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Jessica Senehi

University of Manitoba, jessica_senehi@umanitoba.ca

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CONSTRUCTIVE STORYTELLING:
A PEACE PROCESS

Jessica Senehi

Having said having done
What pleases me
I go right I go left
And I love the marigold.

These lines were written by Robert Desnos, a leading poet of the French surrealist movement. Surrealism was an artistic movement of 1924−1936 which valued the imagination, plumbing the wisdom of the unconscious, and a creativity unfettered by reason and convention. Desnos was known for his agile imagination and his experimental style. He was also a journalist, produced radio shows, and wrote advertising jingles.

During WWII, Desnos was active in the French Resistance. In 1994, he was arrested by the Gestapo and taken to Buchenwald. Despite being tortured, he refused to give up the names of fellow resistance fighters. He joined the other prisoners in the camp who had been taken from their homes, stripped of their possessions and clothes, separated from their families, and denied basic human rights.

One afternoon, Desnos and other prisoners were taken by some camp guards and crowded onto the bed of a truck. Everyone knew they were being taken to their death. Traumatized and weakened by lack of food, the prisoners were mostly silent. The guards did not look at the faces or into the eyes of the prisoners.

After the prisoners had been taken off the truck at the place where they were to be killed, suddenly and with enthusiasm, Desnos seized the hand of one of the prisoners, a young woman, and said that he would read her palm. With exuberance, he foretold a wonderful romance, children, and a long life. The young woman laughed, and others put their hands forward. Desnos began to tell other fortunes filled with joy and promise. The prisoners became animated and began talking among each other about the romances, children, and hopes that they did have. They laughed and cried.

One guard began to cry. Hearing these stories, the guards could no longer deny the prisoners' humanity, and were unable to go through with the executions. They put the prisoners back on the truck and returned them unharmed for the time being, and some lives were saved.

Desnos, however, died of typhoid in 1945 at age 45, at Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia, shortly before the camps were liberated.[5]

> *Having said having done*
> *What pleases me*
> *I go right I go left*
> *And I love the marigold.*

Peace and Conflict Studies and the Humanities

Since the inception of the peace studies and conflict resolution fields, theorists and practitioners have recognized the significance of both imagination and an analysis of culture for understanding social conflicts and their resolution. In 1976, Theodore Lentz called for generating a *great moral imagination* to promote loyalty—not only to one's own nation—but to the people of all nations and the future. Elise Boulding (1990) argues we need to *imagine a global civic culture* in order to attain it, and John Paul Lederach (1999) writes that *imagination for peace-building* requires *courage,* implying that we are constrained in significant ways by conventional modes of thought. Thus, Johan Galtung (1990) calls for analyzing the cultural justifications of violence, and John Burton and Frank Dukes (1990) call for questioning the underlying assumptions that drive social thought and action in order to effect social transformation. Valuing so-called "folk" culture and subaltern voices is also important. John Paul Lederach (1996) argues that it is critical to value indigenous knowledge and modes of cultural representation in order to appropriately intervene in cross-cultural contexts. Recently, Johan Galtung (2002) stated that one of the main goals for peace activists is to facilitate and amplify the voices of those who are not being heard.

This paper examines the role of cultural production—specifically, storytelling—in the processes of social conflicts and their transformation. *Social conflicts* are broadly conceived to encompass conflicts at various levels (between states, within states, and within communities) as well as social divisions characterized by inequality, oppression, and/or a lack of mutual recognition (for example, divisions along the lines of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, social class, or global regions). This paper is based on an understanding of intergroup conflicts as complex—that is, involving both objective and subjective components that interdepend. We must examine the powerful economic, political, and institutional forces that shape persons' lives in ways that are often oppressive and dehumanizing. But we must also see persons as meaning-makers and agents in order to understand how social

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[5] In her 1996 article in *Utne Reader,* "Can Imagination Save Us?" Susan Griffin reports hearing about this incident from her friend Odette and cites these lines of poetry. I retell this story here in my own words. Similar reports can be found elsewhere although they do not refer to this exact incident (see, for example, Hirsch, 1998).

systems and identities are created, interpreted, accepted, resisted, and changed. This is also critical because intergroup conflicts, while usually about tangible interests, always involve a crisis of meaning. As Lederach (1996) puts it: "Conflict emerges through an interactive process based on the search for and creation of shared meaning" (p. 9). In this paper, I address the role of what I call *constructive storytelling* in peace-making and peace-building by (1) defining *constructive storytelling,* (2) examining storytelling in relation to several factors in intergroup conflicts—knowledge, identity, socialization and education, emotion, morality, memory and time, and geographic space, and (3) identifying *transcultural storytelling.*

Constructive Storytelling

Storytelling is language. Encompassing vocabulary, grammar rules, norms of communicative behavior, and narrative forms—language is society's most complex symbolic system. As such, language encodes the culture of a particular community, including shared understandings of identity, power, history, values, and utopian visions.

Storytelling is also narrative. A subset of language, narrative is both simple and complex. While they can be distinguished by several features (e.g., Burke, 1945), narratives can simply and sufficiently be defined as "someone telling someone else that something happened" (Smith, 1981), and narratives can be recognized and constructed by children as young as three-and-a-half years old (Peterson and McCabe, 1991).

Narratives may relate events or be explicitly fictional. But narratives are not pure fact or pure fiction. A fictional narrative may be used to persuasively express an idea that the narrative sees as true. Appalachian storyteller Kathy Coleman (1996) reports her grandmother's saying about stories: "Well, if they ain't true, they oughta be." Meanwhile, personal and group's histories are constructed and interpretive. Historical accounts are selected, framed, and used—often to make a point about the present and the future (e.g., Consentino, 1982; Scheub, 1996; Tonkin, 1992). While the relationship between narrative and truth is complex, not all narratives are equal; they may be evaluated, and some deemed better than others (Haraway, 1989). Within a particular context, meaning is negotiated through narratives and certain versions will not have currency with the group and will not be circulated (Myerhoff, 1992; Urban, 1996).

Narratives serve as a rationale for action. Because cultural narratives encode the knowledge that everyone in the group buys into, they can be reframed to comment critically and persuasively on social life. Narratives operate in the world and get results; they have *narrative potency* (Raheja and Gold, 1994). Because access to this process of meaning-making is so significant and so unequal, Foucault argued that power precedes politics. Those who generate narratives—storytellers broadly conceived—are in a

position of relative control in the process of the social construction of meaning (Bauman, 1986); they have *narrator potency.*[6]

Narratives can be related in a number of media such as books, periodicals, film, and video have the ability to disseminate knowledge widely. However, access to expression in these media is restricted and difficult. *Storytelling,* as I use it here, refers specifically to a sub-type of narration—the relating of narratives in person, orally (or by signing), to an audience of at least one (Ryan, 1995). The medium of storytelling is potentially available to everyone because everyone is able to tell a story and no equipment is required. Thus storytelling is a readily attainable means whereby persons can access at least some narrator potency. In Central America, for example, for a prostrate populace, *testimonio* literature—based on the spoken narrative of life experience—both expressed and effected resistance to oppressive regimes (Gugelberger and Kearney, 1991; Harlow, 1987; Menchu, 1984; Zimmerman, 1995). While storytelling may seem by definition small-scale and therefore insignificant, storytelling has the potential to be empowering because it is profoundly accessible.

First, the storyteller is accessible to her or his audience in ways that the narrator of a textbook, a film, or TV news is not. Unlike an interview in a video documentary, for example, storytelling is a direct interpersonal interaction, and can generate and sustain person-to-person relationships in immediate and dynamic ways. The proximity of the storyteller to the listener can engender feelings of closeness, community, and security. Post-storytelling dialogue among storyteller and listeners is often a part of the storytelling process. The audience may directly challenge or critique the storyteller. In the medium of storytelling, the power relationship between the narrator and audience is more in balance and allows for the possibility of a collaborative process of meaning-making.

Second, stories are intellectually accessible. Literacy is not required. Special training or experience is not required to appreciate stories. Children as young as three-and-a-half years old and persons with severe cognitive deficits can understand stories (e.g., Peterson and McCabe, 1991). This may make stories seem infantile and far afield from weighty affairs of state, but rather this is a clue to stories' significance. Storytelling (as narrative) is a methodology for both apprehending and presenting knowledge; that is, storytelling is an analytical methodology that almost everyone can employ to some degree. Stories are a means of socializing and educating youth in all societies. Information necessary for survival and making society has to be able to be understood by and communicated by all members of the community. The ability to tell and understand stories is probably a critical capacity with which humans are innately endowed.

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[6] I make a distinction between the potency of the narrative itself and the power of the narrator's ability to narrate. This is to clarify that Raheja and Gold's (1994) concept of *narrative potency* encompassed both of these.

Third, stories are accessible because they are low-tech. No special equipment or training is required so access to storytelling is not restricted by economic class. Even in the restricted circumstances of oppression and slavery; storytelling can be a means of comfort, survival, resistance, and maintaining cultural identity.

What was related about Robert Desnos at the beginning of this paper is a story about stories. For me, it illustrates two ways in which storytelling can be significant for conflict resolution, peace-making, and peace-building. First, the storytelling described above invites a paradigm shift; it catalyzes a *transformation.* Second, because it requires no special equipment or training, storytelling is technically and intellectually accessible, and therefore potentially *empowering.* Storytelling is a resource even when stripped of all possessions and in the face of overwhelming power; as James Scott (1990) puts it: "short of killing its bearer, the human voice is irrepressible" (p. 163).

This is not to diminish the power of social and political violence to cause trauma and death to individuals and whole groups of people. Such violence may threaten the security and integrity of persons' identities and psyches that results in fear and internalized oppression that suppresses the human voice (e.g., Fanon, 1963). But the boundary of one's mind may also be the last stand—a place that remains illegible and uncontrollable to the dominator. Therefore, the individual voice—expressing one's own experience and possibly also representing the similar experience of others—has the potential to be a critical means of empowerment.

Also, of course, storytelling and other forms of discourse do not always generate peaceful relationships among and within communities. Storytelling and other modes of expression may, in fact, intensify social cleavages and mistrust and perpetuate structural violence. Thus, I make a distinction between destructive versus constructive storytelling. Based on a review of literature in the field, the cornerstones of peace are understood to be power balance, mutual recognition, critical awareness, and sometimes acts of resistance (Senehi, 2000). Constructive storytelling is associated with positive peace; destructive storytelling is associated with its antithesis. *Destructive storytelling* is associated with coercive power ("power over" rather than "power with"), exclusionary practices, a lack of mutual recognition, dishonesty, and a lack of awareness. Destructive storytelling sustains mistrust and denial. *Constructive storytelling* is inclusive and fosters collaborative power and mutual recognition; creates opportunities for openness, dialogue, and insight; a means to bring issues to consciousness; and a means of resistance. Such storytelling builds understanding and awareness, and fosters voice.

It may not always be immediately evident whether a particular instance of storytelling is more or less exclusionary. Sometimes a particular group might create a closed setting where they can feel free to air certain experiences without retribution, for example, at an all-lesbian gathering. Such environments may seem exclusionary, but paradoxically allow for the

inclusion of these voices in a public—although not fully public—conversation. And it might not always be clear whether or not storytelling is emancipatory. What is critical is to examine how storytelling takes place—for example, who creates the stories and whose interests do they serve?

Factors in Intergroup Conflicts

This paper is based on an understanding of intergroup conflicts as complex—that is, involving both objective and subjective components that interdepend. Structural violence engenders cultural violence, and cultural violence engenders structural violence (Galtung, 1990). Protracted social conflicts play themselves out on multiple social planes: geographically, in the economic system, in politics, in law, in educational access and curricula, in interpretations of history, linguistically, and in religious and cultural practices. The dynamics of conflict in these numerous social arena intersect and reinforce each other to perpetuate the conflict and the negative relationship between groups (Byrne and Carter, 1996). Intercommunal conflicts can become encoded in each group's identity and culture in an intensifying cycle of rigidification, separation, and distortion (Northrup, 1991). The intercommunal conflict permeates social life.

To recognize the complexity of intercommunal conflicts is not only analytically sound, but has practical implications. Conflicts' complexity is double-edged. Complexity contributes to conflict perpetuation and intractability. But simultaneously, this suggests multiple arenas for intervention, multiple agents of intervention, and multiple intervention tasks in a dynamic process of social change (e.g., Kriesberg, 1991). Improving the relationship between groups facilitates sustainable problem-solving, and successful problem-solving builds mutual trust and confidence and improves intergroup relationships (e.g., Kelman, 1998; Rothman, 1997). Interventions directed at one factor in a conflict can affect other factors as well. Consciousness-raising and efforts to change attitudes can lead to new policies, laws, and institutions; and new policies, laws, and institutions can lead to new cultural norms in a dialectical process of social change. By naming in detail the ways in which intergroup conflicts are driven and perpetuated makes it possible for people at all strata of society to participate more consciously to determine their own culture, address critical concerns, and conceive of modes of resolution.

In this section, the significance of storytelling for seven factors in intergroup conflicts are examined. Throughout the discussion, a distinction is made between destructive discourses (encompassing all narrative media, including storytelling) and constructive storytelling (focusing only on the medium of storytelling) with the emphasis on constructive storytelling because that is the focus of this paper. What is always at issue in this distinction are processes of domination versus peace—that is, coercive power

versus shared power, dehumanization of the other versus mutual recognition, dishonesty and unawareness versus honesty and a critical consciousness, and resistance and agency versus passivity and hopelessness in the face of social injustice.

Knowledge

Language is a means through which communities develop and articulate their worldview. The knowledge encoded in language and culture facilitate common understandings of experience and form the naturalized truths for a particular community (Narayan, 1989). These norms make life predictable and secure rather than frighteningly random (Northrup, 1989). The social process of constructing meaning is critical to peace-making and peace-building because conflicts can be understood as a contestation of meaning (Lederach, 1996). In the case of intractable inter-communal conflicts, the conflict becomes encoded in each communities' cultural knowledge, involving understandings of self and other, interpretations of history, goals for the future, and norms regarding how to go about addressing conflicts.

DESTRUCTIVE DISCOURSE. Power relations between and within communities are encoded in language (e.g., Foucault, 1972). These power relations are often reflected in what are seen as more legitimate or politically powerful discourses: mass media versus what has a lesser audience or no audience (Randall, 1991), discourses from within academia versus from without (Foucault, 1972; Franklin, 1978), and "high culture" and "literature" versus "low culture" and "folklore" (Bakhtin, 1986; Franklin, 1978; Gates, 1988; Gugelberger and Kearney, 1991; Roberts, 1989). Only those in power may have access to producing knowledge, and therefore authoritative discourses may serve the interests of power rather than truth. As a result, cultural knowledge and history may exclude or misrepresent whole groups of people, and collective trauma may remain unacknowledged and therefore unhealed.

CONSTRUCTIVE STORYTELLING. In a peaceful community, all persons have access to processes for developing knowledge, and research goals serve the interests of all groups. In peace, all feel their story is told and heard. Because storytelling is accessible, story-based interventions and projects can be a means for facilitating more voices into the public transcript.

Storytelling as the spoken narrative of life experience has given a voice of resistance to whole groups otherwise excluded from the "authoritative" discourse of First World journalism, academia, and literature (e.g., Gugelberger and Kearney, 1991; Randall, 1991). For example, in Central America, for a prostrate populace, *testimonio* literature—based on the spoken narrative of life experience—both expressed and effected resistance to oppressive regimes (Gugelberger and Kearney, 1991; Menchu, 1984; Harlow, 1987; Zimmerman, 1995). This body of social and political history

includes the 1984 autobiography of Guatemalan social activist and Nobel Peace Prize (1992) winner Rigoberta Menchu Tum.

Sometimes there is silence or unawareness around conflict issues. Groups sharing a certain difficult situation or set of experiences may literally establish a community-base, power-base, and knowledge-base through sharing their stories (Plummer, 1995). This knowledge, embraced and shared by group members, literally builds a sense of community. Such community-building is a means of empowering individuals and groups to address problems that were previously latent. In the 1960s, through small consciousness-raising groups, middle-class white women recognized that their individual experiences were not idiosyncratic but were shared by others and shaped in significant ways by social factors. Women saw themselves as connected in a common struggle and were able to mobilize for political and social change. In this kind of process, the personal story becomes the political story. This may change how groups think about themselves, each other, and the world.

In 1946 in the aftermath of WWII, the Caux Palace Hotel in the Swiss Alps became Mountain House, a setting for reconciliation and peace-making, and since that time more than 250,000 persons have attended conferences or encounters there (Henderson, 1996). Increasingly, citizen-diplomats are coming together across profound divides to understand social conflicts through interpersonal conversations—whether in the context of "study circles," "public conversations," "dialogue groups," "problem-solving workshops," or other encounters. Such interventions involve personal storytelling and inevitably become a process of collaboratively developing mutual recognition and social knowledge (e.g., Schwartz, 1989). Harold Saunders (1999) argues that the Israeli-Palestinian peace process of 1993 would not have been possible without interpersonal dialogue directed at addressing conflict issues as well as everyday intergroup interactions involving "countless Israelis and Palestinians" over the preceding 20 years (p. xx).

Identity

Stories create and give expression to personal and group identity. The very process of storytelling and narration fosters empathy as listeners identify with the characters in a story. Elizabeth Fine and Jean Haskell Speer (1992) discuss the power of performance to shape and model identity. The principle of performance, they argue, is identification—the sharing of identity—rather than rhetorical deliberation: "Cultural performance both imitates cultural identities and perpetuates identities as a web" (p. 10).

Cultural production is crucial to national identity because it articulates and engenders the nation's identity, history, and vision (Anderson, 1983). A community's expressive traditions encode a body of shared knowledge to which persons are intellectually and emotionally—even morally—committed. Because they are accessible, fluid, and used contextually, stories

can be a means of reformulating cultural notions in order to comment critically and persuasively on social life. Thus, group narratives have political import. Usually, intergroup conflicts are framed in identity terms. In long-standing intractable conflicts, the conflict itself becomes a part of group identity (Northrup, 1989). Identity-based violence may involve forced assimilation or punishment by murder, expulsion, marginalization, or oppression based on one's identity (Galtung, 1990).

DESTRUCTIVE DISCOURSE. Because political domination depends on culturally-defined social difference, high literature is used by dominant classes to make social difference appear natural or justified (e.g., Gugelberger and Kearney, 1991; Said, 1993). As a result, social conflicts can be rendered less visible and are therefore less easy to address, and people may participate in the oppression of others and even in their own oppression in ways of which they are unaware. A community's folk stories can encode highly negative images of the enemy (Snyder, 1978; Volkan, 1988, 1996). In Nazi Germany, folklore studies became an instrument of racist state ideology (Dow and Lixfeld, 1994; Lixfeld and Dow, 1994). Minority groups may be stereotyped in film, television, books, and other media portrayals. When there is social inequality among groups in a society, disempowered groups may not have access to dominant and powerful media of cultural production, and in this way their identity within the wider community is made invisible or threatened with erasure.

CONSTRUCTIVE STORYTELLING. However, because the process of listening to a story involves walking in the narrators' shoes and because stories translate well across culture, mutual recognition is fostered when people listen to each other's stories—even across cultural divides and in the context of social conflicts. Mutual recognition does not refer to a universalizing view where one party embraces another party as essentially the same as the self. Claims of a common humanity can rationalize an assimilationist position that subordinates particularities to dominant prototypes (West, 1990). Rather, the concept of mutual recognition encompasses the willingness of parties to engage in dialogue. This should include a struggle to articulate and examine differences. While developing understanding across boundaries of cultural difference may never be complete or unproblematic, it seems that trusting relationships require a desire on the part of all parties to recognize the dignity and experiences of the other.

For example, in Burundi, contemporary poetry and storytelling performance provide a means for developing a shared culture "as a necessary first step" in ending and recovering from cycles of severe intergroup violence there (Kadende-Kaiser and Kaiser, 1997). In the case of long-standing inter-communal conflicts, developing a shared historical narrative may be a means for bridging conflict and developing a shared identity that encompasses diversity without erasing it (Kelman, 1998). Dan Bar-On (2000) and others have brought people from different sides of divides together in seminars called "To Trust and Reflect" where persons' shared their personal

experiences and listened to those of others. Evaluations of these seminars emphasized the value of the storytelling that this space made possible: "Hearing the stories of the 'other' and learning more about their pain and suffering, something that left an impact on me. Storytelling and the care, support, safety and protection of the TRT group to others which made it easy to open up and trust" (Maoz, 2000, p. 152).

Persons' telling stories about their experience is also a means through which identity groups may come into existence as part of a process of consciousness-raising and political mobilization to address a latent conflict. Kenneth Plummer (1995) argues that an interaction between telling sexual stories—e.g., coming out stories and rape stories—have helped create and build communities where these stories can be told. At the same time, this storytelling leads to political action, and when it occurs in more public settings (such as TV talk shows), it challenges the social order by increasing acceptance for and understanding of marginalized persons and groups.

Socialization

Stories are a means of socializing children in all cultures. Stories told in childhood may be connected with intense bonds of love that the child has for her or his caregiver(s) during the time of life when she or he is most helpless. Such storytelling is also a process of political socialization and teaches about identity, power, and inter-group relations. Family storytelling is also a means through which inter-communal conflicts and identity-based prejudice are transmitted through the generations.

DESTRUCTIVE DISCOURSE. Images of the enemy and political information, encoded in cultural parades and festivals attended by families, may be fused with childhood affections that would make them hard to question or challenge (Wadley, 1995). For example, a poor white boy growing up in Durham, North Carolina, during the 1940s longed for closeness with his remote alcoholic father, a closeness that was only achieved when his father talked to him about the organization that he loved—the Ku Klux Klan (Davidson, 1996). That boy, Claiborne Paul Ellis eventually became a leading member of that white supremacist organization although he later renounced the KKK after participating in sustained dialogue and befriending black civil rights advocate and his previous enemy Ann Atwater.

Stories encode and transmit everyday understandings of conflict and what to do about it. Stories may glorify and/or justify violence to recruit military volunteers, child soldiers, and martyrs. Militarism is so endemic to U.S. culture that the end of the Cold War alone could not alter this political culture (Enloe, 1993). Louis Snyder (1978) argues that the Grimms' *Fairy Tales* (1812) influenced the construction of twentieth-century German nationalism and militarism. Snyder argues that whether consciously or unconsciously, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm emphasized in their recrafting of the tales a set of values that played a significant role in the socialization of future generations and the acceptance of Nazism by many German people

nearly a century later. These values included "respect for order, belief in the desirability of obedience, subservience to authority, respect for the leader and the hero, veneration of courage and the military spirit, acceptance without protest of cruelty, violence and atrocity, fear of and hatred for the outsider, and virulent anti-Semitism" (p. 51).

Modern educational institutions may deny identity needs in ways that are exclusionary. Educational curriculum may omit the achievements and perspectives of certain groups of people. Textbooks may misrepresent history or the experience of particular groups. Sometimes public education is a harsh means for resocializing indigenous persons and immigrants. In educational institutions, silence of faculty and administration around issues such as drop-out rates and the lack of job opportunities may confuse students and prevent a critical awareness (Fine, 1989).

CONSTRUCTIVE STORYTELLING. Many have called for peace education as an alternative means of political socialization to create alternative visions of conflict resolution and to promote the development of a peaceful world (e.g., Brock-Utne, 1985; Reardon, 1993). Storytelling, which is a significant means of socializing children across cultures, can play an important role in this process. In Mozambique, the UNICEF-funded "Circle of Peace," used traditional music, art, and drama to teach peace-building to children (Kolucki, 1993; Lederach, 1997). In response to the U.S.-Iraq war in 1991, storyteller Margaret Read MacDonald (1992) collected *Peace Tales: World Folktales to Talk About.* Interestingly, MacDonald (2001)—who had traveled throughout the world telling stories, collecting stories, and doing collaborative storytelling projects—reports that it was difficult to find "peace tales" because stories throughout the world tend more often to be about triumph and militarism. In response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S., New York City storyteller Laura Simms (2002) collected traditional stories in her book, *Stories to Nourish Our Children in a Time of Crisis.* Sometimes new stories are developed: in Germany's Weimar Republic (1919-1933), political activists wrote alternative utopian fairy tales (Zipes 1989).

Children and youth may take part in crafting these stories themselves and articulating their experiences of conflict as part of a process of healing and envisioning a better future. Recent conflicts throughout the world have impacted child survivors—including the children of systematic rape in the former Yugoslavia; child soldiers; and children who have witness the deaths of family, friends, and neighbors. *Mladi Most,* which means "Youth Bridge," is a community center in Mostar, Bosnia, for Bosniak and Croat youth between the ages of 16 and 25; there, Austrian photographer Uli Loskot mentored youths in a collaborative project of photographing images of war resulting in an international exhibit of their work, "Crucible of War 2000." Child survivors of the genocidal violence in Rwanda tell their stories through drawings in *Witness to Genocide* put together by Richard Salem (2000), a mediator and former journalist after visiting Rwanda's National Trauma Center in Kigali in 1997.

Peace education also encompasses developing awareness regarding the causes of conflicts and modes of conflict resolution, both interpersonally and for wider social contexts. Peace education may also involve "teaching tolerance"—to quote the title of the Southern Poverty Law Center magazine for teachers—and teaching about interpersonal and social conflicts and what to do about them. Importantly, curriculum and teaching practices should reflect the interests and needs of students, and not be a means of reproducing oppression (e.g., Bourdieu and Passerson, 1977; Freire, 1970). For groups who feel they are not represented within educational institutions and curricula, storytelling at home is an alternative means of education and a means of resistance (e.g., Cruikshank, 1998; Parks, 1994; Roberts, 1989).

Emotions

Stories simultaneously engage mind and heart. Through storytelling and other cultural rituals, information and argument is conveyed, but gains added power through the emotional impact of the story that is sensed and felt by participants (Urban, 1991). However, because of their ability to arouse emotions, stories are often suspect and associated with the irrational.

In conflict, emotions may get in the way of addressing a problem or conflict cautiously and morally. Intergroup conflicts and violence are fueled by powerful emotions of fear, mistrust, anger, hatred, and grief as well as self-loathing. Such emotions reflect a negative and destructive relationship between self and other.

DESTRUCTIVE DISCOURSE. When political debates about present needs become associated with symbols and narratives of national identity, they become harder to challenge (Horowitz, 1986). Stories may tap into intense emotions—for example, the love, grief, and anger associated with the violent death of a loved one—in order to foment hatred. Or, narratives justifying violent interventions may draw on memories of past humiliations. When collective trauma (and all the emotions subsumed therein) remain unacknowledged, fear and mistrust intensify; this can serve as an obstacle to a group's healing and moving forward.

CONSTRUCTIVE STORYTELLING. Addressing emotions is critical in post-conflict peace-building. When a collective historical trauma remains unacknowledged, this can be an obstacle to the traumatized group's healing and inter-group rapprochement (Brooks, 1999). Storytelling—in the context of truth commissions, dialogue groups, or interpersonally—can be a means of facing history and healing in the aftermath of inter-communal violence (e.g., Bar-On, 2000; Belton, 1999; Minow, 1998; Saunders, 1999). In a Tanzanian camp for Rwandan refugees where refugees were told not to discuss their experiences, women cured their insomnia by telling the stories of the atrocities they had experienced to a "story tree" at the suggestion of a psychologist working there (Anderson and Foley, 1988).

Storytelling in a safe place, such as the home, among persons who share a common hardship or experience of oppression, can be an occasion when their

perspectives, silenced elsewhere, become prominent. This can be both emotionally comforting and a form of resistance. Such a safe place becomes a site where people are no longer objects, but rather can regain their "human-ness" and engage in subject-subject dialogue in order to comment upon, interpret, strategize about, and heal from their difficulties (hooks, 1990).

Stories' ability to touch the heart makes them a powerful tool for social change (Henderson, 1996). Thus, stories can exert moral pressure (Coles, 1989). Gandhi argued that to encourage personal transformation in others "you must not merely satisfy reason, but you must move the heart also" (cited in Barash, 1991, p. 560).

Storytelling also connects people in ways that bring individuals and groups affirmation and pleasure. Professional U.S. storyteller Bill Harley (1996) stated that even more profound than stories' role in education or protest, is the "joy" experienced in the storytelling interaction. This builds bonds of community among people as they share laughter and tears. This kind of community-building occurs in dialogue groups and similar encounters (e.g., Bar-On, 2000). Storytelling can be a means of comfort and hope during hardship. It is a powerful means of community building that can help create bonds among people during post-conflict peace-building.

Morality

Stories, even personal stories, always imply how things should be. They have moral import. All religions encompass a body of stories that encode understandings of right and wrong. Storyteller and theologian Megan McKenna (1998) states that all stories have the purpose of "transformation, conversion, or change." Stories are about envisioning what should be in order to shape social thought and action to bring that about.

Issues of morality are relevant to conflict in several ways. Conflicts framed in moral terms are particularly difficult to resolve. When the opposing party is viewed as immoral, this affects the willingness to resolve and choices regarding how a particular conflict will be addressed. On the other hand, a moral vision is often what compels persons to serve in conflict as intermediaries, advocates for the disempowered, and voices for peace, often in the face of physical threat and at great personal cost.

DESTRUCTIVE DISCOURSE. Cultural violence is that which justifies structural and direct violence (Galtung, 1990). Powerful narratives can make ideology appear natural in order to rationalize social injustice. Framing a conflict in moral terms without an effort to understand the perspectives of the other party can be a part of the process of demonizing the enemy.

CONSTRUCTIVE STORYTELLING. Robert Coles (1989) argues that stories can evoke a "moral imagination" that calls persons to question their assumptions and make choices that are motivated by unselfish ends. Such stories can be a means of resistance and a compelling call for the redress of wrongs. They might describe moral approaches to conflict resolution and problem-solving. Coles (1993) writes about how one black nine-year-old girl, Ruby Bridges,

empowered by the biblical stories told to her by her aunt, was able to face angry crowds of white parents with courage and forgiveness to be the first (and, for several months, the only) black child in a school desegregated by court order but not yet by practice. This storytelling is also part of a complex process of knowledge production, socialization, and even emotion, and it involved the personal agency of both Ruby and her aunt. The stories Ruby's aunt told were selected from among many biblical stories, were told in the context of a loving relationship between the child and her elder relative, and discussed in relationship to the significant social events that were affecting their lives.

Time and memory

Stories, as narrative, have a dimension of time that mimics the dimension of time in life (Narayan, 1989). However, stories can also be understood to disrupt the linearity of time. Through stories, persons visit the past; this may involve, for example, remembering a loved one. Also, narratives draw on the past in order to envision the future—in the context of present needs and intentions (Sheub, 1996; Tonkin, 1992). The past, present, and future mutually determine one another as parts of a whole (Carr, 1996).

Issues of time, memory, and history are significant in intergroup conflicts because the conflict is often framed as being about past events that have disrupted relationships. Memories of past conflict are passed from generation to generation by means of stories. Conflicts may involve a claim to a glorious or at least different past. Reconciliation and post-conflict peace-building may involve coming to terms with and healing from the past. Through stories, we visit, interpret, mourn, and treasure the past. Meanwhile, at stake may be the future. When memories are shared in public setting, they become part of a historical record and culture, and they can have moral and political import.

DESTRUCTIVE DISCOURSE. During times of political crisis, narrative's disruption of time can be part of a process of "time collapse"—where the antagonisms, injustice, and violence of even centuries past are experienced intensely in the present—and exacerbate intergroup conflict (Volkan, 1998). In Northern Ireland, Protestant and Catholic paramilitaries draw on stories of historical victories and massacres to legitimate political violence. Interpretations of history may be inaccurate or incomplete in ways that justify inequality, dismiss groups of people, or foment intergroup tensions.

CONSTRUCTIVE STORYTELLING. During years of apartheid in South Africa, oral historians and storytellers drew on the past in conscious ways in order to articulate various social and political arguments for the Xhosa people in resistance to their government in the present and with specific objectives for the future (Scheub, 1996). This expressive and analytical tradition created a channel of meaning that kept awareness and consciousness of the conflict high. Individuals' interpretations of experience and actions informed the stories, and the stories affected individuals' interpretations and actions.

Beginning in April 1996, the amnesty hearings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission have been a process of developing historical knowledge in the aftermath of political, intergroup violence. In these hearings, persons report their experiences, which is a process of interpersonal storytelling. While the trials were attended mostly by black South Africans, they have been aired on national TV. An ongoing cultural backdrop, the trials could be seen on TV monitors in hotel lobbies. While this process may have several limitations and is not wholly satisfactory, the TRC has provided the space for survivors of political terrorism and violence to include their experience as part of a very public record. It will be difficult—if not impossible—to dismiss these testimonies in the future. As of November 2000, the TRC recorded tens of thousands of statements, received 7,112 applications for amnesty, rejected 5,392 applications, and granted 849. The material bases of the conflict were also addressed by the TRC, which included in its report a call for big business to offset past poverty caused by apartheid policies through a one-time levy of one percent of their capital.

Long-standing intergroup conflicts—such as in South Africa, the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and in Northern Ireland—the perspectives of each group are grounded in historical narratives with divergent meanings. Developing a shared historical narrative may be necessary for transforming the intergroup conflict and allowing for a shared vision of the future (Kelman 1995).

Geographic space

Geography (so tangible) and stories (so intangible) at first may seem unrelated. But stories are often tied to geographic places which have cultural and symbolic significance for persons and particular communities (e.g., Lane 1988). Particular locations figure prominently in religious, national, and historical narratives. Narratives also encode cultural norms regarding the relationship between humans and the natural environment.

Geography, of course, is significant for intergroup conflicts as many involve overlapping claims for sovereignty over a particular territory. Conflicts occur between persons and settlers, and between waves of settlers to a region, all of whom over time develop powerful ties to place. Arguably, such conflict bases are especially resistant—if not wholly resistant—to anything but a zero-sum outcome (Agnew, 1989).

DESTRUCTIVE DISCOURSE. Identity and geography are often fused in a group's historical narrative. Such narratives may justify territorial claims in us/them terms. Different cultural worldviews, encoded in narratives, may reflect wholly different ways of looking at the environment, leading to conflicts about environmental issues.

CONSTRUCTIVE STORYTELLING. Storytelling as a conflict resolution method to promote a reinterpretation of space is certainly a very unexplored area. However, a recent issue of the journal *Orion* contained examples of how storytelling (in both written and oral forms) was being used for restoration of local communities and natural areas. In an urban Tuscon

neighborhood, youths gathered local stories from the past and present about their community (Eisele 2001). As part of this process, for these youths, an increase of regard for the locality went hand-in-hand with an increase of self-regard; again, identity and geography intertwine. Increasingly in the U.S., communities are consciously defining and affirming their knowledge about their region—both drawing on the knowledge of naturalists; the spoken narratives of elder residents; and the efforts of local writers, poets, and artists—in order to inspire and shape future decisions regarding the lands (e.g., Adams 2001, Nelson and Klasky 2001, Teter 2001, Wilson 2001.) As Constance Mears, the book designer of *At Home on Fidalgo* (Adams, 1999) about Fidalgo Island in Washington State, put it: "'Our stories are threads that anchor us into the land. They're like invisible roots that go deep in and when people have those, they take care of their place'" (cited in Adams, 2001, p. 11). As groups in long-standing conflict begin to craft shared historical narratives, they may simultaneously develop shared identities and a cooperative vision of place.

Transcultural Storytellers

Storytellers are typically seen as addressing their own cultural audience: Walter Benjamin (1868) characterized storytellers as either *farmers,* who relate the knowledge of the local community, or *seafarers,* who share the stories of their adventures when they come back home. But it is possible to also conceive of a storyteller who enters into an environment where she or he is largely an outsider and tells stories of her or his community of origin; such storytellers represent their community to others. And, in fact, throughout history, storytellers have often served as ambassadors and diplomats (e.g., Hale, 1999).

Such storytelling is relevant to understanding conflict practice. This paper is a call to recognize, value, examine, and invent such interventions. There is no one formula. Storytelling—a particularly flexible and available medium—lends itself to perhaps an infinite variety of applications.

In Belfast, both Catholics and Protestants are part of a yarnspinners' group (or, storytelling guild) established by storyteller Liz Weir to help build community across the sectarian divide. Weir (1996) believes that in the modern world, storytelling is critical for bringing people together on a personal level: "You don't ask a person who they are when they come to a storytelling group. But you know. The stories we tell show who we are." The storytelling guild provides a context where people can build relationships on a personal level by simply telling tales or stories about their lives. Ireland is known for its storytelling. But, in this situation, in a community characterized by sectarian separation and conflict, Weir is using the indigenous storytelling tradition in a new, transcultural context. Through this process, a broader, shared identity is developed.

Conflict resolution practitioner, scholar, and educator John Paul Lederach has also taken on the role of storyteller. Lederach and his friend and colleague Herm Weaver, a college professor and singer, have used a story and song as "a small response" to terrorism and war in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. (Shenk, 2002). The story tells about how a high school changed the world by reaching out to Middle Easterners in their community. Lederach stated, "This is a true story except for the parts that haven't happened yet" (cited in Shenk, 2002). As a result of hearing this story performed by Lederach with musical accompaniment and singing by Weaver, high school students took action: they began learning the Arabic language, established a sister-school relationship with a high school in the Middle East, invited Arab community members to speak, and gathered blankets for Afghan refugees.

Conclusion

Stories have power. They operate in the world and get results (Raheja and Gold, 1994). However, power and stories are also constrained. Stories operate within a context of ideological, economic, and power constraints. We must examine how we can facilitate cultural spaces where people—faced with social upheaval and conflicts or in the aftermath of violence and tragedy—can participate in building communities and inter-communal relationships characterized by shared power, mutual recognition, and awareness in order to work together to shape the future.

Storyteller and theologian Megan McKenna (1998) states that all stories have the purpose of transformation, conversion, or change: "Stories were meant to, first, tell you the truth. But to posit it in such a way that you must decide whether that's the truth you abide by, and whether that's the truth *you* tell with your life, and that's that story that makes *you* come true. When it comes down to it: Stories—even when they just confirm something that we already *believe* and *feel*—are about making us make that a reality. So I mean we talk about "happily ever after." It only gets to be "happy ever after" if you do something with it."

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