Narrative Praxis
A (Draft) Training Guide for Conflict Intervenors

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Erin Nielsen, Mel Kutner, Riley Barrar, Kaitlyn Conway and Stacy Chapman

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INTRODUCTION TO NARRATIVE

"A NARRATIVE IS COMPOSED OF A UNIQUE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS, MENTAL STATES, HAPPENINGS INVOLVING HUMAN BEINGS AS CHARACTERS OR ACTORS. THE MEANING OF THESE THINGS IS GIVEN BY THEIR PLACE IN THE OVERALL CONFIGURATION OF THE SEQUENCE AS A WHOLE -- ITS PLOT" - BRUNER

WHAT IS NARRATIVE PRAXIS?

The history of narrative praxis is both fluid and constant with the starting point difficult to discern. But do not fear, this is the piece of narrative work that is often most appealing to those who study the field. The essence of narrative work and the focus on storytelling as a meaning making process is influenced by many cultures throughout history and continues to grow. Narrative work is not fixed or stagnant, the action of using this praxis influences its development. So welcome to the effort in creating and developing narrative praxis!

On the way to this training, you most likely went through a series of actions to get here. These actions could include taking a shower, getting dressed, drinking coffee, taking public transportation or driving your car, finding the location of the building, and locating a seat and preparing for this training. To do any of these activities, there is a strong chance you spoke to someone this morning. Did you say goodbye to a loved one? Did you speak to a cashier to buy coffee or purchase gas? Did you say “excuse me” to exit transportation? Finally, did you introduce yourself or make small talk with someone else at the training?

Human interaction in our global world could be considered inevitable in order to conduct our daily lives. Even in actions that seem independent, interaction often occurs. Our daily interactions compound over time to influence stories we tell about different parts of our lives, from how we explain certain traditions, to thoughts on politics or violence, for example. We explain our viewpoints through discourse. “From this perspective, language is not representational; what we call ‘reality’ resides and is expressed in ones’ descriptions of events, people, ideas, feelings, and experiences. These descriptions, in turn, evolve through social interactions that are themselves shaped by those descriptions; discourse provides the frames within which social action takes place.” (Sluzki, 2) Narrative through the use of discourse, then, provides a realm for development and analysis.
HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF NARRATIVE STUDIES

The conception and discussions of narratives can be traced back to Aristotle in his *Poetics* in which he defines a narrative in temporal and moral terms. For Aristotle, narrative has a beginning, middle, and an end, and includes a plot where a hero or protagonist is in a conflict or problem which elicits feelings of sympathy or worry from the audience. Although these features are still important in narrative studies today, contemporary narrative analysis is rooted in a number of areas. Some key players and schools of thought who very closely influenced and organized the praxis:

- **Communication and pragmatics**: Ludwig Wittgenstein began to look at the role of language specifically in thought processes. Rather than ideas arriving out of thin air, he focused on language as a practice and the way in which confusion over language was often rooted in philosophical issues. He allowed that language could be using as a “tracing” mechanism to follow a path of thought and philosophy. These concepts are identified in his book, *Philosophical Investigations*.

- **Social psychology and human development**: Lev Vygotsky was a strong influence in the developmental psychology. He often focused on how the social environment influenced learning in children. He posited that the development of self arises through interaction. Our processing of understanding our interaction informs our social self and social behavior. “Learning awakens a variety of internal developing processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers.” (Vygotsky, 35)

- **Anthropology and ethnographic studies**: Clifford Geertz is known for his efforts in developing “thick description” insights to the field of anthropology by increasing communication with “subjects” of study and trying to understand the way in which individuals conceptualize their world. He focused away from generalizing and instead looked at interpreting meaning in subjective and individual reflections.

- **Narrative as a meaning making process**: A psychologist, Jerome Bruner, is considered one of the pioneers of cognitive psychology. Bruner focuses on language and narrative as the very epicenter of the meaning process and by doing so, allows for work on narratives to have the ability to influence meaning making.

See the ‘Additional Resources and Literature on Narrative’ at the end of this document for an extensive list of literature related to narrative.
For the purposes of applying narrative theory to conflict settings, Jerome Bruner’s expanded on the definition of what constitutes a narrative is the most useful. He requires “four grammatical constituents”: 1) agentivity – action directed towards goals controlled by agents, 2) sequential order, 3) sensitivity to what is canonical and that what violates it, and 4) a perspective of the narrator (Bruner, 1990). In particular, the focus on what is canonical and what violates it is important in understanding how implicit personal expectations, social norms and values are shared and communicated.

Jane Elliott explains the importance of narratives to sociology, as well as all social science research. She elaborates the connection between narrative and the constructivist methodologies, which concern themselves with questions that ask what social activities consist of, where and how are they recognized and reproduced. She provides three connections between features of narrative and social science research practices.

1. Narratives are **temporal**, and many social scientists are recognizing that there is a temporal relationship between individual lives and social contexts, which provides a rationale for constructing a narrative-informed methodology

2. Narratives by their nature are evaluative and more importantly **meaningful** to the tellers and hearer; they are also ubiquitous within everyday social interaction. This justifies a call for greater sociological attention to narratives to understand what meanings are produced.

3. Narratives are produced for and by **social** processes. Even when you hear a narrative from one individual, that person is telling a story about what they know from social and personal interactions –importantly they are also telling a story for a particular audience.

What does this mean for you as an intervenor focused in praxis? It means that you have a living, breathing piece of meaning in front of you that wants to exist and continue to grow, perhaps even without the individual that currently is carrying that story. A narrative has resilience and wants to do whatever it can to continue living and circulating. Narratives begin to exist in a manner within themselves that can be picked up and carried by any individual. The goal of praxis in conflict narratives is to destabilize, reorganize, and complexify the narrative in front of you.
It is important to understand that conflicts ARE narratives. Conflict arises as a struggle over meaning. Narratives are nested like galaxies. Dominant cultural narratives stabilize the narrative by being told. Many have heard the old adage in conflict resolution that as conflict continues, unless something or someone interferes, people become more entrenched in their positions. Forms of mediation, such as facilitative mediation, suggest uprooting people’s interests in order to soften their positions. Where narrative work is similar is its focus on the narrative as its own entity in a conflict that can change form. As the narrative continues, it simplifies and takes on a cyclical nature. Cobb explains, “It is interesting and important to note that as conflicts become protracted, narratives become, structurally, increasingly simple.” (Cobb, 1994a) Conflict narratives, over time, are drained of complexity as parties develop narrative “short cuts”, events in the main plot line become “dense” with meaning, in that they stand, as themselves a semiotic marker, for the entire set of contextualizing narratives that provide stability for that event.

Narrative praxis works to unravel these intertwined and simplified pieces and work with individuals and groups to rebuild the narratives in a new form. Conflict resolution is always a conversation first and foremost. It might be a conversation with a client, two parties, soccer teams in Bosnia, or a United Nations representative. Regardless it is always a conversation. Learning how to have good conversations helps the evolution of the problem. Jerome Bruner explains, “In human beings, with their astonishing narrative gift, one of the principal forms of peacekeeping is the human gift for presenting, dramatizing, and explicating the mitigating circumstances surrounding conflict-threatening breaches in the ordinariness of life. The objective of such narrative is not to reconcile, not to legitimize, not even to excuse, but rather to explicate.

GOALS OF THIS TRAINING

The following training seeks to break down these concepts more specifically and to provide techniques you can use in your own narrative praxis. You will start by reviewing the Scope of Praxis which includes key themes and social constructs in understanding the basis for narrative work. You might consider these your building blocks. The setting of those blocks can be found in the section called Praxis in Action. This section forms structure narrative work in terms of ethics and genre. From there, you will read about commonly used techniques in the
field. The literature will be supplemented with role plays and video examples assist with learning and praxis. Finally, a resource guide is available for you to learn more based on your interests. Remember, your participation in this training has just made you an active narrative practitioner! We can’t wait to see what you bring to the field!
SCOPE OF PRAXIS: KEY THEMES

"STORY, IN A WORD, IS VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE, AND THE TREASURY OF NARRATIVES INTO WHICH WE CAN ENTER INCLUDES, AMBIGUOUSLY, EITHER 'REPORTS OF REAL EXPERIENCE' OR OFFERINGS OF CULTURALLY SHAPED IMAGINATION. INDEED, THE EXISTENCE OF STORY AS A FORM IS A PERPETUAL GUARANTEE THAT HUMANKIND WILL 'GO META' ON RECEIVED VERSIONS OF REALITY"

- BRUNER

PRESENTER: Key Themes will be introduced to the entire group lecture-style. Make sure to show indented key points, and any charts to whole group on a board/chart paper or in a PPT. The text below can guide your talking points.

COUNTER NARRATIVES

Counter narratives are more than just the antithesis of a narrative; they struggle for legitimacy by building off existing narrative lines. Which narrative is dominant and which is counter depends on the context. A dominant (master) narrative will inoculate itself against change. The dominant narrative is centralized through the media. Social networks are an excellent place for counter narratives to proliferate. It is important to note that there can be more than one dominant and counter narrative. Often times counter narratives compete against each other for space. As narratives strengthen over time, the struggle between a dominant narrative and a counter narrative can be likened to a finger trap, the two becoming further entrenched in the conflict.

Related terms:

**Narrative Immunization**: incorporates master narrative into new structure. Not shared. New plot line.

**Narrative Restriction**: limits counter by bookending. Dominant narrative bookends counter narrative.

**Narrative Compression**: compressed version of reality. Master defends itself from counter - blends core moral frameworks with counter.

**Erasure**: stories or narratives are lost, or the tellers of the stories no longer have the legitimacy and ability to tell them.
POSITIONING THEORY

We structure the world based on the stories that we tell. They are culturally anchored and fluid. Rights, duties, and obligations flow from a moral location in the structure of our stories. Positioning happens in every story that we tell. A position in a narrative is a position in social space; a moral location that has consequences for what the people we position can do in the world.

One of the implications of Positioning Theory is that we get positioned all the time. In conversations we are constantly ascribing to ourselves and others rights and duties. Positions that delegitimize a person or a group can lead to conflict spiral and escalation. As negative positioning causes a narrative to get thinner and less complex, conflict and violence become more likely. One method used to delegitimize a group is the media which can assist in thinning a story and maintain delegitimacy.

Conflict resolution can be used as a repositioning practice. Conflict Resolution practices can challenge the way positions are constructed in a group, track positions and their evolution and thicken narratives of “the other” enough to allow repositioning to take place.

There are three types of Positioning:

1. Positioning of Self and Other through conversation – Through talking about a scenario/event/context the speaker implicitly positions the duties and rights of parties.
2. Conversation about first order positioning (or pre-positioning) - This happens when you talk to someone about something.
3. Conversation about the conversation about the positioning - commentary on second order positioning

Positioning Theory is made up of the Positioning Triad which include:

Position

Storyline

Speech Acts
COMPLEXIFYING AND ELABORATING

In stories of conflict, parties often see themselves as doing what they think is right or good. Conflict stories are often linear, uncomplex, and a one-way road to future or continued conflict. Narrative praxis attempts to complexify storylines by asking parties questions to elicit a response that complexifies the way a party views him/herself and the other party or parties. Once this is reached, a future beyond the conflict can be built and elaborated on so that each party includes the other and seems them as legitimate. The following are some steps on how to do this, as well as some tools that can be used to trace conversations to see if the line of questioning is effective.

In stories of conflict, parties often cast themselves as legitimate. This is done in contrast to the delegitimization of the other party involved, so that a party can project blame onto the opposing party. This can be done in a number of ways. Practitioners should look for how the party expresses their “good” nature. Sometimes this manifests as the party stating that they are legitimate by expressing their own embodiment of good values (honest, moral, cooperative, etc.), but sometimes a party may use different ways of stating this outright. In the case of the later, the practitioner must ask permission to assign a good quality to these cases (I can see you are a moral person. Would you agree?).

Once a practitioner pinpoints the use of the legitimizing factor, then s/he should work with that embodiment to show how this is not always the case (Turning Point 1). This can be done through questioning (Has this always been the case? Has there been a time when this wasn’t the case?) or by asking if this particular quality is problematic in their own story. Once the party has successfully depicted him/herself as a complex person, a practitioner should attempt to do the same to the opposing party via the party one is practicing with (Stage 2). The same line of questioning can be pursued to create a complex view of the other as one who is not entirely bad or malicious (Turning Point 2). This allows the party to view the other as partially legitimate, as well.

Once both parties are cast as legitimate, a practitioner must elaborating on the Future. When the previous scenario unfolds and the complexity of self and other emerges, the practitioner should continue to allow the storyline to build by elaborating more on this new found legitimacy and delegitimacy of both self and other (Turning Point 3). The practitioner should attempt to construct a storyline around the conflict’s history that casts both parties’
attempts to engage in the conflict as legitimate, highlighting that both attempts actually continued the conflict. In this space, with both parties’ complexity recognized by the party, a new story about the conflict’s history including the legitimate casting of both parties can replace the old (Stage 3).

Once the party has a complex understanding of the conflict’s history, future scenarios should be explored from this new platform of understanding (Turning Point 4). The exploration of possible futures should lead to a vision of a future that is populated by the engagement of both parties (Stage 4). In an attempt to further legitimize both self and other, the practitioner should encourage a reflection of both self and other’s values and elaborate their commonalities (Turning Point 5). Finally, the two parties should recognize their shared understandings of each other’s “good” natures so that both are legitimized without feeling threatened by the other’s legitimization (Stage 5).

- Cobb’s diagram (from class notes Jan 30, 2013) shows this process.
While the above process speaks more to a two party process, it is also possible for the same process to take place with many parties. Instead of a two-axis diagram, the process would look something more like a “braiding” of various “strands” composed of different narratives to build a new narrative. This is not necessarily a shared narrative, but a narrative that incorporates elements of others’ narratives. This will allow the conflict to be seen as complex and interdependent or various aspects and parties. The implication for this practice on implementing a resolution is that any solution will require the inclusion of other parties’ perceptions of the conflict as well as their cooperation in the conflict’s resolution, creating a lasting change.

NARRATIVE LINES

Lines of Force: How people speak about conflict is often a product of their environment, including culture, institutional affiliations, and family and social networks. This creates lines of force (or power) in which a person speaks and acts as if there is no other choice. These lines of force are often created by assumptions and applied in totality.

Lines of Flight: While a party may not entirely change how they view the conflict, a line of flight is a slight shift in how they talk about the conflict. Previously, in Cobb’s diagram there is a complete turnaround. A narrative line of flight, however, is a slight bend in the straight projection of one’s story. Winslade compares lines of flight to tiny decisions that are cumulative over one’s life, without which one would continue in the same direction that was first chosen. In the form of a narrative line, it looks more like small “ah, ha!” moments where the party begins to explore the implications of what it means to not deal in totality assumptions or groundings.

CONFlict MAPPING

Conflict mapping can be used in many ways. It can be used before an intervention is undertaken as a way of analysis of the people or organizations involved, context surrounding, and time progression of a conflict. A map can also be of different conversations around or about the conflict as a way to understand the transformation of the understanding of the conflict over time. A conflict map may also be more of a timeline which situates events within a context of time. Finally, a conflict map may be an illustration of the context surrounding a conflict. These
Individual Conversation Mapping

The point of Narrative Praxis is to thicken the narrative. It is useful to map certain conversations, or at least track, to see if this is happening. Conflict narratives are often linear plots lacking contextual details. While each element (A-F) strengthens the conflict narrative, the contextual details (the other elements) allow the plot, characters, and other details to become something other than support structures for the conflict narrative. Allowing the structure to be contextualized allows the individual to have a clearer view of the conflict and possible solutions or actions that could be taken. Think about conversations in terms of the map below (Goffman 974; Cobb, 2010):

The way that we talk about conflicts are shaped by the context in which the conflict happens in as well as the context in which we are. If any one part of the context can be restructured, it will also reverberate in the smaller and larger contexts. For example, if we change the way we think about a conflict we will change the way we act within it. This will, in turn, change the way episodes of the conflict play out which will change the relationships that we have to the conflict. Likewise, if we attempt to change certain episodes of the conflict, then we will change both how we talk about the conflict and our relationships within the same context. The
The following contextual map gives us a guide to think about the kinds of contexts in which we are situated.

**Mapping Actors**

There are several ways that maps can be made using the people and organizations as reference points. One example of such a map is one that is a circle with the conflict as the center. The circle can be divided into quadrants with various levels surrounding the center. Once the landscape of the circle is drawn, place the actors (local, international, individual, group, etc.) on the circle. By doing this, a practitioner can get a better picture of who and what is involved in the conflict. It can also be used to decide who to invite to certain intervention schemes as a way to connect multiple aspects of conflict as well as multiple perspectives involved.

There are a number of ways to map conflicts, those involved, and the context in which it occurs. This list is not exhaustive and it is important that a practitioner be creative when attempting to understand conflicts and the parties involved.
Techniques

"EVENTS AND ACTIONS IN THE 'REAL WORLD' OCCUR CONCURRENTLY WITH MENTAL EVENTS IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE PROTAGONIST. A DISCORDANT LINKAGE BETWEEN THE TWO PROVIDES MOTIVE FORCE TO NARRATIVE (ROMEO AND JULIET). IT CAN TEACH, CONSERVE MEMORY, OR ALTER THE PAST" - BRUNER

One facilitator will present an overview of all these techniques to the entire group, then facilitators split participants into small groups to work on a specific individual skill. Each group will be sent to a ‘station’ where a facilitator will be modeling a specific skill. The facilitator will ask a participant to volunteer as the interviewee with a conflict in their life, facilitator will demonstrate the skill and then ask the group to pair off and practice with one another. The facilitator will stay in the area, listen, be available for questions and give feedback as appropriate. After a set amount of time the small group will rotate to the next ‘technique station’.

EXTERNALIZATION

People often see their problems or a conflict being imbedded in their identity or in the identity of the other with who they are in conflict. When this is the case discussing the conflict can halt the progression of a narrative from fear of the possibility that he or she will be delegitimized in the conversation. Externalization is a technique that encourages parties to objectify the problem, separating it from their own identity and the identity of those involved in the conflict. The facilitator assists the individual in expressing the problem as detached. Having externalizing conversations allows imperfections to come into the room which then allows people to talk about things that would otherwise make them feel like failures and delegitimate.

There are two types of externalization: of a conflict or of an experience.

Externalization is done by asking questions about the problem as if it is not embedded in the traits or personalities of the person. This is done by making the problem a noun. For example, when a person says "I'm angry", angry is an adjective versus replacing it by the noun "anger" or referring to "it". By doing this you animate the problem, making it a living entity, and explore its history within the individual, group or conflict.

Externalization in practice:
1. Taylor and Jaime are having problems in their relationship. Taylor says it's because she doesn't trust Jaime. Jaime also comments on how Taylor's distrust has put a wedge between them. A normal conversation could look like this: "When did you stop trusting Jaime? What caused you to stop trusting Jaime?" These types of questions delegitimize Jaime which would cause defensiveness and make him incapable of wanting to work with Taylor on fixing the situation. An externalizing conversation would look like this: "When did this distrust start? What do you think caused it to start? How has this distrust affected your life? How has this distrust affected Jaime’s life?" Making distrust a noun casts blame on distrust itself instead blaming either party. The goal then becomes about attacking distrust itself and finding steps that both parties can take to overcome it.

2. John works as an associate for a high stress and fast paced law firm. He has been working with one of the Senior Partners named David. John has made several mistakes with some of his client's documents and claims that it is because David puts so much pressure on him that he gets overwhelmed and flustered and as a result does not perform to his best ability. A normal conversation would look like: "How does David pressuring you affect the way you complete your work? Does the pressure that he places on you affect you in your personal life? If he stopped pressuring you what do you think the outcome would be?" This conversation delegitimates David. An externalizing conversation would look like this: "How has pressure itself influenced the way you do your work? What have you done to combat pressure's influence? What could you do to minimize the effects of pressure's power? Do you think that David is also plagued with pressure's influence? Is there something that you both could do to keep pressure from bullying you both in the work place?" This externalizing conversation puts the blame on pressure itself and puts both David and John in a position to work together on minimizing the amount of pressure that exists in the workplace.

**CIRCULAR QUESTIONS**

Circular questioning is a way for an intervenor to ‘download’ new terms or frames, make relationships and connections, and frames of understanding into a person’s understanding of a situation. A key component of a circular question is that it temporarily removes someone from a problem solving focus to foster curiosity in linking actions and events. There are two types of
circular questions. The first creates circles between people which could be a comparison between people of the 'in-group', that gives the entire group positive connotation or even a comparison between a person of the 'in-group' and of the 'out-group'. This should never be delegitimizing, choosing to focus on a negatively expressed individual behavior will only further separate the group. Instead, focusing on a positive action will create connections between people as well as allowing the individual to set herself apart from the others.

The second type of circular question creates a circle between time frames. This question invites the person to explore a different time or context where the individual faced a similar scenario. They are invited to discuss the similarities and differences between that instance and the one they are currently involved in. This technique is a way to reframe situations.

It's important to ask circular questions that will not in any way delegitimize one of the parties. The criteria of the question are set by the intervenor.

_Circular questions in practice:

1. A small university recently had a shift in administration. Debra, one of the tenured professors has concerns that the new administration has made too many changes that has moved the school away from being focused on education and more focused on money. An intervenor was asked to come in to mediate between the administration and the faculty. An example of a circular question could be asked towards Debra. "Debra you have shared many comments that demonstrate how important education is to you. Is there someone else in this school that you think values education the same amount that you do, yet seems less-affected or less concerned by these policy changes?" Debra may say Jennifer, who has been adjunct faculty member for a couple of years. The intervenor could then ask Debra why she thinks Jennifer is able to not be as affected. This allows Debra to make connections between herself and Jennifer. This also allows her to explore how another professor with similar opinions could have a different reaction.

Another example of a circular question could be asked towards Peter who is the Vice President of Instruction. He plays a delicate role because he represents the faculty to the administration, yet is part of the administration and understands the money troubles the school is facing. The intervenor asks: 'Peter, you are in an interesting position. Your job focuses on the quality of instruction at the school and you have demonstrated the importance of education. Yet, you also seem to understand the administration's financial concerns. If I were to ask you if there is someone here who also is torn between balancing a good education while remaining financially
responsible who would you name?" Regardless of the person Peter names, the question itself would open new possible narratives. If he chooses someone within the administration he would be demonstrating to the group that there are others in the administration that are also concerned with the quality of education, but don't know how to balance both. If he names someone who is siding with the faculty he would be pointing out to the group that there are members within the faculty who are aware and are also concerned with the financial issues, not just the quality of education.

2. Within this scenario an example of a circular question that connects time could be asked towards the President of the university. An example could look like this: "President Larsen, from what I understand you have a lot of experience with helping organizations and businesses become financially sound. You have also shared how concerned you are with the financial status of this school. If I were to ask you if there was ever a situation, either in your career or personal life, where you had similar dilemma where you had to find a balance between financial stability and making unpopular changes what is the first experience that comes to mind? How is this experience similar? How is this experience different?" This provides President Larsen the opportunity to thicken the narrative by exploring his previous experiences and reframe the current dilemma. This also allows the listeners to open the narrative that they have of him. Another example of a circular question could be asked towards Troy, another faculty member. "Troy your comments have also demonstrated how much you value your students and are concerned about their education. If I were to ask you if there was another time where placing education as the focus of the decision making process created a positive outcome for the administration and school as a whole, what would it be? What did that process look like?

**REFRAMING/REAUTHORING**

When involved in a conflict, individuals and parties are often are stuck in a particular frame. Frames are the discourses or paradigms associated with a specific event. They are frequently tied into meta-narratives or a larger master narrative and consist of a specific set idioms, terms, histories and metaphors that all support the ‘ideals’ or the agenda of the discourse. Reframing can be used at multiple levels of interaction such as speech acts, episodes, relationships, self-concept and cultural patterns. Reframing is done by introducing new terms,
historic points, metaphors, etc. allowing the intervenor to help shift the frame a person is experiencing in an event. This offers individuals new possibilities of understanding. It is important in reframing to understand all of the terms on both sides of a conflict and to guide the reframing so that it does not delegitimize a narrative or to purposefully shift it to the ‘other side’, but to a new dimension.

**Reframing in Practice:**

1. Let’s return to the discussion of trust with Taylor and Jaime. The intervenor reframes the problem of distrust by using new terms. The intervenor may say to Taylor “it sounds like this distrust is constantly spinning around you in circles to the point that you never know when you are going to be knocked off your feet.” Taylor response “yeah or as though it is pulling me away and as a result I sometimes end up saying something I regret.” The intervenor responds “it sounds like when distrust comes spinning through you don’t feel as though you are in control.” The intervenor is helping Taylor to reframe “distrust” as something that is taking control of her and can either knock her down or pull her away, both choices she does not say she is making but rather “distrust” is making. The intervenor can then work with Taylor on what “losing control” or conversely, being “in control” means to Taylor.

**POSITIVE CONNOTATION**

Positive connotation is reframing the intentions of self or of the other from being negative to positive intentions. Once this reframing takes place the intervenor can help them build a new and more positive scenario. This involves asking questions that will thicken the narrative self or of the other and then using the new information to ascribe more positive intentions or characteristics to the self or other.

**Positive connotation in practice**

1. Revisiting the example of John and David at the law firm. John previously had been discussing David as being the one causing this him to feel so much pressure. The intervenor externalized pressure by referring to it as a "bully" and asked if John thought that David also has been bullied by pressure. John could say that he does think that David probably does feel that way sometimes. The intervenor can then respond by asking "why do you think that you and David both are being bullied so much by pressure?” John could answer that it is because they
both have a lot of work responsibilities. The intervenor could then include positive connotation responding “it sounds like you and David are both very valued employees with good work ethics.” This positive reframing allows John to explore the possibility that David, along with himself, is valued and has a good work ethic. Then John could revisit the conflict with this new frame in mind.

**SCENARIO BUILDING (RE-AUTHORING THE PAST AND BUILDING A NEW FUTURE)**

When people are stuck in a conflict, they often have a difficult time imagining the future. Involving the future in a conversation thickens the narrative which allows the parties to explore how the conflict might develop. The focus transfers from what “could” or “should” happen to what “might” happen. This shift creates space to develop all alternatives and options before too quickly narrowing to a few. After reframing and externalizing the conflict, it is important to work with the parties on creating several future scenarios, allowing the parties to author these futures together.

**SCAFFOLDING THE ALTERNATIVE STORY**

In education paradigms, scaffolding refers to ways in which a teacher breaks down a complex problem or higher ordered thinking concepts into smaller steps. Scaffolding also implies that a teacher first models or aids the student in a task or part of a task and then moves the responsibility for completing a task or understanding the concept fully to the student. This approach makes an objective or task easier for the learner and increases the likelihood that they will succeed at the task. In narrative this last point is particularly important, as individuals take ownership of newly-formed perspectives and stories. Most of narrative mediation techniques can be understood as a type of scaffolding. The use of scaffolding focuses on complex, intertwined stories and in using this technique, seeks to traverse the space between what is known and familiar to what is unknown and might be possible to be known through social collaboration. This space is also referred to as the “zone of proximal development.” Scaffolding means to break down this space into manageable steps. The intervenor uses questioning to scaffold the conversation. The categories for this are as follows:
- **Low-level distancing tasks**: These questions center around the individual’s personal experiences that are closest to individual. It encourages assigning naming, meaning, and characterization to these events.

- **Medium-level distancing tasks**: This includes looking at the individual's events at a mid-level from the individual and bringing in relationships and chains of associations that surround these events. The facilitator should work to create comparisons and distinctions between these events and relationships.

- **Medium-high-level distancing tasks**: At a medium to high level away from the individual's experiences, these questions encourage people to reflect, evaluate, and draw realizations and learnings from the chains of association.

- **High-level distancing tasks**: By taking a more aerial view of one’s life, these questions encourage formulating concepts about life and identity taken from concrete experiences and past learnings.

- **Very high-level distancing tasks**: This step is forward looking by encouraging the development of new proposals for proceeding in life based on the conclusions and understandings created in the first four steps.
**PRAXIS IN ACTION**

"WELL-FORMED STORIES ARE COMPOSED OF A PENTAD OF AN ACTOR, AN ACTION, A GOAL, A SCENE, AND AN INSTRUMENT -- PLUS TROUBLE. STORIES CARRIED TO COMPLETION, ARE EXPLORATIONS IN THE LIMITS OF LEGITIMACY" - BRUNER

**REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS: REFLECTING TEAMS**

A reflecting team is a useful tool for analysis in both small and large group settings. The activity is easily adaptable to any narrative exercise. Primarily used at the end of a session, one group reflects on what was discussed during the session: what they liked, what they found interesting, and any questions that were raised. In the meantime, a different subset of the group (likely the leader of discussion for the session) sits and listens to the reflection. They are not directly acknowledged by the reflecting group. Afterwards, the discussion reverts to the group that remained silent during the first round. It is their turn to reflect and respond to what was just discussed in the larger group. If time permits a third round can be introduced where the group reflects on the second round.

**GENRE**

Genre is a helpful tool when undergoing a structural analysis of a given narrative. As Samantha Hardy discusses, most narratives are told in the genre of melodrama. The past is idealized as perfect and the protagonist (the storyteller) is a passive character who did nothing to contribute to the problem. Blame is individualized. The protagonist cannot articulate a solution to the situation.

A solution to this halted state is to help the storyteller transform the narrative into one of tragedy, which is useful in managing conflict. The tragic hero (think Hamlet) has a sense of purpose, characters are divided with different competing needs and interests. Most importantly, the characters have choices and people are acknowledged as fallible. Where uncertainty exists, so does learning -- something of value is taken to the next stage of each development. With tragedy, the audience is yourself and you get to choose the ending. If you train people to realize when they are telling a melodramatic narrative, they can learn how to alter the genre.
ETHICS

There is no standardized code of ethics that dictate narrative praxis. However, what follows below is a list principles of narrative work that you can use to consider your own ethics, which were taken the Center for Narrative Studies. Remember that for better and worse, people’s stories can be strong and resilient; they won’t accept your reauthoring, reframing or externalized representations if they don’t ‘feel right’ to that person.

- Everyone has a story
- Every story is worth telling
- Every story makes sense in its context
- No one has the full story
- We hold the narrative rights to tell our own story over someone else telling it for us
- We are part of one another’s stories. You are part of my story and I am part of yours. We live story-entwined lives.
- No one is ever in one story
- No one story can ever capture or do justice to the fullness of life as lived
- No story is innocent. Stories have effects for which we are accountable as tellers and audience
- Any story that ‘stories-over’ or ‘stories-out’ the people the story is most likely to effect, is narratively speaking, unethical. The voice of the person most effected, whose interests are most at stake, needs to be in the story of the decision.
- You must be able to tell the story that you create in front of the people most likely o be effected by it.
"CONVENTION AND TRADITION PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN NARRATIVE STRUCTURES; THERE COULD BE A HUMAN 'READINESS' FOR NARRATIVE THAT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONSERVING AND ELABORATING SUCH A TRADITION IN THE FIRST PLACE" - BRUNER

DERBY UNIVERSITY

Background

Derby University is a small school that prides itself on having a wide range of countries represented in the student body. They have accomplished this through providing international students with scholarships, work-study programs, along with assistance in helping the students get student and work visas. Within the last 10 years the school has started suffering financial. As a result the school was becoming run down and the hiring slowed. To help the school get on track President Larson was hired to make changes to help get the school on track.

President Larsen came into the school and immediately began making changes to help the school be more financially sound. One change that he made is the expectation for students to graduate in three years time. This allowed the school to increase the student body and forced the students to take classes through the summer. Another change that was made was to cut down on international scholarships and start bringing in more American students who could pay for school. In order to make the transition smoother, he hired several Vice Presidents over various departments in the school, two of those being Peter who is the Vice President of Instruction and John who is the Vice President of Finances or also known as the Budget Controller.

Not long after the changes were made many complaints raised in regards to these changes in policies. Many of the teachers complained that they and their students were getting burned out too quickly because of the requirement for student's to finish their studies in three years. Others complained that the school's mission was shifting away from its international focus to becoming a university more concerned with money.
President Larsen: President of the School, previously the Dean of Perry University's Business school. He says that the policies are non-negotiable and that they are the only way to save the school.

John: Budget controller. His job is focused on balancing the books. As a result he is mostly ignorant to the teacher's and the student's complaints.

Peter: Vice President of Instruction. He is the middle man between the faculty and the administration. He is aware of the previous financial issues, but also has heard many of the teacher's complaints.

Jonathon: Vice President of Construction. His main focus is the renovation of the school. He thinks that the new policies are necessary to provide the funds needed for renovation that the school is in desperate need of. Along with the renovations to current school buildings, he is constructing dormitories to fit the large influx of students that have been coming in as a result of these policies. Some have seen this project as being unnecessary spending.

Benjamin: Former retired President of the school.

Debra: Tenured professor in Political Science. She has concerns that the new administration has made too many changes that has moved the school away from being focused on education and more focused on money. Also, concerned that the President made his administration so large (with the multiple VPs) that the school has become 'top heavy' and the faculty and the students have less representation.

Troy: Tenured professor in International Studies. He says that before the administration shift the school was rich with culture and unity but now with the growing amount of American students, the international students are feeling marginalized.

Jennifer: Adjunct faculty for only a couple of years. She was hired during the administration shift and feels like she has walked into a war. She tends to side with the other faculty members, but feels like she does not have enough clout to speak up.
**Pablo:** Director over international student affairs. He sees how the changes affect particularly the international students. Because the school now only offers limited student visas, they are forced to return to their country after their studies. They have little opportunities for paid internships and jobs in the U.S. Many of them also have to work on campus to have enough money to pay for school. But, since the administration is pushing students to be done with school in three years, they struggle balancing work and their studies.

**Dustin:** Student Body President. He constantly hears complaints from other students about their feeling of being burnt out and the administration being out of touch. He has tried to take those complaints to the administration, but feels as though the administration is not taking his position seriously.

**FAYETTE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

*Background*

Fayette County decided recently to redraw the school districts. This caused uproar within the community. Two schools will be affected: the first is Kingston Elementary and Middle school which is one of the best schools in the state and the second is Grover Elementary and Middle School which is one of the worst schools in the state. Grover has been known to have a large amount of gang violence and drug issues and is poorly funded. Most children that attend Grover live in the projects or the surrounding areas, whereas most children who attend Kingston Elementary live in middle class neighborhoods. Many parents in the Kingston district have purchased homes in the area just so their kids could attend Kingston. In order to make the distribution of students more equal throughout the district, Fayette County has decided to take around one-fifths of neighborhoods in the Kingston school district and put it in the Grover school district. This has outraged parents who will be affected by this change. An additional concern that these parents have is that because of the lack of funds Grover Elementary school has, the new neighborhoods that are closest to Grover will not be provided with bus services for their children. Instead these children are expected to either walk to school, having to pass over a busy street, or be driven by a parent which is an inconvenience to many parents as well as causes concern for the safety of their children.
**Characters**

**Principle Lee:** Principle of Grover Middle School. He is in favor of the change because the increase in students will also increase the school's funding as well as allow them to hire more teachers.

**Marie:** Parent of two children who both attend Grover school. She has been frustrated that her children's school has received such little funding and attention. She thinks that this change will give the school more attention which hopefully will motivate the district to improve the education, the school's infrastructure and implement programs to reduce violence in the school.

**Richard:** Teacher at Grover Middle School, also hoping to receive more funding from the changes.

**Kendall:** School board member.

**Paul:** School board member.

**Jenny:** Parent of three children, one of which is attending Kindergarten at Kingston Elementary. She and her husband purchased a house in the area just so their children would be able to attend Kingston.

**Robin:** Raised five children who all attended Kingston. The youngest is currently at Kingston Middle School.

**Sandy:** Single mom of two twin boys who are beginning Kindergarten the following year. One of her biggest concerns is how she is going to get her boys to and from school without having a school bus to pick them up. She states that they are too young to walk by themselves, yet it would be inconvenient for her to have to drop them off every day.

**Gary:** Teacher at Kingston.
ROOMMATES

Background

Every month, four housemates get together to talk about any concerns or complaints that they have with each other. The facilitator role rotates between the housemates each month. During each round, the housemates will receive different scenarios. The facilitator will alternate housemates with each round, signifying a new month.

Characters

Sara: Master’s student, night owl
Jim: Ph.D. student, has odd hours with school, work, and research
Bill: recently moved into the area after dropping out of school, works at a local bar
Kim: lived here through undergrad, recently got a job after graduating

Activity

Round 1: Kim is the facilitator. Sara has recently began bringing over her boyfriend, John, after she finishes her evening classes. Sara’s room is next to Kim’s and Kim can hear Sara and John talking all night. Jim is taking over the common areas of the house with his research materials spread over the floor and tables. Kim is frustrated with both Sara and Jim. Neither seems to respect the conflicting schedules or tries to be quite at ‘normal’ sleeping hours. Bill has no problems with anyone in the house and does not understand what Kim is making such a big deal about.

Round 2: Bill is the facilitator. Kim’s job has been taking her on some travel. While she was gone, she noticed that her room was not as it was left. Sara has used Kim’s printer and office supplies before and thought that Kim would be okay with her doing so while Kim was away. Jim has recently started to smoke inside the house, as he is increasingly stressed with his studies. Bill knows it is not cigarettes, but does not want to confront Jim fearing that this would make the living situation uncomfortable. He is unsure if anyone else in the house is aware of the situation.
**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND LITERATURE ON NARRATIVE**

**ONLINE RESOURCES**

**BeyondIntractibility.org**

The goal of the Beyond Intractability (BI) system is to make knowledge about peacebuilding and intractable conflicts widely and freely accessible, so people aren't forced to “reinvent the wheel.” The project does not advocate or teach one particular approach. Rather, it provides access to information on many approaches which can then be adapted to many different situations.

This site has a number of resources related to Narrative Practice, including a “What is Narrative Mediation”, a brief interview with Sara Cobb, as well as a useful series of Q&As about Narrative, Storytelling, and Conflict Resolution done with leaders in the field on topics of: Uses of Narratives and Storytelling, Narrative Facilitation and Mediation, Narratives and Stories in Dialogue Processes and Case Examples

**Changingminds.org**

This site has extensive resources and information relevant to those who work in an array of professions, that are concerned with ‘changing people’s minds’. Some of the techniques, including reframing, are relevant to the work of the narrative conflict-resolver. The website also explains a number of the theoretical frames related to changing perceptions and positions. This list may be helpful for theorizing specific contexts or parts of narrative practice.

**The Dulwich Center**

The Dulwich Centre is an independent centre in Adelaide, Australia involved in narrative therapy, community work, training, publishing, supporting practitioners in different parts of the world, and co-hosting international conferences.

- Popular articles about narrative therapy and community work
- Commonly-asked questions about externalizing
- Videos of the ‘Friday afternoons at the Dulwich Center’ series at the center, which feature practitioners discussing different topics in the field, including:
  - Reconstructing identities and inviting preferred stories of self: Narrative practices in mental health settings and prisons by Marilyn O’Neill and Gaye Stockell
  - Externalizing conversations: Statement of Position Map 1

**Toaist Institute**

Is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to the development of social constructionist theory and practices for purposes of world benefit, and is involved with a number of narrative and conflict resolution organizations and initiatives.
- **Worldshare Books** are full-length books available for free downloading in PDF from the Toaist Institute’s website. WorldShare Books were selected by the Institute to represent significant contributions relevant to social constructionist theory and practice.

- Extensive list of **web resources** to programs, centers and sites related to community, appreciative inquiry, conflict resolution, narrative, creative change, social theory and more!

**Narrative Practices Adelaide**

This is a center committed to furthering the work of Michael White and Narrative therapy. There are resources on educational opportunities and publications, including an information and resources on [Community Narrative Therapy](#).

In addition, the site as a link to Michael White’s [Workshop Notes](#) that he used for 5-10 years on the following topics: Externalizing conversations, Statement of position maps, Therapeutic posture, Re-authoring conversations, Re-membering conversations, Definitional ceremony and outsider-witness responses, Attending to the consequences of trauma, Distinctions between Traditional Power and Modern Power, and Addressing personal failure.

- These workshops notes have guidance and visuals, such as the template for this Re-Authoring Conversations map:
GUIDING THEORETICAL LITERATURE ON NARRATIVE


*From the publisher:* Jerome Bruner argues that the cognitive revolution, with its current fixation on mind as "information processor;" has led psychology away from the deeper objective of understanding mind as a creator of meanings. Only by breaking out of the limitations imposed by a computational model of mind can we grasp the special interaction through which mind both constitutes and is constituted by culture.


*Abstract:* Negotiation research, drawing on rational choice theory, provides a wealth of findings about how people negotiate successfully, as well as descriptions of some of the many
pitfalls associated to negotiation failures. Building on narrative theory, this paper attempts to expand the theoretical base of negotiation in an effort to address the meaning making processes that structure negotiation. Drawing on Greimas’s (Diacritics 7(1):23–40, 1977) notion of “narrative grammar,” we argue that negotiation is a process that relies on a relatively limited set of narrative syntactical forms that structure the negotiation process. We conduct a simulation of a negotiation game and ask participants to storyboard their experience of the negotiation process. The use and evolution of narratives are identified via the storyboards, as well as participants’ accounts of those storyboards. While the number of participants in the simulation is very small, limiting the nature of the claims that can be made, our analysis suggests regularities in the use of narrative syntax as well as in patterns of escalation and transformation. The study offers a new method for the analysis of negotiation, i.e., narrative syntax, aimed at understanding the dynamics of narrative processes in negotiation.

This is an introduction to narrative methods in social research. It is also an important book about the nature, role and theoretical basis of research methodology in general. Jane Elliott instructs the reader on the basic methods and methodological assumptions that form the basis of narrative methods. Elliott argues that both qualitative and quantitative methods are characterized by a concern with narrative, and that our research data can best be analyzed if it is seen in narrative terms. In concrete, step-by-step terms she details for the reader how to go about collecting data and how to subject that data to narrative analysis, while at the same time placing this process in its wider theoretical context. She works across the traditional quantitative/qualitative divide to set out the ways in which narrative researchers can uncover such issues as social change, causality and social identity. She also shows how the techniques and skills used by qualitative researchers can be deployed when doing quantitative research and, similarly, how qualitative researchers can sometimes profit from using quantitative skills and techniques

“Despite its omnipresence’s across the social sciences and humanities, nowhere is there a general statement of framing theory that shows exactly how frames become embedded with and make themselves manifest in a text, or how framing influences thinking. Analysis of this concept suggests how the discipline of communication might contribute something unique: synthesizing a key concept’s disparate uses, showing how the invariable involve communication, and construction a coherent theory from them.” This article attempts to clarify framing as a theoretical framework, and explore how framing excises influence over what the author calls ‘human consciousness’.

This essay is an important and early work in attempts to examine how social events are organized. It attempts to “Isolate some of the basic frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense out of events and to analyze the special vulnerabilities to which these frames of reference are subject” (p. 10).

[Abstract] The word "position" has long been used in the field of social psychology. Now social psychologists are creating new theories on group positioning by studying everyday language and discourse and the application of some of these ideas has revealed the necessity of paying close attention to the local moral order within which both public and private intentional acts are performed. The study of local moral orders as ever-shifting patterns of rights and obligations of speaking and acting has come to be called by a new name - positioning theory - of which Rom Harré is one of the leading exponents. In this book, Rom Harré give a state of the art overview of positioning theory via contributions from some of the world's leading experts in the field.


[Abstract:] When problematic-symptomatic behaviors are conceived as embedded, retained, and maintained in collective stories, therapy can be described as the transformative process by which patients, families, and therapists co-generate qualitative changes in those stories. An emphasis on narratives allows one to specify further how those transformations unfold at the more "micro" level of the exchanges that take place throughout the consultation. To that specification is devoted the core of this essay, which closes with a discussion of the clinical, training, and, especially, research potentials of this systematization.


Thinking in narrative terms is proving useful in a number of disciplines. Such thinking has already contributed to a growing body of work in the family therapy field. Here, we seek to demonstrate the usefulness and applicability of the ideas developed by Michael White and David Epston (among others) to the practice of mediation. Distinctions are drawn from the problem-solving approach with regard to both basic theoretical assumptions and method. A transcribed mediation scenario is used to illustrate and comment on the techniques of narrative mediation in action.


[FROM THE PUBLISHER:] MAPS OF NARRATIVE PRACTICE provides practical and accessible accounts of the major areas of narrative practice that White has developed and taught over the years, so that readers may feel confident when utilizing this approach in their practices. The book covers each of the five main areas of narrative practice-re-authoring conversations, remembering conversations, scaffolding conversations, definitional ceremony, externalizing conversations, and rite of passage maps-to provide readers with an explanation of the practical implications, for therapeutic growth, of these conversations. The book is filled with transcripts and commentary, skills training exercises for the reader, and charts that outline the conversations in diagrammatic form. Readers both well-versed in narrative therapy as well as those new to its concepts, will find this fresh statement of purpose and practice essential to their clinical work.

*Abstract:* Counter-narratives only make sense in relation to something else, that which they are countering. The very name identifies it as a positional category, in tension with another category. But what is dominant and what is resistant are not, of course, static questions, but rather are forever shifting placements. The discussion of counter-narratives is ultimately a consideration of multiple layers of positioning. The fluidity of these relational categories is what lies at the center of the chapters and commentaries collected in this book. The book comprises six target chapters by leading scholars in the field. Twenty-two commentators discuss these chapters from a number of diverse vantage points, followed by responses from the six original authors. A final chapter by the editor of the book series concludes the book.


*Abstract:* This paper is an example of how scenario building can be applied as narrative approach to global conflict-resolution practice. The paper develops a prototype for a new type of conflict analysis tool designed to be used as part of a Track II peacebuilding process. The tool, termed Conflict Analysis through the Structured Evaluation of Scenarios (CASES), provides information on relevant comparative cases by systematically analyzing cases from the Minorities at Risk (MAR) data set. From these 285 groups in the data set, the CASES report identifies five COMPARISON CASES, designed to illuminate potential future trajectories of the SUBJECT CASE, the Kurds. In the CASES report, each of the comparison cases represents a scenario, a possible future of the subject case. The report therefore contains five brief narratives that describe the Kurdish case AS IF they were the subject cases. The report is designed to be used as part of a Track II peacebuilding process.


*Abstract from APA PsycNET* This paper examines existing definitions of empowerment and provides an alternative definition to provide a theoretical framework for the construction of mediation practices that enhance participation. Practicing mediators define empowerment as the result of balancing power, controlling the mediation process, and being neutral. The absence of communication-based descriptions of mediator practices reconstitutes a psychological definition of empowerment as a cognitive state or feeling. The author defines empowerment as a set of discursive practices that enhance the participants of disputants. Participation and empowerment can be understood, using narrative theory, as a function of narrative structures and narrative dynamics that regulate the transformation of stories and the evolution of meaning. Discussion focuses on narrative struggle and participation, narrative structures and processes counterproductive to participation, and implications for practice.

Building on narrative theory, this paper attempts to expand the theoretical base of negotiation in an effort to address the meaning making processes that structure negotiation. Drawing on Greimas’s (Diacritics 7(1):23–40, 1977) notion of “narrative grammar,” the authors argue that negotiation is a process that relies on a relatively limited set of narrative syntactical forms that structure the negotiation process. We conduct a simulation of a negotiation game and ask participants to storyboard their experience of the negotiation process. The use and evolution of narratives are identified via the storyboards, as well as participants’ accounts of those storyboards. While the number of participants in the simulation is very small, limiting the nature of the claims that can be made, our analysis suggests regularities in the use of narrative syntax as well as in patterns of escalation and transformation. The study offers a new method for the analysis of negotiation, i.e., narrative syntax, aimed at understanding the dynamics of narrative processes in negotiation.


This article evaluates the framing concept and its utility for communication research in conflict resolution. The framing concept holds potential heuristic value that has not been realized. The authors take three rehabilitative steps: (a) define frames as communicative, rather than cognitive, constructions, (b) provide a theoretical framework for explicating the communicative framing process and its potential impact in conflict, and (c) explore the effects of particular framing patterns on actual conflict interaction. The framing concept is enhanced through alignment with negotiated order theory, speech act theory, and speech accommodation theory. It is argued that disputants and the professionals who work with them “frame” issues, using language choices to highlight some aspects of an issue, while ignoring others. Linguistic choices function as verbal cues to other participants, who may respond by converging or diverging on frames. As expected, the results of the study found a positive relationship between frame convergence and frequency of agreements. Negotiators and mediators who guided disputant discussion toward frame convergence increased focus, control, positive social attributions, and integrativeness.


This article was first published in 1986. It describes a procedure for training family therapists in the clinical application of circular questioning as developed and implemented at the Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic at the University of Iowa. A pragmatic taxonomy of circular questions is presented; instructional handouts designed to facilitate the use of these questions within the trainee’s initial interviews are included. The document also includes tables with guidelines for conducting circular interviews, a classifications and descriptions of different circular questions, and extensive list of example of circular questions.


Focusing on the whole range of conflict settings - interpersonal, group, and organizational - Working Through Conflict, Third Edition, provides an introduction to conflict
management that is firmly grounded in current theory and research. The text encompasses a wide range of theoretical perspectives and includes timely, up-to-date coverage of the role of third parties in conflict resolution. Numerous, highly practical case studies clarify theoretical content and make it accessible to a broad audience. Updated to reflect the latest research and theory, the third edition of Working Through Conflict includes new information on culture and conflict and the impact of cultural differences. Each case study also ends with questions that highlight the theory behind the case and encourage classroom discussion.

Abstract: Narrative analysis is presented as continuous with personal storytelling in the work of remoralizing what Weber identified as disenchanted modernity. Critics of contemporary storytelling seem to misunderstand what kind of authenticity of self is expressed in stories. Against those whom Charles Taylor calls “knockers” of the idea of personal authenticity, this article affirms authenticity, but in terms that are dialogical: authenticity is created in the process of storytelling, it is not a precondition of the telling, and authenticity remains in process. This authenticity is shown to have an affinity with democratic politics, in contrast to the neo-liberal affinity of the knocker position.

http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/1295  
Abstract: Positioning theory has yet to fully crossover as an analytical tool for examining conflict in business and industry. The manner in which positioning theory explains human interactions (specifically conflicts) could prove to be beneficial to the field of Organizational Development (OD). This study uses critical events narrative analysis to examine the stories of five supervising managers at a large corporate organization who were dealing with conflict caused by a reorganization. Interview data was collected and analyzed to identify the managers’ critical events, as well as primary issues, main characters, and common conflict themes. The data was then analyzed using a framework rooted in positioning theory to determine participants’ perspectives regarding conflict. Positions, speech acts, and storylines for each participant were identified. There were four storylines relating to conflict for those who either supported or were against the centralization: Management as Conscientious Business Leaders, Management as Thoughtless, Employees as Troublemakers, and Supervisors versus Subordinates. Additionally, there were two storylines relating to the conflict theme of Operating in New Roles: Supervisors versus Subordinates and Site versus Corporate. The study also proves useful in identifying a new indicator of polarized cultures. As a result, the study provides greater insight into how positioning theory can be an effective medium for analyzing the nature of conflicts in the corporate setting.

Abstract: This discussion draws from the dramatistic perspective of Kenneth Burke to identify frames of interaction that parties bring to and negotiating situations of conflict. The tragic frame
and other problematic frames of relating are identified as they appear in mediation and negotiation. The discussion advocates the comic or hopeful frame as appropriate for working with complex conflicts and considers means of creating and sustaining the hopeful frame in conflict environments.


http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1064617060114747

[Abstract:] This introductory article, by way of explicating the rationale behind the focus of this special issue, discusses some of the debate concerning the theoretic utility of tropes such as liminality and hybridity for analyzing the negotiation of identity and cultural production in the English-speaking Caribbean. The article critiques the spatial and temporal metaphors that underlie these tropes, drawing on the work of postcolonial scholars who have sought to contextualize postcolonial theory within communication studies. The article ends by proposing that performance may offer alternative perspectives for theorizing resistance to hegemony as communicatively constructed.


[Abstract:] This article provides a brief overview of narrative approaches to mediation, including where it was pioneered, its connection to storytelling metaphors and post-modernist theoretical underpinnings. The article also provides an overview of externalization.


[Abstract:] This paper examines the constitutive elements of the genre of melodrama and relates them to typical Western conflict stories. It demonstrates why a conflict narrative based on the genre of melodrama tends to work against the resolution of the conflict and proposes tragedy as a more constructive genre for a conflict narrative. The paper also discusses how the mediation situation itself can constrain the possible genres that can be constructed in the process and explores the implications of those constraints for people in conflict and for the mediators facilitating a resolution.


In this new edition of his bestselling classic, Kees van der Heijden lays out ways in which an organization can go through changes to meet the future by turning its ongoing ‘strategic conversation’ to its own advantage. The author links an organization’s unique (but often tacit) business idea with scenario thinking, and builds on the principles of organizational learning to describe practical ways to develop those skills that will enhance the continuous scenario-based strategy process. A key components of this approach is that scenario planning enables managers to face up to future uncertainty by evolving from the idea of finding the ‘best strategy’ to one of mobilizing the ‘best strategizing process’.

In *Narrating Evil*, María Pía Lara explores what has changed in our understanding of evil, why the transformation matters, and how we can learn from this specific historical development. Drawing on Immanuel Kant's and Hannah Arendt's ideas about reflective judgment, Lara argues that narrative plays a key role in helping societies acknowledge their pasts. Particular stories haunt our consciousness and lead to a kind of examination and dialogue that shape notions of morality. A powerful description of a crime can act as a filter, helping us to draw conclusions about what constitutes a moral wrong, and public debates over these narratives allow us to construct a more accurate picture of historical truth, leading to a better understanding of why such actions are possible.


*Abstract:* This study assessed the usefulness of narrative group therapy as part of a summer program for female adolescents who had broken the law, and it sought to gain greater understanding of this population. Mainly qualitative methods were used because there is little research on narrative approaches and an exploratory study was most appropriate. Other methods used, include interviews, pretesting and posttesting, and reviews of court records 6 months after beginning. Various means of assessment showed that narrative approaches were useful in helping these young women examine their lives, cope with problems, explore options, and assess possibilities. While several problem themes were isolated, solution and coping themes were also found, which were brought forth and highlighted in the sessions. These adolescents experienced the most improvement in the area of coping. Self-esteem and control were found to be important coping devices and were strong throughout.


*Abstract:* This article is about how to apply narrative practices as tools for mediation in organizations. It offers a range of theoretical reflections that guide the use of narrative practices in this context and illustrates these points by analyzing an organization in conflict and a subsequent narrative mediation process. In particular, the paper discusses the implications of transferring narrative practices from a context of two-party mediation to an organizational context.


*From the publisher:* Hilde Lindemann Nelson focuses on the stories of groups of people- whose identities have been defined by those with the power to speak for them and to constrain the scope of their actions. By placing their stories side by side with narratives about the groups in question, Nelson arrives at some important insights regarding the nature of identity. She regards personal identity as consisting not only of how people view themselves but also of how others view them. These perceptions combine to shape the person's field of action. If a dominant group constructs the identities of certain people through socially shared narratives that mark them as morally subnormal, those who bear the damaged identity cannot exercise their moral agency freely. Nelson identifies two kinds of damage inflicted on identities by abusive group relations: one kind...
deprives individuals of important social goods, and the other deprives them of self-respect. To intervene in the production of either kind of damage, Nelson develops the counterstory, a strategy of resistance that allows the identity to be narratively repaired and so restores the person to full membership in the social and moral community.

[Abstract:] This article centers on the definition and features of critical moments in negotiation that might foster conflict transformation. It draws from the literature on conflict transformation and applies this work to negotiations. First, the author explores the definitions, characteristics, and types of shifts that set up transformations. Then she examines internal and external factors that contribute to transformative moments. Finally, the essay concludes with a discussion of distinctions between transformation and related constructs, suggestions for conducting research, and implications of this work for negotiation research.

[From the Publisher] In *Other People's Stories*, Amy Shuman examines the social relations embedded in stories and the complex ethical and social tensions that surround their telling. Drawing on innovative research and contemporary theory, she describes what happens when one person's story becomes another person's source of inspiration, or when entitlement and empathy collide. The resulting analyses are wonderfully diverse, integrating narrative studies, sociolinguistics, communications, folklore, and ethnographic studies to examine the everyday, conversational stories told by cultural groups including Latinas, Jews, African Americans, Italians, and Puerto Ricans. Shuman offers a nuanced and clear theoretical perspective derived from the Frankfurt school, life history research, disability research, feminist studies, trauma studies, and cultural studies.

[Abstract:] Social science requires a dual ontology: one for the physical realm, and one for the symbolic realm of meaning. Much research produced in social science remains based in an old paradigm, which entirely neglects the symbolic realm. While social scientists attempting to forge a new paradigm have embraced a discursive approach, this approach lacks a coherent framework that can be systematically applied in the analysis of meaning. This paper presents the positioning diamond as a framework that can be employed in discourse analysis across social science disciplines. The four facets of the diamond—storylines, identities, rights and duties, and the social force of acts—can be analyzed at three levels of discourse: the content, narrator-interlocutor, and ideological levels. The framework can be employed to provide explanations of most types of human thought and action.

[Abstract:] Narrative therapy attempts to examine and use the meanings and consequences that are the foundation of the stories and experiences clients bring to therapy. This article reviews
narrative theory, including a description of key narrative techniques, and its application to multicultural counseling.


*From the Publisher:* Telling Stories to Change the World is a powerful collection of essays about community-based and interest-based projects where storytelling is used as a strategy for speaking out for justice. Contributors from locations across the globe—including Uganda, Darfur, China, Afghanistan, South Africa, New Orleans, and Chicago—describe grassroots projects in which communities use narrative as a way of exploring what a more just society might look like and what civic engagement means. These compelling accounts of resistance, hope, and vision showcase the power of the storytelling form to generate critique and collective action. Together, these projects demonstrate the contemporary power of stories to stimulate engagement, active citizenship, the pride of identity, and the humility of human connectedness.


*Abstract:* This chapter examines the potential for the use of new media technologies in countering violent extremist narratives. The debate over extremist narratives and counter-strategies is set against a complex background of information and communication technologies (ICT) that both help and hinder the ability of governments and agencies to combat the use of these same technologies by extremists for propaganda, radicalisation, recruitment, and operational purposes. Whilst states are undeniably lagging in their use of new media, they do possess the resources to engage in these dynamic spaces, if a few important considerations are taken into account. The following chapter discusses both the new media environment and how states might begin to engage more effectively with new media in order to counteract the propagation of extremist narratives.

**Vodde, R., & Gallant, J. P. (2002).** *Bridging the Gap between Micro and Macro Practice: Large Scale Change and a Unified Model of Narrative-Deconstructive Practice.* *Journal of Social Work Education, 439*–*458*

*Abstract:* The bifurcated structure of social work education, micro and macro, is often unwarranted and restrictive. This split forces a premature and unnecessarily narrow focus in study and practice. In order to adequately pursue social justice and deal with issues of power and oppression in a clinical context, this bifurcated structure of social work must somehow be unified. A narrative deconstructive model of practice, nested in the postmodern-poststructuralist paradigm and embodied in the work of White and Epston offers a resolution to this dilemma. The authors provide a conceptual base for understanding this model, highlight those socio-political elements of the model that integrate clinical practice with social change, present examples, and discuss implications for social work education.

The philosophic groundwork of Gilles Deleuze is examined for its relevance for narrative practice in therapy and conflict resolution. Deleuze builds particularly on Foucault’s analytics of power as “actions upon actions” and represents power relations diagrammatically in terms of lines of power. He also conceptualizes lines of flight through which people become other. These concepts are explored in relation to a conversation with a couple about a crisis in their relationship. Tracing lines of power and lines of flight are promoted as fresh descriptions of professional practice that fit well with the goals of narrative practice.


In this groundbreaking book, John Winslade and Gerald Monk -- leaders in the narrative therapy movement-introduce an innovative conflict resolution paradigm that is a revolutionary departure from the traditional problem-solving, interest-based model of resolving disputes. The narrative mediation approach encourages the conflicting parties to tell their personal "story" of the conflict and reach resolution through a profound understanding of the context of their individual stories. The authors map out the theoretical foundations of this new approach to conflict resolution and show how to apply specific techniques for the practical application of narrative mediation to a wide-variety of conflict situations.


Practicing Narrative Mediation provides mediation practitioners with practical narrative approaches that can be applied to a wide variety of conflict resolution situations. Written by John Winslade and Gerald Monk—leaders in the narrative therapy movement—the book contains suggestions and illustrative examples for applying the proven narrative technique when working with restorative conferencing and mediation in organizations, schools, health care, divorce cases, employer and employee problems, and civil and international conflicts. Practicing Narrative Mediation also explores the most recent research available on discursive positioning and exposes the influence of the moment-to-moment factors that are playing out in conflict situations. The authors include new concepts derived from narrative family work such as "absent but implicit," "double listening," and "outsider-witness practices."