

## **Plot-borrowing, resonance and tuning-in: On the tacit side of authoring identities in organizations.**

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### **Abstract**

It is a perennial paradox of research on identity formation that it cannot take place without reliance upon the expressive acts people use to make sense of their experience, yet experience cannot be reduced to such expressions. People are more than they can tell. In this paper I address the dynamics between explicit and tacit elements of identity formation in organizations through three interrelated concepts. *Plot-borrowing* is the tendency to draw upon and infer available industrial and cultural tales in authoring organizational we-s. Some of these borrowed plots span out greater interpretive depths than others. *Resonance* refers to the reciprocal relationship between stories told and tacit narrative structures; how words laid down take sounding in unutterable and vaguely recollected previous authoring acts that reside outsides consciousness, yet inform a wide specter of actions and attentions. *Tuning-in* denotes to the ongoing interpretive relationship to a stream of authoring acts, whether experienced in a living present or by recollection. The paper draws from a study of two professional service firms and uses a specific episode in one of the organizations – a communication agency - as a thinking device. I briefly discuss implications for practitioners and research.