
Welcome to this first edition of Narrative and Conflict: Explorations in Theory and Practice!

This is a new project and we appreciate your interest, however you found your way to the journal. We are happy to launch this first edition and look forward to hearing your responses. We also are hungry for contributors who see this journal as an opportunity to circulate their work to a wider audience. So, wherever you live in the world, we wish you a warm welcome.

Purpose of the Journal

The intention of this electronic journal is to foster the application of a narrative perspective to the analysis of conflict in all its forms and to the practice of conflict resolution that is built on the same narrative perspective.

The premise of this perspective is the idea that stories are corporeal and interactive. They are more than reports of what is happening; how they are produced, circulated or circumvented gives shape to what people *do*. In addition, conflict resolution analyses and practices focused on intentionally facilitating shifts in the available narratives have the possibility to shift relationships between people or groups of people.

A narrative perspective in general is, as we understand it, not a neutral one. It is founded on a profound respect for persons and communities and for their right to have a say in the shaping of their own lives. We believe that conflicts are shaped by the complex interplay of powerful narratives, some of which come to dominate a field of experience and restrict the possibilities for the living out of those narratives that are subordinated. We cannot thus understand or intervene in conflict scenarios without taking account of how power works. In particular, we need to understand the effect of the dividing lines that separate people and the contests that take place for the control of meanings. Conflict analysis should address the deconstruction of such power relations and conflict resolution practice needs to work creatively to avoid getting caught by them.

And yet we notice, time and again, that people and communities are determined to hold onto the stories that give them hope and regularly find ingenious ways to breathe life into these narratives. In the interplay of these stories, lives, relationships, organizations, and communities are constructed. In this interplay, there are always counter stories that can form the basis for hope and change. Sometimes they lie in the shadows; sometimes they are muddled and confused; and sometimes they are open for all to see. But narrative conflict analysis and conflict resolution practice seeks to hold to the light these counter stories and to focus the building of just and peaceful futures on the back of the hopes that they represent.

Narrative and conflict emerged out of conversations between its founding editors, Sara Cobb and John Winslade, and grew out of an earlier journal on narrative practice in general, called *Explorations*, which was published by the Dulwich Centre in Adelaide, Australia under the publishing oversight of Cheryl White. It included a focus on a range of fields of practice, including narrative therapy and narrative conflict resolution. *Narrative and Conflict* owes a debt to Cheryl White and to the Dulwich Centre, as

well as to the legacy of the work done in family therapy and community work by Michael White.

We are launching this journal on the belief that there is a hunger for the articulation of work in this field. And we are looking to our contributors and readers to confirm this belief. While many other journals exist, we do not believe there are any others that have our particular focus on understanding and responding to conflict from an avowedly narrative perspective.

Because we are consciously seeking to grow an emergent field of endeavor, we intend to be friendly to new writers, including student writers, and aim to be helpful to all potential contributors rather than dismissive of anyone's work. We also aim to be friendly to practiced writers who share our concerns so that their work can be made available to a wider audience. We are conscious too that there are parts of the world where access to print journals is more difficult and the idea of an electronic journal might make useful material more easily available to people in such contexts. One reason for doing so is that sometimes places where fresh ideas about conflict resolution and analysis are most needed are the same places where it is more difficult to access the traditional print-based journals. We live in an exciting time in this regard. The development of new electronic publishing formats allows for many new possibilities in the circulation of ideas.

This journal will, however, be academically rigorous. All published material will be subject to peer review.

Narrative and conflict will publish articles on conflict resolution and conflict analysis at local, national and international levels. We invite the submission of articles that focus on the following topics:

- Practices of narrative conflict resolution of all kinds, including, mediation, facilitation, public deliberation, negotiation, problem-solving workshops, conflict coaching, conferencing, etc.
- The narrative analysis of conflict that has the potential to lead to shifts in relations.
- Work based on the narratives within and between kinship networks, groups, organizations, communities, nations, and aimed at conflict or violence prevention, intervention, transformation, peace-building and reconciliation.
- Narrative restorative practices, in youth and adult contexts and in schools, aimed at addressing the harm done by conflict or violence.
- The construction of peace-building narratives within and between communities or nations.
- Fostering or articulating narrative responses to interpersonal, community, organizational, or international conflict.
- Efforts to bring forward generative, resilient and hopeful responses to violence or conflict, drawing on a narrative lens.
- Analysis of the politics of narrative processes in conflicts, including master and counter-narratives.
- Description of narrative interventions or processes that reduce and redress narrative marginalization and destabilize dominant narratives.
- Deconstruction of dominant and powerful narratives or discourses that produce conflict or violence or that restrain peaceful or respectful relations between people.
- Intentional design of narratives of inclusion in contexts where difference threatens to undermine

relations between people.

- Reviews of significant books, films, etc, on themes related to narrative practice in conflict resolution.
- Interviews with significant contributors to the field of narrative conflict resolution.

We welcome submissions in any of these areas as long as they feature a clear narrative perspective.

The editing and publishing team

Publishing is a collective process that always involves many people. This journal is edited by Sara Cobb and John Winslade.

We are grateful too for the contributions that have already been made to this first edition to a number of others.

Mel Kutner has provided valuable editorial assistance and organizational management. She has also handled the layout of the first issue.

Joanna Lee has given technical assistance to the setting up of the journal website.

Maria Domingo has offered careful proofreading of articles.

We are grateful to those who have reviewed articles for this first edition. Many thanks to the following: Alison Castel, John Forester, Lorraine Hedtke, Sarah Rose Jenson, Stine Kaplan Jørgensen, Gerald Monk, Joaquin Gaete Silva, Tom Strong.

We have also sought out a wide range of people who will be on the Editorial Board for *Narrative and Conflict*. They are listed on the website and we will not list them here. We are grateful to all of you for your willingness to have faith in this project and to be generous enough to respond so warmly to our invitation to join this endeavor.

Narrative and Conflict is housed at the Center for the Study of Narrative and Conflict Resolution (CNCR), within the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR), at George Mason University. The Center functions as a research hub to anchor a narrative lens for both conflict analysis and conflict resolution; it also offers workshops and training programs on narrative approaches to conflict and its transformation, as well as academic courses and programs (<http://cncr.gmu.edu/>). The School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution offers several academic degrees, including a BA, a MS, and a Ph.D., in addition to a set of certificate programs for professionals. S-CAR's support for the CNCR, and for this journal is greatly appreciated.

So we invite you to read the articles in our first edition. They constitute a modest beginning in terms of numbers of articles. We are hopeful that the journal will grow from this beginning. We invite you all to be part of this growth by considering how you might contribute. We will be waiting with anticipation for your contributions.

John Winslade and Sara Cobb