This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

Pondering over "Participation" as an Ethics of Conflict Resolution Practice

Leaning towards the "Soft Side of Revolution"

Sara Cobb & Alison Castel[*]

Abstract

"Participation" has been defined as the engagement of local populations in the design and implementation of peace-building processes in post-conflict settings and it has been presumed to be critically important to sustainable conflict intervention. In this article, we explore this concept, so central to the field of conflict resolution, focusing on a set of problematic assumptions about power and social change that undergird it. As a remedy to these issues, we offer a narrative as a lens on the politics of participation. *This lens thickens our description of our own participation as interveners, a reflexive move that is notably missing in most efforts to redress the dark side of "participation" – that it has often been used as a means to upend structural violence, only to contribute to its reproduction. Drawing on the work of Ginwright, specifically his work with black youth in Oakland, CA, we explore participation as a process involving the critical examination of master/counternarratives. By offering a narrative lens on participation, we hope to illuminate a framework for the ethics of conflict resolution practice that enables practitioners to ethically navigate the politics of "participation."*

Keywords: participation, structural violence, narrative compression, master-counter narratives.

1 Introduction

"Participation" has been defined as the engagement of local populations in the design and implementation of peace-building processes in post-conflict settings (Cornwall and Brock, 2005), and it has been presumed to be critically important

* Dr. Sara Cobb is the Drucie French Cumbie Chair at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR) at George Mason University. She is also the Director of the Center for the Study of Narrative and Conflict Resolution at S-CAR that provides a hub for scholarship on narrative approaches to conflict analysis and resolution. Dr. Cobb is widely published and a leader in narrative approaches to conflict resolution. Dr. Alison Castel is faculty at the University of Colorado, Boulder where she teaches the core curriculum in Peace and Conflict Studies for the International Affairs program and is the Associate Director of the CU in DC internship program. She holds a Ph.D from the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR) at George Mason University, and is an affiliate of the Center for Narrative and Conflict Resolution at S-CAR.

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

to sustainable conflict intervention (Gizelis and Kosek, 2005). Pondering over "participation," we are forced to consider not only the practical strategies for increasing local engagement in peace-building processes, but also the politics of these practical strategies – do they change, or simply reform the systems that perpetuate conflict – whether these interventions generate radical change, or just impose solutions to violence (physical or structural) *on* them. Does "participation" necessarily generate positive changes, or can it simply reproduce the very systems that contribute to silence voice, and reconstitute oppressive (conflict) systems? This question is critical to the ethics of conflict resolution practice and calls into question assumptions we might have about "participation."

Since Galtung (1969), if not since Lenin (1987), there is recognition that the existing structures of a given society form the conditions that reproduce inequality and marginalization, enacting a form of violence which can and must be addressed from without: "Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without" (Lenin, 1987: 99). In other words, Lenin's assumption was that people, on their own, will not be able to address the conditions that contribute to their own oppression. Unmet human needs, a manifestation or consequence of structural violence, require the engagement of people *outside* such a system to enable those within it, and then, support them to address these changes in the rules of the game, or the way the system itself operates. This assumption poses a critical challenge to the naïve view that fostering participation in peace-building is ethically, and practically, sound.

Setting aside the critiques of the patriarchal, if not elitist, nature of such formulations (that it is the knowledge of those on the outside of a system that is needed to redress the violence of the structure, or to mobilize those that are otherwise incompetent to redress their own problems), the definition of structural violence rests on the presence of "exploitation" (Galtung, 1996). This process, in turn, maintains the centre/periphery distinction, and therefore, is likely to reproduce the exclusion of those in the periphery. Yet, the participation of the excluded, or marginalized, is understood as an antidote to structural as well as cultural violence. Basically, it is assumed that through participation, those on the periphery can augment their knowledge, develop their "interests" and communicate their needs in a manner that would alter the system itself.

Both Lenin (1987) and Galtung (1996)[1] note that the masses, those on the periphery, are excluded and subjected to structural violence and inequality. They make an assumption that power is visible in the oppressive capacity of the centre to enforce the "participation" of the periphery, in the fulfillment of the needs and interests of the centre (Galtung, 1971). From within this view, conflict resolution requires not just resolving differences, but also the naming and redressing of the gap between those that have their needs met and those that do not, which in

1 Galtung was critical of Marxism, but there have been critiques of his criticism. See Lawler (1995). We are lumping them here together for our own purpose, not because Galtung advocated Lenin's ideas. However, both shared this view, that the people within a system would not, without the help of Others, be able to change the system.

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

turn, requires changes to the system itself. This is called a "second-order change," wherein dynamics of the system itself are altered (Umpleby, 1976).

"Participation" that would lead to second-order change (also known as "revolution") denotes voting in elections, but also, social mobilization that would engage the excluded in an inquiry as to their needs/interests, and support their confrontation of the system, towards legislative changes that would recognize those needs and interests. But it is important to note that Galtung, and Lenin before him, argue that the people may not know or be able to articulate their needs and interests, as the system perpetuates their ignorance (of themselves). And it is this reason why "outsiders" are needed, and why the conversation about needs and interests must be expanded beyond the domain of a given problem set, as indeed, inequality is a multisectoral issue that impacts the entire set of basic human needs (as, for instance, Galtung defines them) (Lederer *et al.*, 1982). This is a warning to those that rely on "participation" as it may not take on a broad set of interrelated issues, or at least, support their emergence in a problem-solving process. However, this process of discovery / invention of "interests" may not be included in conflict resolution processes, for indeed, it is often the case that the definition of the problem is provided by outsiders, or, if it is defined by "insiders," the problem definition may be disaggregated from its related issues. In either case, the definition of the problem may serve the interests of the outsiders. This is often the case in locations where the US military is working to foster "participation" in local governance, for example; it is the interests of the US government that are served, when the problem is defined by the United States as "security," for example.

While the participation of the victims of structural violence is critically important as a process for upending structural violence, it remains unclear as to the criteria we, as practitioners, would use in order to be sure that our own "participation," as third parties, does not simply seek reform of an existing violent system, but instead, is able to engage in a manner that revolutionizes the system (Ferguson, 1976). As Galtung notes:

> But one has to observe carefully, for those most interested in the maintenance of status quo may not come openly to the defense of the structure: they may push their mercenaries in front of them. (Galtung, 1969: 179)

How would we know when or if we are ourselves participating as "mercenaries in the maintenance of the status quo?" Galtung recognizes that this is a possibility in terms of peace work, and while he recognizes the problem, his list of "dos and don'ts" for peace workers does little to enable "outsiders" to differentiate when their own participation would change the system, and when they are just duped by that system as its agents.

Fontan (2012) points us in a good direction, via her robust critique of peace-building more generally, noting its roots in the reproduction of liberalism; she documents the perniciousness of funds for peace-building, which then operate as a form of economic fracking (Cobb, 2013), destabilizing local economies, poisoning local relations and harvesting the sex trade in the process. Richmond and

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

Mitchell (2011) make similar arguments, critiquing liberalism as a sort of trickster that dupes the peace-building industry to its purposes, and in the process, undermines, or worse, colonizes it.

While Mary Anderson's mandate "Do No Harm" is certainly an expression of good intentions, we know about the road to hell – it is paved with good intentions. The question we are addressing is a question with huge implications, one at the very core of the ethics of conflict resolution practice: How can we make sense of the kind of "participation" that engages those subjected to structural violence in a manner that would enable them to develop their own "problem narratives" as well as their own responses to the systems they find oppressive? While some would argue that this question about the nature of "participation" could be resolved via attention to the *outcomes* of peace work, others have noted that Galtung's "autotelic value of peace" (Lawler, 1995: 55) may blind peace workers to both their values that undergird their processes, as well as to the associated outcomes, or consequences.

We argue in this article that this puzzle accompanies a set of issues surrounding the notion of "participation" itself and are resonant with a set of underlying and problematic assumptions about power and social change. We explore these assumptions about power, arguing for a focus on discourse, and more specifically, narrative, as a lens on the *politics of participation*. While this lens does not translate into a list of do's and don'ts for peace workers (*ala Galtung*), it does thicken our description of our own participation, a reflexive move that is notably missing in most efforts to redress structural violence. And in this move, we hope to illuminate a framework for the ethics of conflict resolution practice that can account for the design for fostering participation.

2 "Participation": A Set of Interrelated Puzzles

The issues associated with "participation" are multiple, if not multiplying. First, and perhaps foremost, it anchors a discourse that advocates democracy, celebrates "voice" and "choices." This discourse, critically central to the liberal agenda, can undermine alternative, local, ways of being and value systems. This has been widely recognized in the efforts to resuscitate local forms of peace-building, suggesting that "local" practices would somehow address and redress exploitation and violence (Shaw *et al.*, 2010). But there are a set of issues surrounding the valorization of the local – the Gacaca process was heralded as an indigenous form of restorative justice, but it was clearly mired in a set of complexities that allowed communities to avoid the violent past, and follow, rather than challenge, powerful elites (Ingelaere, 2009).

The discourse of "voice" itself downloads a set of assumptions that are problematic as an anchor for ethical practice. Dwyer (2012)[2] notes that we often presume that having a "voice" is equated with participation – being able to speak,

2 See Dwyer's lecture, "Beyond Speaking as Healing" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ak8K4sWkH60>.

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

being able to represent experience is equated to being able to constitute the Self, as a person, and to be able to account for the past, and design a future. But she points out that there are peoples and places where speaking is not the modality for achieving freedom, and indeed, "freedom" itself may not be a desired end. Her research in Indonesia recounts the ways that people make sense of a violent past, without speaking. By Western standards, they would not be able to "work through" a violent history unless they give voice to their experience. But again, this presumes the centrality of a system based on representation, where casting our vote or "choosing" our preferences reveals our own preference for "agency" as we know it. So, our own reliance on voice, on speaking, as a way to address and redress violence may be filled, as Dwyer has suggested, with potholes.

Additionally, Cobb (2013) notes that speaking, generally, is fraught, not only because it often requires, in the context of conflict, that people speak on discursive grounds they did not make and cannot change, but also, because speaking about violence reproduces the narratives that anchor the violence, even when it is contested or denounced. In other words, when people speak, they do so within the discursive resources that are available to them; these "resources" *function as discursive regimes that regulate what can/cannot be said, as well as what must be said*. Speaking can itself pose serious problems for peace workers, who are working to enable people to speak about their victimization or to problem-solve within a polarized setting. The risk that discursive regimes pose to people in conflict, or those subjected to structural violence, cannot be mitigated by our trust in speaking, or the processes we set in place, which are intended to enable deliberation and collaborative problem-solving. While Habermas does work to provide a theory of how this might happen, his work can be, and has been, soundly critiqued as one which cannot address power within deliberation, at the level of the discourse itself: the ideal speech situation is, in fact, an ideal (Susen, 2011). "Communicative rationality" cannot begin to provide the container, as process, for narratives of hate, or of the liberal state itself; narratives of hate, as well as liberal state narratives about peace regulate and restrict, if not police, what can and cannot be said. In sum, the discourse of "voice," central to the process of participation, cannot provide the criteria needed to enable participants, be they peace workers or victims of structural violence, to alter the systems which anchor that victimization.

A second serious puzzle is that "participation" can download a given problem frame that either does not emerge from within, or is at odds with the local culture. These problems can be couched in "development" frames, and set up a conversation about an issue that is excised from the set of related issues to which it is attached. Dryzek (2002) provides an excellent review of the variety of critiques that can be made of deliberative processes as he works to retain it as a legitimate alternative to what Mill called the "tyranny of the majority."[3] However, Dryzek also advocates a robust debate in the public, and indeed, at present, participation in deliberative processes is understood as a way to actually ensure that cultural and ideological diversity is not only maintained, but institutionalized in the state

3 See the discussion of Mill's concept and its relation to violence in Brewer (2003).

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

(Dryzek, 2002: 9). However, this elides the core problem of problem framing – cast as "development," there is a requirement for people to engage in making decisions about *how* it will occur, not whether or not it will. Likewise, deliberations at the local level about "environmental justice" can lead to decisions that may or may not become institutionalized, in which case, "participation" becomes a way to talk about action, while avoiding it. And further, deliberation can function to disaggregate the impacts of structural violence in a manner that Galtung has warned against – deliberations about environmental issues is never linked to problems in the educational system, or in the local economy; thus, the atomization of injustice could be a process of some reforms that never lead to a systems change.

Third, embedded in "participation," and this includes Participatory Action Research (PAR), we can see the process of what Althusser called "interpellation" at work (Law, 2000). Given the centrality of the United States to recent wars, development and to the advance of the liberal state, the United States as a state hails subjects, in and through peace work, to respond *as subjects*. And it follows, that from within that role, people may not be positioned to think outside the frameworks provided by the United States. From this perspective, PAR can be a process, which, unwittingly, extends the power of the state, enrolling subjects in and through its own formulation of problems and possible solutions. The climate change conflict provides a case in point: communities are taking collaborative action, through collaborative processes, to mitigate against the impact of climate change, and are, in this way actually sidelining the core conflict where the state has sided, over and over, with the coal and oil industry, refusing to participate in global frameworks to reduce carbon emissions. We can see a similar process in the US State Department's approach to "resilience" – they define it as a community's capacity to bring itself back to a steady state,[4] after shocks and stressors, and yet, the "steady state" may be one that contributes to violence and oppression.[5]

All three of these participation puzzles are highlighted in an effort to create a deeper conversation about the complexities that surround peace work, and hopefully mitigate the blind trust we, in the field of conflict resolution, have in the processes surrounding participation. But we are not advocating throwing out the baby with the bathwater; we are not suggesting that all participation – "theirs" or "ours" – is unethical, or automatically generates reform, and not revolution. Rather, we are seeking to advance a hermeneutic of suspicion, or to at the very least, make this familiar concept, more strange.

However, some of these critiques of "participation" are rather tired, and indeed, quite familiar. This is because at their core lie the worries about the reach of the liberal state, and the failure to address structural violence. From this perspective, "participation" is the unlucky bystander of the revolutionary agenda. To

4 For an example, see <www.epa.gov/dced/pdf/iowa_climate_adaptation_report.pdf>. For an account of the US definition of "resilience," see the Presidential Directive at <www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/presidential-policy-directive-critical-infrastructure-security-and-resil>.

5 See USAID's policy on resilience in action at <www.usaid.gov/resilience>.

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

extend our effort to make the familiar strange, we circle back around to the foundation of these critiques – the framing of "reform vs. revolution" itself, for it is within this frame that we are able to expose the politics of social change that are at work, notions which then disable us from tracing the effects of our work as peace workers or the effects of those that "participate" in these peace projects. In the section that follows, we offer a perspective on social change that may be useful in tracing an ethics of "participation" in conflict resolution.

3 Beyond "Reform vs. Revolution": Towards an Ethics of Meaning-Making

Day (2004), in his article "From Hegemony to Affinity," lays out an alternative to the "reform vs. revolution" frame, and in the process, enables us to see "participation" in a new light. He offers a critique of "hegemony" and argues that it has, as a concept, operated hegemonically, focusing our attention on the state and corporate apparatus, as the location for "irradiation effects within the system" (p. 719). He notes that

> ...in protest politics, there is still a strong orientation to the state (and they) hope to achieve effects on a limited number of axes, rather than on all axes at once. (Day, 2004: 723)

And his point here is that many of the protests of the 1960s, which he called New Social Movements, were ostensibly single issues, but were still often oriented to state powers. The point here is that protestors began to focus on issues other than class, and in so doing, decentred the centre, which was the state. Day distinguishes between

> *a politics of the act* and *a politics of demand*. By the latter I mean to refer to actions oriented to ameliorating the practices of states, corporations and everyday life, through either influencing or using state power to achieve irradiation effects. As "pragmatic" as it may be, and despite its successes during the heyday of the welfare state in a few countries, the politics of demand is by necessity limited in scope: it can change the content of structures of domination and exploitation, but it cannot change their form. As Laclau points out, without a hegemonic centre articulated with apparatuses of discipline and control, there is no force to which demands might be addressed. However, the converse is also true – every demand, in anticipating a response, perpetuates these structures, which exist precisely in anticipation of demands. This leads to a positive feedback loop, in which the ever-increasing depth and breadth of apparatuses of discipline and control create ever-new sites of antagonism, which produce new demands, thereby increasing the quantity and intensity of discipline and control. (Day, 2004: 733-734)

However, in the politics of the act, Day notes that social change is a function, not of the logic of hegemony, with its insistence on state power, but rather, on the

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

logic of affinity, or the connections people create between themselves and issues that reflect a more anarchic set of processes.

> The key elements of an anarchistic logic of affinity are: a desire to create alternatives to state and corporate forms of social organization, working "alongside" the existing institutions; proceeding in this via disengagement and reconstruction rather than by reform or revolution; with the end of creating not a new knowable totality (counter-hegemony), but of enabling experiments and the emergence of new forms of subjectivity; and finally, focusing on relations between these subjects, in the name of inventing new forms of community. (p. 741)

"Participation" begins to have a new political agenda from this perspective; it no longer is suspect as the handmaiden of reform, nor does it require the outside leadership (i.e., peace workers) that Galtung imagined. Indeed, Day makes the point that many of the social movements that are anarchistic by nature cling to an ethic that their way of doing social change is as important to them as the effects they seek to create.

He refers to these social movements as using "constituent power" rather than "constituted power" (Day, 2004: 738), highlighting the power to constitute, to create new meaning, and new sets of relations, as the criteria for their effectiveness. Building on Day's work, we offer a narrative lens on social change work that extends his concern for the "reform vs. revolution frame" and anchors the ethics of participation on the narrative dynamics that support the evolution of meaning, and the creation of affinities, formed through what Day calls "capillary" power (Day, 2004). In the section that follows, we elaborate this form of power as a foundation for a new frame for understanding participation.

4 "Constituent Power" as Capillary Processes: A Foundation for the Ethics of Participation

Borrowing from Foucault, Day's "constituent power" is that which is found in the capillary processes whereby people negotiate meaning in their everyday lives – in their day-to-day practices. Day notes:

> As early as 1949, Martin Buber argued that the crucial feature of the rise of the state was not that it displaced existing forms of association, but that "the political principle with all its centralistic features percolated into the associations themselves, modifying their structure and their whole inner life" (Buber, 1958: 131). Buber had thus identified, in its nascent form, the situation which Habermas would later describe as the colonization of the lifeworld (1987: 301-373), and which Hardt and Negri have characterized as the "real subsumption" of society in the state (1994). Buber's use of the term "political principle" marks a crucial point of differentiation between anarchist theory and its (neo)liberal and (post) Marxist counterparts: for anarchists, it is both

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

> possible and desirable for human beings to live without state intervention, if sufficiently strong non- state (and of course non-corporate) modes of organization exist to take on the tasks assigned to state coercion in the other paradigms… On the further assumption that the character of a transformation will have a strong effect on its outcome, anarchist thought has tended to privilege "social" revolutions based on the construction of affinities (constituent power) over "political" revolutions based on achieving hegemony (constituted power) (Day, 2004: 738).

In the context of constituent power, meanings are negotiated in interaction with local institutions, organizations, schools, and so on; coalitions emerge organically; and it is in these capillaries of social engagement that power is working. When we look beyond the centre at the capillaries, streams of interaction become visible in which dominant narratives are either reproduced, or challenged and evolved.

Shawn Ginwright (2010) presents a moving example of activism (his term) with black urban youth that elucidates how the emergent coalitions in Oakland, CA work to uncover unrealized constituent power in ways that are transformative for the youth as well as the broader community. This call to activism comes after a serious shift in the political landscape in Oakland from a context of political and social vibrancy to one fractured by the government dismantling of radical political organizations such as the Black Panthers in the 1970s, the exodus of blue-collar jobs and the infiltration of crack onto the city streets, leaving many more people than there were jobs to go around and the drug market became the major viable economy for the rising youth. Communities suffered as violence became more pervasive, leading to turf wars, and ultimately, greater isolation as families began to send their youth to outside schools or kept them away from neighbourhood parks, streets and other public domains, out of fear. As these dynamics gained more traction, increased policing and surveillance led to heightened tensions, and eventual mistrust of authorities and local institutions among community members and youth, more specifically. Against this backdrop, in the mid-1980s, there was a proliferation of non-profits and social service agencies in the city that were tasked with providing much-needed services to the population.

However, as Ginwright (2010) suggests, these institutional programmes were insufficient as they attempted to succeed in an environment where youth are navigating daily struggles and violence, but even more importantly for this discussion, muted the vibrancy of black civil life once prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, and with it, the capacity for youth to dream and imagine a new way of life, what Ginwright calls an "attack on hope" (p. 51).

This attack on hope is both cause and consequence of conflict. What do we do with this attack on hope? Where do youth turn when they have no faith and trust in their institutions and social prescriptions forbid that they talk to their friends about the violence they have witnessed? If there are no spaces that exist whereby youth can express themselves or truly engage with their day-to-day experiences they, themselves, become colonized by the violence in their lives, with their own bodies as containers for their "secrets." Their agency is radically depleted as alternatives to their lives are ultimately foreclosed. And the double whammy, of

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

course, is that they are then blamed for their own alienation! "Agency," from this perspective, becomes the weapon for denigration and social control, as the "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" American myth is invoked, papering over the *absence* of affinities, or capillary creation, and evolution of meaning.

One of the dominant stories that does circulate about black youth in Oakland, in schools, families, the media, through the prison system, is that black communities are inherently more violent than other, i.e., white communities – that victims of violence in black communities deserve their fate, that they are responsible for the conditions of their lives. As many critics have noted, this is an oversimplified narrative that delegitimizes black communities and negates them of having a more complex history and politics. It does not, for example, acknowledge the years of divestment in black communities which has resulted in joblessness and the reliance on the drug trade economy (Ginwright, 2010: 55). This type of thin storyline risks marginalizing the people from such communities and leads to internalized blame or "infiltrated consciousness" limiting the available discursive resources communities and individuals have to story themselves as moral agents (Nelson, 2001).

"The ability to frame individual narratives within powerful larger narratives imbues narrators with respective degrees of power within a given local culture…" (Wibben, 2011: 34). Often times, political structures use a *narrow* narrative construction in order to consolidate their own power and to disempower those who might contradict their own legitimacy, blaming the victims of structural violence for their plight. This has implications that go beyond the macropolitical context, according to Nelson (2001), who argues that individual identities are narratively constructed and that their moral agency is completely dependent on their stories having uptake and being legitimized by Others. She notes that damage is done to identity in and through the processes through which being seen as a moral agent, as having the capacities, abilities and experience to make moral decisions, is denied by Others. When moral agency is denied, it constitutes a relation of oppression that denies people opportunities and leads to the development of what she calls an "infiltrated consciousness" – people unwittingly adopt these delegitimizing stories about Self. But this not only damages a person's/group's identity, it creates the relations of hierarchy in which some can deny the legitimacy of Others, and it anchors the structures which then perpetuate this form of violence (Nelson, 2001: 21). Individuals and groups whose narratives are not acknowledged by the dominant discourses, who are denied the ability to be moral agents, may resort to extremes in order to have their voices heard. Alternatively, they, as many people of colour in the United States do, live in the shadow of a system that victimizes them.

In this context, institutions are themselves locations for the circulation and proliferation of narratives that damage identity – the proliferation of prisons, zero-tolerance policies and police/state surveillance threatens the viability of networks within many black communities and undermines the notion of democratic participation and community building (Ginwright, 2010: 56). Black Lives Matters has struggled to ensure that the stories of the black community are legitimized, ensuring that the black community is seen by law enforcement, as a moral com-

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

munity. From a narrative lens, addressing damaged identity requires that we build contexts where moral agency can be constituted and nurtured. But this, in turn, requires more than an army of do-gooders in black communities who encourage their participation in after-school programmes (to increase success in school), or trade skills training programmes in trade (to augment employment), or creative arts programmes (mimicking the privileged white children's curriculums) or conflict resolution training (helping them redress the violence in their lives). Rather, it requires opportunities to develop an *understanding* of racism and racial politics, in order to externalize the blame of urban violence and help to "repair" identities. In other words, it requires the creation of consciousness about the structures of violence, as discursive regimes, as narratives told and elaborated about/by Self and Other.

Ginwright demonstrates this process through his in-depth work with youth in Oakland; he describes how to work with young people to name and address the "unimaginable choices" resulting from violence and the institutional failures, through the creation of caring relationships, political consciousness and action (p. 54).

> Caring relationships can confront hopelessness and foster beliefs about justice among young people. These caring relationships are not simply about trust, dependence and mutual expectations. Rather, they are political acts that encourage youth to heal from trauma by confronting injustice and oppression in their lives. (Ginwright, 2010: 56)

As he explains, this care is not something that is only personal to the individual, but is essential in building social networks of collective responsibility. It does the political work of situating the violent experiences of youth within a broader system of politics and injustice, therefore externalizing the blame that is so often internalized, and acts as a barrier to alternative possibilities for action and engagement.

This consciousness-raising within "caring" communities is a narrative domain and it has constituent power. It happens in a space for the emergence of new meanings about the legacies of marginalization and racism; these narratives provide a new lens through which youth are able to make new sense of themselves, in their own lives. The stories of their personal experiences of violence and oppression materialize in spaces of non-judgement, shielded from additional threats of violence and fear of "ratting" out their peers. Their stories are not only shared, but also, elaborated in these spaces such that they are no longer shackled by their untelling, by silence and alienation.

Maria Pia Lara (2008) describes "disclosive" spaces, where narratives are explored and elaborated; in these spaces, communities can engage in "morally interpreting historical experiences from the past to construct a new understanding of our present" (p. 58). She argues that these spaces enable the emergence of "reflective judgments." Building on Kant and Arendt, Lara (2008) describes these kinds of judgements as those in which persons begin to build, in interaction with

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

others, normative assessments that contextualize themselves in their own history, as tragic narratives:

> If we go back to Arendt's idea of the *sensus communis*, we find the perspective that when we construct the communicative space of political judgment, we need the help of its moral dimension, which comes more from an aesthetic immersion into the tragic search for the meanings of our actions that can never be completely reconciled to our understanding. (Lara, 2008: 95)

The significance of these narratives in addressing experiences of violence is that they open up, through storytelling, the opportunity for understanding the past events, as well as opportunities to construct new stories or even introduce new elements to stories by using moral imagination; these new elements emerge from debate, discussion and dialogue. In other words, the stories told and interpreted in these disclosive spaces have an opportunity for evolution – new evaluative framings of the past and imagination of the future. These spaces are "disclosive" precisely because they combine language in unexpected ways, bypassing, if not destabilizing, master narratives. Indeed, the way the story is told is impacted by the context for that storytelling; these "disclosive spaces" allow one to see things one could not see before – but once you see it, you cannot go back to the prior narrative. This is a core characteristic of narrative change, that in places where narratives have been thinned by routinized binary representations (good/evil), introducing new story elements and having those elaborated by Others (which is crucial) creates a thicker, more complex story that then increases the discursive resources available to draw from in the future. The development of these type of narratives are important, especially in places where dominant stories about African American communities occupy the social imaginary, delegitimize their communities, and where fear and threats of violence stall narrative development.

Providing spaces for youth to feel cared for and to tell their stories of their own experiences, exploring existing structures and systems of oppression and have these stories elaborated, begins to activate the capillary processes that are essential to emerging new forms of agency within structures of oppression. But youth cannot do this alone. In this case, Ginwright organizes a three-day training camp outside of the city, which first focuses on building trust among the youth participants, and subsequently, begins this process of consciousness-raising. That process is sustained by providing an organizational space where youth can congregate after school. This space functions as an office environment, but is then relinquished to the youth once they enter – reorganizing normative notions of organizational hierarchy. The computers used by staff are immediately relinquished to students for doing homework, playing games, looking at their social media pages and so on; a constant reminder to the youth is that this is their space. The leaders of the organization are referred to as Mamma and Babba and they treat each other as family. While they do not always agree, the youth are even brought into decisions about the funding of the organization itself – they are given the opportunity to give weight to the political and moral implications of

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

accepting funding from a company such as Phillip Morris (Ginwright, 2010: 59), for example.

Providing opportunities for this type of debate provides youth with the resources to consider themselves agents in their own lives and activates their ability to story themselves in relationship to broader systems of power. It invigorates the capillary processes that enable them to make informed decisions about their future as individuals as well as a community, reorganizing their relationships with each other, as well as with the dominant narrative *about* their communities. In this case, the youth now are able to create descriptions about themselves, rather than to only know themselves as they are storied *by* the system.

This chance to question and develop new stories about Self is crucial to creating moral agency in marginalized communities, which are faced with stories about themselves that prohibit a sense of trust, care, community and action – aka "constituent power." Much of the critical theory that underlies the liberal critique of participation, as we have argued, is too oriented towards structure, giving the structure all of the power. Day (2004) points in a new direction, one where we need to recognize that structure is a set of dynamics that includes the politics of the everyday, and therefore, in order to reorganize the structure, we need to take action at the micro-political level, using the logic of affinity, to support the emergence of new stories about Self that anchor new understandings about Self/Other and context.[6] However, this process must itself be explored, as we are arguing that consciousness raising is a process by which persons begin to restory themselves and Others, within existing oppressive structures. Framing these structures as master narratives, we explore, in the section that follows, a narrative lens on how master narratives function, in an effort to deepen our appreciation for "participation" as narrative practice. This, in turn, provides a narrative lens on the ethics of participation, at the capillary level where narrative power operates.

5 Master-Counter Dynamics and Narrative Compression

How people make sense of themselves in relationship to the dominant stories about themselves can be described, in narrative terms, through the relationship of master and counternarrative dynamics. As we can see from the example of the Oakland youth, many of them are trapped in stories told about them that they did not create themselves. These master narratives are so powerful that they create the conditions whereby some stories simply cannot be told. The stories about the black youth that circulate in the media position them as deserving victims, as lazy and/or as criminals. These dominant stories in the public domain are so pervasive that they foreclose the possibility of the youth framing themselves in alter-

6 Although Day (2004) was writing prior to the Occupy Wall Street movement, his account of the logic of affinity and the anarchic nature of social movements indeed captures the nature of that movement, as it refuses to engage the state, but rather, functioned so as to ensure it did not use the instruments of power and hierarchy that would be simple replications of structural violence. See Gitlin's (2012) description of this movement, which mirrors Day's points about the nature of new social movements.

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

native ways. Attempts to counter these master narratives are warded off by their coherence, which is, tragically, strengthened by the direct rebuttal or attack from counternarratives (Cobb, 2013). Master narratives are protean – drawing on and coopting the discursive resources from the counternarrative; master narratives learn from the counternarrative, absorbing, reframing and repositioning themselves in ways that disqualify, marginalize and deny the claims of the counternarrative. As a result, the counternarrative is stalled, hijacked, marginalized, inoculated and drained of its power to penetrate or fracture the master narrative. As the master narrative consolidates itself through its telling and retelling, and as the counternarrative is absorbed and hijacked, the narrative field is "compressed" – that is, it gets restricted, routinized and delimited such that no new conversations can materialize and the possibility for new meanings to emerge is stalled, if not completely obliterated. These dynamics of conflict narratives damage the ecology of the meaning system itself, limiting the narrative landscape and the discursive potential for new or alternative stories to emerge. However, because dominant narratives are not static, and in recognition of their capacity not only for the colonization of political events and social practices, but also, its capacity for evolution, it is important to examine these dynamics further in order to understand where there might be cracks or fissures in the dominant narrative such that it might be unseated or evolved, even if only slightly. Because the relationship between the dominant narrative and counternarrative is the location for the struggle over meaning, there is a lot at stake, i.e., legitimacy, access to resources, traditional notions of political power, funding, rights and even access to participation.

There is little research that differentiates counternarratives as to their effectiveness, or their capacity to destabilize master narratives. However, Nelson (2001) does address this, via her discussion of what kinds of counternarratives "work"; she notes that there is a naïveté in the literature of counternarrative, which posits that they can be launched and actually counter the master narrative. All too often, that is not actually what happens, and she details the kinds of mistakes that counternarratives make, which in this process, actually reinforce master narratives. While this is an excellent beginning, it does not go far enough, in that she does not detail the affirmative – the nature of the features, or the processes of counternarratives that are able to destabilize master narratives, and engender social change.

In Ginwright's case of black youth in Oakland, we can see how youth are "interpellated" by the dominant narrative – they are "hailed" by master narratives, and in this process, feel that they have little choice of responses. Indeed, black youth in Oakland are positioned as particular kinds of narrative subjects prior to their birth, on the basis of race. Under the constant threat of violence in their communities, pushed towards social isolation, there are not many ways that these youth can make counter claims against the dominant storyline about themselves and their community. The challenging task here is to recognize that the routinized way of responding – the same old counter story that youth respond with, i.e., joining gangs, selling drugs, resorting to violence – does not upend the

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

master narrative, but rather, consolidates their path on what has been called "the school to prison pipeline."[7]

So, what can be done about this? How can we engage differently within this narrative system such that youth can begin to story themselves in new ways and create a greater sense of agency? This brings us back to the importance of Ginwright's approach to care, consciousness-raising and action. In his work, he has reconceptualized the kinds of responses that are available to the young people in Oakland, by generating safe spaces for the telling of new kinds of stories and providing a consciousness which externalizes the blame for how the youth are positioned by master narratives. His kind of activism is a form of peace work, and indeed, helps anchor a narrative foundation for an "ethics" of participation for the field of conflict resolution.

6 Participation

What can we say about this type of participation, what Ginwright has called "the softer side of revolution?" Here, we come back to the logic of affinity where Day notes that social change is a function, not of the logic of hegemony, with its insistence on state power, but rather, on the logic of affinity, or the connections people create between themselves and issues, as they see them. This capillary power, the power to create meanings, reflects a more anarchic set of processes – social change is not aimed at upending the state, reproducing the reform vs. resolution frame, but rather, aimed at the production of stories that explore "interpellation" by master narratives. This form of activism, explicitly described as "conscientization" by Freire (1970), recognizes the political in the personal and the importance of engaging in consciousness-raising towards engagement, as action against oppression. This narrative foundation for participation calls for an understanding of marginalization and the relationship to power, which leads to political engagement or the kind that reorganizes meaning for those who are themselves being called to action.

From the narrative and conflict perspective, however, people get caught up in stories they did not make for themselves, and likewise, they cannot change them themselves. This has implications for the peace worker or intervener where they have a role in supporting the development of the new narratives in communities; in these processes, the work is not just storytelling, but the process of exploring, through stories, the master/counternarrative relation, exposing and exploring how people see the master narrative from where they are, from within their own experience and creating disclosive spaces where new meanings can emerge. As discussed by Day and demonstrated in the example of youth in Oakland, we need to engage in processes that run parallel to or alongside the state, rather than getting caught in the cycle of master-counter dynamics, which often leads to narrative compression, or to perpetuate and reinforce the system in a positive feedback

7 See The ACLU's discussion of the "school to prison pipeline" at <https://www.aclu.org/school-prison-pipeline>.

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

loop, as Day (2004) notes. "Participation" in Ginwright's work requires narrative development; after school programmes, literacy programmes, job programmes are all "participation" programmes that perpetuate the very narratives that delegitimize and disqualify black youth.

Through this articulation of participation, we begin to see the importance of capillary processes. Building on the theory that structural change is a matter of changing the organization of relationships and communities, it requires that the intervener be able to design the spaces that could challenge master narratives and encourage the development of new stories. This would, in turn, require interveners to map the narratives in a community; this map would provide an understanding of the way things are talked about and where and how sense-making is happening, effectively requiring interveners to take meaning-making itself as an object of study, in context. "Participation" becomes a process for narrative development, through the critical focus on master/counternarrative relations, tied into personal experience and relationships. Conversations about these narratives enable them to evolve. Thus, the goal of participation is not engagement in peacemaking, or in development, but in the re-design of the architecture of meaning, which is narrative itself. This approach to participation is not aimed at the state, at the centre, but rather, aims to build the capillaries of connections between people, so that they are legitimized as moral agents, in the narratives of Others.

It is in this realm of political action "that structural renewal is intersubjective and deeply ethical" (Day, 2004: 740), not because it blocks structural violence-as-system, which pulls "participation" back into the tractor-beam of the reform vs. revolution framing, but because it enables people to make sense of themselves, in context, in an affinity with Others. We agree with Day; the point of social change is not system change, but rather, affinities that disrupt the hold of dominant narrative on their victims.

Bibliography

Brewer, J. (2003). *C. Wright Mills and the ending of violence*. New York, NY: Springer.

Cobb, S. (2013). *Speaking of violence: The politics and poetics of narrative dynamics in conflict resolution*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Cornwall, A. & Brock, K. (2005). What do buzzwords do for development policy? A critical look at "Participation", "Empowerment" and "Poverty Reduction". *Third World Quarterly, 26*(7), 1043-1060. doi:10.1080/01436590500235603.

Day, R.J.F. (2004). From hegemony to affinity. *Cultural Studies, 18*(5), 716-748. doi: 10.1080/0950238042000260360.

Dryzek, J.S. (2002). *Deliberative democracy and beyond: Liberals, critics, contestations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

Dwyer, L. (2012). “Beyond Speaking as Healing.” Lecture given at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZoCx4cLkFY>.

Ferguson, A. (Editor). (1976). *Revolution or reform?: A confrontation*. Oxford, UK: Transaction Press.

Fontan, V.C. (2012). *Decolonizing peace*. Doerzbach, Germany: Dignity Press.

Freire, P. (1970). Cultural action and conscientization. *Harvard Educational Review, 40*(3), 452-477.

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research, 6*(3), 167-191.

Galtung, J. (1971). A structural theory of imperialism. *Journal of Peace Research, 18*(2), 81-117.

Galtung, J. (1996). *Peace by peaceful means peace and conflict, development and civilization*. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute; London; Thousand Oaks, CA.

Gitlin, T. (2012). *Occupy nation: The roots, the spirit, and the promise of occupy wall street*. New York NY: itbooks.

Gizelis, T.-I. & Kosek, K.E. (2005). Why humanitarian interventions succeed or fail: The role of local participation. *Cooperation and Conflict, 40*(4), 363-383. doi: 10.1177/0010836705058224.

Ginwright, S. (2010). *Black youth rising: Activism and radical healing in urban America*. New York: NY: Teachers College Press.

Ingelaere, B. (2009). “Does the truth pass across the fire without burning?” Locating the short circuit in Rwanda’s Gacaca courts. *The Journal of Modern African Studies, 47*(04), 507-528. doi:10.1017/S0022278X0999005X.

Lara, M.P. (2008). Reflective judgment as world disclosure. *Philosophy & Social Criticism, 34*(1-2), 83-100. doi:10.1177/0191453707084275.

Law, J. (2000). On the subject of the object: Narrative, technology, and interpellation. *Configurations, 8*, 1-29.

Lawler, P. (1995). *A question of values: Johan Galtung’s peace research*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Lederer, K., Galtung, J. & Antal, D. (1982). Human needs: A contribution to the current debate. *TELOS: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, 53(227-230). doi: 10.3817/0982053227.

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004

This article from International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution is published by Eleven international publishing and made available to anonieme bezoeker

Lenin, V. (1987). *Essential works of Lenin: "What Is to Be Done?" and other writings*. New York, NY: Dover Publications.

Nelson, H. (2001). *Damaged identities: Narrative repair*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Richmond, O.P. & Mitchell, A. (2011). *Hybrid forms of peace: From everyday agency to post-liberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shaw, R., Waldorf, L. & Hazan, P. (2010). *Localizing transitional justice: Interventions and priorities after mass violence*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Susen, S. (2011). Critical notes on Habermas's theory of the public sphere. *Sociological Analysis, 5*(1), 37-62.

Umpleby, S.A. (1976). Second order cybernetics and the design of large scale social experiments. In *Annual Meeting, Society for General Systems Research, Boston, MA*.

Wibben, A.T.R. (2011). *Feminist security studies: A narrative approach*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Routledge Press.

doi: 10.5553/IJCER/221199652016004002004