Communicate belonging?
Duoethnography of an organisational change study

Ivana Crestani and Jill Fenton Taylor
Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia

Abstract

Purpose – This duoethnography explores feelings of belonging that emerged as being relevant to the participants of a doctoral organisational change study. It challenges the prolific change management models that inadvertently encourage anti-belonging.

Design/methodology/approach - A change management practitioner and her doctoral supervisor share their dialogic reflections and reflexivity on the case study to open new conversations and raise questions about how communicating belonging enhances practice. They draw on Ubuntu philosophy (Tutu, 1999) to enrich Pinar's *currere* (1975) for understandings of belonging, interconnectedness, humanity and transformation.

Findings –The authors show how dialogic practice in giving employees a voice, communicating honestly, using inclusive language and affirmation contribute to a stronger sense of belonging. Suppressing the need for belonging can deepen a communication shadow and create employee resistance and alienation. Sharing in each other's personal transformation, the authors assist others in better understanding the feelings of belonging in organisational change.

Practical implications – Practitioners will need to challenge change initiatives that ignore belonging. This requires thinking of people as relationships, rather than as numbers or costs, communicating dialogically, taking care with language in communicating changes and facilitating employees to be active participants where they feel supported.

Originality/value – For both practice and academy, this duoethnography highlights a need for greater humanity in change management practices. This requires increasing the awareness and understanding of an interconnectedness that lies at the essence of belonging or Ubuntu (Tutu, 1999).

Keywords Organisational change, Ethnography, Practitioner reflexivity, Dialogic practice, Change communication, Jungian shadow

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The overall aim of this duoethnography is to explore the relevance of the feeling of belonging when communicating organisational change. This challenges a long-held belief in dominant rationalist change management approaches that start with a separation from the 'old' norms to embrace the 'new' ways, thereby disrupting feelings of belonging that were important to participants in a change study (Crestani, 2018).

A backstory on belonging, change management and pertinent case study findings provide context for *Ivana,* a change practitioner and *Jill,* her doctoral supervisor/communication researcher, to engage in dialogic reflection and reflexivity. Their duoethnography concludes with some questions and suggestions.

The backdrop—belonging and organisational change

> One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu – the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself … (Tutu, 2012).

> A person is a person through other people. It is not 'I think therefore I am'. It says rather: 'I am human because I belong' (Tutu, 1999, p. 35).

Belonging is central to Ubuntu philosophy; it speaks to the essence of who we are, being human, and is underpinned with the belief that our connectedness affects the world and humanity (Tutu, 1999). Ubuntu offers an African worldview that is different to Western epistemologies (Hailey, 2008). It has been used in studies on employee engagement (Tauetsile, 2016), transformational leadership (Hoffart, 2017) and decolonising university curriculum (Le Grange, 2016). Other disciplines support the concept of belonging, yet it is not considered in most change management methodologies. Maslow, a psychologist, identified in 1943 that belonging was a core emotional and human motivational need. Recent neuroscience research concluded that "our brains are wired to be social" (Scarlett, 2015). The feeling of belonging and connection enables people to believe they are "making a contribution to the greater whole, and that the greater whole is making a contribution to them" (Virgilio and Ludema, 2009, p. 79). This is all in keeping with Ubuntu philosophy.

The notion of belonging seems at odds with preparing for organisational change. After all, most dominant academic and practitioner approaches start with letting go of the past to embrace change and the future. They are adaptations of Kurt Lewin's (1947) three-step model of 'unfreezing', 'moving or changing' and 'freezing'. Bell and Taylor (2011) challenge the need to break from the past, or 'unfreeze'. Rather than having employees dislocated between the 'old' and 'new' ways of working, they propose a 'continuing bonds' perspective that accepts the past as this has greater meaning to employees experiencing change (Bell and Taylor, 2011). This leads to asking the following questions How does an employee feel a sense of belonging to an organisation whose future is unknown, with change causing loss of identity, status, power, position, competence and group membership (Schein, 2010 pp. 304-305)?

Communication scholars have recognised the important role of communication in creating a sense of belonging or a community spirit in preparing employees for change, fostering their commitment and trust in management (Elving, 2005, p. 133). Lewis believes that "change

implementation is essentially a social and communicative process (2011, p. 281). Yet, this knowledge seems to be missing from the dominant positivist, top-driven 'directed' or transactional change management methodologies which rely on communication as a tool to inform people about change. In contrast, the less common 'participative' or relational approaches would generate a sense of belonging through involving employees in dialogic processes.

Duoethnographic inquiry
Underpinned by Ubuntu philosophy, we consider how feelings of belonging can enhance a sense of humanity in implementing organisational changes. As authors in a duoethnography, we are the sites and data for the research, not the topic (Sawyer and Norris, 2013). While we provide case study findings as context for our duoethnography, our focus is on sharing reflections, ideas, thoughts and feelings to restory and reconceptualise some of our experiences.

Our duoethnography is written in script-style text and draws on Pinar's concept of *currere* (Norris and Sawyer, 2016, p. 12) as a frame for investigation and transformation, where a person's life is seen as a curriculum. *Currere* involves four, not necessarily linear, dimensions: the first is regressive where one returns to the past, the second is progressive where one looks for the other way to what is not yet the case (the future), the third dimension is analytic where one's analysis is a constituent element of the present and a final stage is that of synthesis (p. 13). *Currere* acts as a form of self-interrogation as one unpacks and repacks the meanings one holds in tandem with the Other (p. 14). In this context, we are seeking to promote fluxing individual and collective meaning-making through personal analysis and reenvisionings, while grounding details of these within the larger narrative meanings (Norris and Sawyer, 2016, p. 14).

We are attracted to duoethnographic inquiry for two reasons — its grounding in social justice promoting "a deeper sense of humanity" (Sawyer and Norris, 2013, p. 29), and it opens fieldwork storytelling as cyclical sites of meaning making and re/generation (Brown and Sawyer, 2016, p. 5) in asking us, What's going on here? (Denzin, 1997, p. 123).

In interacting over this duoethnography, we each wrote a piece, then the other would respond and so on, with our text and ourselves growing, changing and transforming. As we reviewed each other's contributions, we refreshed our own pieces with personal and collaborative reflections. We supplemented our online video sessions with some extended face-to-face meetings where we discussed, clarified and developed ideas and engaged in some editing and re-editing. This was a learning experience for both of us, as our understandings of different perspectives intensified, reshaped and morphed into new appreciations and reconceptualisations.

Context — organisational change study

> I feel like the last four or five years there has been nothing but change. We have just had to try and conduct our work in a sea of change… and I think I've developed a resentment towards a lot of our management because they've seen us being anti-change or negative to change, but I think it's a well-known human characteristic that I strongly agree with, humans are not resistant to change. They just don't like too much of it at once …or unstructured change that is not thoroughly explained. (Participant 11)

This quote encapsulates the context for the 12 non-managerial employees who participated in the case study. They were employed in an Australian agricultural government department, in head office and regional centres with roles in agricultural science and research, veterinary, regulation, legal and administration. While most had experienced many changes over the years, the case study focused on four changes in the last two years — a new strategy, a restructure, a new financial management system and redesign of head office. We present key features and findings from the case study, as a dialogue, to inform our duoethnography.

Ivana: We first met each other when we came together as supervisor and candidate for my doctoral study. I wanted to understand how employees experience 'feeling valued' and how communication could engender this feeling in preparing employees for organisational change. My case study drew on conversational semi-structured interviews with the participants, archival documents and reflective field notes. Coding of the data employed moiety analysis (Wolcott, 2003) to expose "intercultural conflict and opposing norms and values systems" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 137). The dialectical tension within a moiety is not 'either/or', rather to co-exist although unequal halves.

Using participants' language, I named the moiety subcultures as 'Service-Giving' and 'Political-Power' to help articulate the conflicting values and beliefs that co-existed in the one organisation.

Jill: What distinguishes participants' values of these moiety subcultures?

Ivana: Participants, as part of the 'Service-Giving' subculture, valued being able to provide a public service, contributing and making a difference to both industry and community. Their sense of service and giving is captured with the following:

> I love problem solving, particularly in this industry, trying to make a difference which then directly supports productivity and the community and that's what the public service is about, or that's what a lot of us think that the public service is about, supporting the community. (Participant 11)

> We provide a public good. The things we are doing benefit the public, the farmers, pet and animal owners … and no one else is doing this service. (Participant 2)

In contrast, participants believed the 'Political-Power' subculture focused on supporting the government, pleasing the Minister and industry leaders, rather than assisting the farmers and the community.

> It's very much we have to just feed what the Minister wants. I think they're not necessarily in touch with everything that happens at grassroots. (Participant 3)

> No one tells politicians 'No'. (Participant 2)

> Where you have a culture where you don't want to offend anybody, you just want to keep everybody happy including the politicians, you spend a lot of resources. This means time doing stuff that's very reactive, justifying what you do, or trying to pre-empt what you might want to do. So, it's not an environment that is very motivating. It just takes so much energy and time doing that sort of stuff. (Participant 9)

While most participants felt empowered to do their role, they believed the 'Political-Power' subculture was controlling, and individuals had to comply and fit into the system. They felt

powerless and expected to do meaningless, time-consuming tasks which they found demotivating and draining.

Jill: How could you summarise the key attributes of these two subcultures in the context of organisational changes?

Ivana: Here's a summary of key attributes of the opposing beliefs and values around feeling valued in preparing for organisational changes.

Feeling valued attributes	Moiety		
	SERVICE-GIVING subculture	*vs.*	POLITICAL-POWER subculture
Leaders being open	Communicating honestly	*vs.*	Controlling information
Contributing to change	Having a voice	*vs.*	Forcing a 'done deal'
Feeling of belonging	Supporting	*vs.*	Separating

Participants would feel valued when (a) leaders are open and communicate honestly about the changes; (b) employees have a voice and contribute to decisions about change; and (c) they experience feelings of belonging and being supported. Their experience was different. Instead, they believed the 'Political-Power' subculture controlled information about the changes and forced a 'done deal' or a *fait accompli.* In not having a voice, most participants felt they were not trusted, nor empowered and this created feelings of separating, or not belonging.

Jill: In terms of leaders being open, how were these changes communicated?

Ivana: Well, there was little or no formal communication prior to any of the four changes being introduced. Participants spoke mostly about the restructure. They heard on the grapevine about it:

> We got wind at work that there would be a radio announcement… The press got the information before us and we got different information. (Participant 2)

Once the public announcement was made through the media, employees were able to access draft structures through the intranet and discuss the implications with their manager. There were many unknowns and participants believed there were inconsistent messages about jobs:

> The communication was not overly handled well. There were a lot of rumours and innuendo about what sections were going, who was going to lose their job and even now I know people in the lab are still very much uncertain about their futures …and feel quite threatened. (Participant 7)

> There were different messages between divisions. … There was no information coming through. … We had no idea of what was going to happen and we sat there for three months waiting with nothing to do. … Communication was not good and it was guesstimates and rumours. (Participant 2)

Participants wanted honest communication about the changes and job cuts:

> One thing I feel strongly about is honesty about the reasons why things occur … and not trying to dress it up in a positive when it is really a negative. If you're open and honest about what is occurring and why things are occurring, that's the best way as far as communicating things with groups. (Participant 8)

If the changes are coming, have a clear explanation and be open and honest with us. (Participant 5)

In contrast, the 'Political-Power' subculture had the tactic of controlling information from the top — senior management, executive management, or the Minister — and involved withholding information, secrecy, keeping people in the dark, or putting a positive spin on information. Participants revealed that this political communication style created tension, causing several to feel threatened, uneasy and uncertain about their future. It was at odds with the organisation's espoused corporate values of acting professionally with honesty, consistency and impartiality; and communicating intentions clearly, inviting teamwork and collaboration. These values and behaviours were more evident with the 'Service-Giving' subculture.

Jill: Are these participants feeling they cannot contribute to the changes?

Ivana: Yes, participants felt the changes were predetermined:

The Director and Manager came up from head office to interview people on the day of the announcement and told them who was getting forced redundancies. We had no discretion whatsoever with what happened there. (Participant 4)

While senior management referred to 'voluntary' redundancies, participants and the media spoke about these as being 'forced' redundancies where given positions were deleted from the organisational structure. One participant mentioned a previous restructure implemented in an inclusive manner where employees were able to influence the outcome:

Previous changes were handled well … There was a little bit of redundancies and they were voluntary. Redundancies went to people who wanted to go. They also managed the change well. They kept us informed and everyone got the same messages. There were workshops … It was inclusive … and our opinions were sought. We were able to have input into developing the structure of what we were going to do and how it would work. (Participant 2)

Participants believed that all four change initiatives were introduced as 'instructing' employees to take on the changes rather than 'consulting' them beforehand:

They did not bother to consult. They did not inform us or consult with us although they said they did. It was a 'token' consult. (Participant 2)

No-one consulted with us. Just do it. … no one cares about what you think. (Participant 5)

Ideally, participants wanted a voice in contributing to decisions and leaders to spend more time communicating face-to-face with groups of people and listening to them:

It would be nice if there was more bottom-up type consultation and a feeling of being listened to, especially during change. (Participant 4)

Jill: So, how can these employees feel a sense of belonging when experiencing organisational changes?

Ivana: In normal circumstances, the 'Service-Giving' culture gave participants a sense of belonging in feeling supported, connected to their teams, having good working relationships and communication and helping each other in achieving organisational goals:

Overall, the culture is supportive, it is very generous… If you are busy at certain points of time, they will manage your workload so they're not driving you into the ground. It's a very nice and rewarding place to work in. (Participant 10).

You feel people care about you. You feel it is a second family. You support them and they support you. In (our) branch we care about each other. (Participant 5)

In contrast, with the changes, the 'Political-Power' subculture gave participants a feeling of 'separating' rather than belonging, as employees were viewed as being 'disposable' or a number and replaceable. Consequently, while participants felt valued for their technical skills, the 'Political-Power' subculture undermined this during restructures where there were forced redundancies. The word 'forced' signified strongly that the affected positions no longer belonged, leaving individuals to feel discarded, isolated, devalued and excluded:

I think in that part we're just a number, we're just another person and usually if they want to cut costs, they'll just wipe out an area without any understanding of what that area does. I just accept that's life being in the public service. (Participant 3)

There are politics for instance. We lost a staff member to forced redundancy, a very good employee … who did a lot more than people understood and recognised. The person leading that project said if we haven't got that person anymore, that job can't be done. He dug his heels in instead of looking outside the square, this person's gone, we still need this job done, how do we do it? I think that's a bit childish. (Participant 1)

Valuing and recognising employees' past work contributions, open communication, involving employees in decisions, where they feel supported and trusted by their leaders, can help with their sense of belonging in preparing for change.

Managers … usually they're not encouragers … I think the negativity is what we jump on, and the positive and affirming just doesn't happen nearly enough. And that's the massive thing out of the changes that I think needs to be changed in the culture of management … There's been little acknowledgment of what you do. We really need to be encouraged. If we're informed with what's going on, the fear's not going to be there. I think fear develops out of half-truths, innuendo and not knowing what's going on. (Participant 4)

Finding belonging – reflections and reflexivity
Here we start our conversations around some aspects of our case study experiences with Ubuntu and *currere* shaping our reflections and texts. We focus on our own data, findings, learnings and transformation, supplementing these with relevant literature.

Not belonging

Disposable, I think is the organisational feeling … you feel you're there to do a job, and if that is no longer needed to be done, there are no qualms about cutting you loose. (Participant 9)

Before the redundancies, I enjoyed working for the department, the teamwork, supportive culture and what I was doing. I have lost that ... Teamwork was most appreciated and information sharing and being self-directive. There was a lot of dedication amongst staff and this was not acknowledged. In the redundancies, they didn't value what we were doing. (Participant 2)

A lot of us out here are feeling lonely and isolated … (Participant 11)

Ivana: Listening to the participants express how they felt isolated, lonely and devalued, triggered the heavy cloud of my memories of deaths — suicides and heart attacks at work —

in organisations undergoing change. My most confronting experience was several years ago helping out where an employee had committed suicide in his office in a quasi-government organisation undergoing a hostile restructure over the preceding two years. Jobs were uncertain. I was given to understand that the deceased had been going through divorce and unable to see his child on Father's Day. This was a wake-up call for me.

When a participant in the case study talked about how their regional site was closed down, it reminded me about this suicide. Over the years, I have come to realise that most change management methodologies are internally focused and silent on impacts on the family, businesses, local community and society. In country areas, jobs are difficult to find and could mean relocating to another town or city creating anxiety and losing connections.

As practitioners, we need to take the blinkers off to see the bigger picture. I can no longer put up with senior executives threatening their staff to either 'get on the bus' or 'get off'. I believe 'imposed' changes can create harm and anguish to individuals, their families and communities. They can kill.

My hope is for change initiatives to be introduced in a more humane way that ends suffering and saturates us with positive employee stories about change experiences. I look forward to working with theories and frameworks that are inspired from Ubuntu and others, relational, rather than transactional approaches that management gurus seem to propagate. There would be conversations giving employees a voice rather than just simply sending out messages about changes. This dialogic approach would foster feelings of belonging, even for those who leave, hopefully with fond memories in continuing their bonds (Bell and Taylor, 2011). This would be in preference to recollections of how poorly they were treated, how they felt a *persona non grata* and that they did not belong. Valued before change, discarded with the change!

Jill: This change storytelling reminds me of Mikhail Bakhtin who acknowledged a particularly open sense of a text (Bakhtin and Holquist, 2017) as a parallax of discourses, where nothing is ever stable or capable of firm and certain representation. His analysis of a Russian folktale goes something like this: Two people are sitting in a room, both silent, then one of them says, "Well". The other does not respond. For an outsider this exchange is without meaning. For Bakhtin four crucial elements were absent in the text: (tone) how the word "Well" was pronounced; the visible, concrete and historical situation the two speakers shared; their shared knowledge of the situation; and their interpretation of it. Bakhtin fills in this discourse. The two Russian speakers were looking out the window in a railway station and noticed it had begun to snow. It was time for Spring to finally come. *Both* were *sick* and *tired* of the protracted winter, *looking forward* to spring and bitterly disappointed by the late snowfall. All these assumptions were unstated, glossed over, indexical to the situation. The word "Well" contains many meanings: snowflakes outside the window, the date on the page of the calendar, the evaluation of the psyche of the speaker. All of this is *assumed* in the word "Well". Story context rests within a shared knowledge unique to a moment (Denzin, 1997, pp. 37-38). This particular folktale retelling works as a metaphor for the oral nuances of some transformational storytelling. Taking the word "Redundancies" — for one subculture these were *voluntary.* "Redundancies" are *cost cutting;* a *positive spin* to meet the minister's demands. For others, because change initiatives are a *done deal,* "Redundancies" are *forced*

on employees who are instructed to change or be *disposable.* It is a *fait accompli.* "Redundancies" are an everyday language of not belonging in change.

Tensions

Ivana: Except for a few, I found the interviews emotionally challenging and made these comments in my field notes:

> I felt sad with this interview. People are doing great things and they've learnt to cope with no appreciation. 'Frustration' is a word that I'm hearing frequently in these interviews. People are frustrated with the changes and lack of leadership. They just want to do a good job and get on with it and feel there is less time for work with constant changes.

> I am speaking with the survivors and feel their vulnerability. I'm frustrated too and feel powerless. Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider *et al.,* 2008) is preventing me from drowning in a sea of anxiety and negativity, giving me a perspective to persist with finding the hidden positive gems.

As a change practitioner, I found it distressing to hear:

> We're fairly knocked around, just coping. It's not very motivating and I think it's probably throughout the organisation. You don't need to be an Einstein to know that you just don't bring in constant changes with poor communication of what's involved and what the vision is. (Participant 4)

Change management methodologies have been around for over 70 years and we still have to put up with these top-down instrumental approaches that mostly alienate employees, perhaps an unintended consequence. I feel embarrassed. For the past 30 years, I have been an advocate for employees having a say in changes that affect them. It has been difficult going against the hierarchical tide and exhausting. Perhaps I've been too pro-employees and not enough pro-leaders.

I believe these two words 'Supporting' vs. 'Separating'— summarise the inherent conflict between the less common 'participative' and more common 'directed' change management approaches, respectively. The former is about building a sense of belonging for better change readiness (Elving, 2005), whereas the latter is about breaking connections. I hope for greater humanity to pave the way in change programs, moving away from the 'I' individualistic thinking to an Ubuntu interconnectedness. This is in keeping with the continuing bonds approach (Bell and Taylor, 2011), and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider *et al.,* 2008) which start with people and their stories of the best aspects of the past, to build the platform for change. It is not about threatening employees to forget the past. It is about acknowledging and valuing their work contributions, rather than relegating them to a forgotten past.

Jill: Ubuntu philosophy prescribes what "being with others" is all about. "I think therefore I am" is substituted for "I participate therefore I am" (Hailey, 2008, p. 7). Thinking *about* a story reduces it. To think *with* a story is to experience it affecting one's own life and finding in that effect a certain truth of one's own life (Bochner and Riggs, 2015, p. 207). I want to return to "Redundancies" again. When we are thinking *with* a story, we speculate about the subtle dialectical tension of what field participants have come to believe are culturally appropriate ways to behave − for a community and a common good (Hailey, 2008). This freeing up of voices and experiences that are otherwise restrained or out of reach (Madison,

2012, p. 6) is the everyday change dynamic I am seeking to engage. Our original data analysis (thinking *about* a story) highlighted a subtle moiety tension, or oppositional patterning, playing out against a noisy shadow. "Redundancies" offer us ways of further working these blind spots (Lather, 2013, p. 642). When we engage change processes, as everyday preferences and actions, we create field sites for "re/generation" (Brown and Sawyer, 2016, p. 5). These are the places where we learn to live into change — becoming "beings with others" (Hailey, 2008) rather than just revealing culture as a interplay of desirable attributes.

Communication shadow

An aspect of the case study was unearthing a communication shadow, or the unconscious communication in change. It represents an extrapolation of Carl Jung's shadow concept (1958). According to Jung, the shadow comprises the repressed parts, both negative and positive, of our being that are unconscious to us (Fawkes, 2015). Everyone has a shadow and becoming aware of it releases energy for growth and development, whereas pushing the shadow further into the unconscious, makes it denser. Hence, the shadow is not necessarily bad, just disowned (Fawkes, 2015) — working the shadow releases untapped potential for communicating change.

Ivana: I first came across the concept of the Jungian shadow over three decades ago when being trained as a change agent. One way to understand it is to think about a conversation with a person. If that conversation triggers a reaction in you, then your shadow has been engaged. When we are uncomfortable talking about things, we enter the realm of the shadow (Fitzgerald *et al.,* 2010).

I felt awkward when participants were openly critical of their bosses during the interviews. They seemed so unguarded with me, even though I was a stranger. Hostile in some cases, and angry and frustrated with how the changes were introduced without any prior communication or involvement.

Even though I could feel their trust in me, my personal shadow was engaged — I felt distressed and uneasy listening to their stories. Writing this piece, I reflect on why I feel such discomfort. According to Jung (1958), the shadow has a history of our repressed memories in our unconscious. Digging deep, I think my uneasiness with the participants' overt criticism or open and 'honest' communication is possibly due to my mother instilling in me, as a child, not to criticise people. She, an Italian immigrant, was laughed at in the shops when unable to speak English or even when she sang an operatic piece while hanging out washing in the backyard. Her neighbours thought she was drunk. Why else would she be singing? She stopped singing. I have no memories of her singing as this happened before I was four years old. I only know of this from her storytelling about her early years in Australia. Yet, despite deliberate criticism and mocking from members of her small regional community, my mother maintained her dignity and inculcated in me that it is wrong to criticise people. I have come to learn that respect is a strong national value of Italians and criticising people would be considered disrespectful. Perhaps it was a way of my mother trying to fit in. Criticism can be isolating. There was no Ubuntu thinking or feeling there—my mother was considered different and ridiculed, rather than being accepted and connected to the community. I now appreciate how challenging it can be as a new immigrant and isolating.

In the study, participants wanted open and honest communication about the reasons for the redundancies. They were critical of the 'spin' and 'sugar coating'. Perhaps managers can become trapped in a communication shadow and feel uncomfortable about being honest in their political environment. As one participant said: "I don't really feel they're being honest with us and once you've broken honesty, it's hard to get it back" (Participant 11). Not being honest promotes a 'them and us'. A divide between those privileged with information and those without, promotes an anti-belonging. How do we build community spirit during change? Perhaps becoming aware of the communication shadow encourages us to ask the following questions: How honest can one be, without feeling discomfort with one's own values? How can we share information openly and with trust?

My hope for the future, as a practitioner, is to take a courageous voice in persuading my clients to be more honest in communicating difficult change decisions. By not speaking up, I remain an outsider to organisations that I impact. With new awareness, my aim is to be open with my feelings when clients ask me to say or divulge things that are misaligned to my own values, and I'm acting with "emotional labor" (Hochschild, 2003). "Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is … if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected, and is liable to burst forth suddenly in a moment of unawareness" (Jung, 1958, p. 76, para 131). Being honest fosters belonging. If we suppress the need for belonging, will there be a deepening of the communication shadow with employees showing greater resistance and alienation?

Jill: Shadow work around communicating brings to mind Patti Lather's (2012) insightful "when is data"? We have talked about Ubuntu being a living ethos. It can't be imposed. It's something to be nurtured (Hailey, 2008, p. 23). Presenting my research, to the academy, is still difficult for me. Here's a good "when is data" moment to expose the jagged edges, for getting lost and messy "*because it's productive*" (Helfenbein and Adams, 2016, p. 133). Thinking with communication shadow "opens up new space for you" (p. 133). We (don't) just go to these jagged edges for some other reason; we are going there to do something – to be alive to new possibilities and new ways (p. 133). My first stage experience as a child was dancing before a packed auditorium. I miss my exit cue and further disoriented, by a now closing stage curtain, running to the wings knocking over some tripod illuminators. The audience is amused. My parents gaze shamefully and without any further acknowledgment, an embarrassing stage moment erases from family memory. These presentation anxieties continue to be disorientating and immobilising. Given any spotlight moment, my shadow can erupt as nauseous haze. I am still trying to find my voice on this journey. It was my dissertation mentor who tapped into this. Over the years, encouraging me to respect the conventional while still valuing my own radically different discoveries from digging around some more complicated field spaces. Other's renderings of your carnivalesque and counter-culture storytelling continue to entrance us. Even though you are no longer here, you continually score the runes (Taylor and Carroll, 2010). Hailey's review (2008) found, "Ubuntu means that people are people through other people" (p. 3). In the west we might talk of "I think therefore I am" whereas the Ubuntu can be translated as "I am human because I belong" (p. 5). As I continue to work on my stepping-out, I am alive to the inspirational competencies of those around me. Affirmation is a resounding power for our faculty and our

school community. Let us pay more attention to how our affirmation of others also validates ourselves (p. 8). We must keep talking about this …

Discussion

From a practice perspective
This duoethnographic experience deepens our need to focus on the humane and wider societal considerations greater than the organisation. Practitioners, with the understanding of Ubuntu (Tutu, 2012) would need to challenge change management approaches that ignore belonging, before encouraging thinking about humanity. Perhaps, removing aggressive language and reframing people as 'relationships', rather than as 'numbers or costs', would be a start. Dialogues could include "how do we support these valued relationships in change?" rather than "how do we remove these costs from the business?" We need more open and honest conversations in preparing for change initiatives to remind us that we have both a head and a heart — we affect so many lives and we are affected also. We are starting to see this with the adoption of methods outside the change management discipline, such as Design Thinking and Agile. It will take time though, before these relational approaches become more dominant.

   Belonging is central to who we are, yet it is not central to 'directed' change management. Recognising the need for belonging requires a change in paradigm. Traditional approaches mandate a letting go of the past. Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider *et al.,* 2008), and 'continuing bonds' (Bell and Taylor, 2011) embrace the past by affirming work contributions. These developments are starting to disrupt transactional change management approaches. Suppressing the need for belonging can deepen a communication shadow and create resistance, or an anti-belonging rather than releasing its strong potential for positive change.

From an academic communication research perspective
The diversity of understandings surrounding Ubuntu (Hailey, 2008) embraces a willingness to be open and vulnerable which comes from a self-assurance of knowing that we belong to a greater whole (p. 3). Ubuntu is partly the product of the oral nature of a traditional culture (p. 4). This lends well to working blind-spots (Lather, 2013) or what Rifkin (in Bowman, 2003, p. 20) refers to as those "complex overlappings and histories" that can become useful sites for enunciating a self-critique and change in practice (Brown and Sawyer, 2016). In finding a new sense of place (Brown and Sawyer, 2016), organisational change participants can activate, to good advantage, some unique storytelling that comes from nourishing, knowing and belonging to a community. This thinking *with* stories creates increasingly complex field sites where research participants can learn together by allowing contextual storytelling questions. We do this by listening to the text, listening to us, listening to a text and by listening to oneself as this text becomes our own text out of that process (Bowman, 2003, p. 23). It is here, in the creation of our own story, that we get to live into feelings of belonging in change.

Segue – some concluding thoughts
Taking greater care with language can help with belonging. The word 'together' fosters a sense of belonging (Carr and Walton, 2014) and can replace the separating language 'get on the bus' or 'get off'. Dialogic practice, that builds on *currere* is useful for both organisational

ethnography and change management. *Currere* is a transformational dynamic for activating relational changes: *How is the future present in our past, the past in our future and the present in both?* (Norris and Sawyer, 2016; Levy, 2013; Pinar, 1975). It is by embracing these wisdoms of intercultural worldviews that we can find belonging while creating our own change stories.

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