffective, trusting or untrusting, etc., the usual scale item indicators of high or low quality LMX. Just *what* is experienced as effective or ineffective, trustworthy or not, etc. is most likely to be narratively organized, but is not a subject for inquiry. (p. 123)

Compared to survey work, in-depth interviews give leadership actors a greater chance to discursively reflect upon their LMX experiences, thus taking advantage of the ways that sensemaking and meaning get worked out *in communication*. Also in contrast to survey work, studying the actual dialogue between leaders and members can reveal the ways in which narrative is used to

construct LMXs as they happen. Consequently, in explicating the narrative basis of LMX, Fairhurst and Hamlett (2003) argue for three research agendas, which are extended in this chapter. The agendas include narrative reflection and the uniqueness paradox, constructing LMX through narratives and stories, and narrative resources for LMX.

NARRATIVE REFLECTION AND THE UNIQUENESS PARADOX IN LMX STORIES

In the same way that storytelling in a cultural analysis is seen as reflective of an organization's culture (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985; Schein, 1985), so too could the stories told about work relationships be seen as reflective of LMX quality. Yet, it is important to realize that storytelling is not just a *sensegiving* exercise (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) in which leadership actors, when queried, simply relay the meanings that they have already assigned to their LMX. It is fundamentally a *sensemaking* exercise in which actor and interviewer work out meanings for LMX in communication with another. Leadership actors discover these meanings in the work of producing them (Boden, 1994; Cronen, 1995a), which is precisely Weick's (1979) point in his discussion of retrospective sense-making. In other words, how can I know what I think (about my LMX) until I see what I say? As White (1987) argues, "narrative discourse does not simply reflect or passively register a world already made; it works up the material in perception and reflection, fashions it, and creates something new" (p. 999).

Narrative becomes a distinct mode of knowing LMX and coping with the everyday world because of our ability to remember and reconstruct the past and project into the future. As interpretive devices, narratives tell us how one's LMX works today and how it is likely to work tomorrow. Precisely because they are so connected to the experience of LMX, narratives readily display commonsense wisdom based on unspoken premises that reinforce the tacit aspects of organizational knowledge (Patriotta, 2003). Consider the following examples, which demonstrate LMX as a type of knowledge structure known through narrative.

One of my graduate students, Elizabeth Prebles (2002), surveyed and interviewed leaders and members in a medium-sized manufacturing firm in the United States for her thesis. In the mostly male sample ranging in ages from 18 to 60, participants completed the LMX-7, one of the more commonly used LMX measurement devices (Gerstner & Day, 1997). The actual scaled items served as prompts for sensemaking in ensuing interviews in order to elicit narrated experiences behind the ratings judgment.[7] In the data set, several stories were told by those members deemed to have LMXs of medium quality,[8] a particularly interesting group to study because so little is known about them relative to high and low quality LMXs. In the narratives that follow, the italics signal an interview question or response.[9]

Narrative 6.1

1   I had a situation where people weren't backing up what they said . . . said

2   verbally over a time period, and it was forgotten. And if you couldn't prove it

3   [what they said] with paperwork, what can you do there? They're higher up

4   in rank than you. When you're in situations like that, it doesn't seem to be

5   good. But in the same regard, there are situations where they do stick up for

6   you regardless of whether you can show proof or not. I've had it both ways.

Narrative 6.2

1   Well, they understand your potential, but they don't show it. See what

2   I'm saying?

3   What indicates to you that they know your potential but don't show it?

4   Pay. Pay. Pay. Real quick, pay. Like when I first got hired on, I just got out

5   of the service and I come in here and they said they hired you because of your

6   knowledge and your skill, but that's not true. That's not true at all. I had my

7   experience when I got in here, but it took them a while to give me my

8   Leadman. Although I was doing a Leadman job, they didn't give me my

9   'Leadman' title for a while. It was not very fair.

Narrative 6.3

1   I don't think my leader is quite, you know what I mean, up to snuff on what

2   he's trying to get me to do.

3   So he's not familiar with the job or . . . ?

4   Job or . . . A good example is a job. You know, when they come out there and

5   they try and tell ya, 'We need to do this, we need to do that,' yet you can tell

6   the way that they're explaining it to you, they really aren't for sure

7   themselves. Or, there might be changes they aren't aware of. We have a lot

8   of that here.

Narrative 6.4

1   Of all the supervisors I think that [my leader] is probably the most

2   knowledgeable about what we do . . . because he took the time to self teach. He

3   seems to be in touch with what the job actually entails.

    4   Is he an electrician then?

    5   Um, no.

    6   So when you say that he took the time to learn, do you mean because it wasn't

    7   necessarily his trade?

    8   And that happens a lot in this type of industry. I mean this is industry wide.

    9   A lot of times you'll have a guy that's a supervisor and he has management

10   training and no skills training for those particular jobs. It's not always the

11   case, but a lot of times. And that makes a big difference. I mean, if they don't

12   know how to do the job, how can they manage properly?

Narrative 6.5

1   His experience in the field is minimum. He has a mechanical background and

2   he's the supervisor. It's hard for Jim to answer my questions.

Narrative 6.6

1   That's just to do with his experience versus my experience. I can't turn

2   toward Jim for advice.

3   What kind of advice?

4   Any kind of technical advice.

In this sampling, the first two narratives suggest mixed results in the exchange of members' performances for leaders' resources. Narrative 6.1 suggests uneven support of the member, and 6.2 reveals delayed recognition of the member. Because support and recognition are neither minimal nor unconditional, they logically calibrate at a medium level of exchange from the member's vantage point.

Narratives 6.3–6.6 all seem to be telling the same story. It is one in which the members' technical expertise exceeds that of their leaders. Thus, members cannot turn to their leaders for help and advice (6.5, 6.6), or leaders may appear unsure of what they are requesting of members (6.3), all of which raises questions about their ability to manage (6.4). Thus, in this second group of stories leaders have positional power, but insufficient expert power. This situation could place a ceiling on the resources at the leaders' disposal, or alternatively, dissuade them from dispersing key resources if they are discomfited over the lack of 'value added' that is supposed to derive from hierarchical level (Jacques, 1990). Particularly skilled members may be denied key resources if 'who is leader' and 'who is led' are in danger of a reversal because a leader feels threatened.

This second group of stories also suggests the possibility of a uniqueness paradox (Martin, Feldman, Hatch, & Sitkin, 1983). First written about when describing organizational cultures, the uniqueness paradox suggests that a culture's claim to uniqueness, as expressed in its stories and rituals, is quite the opposite. Martin et al. (1983) argue that this is because key tensions over equality, security, and control underlie all complex organizations, and quite often come into conflict with the values of individuals, organizations, or society. Actors must work through these tensions, and narrative is a means by which they do this (an argument reminiscent of relational dialectics). In the working out of these tensions, individuals will offer self-enhancing attributions for organizational successes and failures, and in their sensemaking, endow the organization with a uniqueness that is conveniently embraced or disparaged.

Although Martin et al. (1983) focus on culture, they reason that the uniqueness paradox should also be seen at individual, cultural, and societal levels. Fairhurst and Hamlett (2003) argue for its relational relevance based on three arguments. First, issues over equality, security, and control impact relationships in equal measure to culture. Equality tensions emerge in differential amounts of social distance in high versus low quality LMXs (Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989). Security versus insecurity may reflect the ontological status of high versus low quality LMXs respectively, especially in an age of corporate downsizing. Finally, control versus lack of control has been a distinguishing feature of high versus low LMXs from the start (Graen & Scandura, 1987).

Second, drawing from Schank and Abelson (1977), Martin et al. (1983) argue that stories can differ yet share a set of common scripts that "specify a set of characters or roles and a causally connected sequence of events, sometimes with oppositional branches for alternative story components and events" (p. 441). Clearly, common script elements concerning the role of hierarchy inform individual work relationships as much as they inform the culture because the former is nested within the latter. Indeed, many of Martin et al.'s cultural story types reflect hierarchical themes such as, "Is the big boss human?" "Can the little person rise to the top?", "Will I get fired?", and "How will the boss react to mistakes?"

Third, it also follows that if individuals embrace or disparage their organization's uniqueness to play into self-enhancing attributions for organizational successes or failures, a similar dynamic will work for the LMX relationship. As Fairhurst and Hamlett (2003) argue, "Idiosyncrasies surrounding the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the relationship will likely be targeted positively or negatively as individuals engage in face saving and self-enhancing attributions as they explain their behavior" (p. 126). Indeed, the somewhat less than ideal level of effectiveness of the medium quality LMXs is displayed in Narratives 6.3–6.6 as members justify their ratings judgments with self-enhancing attributions based on their superior skill set relative to that of their leaders.

Thus, even in this small amount of data, we can see how the elicitation of narratives through interviews allows LMX actors to discursively reflect upon their relational experiences. In so doing, they reclaim the ways that sense-making and meanings for the relationship get worked out in communication and through discourse.

NARRATIVES AND STORIES: CONSTRUCTING LMX

Fairhurst and Hamlett (2003) propose a second narrative research agenda for LMX, based upon the study of talk-in-interaction in which leaders and members use narratives to construct their LMX. However, this research agenda requires that we make a distinction between 'narrative' and 'story,' unlike the previous agenda in which the terms are used interchangeably. According to Ochs (1997)

> the interactional production of narrative maintains and transforms persons and relationships. How we think about ourselves and others is influenced by both the message content of jointly told narratives and the experience of working together to construct a coherent narrative. (p. 185)

Ochs is making a distinction here between "jointly told narratives" and "working together to construct a coherent narrative." Others similarly distinguish between 'stories told' and 'stories lived' (Cronen, 1995a; Pearce, 1995), and 'story' and 'narrative' (Cunliffe, Luhman, & Boje, 2004). Despite the differences in language, all point to the fact that in living life, we become narrators of the unfolding nature of our relationships. Its rules and patterns of interaction are ongoing, unfinished, and subject to changes in meaning as we and others respond to the exigencies of the situation or context (Pearce, 1995). Narratives or 'stories lived' thus reflect the unfolding nature of relationships as story lines, wherein all discourse is in some way narrative (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). As such, our ongoing narrative accounts may or may not include 'stories told,' or conventional storytelling, which actors are generally ready to do for strategic reasons or any time one's behavior comes into question (Boje, 1991; Cunliffe et al., 2004; Edwards, 1997).

For example, Shamir and Eilam (2005) argue that the most legitimate and convincing means by which leaders convey their authenticity is through their life stories, especially those life events that trigger growth and development. Such a process often focuses on the leaders' defining moments or crucibles in which actors try to relay what they have learned from the difficult choices they have been forced to make (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Life stories are commonly used for identity management, coaching, or role modeling, but it also seems reasonable to expect that LMX would be one basis for their use. Telling one's biography can be a deeply personal act of self-disclosure. Leaders and members

in high quality LMXs may feel freer to share more personal stories because their trust levels are high. Moreover, leaders and members may engage in greater amounts of storytelling the higher the quality of the relationship, based on communication frequency or the opportunities that the discriminatory use of the leader's resources provide (for example, in decision-making influence; providing inside information; allocating task assignments; or offering job autonomy, support, or attention in the form of coaching or career counseling).

The key point here is that stories used in the context of the LMX relationship help to construct those relationships as high or low quality *in their telling.* For further evidence of this, consider the following excerpt from an earlier study of the discourse of LMX with women leaders in a manufacturing firm (Fairhurst, 1993).[10] Storytelling is used quite strategically by the low LMX member (Herb Conly) who happens to be male, white, older, less educated, and more tenured than his supervisor (Lori) who is female, black, young, more educated, and less tenured.

Narrative 6.7: Great Big Yellow Pill[11]

1	**Herb:**	I almost ended up on disability *twice* this weekend.
2	**Lori:**	What *happened*?
3		(2.3)
4	**Herb:**	Goin' down the stairs my leg gave out, and I went
5		flying down the stairs.
6	**Lori:**	*Oh no:::* (.) *here* at work? (1.9) [let me *see.*
7	**Herb:**	[INDISTINGUISHABLE
8	**Lori:**	Your [hurt?.
9	**Herb:**	[INDISTINGUISHABLE
10	**Lori:**	Oh oh you hurt yourself at home?
11	**Herb:**	*Yeah* (.9) Just couldn't put any weight on the leg and
12		went down the stairs,
13	**Lori:**	Oh g*o:::d*
14	**Herb:**	Grabbed onto the wall. Cut *that.*
15	**Lori:**	*Oh god*, I see. Let me *see* let me see this hand (1.4)
16		You say you cut that one. I don't I don't see, oh on your
17		finger?
18		(.7)

19	**Herb:**	I got a couple little [cuts
20	**Lori:**	[You have one on this hand too? Okay.
21		You're gonna have to be *careful.* You're gonna hurt
22		yourself *real bad.*
23		(1.4)
24	**Herb:**	Then I almost drowned.
25	**Lori:**	You almost *drowned*? (.6) Uh, wh-what happened?
26	**Herb:**	I (.5) went swimming (1.1), stayed in the pool until I gave out (1.0).
27	**Lori:**	Till you gave *out*?
28	**Herb:**	Yeah, I was swimmin' 80-80 foot length of the pool and gave
29		out when it was 9 feet deep.
30		(3.8)
31	**Lori:**	*What happened?* (2.8) How did you save yourself? What
32		happened?
33	**Herb:**	Just kept swimmin'
34		(.8)
35	**Lori:**	I'm glad you're okay, Herb. *God* you you scare me
36		sometimes.
37	**Herb:**	I almost drowned a *lotta* times (2.2). It doesn't stop me.
38	**Lori:**	You better take care of yourself (2.1). You should do that
39		cause you scare me with some of those stories you
40		tell me, I don't know.
41	**Herb:**	I got a pill from the V.A. now I could kill myself if I
42		wanted to
43		(1.0)
44	**Lori:**	You got a pill to kill yourself?
45	**Herb:**	Yeah, if I wanted to kill myself, I got a pill to do
46		it now.
47		(1.6)
48	**Lori:**	Well, I hope you don't take the thing.
49	**Herb:**	Great big (1.8) yellow pill. No markings on it

50		(3.4)
51	**Lori:**	((Sigh)) Mr. Conly, (1.1) I don't know about you
52		sometimes. I wonder (1.2) Anyhow (2.6) let's get back
53		to this. As far as (.7) the associates with mechanical skills
54		working the *line* (1.8) who *else* can fill in?

Herb tells stories of falling down stairs (lines 4–5), bodily injury (lines 4–5, 11–12), near drowning (lines 24–37), and potential suicide (lines 41–49). Yet, these stories are a joint performance between leader and member (Boje, 1991). Lori coproduces these stories with each expression of strong interest or concern (lines 2, 6, 8, 10, 13, 15–17, 20–22, 25, 27, and so on) until the subject of suicide emerges (line 41), at which point she takes the unusual step of switching the subject back to more work-related concerns! Displaying more concern for a cut on the hand than talk of suicide makes sense only if Herb has exceeded the bounds of credulity (Fairhurst, 1993). Consider also the greater use of pauses toward the end of the excerpt (lines 51–54), which may indicate momentary reflection by Lori on the veracity of Herb's stories.

Clearly, this older, white male member is playing power games with his younger, black female leader as they *coconstruct* an interactional pattern of deceit, distrust, and resistance to authority (Fairhurst & Hamlett, 2003). This is evidenced by Herb's increasingly implausible string of narratives both prompted and unchallenged by Lori. Unless she intervenes, this pattern is likely to repeat itself in the future, as it has in the past (lines 38–40). Thus, we see how storytelling as an assisted control move constitutes, not merely reflects, this LMX. Story upon story become part of an unfolding lived narrative (or story line) of low LMX quality.

Contrast the low quality LMX of Narrative 6.7 with the high quality LMX of Narrative 6.8 (Fairhurst, 1993). In this example, the male member's (Paul) use of narrative opens an opportunity for the female leader (Jan) to back previous commitments she made to him.

Narrative 6.8: Romantic Interlude

1	**Jan:**	Even if we're not here, there oughta be a way to
2		cover it. (.3) So if someone from the day shift who was
3		at the morning meeting could cover what happened
4		at the next meeting (.6) or for third shift, [we'd be
5	**Paul:**	[You gonna do that?
6	**Jan:**	in real good shape. (1.0) Do you want me to

7		to ask somebody? Is that what you're sayin? (1.5)
8	**Paul:**	*Yeah.*
9	**Jan:**	*Yeah*, I can [ask Joanie or Shelby or somebody like that
10	**Paul:**	[My list my list is getting long.
11		My list is getting *longer*
12	**Jan:**	I know, I had a meeting with my boss[this morning
13	**Paul:**	[I'm supposed ta (1.5)
14		I'm supposed to get my list *shorter* (.2) if you *remember.*
15		(.6)
16	**Jan:**	*I know*
17	**Paul:**	And I'm not making any *progress.*
18	**Jan:**	So you can have a romantic interlude or [something
19	**Paul:**	[Right
20		I'm not- I don't have *time.*
21	**Jan:**	Heh-heh-heh-huh..I'll ask Shelby or Tony or the
22		both of them

Unlike the way in which we have come to think of stories with identifiable plots and progression toward some resolution, the abbreviated use of narrative in 6.8 is what Boje (1991) terms 'terse storytelling': "A terse telling is an abbreviated and succinct simplification of the story in which parts of the plot, some of the characters, and segments of the sequence of events are left to the hearer's imagination" (p. 115). Paul commences a terse telling at lines 10–11, 13–14 ("My list is getting long. . . . I'm supposed to get my list *shorter* (.) if you *remember*") immediately after he directly challenges Jan over shift coverage (line 5: "You gonna do that?"). Paul is using a story to legitimate his resistance to covering the shift.

Again we see a leader who actively coconstructs the story. Jan not only acknowledges the abbreviated narrative over the shortening of Paul's to-do list (lines 12 and 16), but adds to the story by humorously characterizing his motivation to reduce his workload (line 18: "So you can have a romantic interlude or something"). Boje (1991) argues that there may be strategic reasons for the chosen parts of stories in a terse telling, and in this instance, Lori's attempt at humor may be to diffuse the emotion behind Paul's rather direct threat to her face at line 5 ("You gonna do that?"). Fortunately, Paul responds in kind at lines 19–20 ("Right, I'm not. I don't have *time*."), effectively achieving Lori's goal. Importantly, this entire exchange is an opportunity for consistent

follow-through by Lori in honoring previous her commitments, an indication of a high quality LMX (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Boje (1991) also asserts that the more terse the storytelling, the more shared is the understanding of the social context because insiders know what can be left unsaid. Communication frequency is reportedly greater in high quality LMXs (Baker & Ganster, 1985) and may explain the more restricted code that enables a terse telling. In short, the 'romantic interlude' story was tersely told, actively coproduced by both leader and member, and marked by in-kind responses and the leader's consistent follow-through on a previous commitment to the member (Fairhurst & Hamlett, 2003). This is but one instance of an unfolding story line of a trusting, high quality LMX.

One final example of a high quality LMX from Fairhurst (1993) nicely demonstrates the distinction between narrative (stories lived) and story (stories told). It involves a case of insider joking by the male member (Jim) toward his female leader (Pam).

Narrative 6.9: Insider Joking

1	**Jim:**	((papers shuffling)) I wanted to talk *about* (.4) feasibility
2		(1.4) uhm ((papers shuffling)) (2.9) update on uh (.) making
3		operation, my perspective on that
4	**Pam:**	Oh good (2.6) Mm-hmm.
5	**Jim:**	Is this how you're gonna do this while we're on tape
6		keep sayin' "Oh good" to everything I mention?
7	**Pam:**	HAH-HEH-heh-[heh-heh-heh-huh
8	**Jim:**	[Heh-heh-huh-huh
9	**Pam:**	That's what I told Carol, I said, "*Hey,* I know you've
10		already had this uh (.4) session already so if you do anything
11		out of characteris- out of character, I'm going to call you
12		on it."

Pam's back-channel comments at line 4 ("Oh good. (2.6) Mm-hmm.") prompt Jim to humorously tease her by reflecting on her behavior in story-like fashion (lines 5–6: "Is this how you're gonna do this while we're on tape keep sayin' 'Oh good' to everything I mention?"). The telling of this story, albeit a brief one about the taping of their conversation, is done while living the story (narrative) of actually doing so.

In addition, the humor is face-threatening, but playful and indicative of a high quality of an LMX as Pam reacts favorably to the jab with a hearty laugh (line 7) and her own narrative that she aligns with Jim's sentiments (lines 9–12: "That's what I told Carol . . ."). Again, we see a coproduction of the narrative by the leader and member, and the way humor can disarm potentially face-threatening challenges. Unlike Narrative 6.8, the humor is directed upward here, which is significant because teasing is frequently a privilege of the powerful (Coser, 1960). In this example, it appears indicative of a lack of social distance within the relationship, again a high quality LMX marker (Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989).

As the above examples demonstrate, the narrative construction of LMX and its story performances are coproductions of leader and members' talk-in-interaction. Meanings are continuously negotiated, especially in 'terse tellings' in which the narrator's theatrical license to accentuate, abbreviate, or otherwise edit selected stories becomes apparent. However, there is still much to be said about the construction of the LMX relationship based upon the narrative resources available, a topic to which we must now turn.

NARRATIVE RESOURCES FOR THE LMX

Thus far we have focused on the role of stories and narratives in LMX discourse, specifically the language used in leader–member talk-in-interaction and member interviews. However, based on a more Foucauldian view of Discourse, we can also ask about the narrative resources available to LMX actors (Fairhurst & Hamlett, 2003). Recall that discursive psychologists prefer the term 'interpretative repertoire' to Discourse (see Appendix A4) because it focuses upon the linguistic resources that actors are using; they include terms, tropes, metaphors, themes, commonplaces, habitual forms of argument, and so forth (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter et al., 1990; Wetherell, 1998). This discussion requires the use of *both* Discourse and interpretative repertoire.

Drawing from Foucault, Cronen (1995a) argues that certain stories of a special character rise to the level of a discursive formation:

> Foucault used the term *(D)iscourse* to describe stories of a particular character. In my use of this term, a story can be regarded as a (D)iscourse if it includes a formalized set of grammatical relationships among utterances that is well instantiated in a group of users. The formalizations include the kind of relationships persons have with each other. The relationships that make up the discourse are widely known and available, carrying great authority and strong feeling for certain people. (p. 47, emphasis original)

While one might debate the merits of equating story with Discourse for clarity purposes, Cronen's (1995a) point is that Discourses inform the stories

that people tell, giving those stories and the repertoires they supply a kind of authority vis-à-vis other stories. As such, we should be able to discern other voices in LMX narratives, signaling the influence of society, the corporate community, the organization's culture, one or more professions, and so forth. Recall from Chapter 4 that the power of these Discourses is their ability to normalize, that is, define problems based upon what a discursive formation deems normal versus abnormal, reasonable versus unreasonable, and so on.

It will also be useful to adopt a poststructuralist view of the self, defined here as a repertoire of structured narrations (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Recall Chapter 5's discussion of subjectivity-in-the-making, or working subjectivity, in which the experience of the self as both an agential 'subject' and an 'object' of our self-consciousness produces self-identities that are practical everyday accomplishments, becoming both medium and outcome of how we think, feel, and value (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Collinson, 2003; Hassard, Holliday, & Willmott, 2000). These self-identities assume a narrative form in discourse as they respond to the contingencies of the interaction and context.

Consider the following example from Fairhurst (1993) in which a female leader (Barb) is coaching a female member (Sue) in a medium quality LMX. These women work in a manufacturing plant that had recently converted to a socio-technical systems philosophy.

Narrative 6.10: Coaching Tip

1	**Barb:**	One of the coaching tips that Bob gave me
2		today (.6) is that *I* tend (.4) and I and I do this *purposely*, not
3		to (.8) throw in my input
4	**Sue:**	Mm[-hmm
5	**Barb:**	[in the middle of a conversation (.8) when
6		maybe my perspective would let somebody else
7		know that I knew what was going on (.7) cause some
8		people are gonna interpret that like I don't know
9		what's going on. And (1.6) contract manufacturing?
10		when you when we give presentations to Smith or
11		whoever came through? (1.0) whoever was specifically
12		working on that *project*, whether (.3) my input was 50%
13		or *not*, if I thought they had ownership to the
14		*project*, I let them do the presentation because then:::

15   they felt more ownership to the end product. They

16   they could be more *proud* of what they were

17   doing (.3) and that's *my perspective*, but that's that's

18   why I I manage and I sit back a lotta times and let

19   somebody else *do* that. And some people *like* that

20   style (.) and some people say, "You're doing yourself

21   an injustice by not speaking up."

22 **Sue:**   Mm-hmm.

23 **Barb:**   So (1.4) understanding that (.) there are cases where your

24   presentation (.) I may be somewhat underlying and being

25   a *driving force* and stuff, but I would prefer to *tend* to

26   stay *out* of it. If I need to tell Goldberg my role, I can

27   do that another time. And I told Bob, I said, "Bob,

28   I think that's part of *your* role (.4) is to know what I'm

29   doing (.4) behind the scenes, to let other people know."

30   So I need to give him that (.5) *information* so he knows

31   those types of things. But *that's a bit of feedback*

32   that Bob gave *me* today that I just wanna share

33 **Sue:**   Okay

34 **Barb:**   Uhm, anyway, so that's *why I'm* giving an overall

35   perspective of the whole program.

As leaders grow more invisible with greater team self-management (Manz & Sims, 1987), Barb is told by her manager, Bob, that her selflessness in letting team members take credit for accomplishments was creating a problem in the current management structure. A visible, individual display of command appears necessary to be competitive even in this team environment. In the taped conversation above, Barb selects from her repertoire of self-narratives and begins 'telling her biography' around team ownership (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

While framed as a coaching tip to Sue, Barb engages in a lot of identity work by justifying her actions, perhaps to a more sympathetic audience this time around (lines 1–3, 5–21). Self-justifications often emerge in post hoc reports of conflict, and in this scenario, there are several voices at play whose

authority conflicts. Since Sue does little but listen and back-channel (lines 4, 22, and 33), we can discern these voices chiefly through the terminology and habitual forms of argument in Barb's interpretative repertoire as she speaks and also gives voice to her manager. For example, Barb's manager (reportedly) aligns himself with a masculinity Discourse, which is individualistic and competitive, and thus focused on a visible display of one's achievements and abilities (lines 1–3, 5–9). Masculinity Discourses also converge with neo-charisma Discourses here, equating leadership with a demonstration of agency. Both Discourses problematize the lack of Barb's visibility, making her selflessness ill advised. By contrast, both masculinity and neo-charisma Discourses conflict with a self-managing team Discourse in which leadership shifts and distributes itself within the team-based expertise, ownership, or time expended. Barb uses a self-managing team Discourse to justify putting team members in the spotlight, thus explaining her relative silence in the presence of visiting dignitaries (lines 9–21). Team Discourse also intersects with feminine management Discourses that feature inclusiveness and self-sacrifice as strong feminist values (Buzzanell, 1994, 2000). Thus, these latter two Discourses render this leader's selflessness as normal.

These multiple and conflicting Discourses appear to create a space of action for Barb. She reports that she challenged her manager by offering solutions that would require additional work for him and her, so as to increase her visibility without taking away from the team's time in the spotlight (lines 23–32). However, for the presentation they were planning, she negotiates the struggle between the Discourses by placing herself in a moderator's role in providing an overview of the project in the planned presentation to higher-ups (lines 34–35). While still doing what is best for the team, it remains unclear whether the moderator role ameliorates the presumed career consequences of a less visible leadership role from those who embrace masculine, neo-charisma Discourses in this management culture.

This telling of one's biography also hints at a teaching moment between Barb and her manager—and perhaps a change in her repertoire of self-narratives. Such moments usually occur when the circumstances of the member (in this case, Barb who is being coached by her manager) increase her receptivity to feedback and teaching (Tichy, 1997). However, in this instance, sensemaking and perhaps dissonance reduction seem to be more pressing concerns because of the putative weight Barb assigns to the feedback with which she disagrees. As demonstrated, Barb engages in considerable identity work as she accounts for her behavior, apparently not for the first time as she claims knowledge of others' views (lines 19–21: "And some people like that style and some people say, 'You're doing yourself an injustice by not speaking up'"). If true, these are additional examples of discovering meanings in the work of producing them, aided perhaps by new listeners and fresh insights. It also suggests that telling one's biography involves more than just crafting an inspirational story

that will resonate with members (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Leaders may story their unfinished business with members in search of meanings and self-justifications that elude them.

Finally, it appears that not only should the self be viewed as a repertoire of structured narrations, but so should LMX. Like self-narratives, leaders and members will construct their LMXs based upon the linguistic resources afforded by the Discourses to which they consistently lay claim. For example, low quality LMX members might be more subject to downsizing Discourses from the leader than high quality LMX members because the former are considered expendable. Conversely, high quality LMX leaders and members may share in a greater range of Discourses from the corporate community (e.g., globalization, technology, outsourcing Discourses, etc.) the more varied and challenging the members' task assignments. Low LMX members may seize upon those Discourses as well, although it may well be with irony and contradiction. A leader's reliance on more feminine management Discourses around inclusiveness may show that members with medium quality LMXs, in addition to high quality LMXs, will be coached and given more resources than a leader who subscribes to masculinity Discourses. Whatever the Discourses drawn upon, the investigation into narrative resources shows that the business conducted within the LMX is not just relational, but is also significantly impacted by cultural forces (Fairhurst & Hamlett, 2003). These cultural forces carry great authority as they are drawn upon to construct the relationship, complete tasks, and manage identities. With discursive analyses, we have the potential to see the interactive input of both culture and dyad (team), a subject long overlooked in this literature (Fairhurst, 2001).

A Backward Glance—Final Thoughts

In this chapter, the following points have been made:

- The study of narrative involves discourse as language in use and Discourses as sets of narrative resources.
  - o LMX is a theory of relationships between leaders and members whose narrative roots for high, medium, and low quality can be reclaimed.
- Narrative is a basis for sensemaking; it is a primary means by which we understand the world and make sense of it.
  - o The extant LMX literature may underplay the experience of LMX due to a heavy use of survey research. In-depth interviews give leadership actors a greater chance to narratively reflect upon their LMX experiences and project into the future.
- The uniqueness paradox, which challenges a culture's claim to distinctiveness, can also be applied to LMX.

- o Individuals in an LMX relationship will embrace or disparage their rela-tionship's uniqueness to play into self-enhancing attributions of personal success or failure.
- A distinction between narrative and story is necessary to understand the means by which LMX is constructed.
  - o Narratives or 'stories lived' reflect the unfolding nature of LMX as story lines where all discourse is in some way narrative.
  - o These narrative accounts may or may not include 'stories told' (conven-tional storytelling), which perform a number of actions in their telling.
- The storytelling between leaders and members in actual dialogue is often coconstructed and tersely told, that is, abbreviated and succinct. The more tersely told the story, the more shared the understanding of the social context because insiders know what can be said and left unsaid.
- Various Discourses of society, the corporate community, the organization's cul-ture, various professions, and so on serve as linguistic resources for narratives and stories.
  - o Both the self and LMX can be viewed as a repertoire of structured narra-tions that draws from these Discourses.

It is appropriate to end this chapter by again reiterating the complementar-ities of a discursive view of leadership with a psychological one. Indeed, it would be hypocritical to do otherwise because some 30 years of social-psychological LMX research serve as the foundation for this chapter. However, the concern here is that a psychological, empiricist orientation to LMX not be the only ori-entation. As we have seen in this chapter, discursive perspectives have the capac-ity to add nuance and detailed meaning to the character and quality of LMX. When the bird's-eye view of LMX scaled measurement comes in for a landing with a discursive's view from the ground, or 'below,'[12] LMX only benefits from this kind of cross-paradigmatic, multi-method thinking and analysis. Indeed, all three narrative approaches to LMX reviewed in this chapter took as their starting point the scaled judgments of the members. Finally, it is important to reinforce that a narrative research agenda is a diverse one, whether narrative reflection and the uniqueness paradox are used to make sense of LMX quality; narratives and stories in actual leader–member dialogue construct the LMX in elaborated or terse tellings; or the narrative resources used in dialogue or inter-views reveal powerful cultural voices other than leaders and members. In short, the variety that characterizes the study of narrative awaits LMX and other main-stream leadership researchers.

NOTES

1. Much of the conceptual framework for this chapter draws from Fairhurst and Hamlett (2003).

2. At least 10 reviews of the literature were found (Barge & Schleuter, 1991; Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Fairhurst, 2001; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien,

1995; House & Aditya, 1997; Keller & Dansereau, 1995; Liden et al., 1997; Schriesheim, Coglister, & Neider, 1995; Schriesheim, Castro, & Coglister, 1999).

3. Leaders were prone to socially desirable answers, while members tended to give more unvarnished accounts (Fairhurst, 1993).

4. The early LMX work used 'in group,' 'middle group,' and 'out group' (Graen et al., 1982), but changed to high, medium, and low quality respectively (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

5. Based on Roloff's (1981) observation that individuals are active and self-aware calculators in social exchange theories, Fairhurst and Hamlett (2003) argue that the calculation may be situational, gradual, post hoc, or an individualized tendency, but it remains a resources in/resources out rational assessment nonetheless (p. 120).

6. Bruner's (1990) argument for a narrative psychology in which people organize their experiences, knowledge and transactions in the world corresponds to conceptions of *episodic memory,* which Lord and Brown (2004) highlight in their book on leadership processes and follower-self identity. Episodic memory provides a temporal organization to events because of our innate ability as humans to locate the self in time; we remember our 'selves' in the past and project them into the future (Tulving, 2002; Wheeler, Stuss, & Tulving, 1997). From a narrative perspective, however, *we reconstruct as we remember* our 'selves' and we project them into the future.

7. More specifically, "You indicated an answer of 2 out of 5 for the first survey question, 'Do you know where you stand with your leader?' (or Do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?' and so on). Can you give me a specific example to illustrate your answer?" or 'What experiences have you had that would lead you to give this specific rating?'"

8. Normative data for LMX placement was provided by Graen and Scandura (1985).

9. Reprinted with permission.

10. Fairhurst's (1993) original analysis does very little with narrative.

11. Narratives 6.7, 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10: From "Social structure in leader-member interaction" by T. Gail, et al., *Communication Monographs, 56*, 1989. Reprinted with permission of Taylor and Francis, www.tandf.co.uk.

12. Hosking (1988) characterizes the study of interaction as 'from below.'