



Editorial

Dear Reader

This issue is a compelling offering of peer-reviewed articles, audio recordings, videos, reviews and multimedia from narrative practitioners in Nepal, Armenia, Hong Kong, China, Chile, Australia, the UK and the USA. There is a diversity of themes that sparkle with everyday acts of resistance, a call for epistemic justice and communities as sites of healing.

Yasna Mancilla Monsalve engages us in accounts of how she and others in her community responded to anti-lesbian hate crime in Chile using collective narrative practice, scraps of fabric and fanzines as ways to weave together histories and generate visibility as forms of activism. We're delighted that this paper is the first for *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work* to be published in two languages – English and Spanish.

Hamilton Kennedy highlights the significance of seeking epistemic justice for the most unusual of stories – those sometimes characterised as delusions. Hamilton reflects on how we can recognise “individuals as knowers, ensuring they are heard fairly ... supporting them in making sense of their experiences” and acknowledging them as experts on their own lives.

Anne-lise Ah-Fat writes about oral histories as an antidote to the positioning of the therapist as an expert while working with grief and death within queer, trans and Black, Indigenous and people of colour communities. Their stories of resistance create an archive based in local knowledges and highlighting the lives of those who are silenced or erased.

Through the metaphor of a spider's web, peer worker and narrative therapist Frankie Hanman-Siegersma describes how friendship responses to mental health crises can increase community connectedness and local support networks and offer ways beyond medicalised responses to distress.

Will Sherwin's account of the “Read Everything Michael White Published Project” might speak for many of us when he writes: “I don't see narrative therapy as a container that I try hard to stay within. I don't hold it as a big long list of ‘don't do these things, and don't use these words’ that feels tight and confining. Instead, I see it as an inspiring ethics-based therapy with lots of creative ideas that, compared with what I was doing before, provides me with a foundation to see more possibilities and enquire more interestingly into the worlds of others.”

“Body as a Picture Book” by Paul Graham brings us stories of how tattoos can be powerful statements and can invite narrative conversations about survival, recording history, defying expectations, expressing pride in culture, and reclaiming ownership of our own bodies. Jacob Tumanko’s response to this paper brings our attention to Māori traditions in which “each and every line within my tā moko (tattoo) has meaning, and it is this meaning that makes my identity visible ... tattoos [can be] forms of resistance and documentation”.

Alicia Bruzek questions dominant ideas that pathologise and push negative identity conclusions with the label of borderline personality disorder , which can leave people “exhausted by the pressure to conform or fit the mould”. She offers ways we can honour people’s experiences to expand territories of identity. Tiffany Sostar responds to this paper with a tender appeal: “The main thing I hope for in this small response paper, as you maybe can tell, is more! More narrative engagement with this community that I love so much, more engagement with the social and political contexts of borderline lives, more solidarity to examine and stand against unjust discourses and the harm they cause.”

Manja Visschedijk reviews *Reframing trauma through social justice: Resisting the politics of mainstream trauma discourse* edited by Catrina Brown. Manja highlights the book’s call: “to resist neoliberal invitations to reduce persons affected by trauma into measurable KPIs and economic units of service provision; to resist the truth claims of universalising, ‘evidence-based’ treatments; and to resist attempts at erasing the richness of diverse worldviews into narrow, pathologising, one-size-fits-all approaches, adopting instead a spirited championing of many, diverse approaches to promoting collective wellbeing and ever-changing expressions of individual freedoms.”

Trans bodies, trans selves: A resource by and for transgender communities, edited by Laura Erickson-Schroth (2nd edition), is reviewed by Tiffany Sostar. The book presents a wide-ranging view of trans and gender-expansive experience. Among multiple themes, the review brings our attention to “whether it is possible to connect the projects of feminism to notions of a multiplicity of genders; to gender-diversity; to multiple ways to become gendered or sexed; to freedom of gender-expression; to gender rights”.

There are two featured videos. Wenjia Li explores fascinating stories that are inspired by Chinese mythical animals as metaphors in narrative practice (in Mandarin with English subtitles). This video documents how, through the use of local metaphors, people can resist alienation and build connections with the wisdom and experience of Chinese culture, history and ancestry. Jaya Luintel and Biju Kandel invite us to The Story Kitchen, which has ignited and built courage for justice in Nepal with women survivors of armed conflict. Again, it uses local metaphors to navigate the identity shift from survivors to storytellers through collective healing and redefining justice.

In an audio practice note (in English and Cantonese), Hong Konger Jack Chiu engages us in an aching question that every immigrant might ask themselves sometimes: “What is life away from home?” Through inviting people to gather together as if to warm each other with their support and acknowledgement, Jack has documented the stories of 39 families who have emigrated from Hong Kong or are considering doing so.

An audio recording of a paper from the journal’s archives, “Poststructuralism and therapy – what’s it all about?”, juxtaposes the intellectual struggle we may face as we grapple with poststructuralist ideas and yet the excitement and the new possibilities they bring for creative forms of listening and working with people.

The photo essay by Ani Margaryan, Sara Portnoy and Heghine Poghosyan is a rich documentation of narrative practice drawing on Armenian “revivalist” experiences. The Armenian people have a long history of survival and reviving from trauma – the genocide, a devastating earthquake and a recent conflict with a neighbouring country. The piece “Still standing: Armenian revivalism and narrative practice – a story of a unique initiative” highlights how narrative practices can support large-scale community programs that acknowledge hardships that people are continuing to face, make space for stories and histories of survival, and start imagining the continuation and sustenance of dreams for their lives ahead.

As I immersed myself in the profound ideas and practices in this issue, Michael White’s words kept echoing in my mind:

Is this work better defined as a world-view? Perhaps, but even this is not enough. Perhaps it’s an epistemology, a philosophy, a personal commitment a politics, an ethics, a practice, a life, and so on. (White, 1995, p. 37).

In solidarity
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New Delhi, India.

Reference

White, M. (1995). The narrative perspective in therapy (D. L. Bubbenzer, J. D. West, & S. R. Boughner, interviewers). In M. White (Ed.), *Re-authoring Lives: Interviews and Essays* (pp. 11–40). Dulwich Centre Publications.

ABOUT THE EDITOR



Shelja Sen is narrative therapist, writer and co-founder of Children First, New Delhi. Her latest book is Reclaim Your Life and she is also a columnist with a national newspaper, Indian Express. Shelja has worked as a narrative practitioner and teacher for over 20 years in various contexts in the UK and India. She is an international faculty member at Dulwich Centre Foundation, Adelaide, and a clinical tutor at The University of Melbourne, Australia. Shelja is a curator of the unique skills, expertise and know-how of the children, young people and families she has the honour of working with, and is committed to building innovative, culturally aligned, ethical practices using a feminist intersectional lens.

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