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Abstract

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Keywords

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AT THE COALFACE: STORYING RESISTANCE TO THE MANAGERIAL IMPOSITION OF A NEW PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM

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Abstract: This study explores contested change at Glenrothes Colliery and the way that stories emerge are challenged, developed, redefined and shared as part of a continuing dialogue and storying process as miners sought to reassert their sense of collective identity. We argue for a broader conceptualisation of story that moves beyond the confines of folklorist tradition with a focus on retrospective narrative analysis to one which is able to accommodate the temporal, contextual, and political nature of stories as employees make sense and give sense to the changes imposed by management that threatened their collective sense of identity.

Keywords: change, story, sensemaking, processual, temporality, identity, power.

Introduction

The focus of this research is on the stories and storying that occurs in the context of workplace change among non-managerial operative employees. Our interest is on how stories may be used as a lens for gaining greater insight into how employees make sense and give sense to their experiences of change. We are also interested in the way that stories may be used as a political device for resisting change and/or for steering change processes in certain preferred directions. Compelling stories have the power to engage and persuade others about how to interpret actions and events. They act as sensemaking devices that can be used to channel and present interpretative accounts of change as well as sensegiving tools that may seeks to intentionally influence and shape the very processes they describe. In the unfolding dynamics of change, we are also interested in temporality and how this concept relates to stories and sensemaking processes. For us, there is an interesting conundrum that emerges from the empirical data that is difficult to theoretically resolve. This centres on the way that retrospective coherent stories provide a beginning, middle and end that presents a linear sequence of events with causal implications (this happened, that caused this to happen, leading to this to happen) that helps people make sense of change processes that may be ambiguous, contradictory and unclear. However, in the lived experience of change people story about the here-and-now in relation to what has happened in the past and their expectations of what will happen in the future. Their subjective experiences of time are non-linear and yet in making sense of what has happened in the past stories are constructed that have event sequences that are characterised by a linear conception of time. The empirical conundrum that is raised centres on the intertwining on linear and non-linear time (the two are not clearly divided and separate) in contrast to intuitive theoretical and conceptual understanding that marks a clear division between subjective and objective time.

The final elements that come into play in our analyses centre on context, identity and power. Our interest in power is in terms of micro politics and the authority relationships and established regimes of hierarchy and control that exist at the workplace. If politics is viewed as power-in-action, then the soft power of stories come

into play during contested change when employees script accounts that defend their collective sense of who they are. This turns our empirical gaze to identity, not simply as it emerges from a process of workgroup socialization, but how collective identities are reconstituted over time through the telling and reconstruction of identity-oriented stories that provide a sense of belongingness and history (continuity) and give sense to ambiguous situations (for example, disruptive change) when their pre-existing identity may be threatened or challenged. Our final element of context, relates to the contextual features of the workplace that includes: history and culture, administrative structures and power-relations, systems of control and regulation, operational tasks, procedures and the technology of production, as well as the affective aspects within the spaces and places in which work is routinely carried out. In examining these issues we present a broad orientating framework of stories and the storying process in changing organizations from which we empirically examine stories and contested change at Glenrothes Colliery (due to space restrictions the literature review and methods section has been significantly truncated to enable greater attention to data analyses).

The Story Turn and Narrative Analysis
There is an extensive body of literature on the narrative turn in the social sciences (see for example,Butler, 1997; Czarniawska & Gagliardi, 2003; Fraser, 2004; Pentland, 1999; Sims, 2003). Drawing on the work of MacIntyre (1981), Fisher (1984) advocates that people are essentially storytellers and that the world is full of stories from which individuals and groups choose stories that hang together, often aligning with stories that cohere with their own values and beliefs (with the stories already held by them). These stories are not just ways of communicating about the world but of interpreting and making sense of our own actions and the behaviours of others (Fisher, 1984). In his concept of a narrative paradigm, history and context are central as are notions of narrative fidelity - soundness of reasoning and whether stories accords with our own beliefs and experiences - and narrative probability – whether stories cohere and are free from contradiction (Fisher, 1985, p.349-350). For Fisher (Fisher, 1985, p.364) compelling stories provide a rationale for making decisions and engaging in actions and by so doing, they both determine and constrain behaviour.

The use of storytelling and narrative analysis has also become increasingly popular within the field of management (Baruch, 2009; Berry, 2001; Hansen, Barry, Boje, & Hatch, 2007) and organisation studies (see Phillips, 1995; Rhodes & Brown, 2005; Tsoukas & Hatch, 2001). This growing interest in storytelling approaches to the study of organizations is reflected in the work of Boje (2001), Brown (1998, 2006), Czarniawska (1999) and Gabriel (2000).

Research Methodology
Data collection occurred at Glenrothes Colliery from 2001 to 2007. The initial data collection began with semi-structured interviews seeking understanding of employees' experiences of the rating process, listening with a 'big ear' (Glaser, 2001) as individuals described significant incidents and experiences connected to the implementation of the appraisal process. Sixty-one interviews and meetings with mine managers, human resource managers, union officials, and miners working at the coalface were recorded. Each interview lasted, on average, about 90 minutes. Extensive observations in order to understand the context of employee experiences (Glover & Noon, 2005) occurred through some 60 hours of attendance at mine management and union meetings, plus underground mine visits and two eighteen hour days back to back spent at the colliery.

Informal chats with miners in the muster room provided further insights. Interviews with miners were conducted on site, and also at the local pub or in their homes, where partners also shared insights into the impact of this human resource (HR) practice on extended family members.

Stories and Workplace Change: The Hegemonic Struggle over Identity
The decision to institute a new appraisal system was initiated by the chief executive officer of a large multinational mining company who decided, without consultation with locally situated stakeholders, that a performance management system would be introduced for underground coal miners and gave directions to middle managers to implement this initiative. Management were completely unprepared for the vehement resistance from coal miners that occurred even before the first round of appraisals. Miners refused to participate in the appraisal process until forced to do so by the Industrial Relations Commission, which ruled that performance appraisal was a legitimate managerial prerogative. Miners then insisted on their right to have a union official accompany them during their performance review meetings. Management responded by insisting that a HR manager accompany the reviewer at these meetings. Review meetings averaged over two hours in length as miners argued over their scores on each of the performance criteria. There were massive resource implications, and disruptions to shift crews and productivity in general, in having four men tied up in every single review. The introduction of comparative performance ratings was followed by shock waves after the first round of performance reviews. Workforce morale plummeted and performance slumped. Relationships among all of the parties involved in the appraisal process were severely strained and during this time, there was an upsurge in stories and storying among miners as they sought to make sense of the change and reaffirm their identity as miners.

A framework for locating the range and variety of stories that emerged from our research is outlined in Figure 1. Empirically, we identify stories that are retrospective coherent stories, with plots and characters (Gabriel, 2000); stories that are partial, future-oriented and unfinalised (Boje, 2008); and stories of the 'here-and-now' that may seek to establish some form of continuity and/or challenge conventional ways of doing things (present stories that are change or continuity oriented). This framework aims to draw attention to the way that stories and storying during times of change variously draw on elements from the past, present and anticipated future in seeking to make sense of what is occurring, and how stories are purposefully used to give sense to others in attempts to steer change and shape the process they may be describing. This storying process occurs in context in which prior relations and existing power dynamics may determine which voices get heard and who are silenced in the politics of change.

In presenting a temporal framework of stories and the storying process in changing organizations, the intention is not to produce a further taxonomy or to simply extend story types, but to provide a frame to orient researchers in the study and analysis of stories as they exist, develop and emerge in changing organizations. Context, history and process are central in providing a temporal understanding of stories and storying and in recognition of the dynamic non-linear nature of organizational change. The temporality of stories and the storying process links to the sensemaking and sensegiving that occurs in multiple spaces and times, whereby our understanding of the past influences our present experiences as does our expectations for the future.
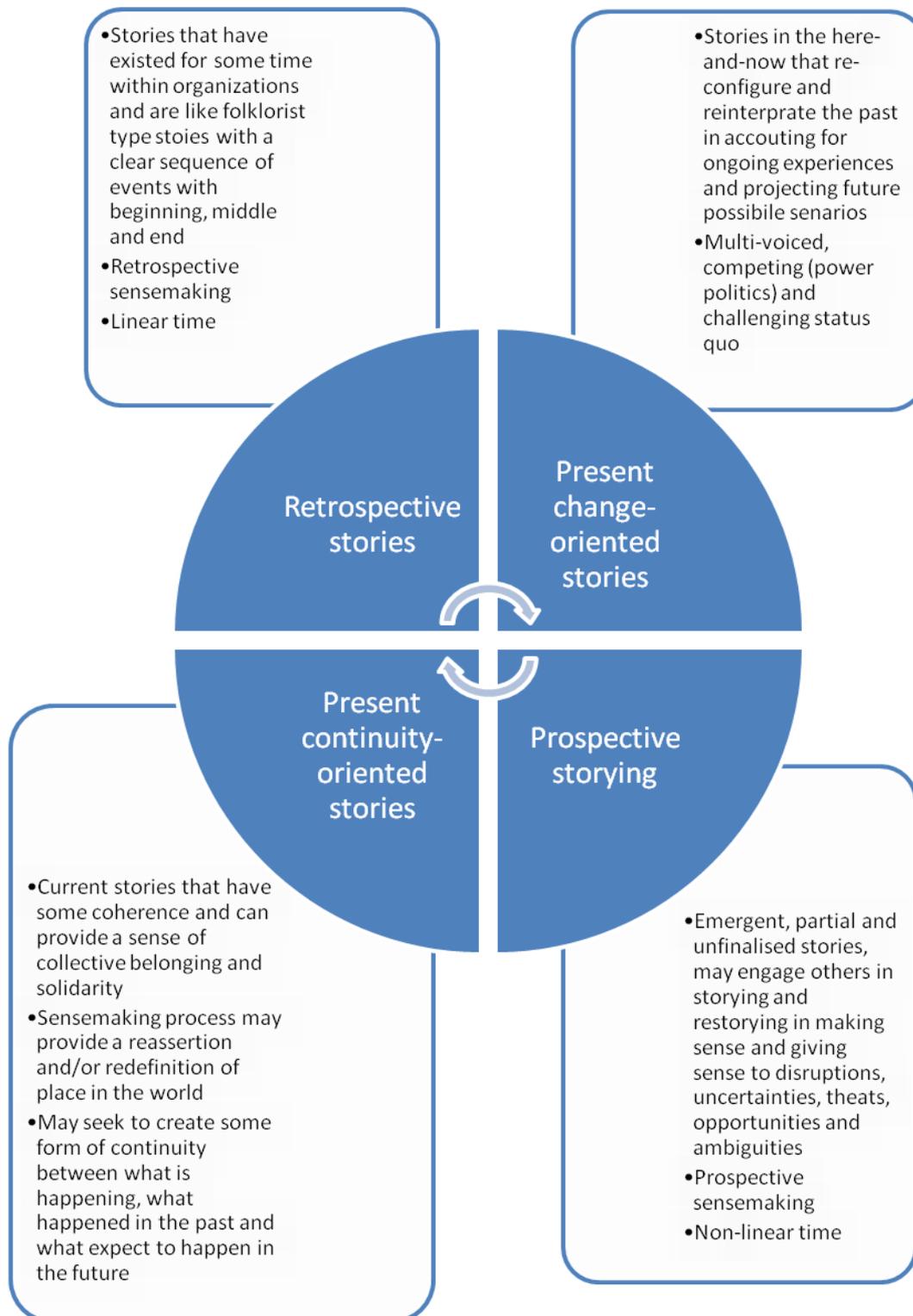
Figure 1: Stories and the Storying Process in Changing Organizations

We advocate the need for a more dynamic temporal understanding of the storying process but in so doing, we do not wish to elevate non-linear time over linear time in

analysing the place of stories in changing organizations, rather, we aim to recognise that both are present in the stories that already form part of organizational folklore and those that are emerging and partial   Although a simple separation could be proposed between retrospective coherent stories and prospective future-oriented story fragments, we prefer to see an intertwining of linear and non-linear time in which the search for a clear dividing line is inappropriate. In other words, rather than being two ends of a continuum there is an ongoing relational dynamic in which even the more established and stabilised stories can over time be open to change.

We also emphasise the importance of context and political process in the dynamics of storying over time, especially in the way that the storyteller actively engages audiences in their use of words, movement, images and sounds that accord with audience beliefs and experiences (narrative fidelity) in constructing compelling stories free from contradiction (narrative probability) that seeks to influence the sensemaking of others (Fisher, 1985). Collective sensemaking through story construction is not a one-way process but also includes the active involvement of audiences in the way that listeners may become co-tellers and the way that story tellers may become co-listeners. Polyvocality, reflexivity and incompleteness are all part of the dynamic context within which individual accounts may be co-constructed into collective sensemaking. In our case example, we would argue that the contextual, political and temporal dimensions of stories and the storying process enabled miners to not only give and make sense of their experiences, but also to resist challenges to their collective identity during this period of contested change.

Management Hegemony and the Storying Resistance of Miners
A regular source of injustice and psychic injury was the managerial criticism arising from the performance reviews that miners were lazy in avoiding important work activities. For miners this represented a grievous breach of the element of their occupational identity that positioned them as hard workers. For example, a mining electrician who had spent the majority of whose working life underground keeping conveyor belts running to take the coal from the longwall to the surface, was highly offended by what he considered to be an unjust and misinformed performance review on working practice:

> You know, I felt like a school kid! *I was so pissed off!* I'll tell you, I went in to
> my engineer and I said to him, 'You know, Ivan,' I said. 'It's wrong that you treat
> people this way.' I said, 'I work hard.' I said, 'I don't have to tell you, I don't
> even have to write stuff down'. That was one of the criticisms, the fact that I
> don't write enough. 'I don't have time to write, I've got work to do, you know!'
> I was that pissed off! I said, 'If half the blokes in this place worked as hard as I
> do, you'd sack the other half, mate.' I said, 'You wouldn't need half of them'
> And he [Ivan] never said nothing, you know. I just wanted my two bob's worth,
> and then I walked out!   [Interview 24, longwall electrician 2]

In the above story the electrician constructs himself as victim of grievous errors in his performance ratings. Identity defence is apparent in that he describes himself as a hard worker. He (wisely in his own eyes) chooses not to write down a lot of 'stuff' because he constructs himself as a responsible worker who knows his priorities (better than Ivan the engineer does). He keeps the belts running. If the belts stop, the men on the longwall cannot cut coal. But there's a wider theme to this story that goes beyond the

words of our interviewee. His story is embedded in the practices that he views as being valued, recognised and supported by others. This story does not need to be voiced or formally applauded yet it exists with the collective identify of what it means to be a miner – the camaraderie and solidarity – of knowing that what is not said is as important as what is said. In the miner's story, he works harder than half of the men in the pit, he understands the unvoiced recognition of significant others but he takes umbrage to 'outsiders' questioning his view of the world. He is expecting praise, yet receives criticism. Even when he puts the record straight, his boss 'never said nothing'. Praise is denied. His story is undermined and his identity is compromised and this invokes anger and resentment. His story ends with a mini-victory for employee 'voice', which is ultimately a hollow victory with the realisation that all his effort has gone unrecognised. His voice is 'silenced' from a broader managerial audience as he seeks to reassert his own identity in the face of powerful others. The miner had his say (reconstructed his identity as a hard worker, in spite of the errors of appraisal), and then affirmed his resistance by walking out – at a timing of *his* choosing, but his story fails to influence change or the views of management. The story provides a lens on how the miner makes sense of events, attempts to give sense and engage Ivan, as well as explaining the rationale behind the consequent actions that are taken as a result of the perceived frustration and sense of injustice. Whilst residing in our frame, this story is more than can be captured in the classification of a single type of story or a terse fragment; it is multi-faceted, evolving and partial, grounded in the material context of the here-and-now and is ongoing.

In another example, a miner presents an alternative explanation for problems of downtime that lays the blame on managerial incompetence. In constructing a story that explains some of the problems and issues that occur and are misinterpreted by management the miner also refers to the frustration of not being heard or listened to by management:

> If everything goes well, the guys will 'have a go' and most of them are hard workers…But a lot of things happen that are out of your control as a worker. We had a scenario there a few years ago, I forget his name. He came and just reduced all the stock out of the store, probably practising just-in-time…and all of a sudden, we've got no gear! We ring up [phone], 'Where is the part for this, it's not here?' Trying to save on capital! So then again that was a stuff-up there…but they don't want to admit it!   [Interview 5, longwall miner 1]

The above story represents a recurrent theme in numerous miner interviews. Embedded in each account was a sense of frustration at the injustice of being held accountable for outcomes which were beyond their control. Miners attributed blame to managers for the 'stuff-ups' that occurred in the mine. They found it offensive to be 'down-graded' by the very people who, in their view, were responsible for production delays. As one miner said, 'it's not grading, it's degrading' [Interview 29, coal clearance electrician 1]. Stories of supply blockages illustrated the power of such accounts to simplify cause-effect relationships and defend the narrator's identity in the face of perceived unwarranted and ill-informed attack. Each counter-story was employed as a discursive device to restore the collective sense of self that existed before the identity breach, but the stories remain with the miners' tale and are unable to influence the sensemaking of management.

Many of the stories conveyed by miners were driven by a sense of anger and of injustice, and in a sense of frustration in not getting their views (stories) across to management. A failure by management to see or understand the 'real' contribution of miners in their attempt to impose an inappropriate external set of criteria aggravated relations and yet, miners were unable influence the sensemaking of managers in any significant way. Their stories were not able to steer change in certain preferred directions, nor were they able to give sense to managers in a way that made them rethink and reconsider their own position and assumptions. The longstanding division between manager and worker remained and the storying of miners that sought to resist change often positioned the miner as a victim, of suffering injustice at the hands of management and thereby, attributing blame towards managers. Moreover, these stories in the context of the colliery were built on the present (here-and-now) in making sense of what was occurring and in trying to give sense to others and engage management in the absurdity of the system they were trying to put in place. The interpretation of these stories occurs within the broader temporal context of past ongoing relations and sensemaking processes as well as prospective expectations and understandings. For example, as one miner recounted:

> A boss who has been here five minutes will come down and ask you something. You will tell them, but they take absolutely no notice, walk away and do whatever they want to do anyway, even though we have been working on the job for 20 years.   [Interview 8, longwall miner 3]

The temporality of the story captures the past as related to the present and the prospective future in giving sense to the strained relations between a boss with little respect for miners or their longstanding experience through years of working at the mine. The story positions the miner as being insulted and being viewed of with disdain by an ill-informed manager who fails to listen to well-intentioned advice which is based on a wealth of on-the-job experience. The standing of the manager is undermined in the story relayed by the miner who uses this account as another example of management arrogance (of 'us' and 'them') as managers fail to respect the knowledge and experience of miners gained from years of working at the coalface. In such a circumstance, the miner is now justified in not listening to the appraisal 'voice' of his manager. His identity has been bolstered by virtue of the fact that the incident defines a manager as one who will not listen. It follows that the manager's performance ratings will be poorly informed. Once again however, the miner has not been able to change the sensemaking of the manager or the assumption by managers that performance will improve with appraisals. The counter position remains intact and all the miner is able to do is to shore up their own sense of identity and collectively held view (among miners) that a negative appraisal leads to *worse* performance, not better. Whilst miners felt resentment towards their appraisers and engaged in storying processes to decrease the effects their alleged failures had on their sense of worth, this did not bring about any substantive change to the system of performance appraisal used by management. The two collective independent voices of managers and miners engage in dyadic counterpoint producing storying polyphony around performance appraisal that plays around the underlining disharmony in terms of a perceived longstanding separation between the worlds of mangers and miners. Outright conflict in the contested terrain is evaded and the hegemonic power of management is not called into question through stories that are able to shift the meaning-making of managers. Defiance is evident, but it remains largely a self-supporting process within the mining community with the system of

appraisal reaffirming miners' distrust of managers and reinforcing the pre-existing antagonistic relations in the mine.

Performance Review and Appeal: It's 'Us' Against 'Them'
Miners often positioned themselves as a unified category as evidenced, for example, in a miner's comment, 'We're miners. We work hard.' They also frequently talked about 'management' as a united entity in this respect, too. They viewed themselves as being on the receiving end of wrongdoing or injustice, mostly as a result of managerial incompetence ('what were they thinking?' was a common miner refrain) or wilful neglect. In the tales told by miners, they rarely positioned themselves as guilty of the offence. This made the tale the more injurious; they were being punished ('marked down') for offences of which they were innocent. To miners, their ratings were a mistake. The raters had got it all wrong. For example, a union official recounted a story about one miner who refused to accept his rating in the first round of performance reviews. There appears to be poetic licence taken in recounting the time taken for this review, but this amplifies the absurdity conveyed in the account:

> We had one [performance review] take four shifts! Unbelievable! And it was just that the individual - they were focusing on, rather than saying, 'Yeah, OK, you do do that wrong but you could do it better,' and giving them a couple of instances where they could do it better - I really don't believe, first time round, I don't believe the person who was doing the feedback did their homework properly. Didn't go right into it. They could have done it a lot better. They were coming into it saying, 'This guy said you did that.'
> He did it. But it was four or five years ago! I mean, that's *bloody stupid*! When they really nailed him down, he said, 'I don't really know. They just told me that you did it.'
> 'Well, let's get that bloke in here and find out what he's talking about.'
> 'Oh, yeah, well, he did it five years ago.'
> Well, to me, that's *bloody bullshit*! You can't do that!
> [Interview 10, longwall miner 3]

Such stories were used to resist the subjugating effects of managerial imposed ratings. There is a heroic twist in this tale; the individual arguing the score resisted for 'four shifts' until managers were made to look 'bloody stupid'. This story also served to bolster the 'us' against 'them' source of occupational identity. As the miner gets to the cause-effect connection, his language intensifies, 'bloody stupid' and 'bloody bullshit' indicating the process of storytelling being used as a vehicle for expression of emotional vexation. Another miner, who also acted as a workplace union official, also commented on the profound emotional turmoil which appraisal caused for some miners. He labels the whole appeals system as unjust and 'not worthwhile' with an escalation in emotional intensity evident in the change in language in the second paragraph:

> They [miners] feel the appeal system is still not worthwhile. They feel like they don't get justice out of it. The fact that even when you do go in to do your review, what is set in front of you is virtually set in concrete until you go through the appeals review. So you have to sit there and listen to the judgment day expecting to be criticized and knowing that you can't change any of those criticisms until you go through an appeals process. So they feel frustrated by that exercise in itself.

> They [miners] make an initial statement: 'This is fucking bullshit!' or whatever.
> And that will be it, until the next time comes around. 'Oh, not these fucking things
> again! I've got to go in there and listen to this sort of shit!' [Interview 36,
> longwall miner 11]

The union official refers to the story of a miner being profoundly disturbed and angered by his review. The concrete metaphor aptly captures the sense of frustration at being utterly powerless to negotiate on 'judgment day' – another interesting metaphor to describe the dominant power relations fostered by appraisal. There is a palpable sense of injustice at having been made to sit and listen to the judgment while reviewers refuse to listen in return. The resignation at knowing in advance that they will be judged and criticized hardly motivates performance improvement; rather, it sets the course for a protracted appeals process (one miner's appeal stretched over three years).

Performance ratings were supposed to be delivered in a meeting where the context was ostensibly about improving performance. As part of the dialogue in such meetings, lip service was given to listening to the concerns of workers, seeking their input on how their work could contribute to organizational effectiveness. A common theme was the fact that above-ground managers failed to implement any of the processes they promised they would as part of the performance review process. By holding miners accountable for performance targets while failing to deliver on promises of training opportunities made during earlier review meetings, managers were seen as insulting the intelligence and the efforts of these underground workers. Particularly offensive was an apparent inability of raters to differentiate between systems factors and personal factors in performance variance. Ratings based on factors outside a miner's individual control were deeply resented as unfair, unjust, subjective and wrong. Managers and miners also differed in their analysis of causes of performance variation. Managers consistently blamed miners for poor performance; miners consistently blamed poor performance (when it occurred) on factors beyond their control, including mismanagement of supplies and maintenance by above-ground staff. Miners thus felt that a low rating for poor performance was unjustified, wrong and insulting.

In contrast, management referred to these types of miner accounts as the 'war stories' that miners have always loved to tell [Interview 61, HR Manager 2]. Most of these war stories contained themes of perceived injustice with poetic tropes of attribution of unity towards miners and attribution of blame towards managers. The division that was evident at the Colliery between 'us' (miners) and 'them' (management) intensified as a result of performance appraisal and the protracted appeals process. Furthermore, miners contested the appraisal discourse by refusing to accept the legitimacy of managers to assess accurately their work underground. Through a restatement of their narrative identities as competent, professional miners they, in effect, challenged the power relations assumed by the dominant coalition, refusing to be treated as objects of appraisal. Thus despite the asymmetries of power in the employment relationship, storying spaces for resistances were found and used to support and sustain the collective identity of miners, even though they were unable to effectively change the system of appraisal.

During this period of contested change, there were many miner stories where they portrayed themselves as undeserving victims of situations created by management (the

villains) and these stories were generally highly emotive generating feelings of: anger, grief, frustration, loathing, incredulity and pain. Whilst these stories were used as a basis for reasserting a sense of togetherness and collective identity among miners, these stories did little to engage the sensemaking of management, to heighten manager's awareness of their achievements and accomplishments. For miners, their storying process around change centred on the injustices inherent within the new system of appraisal and the short-sighted arrogance of management, which confirmed traditional divisions and ultimately had the effect of turning identity defence into employee resistance through a 'culture of cynicism' with 'a highly cynical employee orientation to management and work' (Collinson & Ackroyd, 2005:318). Thus, the telling and retelling of stories about appraisal injustices was a discursive device to garner support for the wounded against managerial perpetrators. The stories at Glenrothes had recurrent themes of continual mine mismanagement and intractable neglect (attribution of blame), in which the performance rating system was but the latest instalment in a long history of managerial incompetence or at worse, managerial malevolence. The stories of the miners and managers remained independent with the above-ground world of managers being a universe apart from the underground domain of coalface miners and yet, they are both integral to the storying of change in the introduction of performance appraisal at Glenrothes Colliery.

Conclusion
There were a large number and range of stories uncovered and analysed in the course of our research. Some of these align with the story types identified in the literature although others did not lend themselves to categorization under current schemas whilst providing important insights into the miners' lived experiences of change. We contend that retrospective stories, stories of the present (the here-and-now of change), as well as the prospective storying that occurs among individuals and groups during times of change (forward looking unfinalised stories that draw on the past and the present) are all central to understanding change. Taken together these stories capture the important dimension of contextual and temporal inter-connectedness of stories influenced not only by the present but also by retrospective and prospective sensemaking highlighting the need for a more contextual perspective that combine these elements with a temporal framework which is able to engage with the storying process that occurs in the workplace during ongoing change. In the case of Glenrothes, the stories and story process that occurred enabled sensemaking and sensegiving to occur with the latter being constrained and shaped by existing power relations at the workplace. Stories acted as a powerful discursive resource for miners and managers (our focus has been on miners) in enabling miners to shore up their challenged identity and to share their experiences of people and events in the workplace. Taken as a whole, stories and the storying process provided a source of unity, with miners (portrayed as the victims) being seen as noble, decent, worthy and good while the managers (portrayed as the villains) were seen as mean-spirited, misinformed and more interested in money than in the well-being of the workforce.

Some of the stories which miners told, especially those highlighting managerial incompetence, provided powerful vehicles for resistance. Perpetrators of identity violations received their comeuppance as miners appropriated their methods to turn the tables back on them. Much of the rough talk and masculine humour observed during mine visits was at the expense of above-ground managers. Miners' masculine humour was strategically employed against managers in the ongoing struggle over appraisal. As

Mumby (2004, p. 244, emphasis in original) observes, 'organizational storytelling is a discursive site *par excellence* for the critical analysis of the dialectic of control and resistance'. Empirically, our understanding of stories in terms of sensemaking and identity – as experienced by our miners at the Glenrothes colliery – required us to examine not only coherent stories of the past, but also, the emergent, developing and partial stories of the present. We identified the importance of prospective sensemaking in the way that miners in reflecting on the past and relaying stories of the present, projected forward into the future. For miners, the new rating system was viewed as an attack on their occupational identity – both individually and as a collective community. As such, appraisal reviews were sites of hegemonic struggles stimulating the storying and restorying of miners' tales. These stories were mobilized as discursive resources to repair fractured identities and as a form of employee 'voice' against the dominant discourse of pit managers. Organisational storytelling surrounding these appraisal events became a primary resource for identity defence. Indeed, the stories of Glenrothes miners under contested change highlight not only power relations at the colliery but also the power of stories to resist attempts by management to legitimate the new performance measures of regulation and control. However, whilst miners' stories of the appraisal process provide insights into their emotional states and the coping mechanisms they brought into service to defend their identities from unwelcome managerial interventions, the persuasive power of the stories remained with the miners and ultimately did not alter the views and opinions of managers. Nevertheless, these stories enabled miners to sustain a collective belief of what it means to be a miner and provided a way for miners to resist subjugation and voice their views on the inappropriateness of the new performance appraisal system to the work of miners. Stories were used not only to make sense of change, but also, and importantly for miners, to shape the change and to re-story the broken and battered identities of miners.

We conclude that the storying lens does provide greater insight into the dynamics of change drawing attention to the way individuals and groups make sense and give sense their experiences of change. Narratives of change also highlight the need to move beyond a backward glance to an understanding of how people and groups story the ongoing present in relation to the past and future in different ways. These story constructs are configured and reconfigured not only to make sense of what is going on but also to give sense and influence the behaviour and understanding of others. Power political intent behind the storying process does not however guarantee change will move in the preferred direction or that intended audiences will listen or even consider the message within the story. Existing (hard) power relations and divisions (the context, history and authority relationships) may negate the (softer) power of stories to achieve change (Nye, 2004). As such, stories are useful in gaining a deeper understanding of the feelings, behaviours and interpretations of people as they experience change. Whilst storying may also be used as a political device to steer change in certain preferred direction the persuasive power of stories are also enabled and constrained by existing authority structures and the position and standing of the storyteller/audience. Dominant stakeholders are more likely to get their version of reality voiced and accepted than those in less powerful positions within organizations. This does not undermine the power of stories but it does suggest that there are barriers that are more difficult to overcome for some rather than others. In the case we report on, the miners are able to use stories as a vehicle for shoring up their own sense of identity among themselves and they enable them to shield themselves from managements' prescribed ways of behaving. As long as miners' are able to resist attempts by management to legitimate

the new performance appraisal system, the door of prospective sensemaking of potential change remains open and in this way, stories provide a powerful vehicle for miners to sustain a sense of collective worth that resists and counteracts the assumptions of 'good performance' embedded in the contested appraisal system implemented by management at Glenrothes Colliery.

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