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External Preconditions for Civilian Peacekeeping

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EXTERNAL PRECONDITIONS FOR CIVILIAN PEACEKEEPING

Abstract

Civilian peacekeeping by civil society organisations is an innovative technique to create space for peace, but it is partially still underdeveloped as a field of study. The presence of international civilian peacekeepers may create the conditions for protecting civilians in situations of violent conflict. However, civilian peacekeeping is not adequate for any environment. The existing literature in this field is not analyzing the pre-existing conditions that might affect deployment. This article – defining some general external factors that may bring to the success or failure of a civilian peacekeeping mission – is a first attempt in this direction.

Keywords: peacekeeping, civilians, nonviolence, NGO, accompaniment.

Introduction

Civilian peacekeeping by civil society organizations is a relatively recent technique to create space for peace. As a field of study, research on the feasibility and efficiency of civilian peacekeeping are present (Schweitzer, 2010, Wallis, 2009, Schirch, 2006, Mahony 2006b, Müller, 2006, Schweitzer et al, 2001), but its key-aspects need further investigation and evaluation. Furthermore, the existing literature shows that civilian peacekeeping has been a field of study involving mainly scholars supporting this technique and just few of them considered the protection impact in a broader framework and understanding (Mahony 2006b). What is more needed, therefore, is to identify a set of external conditions that may affect the deployment of a
civilian peacekeeping mission. This article attempts to provide preliminary insights in this direction. It explores which external variables can create a suitable or challenging environment for the deployment of peacekeepers by civil society organizations (CSOs).

Obviously, “create space for peace” (Friesen et al. 2011, Wallis, 2009, Schirch, 2006) is not the same of “create place for peace”. Create space means to create the conditions in which the local people committed to peace can work safely and without strong external pressures. Usually, this space is not a tangible place, a geographical location, but it can take the intangible forms of dialogue, absence of threats, human rights protection, or empowerment.

The article is structured in three parts. The next session is an overview of the main definitions and interpretations of civilian peacekeeping in the literature. The following section analyses the data on civilian peacekeeping. The 7 main organisations working with this approach are considered for a total of 25 missions and 13 countries. The deployment countries and periods are cross-checked with 8 external variables (intensity of armed conflict(s), type of armed conflict, murder rate, rule of law, voice/accountability, government effectiveness, international aid workers major incidents, and civilian peacekeepers major incidents). Finally, constants and variables are discussed and interpreted. The 8 variables were chosen because they combination is providing a reliable understanding on the areas of intervention about conflicts, political, social and security issues. All the data are provided by widely-used datasets, as presented in the second part. These datasets are combined for the first time together and the matrix can offer a new glance on civilian peacekeeping missions. The article is based on desk-research and the specific information on any kind of incident in civilian peacekeeping missions is directly provided by the implementing organizations. The insights provided by this article might also be considered as a ground for future empirical investigations.

Defining civilian peacekeeping

Peacekeeping is mainly considered as an approach aimed at stopping or deterring the overt violence of the parties involved. The United Nations are traditionally associated to the idea of peacekeeping, although ‘peacekeeping’ is not mentioned in the Charter, the founding document of the UN. Peacekeeping missions are based on Chapter VI and VII of the Chart and they are sometimes referred to as operations under ‘Chapter VI ½’. The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a new era in UN peacekeeping. Following the 1992 Agenda for Peace, written by the then Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, the UN peacekeeping missions notably increased their tasks and – to express the changed scope and size – they are labeled as ‘robust’, ‘complex’ or ‘multi-dimensional’ peacekeeping operations. As a consequence, civilian experts are a significant part of these multidimensional operations working on civilian affairs, human rights, SSR, DDR, monitoring, gender issue, confidence-building, etc. (Bellamy, Williams, Griffin, 2010; Isely, 2010; Heldt, Wallensteen, 2011; Koko, Essis, 2012). However, following the failures of UN peacekeeping in Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Somalia in 2000, the Secretary General Kofi Annan commissioned the commonly-called ‘Brahimi Report’. The reforms confirmed, at least in theory, the importance of the civilian component to decrease violence and to maintain peace.
Civilian peacekeeping by civil society organizations (CSOs) can interact with these UN missions or with other international organizations or state actors, but they are independent from them. This peacekeeping also shares a civilian active protective impact with the UN human rights field presence (Mahony, Nash, 2012).

Surprisingly, Schirch (2006) and Wallis (2009) have tied the emergence of civilian peacekeeping by CSOs to the ‘failures’ of multidimensional peace operations conducted by the UN and by some regional organizations. However, they miss the point on how UN peacekeeping missions are changed since mid 1990es and how the civilian component is, at least theoretically, more relevant in many missions. Meanwhile, some practical collaborations between unarmed civilian peacekeeping and the UN are already present on the ground, as shown by the work of NP in the Philippines.

What is probably missing is a systematic recognition, conceptualization and systematization of possible space of collaboration (for instance, in which scenarios, with which mandates, etc.). Therefore, it makes sense the conclusion reached by Tshiband (2010: 4): ‘the negative allusion made to UN peacekeeping in the definition of civilian peacekeeping hinders its development as an independent field of research’.

Peacekeeping by CSOs is two-fold: on the one hand, it is a reactive dimension involving the direct physical protection of civilians under threat of violent conflict; on the other hand, it is a proactive dimension involving conflict resolution and diplomatic efforts. This peacekeeping has an array of tools available for applying pressure: moral pressures, political pressures, legal pressures, economic pressures, and social pressures (Wallis, 2009). Furthermore, civilian peacekeepers can act with a “proactive presence”: the presence of international civilians in a potentially violent situation can reduce violence and tensions. This because perpetrators of violence or human rights abusers generally do not want to be seen, caught or identified in a violent act (Wallis, 2009). This approach of proactive presence and accompaniment was pioneered by the CSO Peace Brigades International (PBI) early in the 1980s.

Usually, these international CSOs are receiving some type of invitation or contact with at least one group from the conflict region. However, this aspect is quite complex, as well as the actual relevance of a local CSOs invitation, its implications, and the relations with other actors (Schirch, 2006).

As Wallis described (2009), other expressions are used (“witness”, “monitor”, “unarmed bodyguards”, “human shields”). Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) – another organization working with this technique – is often using the expression “unarmed peacekeepers”, while the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) is labeling its internationals on the ground as “accompanyers”.

**External conditions affecting the deployment of a civilian peacekeeping mission**

A promising chapter by Christine Schweitzer (2010) is entitled “What unarmed civilians cannot do”. The first sentence sounds remarkable: “Unarmed civilian cannot stop spoilers and

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determined actors from one party or the other, who want to carry on fighting” (Schweitzer, 2010: 31). Then, the article explains how in some scenarios – like Chechnya – a civilian is just a target. However, few lines later, the author claims that it is pretty the same for military: useless and dangerous to stay there. The idea that spoilers cannot be stopped” appears therefore oversimplified and it is not supported by data or evidences. Eventually, Schweitzer concludes with some general sentences and “what unarmed civilians cannot do” remains vague.

Tim Wallis is trying to provide an answer on timing for civilian peacekeeping interventions (Schirch, 2006), but “accompaniment and presence” are considered valuable in all the phases of a violent conflict, and this is not providing any specific indication. He is inevitably concluding: “Each of the intervention activities may be more or less appropriate and effective, depending on the stages of conflict when an intervention takes place and the ripeness of the conflict. Conflict analysis helps to determine the stage of a conflict and if intervention is appropriate.” (Schirch, 2006: 70).

The existing literature on civilian peacekeeping is therefore almost avoiding the issue of when and where to intervene with this innovative technique. However, is it possible to define a set of external conditions that could affect the deployment of a civilian peacekeeping mission? In order to provide a tentative answer, this article is analyzing all the major organizations and their well-established missions of civilian peacekeeping. In the first table below, the 7 considered organizations are listed with their 25 missions. The missions non-based on civilian peacekeeping principles are not considered. To analyze only well-established missions, another criterion is utilized to filter them: the presence of at least two members for at least two years without interruptions. Some of these missions are combining both civilian peacekeeping and some peacebuilding approaches, but this is not considered a relevant factor for this investigation: the main aspect is a predominant role of peacekeeping techniques.

Then, in the second table, the analysis measures the relationships between the 13 countries of interventions delineated in the first table and 8 country-specific conditions. These 8 variables are: intensity of armed conflict(s), type of armed conflict, murder rate, rule of law, voice/accountability, government effectiveness, international aid workers major incidents and civilian peacekeepers major incidents. These variables are based on the presence and intensity of conflict from UCDP-SIPRI conflict data, the national homicide rates as sourced from the UN Office of Drugs and Crime, the full set of the World Bank’s World Governance Indicators and the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD). The analysis is considering a country only in the periods of a mission deployment. Data on civilian peacekeepers major incidents are obtained by direct interviews to the seven organizations conducted by the author of this article.

Table 1 – Organizations and country deployments

Table 2 – Data

2 A specific research or dataset on the “respect” for foreigners is not available. However, a similar perspective is provided by the international aid workers killed, injured and kidnapped (local/national staff has not been considered). AWSD defines “Aid workers” as the employees and associated personnel of not for profit aid agencies (both national and international staff) that provide material and technical assistance in humanitarian relief contexts. The aid worker definition does not include UN peacekeeping personnel, human rights workers, election monitors or purely political, religious, or advocacy organizations.
Data analysis

The total number of civilian peacekeepers killed, injured or kidnapped for direct causes of the conflicts is:
killed: 1; injured: 11; kidnapped: 7. The missions affected by these major incidents are 4 out of 25 (16%).
The direct analyses of the single variables are showing the follow:

Table 3 – Conclusions

- Intensity of armed conflict. Civilian peacekeeping is present in conflict affected by different intensity. The relationship with the danger for civilian peacekeepers is weak. However, in the majority of the cases, the missions are deployed when the intensity of the conflict is low.
- Type of armed conflict. The relationship with the danger for civilian peacekeepers is weak. However, the majority of the missions are deployed where conflicts are internal (civil wars), between the Government and one or more armed groups. The presence of well-define actors in many areas (e.g., government vs. non-state actors) shows a moderate correlation between these actors and the duration of civilian peacekeeping activities.
- Murder rate. No significant correlation with the general homicide rates in host countries: data are very different. It seems that it is not influencing the well functioning of the missions or the dangers for peacekeeping work.
- Rule of law. Usually low-moderate in the states of deployment, but with some exceptions (Israel, Sri Lanka, and Serbia/Kosovo at the end of the 1990es). No significant correlation with the danger for civilian peacekeepers. Concerning the duration of the missions, the majority of long-term missions are deployed in states with low or moderate rule of law, and it shows the ability of these organisations to work in such conditions.
- Voice/accountability. A correlation with the presence and duration of the missions is evident: voice and accountability are moderate or high in almost all the scenarios (the main exception is Iraq, where the deployed mission encountered severe problems). The correlation with the security of the missions is not significant.
- Government effectiveness. All the mission deployed are in states with moderate or high
government effectiveness, with the exception of Haiti (PBI 1995-2000, a quite short
mission, more considerations below), Iraq (CPT, short and with huge problems) and
Serbia/Kosovo at the end of the 1990es. In fact, with the exception of Haiti and Iraq, the
states percentile ranks are always in the 80% with more government effectiveness.
- Respect for foreign workers. This is a very important variable for deployment, duration
and security of the missions. The international aid workers data on major incident are
showing similar trend in the four states where civilian peacekeepers were injured, killed
or kidnapped.

Some additional considerations can be taken into account:

3 Those killed while kidnapped are counted under ‘killed’ total.
- The major accident of a civilian peacekeeping mission deserves more attention. In November 2005, four Christian Peace Team personnel were taken hostage, resulting in the murder of CPTer Tom Fox and the freeing of the remaining three CPTers in a military operation in March 2006 (Loney, 2011). Following an evaluation phase, CPT relocated its violence reduction work to the Kurdish north of Iraq in late 2006. There, the team works toward accompanying displaced persons home by living in conflicted border regions and documenting human rights violations against civilian populations\(^4\). In the last decade, Iraq has been a country with a very low consideration for foreign workers and a high number of major incidents. Beyond it, the government effectiveness and accountability have been both very low. Under these conditions, a deployment of a civilian peacekeeping mission is not supported by its stronger leverages and can result very dangerous for the international personnel.

- A very low consideration for foreign workers and low government accountability has been also present in Chechnya, where Operation Dove tried to be present in 2000-early 2001. However, due to security reasons, they have not been able to maintain a presence and therefore they moved to Ingushetia to work with refugees\(^5\).

- In the Occupied Palestinian Territories the violence against international aid worker is low (but high against national staff), but for international civilian peacekeepers is high. This data suggest that with a strong government effectiveness and rule of law, international workers are safe if they do not work on sectors with political and human rights implications.

- Concerning Haiti, it should be specified that accompaniment and civilian peacekeeping in general was not the main part of the missions, even if PBI received some requests on it. The core work was mainly based on a peacebuilding approach, in particular on peace education and network-building: “PBI worked in Haiti on a project almost entirely devoted to workshops in nonviolent conflict resolution. The team facilitated workshops with the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Church and with rural communities where local land disputes threatened to lead to bloodshed. In collaboration with the UN human rights monitoring mission, PBI also facilitated workshops with Haitian judges. The aim of PBI’s work was to help build a network of local nonviolence trainers so that PBI’s work would become redundant” (Mahony, 2006a: 12).

- Considered the close correlation with aid workers major incidents, there are grounds for doubting that to intervene with a civilian peacekeeping mission in countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan or Iraq – where international personnel is often a target – may be highly safe and effective. However, this aspect might be a challenging topic for future investigations.

### Conclusions

This article has provided some tentative answers on external variables that might affect the deployment of peacekeepers by CSOs. It shows that these peacekeeping missions are almost exclusively deployed for medium-long periods in states with a significant level of voice/accountability, with government effectiveness, with respect for foreign workers and with well-defined actors in conflict. On the contrary, the general level of violence in the country is not

\(^4\) [http://www.cpt.org/work/Iraq](http://www.cpt.org/work/Iraq)

\(^5\) This case-study is not considered directly in the table above because the deployment period is shorter than two years.
a negative pre-condition for the deployment and effectiveness of a mission. The intensity of armed conflict and rule of law show weak correlations. Concerning the safety of a mission, a first positive correlation is evident with the respect for foreign workers, as well as internal conflicts. At the same time, the general level of violence, government effectiveness, voice/accountability and rule of law has not a direct correlation with danger situations for civilian peacekeepers. The correlation with intensity of armed conflict is weak and showing a slightly increase of danger in more intense conflicts. Finally, the correlation with type of armed conflict is weak and could be the focus of future investigation on more specific analysis within the single countries.

Civilian peacekeeping by CSOs is still a relatively recent sector of peace intervention, but some organisations are working on a medium-scale and they have already gained significant experience. On the one hand, practitioners should take time to analyze and evaluate the work done so far in order to improve the impact and the security of future missions. On the other hand, Scholars interested in civilian peacekeeping missions should consider the operations within the broader framework of the civilian protection impact, as impeccably investigated by Liam Mahony (2006b, 2012). This article may provide a first analytical framework for future field research and some insights for ongoing and future field operations. Sure enough, the systematic study of these peace interventions can provide some useful insights and criteria on where and when to deploy missions in the future.

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African Indigenous System of Conflict Resolution: Reference to the Case of Rwanda and Somalia

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AFRICAN INDIGENOUS SYSTEM OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION: REFERENCE TO THE CASE OF RWANDA AND SOMALIA

Abstract

The task of this paper is to examine, highlight and demonstrate the increasing relevance of African Indigenous System of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) to Western Legal System of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) situations in Africa. The rationale for thinking aloud on this area of intellectual study at this point of continental experience is not far-fetched. It needs to be emphasized that before the coming of the slave driver and colonial master to Africa, Africans had their peculiar strategies of monitoring, managing and resolving conflicts. They also had their peculiar ways and manners of effecting peacemaking, peace-building and confidence-building. And it must be borne in mind that the present Western legal systems which do not fit into the cultural and indigenous practices of African societies are part of the ways the former colonial masters seek to maintain a perpetually divided and conflict ridden Africa, readily available for external manipulation, destabilization and exploitation. This paper also seeks to argue and subsequently sensitize African scholars to de-emphasize Euro-centric postures in conflict resolution situations and adopt instead, the attitudinal and philosophical postures of live and let live and being our brothers’ keepers from which our ancestors lived for more than 150-200 years and their times knew peace.

Keywords: Africa, conflict resolution, indigenous, Peace, Rwanda, Somalia.
Introduction

It is not a misplaced statement, emanating from the sad experiences of African societies today, that the abandonment of utility-laden African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) for Western Legal System of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) is largely responsible for the multiplicity of avoidable (violent) armed conflicts all over the region. A mere land dispute between two families or communities in leads to murder and destruction of hundreds of houses and killing of several people today; whereas, in indigenous Africa, the systems put in place to monitor, prevent, manage and resolve conflicts would have readily prevented such wanton damages. Human history is replete with cases of armed conflicts and struggles over territorial (land) claims, political posts, natural resources and other values. These armed conflicts are products of failed conflict resolution processes. Some forms of resolution enable one side to take everything leaving the other side with nothing as it is found in the concept of Western Legal Systems of Conflict Resolution (WSCR). Again, the adoption of Western Legal Systems of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) postures, especially during conflicts over land, natural resources and political posts breeds bitterness, tension and gives no sense of belonging to others. It creates fear, instability and disorder and makes peaceful coexistence impossible between individuals and groups. Ultimately, it generates insecurity and breeds violence and armed conflicts.

In Africa, Western Legal System of Conflict Resolution (WSCR) nullifies the philosophy of live and let’s live and the concept of being our brother’s keepers. And, almost three decades have passed now since African scholars, facilitators, and to some extent policy makers, embraced conflict resolution as a legitimate area for scholarly endeavor and a useful tool within the realm of professional practice. Within this relatively brief span of time, the field has expanded exponentially, both in theory and in practice. African societal curriculums have been organized by degree-offering institutions of higher learning in African States. Some modern institutions in African societies have also begun offering courses in this field (Kriesberg, 2007). Some basic concepts have become a part of the language of discourse in local African communities. Already, there are some feverish activities to consolidate the accumulated knowledge in the form of African Indigenous System Conflict Resolution (AISCR) literatures (Sandole, et al., 2008; Meffitt, 2005; Deutsch, et al., 2006) Also, some efforts have been focused on snatching the last words from the mouths of the retired pioneers, so that a complete history relative to the evolution of this inherited system can be accurately recorded and preserved for future generations in African societies. In this view, African scholars/facilitators have every right to be proud of the remarkable accomplishments attained within a relatively short period of time. This achievement has been possible, in part due to African system of technology, the illiterate tradition on which African civilization has been anchored, the availability of skills regarding research, the existing capacity to organize ideas and practical projects, and the availability of resources to enable African scholars and facilitators to embark on an old system of such status. Also, and more importantly, is the fact that African scholars/facilitators have been able to create a new paradigm that rejected absolute power as a pre-eminent tool for the settlement of disputes. This structure is in striking contrast to the paradigm which led African societies into several armed conflicts that ravaged and debilitated them. Notwithstanding these significant achievements, it is fairly safe to state that the field of conflict resolution remains an Afro-centric system in all aspects of its functions (e.g. theoretical frame, research orientation, and practice). More serious is the fact that
Conflict resolution as conceived and practised in the African societies has been elevated to occupy a much more visible and domineering space in the Africa of ideas and practice.

Conversely, many other African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) which have been modeled for many centuries by African indigenous communities around the African region remain largely ignored. There have been those who have argued that armed conflict is an African culturally constructed social phenomenon and that its resolution must take into account the African cultural context in which it takes place. Specifically, the works of (Witty, 1981; Avurch and Black, 1991; Avurch, 1998; Abu-Nimer, 2003; Fry and Bjorkqvist, 2009; Lederach, 1995; Augsburger, 1992; Sponsel and Gregor, 1994 and Davidheiser, 2004) stand out in this regard. Also, more recently a number of literatures in the field of African armed conflict analysis and conflict resolution have added some specific references to the propositions that African culture does play a significant role in the dynamics which influence African conflict formation, escalation, and resolution. Examples of the theorists who have moved to this direction include (Pruit and Kim, 2004 and Folger et al., 2009).

This paper will attempt to point out how the Western Legal Systems of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) has largely neglected African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) practices, which have engendered a longer African history of successful functions than in ‘traditional’ societies. I will discuss the negative consequences of such neglect by the civilized societies regarding the nature and the value of African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR). Other aspect will focus on the common features found in African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) (based on a preliminary examination of the available cases). Also, under this section, some major challenges facing African scholars/facilitators in the area of African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) will be explored.

**Rationale for African Indigenous System Conflict Resolution (AISCR)**

Before embarking on the substance of this paper, it is critical to define a number of terms. Perhaps, more significantly, the term *indigenous* needs special attention. African scholars/facilitators use the term indigenous in two broad applications regarding African culturally related practices. In the first sense, it is used in reference to the broad range of African cultural practices and products, which are found outside the modern world. Stating it differently, it refers to anything created outside the scope of modern or civilised influence. In the second sense, the term *indigenous* refers to societies that are not independent states, and are encapsulated into modern states as marginalized and subordinate populations. Additionally, they are generally characterized as African societies which place high value on coexistence with nature, as opposed to its exploitation and abuse; they have their own African economic systems, which do not correspond with the ‘conventional capitalist’ or ‘socialistic economy’ (Wilmer, 1993). In the context of this paper, the term *indigenous* refers to the former category as described above. More specifically, it refers to the broad range of African peacemaking traditions, which have been developed by African traditional societies. Looking at dialogue between disputants in African societies is today replaced by fighting. Again, the mediating role of elders and other more peaceful institutions as age grades, highly revered societies and third-party neighbors, are replaced in several cases with police action (tear gas), military ‘peacekeeping’ operations and
endless court proceedings. Yet, Adedeji (1993) reminds us of the old saying that a people live out their culture and tradition, for self confidence, self reliance, positive change and stability and that a people without their culture are as good as dead and forgotten. In his exact words: ‘A society which neglects the instructive value of its past for its present and future, cannot be self-reliant; and will therefore lack internally generated dynamism and stability’.

In the same vein, the Cable Network News (CNN) in March 2001, through its advertisement programmes, repeatedly beamed the assertion that, ‘The future of Africa lies in her past (CNN cited in Harunah et al., 2003). Again, when the former President of South Africa, Mr. Thabo Mbeki came on a working visit to Nigeria, he lamented the conflict situation in Africa and the failure of contemporary systems which are essentially Eurocentric and pleaded that Africa should adopt new ways of conflict resolution which will be more effective and efficient than what is now operated as inherited from the European colonial masters. In his words:

The time has come for Africa to seek new ways of preventing conflicts, so as to enhance our growth and development, as well as remove the stigma placed on us, indicating that Africa is a continent of perennial conflicts and wars. The new conflict prevention process, conflict-management and resolution systems and techniques being elicited, are to make Africa a continent of peace in the new millennium (Harunah et al., 2003).

Hakeem Harunah et al (2003) goes further to emphasize the above view by strongly instisting: ‘The time has indeed come for us in Africa to seek new ways and means of conflict prevention, conflict management and resolution’. This call has become particularly crucial, especially as the modern forms of Western legal systems, institutions, processes and strategies, which were introduced into post-colonial African nation-states, through the UNO and allied multi-national political organizations such as the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU) (now African Union) have continued to fail in helping to effectively and efficiently avert, manage and bring about an enduring sense of peace in Africa (Harunah et al., 2003). He went on to lament the fact that some of the systems inherited from Western even exacerbate conflict situations. In his words:

In fact, some of the systems, especially those of the UNO had in certain cases, precipitated fresh uprisings, leading to further violence, wreckless killing, arson, generation and production of more refugees, instead of finding a lasting solution to the original conflicts, which they were evolved or adopted to tackle (Harunah et al., 2003).

This therefore adds to the ‘noise’ being made by millions of contemporary Africans demanding in very strong terms that Africa’s leaders including and particularly those of Nigeria, urgently fund in-depth researches into Africa’s Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) as well as of peacemaking, peacebuilding and confidence-building. Relevant aspects of these strategies should be adopted and incorporated into our modern frameworks and mechanisms for a more peaceful, orderly, lawful and harmonious society, which can support and catalyze overall development. It must be borne in mind that the present Western legal systems which do not fit into the cultural and indigenous practices of African societies, are part of the ways the former
colonial masters seek to maintain a perpetually divided and conflict ridden Africa, readily available for external manipulation, destabilization and exploitation. As Okigbo (Cited in Harunah et al., 2003) rightly observed in this direction:

Having lost direct political authority…the colonial powers sought to retain control through a series of undeclared protocols: economic and political ties and traditions linking the colonial territories to the metropolis in some special relationships; mental links through the education system; cultural ties by copying the systems of information, sports, entertainment, language and literature and arts of the metropolis; religious and spiritual ties through two muscular religions—Christianity and Islam—imported from the West and from Arabia respectively.

Therefore, effective and efficient application of African Indigenous Systems Conflict Resolution (AISCR) and institutions in resolving conflict in two African countries; celebrates and makes strong case for the adoption, incorporation, support, encouragement and promotion of these African ways and means in the pursuit of enduring peace which is a sine qua non for stability and meaningful development in Africa. This piece also recommends the use of indigenous systems by African scholars and facilitators.

**Reasons for Neglecting African Indigenous System of Conflict Resolution (AISCR)**

Understanding the African historical roots which have contributed to this level of neglect, relative to the oldest and widely used practices of conflict resolution systems will help us to view this issue in a proper perspective. Thus, this paper will briefly discuss seven basic reasons, which have contributed to the neglect of African Indigenous System of Conflict Resolution (AISCR). The Western prejudice towards the indigenous cultures commenced with the civilizing mission, which began in 1500 when Portugal and Spain received an endorsement, at their request, from the pope to conquer and colonize any territory which was not occupied by Christians. The actual motives can be categorized into two broad areas. The first is rooted in the history of Western expansion, which eventually led to the Western domination of the world and reached its zenith in 1914. A chief motivation for this new thrust was that by the beginning of the fifteenth century, Europe was entering the industrialization phase of its development, and securing new material sources for an intense new enterprise which was very critical (Davidson, 1994; Stavariannos, 1991). The second was psychological, the pride that was gained from dominating peoples of other cultures.

As African scholars/facilitators have observed, any form of domination necessitates a rationale (justification) for controlling its victims. It was during this period and the ensuing centuries that the projection of the Western cultures as savage, and unworthy of recognition by the ‘civilized world’, became very popular in Western thought and perception. It was during this period that places like African region were condemned as the ‘Dark Continent’, only to be viewed as a natural place for partition, colonization, and a source for importing slaves. To be sure, the damnation of African culture and its peoples predates Western colonization; the prejudice toward African culture was rooted in Semitic religions. Believers were taught that blacks were the descendants of Ham, the son of Noah, and since he was cursed by his father, blacks were also
cursed. It was based on this thesis that slavery was justified (Stavariannos, 1991). Later on, another layer of powerful negative thesis was developed by Western scientists regarding African peoples, which posited that the Africans, as a category, belonged to the last leg of human evolution therefore they were closer to the ape family and were racially inferior. The third level of negative thesis emerged when Western historians declared that Africa had no history. During the same period, similar types of prejudice were manifested against other societies in Asia, the Middle East, and Australia. After the 1940s, the decolonization movement went forward with considerable speed.

The newly independent African States were inherited by Western scholars/facilitators in African developing societies when their colonial masters departed. These newly independent African societies also inherited the Western Legal Systems of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) as a frame of reference to resolve conflicts in their respective African societies. However, the Western Legal System of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) remained a tool to be used in matters relating to the state such as land, insurgency against the state, taxation, and so on. At the same time, African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) remained in effect in most societies around the African region. This situation led to a dual system of conflict resolution in those African societies: the Western Legal System of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) and the one based on African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR). However, the scholars/facilitators depended on the African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) when it came to matters of great importance, such as African marriage, African homicide, African intra- and inter-community conflicts, and so forth. Hakeem Harunah et al (2003) gives reason for this in these supportive words:

Indeed, from…oral sources, and … some existing written accounts, it is clear that all African indigenous cultures, customs, traditions and civilizations had emphasized not only the value and significance of peace in society, but also the necessity of having to ensure that there was peaceful coexistence and harmony among the various groups that lived in a community and between them and their neighbors. This sort of premium which was placed on peace, and the essence of ensuring peaceful coexistence in pre-colonial Africa, stemmed from the realization by the people about the negative results and allied adversely that usually followed the demise of peace in a society, and in inter-group relations.

While the African indigenous systems survived in this manner, it still remains a marginalized and neglected affair. For example, most African scholars/facilitators refer to African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) in their respective African societies as ‘informal’ or ‘traditional’. The relevant point here is that there was no investment by new State systems in the study of African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) and therefore such knowledge and practice remained unattended to by the ‘literate’ societies. While the Western legal system was taught in modern African societies and institutions, where the newly educated conflict scholars/facilitators acquired their skills and legitimacy to embark on their professional lives, the knowledge of African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) was excluded due to the fact that it was perceived unworthy to be included in the African modern institutions’ societal curriculums. Therefore, this critical knowledge remained marginal, the sole
mission of passing such knowledge and practices of these African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) to the next generations was relegated to oral forms of communication at African family and local societal levels.

Limitation of African Scholars/Facilitators Vs Prejudice of Western Scholars/Facilitators

In general, there has been a disproportionate representation of African scholars/facilitators with civilized backgrounds in higher education, where new areas of knowledge were proposed, refined, and published for the larger African society. Therefore, the direct benefits of modern African institutions/societies never reached scholars/facilitators from rural areas of the African societies, which, for the most part, is where groups practice African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR). This problem is particularly acute in African traditional societies with a special level of severity among African indigenous scholars/facilitators in most African societies. More relevant to the current situation is that institutions where the new profession is being developed are primarily located in Western and Southern region of Africa. Unfortunately, they have not been able to break down those historic barriers against scholars/facilitators of other African societies, particularly those African societies in rural areas. This situation is compounded by two related factors, which continue to plague societal institutions of conflict resolution. The first problem relates to the social phenomenon of African cultural reproduction in the conflict resolution field.

This social phenomenon takes two forms. The first form illustrates that African institutions, through their established systems, tend to hire new faculty scholars/facilitators who share similar values and beliefs to personnel in respective departments and administration. In this observation, this is the reason that minorities remain marginal groups in academic departments in African societies. The second problem is that academics tend to support African professionals who pursue lines of research established by their faculty. While this approach is totally legitimate, the problems stem from the fact that the field of conflict resolution, as it currently exists, is based on information which had been collected from a very limited human universe in the first place.

Prejudice of Western Scholars/Facilitators

When colonial Western powers departed from their respective colonized territories, there were explicitly and implicitly stated expectations from all newly independent African societies. The new leadership of these newly decolonized African societies promised national integration, modernization, equality, and social justice ‘for all African citizens’ (Sponsel and Gregor, 1994). The premise of the new African development or modernization movement was predicated on the notion that old traditions had to be removed and modern ideas and practices had to be embraced. Western scholars/facilitators in the field have been dedicated to the study of African cultures from a comparative perspective. Indeed, Western scholars/facilitators have spent an inordinate amount of resources to explore African cultures in African societies. However, as the products of Western culture themselves, they carried the Western worldview to the study of other African cultures. Also, it seems that the basic mission of the field was to explore the nature of African cultures for the purpose of transferring knowledge-based benefits to their own societies. As a result, a particular focus was to accumulate information from ‘uncivilized’ societies and assist
them in reconstructing their patterns of human conflict. Thus, Western scholars/facilitators tended to look for African cultural groups that they considered the ‘most savage’ and the most violent. Based on these attitudinal orientations and strategic goals for research, they looked more for violent activities in such African societies at the expense of conflict resolution activities. Sponsel and Gregor (1994:199), in their reflective work, wrote the following regarding this subject:

In peace and conflict studies, until recently, conflict, aggression, and violence have claimed most of our attention; peace, both interpersonal and inter-sector, has received relatively short shrift. For example, Brain Ferguson’s recent bibliography on the anthropology of conflict all 366 pages of reference; of these, only four pages are devoted to peace and conflict resolution. . . . On the face of it, a disproportionate interest in warfare by western scholars is strange. For human society to persist, even the most violent of them, there must be order, sociability, reciprocity, cooperation, and empathy, perhaps, even compassion and love. In even the most warlike societies, the vast preponderance of time is spent in the pursuit of ordinary, peaceful activities that embody these qualities in Africa.

Critical Features of Western Legal Systems

There have been adverse consequences as a result of the negligence and marginalization of African indigenous systems of resolving armed conflict. More specifically, there are five general areas of adverse consequences as a result of the marginalization of African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR). There is a disconnection between Western legal systems and the cultures of indigenous African societies. The Western legal systems, for the most part, are the inventions of Western civilization and in many respects do not correspond with the cultural values and dispositions of African traditional/indigenous societies.

Some critical features of the Western legal systems are as follow: (a) It focuses on establishing sufficient evidence accompanied by well developed technical arguments; this approach inherently favours the party that has resources to hire the most skilled lawyers in Africa; (b) It does not take into account the future relationships between the parties in most traditional, whereas, societies repairing the damaged relationship is the chief goal of conflict resolution; (c) for the most part, Western legal systems focus on the individual grievances it does not recognize the interconnections between the individual, family, and community; (d) Western Legal Systems of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) depends totally on the coercive power of the state; (e) it has no room for the spiritual dimension of resolving conflict; and (f) the main goal in the Western legal systems is to win over the opponent, not to repair the damaged relations as a result of the conflict. Naturally, when the source of the armed conflict, which stems from dysfunctional relationships between parties, is not addressed, the conflict may continue at an attitudinal level. African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) should occupy a major space in the cultural landscape of the African populations’ societies. This aspect of their culture remained vulnerable to the abuse of power by the civilized ruling class, who control the African state apparatus.
**Illustration of African Indigenous System of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) in Rwanda and Somalia**

The Western Legal System of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) has proven to be inadequate in dealing with inter-communal armed conflicts. This point refers to inter-communal conflicts that have taken place within a larger collectivist societal system. The inadequacy of legal approaches stems from two major factors. First, collectivist societies generally have indigenous culturally crafted systems rich with rituals for dealing with inter-communal conflicts. In recent years, such conflicts have been handled through the power approach; power which either uses physical violence to alter power relations in the conflict or state, or an internationally sanctioned legal or resolution approach to punish the aggressor party. These two approaches do not adequately deal with the emotional trauma as a result of the conflict. Nor do they address the future relations of the communities, which have engaged in armed conflicts. To illustrate this point, this paper cites two internationally known inter-communal conflicts in Africa during recent years, where such patterns of action have taken place. The first is the ethnic identity conflict in Rwanda while the other is the intra/inter-communal conflict in Somalia.

**Rwanda**

Rwanda is the first example, such state where ethnic identity conflict has caused much death and destruction, both physically and emotionally. When the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took power in Rwanda in July 1994, thereby ending the genocide, it faced the daunting task of dealing with the past. Rather than opting for a Truth Reconciliation Commission (TRC)–like mechanism to cope with the society–wide crimes committed in 1994, the new government ambitiously embarked on a mission to bring every genocidaire to justice. As President Paul Kagame has explained, ‘There can be no durable reconciliation as long as those who are responsible for the massacres are not properly tried’.¹ Rwanda initiated this plan through the use of a judicial system composed of the mere five judges and fifty lawyers that remained in the country. Nevertheless, the government incarcerated 125 000 genocide suspects about ten percent of the adult male Hutu population and placed them in jails meant to hold only 15,000 people. To manage the overwhelming nature of its task, the government passed a genocide law in which it divided the crimes committed during the genocide into four categories: Category I for leaders of genocide or crimes against humanity, Category II for homicides and accomplices, Category III for serious assaults, and Category IV for offenses against property. Although the government managed to try 5 000 individuals by mid–2001, the number of detainees languishing in prisons, along with international abhorrence of the conditions of confinement and concerns over possible due process violations, forced Rwanda to reconsider its strategy. In 2001, the government passed the Gacaca Law, which transferred crimes in Categories II-IV to an institution the government had co–opted from Rwandan customary law-Gacaca. Before the genocide, Gacaca was a traditional, community-based mechanism for resolving local civil disputes. In their traditional form, Gacaca proceedings were conducted by community members, with respected community figures serving as judges.

The principles applied in Gacaca emerged from local customary values. The proceedings aimed to emphasize to the wrongdoer the gravity of the wrong committed so that he or she could reconcile with the community and thus be reintegrated into society. When the Rwandese
government adopted the *Gacaca* system, it retained certain traditional characteristics of the original model. These characteristics include requiring members of society to provide testimony and evidence against suspects, as well as to participate in hearings. However, it departed from the restorative nature of traditional *Gacaca* by granting the elders who serve as judges the power to sentence defendants to punishments ranging up to lifetime imprisonment, thus substituting retributive characteristics for some of *Gacaca's* rehabilitative ones. The *Gacaca* courts established by the government were put in place to serve two official purposes: Justice and reconciliation. Most pressingly, the *Gacaca* courts supplement the national courts in their mission to try genocide crimes retributively. Second, the community involvement element the existence of a forum for community members to voice their concerns and make known their suffering endeavors to imbue this retributive mechanism with the spirit of social rehabilitation and reconciliation. Therefore, the single institution of *Gacaca* aims to do the work for which two distinct transitional justice mechanisms—criminal tribunals and Truth Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) are typically utilized. In light of *Gacaca's* goals, the international community has raised concerns about its efficacy. Whether *Gacaca* will prove to be a success in light of these official goals remains to be seen. *Gacaca* has only recently begun its operations. As of 2003, only ten percent of *Gacaca* courts had held pretrial hearings, and none had actually begun to try suspects. Thus, any discussion of *Gacaca's* success or failure remains speculative.

Even if *Gacaca* fails to attain its stated goals of justice and reconciliation that does not necessarily discredit *Gacaca* as an effective transitional justice mechanism. Because it can contribute to the consolidation of democracy, in order to truly pass judgment on *Gacaca* it is important to re-examine it in light of the link between transitional justice and indigenous culture.

In its contemporary form, *Gacaca* draws its unique strength from its combination of indigenousness and state involvement. Although *Gacaca* has been co–opted and altered by the government, it nevertheless retains its traditional origin and communal style. As such, it allows the Rwandese people to retain a sense of ownership and comfort within the forum. This innate familiarity may encourage the people to approach *Gacaca* with a participatory attitude. Furthermore, the very fact that this community–based mechanism is now utilized by the government creates a critical communication bridge between the people and the State that did not exist before. Consequently, any effects that *Gacaca's* structure may have will impact not just local communities, but also the relationship between the people and the government. Such linkage plants indigenous culture directly where it should reside: In the space between society and the State. *Gacaca's* procedural dependence on public participation has made it a forum in which speech is relatively free and protected. Thus, the democracy–engendering consequences of free speech can begin to emerge within this forum. To start, freedom of speech in *Gacaca* can serve as a crucial safety valve for the ethnic opposition and discontent that is currently building up in Rwanda. As Thomas Emerson (Cited in Wierzynska, 2004) writes:

> [F]reedom of expression is a method of achieving ... a more stable community... [T]he process of open discussion promotes greater cohesion in a society because people are more ready to accept decisions that go against them if they have a part in the decision–making process...Freedom of expression thus provides a frame–work in which the conflict necessary to the progress of a society can take place without destroying the society.
Freedom of speech allows the Rwandese people and government to confront their conflicts openly. Furthermore, open discussion of differences is apt to promote public autonomy and public inquisitiveness. These characteristics fall squarely within indigenous culture. Notwithstanding the retributive characteristics the government has added to Gacaca, it remains a restorative instrument. Because of its restorative nature, it serves as a precedent for peaceful dispute resolution while engendering the indigenous engagement and empowerment that are necessary for indigenous culture to develop.

Finally, through encouraging and protecting participation, Gacaca ought to create a sense of empowerment among the people of Rwanda. Indigenous justice mechanisms have been found to empower communities that are typically isolated from the democratic process. Wierzynska (2004) reports that ‘the enlargement of citizen participation, institutional decentralization, and accountability of [government] prosecution offices to local communities stimulates citizen–state collaboration and grassroots equality initiatives broadly within the criminal–justice system, thereby ameliorating the conditions of poverty, disempowerment, segregation, and crime pervading communities of color’. Similarly, beginning with community engagement on the subject of criminal justice, Rwanda's people can begin to develop a sense of empowerment that will allow further pursuit of ‘citizen–state collaboration and grassroots initiatives aimed at alleviating, powerlessness and violence’, Rwanda's most pressing problems.

Over the past fifty years, the international community has been developing a menu of transitional justice mechanisms and a body of international criminal law to fulfill its commitment to putting an end to crimes against humanity and systemic abuse of human rights. The Gacaca experiment serves to remind those involved in this continuing international effort that the primary recipient of transitional justice is not the international community, but the postconflict society-composed of both victims and perpetrators that suffered during mass atrocities. As Kritz (1995), a leading authority in Western legal based system, argues, ‘it is essential that the needs of those people not be given short shrift for the sake of a feel–good international exercise in justice’. Kritz (1995) calls for bringing indigenous justice mechanisms ever closer to the society that experienced conflict:

> From a pragmatic, political perspective, insofar as post-conflict justice is a necessary ingredient to successful peacebuilding and long-term stability in the country,...ensuring a form of post–conflict justice that is maximally effective vis–à–vis the local population needs to be a higher priority.

This issue has particular resonance in Rwanda's case. As the field develops in light of experiments such as Gacaca, it may well seek to change even its very name to better reflect the scope of its mandate. It remains to be seen whether Gacaca will bring about justice or truth in relation to the genocide of 1994. Nonetheless, Gacaca will serve the mission of transitional justice if it creates a forum through which democracy can take root in Rwanda. By engendering civic culture, Gacaca addresses the preconditions that have made violence part of Rwanda's history. Consequently, Gacaca can fulfill transitional justice's fundamental goal of preventing the events of 1994 from recurring.
This instance is another case in which the well-developed indigenous system of conflict resolution, in the evolution of the ethnic societies in Rwanda, had been neglected as a result of emergence of the Western Legal System of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) during the colonial era. It was subsequently adopted by the leadership of independent Rwanda. Indeed, Gacaca was implemented in a haphazard manner; it was something that was thought of at the last minute.

**Somalia**

Somali experience is another example. Siad Barre illustrates this point. The Somalis possessed two indigenous traditions, the clan system and the eldership system, which survived colonial administration, Islam, and the modern state. The clan system ensured the survival of each member in a very austere material environment, where the competition for daily survival becomes an imperative function of the clans system, while the African Indigenous System of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) built bridges between the clans to create and sustain relatively harmonious relationships. However, both of these African indigenous systems were undermined by the regime of Siad Barre; he pitted clans against clans, and elders against elders. When his regime collapsed in 1991–1992, the intensive and destructive cycle of contentious conflict between General Mohamed Farad Aidid and Mohammed Hamidi ensued, leading to the total collapse of the societies’ basic social and psychological infrastructure, and the Somali society looked like a bottomless pit, so to speak today. The national nightmare, which was experienced and is still being experienced by the Somali society during that period and up to the present, can justify, the Western Legal Systems of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR), while rich in theories of social sciences and practical systems, have not developed the concepts and practices, which adequately meet the spiritual dimension of conflict resolution which involves rituals. In African culture, when blood is shed as a result of such armed conflicts, there are rituals to be performed. The members of the society of the aggressors come out and be accountable and participate in such rituals; it is such activities, which would assure the victims of violent armed conflicts that such hostile acts against them would not be repeated; then, forgiveness and healing would be much easier. There is a lack of adequate preparation on the part of African indigenous societies to deal with Western based legal systems.

As indicated previously, the scholars/facilitators in African societies relegated the African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) to the status of backwardness and irrelevance to the functions of the modern or civilized sector, while in the rural African societies, the masses continued practicing the African indigenous ways of resolving conflicts. For example, there has not been much research conducted to establish the critical features of African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR), which have common threads or are radically different from the Western Legal System of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR). Neither is there credible literature nor are there suitable models that have been developed to reconcile concepts and practices of the two systems. The problem is becoming more acute regarding this issue as a result of more recent movement by the indigenous African scholars around the regions, asserting their rights to use their own African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR). This movement has evolved as a result of the fact the European and American countries have embraced conflict resolution.
Consequently, it is natural for such sects to take a more proactive position with respect to their systems of conflict resolution, including dealing with African conflicts which take place within modern or civilized sectors. Looking at the role that indigenous system of conflict resolution played during the violent conflict in Somalia, which ensued after the collapse of the regime of Siad Barre, it would be realized that the indigenous systems of peacemaking in Somalia survived many social forces (colonialism, Islam, the state system, and the Cold War). It is the most enduring, most trusted cultural practice in the Somali society (Menkhaus, 1999). It will be recalled that the Somali society plunged into social strife of an epic proportion after the regime of Siad Barre collapsed in 1991, as a result of a power struggle between two ambitious individuals; namely, General Mohammed Aidid and Ali Mahadi—which eventually led to the collapse of the state infrastructure and the catastrophic civil war that ensued. Several international and regional organizations such as the UN, the Arab League, and the African Union attempted to intervene to make peace among various Somali factions. In relative terms, it was the Somali indigenous system of conflict resolution, which was more successful in making peace in Somalia than any other mechanism of peacemaking (Kaplan, 2008). Once again, the Somali experience illustrates that an indigenous system of conflict resolution is the mechanism which the populace relate to and trust the most. It deals with different dimensions of the conflict. However, it had been neglected by the Western legal system, the ruling class, and academic institutions. In the last section, this paper will explore, though briefly, the opportunities and challenges relative to the studies of African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR).

Opportunities

This discussion was commenced with the assertion that as long as African indigenous systems remain marginalized and neglected, the field of conflict resolution in African societies will remain incomplete and indeed impoverished because there are several strong reasons why the African scholars/facilitators in the field of conflict resolution should study African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR). As discussed previously, the European colonization of the world created a wall of prejudice against non-western cultures; it depicted non-western cultures as backward and unworthy to invest resources (time, energy and funds) in research. After decolonization, the rulers of new states manifested ambivalence toward their own cultures at best; they viewed Western Legal Systems of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) in the same manner as their colonial masters. The pro-West group was taught to get rid of African indigenous systems, which were considered backward and irrelevant. This level of sustained attack over some five centuries has made African indigenous peoples (particularly the educated elite) think that, somehow, their cultures are inferior and backward. Thus, they have nothing to offer the modernity project. In this view, the systematic studies of African Indigenous System of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) will contribute greatly toward the restoration of honour and dignity to the cultures of the non-western peoples of the world.

Specifically, they would have more confidence in their own systems of conflict resolution. Much more solid and robust research and publications in this area will help the field of indigenous conflict resolution to develop and enhance a cross-cultural perspective and will make the field of conflict resolution more comparative as a field of learning and practice. Presently, dramatic changes are taking place in many traditional societies, with significant impacts on interpersonal and inter-group relationships. For example, stratification is emerging in such societies with the
result of an imbalance of power in inter-relationships at all social levels. Such changes are altering the social context in which African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) take place. Introducing social research regarding the practices of African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) will help to identify such changes and the negative impact on indigenous systems of peacemaking. With such knowledge, potential remedies could be considered.

John Burton (1993), in his important work entitled *Conflict Resolution as a Political System*, wrote a critique, arguing that Western approaches to governance have been based on power rather than the consideration of human needs. He passionately recommended that conflict resolution should be incorporated into the political system. He proposed this approach as an alternative to the Western legal-based system in dealing with human basic needs. Pursuing research and publication in the area of indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution will assist and enhance our understanding of how conflict resolution can be incorporated into the African political system. Such endeavours, as discussed in this section, have the potential to encourage the African scholars/facilitators, particularly the academic community, to re-enter, so to speak, the cultural arena of the majority in the rural societies, at least at the intellectual level, from which they had distanced themselves, because traditional cultures were viewed as backward and irrelevant to contemporary social issues.

**Challenges**

There are several major challenges, which the field of indigenous conflict resolution in Africa has to face in pursuing this line of research and practice. And, currently, it is estimated that there are about five thousand ethnic groups in the African societies. A critical question arises relative to the required resources (funds, expertise, time, and energy) to do credible research regarding the peacemaking process of each group. In other words, the question emerges, how will we ever be able to study all of these systems of peacemaking with professional efficiency and equity? If we have to select some of these for focus, what criteria will be used? Will it even be ethical to make such selections? The rise of modern elites in African societies has created unique complexities regarding the status of indigenous cultures—when the utilization of indigenous cultures suits their political interests, including indigenous systems of conflict resolution, they embrace and use traditional culture.

However, if respecting the basic tenets of indigenous cultures does not support their immediate political needs, they are totally capable of and willing to abuse these cultures. The best example relative to this type of political phenomenon is the case of President Siad Barre, who ruled Somalia for some twenty years with an iron fist. In Somalia, there were two major African traditions the clan system and the eldership which survived Islam and colonialism. In environmentally hostile conditions, which are prevalent in Somalia, the clan system was created to ensure the survival of the individual, and at times the clans clashed over resources (e.g. land, water, etc.) for the survival of their clan members, and the eldership system managed conflicts between the clans. When oppositions rose from various clans to challenge his autocratic rule, in order to stay in power, he (Siad) pitted clans against clans, and elders against elders. Thus, the catastrophic inter-clan strife, which took place in Somalia after the collapse of his regime,
ensured that the Somali society behaved as though it was a bottomless pit (Sahnoun, 1994; Makinda, 1993).

Another pattern of misuse of the African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) is also emerging in developing societies. Since Western Legal System of Conflict Resolution (WLSCR) emerged in the West, conflict resolution as a field has become more attractive to the elite in African societies; it has become a new fad, so to speak. As a result, some elites are claiming to be experts in African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) when they are not, and they are using their relative power in the society, their education and name recognition, to present themselves as peacemakers in modern elite-powered conflict. The case of the Peace Committee in Ethiopia (PCE),² mostly comprised of academics, which was created after the fall of the Dergue (military junta) in 1991, presumably to ameliorate the ensuing ethnic schisms between the Tigrean led government and members of other ethnic communities, illustrates this point. The relevant point for our discussion here is the mischievous process which the PCE undertook after the fraudulent elections of 2005, where the opposition challenged the outcome of the disputed elections and violence ensued, briefly, when Meles Zenawi’s security forces opened fire against the members of the opposition party, killing and wounding several hundred people. In addition, the regime imprisoned the leadership of the opposition party. The PCE negotiated with Meles Zenawi, the Prime Minister, to release the political prisoners, on the conditions that they accepted wrongdoing against the government, and write individual letters of apology. Then, the chairman of PCE made claims to the media that the PCE used traditional systems of conflict resolution in facilitating the agreement (Halpern, 2009). As indicated in this work, previously, such a tactic is contrary to the indigenous systems of conflict resolution in indigenous societies. In this context, the critical question becomes, who represents the real experience and practice of African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR)? The prevailing bias against anything indigenous in the context of contemporary global systems makes it very difficult for this area of inquiry and practice to be more attractive for funding for research and practice. Also, such prevailing bias could discourage potentially academically strong African scholars from pursuing further researches in this area.

In the context of contemporary notions of ideals of justice and equality between all segments of human society, some aspects of practices in African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) may be problematic. For example, most practices of peacemaking by indigenous African societies are done by elders, which, ipso facto, favour older males. Women around the world are becoming dissatisfied with male hegemony in societal daily lives, as they are increasingly having more access to modern education, and becoming more empowered. Equipped with modern education, can the younger persons participate in peacemaking? Will that be acceptable to such cultures? Critics of African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) have argued that it vests too much in keeping harmony in the society and, thus, those who have more power in the society ultimately control the system, using it to maintain their status of privilege and power in the community (Nader, 1990).³

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR), which, by far, have a much longer history and successful functioning in African traditional
societies, have been neglected by the theorists and practitioners of conflict resolution, a profession that is only about three decades old. The level and nature of the neglect is manifested in the absence of textbooks relative to African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR), the lack of courses in the curriculums of the degree programs offered in Western institutions, the lack of examples reflecting everyday social realities from traditional societies, and the absence of the spiritual dimensions, usually shown through rituals, which are commonly present in African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR). What is even more significant is the fact that conflict resolution has been promoted as the new paradigm on the block to the world community, as though it is universal in all its forms and dimensions, and relevant to all cultures and social realities.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the reactions from non-Western societies toward conflict resolution have been lukewarm at best, and at times, there is outright rejection of the new system. In my opinion, in order for the field of conflict resolution to take African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) more seriously, as suggested in this paper, we need to understand the historical and cultural background in which the Western and the indigenous cultures have interacted during the last five centuries. Also, this suggested that the negligence of African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) by the literate world in the past, and, more recently, by the theorists and facilitators of conflict resolution, has had negative consequences for the peoples of African traditional societies, who have experienced considerable levels of group humiliation, ambivalence toward their own culture, division, and disorientation.

Amusingly, more recently, some societies, which had experienced violent armed conflicts, have turned to African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) in the hope of finding more appropriate mechanism of healing and reconciliation. These episodes have also revealed that individuals and societies turn to the traditional systems of peacemaking more in some haphazard manners due to the fact that their culturally based systems of peacemaking have been neglected for so long. In addition, the African Indigenous Systems of Conflict Resolution (AISCR) should be the new frontier for the profession of conflict resolution in African societies. It both presents real promise and has the potential to broaden our horizon regarding human capacity to invest more in peaceful coexistence. It also presents real challenges. In particular, those institutions which offer graduate degrees in the field of conflict resolution have an unparalleled opportunity to guide their graduate students to do ethnographic studies, focusing on peacemaking activities in major cultures in different parts of the African regions. The next phase of such study should include comparing the main features commonly found in different systems of conflict resolution, the interactions between the state-based legal system and indigenous systems of peacemaking, the evolution of the hybrid types of peacemaking, and the application of indigenous systems of peacemaking in dealing with inter-ethnic armed conflicts.

Notes

1. Paul Kagame, now president, was defense minister at the time and very involved in what we were trying to do, which was to present Rwanda to the international community and convince it that this was a country with promise, a country that, even with all the cleavage in its society and the terrible lingering effects of the genocide, had a chance to mend.
2. However, there was sustained critique of the PCE regarding this case, which appeared for several months on http://www.Ethiomedia.com.
3. Anthropologist Laura Nader is among the many critics of indigenous processes of conflict resolution.

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Mediating the Dagbon Chieftancy Conflict: the eminent chief approach

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MEDIATING THE DAGBON CHIEFTANCY CONFLICT; THE EMINENT CHIEF APPROACH

Abstract

This article assesses the efficacy of a traditional instrument of conflict resolution. In 2003 the government appointed a Committee of Eminent Chiefs (CEC) to mediate the intractable Dagbon Chieftaincy succession disputes, which both the legal and political mechanisms have failed to address. The CEC mediation model involves the deployment of traditional African diplomacy, which rests on the application of customs, norms and traditional ethics by highly revered chiefs to address local conflicts. The use of the CEC to broker peace and reconciliation among the two feuding royal families of Abudu and Andani has led to important breakthroughs including a reconciliatory gesture by the two disputants, the burial of the slain chief, fixing of dates for the funeral of some deceased chiefs and the enskinment of a successor to the assassinated Ya-Na. The paper has argued that in spite of prevailing challenges, the CEC’s approach has the prospect of bringing to an end, the perceived obdurate Dagbon chieftaincy conflict, especially when the Clean-Sheet Electoral College strategy is adopted for the choice of the Ya-Na’s successor.

Keywords: chieftaincy, conflict, mediation, eminent chiefs, Dagbon, Ghana

Introduction

Chieftaincy is a highly revered institution in Africa. Not even the advent of modern democracy and the strong currents of Western education and Christianity have succeeded in disengaging
Africans from this sacred institution. According to Logan (2005), traditional leaders are valued because they provide a sense of continuity and stability in an era of great change. Williams (2004) agrees that they serve as intermediaries to ensure that change occurs in an orderly and familiar way. Keulder’s (1998) extensive study concluded that most Africans cherish traditional rulers because they are approachable and more accessible to the people than the politicians. Moreover, decision-making processes in the traditional governance system are transparent, participatory and consensus – these have engendered harmony and unity in the society.

In contemporary multiparty democracy, chiefs are the gateway to the electoral constituencies. The political parties’ grassroots campaigns are impossible without the involvement of the chiefs. They provide the bridge between the constituencies and politicians. By virtue of their active involvement in the political parties’ voter mobilization, they have grown in importance. Similarly, chieftaincy has not only become prestigious because of the aura of respect chiefs attract from the enlightened society but also lucrative because of the resource attachment to the institution (Nolte 2002). In Ghana, chiefs, control resources within their traditional area including the authority to allocate lands for commercial use and estate development. They also receive royalties from government regarding sales from mineral and timber resources, among others. For these reasons, there is a high desire among both the educated and uneducated men in the society to become a chief. This has engendered excessive competition among royals to ascend to the throne. The craving to become a chief in order to exercise communal power and influence over the allocation of resources has led to undue struggles between groups including even non-royals to lay claim to the stool and skins. In a contest where the referees (kingmakers) are also involved in the game, the probability that fair competition will not be achieved and conflict will occur is high. As a result, chieftaincy has been characterized by violence, hatred, acrimony and sometimes destruction of property and fatalities (Tonah, 2012).

Since 1992, there have been several chieftaincy disputes some of which have sparked communal rivalries leading to internal displacement of women, children and the elderly. It has been noted that across the geographic spectrum, chieftaincy conflicts abound. In the coastal zone of Ghana, the Ga Mantse succession dispute and the Anlo chieftaincy conflict were epochal. In the forest belt, the Akim Kotoku, Juaso, Tuobodom chieftaincy conflicts as well as the Princess and Aketekyi towns’ troubles have been devastating (Prah and Yeboah, 2011). While some of these conflicts have defied any solution, they have not generated political controversies, human rights violations and created financial burden on the state than the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict (Tonah, 2012; Crook, 2005). Hence not only is the government, civil society, including churches and mosques concerned about it but also the international community has been alarmed by its intractability and truncation of socio-economic development in the poverty the endemic area. Given the high profile of the Dagbon conflict, many scholars have given it critical attention but without an assessment of the eminent chiefs’ mediation strategy of conflict resolution.

The dominant theme in the literature on chieftaincy is the role chiefs have played in the local governance process. Chiefs were the pivot around which traditional governance revolved (Arhin 2006; Awodoba 2009). However, chieftaincy underwent radical transformation due to modernization, including colonial rule and Western education (Busia 1968; Rathbone 2000). Despite these, chieftaincy has showed great resilience and survived all the assaults against it. In recent times, chiefs have found new roles as socio-economic promoters. As alternative state
authority, chiefs have engaged in many activities including mobilizing independent funds to undertake educational projects for their fiefdoms (Seini 2006). Chieftaincy conflicts with its destructive consequences on development in Ghana have also attracted the attention of some scholars. Social disputes relating to chieftaincy in several communities have dent the image of the otherwise cherished institution that is noted for its inherent order, integrity and unity. Of the many studies that have examined chieftaincy conflicts in the northern Ghana, Tonah (2006), Brukum (2004), and Awodoba (2009) have addressed the Dagbon issue.

Notwithstanding the number of studies that have delved into the Dagbon conflict, none of them has subjected the eminent chiefs approach to conflict mediation – a mechanism of resolving conflict using prominent chiefs – paramount chiefs with considerable staying power and influence on the chieftaincy institution to mediate conflict to a thorough assessment. For instance, Tonah (2012) only made sporadic reference to the attempt to resolve the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict using the eminent chiefs. In 2002, the government resorted to the eminent chiefs’ mechanism of addressing conflict. This form of conflict mediation was a departure from the orthodox approach that had relied on the courts and politics. After several years of mediation there seems to be less sporadic skirmishes in Dagbon. The question agitating the minds of many people is whether the seemingly calm and peaceful environment at Dagbon is the result of the excellent work of the eminent chiefs? Are there teething challenges facing the CEC? What other thing should the CEC do in order to bring relative peace to the conflict prone Dagbon traditional area?

A brief note on Dagbon chieftaincy tradition

The Dagbon people (referred to as Dagombas) constitute the single largest ethnic group in Northern Ghana, with Yendi as its traditional capital, and Tamale, the political and administrative capital (Tamakloe 1931; Ladouceur, 1972; Tsikata and Seini, 2004). The Dagombas have strong attachments to chieftaincy and the craving for chieftaincy titles is high among the people. The chief is regarded as both the spiritual and secular leader in the community. By the classification of the National House of Chiefs, the traditional status of Dagbon is a paramountcy, which implies that the chief of Dagbon known as Ya-Na is a paramount chief. He superintends over three principal divisional chiefs – Karaga Lana, Mion Lana, and Savelugu Na – each one of these could be enskined as a Ya-Na (Brukum, 2004; Albert, 2008). The Dagbon paramountcy operates a two gate system which rotates among the two royal families of Abudus and Andanis that have usufruct right to the throne (Ladouceur, 1972; Tamakloe, 1931). Traditionally, it is sacrilegious for one gate to prevent the other to occupy the skin when it is the turn for that gate to assume the position of a Ya-Na. The rotation can only occur upon the demise of the incumbent Ya-Na (Tsikata and Seini, 2004). However, the checkered history of chieftaincy conflicts of the Dagbon paramountcy hinges on succession disputes. Past interventions aimed to address the succession disagreements among the two gates have proven futile. The next section analyzes in detailed, specific strategies and methods set in motion to resolve the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict.
An overview of Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution framework

The complex nature of the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict reflects the variety of methods propounded for resolving it. The earliest method was the traditional consensus approach where the elders worked a succession plan, which established a fair selection method for a replacement of the first Ya-Na Yakubu I (Prah and Yeboah 2011; Mahama 2009). The elders agreed that upon the demise of the Ya-Na Yakubu, the elder son, Andani (1849-1876) would succeed him and the younger son, Abudulai (1876-1899) will step in upon the death of Andani (Tonah 2006; Brukum, 2004). This method was followed through such that Andani was enskined as Ya-Na Andani after the death of Ya-Na Yakubu I in 1849. Similarly, in 1876 Abudu became the Ya-Na when the brother Ya-Na Andani passed out. Unfortunate, however, the rotation method and the procedure agreed upon by the king-makers were not formally codified. Overtime, it became extremely difficult to choose a Ya-Na by the rotational method. As Tsikata and Seini (2004:3) rightly noted, ‘there is no agreement over who has the right to select a successor’ and the ‘enskinment’ process failed to indicate how to make the royal Ya-Na’ (Ladouceur, 1972:15). Because the rotational system was not properly documented, it paved the way for manipulation by the elite, which led to the outbreaks of successive conflicts. For instance in 1948, some of the Dagomba elite replaced the four soothsayers that were responsible for ensuring that the rotation procedure was followed with an eleven-member committee. However, the committee failed to implement the rotational system. Instead, when the Ya-Naa Mahama II died, his son who became the Regent elected himself as the successor in clear violation of the established alternating system of succession thereby fuelling intra-royal and family conflict (Ladouceur, 1972; Tsikata and Seini, 2004).

With the rotation method truncated and the fear that chaos in Dagbon would undermine Nkrumah’s vision of a united nation for socio-economic development, the government intervened and convened an all-party meeting of Dagomba chiefs to address the issue. In the end, a Legislative Instrument, L.I. 59 was born which reinforced the rotation principle. In the interim, it was decided that the skin should return to the Andani Gate after the death of the incumbent Ya-Na. For the sake of fairness to the Andanis, the legislation included a clause, which was to allow the Andanis to occupy the skin for two succession terms upon the death of the incumbent Ya-Na Abudulai III because the Abudu Gate stayed on the skin for two conservative occasions (Tsikata and Seini, 2004; Brukum, 2004). The legislative solution was widely celebrated as the panacea to the chieftaincy conflict. However, the method suffered a major setback following the abrupt overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah’s government in a coup d’etat in February 1966. Instead of the Andanis occupying the skin after the death of Ya-Na Abudulai III on September 14, 1967, his nineteen year old son attempted to sidestep the procedure but the Mion Lana Andani, who was to have been the Ya-Na in 1954, was sworn in as the Ya-Na by the king-makers (Tsikata and Seini, 2004), a move that angered the Abudu Gate.

By 1967, the struggle to become a Ya-Na had reached its apogee. Hence, it was thought that a political solution was necessary. Consequently, the military junta that had succeeded Nkrumah revoked L.I 59 and appointed the Mate-Korle Committee to inquire into the customary procedures for selecting and enskinning a Ya-Na (Ladouceur, 1972). The Committee concluded that the enskinment of the Mion Lana Andani as Ya-Na was repugnant to Dagbon custom, and went ahead to nullify his installation to the skin. It rather recommended the enskinment of the
Gbon Lana Mahamadu Abudulai (from the Abudu Gate) as the rightful Ya-Na (Ladoucuer, 1972; Albert, 2008; Tsikata and Seini, 2004). The Andani Gate that had occupied the Palace in preparation for the performance of the final funeral rites of the late Ya-Na Andani III were forcibly ejected by the military, and Gbon Lana was installed. In the melee, many lives were lost and several others injured and displaced. According to Ladoucuer (1972: 12), ‘... there were neither apologies nor any regrets on the part of the government for the killings’. To exacerbate the conflict, Busia’s government rewarded (Ya-Na Mahamdu Abudulai IV) an Abudu with a Council of State appointment. Furthermore, the government turned down the Andani’s request to perform the funeral rites of Ya-Na Andani III ((Prah and Yeboah 2011; Brukum, 2004). It was not until 1972 following the military coup that ousted Busia’s government that the Andani Gate found a respite to their search for justice. The Ollenu Committee set up by the military junta recommended the deposition of the incumbent Mahamdu Abudulai IV and the enskinment of Ya-Na Andani III as the Ya-Na (Tsikata and Seini, 2004). By extension, this decision seemed to have re-instituted the L.I. 59 established by the Nkrumah’s government in 1960.

Aggrieved by the political solution to the conflict, the Abudu Gate resorted to the judicial method. It appealed to the court to make a judicial declaration as to the proper procedure and who should be the rightful occupant of the Dagbon skin. It had been anticipated that the Supreme Court judgment would settle the controversies and bring lasting peace to the chieftaincy conflict. However, the general expectation did not materialize because the Abudu Gate remained obstinate. Although the court’s ruling upheld the rotational system and legitimized the enskinment of the Ya-Na Yakubu Andani II, the Abudus requested permission to perform the traditional burial rite of the deceased Mahamadu Abudulai IV in the royal palace where the incumbent king resided ((Prah and Yeboah 2011; Brukum 2004). The tension between the Abudus and Andanis that abated for over a decade resurrected when the New Patriotic Party, the political allies of the Abudus won the 2000 elections. Leaning on the favourable political climate, the Abudus allegedly masterminded the assassination of the incumbent together with forty other royals in March 2002 ostensibly, to pave the way for the enskinment of an Abudu royal (Tonah, 2012).

**Theories on conflict mediation**

Kressel and Pruitt (1989:3) have defined mediation as ‘assistance to two or more interacting parties by a third party who at that time has no power to prescribe agreements or outcomes’. According to Drew (2008:7), ‘mediation is a decision making process in which the parties are assisted by an outside intervener, who makes attempts to assist the parties in their process of decision making and reach an outcome to which each of them can assent without the mediator having a binding decision-making capability’. According to Nolan-Haley (2008), mediation is a short-term, structured and task-oriented participatory intervention where disputing parties work with an impartial third party to negotiate towards a resolution of conflict. Alexander (2008) has indicated that mediation has varied objectives from efficient settlement of disputes and access to justice to conflict resolution. However, irrespective of the objective, the essential element of mediation is to meet the needs of parties and key stakeholders.
Fundamentally, there are four models of mediation that are available to professional and traditional mediation practitioners in their efforts to settle disputes on a wide range of subjects. Drawing much on Spencer (2005), Drews (2008) delineates the following features of mediation:

a. Facilitative Mediation - This is a model where the mediators inspire disputing parties to negotiate their respective needs and interests without resorting to and insistence on their rights (Drew 2008). This model of mediation is typically used in African marriage dispute settlements whereby couples are encouraged to bury their wrangles in order to continue their marriage.

b. Settlement Mediation – This occurs where disputing parties are motivated to compromise their positions and make concessions in order to settle the disputes between them through positional bargaining discourse (Wall and Dunne 2012).

c. Transformative Mediation - This is a model where parties are urged to deal with underlying causes of their problems with a perspective of repairing their relationship as basis of settlement of dispute. Alexander (2008) argues that the transformative mediation adopts social-communicative perspective of human conflict, which emphases on disputing parties’ ability to transform their relationship through empowerment and recognition, in order to encourage them to communicate with each other in a constructive and useful manner.

d. Evaluative Mediation – Under this mediation model, parties are encouraged to reach a settlement according to their rights and entitlements within the anticipated range of court remedies (Beck and Frost 2007; Friedman and Himmelstein 2009).

A salient feature of a good mediation is that the mediators would identify, evaluate and prioritise the anticipated risks in order to achieve the prior determined objectives. The potential risk factors are the operational, financial and ethical dimensions of the process. The sub-components of the operational-risks include organizational (e.g. failure in technology articulation, electoral logistics-constraints, sitting-arrangements, failures in staff and stakeholder-safety and health-care systems); administrative/management considerations (failure to recruit, retain and effectively utilize qualified staff; misallocation of resources and efforts from agreed priorities); the technical refers to mediation-style drawbacks and loss of litigant-confidence in mediator-integrity (Currie 2004; Drew 2008).

These mediation strategies promote high stakeholder-confidence because they are regarded as robust and their application can potentially neutralize entrenched positions. Deploying them in conflict resolution can help remove the limitations to intra-factional self-expression of divergent views by using the secret ballot in the electoral college system. The model teaches about the use of public hearing as a manipulative stick by mediators when occasions such as stalemates occur (Wall and Dunne 2012). The platform created for government to enforce compliance through the imposition of statutory sanctions is laudable. Furthermore, the deployment of the models would provide a better assessment of the post-consensus mediation-environment, which could lead to the identification of new opportunities such as enhanced civil-society advocacy for consolidating the success of the process. Also, they caution us to anticipate that any external condition/situation...
which is potentially detrimental to the realization of the objectives is a threat (Alexander 2008; Currie 2004; Drew 2008).

**Formation of the committee of eminent chiefs**

Following the outbreak of the conflict, the government appointed the Wuaku Commission (WC) of Inquiry to establish the causes of the feud, the victims involved, the perpetrators, and make recommendations for the resolution and prevention of further conflicts. The WC recommended the persecution of some individuals. Consequently, the government ordered the arrest and prosecution of some dozen of individuals who were identified in the WC’s report as principal perpetrators of the heinous crime in Dagbon. In an appeal, a higher court freed all the accused for lack of evidence. Given that neither the WC nor the court was able to reconcile the two royal families, the need for an alternative method that would lead to an amicable solution of the conflict became imminent. Hence, in November 2003, the government abandoned the judicial process and appointed a Committee of Eminent Chiefs (CEC) to mediate the conflict. Among others, the CEC was charged to develop a ‘roadmap to peace in Dagbon’ – the most appropriate traditional processes and platform for achieving enduring peace in the Dagbon traditional area (Daily Graphic 2003).

The membership of the CEC was made up of distinguished chiefs with varying professional acumen. The composition also reflected ethnic and traditional complexion. Whereas members of the CEC possessed academic and professional qualifications, their positions as paramount chiefs in their respective traditional areas made them the most suitable choice for the conflict mediation assignment (Daily Guide 2010). As responsible paramount chiefs, they have been at the center of conflict resolution at their lower fiefdoms. They included, the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II (head of Ashanti kingdom), Nayiri Naa Bohugu Abdulai Mahami Sheriga, paramount chief of Napkaduri and overlord of the Mamprugu Traditional Area and Yabonbwura Tuntumba Borsa Sulemana Japka I, the paramount chief of Damango and overlord of Gonja Traditional Area. The decision to use the CEC was an attempt to combine professional experience and traditional wisdom and skills – tact and diplomacy to address the complex Dagbon conflict situation. These sterling qualities which the members of the CEC possess made them most suitable for the task. As Beck and Frost (2007:15) rightly noted, ‘a person is incompetent to participate in mediation if he or she cannot meet the demands of specific mediation situation’. According to Owusu-Mensah (2013:6), ‘the three eminent chiefs possess strong historical and traditional linkages, knowledge and understanding of the Dagombas’. Indeed, Currie (2004:12) has identified four basic elements that good mediators must possess – qualities that were very much embedded in the character of the CEC:

1. Academic and professional qualification to enable the mediator understands as well as appreciates the rudiments of mediation.
2. External and insider mediators must establish and well define their relationship to disputing parties before the commencement of mediation process in order to demonstrate their level of objectivity in the process.
3. The mediator must demonstrate the level of expertise in the subject under dispute.
d. The mediator must wield some level of authority as well as influence over the disputing party.

The mediation process and the outcome

The Committee of Eminent Chiefs (CEC) began work with a ‘Peace Workshop’ for the chiefs and youths of the two families involved in the conflict at the Damango Peace Centre. The workshop was intended to help the feuding parties to understand the environment and the traditional context of the mediation process. It also brought the disputants and the mediators in close interaction, and to design common objectives that would be accepted to all the parties. According to Beck and Frost (2007), the interactive process is important because it allows both the external and internal forces involved in the conflict to agree to participate in the mediation process. Once the feudal parties have consented to the mediation, the CEC had to develop its unique mediation instruments with which it tackled the problem: the subsequent discussions examine some of the key strategies used to mediate the conflict and the outcomes obtained, thus far.

Face-to-face meeting between Abudus and Andanis: The death of Ya-Na Yakubu Andani had strained relations between the two royal families to the extent that each regarded the other family as an adversary. Married couples that came from the opposite side of the lineage dissolved their marriages. Several efforts by groups to restore love among the families proved futile. However, the CEC took steps to bring the two opposing families to reconcile with each other. The CEC arranged separate meetings with the families, which involved efforts to persuade each family to embrace peace and relegate hatred and violence to the background (Mahama 2009). The counseling aspect of the interactions was a useful means of reorienting the people not only on the traditional customs of respect for elders and communal living but also about the need to promote sustainable livelihood of the people of Dagbon (Daily Graphic 2009). Appealing to customs, the CEC made specific references to the bond between the living and the ancestors to draw attention to the necessity for the two families to promote unity and coexistence in their daily lives in the traditional area. Once it became convinced that the families have availed themselves of the traditional therapy, and the families have demonstrated willingness to forgive each other, the CEC organized a mammoth meeting where the two families were brought together to interact with each other on a common platform. Unlike in the past where attempts to unite the factions ignited conflict, the grand meeting between the two families proceeded amicably with handshakes and traditional kisses which signaled the end of hostilities between the two rival royals (The Chronicle 2007).

Burial of late Ya-Na, Yakubu Andani – The burial of the late Ya-Na was regarded as the most significant ingredient in the peace process. Traditionally, the burial of the chief represents a safe departure from the land of the living to the land of the dead. Until a befitting burial was organized for the assassinated chief, peace could not be negotiable with the parties. Consequently, upon assuming the role as mediators, the CEC decided to set mechanisms in motion that would lead to the burial of the deceased chief. Through series of arduous engagements, the CEC was able to get the two families to draw a time table that would culminate in the burial of the Ya-Na. The two families agreed on the modalities widely regarded as
appropriate for the status of deceased. The compromise reached was significant because it demonstrated the superiority of traditional and chiefly prowess as the most viable alternative conflict mediation over the judicial and political process. The CEC’s intervention paved the way for the speedy preparation of all the customary rites that led to the internment of the remains of the slain chief. The successful burial of the late Ya-Na was a gigantic step in the reconciliation process (Ghanaian Times 2005; Dialy Guide 2005).

Enskining a regent of Dagbon – Once the burial of the Ya-Na has been successfully organized, it became necessary for the installation of a care-taker chief who would hold the fort until a legitimate Ya-Na was enskined. The CEC insisted that it was important to ensure a balance of power in the enskinment of the regent. The choice of the regency fell to the Kuga Naa, the Mionlan Korle who by the arrangement became the chair of the so-called cabinet. Two senior royals were appointed from the two gates to be co-regents. These elders were the Bavinlan who represented the Abdulai family and Sunlan Kpatinlana, the Vugnaa that represented the Andani family. The inclusion of the two chiefs reflected the two interests in the conflict. The CEC conferred on the Regent and his cabinet the responsibility to direct and control all public traditional rites, including funerals, festivals and assemblage of the people for communal meetings and participation in grassroots political activities (Daily Graphic 2006).

Performing the funerals of former chiefs:
Key among the issues that ignited the conflict was the claim by the Abudus that the slain Ya-Na had refused to allow the group to perform the funeral rites of the late Yaa-Na Mahamadu Abdulai IV. The Andanis also had the funeral of the late Yaa-Naa Yakubu Andani II pending. In order to address the particular concerns of the two groups regarding the performance of the final funeral rites for the departed chiefs, the CEC resolved that each group would be given the opportunity to bid the final farewell to their royal. It prevailed upon the groups that the performance of the funerals of the late chiefs should follow customary practices of the people (Mahama 2009). Consequently, it decided that in accordance with custom, the funeral of the most eldest of the deceased should be performed first to be followed by the younger deceased. Hence by a resolution of the elders representing the two factions, it was agreed that the funeral of the late Yaa-Naa Mahamadu Abdulai IV who died in 1988 would be performed first, and that of Yaa-Naa Yakubu Andani II will follow. The CEC went further to appoint a subcommittee to plan for the funerals of the two chiefs. Among others, the subcommittee was charged to make estimates regarding the cost involved in the renovation of the old Gbewaa Palace in Yendi where the two funerals would be performed (CitiFm. 2014).

Challenges facing the CEC

Notwithstanding the seeming successes by the mediation team in forging peaceful settlement of the differences between the two feuding groups in Dagbon, real obstacles exist, which have slowed down the process toward the speedy resolution of the conflict. Some of these challenges that have been obstructive to the resolution of the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict are highlighted hereunder:

Lack of Executive Instrument:  The CEC commenced work without a promulgation of an Executive Instrument (EI), which would have provided the legal basis for its work. In the
absence of any legal framework, the legitimacy of the CEC is in limbo. This poses danger for authenticity of the work, findings, and recommendations to be made by the CEC. For instance, an aggrieved party may refuse to respect the consensus arising from the mediation. In addition, litigants may question and even challenge the legality of the CEC. The lack of legal foundation for the work of the CEC would affect the successful implementation of any Road Map that may be determined. As it is, the CEC largely depends on the goodwill of the two families to carry out with its mandate (Ghanaian Times 2012).

Lack of secretariat: The CEC commenced its work without established basic infrastructure. In the absence of a secretariat, the CEC depended on ad hoc measures to carry out its responsibilities. Throughout the mediation process, it depended on volunteers who offered to serve as secretaries to compile and document minutes for the meetings it held with the parties involved in the conflict. Given that, effective mediation process depends heavily on availability and access to information, an administrative support system, is a necessity because it provide information and education not only to the stakeholders but also serve as the reference to the mediators. The lack of secretariat and supporting staff has forced the CEC to hold their meetings at the palace of the chairman of the CEC. Any serious mediation effort requires planned and scheduled meetings to assure the presence of aggrieved parties at meetings. However, the stakeholders involved in the dispute were invited to meetings at short notices and without a formal notification. The late delivery of notices to the parties at the center of the mediation to attend meetings, led to cancellations of the several schedules (Daily Guide 2013). In a personal communication with Dr. Ziblim Iddi, one of the key members of the Abudu family, he revealed that the CEC did not consult the parties whenever it fixed date and time for the meetings. The disputants received telephone calls from the secretary to the Asantehene close to the meetings day, which did not allow them to make adequate preparations for the meeting. Meanwhile, the disputants had to travel for a long distance in order to attend the meetings.

Lack of legal service for the mediators and disputants
The parties did not have access to legal services. They had no lawyers they could consult for direction on the mediation process and other emergency issues. The parties consequently relied on their personal ideas and perspectives without a proper and appropriate consideration of the legal implication of the issues raised and discussed. Whereas the parties relied on the legal advice of some family members, the extent of availability of these persons and their contributions were not sustainable (Ghanaian Times 2008). Commenting on the necessity for legal services in any mediation process, Sales, Beck and Haan (1993) emphasized that legal services are part of the important environmental factors for mediation. They maintained that except clients have, at least, some legal training or experience with the legal system, going into the complex mediation process without a counsel is difficult and frustrating to the parties.

The road to peace in Dagbon has been bumpy. The mediation process by the CEC stalled in 2008 and was only resurrected in 2013. Even so, several attempts by the two feuding families to get the CEC to reconvene the peace and reconciliation meetings had been without success. The Dagbon Traditional Council, members of the two royal families and other stakeholders are perplexed about the prognosis of enskinning a new Ya-Na. The Regent who was appointed and charged with the temporary performance of the chiefly responsibilities has celebrated his seventh anniversary. The question about who would be the next Ya-Na remains unresolved. Despite the
looming danger of protracting the peace process, there is some optimism that the seemingly intractable conflict would finally be resolved by the CEC.

Conclusion and the way forward

This paper set out to assess the work of the CEC as a trusted body to mediate the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict after several conflict resolution mechanisms had proven futile. Since assuming the mediation role, the CEC has brokered peace between the two feuding families over critical aspects of the conflict. Apart from forging close interaction between the Abudus and Andanis and resolving to allow a care-taker cabinet to oversee the running of the paramountcy, the CEC has also secured the consent of the factions to structure the funerals of the departed chiefs of the people. These are monumental breakthroughs that have opened up the channel of cordial relations and relative unity among the conflicting parties. Notwithstanding these outcomes, the prevailing bottlenecks must be addressed head-on in order to achieve true peace and reconciliation among the factions in Dagbon. Hence the paper recommends an alternative mechanism that could augment the work of the CEC in finding the solution to the intractable Dagbon chieftaincy conflict. The Clean-Sheet framework involving the adoption of an Electoral College system in choosing the new Ya-Na can produce a tantalizing result. The first stage is the expansion of the membership of the Dagbon Traditional Council to include other key stakeholders who have considerable influence over the development of the Traditional Area yet have been excluded from the programs and activities as result of the enforcement of rigid customs. These individuals must represent the Abudu and Andani families on equal numerical strength. The expended Traditional Council should constitute an Electoral College to choose the next family that will produce the Ya-Na. The Electoral College must cast the vote through a secret ballot at a conclave. The balloting should continue on progressive basis until a family is selected after series of lobbying from the two families. The family that receives the approval to select the next candidate as Ya-Na would follow the traditional customary practices to enskin the Ya-Na. The CEC that would act as the umpire would supervise the process in order ensure that there is no breach of custom.

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Impunity In Transition: UN Peacekeeping, Transitional Realities and Feminist Considerations

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IMPUNITY IN TRANSITION: UN PEACEKEEPING, TRANSITIONAL REALITIES AND FEMINIST CONSIDERATIONS

Abstract

Anchored in feminist theory, this paper questions the peace in peacekeeping through an exploration of the realities of sexual violence and exploitation in UN peacekeeping operations. More specifically this paper highlights abuses in the DRC and employs an intersectional lens in connecting individual micro-level cases of abuse to a broader landscape of hyper-masculinity, misogynistic culture, neo-colonial dynamics as well as the complexities of racism and dehumanization. This research interrogates the role of institutions is in advancing gender equality of transitional societies when they are built on patriarchal, neo-colonial foundations. Ultimately this paper seeks to further the conversation about UN peacekeeping, western intervention in transitional times and gender-based concerns while aiming to create space to re-envision and shift a damaging paradigm under the guise of peace.

Keywords: peacekeeping, feminism, intersectionality, sexual violence, DRC
Deconstructing the peacekeeping paradigm

United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations have been in existence across the globe since 1948 and sixteen peacekeeping operations are currently in progress on four continents (United Nations, 2014). As the number of operations continues to grow, so has public exposure and criticism about UN peacekeeping missions, questioning their effectiveness, underlying consequences and potential for injurious dynamics. More specifically, accounts of sexual abuse and exploitation of local women by peacekeeping personnel has been increasingly documented with the first major publicity on the issue being as recent as the conflict in Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990’s (Allred, 2006). In this particular case, journalists and activists documented abuses where UN police participated in supporting brothels where women had been trafficked from all over Eastern Europe to engage in prostitution (Lynch, 2005). Moreover, reports of abuse have surfaced in several nations, notably in Guinea, Bosnia, Cambodia, Liberia, Haiti, East Timor and the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the past two decades (Bowcott, 2005).

UN peacekeeping missions are meant to incite positive outcomes such as the sustainable rebuilding of communities and the promotion of human rights and peaceful co-existence, while ultimately aiding in the creation of more peaceful societies. Peacekeeping operations are part of a larger system of international presence in fostering democracy, stability and rebuilding transitional and post-conflict societies. Though sometimes far from this reality, the scandals of UN peacekeeping urge us to confront not solely individual actors but the broader institutions in order to enhance our understanding and prevent further abuse (Aoi, de Coning, Thakur, 2007).

By looking at the UN system’s prominence in international post-conflict and transitional work and more specifically the role of peacekeeping operations, this paper aims to explore more concretely the sexual violence and exploitation perpetrated by UN peacekeepers, which arguably contributes to an overall culture of violence in conflict regions. This work will employ a feminist, intersectional lens and will specifically explore the case of the DRC. I will argue that reported abuses are closely connected to a broader landscape of damaging hyper-masculine and misogynistic culture deriving from military culture, which can be transposed from ‘donor’ countries militaries to specific peacekeeping missions. Further, I will look at evidence suggesting the presence of neo-colonial dynamics and the complexities of racism and cultural disconnect which are realities of UN peacekeeping framework. Moreover, this paper problematizes the role of institutions in advancing gender equality of transitional societies when they are built on patriarchal, neo-colonial foundations. Ultimately this paper seeks to further the conversation about ideals of accountability and justice, realities of impunity and the complex roles of UN peacekeeping as a transitional authority in post-conflict regions in order to further an understanding of this topic.

This refined lens, though difficult to gaze through, allows us to recognize the racism and sexism inherent in the UN peacekeeping model as well as in the peacekeepers’ embodiment of the role of ‘the protector’ by examining how this is utilized in international rhetoric. By looking critically at the UN model of peacekeeping and North-centric impositions of peace, we can more precisely...
understand yet another one of the complexities of the field of transitional and post-conflict work. By closely examining the roles of peacekeepers, our dominant global culture, which accepts and condones this violence, as well as the impunity that surrounds such acts, we can better understand one dimension of post-conflict realities and what it means to seek, build and keep peace.

**Peacekeeping and transitional societies**

Klosterboer and Hartmann-Mahmud describe transitional justice as “the phenomenon and process by which a society utilizes legal and quasi-legal institutions to facilitate fundamental change from one political order to another or the construction of a new reality against the background of a profound historical memory” (2013, p.57). They then go on to describe various transitional justice mechanisms, which fall into three categories- accountability measures such as trials and truth commissions; strategies of victim restoration such as reparations and memorials; and lastly processes that promote peace and stability, such as government reform (Klosterboer and Hartmann-Mahmud, 2013). I would argue that in moving beyond purely legalistic notions of transitional justice that UN peacekeeping in the DRC could fall into the latter category proposed as a ‘peacebuilding’ mechanism in this transitional state.

UN peacekeeping is effectively a tool used to create the necessary environment of security in order to continue to move forward with other transitional justice mechanisms and thus can be an integral part of this system. Moreover, the development of the field of transitional justice has very much been alongside that of UN peacekeeping as well as the advancements of the field of international law and it is beneficial to see the intersections between these concepts and draw insight from the ways they can and do interact (Zyl, 2008). Though a relatively new emergence, transitional justice and post-conflict peacebuilding as a field can be brought into conversation with UN peacekeeping as a complimentary project in rebuilding sustainable societies in post-conflict. Professor Luzolo of the University of Kinshaha, encapsulates the complex interconnections between these concepts in his statement that, “there is no peace without reconciliation; there is no reconciliation without justice; there is no justice without reparations; there are no reparations without forgiveness; there is no forgiveness without truth” (Zyl, 2008, p.1).

Furthermore, in effort to speak to the complexities of peacekeeping in the DRC it is beneficial to employ a feminist intersectional framework to more critically account for the various axes of identity, which are at play. First coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in her paper, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color* intersectionality is important concept to consider as a foundational component of this paper. Ultimately, by thinking through this issue intersectionally, this paper aims to account for a broader range of dynamics in order to have a more complete picture in discussing issues of race and gender as well as the complexities of neo-colonial peace efforts and power dynamics in international peacekeeping (Crenshaw, 1991).
Is peacekeeping a pipedream? A brief international overview

UN Peacekeeping is said to be “one of the most effective tools available to the UN to assist host countries in navigating the difficult path from conflict to peace” (United Nations, 2013). The UN model of peacekeeping aims to go beyond simply advocating for peace and security with the additional goals to facilitate the political process, assists in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants as well as aid with elections and matters of restorative justice (United Nations, 2013). In the UN peacekeeping promotional video, the organization’s ‘celebrity’ spokesperson reaffirms that, “peace is a full time job” and, “like war, it must be waged” (United Nations, 2008). This description of peace is perplexing in the militaristic language choice of ‘waged’ and also in the idea that peace is an intervention—something prescribed, something taught, something to be enforced. This unfortunately speaks to the nature of the peacekeeping industry and the complex and often damaging role its institutions have in conflict zones. This reality raises important questions such as: how can peacekeepers be disconnected from potentially harmful norms of conduct from their previous military workplace culture while on peacekeeping missions? How are the various involved parties meant to work towards peace for civilians in any given region when working with a structure that may not embody these principles?

Over the past five decades, countless horror stories from the field have surfaced, recounting the abuse and exploitation of local women and children during peacekeeping operations. Inadequate accountability and impunity have threatened the integrity of peacekeeping as a concept and operations unfortunately continue to add risk and vulnerability to local populations (Ladley, 2005). One such example is of a UN police officer serving in Kosovo who allegedly raped a young girl and was then smuggled out of the country overnight by his home country of Austria (Amnesty International, 2004). Though the abuses in Kosovo were among the first to gain mainstream media attention and sparked academic analysis of sexual abuse and impunity within the peacekeeping framework,—they are not isolated to Kosovo (Kent, 2007). For example, a 1996 study of the impact of armed conflict on children reported that in 6 out of 12 countries studied, the arrival of peacekeeping troops had been associated with a rise in child prostitution and accounts of sexual exploitation (Machael, 1996).

Many other abuses have been documented across the globe over the past two decades, yet commitments to address them on the part of the UN have only materialized since 2004 with the harrowing allegations of abuse having developed in the DRC (Defeis, 2008). For example, unthinkable acts were committed in Haiti where several troops from Uruguay gang raped a young boy and video taped it and later circulated it over the Internet (Newman, 2011). Also in Haiti, 117 Sri Lankan soldiers were expelled from the country for accusation of rape and sexual violence with some victims as young as 7 years old (Newman, 2011). In the Ivory Coast, 8 out of 10 minor girls in the community of Toulepleu admitted to engaging in sexual acts with UN

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7 My description of the peace industry refers more broadly to include other agents such as NGO’s, INGO’s and other expat entities who are involved yet this paper highlights the unique role of peacekeeping units and actual peacekeepers (largely military personnel)
8 Though sometimes referring to the abuse of women and girls, this does not discount the fact that a small amount of abuse is also inflicted on boys and men in the DRC. It is important to focus on women and girls due to the widespread disparity of abuse, but it is important to also note that sexual violence is about power and control and vulnerable men and boys are also victim to this crime.
peacekeepers Newman, 2011). Yet despite UN assurances of change, impunity reigns on and abuses are occurring in the world today with the most recent exposure of sexual violence being in the ongoing peacekeeping monitored conflict zone of Mali (UN News Centre, 2013).

The disheartening reality is that despite allegations of widespread abuse, out of approximately 100,000 UN peacekeepers, the UN itself admitted to having knowledge of only two examples of sex offenders being sent to jail (BBC News, December 1, 2006). Though the UN boasts a zero tolerance policy in terms of sexual abuse and exploitation, the policy was investigated by the UN’s Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) which found that there was a grave lack of programming to enforce the policy, describing the situation as “zero compliance with zero tolerance” (Fleshman, 2005). So how then do we address such dishonor by those serving the international community in the name of peace? Does a blue helmet mean impunity and if so how do we understand institutionalized ‘peacekeeping’ with this knowledge? Let’s take a closer look.

**The rape capital of the world and a haunting shade of blue**

“The parking lot is filled with UN SUVs. The Russians are there, watching porn in the hotel lobby to prepare themselves, waiting for their flesh to turn up. As I wake up early the next day, all the cars are gone, as if it had only been a sordid nightmare” (Fontane, 2012). This scene described by Victoria Fontane, is that of your average night at Hotel Uvira in Kivu province DRC where UN peacekeepers pay local women for sex and where many times these women are but girls (2012).

The DRC, a former Belgian colony and vast nation in central Sub-Saharan Africa, continues to be marked with instability, insecurity and violence. It has been referred to as the ‘rape capital of the world’, ‘the world’s most ignored humanitarian crisis’, ‘the most dangerous place to be a woman’, ‘a poster child of the failed state’ (Heaton, 2013). As Vinck and Pham describe,

> “few places illustrate better than eastern DRC the challenges of transitioning from a period of human rights abuses and conflicts or oppression toward one of peace, rule of law and respect for human rights. Six years after the ‘official’ end of the conflict marked by the Sun City Agreement armed conflicts, insecurity and economic and political instability continue to pose serious challenges to achieving social reconstruction, justice and peace in the area” (2008, p. 400).

More than a decade after the Pretoria Accord, instability remains with sporadic violence outbreaks and violence against women being a daily reality; the DRC does not meet the conventional idea of a post-conflict transitional society (Klosterboer and Hartmann-Mahmud, 2013). Further, throughout this period of transition there has been a strong international presence in the DRC with high reliance on UN peacekeeping personnel. For example, for the first time in a UN-assisted conflict, it was explicitly outlined during the Pretoria Accord that the DRC would institutionalize a leading role for international actors. Accordingly, more than half of the nation’s budget is contributed from ‘international observers’ (Klosterboer and Hartmann-Mahmud, 2013). A recent study found that on average 1,100 women are raped per day, which is 48 rapes per hour (Peterman et al, 2011). The DRC’s many armed groups have committed horrific violations of human rights and the country has dropped 20 places on the human development index, making it
the least developed country in the world (Autesserre, 2012). Sexual violence has been used as a tool by all parties involved in the conflict as part of their military strategy for various purposes, ranging from inflicting harm, emasculating the opponent and ethnic cleansing, to morale boosting, male group culture initiation and myths of the magic powers and strength gained from rape (Bastik, et al., 2007). August 2009 marked the 10-year anniversary of the Congo where the government signed the Lusaka Ceasefire agreement, which marked the end of the second Congolese war. This date also commemorated the 10th anniversary of the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC)⁹ (Carayannis, 2009). Today, nearly 15 years after promise of peace, uncertainty remains.

In a study by Vinck and Pham, over 2,500 citizens in the DRC were surveyed to investigate priorities surrounding sustainable human development principles with results uncovering that basic survival and security were outlined as priorities that must come before more concrete efforts of justice and reparations (2008). Though security has been outlined as a key priority, the survey reported that only 4.2% of the population felt that the UN peacekeeping mission in the area actually provided them with protection (2008).

Although having a primary role of promoting peace and protecting civilians during conflict, many would argue that peacekeepers in the DRC have exacerbated the state of fragility and have significantly contributed to insecurity. Reports from journalists, NGO’s and researchers have exposed the widespread abuse, revealing a darker side to one of the most devastated regions in the world. In 2005 alone, the UN counted 150 allegations of sexual abuse, with likely hundreds more having gone unreported. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated, there was “clear evidence that acts of gross misconduct have taken place” (Nolan, 2005). A shocking addition to this knowledge is that peacekeepers pay an average of $2 for sex in the DRC, which has become a bleak survival income for many (Nolan, 2005).

This leads us to the need to examine the harmful consequences that derive from these acts such as active contribution to the spread of sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS and the surge of ‘peacekeeping babies’ without fathers in a fragile state (Higate, 2007). Beyond engagement in sexual acts with prostitutes and children, sexual assault and abuse, peacekeepers have also been accused of “standing by” and failing to protect women, men and children from being raped, thereby upholding a culture of rape and impunity. The combination of the above examples and countless more where peacekeepers failed to bring peace has resulted in an overall lack of confidence and mistrust in MONUSCO by locals (Fleshman, 2005). Jane Holl Lute, former assistant Secretary General for peacekeeping has stated that, “the blue helmet has become black and blue through self-inflicted wounds,” reassuring the public that the UN would not sit still until the ‘lustre’ was restored. Yet we are still waiting for justice a decade later.

Protectors turned predators: who is to blame?

This now leads us to the question of how do we grapple with this reality? How do we confront the incongruence of peacemakers and global ‘hero’ figures as key contributors to mass violence, exploitation and dehumanization of local populations? The first step I want to propose is to shift

⁹ The name of the mission MONUC changed to MONUSCO in 2010.
into a less comfortable arena where we view peacekeepers as not only perpetrators, or a ‘few bad men’ but as ordinary people. This discourse has been applied primarily in war and genocide studies, in order to humanize the darker sides of mass violence in an effort to gain a better understanding (see: Arendt, 1963; Browning, 1992; Goldhagen, 1997, Waller, 2002, McDoom, 2005, Short, 2005; Strauss, 2006, Clark, 2009; Loyle, 2009; Jones, 2011). In adopting this frame, we can go beyond the individual to look at some of the social factors as well as overarching institutions of oppression.

Clark highlights for us that research on perpetrators is crucial in order to adequately illustrate the complexities of perpetrator behaviours as she seeks to challenge individual and psychological explanations as the sole basis of analysis (2009). She attests that the general reaction to perpetrators as ordinary people is one marked with hesitation as we have a reluctance to associate the behaviours we condemn as bad and inhumane with your average person (2009). It is easier then, to place perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict in a category of a bad few, associating these individuals with not being in a rational state of mind, suffering from post-traumatic stress or being a deranged individual to begin with. Arguably, this can be seen as part of a neo-liberal strategy of the UN, which seeks to deflect responsibility and attention from structural and institutional-level concerns at hand.

One may object to the alternative conceptualization I am advancing, in that if we don’t individualize this criminality we risk assuming that all peacekeepers are bad, when in reality the majority are not active in abusing local populations. Still however, I argue that this framework is a necessary application to the issue of sexual violence in peacekeeping, in the DRC and elsewhere in order to localize and frame the issue within its context. Beyond those who engage directly in rape, sexual assault, underage prostitution and child abuse, are those who uphold a system through turning a blind eye, by covering up the acts of others and through reinforcing a culture of dominance over vulnerable people. For example, in the DRC, a dominant part of peacekeeping ‘expatriate’ culture portrays local women as near sexual predators hunting down foreign men relentlessly for sex and is a topic that is framed as socially laughable (Higate, 2007).

This culture I speak of is one where vulnerable people, especially women and girls in the DRC have been constructed as ‘empowered’ through sexual exploitation for financial gain for their basic survival needs. This pervasive idea reigns with the popular opinion that men are ‘respecting’ local women by having sex with them and supporting their livelihood (Puechguirbal, 2003; Higate, 2007). Higate also points to issues of group culture, which come into play in actions such as the bullying and harassment of those who act as ‘whistleblowers’ and are socially shamed as result of telling on the boys who are ‘just being boys’ (2007).

We need to challenge these bold assumptions, negative group culture, a lack of an internal system to deal with issues of abuse and the overarching system of impunity that upholds these fragments. We need to take a step back and see this as connected to the ‘ordinary’ group male culture and norms of masculinity that pervade our globe. This also points to the ‘ordinary’ men and women who hold power positions at the UN and other key institutions, and who have the power to challenge these settings of impunity but turn a blind eye. Beyond this, we need to look critically at the hand that ‘helps’ and recognize the neo-colonial nature of the industry of peace. By looking at perpetrators of sexual violence as ‘ordinary’ people, we expose a broader picture.
If realistically these are your average peacekeepers then we can shift our gaze from an individual exception to look at broader social structure that might condone the behaviours of these individuals. Due to the prevalence of incidents we must look beyond individual accountability alone in order to address the violence that continues to happen.

**UN Peacekeeping and a culture of military masculinity**

In order to more fully understand the complexities behind the optimistic promise of peacekeeping, we need to see it for what it is. UN peacekeepers are military personnel and police officers, largely trained through traditional means that historically have been patriarchal and thus both exclusory and discriminatory toward women (Whitworth, 2004; Enlow, 2000; Higate, 2007). To put this into perspective, of the current UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC there are 22,016 uniformed personnel of which 19,815 are former military personnel, 760 are military observers, 391 are police and 1,050 are personnel which make up police units (United Nations, 2014).

Further, the mission in the DRC is the most militarized of any UN peacekeeping operation, which is evidenced in this official UN statement:

“On 28 March 2013, the Security Council decided by resolution 2098 that MONUSCO shall, for an initial period of one year and within the authorized troop ceiling of 19,815, include an “Intervention Brigade” consisting inter alia of three infantry battalions, one artillery and one Special force and Reconnaissance company. This force ceiling was further confirmed by resolution 2147 of 28 March 2014” (United Nations, 2014).

Resolution 2098 ultimately enables ‘offensive combat’ where troops are to carry out targeted military measures meant to ‘neutralized’ and ‘destabilize’ the conflict through military intervention (Ponthieu et.al, 2014). Further, resolution 2147 was unanimously adopted to renew the MONUSCO mission in March 2014 as well as to reaffirm international support of resolution 2098. Further, the UN for the first time has launched surveillance drones over the DRC as part of its peacekeeping measures in the region, stating that “ the move is a necessary part of modernizing its peacekeeping operations, and a way to monitor large areas of land in the eastern region of the DRC where troops are stretched thin” (CBC, 2014).

We can’t think of the DRC’s peacekeeping efforts as unlike a military operation and all of the realities, which may be associated. Beyond this then, we can’t disconnect the reality of utopian peace ideals from the harmful norms implicit in a military culture. These norms can and do diffuse into the narratives of peacekeeping, yet are harder to confront disguised in pale blue and emblems of peace (Whitworth, 2004). For example, in the DRC in 2005, between May and September several cases of abuse were looked at and in 19 that were corroborated, none of the peacekeepers admitted to doing anything wrong (Nator, 2006). Where is the awareness and accountability here? How can the disconnect between preconceived gender and cultural norms and attitudes be bridged with the harsh reality of sexual violence, exploitation and racism?

It is first important to understand how this disconnect may be related to the idea of ‘militarized masculinity.’ Militarized masculinity can be defined by a combination of actions, choices and attitudes, which conform to a narrow hegemonic masculine ideal and are associated with militaristic values. Sandra Whitworth explains that,
“militaries depend on attracting young people, but especially young men, to the idea of becoming ‘real men’ through the initiation rituals associated with soldiering. As Judith Stiehm has written: ‘all militaries have ... regularly been rooted in the psychological coercion of young men through appeals to their (uncertain) manliness.’ What militaries do is replace that uncertainty with a certainty that is, at least in part, constituted through norms of masculinity which privilege violence, racism, aggression and hatred towards women” (2005 p.21).

Whitworth offers the example of when two Canadian peacekeepers beat to death a young man in Somalia. She speaks to how this tragedy enacted by ‘ordinary’ men is not disconnected from the myths of peacekeeping and the associated militarized culture which promotes a certain kind of masculinity, “premised on violence and aggression, institutional unity and hierarchy, aggressive heterosexism and homophobia, as well as misogyny and racism” (2005, p.1). Ultimately, she attests that militarized masculinity and the very nature of hiring a predominantly male force, who are trained to kill as military personnel, as those who now are meant to keep peace to be deeply problematic and intricately linked to issues of violence, exploitation and dehumanization (Whitworth, 2005).

Feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe also speaks to the process of militarization and describes it as characterized by being controlled, dependent on or deriving value from the military or militaristic institutions (2000). She then expands beyond our traditional understanding of what constitutes the military stating that feminists and researchers across the globe, “have all found that when they have followed the bread crumbs of privileged masculinity, they have been led time and time again not just to the doorstep of the military, but to the threshold of all those social institutions that promote militarization” (Enloe, 2000: 33).

Militarized masculinities therefore are not confined to our traditional idea of the military but, more subtly, have qualities that promote and condone violence, advertising and celebrating this culture; and it is so widespread that we recognize it as normal (Belkin and Carver, 2012). This view of a specific, yet dominant form of masculinity speaks to the pervasiveness of a hyper-masculine culture in our world and its relationship to harmful patriarchal ideas and systems of control. The idea of hyper-masculinity is central to understanding the normalization and widespread nature of abuse and exploitation among peacekeeping personnel in the DRC and elsewhere. It also informs our understanding of other peace industry institutions, which are marked with militaristic and patriarchal values and serve as outlets to uphold abusive behavior through a culture of impunity.

Where are the women in peacekeeping?

Another key factor to address, which contributes to and is a product of a male dominant sphere, is the low representation of women within peacekeeping, which parallels the low number of women in military operations. Although the numbers of women in peacekeeping have been on the rise they are still low and much improvement needs to be made. Of the UN peacekeeping groups on missions as of October 2013, women comprised only 4.5% (86/1,889) of military ‘experts’ and the number of women acting as troops on the ground sits at a mere 2.7%
The number of female police officers is the most significant with 15% representation (785/5117) for individual police officers and 6% (465/7694) for group squad units (United Nations, 2013). In the DRC, only 865 women currently serve out of the 22,016 personnel who make up MONUSCO (United Nations, 2013).

In order to challenge some of the limitations of peacekeeping, the gender disparity in representation by numbers should ideally better reflect the population at large. With this in mind though, peacekeepers and women in general are subject to becoming upholders of patriarchy in the same way as men do; more would still need to be done to challenge the culture of hyper-masculinity at large (Baaz, 2009). Furthermore, there is no concrete evidence saying that women are better peacekeepers than men, but Degroot points out that there is concrete evidence that women’s inclusion can and does improve the success of operations (2002). Ultimately, this leads to the issue that gender has been inadequately mainstreamed in the UN training models for peacekeeping personnel (Puechguirbal, 2003). An understanding of masculinity and its socially constructed nature as well as the need for representation and gender mainstreaming must be addressed.

**Implicit racism and its contribution to violence and exploitation**

In recognizing internalized sexism, as well as the harmful hierarchies of the peace industry, we must also look at the implicit racism within this structure to gain better insight as to why peacekeepers and seemingly ordinary, respectful men engage in damaging behaviors abroad. We need to better understand Clark’s understanding of a ‘slide from normal to depravity’ and look at another contributing factor that makes ordinary people commit sexual violence in peacekeeping (2009).

Goldhagen (1997) uses the context of Nazi Germany to develop the concept of ‘ordinary men’, which moves beyond the individual murders there and urges us to look at the wider social structure. With the mass levels of anti-Semitism and hate propaganda, how could people developed any other view of Jewish people, he asked? Browning also speaks to this reality and draws our attention to issues of group culture, the powers of authority figures and pressures of conformity and desire for acceptance among the members of the Police Battalion 101 (1992). He explains that the Nazi men were mostly ‘ordinary’ men, yet were living under extreme circumstances. Countless theorists have come to this conclusion not only about Nazi Germany, but also in other sites of mass violence around the globe such as Cambodia and Rwanda.

There is something about this change in mindset, which perhaps occurs because of factors such as the power of the group, the change in social and economic landscape that pushes people to the edge, resulting in shameful consequences, which is arguably also prevalent in peacekeeping operations. Though, in cases of genocide, we are talking about the brutality of murder, I would argue that similar characteristics and social contexts exist and encourage those who engage in sexual violence and exploitation while part of peace missions.

The racist ideology of “the civilized North and the barbaric South” is very evidently embedded in peacekeeper’s ‘militaristic’ training and in peacekeeping models (Darby, 2009) Fontane echoes this in her fieldwork report stating that “it is much easier to ‘address’ the sexual abuses committed by ‘savage’ Congolese, than to acknowledge the sexual violence brought in with
peacekeeping contingents” (2012). This element of peacekeeping reveals a system where violence against bodies of color is normalized and becomes an acceptable part of the mission with roots stemming from a dark history of colonial violence (Razack, 2004). This western bias of who is an ideal perpetrator and focusing on local Congolese men and militia members as the main ‘bad guys’ aids in constructing the problem at hand and the binaries of governance within this industry. These expressions of racism can be associated to individual concerns of peacekeepers such as stress and intense culture shock, which serve as important excuses in depoliticizing the reality of the peace industry (Razack, 2004). Yes, arguably the reliance on peacekeepers from across the globe can result in issues of cultural disconnect. We must consider how norms and practices from various countries are different and risk misinterpretation. For example, if women’s rights remain a struggle in the peacekeeping supply countries and issues such as domestic violence and the degradation of women are high then associated attitudes risk spilling over into peacekeeping units. As a more practical example, the lack of French speaking troops in the DRC is said to compromise the work of peacekeepers and undermines the missions ability to protect civilians due to a prevalence in communication barriers (CBC, 2014).

Furthermore though this speaks to the idea of ‘west’ vs ‘rest’ dehumanization that can be a reality in peacekeeping due to pervasive neo-colonial ideals, biases and racism can also be a reality in a different way when peacekeepers are from neighboring regions and whom are arguably better versed with the cultural landscape. For example you might assume that peacekeepers in the DRC from neighboring regions such as Rwanda may not disrespect local populations as they could identify as being also from the Great Lakes region of Africa, and therefore in some sense part of the community they are working with. However, abuse in this context does still happen. Razack speaks to this reality in his discussion of the ‘hegemonic bargaining,’ which can occur peacekeeping units (2005). He describes this phenomena as a response to hegemonic, or dominant ideals of masculinity where sometimes men of color “agree to engage in behavior that makes them complicit with white supremacy. Racial minority men adopt gender strategies that consciously or unconsciously trade on the privileges they can access through gender, sexuality, and class in order to negotiate the penalties they confront” (2002, p.5).

Ultimately by conforming to the status quo due to their perceived otherness in a neo-colonial reality, men (and I would argue women alike) may feel compelled to act in harmful ways as means, “to secure belonging through deflecting attention away from their own shortcomings by doing things that will buy them some respectability (Razack, 2005, p.5). This is an important dynamic to consider when thinking of peacekeeping and how complex it is in that it is not only the ignorant and racist hyper-masculine figure from ‘away’ who is committing this violence but other men and women from perhaps more similar cultural and social realities. This affirms the need to look at the systemic underpinnings peacekeeping, which are inherently harmful.

Moreover something to consider is that there is an increase in peacekeepers from other countries in the global south. For example, it is “often an overlooked truth that donor nations can benefit, or even profit, from their contributions to peace missions, given the right circumstances” and many countries which are developing and in stages of post-conflict transition themselves are contributing to international peacekeeping in vast numbers (Axe, 2013, p.1). In the case of emerging economic nations like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, peacekeeping is an ideal way to
boost the resources and financial gains of their own armies, while also building south/south relations in mineral rich regions of the globe such as the DRC.

In war and in conflict regions we need to acknowledge that the rules of law and morality can be blurred, especially from the privileged standpoint of a peacekeeper who has ascribed social power. In some instances these ordinary men may be experiencing this elevated social privilege, flattery and praise from local women for the first time. Researcher Sally Price suggests that we need to move from simply framing military masculine sexual oppression as “mad” or “bad” (2001). By doing so, we encounter the social origins, revealing “a series of structural contingencies shaping [men’s] sexualized power interactions with vulnerable others” (Higate, 2007).

Neo-colonialism and the outside ‘helpers’ and ‘heroes’:

Another element to confront is the neo-colonial nature of the peace industry. Outside intervention such as UN peacekeeping has a darker side of structural violence, power and colonialism-rooted principles. In this type of ‘helper-and-helped’ dichotomy, potentially hazardous realities can arise where hierarchy may hinder opportunities for effective cultural exchange, equitable working relations and ultimately, the sustainable progress of the nation in ‘need’. In order to break out of the ‘Cartesian’ limits of the peace industry and disentangle this densely woven paradigm, we must explore the colonial expressions of both the self and collective in peacekeeping.11

We have to begin this inquiry by recognizing the structure of which peacekeepers are a part. Peacekeeping is an element of a system of colonial ideas and a culture of “self-satisfaction that permeates Western societies, which is often accompanied by a marked impatience with the developing world and its problems” (Darby, 2009). Phillip Darby describes this reality as a new form of racism (2009). He goes on to suggest that the global insecurity which accompanies this racism goes back to Imperial times, which results in global north actors searching for security in the former colonized world, reinforcing a system of self-interest and exploitation that goes beyond wishes for world peace (2009). Peace work can be impactful, yet it can also be a subtle, easily disguisable contemporary way to control others, their land, resources, and personal agency. Writer Michael Maren would further this conversation by saying that the peace industry itself is insincere and that this trait alienates expatriate workers, reinforcing a myopia on how to improve foreign aid and peacebuilding, keeping the cycle in motion (2002). This sentiment on a more individual and internalized level creates a situation that constructs the ‘other’ as such.

Thus, much of the deeply problematic behavior of peacekeepers are rooted in misogynistic culture and colored with colonial interests. Further, they also can be understood as part of an ‘escapist’ culture. Many of the sexual encounters on mission get justified as ‘needed release’

10 It is important to highlight that the ‘peace industry’ is not confined to the UN or UN peacekeeping but is made up of other expats, NGO and INGO workers who knowingly and unknowingly exploit local populations and disrupt sustainability. They will not be discussed in any detail due to the nature and length of this paper.

11 ‘Cartesian’ in this context refers to the compartmentalized left-hemispheric thinking and dualistic worldview that creates and reinforces hierarchies—in this case, the help and the helped, the North and the South.
from the harsh realities on the ground. This can result in women and children’s bodies and sometimes those of boys and other men, becoming objectified as the ‘subordinate other’, which serve as sites of exotic escape from reality. Relating to the understanding of militarized masculinities and the argued ‘need for sexual release’ is a common rationale for the social acceptability of prostitution rings around military bases and peacekeeping units across a vastness of space and time in our global history (Baaz, 2009). When harmful and exploitative culture gets framed as part of the ‘needs’ of peacekeepers, the results are deeply concerning and impunity is witnessed in how it becomes socially acceptable to engage in sexual acts without the recognition of power imbalances.

**Can we restore the honour of blue helmets? Rethinking peacekeeping**

The advantages of peacekeeping are widely discussed and accepted as positive, yet we need to look closer and confront the uncomfortable reality behind the light blue system of saviors. UN peacekeeping missions are a grave contradiction to promoting peace where the peace builders themselves are met with impunity for their exploitative actions (Ladley, 2005). We need to begin with exposing sexual violence and exploitation in UN peacekeeping. But, as I have argued, we must also reveal the wider social system that supports perpetrators in their impunity through racism and sexism—upholding a culture of ‘boys will be boys’, and a ‘we vs. they’ view of who the perpetrators of violence are, within missions. The number of peacekeepers punished for their acts during missions in the DRC and elsewhere remains inconsequential (Higate, 2007). Without taking away from individual responsibility and choice with respect to these harmful actions, we must frame perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict as ordinary people and look at the issue through an inclusive and intersectional lens in order to reveal the rest of the iceberg that although massive, remains largely hidden from sight in standard analyses.

Given that peacekeeping missions are a microcosm of the larger UN system, which is patriarchal and neo-colonial in nature, we need to work both specifically and broadly to confront the shortcomings of peacekeeping. The reality stands that nothing had been done to address sexual violence and exploitation to the extent that the accumulation of events in the DRC and around the world has become a scandal. Only at this shocking status has the UN made an effort to confront the issues at hand, but still progress lags. Further, the power is not only in the hands of the UN but of nation states where countries don’t want the allegations to come out of fear of national shame if peacekeepers are exposed (Fleshman, 2005). The UN has also failed to implement harsh sanctions such as barring participation of countries from peacekeeping if there are abuses, as the institution relies on the numbers of peacekeepers for its operations (Fleshsman, 2005). Fingers are being pointed back and forth, yet who will take ownership and take a stance in ending the impunity that allows sexual violence to ensue?

In looking at violence in conflict from an intersectional approach, which incorporates a strong structural analysis, Cyanne Loyle suggests that, “determining the motivations and conditions for participation in mass violence is essential for establishing patterns of prevention. Only by understanding the factors that facilitate participation will the academic and policy communities be able to identify potential perpetrators” (2012). We need to confront the pervasiveness of the peace industry’s myths and challenge those who govern and hold power, while also recognizing that we are complicit in these actions through our inaction. As individuals we can play a role
through raising media attention and fostering a public concern, as well as by putting pressure on our own governments who supply peacekeepers. We have the right to demand accountability and transparency. By critically rethinking the peace industry and looking at individual abuse cases as having wider implications, we can re-envision a more equitable and sustainable idea of what it means to keep and promote peace.

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Facilitators of Mathematics Education and Peacemakers: What Can We Learn from One Another to Support Our Goals?

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Facilitators of Mathematics Education and Peacemakers: What Can We Learn from One Another to Support Our Goals?

Abstract

The classroom as a microcosm of the world is reflecting the real life experience of peacemakers globally. Through education, people may be taught about tolerance, peace making, and conflict resolution, and they may be urged to incorporate these values and activities into one’s everyday life. However, that requires attitude and behavior changes, which is a difficult process and which takes time. In reform-mathematics classrooms, many of the elements of peace-making and conflict resolution are utilized when students--in a community of learners--investigate problem-solving tasks and are then called upon to participate in mathematical arguments, that is to discuss and justify their solutions and to analyze the ideas of others in a collaborative manner. Thus, mathematics educators and peacemakers should ask, “What ideals are shared by those who are engaged in mathematics education and those who are engaged in conflict resolution, and what might we learn from one another that will support our independent and mutual goals?

Keywords: mathematics education, peacemakers, conflict resolution, social responsibility.

Introduction

Developing a culture of peace requires committed efforts by educators, researchers and other members of society. Through education, people may be taught about tolerance, peace making,
and conflict resolution, and they may be urged to incorporate these values and activities into one’s everyday life. However, that requires attitude and behavior changes, which is a difficult process and which takes time. Education may provide people with some information, but to truly “learn” the lessons, it is essential that learners have appropriate opportunities to “live” the lessons, and to apply the principles and values.

In a reform-mathematics classroom, many of the elements of peace-making and conflict resolution are utilized when students—in a community of learners—investigate problem-solving tasks and are then called upon to participate in mathematical arguments, that is to discuss and justify their solutions and to analyze the ideas of others in a collaborative manner. Thus, mathematics educators and peacemakers should ask, “What ideals are shared by those who are engaged in mathematics education and those who are engaged in conflict resolution, and what might we learn from one another that will support our independent and mutual goals?”

**Intelligence, math education, and ‘whole of community’ peace and conflict prevention**

‘Whole of Community’ Conflict Prevention and peacemaking is a cutting edge approach to conflict resolution that suggests the key to peace, from communities to international conflicts, is a systematic and dedicated approach to have all parties, no matter how marginalized, included in efforts to create positive change in communities. This ensures the prevention of spoilers and increases the energy around positive change and coexistence. This also has important implications for examining the strengths and limits of the way in which we deliver math education in classrooms across the country. The classroom is a mini-community with enormously different capacities that seem especially apparent when it comes to the challenges of math and the development and capacities of the human brain. It would suggest that ‘Whole of Community’ approaches to math education would specifically examine new methods of collaborative learning that not only prevent the ‘balkanization’ of classrooms into radically different levels of accomplishments, but also actually enhance the entire communal experience of learning and growth in intellectual capacity. Finally, the roots of violence and conflict are associated by at least some approaches to conflict analysis and resolution on classical frustration/aggression hypothesis in psychology (Whitley & Kite, 2010). This too has ramifications for ‘whole of community’ math education, in that the classroom, as a microcosm of local and global community, can become an avenue to neutralize and transform classic forms of learning frustration and aggression that create havoc in many classroom environments.

**The skills of visioning: A priority for math education and conflict resolution**

The capacity to imagine worlds unlike our own is a fundamental part of the history of human creativity. It is fundamental to the history of literature, philosophy, religion, and mathematics. It is also the basis, according to Elise Boulding, (Morrison, 2005) and many others in the field of positive peace building, for truly transformative approaches to conflict resolution. The most vexing problem of intractable conflict, cycles and spirals of human violence, is that those embroiled in such spirals, from family members all the way to politicians and mad crowds, seem unable to escape from fixations on the most immediate set of past injuries. This is what psychologists also refer to as narcissism and tunnel vision. But visioning is the opposite capacity that must be induced and cultivated. It is a natural skill for some people, but for many it is a skill
only acquired with great work and practice. Visioning, imagining alternatives, is a central feature of math education, but it can become a basis for a parallel process of math education and peace education.

From math to reality and back: The challenge of teaching real world complexity and ideal models for both math education and conflict analysis

In *Relativity: The Special and General Theory* (Einstein, 1924), Albert Einstein raised the challenge of the difference between the ‘truth’ claims of Euclidean geometry based on its own set of ideal axioms versus what the absolute truth may be about experience in the universe. He argues that the ‘truth’ referred to is a truth “with rule and compasses” (p.16), not a complete understanding of experience. Einstein has articulated what in philosophy is the fundamental problem of the coherence theory of truth, where things are true in that they adhere to a constructed system of assumptions, versus the correspondence theory of truth in which truth is measured by a correspondence with observable reality, whatever that may be and however difficult it may be to discover what that is. These dichotomies on ‘truth’ have profound implications for math education as well as conflict resolution education. A basic problem with all interventions into human conflicts is that they consistently are hampered by constructed “Platonic” realities in academia that have little to do with the complexities of conflict situations that include infinite variables and actors. The same tension that math and physics faces with the oversimplification of scenarios, the limits of variables, in order to construct any theory, versus the mistakes of those theories when they do not account for unanticipated variables or complexities, also afflicts conflict interventions. Both fields are challenged to build theory on limited variables but to at the same time be ‘radically humble’ before the empirical reality of complexity, of the raw data of the observable universe. It is only in this tension that human inquiry and human actions can be truly effective.

Violent math, Gandhian arithmetic, social responsibility and math

Math is generally thought of as one of the most abstract fields of human inquiry, but this is not true. Its effects on the real world are dramatic and extensive. The entire earth has been utterly transformed by the power of math to generate unprecedented evolutionary and atmospheric changes of the planet, none of which would have occurred without the advanced mathematics of the last few hundred years. Math is responsible for the most life giving and nurturing developments on the planet, in terms of medicine and public health that has given rise to unprecedented child survival rates and life spans. Yet, math is also responsible for the most intricate forms of mass murder that have ever been attained in human history. The age of nuclear genocide, even ominicide, would not have been possible without calculus. Should this matter to math education? Is there such a thing as a socially responsible math career, for example, or is this inconceivable given the infinite capacity of math to be applied to almost any science and engineering project? Should this variability of application be included in math education examples? How will our judgment of this be affected by the facts of history and the consequences of human actions? If, for example, we were in a post nuclear holocaust world, recovering and surviving, would our attitude to the responsible use of math be different than it is now? It is difficult to see any escape from such values questions in the study of literature or philosophy, but why do we exclude such questions from math and science educational choices?
Has there been a history since Pythagoras of mathematicians reflecting on these questions, and can this form the basis of a curriculum on math and human life?

**Conclusions**

Human beings thrive when their learning is guided carefully by skills of peer collaboration and coordination. This is true in both the work of peacemaking and also in the mathematics classroom. The classroom as a microcosm of the world is reflecting the real life experience of peacemakers globally. When learning and experimentation in peacemaking is fragmented and competitive there is a fraction of the learning and effectiveness by contrast to engaged learning with social networks of people with shared practices who synergistically and collaboratively accelerate learning from experience and exchange of useful skills. We have the capacity to learn much faster as human beings when we collaborate and support each other’s efforts. Part of the challenge is how to maximize entrepreneurial creativity of individuals, while at the same time allowing for social networks that generate a common pool of new knowledge based on experience and experimentation. This is as true of cutting edge conflict resolution methods as it is of problem solving and learning in the classroom. Collaboration and coordination are keys to math education—and to world peace.

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A Theoretical Approach on Why and How to “Unfuck” the World in Europe and North America

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A THEORETICAL APPROACH ON WHY AND HOW TO “UNFUCK” THE WORLD IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

Abstract

From 2011 onwards, activism by and around the worldwide Occupy Wall Street movements in Europe and Northern America was confronted with criticism that it had never really raised any realistically achievable demands. In order to oppose this criticism and justify these movements, this article theoretically elaborates the condition of possibility of a claim which seemed crucial for them from the beginning on: Unfuck the World. Following the theory of Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben, the article assumes a structural pathology within any modern state. Given this diagnosis, the text describes how Occupy Wall Street and similar movements can actually be seen as a certain way to overcome this pathology.

Keywords: social justice, occupy, indignation, peacebuilding, modern state

Introduction

The activist claim to Unfuck the World has been present from the first gatherings of Occupy Wall Street in Manhattan and has spread from there to various areas all around the globe, mostly to cities in Europe and North America. However, the reason for its popularity is also a source of criticism: its generality. What does it mean at all to unfuck the World? What do these movements actually want?
“Unfuck The World to me means creating a positive attitude to go about tackling issues that make the world as fucked up as it is”, says a woman who is engaged within the movement and platform Unfuck the World. Another movement member: “Unfuck The World to me means to take a pledge to proactively spread love and awareness.” Or: “To change the world, attempt to clean up our mess and stop poisoning the planet so we can all live in a better environment.” (Unfuck the World, 2014) Worldwide activities from people who claim themselves members of the movement range from cleaning and greening community areas in Germany to supporting homeless people in the United States or awareness-raising against political and economic injustices through protest events. They all associate with the claim to unfuck the world. Besides the activism which associates itself directly with the slogan, it is also described as claim that describes the feelings of Occupy and its sister movements all around most adequately. However, as these movements grew weaker, critics blamed its lack of concrete demands to be responsible. As Bill Clinton said: “They need to be for something specific, and not just against something because if you’re just against something, someone else will fill the vacuum you create.” (Žižek, 2012: 83) That touches the crucial point: either the slogan Unfuck the World is so general that it seems to refer to nothing at all, or it is associated with single activities which could never live up to this goal of actually changing the world. Referring to the protests in New York, Greece and Spain, Slavoj Žižek says: “[T]he protesters went out onto the streets because they had had enough of a world in which you recycle your Coke cans, donate a couple of dollars to charity, or buy a Starbucks cappuccino so that 1 percent of the cost goes to the Third World is enough to make people feel good” (Žižek, 2012: 83). Still, the question about in which way to change the world remains and what kind of world is actually wanted? That leads us back to the question what to unfuck the world actually means.

The movement Unfuck the World describes the term “unfuck” as 1. to turn things around, 2. to spread positive energy, and 3. to do good. (Unfuck the World 2014b) Whereas 2 and 3 still are very vague, 1 at least contains an exact component: the turning-around of a certain state. Wiktionary describes “unfuck” as to correct or fix a mistake or problem13 (Unfuck 2014). So the term “unfuck” describes the opposite or solution of a certain state which is perceived or judged as unpleasant, negative, and a problem. Thus, to unfuck the world means to turn a state of the world which is perceived as negative into a positive one. Finally, that means that in order to describe what this positively reversed state of the world is, we have to find out what this negative state of the world is. Consequently, we assume the following: In order to be able to describe what to unfuck the world means, we actually have to find out why and how to unfuck – the condition of possibility. The definition of the latter shall serve as a fundament on which the general claim to unfuck the world can then be referred to. Finally, by describing the condition of possibility of the claim it shall be justified in its generality. In doing so, the belief that Occupy failed because it did not raise any demands shall be neglected by describing in which way Occupy indeed presents a solution to a certain problem.

A Source of Indignation

12 Washington Post journalist Anne Applebaum paradigmatically reflects main concerns towards the protests and public occupations in the United States and Europe. (Applebaum, 2011)
13 As second meaning Wiktionary lists refers to the act of copulation which shall not be relevant in this context.
If we seek a strong theoretic fundament for the rather general claim to *Unfuck the World*, we have to start the argumentation by identifying an undisputable source of indignation which is difficult to neglect. A phenomenon which is at the same time general as well as a potential source of indignation is a significant amount of everyday-violence which is being committed by state actors in any modern state: Torture and death of deportees in Austria, ill-treatment of asylum seekers in Germany, police violence against Roma in France and Italy, Israel’s blockade of the Gaza Strip\(^{14}\) including vital nutrition goods for several months and Israel’s repressive occupation methods in the Palestinian West Bank, dead refugees at EU’s outer borders in Greece and Italy at a daily rate, any kind of discrimination of indigenous people in Northern America and Australia or the American horror stories of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay:

\[T]\he two Carabinieri quickly became aggressive after the families asked to remain until they had finished eating. Family members describe being beaten, punched, kicked, and insulted. Cristian Hudorovich, who is 37 years old, said one of the officers grabbed his phone while he was trying to call the police to report the violence, smashed it on the ground, and punched him in the face. Fifteen-year-old Michele Campos said in his police complaint that Carabinieri officers at the Bussolengo barracks beat him with a baton. Both he and his 17-year-old brother Giorgio Campos said in their complaints that they were held in an underground cell, where their heads were repeatedly dunked in freezing water. The third brother, 20-year-old Paolo Campos, gave a detailed description in his complaint of a beating from two officers he claims kicked and punched him at the barracks. One of them, according to the complaint, threatened Paolo against talking about what had happened upon his release. (Everyday Intolerance 2012: 51-52)

*Police violence against Roma in Italy*

No one here can be very happy. You don't know the next day ahead of you. Because if it is a place like prison, where you have been sentenced to one year, two years, you know by the end of two years you will come out. But here you don't have any hope .. of maybe tomorrow is going to be like this/you cannot think what is going to happen here the next day because you don't know how they operate their system. So that is one of the thing that give someone depression, you continue to think .. and anytime, even when the police open your door you .. you are afraid because you don't know what they are going to tell you … [sic!] (Schwarz, 2000: 13)

*35 year-old deportee in detention in Berlin*

The policeman next to me said in perfect English: ‘Today your end is near […]. We have orders to kill you”. He asked: „Do you know Hitler’. I negated […]. He pulled the rope together and said: „Hitler killed 6 million Jews, you are 6 million and one. You will see the fate of other people like you.” He dragged me out of the car by the rope and said: ‘Now is the action!’ […]. All three policemen attacked me with fists and hit me with their feet. As I was lying on the floor, the policemen continued kicking me. The [other] policeman dragged me up and said: ‘Say your last prayer and don’t turn around!’ […] They put me on the floor, facing the car. The driver of the car engaged in reverse towards

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\(^{14}\) Israel including the West Bank and Gaza can be treated as one single state despite some little parts of Palestinian autonomy due to the Oslo Accords. Not only are the West Bank and Gaza occupied territories by international law, but also by the simple evidence of Israel’s military presence all around Gaza as well as within the West Bank.
me and struck me in my upper back and my neck, so that I fell forward. (Vernehmungsprotokoll zu den Misshandlungsvorwürfen, 2006)\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{Gambian deportee Bakari J. in Austria}

But violence is not exclusively physical repression, but also repression of any kind. The Norwegian social theorist Johan Galtung introduced the term of “structural violence” in order to oppose one-dimensional interpretations of violence being just physical repression. Rather, Galtung wanted violence to be understood as being present “when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations”. (Galtung, 1969: 168) Thus, we can speak of violence for example in cases of any kind of discrimination. In the 1990s for example, the child death rate of indigenous people in the USA was twice as high as with non-indigenous people. Furthermore, 75 percent of the inhabitants in reservats were addicted to alcohol. The delinquency rate of indigenous Americans is significantly higher than with other American citizens. (Jäggi, 1993: 194-200) Furthermore, socioeconomic discriminations can indeed have far reaching effects for a very wide range of people if it comes to austerity measures in the events of financial and economic crises for example: it is not wealthy people who feel such a crisis as existential constraint. The feeling of indignation following cuts in social spending for reasons the majority of society felt irresponsible for was a crucial factor for the formation of the \textit{Occupy Wall Street} movement in New York as well as the protests in Spain, Greece, and other EU countries.

However, we still think and speak of the modern state as the ideal concept of organizing a community of people institutionally. If one takes the daily reality of violence and perceived feeling of injustice seriously, this ideal of our current concept of political community is difficult to understand and poses a certain riddle. This not being enough, institutions and people representing modern states are awarded prices for outstanding morality: in 2011 US president Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in 2012 the European Union as a whole was laureate. ‘There are no riddles’, the German intellectual Jan Philipp Reemtsma states, there are just man-made mystifications. This is the case when we project our idea into the reality, which then stares back in a puzzled way. ‘Not the catastrophe is mysterious, but its integrability. We mystify the catastrophe, in order not to have to bear normality as permanent irritation.’ (Reemtsma, 2008: 22)\textsuperscript{16}

So what if what from to time to time is perceived as a violent exception from a peaceful normality actually is normality? What if these acts of violence are crucially linked with the foundations of our political community? Walter Benjamin writes: ‘The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘state of emergency’ in which we live is the rule. We must arrive at a concept of history that corresponds to this. [...] The astonishment that the things that we see, are still ‘possible in the twentieth century is not philosophical. It is not at beginning of knowledge, unless the effect that the idea of history from which it is derived, is not to keep.’ (Benjamin, 1971b: 84) In any case, there is a certain ambivalence concerning modern states: one the one hand, the modern state is not only related to high moral ideals, but also claims to exercise power with a

\textsuperscript{15} Translation from German into English by the author.

\textsuperscript{16} Translation from German into English by the author.
high amount of legal legitimacy\textsuperscript{17}; on the other hand, these frequent acts and situations of state related violence not only contrasts this moral ideal, but also contradicts the legal fundament of legitimate exercise of power: all these acts mentioned acts and situations contradict fundamental human rights which were not only adopted by – for example – most European nations like Austria, Germany or Italy, but are also legally binding for EU member states through the \textit{Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union}. However, the claim for legal legitimacy remains intact – also the ambivalence remains intact.

If the claim to \textit{Unfuck the World} is to be theoretically elaborated, the argumentation has to start at the ambivalence it provokes. In order to solve this riddle, this article will at first have to set some bench marks when a political community shall be called a modern state.

**What is a Modern State?**

Historically paradigmatic became a dispute in French arts, which is called the \textit{Querelle des Anciennes et des Modernes}. The \textit{Anciennes} argued in favor of the old classic authorities, which a society had to imitate and follow as well as possible, whereas the \textit{Modernes} pointed out the very own character and worth of their epoch – it can be understood by itself. Thus, the world can indeed be described in its own value by penetrating it with human rationality. (Piepmeier, 1984: 54) Thus, modernity begins to understand itself. Man grasps the world with its rationality and smashes the old fundaments of normativity. Anything valid has to persist in the face of rationality. (Baumann, 2005: 16-17) As rationality is intersubjective and principally comprehensible for every human being, modernity’s rationality constitutes reality through rational recognition of the world at all. (Welsch, 2002: 46-77; Nietzsche, 2000; Foucault, 1974)

Consequently, a modern state is the type of institutionally organized community, which lies on a rational fundament and its actions can therefore be explained rationally. Being based on a rational fundament, its existence does not depend on single persons or groups. Its processes do not follow individual despotism, but rational principles. It is in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} century, when the modern state’s institutions are being fully penetrated by a legal framework. Due to the monopolization of state power in the centuries of absolutism, this legal framework serves as a homogenous fundament for state actions on the entire state territory. Thus, every individual on the territory where legal framework is enacted finds itself in the very same relation than any other individual – everyone is a citizen. From then on a single framework as reference and base for a state’s functioning and actions overrules local reigns and regulations. This single framework is being enacted by the sovereign of the state through the monopoly of state power. Whereas before the sovereign ruled in person as he incorporated sovereignty through some kind of source of legitimation, the sovereign is becoming a role independent from personal affiliations. The state’s gears are the legalistically educated civil servants, its agents are politicians in power, judiciary, police and military. Although the state acts through agents, it is the intersubjective legal order which carries the state as autonomous subject. The individuals involved state’s processes are only actors of the state who carry out functions. That is why the state’s existence does not crucially lie on individuals, as the state’s fundament is independent from individuals. The modern state is transpersonal – its existential base transcends individuals

\textsuperscript{17} Legitimacy is understood according to Max Weber as “belief in legitimacy”: Political legitimacy is the belief of people that a specific sort of political domination, which is enacted upon them, is legitimate. (Weber 1978.: 212)
and groups. And that is the crucial characteristic of the modern state. (Jellinek, 1976: 58, 325-326; Kunisch, 1999: 53-60; Bloch, 1982: 180-257)

Solving the Modern State’s Ambivalence – the Inner and the Outer Sphere of Law

Yet still, the riddle cannot be solved: acts of state violence like those stated above do not seem to correspond with our characterization of a modern state. These acts of violence contradict the legal, rational fundament of a modern state it bases its transpersonality on. However, there might be another stratum, where the state’s transpersonality lies on.

In his *Critique of Violence* Walter Benjamin states, that it is violence which originally creates any ethical framework as a primordial reference for right and justice. Thus, it is actually violence which ensouls the orders of right and justice. (Benjamin, 1971a: 29-47) Also Carl Schmitt argues that originally power is not based on abstract principles of right and justice but on pure power. What originally constitutes power is the decision on the state of exception. Schmitt argues that the core and foundation of power has to transcend law as it also has to persist beyond the status of enacted law. The pure decision on the removal of the legal order is pure manifestation of power beyond any framework as well as absolute as it depends on nothing but itself. (Schmitt 2009: 13-21) If we follow Max Weber’s definition of power as any chance to enforce one’s own will even against opposition, than power as primordial event of the constitution of power is violence: this manifestation of power overrides any coercion and sets up its own constraints. (Weber 2006: 62) That is why Walter Benjamin names the type of violence constituting primordial order mythical violence. It is power for the purpose of power. Like misfortune comes upon the hero in the Greek mythos faithfully, mythical violence comes over individuals and creates and orders. Consequently, any rationalisation of order is secondary as it has constituted itself upon an act of violence which Benjamin describes as mythical violence. There are no such things as breaches of ethical regulations and principles on this basic stratum: guilt and delinquency come fatefully upon the individuals like the catastrophe comes upon the hero in the mythos. (Benjamin 1971a: 58)

Thus, it is the act of violence which originally creates and enacts rational and intersubjective order. So the modern state’s transpersonality is based on violence. Giorgio Agamben describes this matter in a more precise way than Benjamin and Schmitt do. Law itself has no being: Law always applies to life. That includes a twofold thesis: on the one hand, to even exist at all beyond the written letter, law needs to be incorporated by the individuals it is enacted upon. That means that law needs life as a bearer or fundament to exist at all. Yet, law also needs life in order to be enacted and validated. Agamben states that the letter of law is ensouled, not by the decision on the state of exception, like Schmitt argues, but through the sovereign exception of people from the legal order. That is because law needs a space beyond itself as reference. This place beyond the space of law is being constituted by the exception of people from the legal order. However, this space is not just beyond the sphere of law, it is banned from law: it is bound to the sovereign through its decision to abandon it. That means that the sovereign exercises power upon the banned life by maintaining the status of abandonment. So law is not just absent: law is present through its status of exception. The paradigm of originally banned life is the *homo sacer*: it is disposed to the sovereign to an absolute extend through its abandonment from the sphere of profane as well as divine law. (Agamben, 2002: 15-39, 92-112)
By enacting the legal order through the exception of individuals from it, the sovereign constitutes two spheres: the inner sphere of enacted law as well as the outer sphere of excepted law. The sphere of enacted law depends on the abandonment of people from the sphere of enacted law, which constitutes the sphere of excepted law. In the sphere of enacted law the sovereign is bound by the legal order: It acts with legal legitimation. In the sphere of excepted law the sovereign is not constrained by any order or principle: It acts beyond any type of legitimation – the sovereign acts a-legal. Law is valid, yet not enacted and does not prescribe anything, it is pure potential, as Agamben puts it. Whereas in the inner sphere of enacted law any individual in guaranteed certain fundamental rights through and vis-à-vis the sovereign – the individual is citizen –, in the outer sphere of excepted law nothing stands between the individual and the sovereign’s pure power – the individual is bare life. So individual as bare life finds itself helpless at the pure power’s mercy. (Agamben, 2002: 60-66)

Applying the characteristics of a boundary according to mathematical topology we could say that the sphere of excepted law is a state boundary. A boundary of an open set does not include any element of the set: it is disjunctive. However, the boundary still belongs to the set as its boundary. Given a circle, its boundary would be its circumference. (Schubert, 1971: 15-16; Preuß, 1975: 32) Thus, a state boundary’s elements do not belong to the sphere of the state’s legal order itself – they are excluded. Yet, due to their exclusion they are connected to the state and its legal order through their status of being excluded. So neither do they belong to the supranational sphere, as they are connected to the state and in its sphere of sovereignty, nor do they belong to the state’s legal order: The inhabitants of the state boundary are stuck beyond the sphere of supranational institutions and the legal order of a state: the inhabitants of the state boundaries are being kept beyond the state’s legal order, yet in order to maintain its sphere of enacted law as the sovereign needs the state boundary as reference point for maintaining the legal order.

Consequently, the citizens’ everyday-sphere rests in its existence on the state boundary and its inhabitants – the homines sacri. Normality thus rests on violent exceptions which constitute actual normality. Citizens and abandoned homines sacri live side by side, yet not together: the people in detention camps live next to German, Austrian or Italian citizens and their fundamental rights; the Israeli citizens live next to the Palestinians who have to make their way through the Israeli checkpoints on a daily basis.

**State Boundaries as Vague Sources of Indignation**

So whereas the citizens of the modern state’s inner sphere of law can uphold the emphatic notion of a modern state as a manifestation of high moral ideals and principles due to their being within the sphere of enacted law, catastrophes and violence take place just beside it inside the state boundary. The emphatic image of modern state may be blurred from time to time by eruptions from the state boundaries, yet it will always prevail in its ideal as it refers to the sphere of enacted law which is being maintained by sphere of excepted law which is the state boundary. Thus, this state boundary-driven pathology can be ignored by the majority of people living in modern states, as they are not directly affected by daily state violence.
However, the state boundary serves as source of all sorts of social injustices: from social, political, and legal discrimination to severe physical mistreatment and death. Consequently, state boundaries can indeed be identified as a general root cause for unpleasantness that can serve as the condition of possibility to turn the situation upside down and make the world a pleasant one – to *Unfuck the World*.

What is to be done now in order overcome the treatment of everyday’s eruptions of state violence as exceptions again and again? What is to be done to strip the root cause of social injustices from its veil of vagueness?

**Breaking the Taboo**

A major obstacle for an appropriate interpretation of daily events is the symbolic constitution of our reality. With the ‘end of the grand narratives’, as Jean-François Lyotard puts it, there is no definitive interpretation of the world anymore. (Lyotard, 1997) Friedrich Nietzsche’s ‘God is dead’ puts people in a certain state of interpretative uncertainty: What does it mean, when I consider an event or a situation as unjust? When is criticism justified? Do I understand the interconnections of a certain situation correctly at all in order to raise justified concerns?

This interpretative uncertainty prevents the perception of the crisis as a whole. Thus, we can still pretend to live in the best possible world with some problems, and we have to keep working on. After all, human reality confronts us with the power of self-evidence. Things are the way they are, not only because they are the way they are, but also because they work: language allows to communicate, science makes planes fly, states keep up order and economy makes – more or less – money.

French philosopher Michel Foucault explains how our thoughts, feelings and perceptions are shaped by the institutions and practices we created. He uses the term power to explain this normativity of human reality which veils the historic contingency of our world and its truth. In other words: The world forgets that we created it. Like Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno described in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with the words of Max Weber\(^\text{18}\), it was the disenchantment of the world, which enchanted the world at last. (Adorno&Horkheimer, 1991) Walter Benjamin writes: “The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘state of emergency' in which we live is the rule. We must arrive at a concept of history that corresponds to this.” (Benjamin, 1971b: 84) And instead of unease, indignation should be the answer to continuous violent eruptions of the modern state. Then we can go on to create the world we want to live in. Slavoj Žižek at Occupy Wall Street:

> We are not dreamers. We are the awakening from a dream that is turning into a nightmare. We are not destroying anything. We are only witnessing how the system is destroying itself. [O]ur basic message is ‘We are allowed to think about alternatives.’ If the taboo is broken, we do not live in the best possible world. (Žižek, 2011)

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\(^{18}\) Max Weber describes the process of rational penetration of the the world in order to understand and describe nature as disenchantment of the world (1964: 5-11).
Indignation Constitutes Political Truth – Occupy

It is collective indignation which became manifest in massive protests in Spain first, then Greece and also in the Occupy Wall Street movement. These manifestations seem to have the potential of interrupting routines and breaking taboos. The manifestations of indignation prove the feeling of injustice to be legitimate. The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City of Occupy Wall Street states: "We gather together in solidarity to express a feeling of mass injustice" (The Occupy Wall Street General Assembly, 2011a: 36). By doing so, this phenomenon unveils normality as something that can be criticized legitimately. In a first document of the New York City General Assembly, the core of the Occupy movement, it says: "[I]t is from these reclaimed grounds that we say to all Americans and to the world, Enough! How many crises does it take? We are the 99% and we have moved to reclaim our mortgaged future." (The Occupy Wall Street General Assembly, 2011b: 25) Like the massive protests in Spain and Greece the same year, critique towards the political rationality justifies itself due to its manifestation as spontaneous mass protest – manifestations of indignation. The act of collective indignation unveils truth directly and beyond any mediation by symbols and discourses.

It is what Walter Benjamin calls mythic violence, which comes upon the people when a certain order is implemented. It creates the ethical framework of right and justice and veils its origin of pure power which is bare violence. By doing so, it limits any reference of political action to the criteria of right and justice. This pathology is what we described with further support of the writings of Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben as being constituted by the state boundaries. Interpreting violent eruptions by state actors like the torture of deportees in Austria, the mistreatment of Palestinians at Israeli checkpoints or as unjust perceived distribution of economic debt in Greece as Spain as exception from a normality is to insist on this constituted framework which veils the actual cause of the pathology. Following Walter Benjamin we do not only have to acknowledge the impossibility of solving these problems with the means a modern state can provide, but also have to perceive this veiling as something which should arouse indignation. The destruction of the order of law thus becomes obligatory, says Walter Benjamin (1971a: 59)

Walter Benjamin describes the constitution of a kind of political truth as divine violence. Collective indignation breaks that veil, as we said. Walter Benjamin described divine violence as the phenomenon to break this everyday-routine in a moment of collective realization of political action’s actual meaning beyond the veiling framework of right and justice. ‘If mythic violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythic violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood.’ (Benjamin, 2002: 249-250) Benjamin mentions George Sorel’s general strike in order to explain that the general strike is not an intended action to achieve a just order by using pressure and therefore violence, as that would again lead to the same consequence as before, only in different forms. The general strike is the pure expression and manifestation of the workers’ righteousness. Thus, an order which intends something will always include a certain grade of violence as it will never exactly cohere with the others’ intentions, whereas an order which is the pure expression and manifestation of righteousness could never restrict any other human being in any possible way.
So according to Benjamin, even with the best intentions to correct and avoid injustices in political communities, all these attempts still are doomed to fail. He refers to Paul Klee’s painting *Angelus Novus*:

There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. It shows an angel who seems about to move away from something he stares at. His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how the angel of history must look. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before us, he sees on single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is this storm.

It is the belief that conventional ideas of progress and justice actually hinder the angel from restoring true justice. Only a Messianic event can stop this wind from blowing and allow the angel to fulfill its task. This Messianic event happens when divine violence comes upon a political community. Every conventional political act to change society towards any better state is always doomed to fail. Real change can only come from the outside of this conventional political logic. Referring to Benjamin’s concept of divine violence, Slavoj Žižek explains:

Couldn’t the entire history of humanity be seen as a growing normalization of injustice, entailing the nameless and faceless suffering of millions? Somewhere, in the sphere of the “divine”, perhaps these injustices are not forgotten. They are accumulated, the wrongs are registered, the tension grows more and more unbearable, till divine violence explodes in a retaliatory destructive rage. (Žižek, 2009: 152)

Events of collective indignation like those of the Occupy Wall Street movements can be interpreted as such manifestations of divine violence which break the pathologic dynamics of injustice and violence and is not doomed to reproduce it.

**Unfucking and Rebuilding the World**

Divine violence is not destructive as it does not follow any particularistic intentions. Divine violence manifests itself beyond any intention as pure manifestation of indignation – it does not want anything; it simply is an expression of indignation. A world originating from pure expression beyond particular intention has a maximum potential of inclusion: no one can be excluded in a world built beyond specific intentions emerging from nothing but the pure feeling of collective indignation about a current state. Thus, any attempt to specify the community with certain attributes will plant the seed of violence. Even the most abstract definition of citizenship will still struggle with that dilemma: someone’s belonging to a nation by choice still divides one from others’ not belonging to it yet being present within. It is Carl Schmitt who describes this normative core of a political community’s sovereignty as the political. The political is the essence of the distinction between friend and enemy. Thus, according to Schmitt for establishing sovereignty we need a certain homogeneity basing on a certain type of exclusion. (Schmitt, 2002:
20-37) We have argued in this paper that a modern state’s transpersonality is built on this negativity resulting in the exclusion of people from the sphere of law and citizens to the state boundary. By this event of collective indignation as expressed in various protests and social movements worldwide a core of a community is being constituted which has no tendency for exclusion at all. At the same time, this event of divine violence, as Benjamin describes it, constitutes political normativity which is able to serve as core of a just political community.

Indignation as the protests’ foundation is nurtured by a very basic concern: the world does not meet the expectations of those who live in it. In other words, and in its most general way: the world is fucked up. And as inhabitants of the world, it is our role to shape and build it according to our demands: to unfuck the world, like Occupy appeals. A better world can never be the realization of a specific concept or an ideology as it will never be the better world for everyone in that world. A better world simply is a world which is more the way we want it to be. Alain Badiou interprets the phenomenon of occupation as an event: "People, who are present in the world but absent from its meaning and decisions about its future, the non-existent of the world. We shall then say did a change of world is real When to non-existent of the world starts to exist in the same world with maximum intensity." (Badiou, 2012: 56)

*Occupy* is occupying the world in two ways: a symbolic and a political way. The political occupation means to actively shape the world and the political community, as Hannah Arendt writes. Yet, it’s more than just an option: This political engagement is the fulfilment of man’s disposition – thinking in Aristotle’s Greek tradition, Arendt sees man as a *zoon politikon*. Man’s fundamental freedom is the source and the goal of this collective action constituting the political in Arendt’s sense as every community’s core. Excluding people from this sphere is not only inhumane, yet also unwise regarding an efficient strategy of ruling a political community. Arendt states that any constraint hindering people to carry out their disposition of constituting the world decreases the sovereign’s power and its legitimacy. Any coercive system within a community opposes the political. Economy for example is such a coercive system as it follows its own rules which are not the same as the freedom of the political. (Arendt, 1998)

So coercion and violence decrease one’s power according to Arendt’s definition of power as ‘the human ability not just to act but to act in concert with other individuals’ (Arendt, 1970: 44; 36-56). Consequently, a political community is only legitimate if it is the way people want it to be. If people oppose certain aspects of a political community through manifestations of collective indignation, the lack of the community order’s legitimacy is obvious. This lack of legitimacy is only to be fixed by rebuilding the community in accordance with its inhabitants’ ideas and desires. Finally, reshaping and rebuilding the world in the most inclusive way means establishing a political order with the highest possible grade of legitimacy. It is most legitimate, because it is completely inclusive: the symbolic occupation of the world is being carried forward beyond particularistic political or capitalist logics and structures – exclusion is impossible.

Consequently, manifestations deriving from collective indignation like the *Occupy* movements serve as an example, in which way the pathology of the current model of modern state can be overcome. This element of the political as Carl Schmitt called the normative fundament of legitimacy does not have to lead to the creation of state boundaries in order to create transpersonality; the normative fundament of political communities can also be constituted by
what Walter Benjamin calls divine violence. That can lead to the creation of a political community with the highest possible grade of inclusion and legitimacy.

However, a relatively small crowd of some thousand people is no whole state with some million inhabitants. And in recent months, Occupy as well as similar movements in America and in Europe have lost a lot of their magnitude they had in 2011, but are still present to some extent. And still they lack of concrete demands apart from the intention to radically change the world. We have argued why it actually is the undefined manifestation of indignation which is capable of overcoming the source of indignation without accidently reproducing its root causes. That is why Žižek calls for patience:

The “urge to invent new forms of organization should simultaneously be kept at a distance. What should be resisted at this stage is any hasty translation of the energy of the protest into a set of concrete demands. The protests have created a vacuum – a vacuum in the field of hegemonic ideology, and time is needed to fill this space in a positive fashion.” (Žižek, 2012: 82)

Rather, the messianic energy has to be kept alive by prolonging the presence in public space which supports the notion of indignation being legitimate. The concrete further steps cannot yet be taken. However, the more concrete the steps to actually change the world, the more concrete our question about how to change the world has to be. According to our argumentation, recent protests surrounding the Occupy movements can at least be seen as an opening door to a way towards a world which is more desirable for everyone. Žižek names time as the necessary component in order for people to formulate their question in a more and more concrete way. “It is the people who have the answers, they just do not know the questions [yet] to which they have (or, rather, are) the answer.” (Žižek, 2012: 89) And as long as collective indignation remains present, there is still time left.

By describing state borders as sources of indignation in modern states the article tried to define a certain general condition of possibility for the general claim to Unfuck the World. As such, this condition of possibility non only justifies this claim as a general and still strong claim, but also Occupy Wall Street and its various sister movements as indeed having a valid demand. This leads to an idea about what a more desirable world for everyone could be in the first place. Finally, the concept of politically and symbolically occupying the world explains how this goal of building a more desirable political community can be approached at all.

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Teaching Peace With Young Adult Fantasies and Dystopias: Nine Themes For Educators

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Abstract

Given that young adult fantasy and dystopia novels are widely popular with youth both youth and adults, this paper offers suggestions for themes educators can draw from selected books in these genres in order to teach peace. The paper focuses on J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series, Suzanne Collins’ Hunger Games trilogy, the Divergent trilogy by Veronica Roth, and James Dashner’s Maze Runner trilogy, describing how each addresses interpersonal, institutional and structural violence, militarism, classism, sexism, and racism, as well as how they present community organizing and nonviolent forms of social change.

Keywords: young adult literature, dystopias, fantasies, peace education, militarism, social change

Introduction

Young adult fantasy and dystopian literature can be a powerful tool for teaching important concepts in peace, justice, and human rights. While these books clearly can be integrated into English or Language Arts classes, either as required or additional reading, just like the field of peace and conflict studies, these books transcend disciplinary boundaries. Because these genres are popular among young people, they can reach audiences that might not be engaged by traditional texts or tools. Further, because these books feature protagonists who are in the same
age range as are the readers, facing similar personal identity issues as well as broader institutional and structural challenges, they tend to resonate with youth. That being said, many of these books are also terrifically popular with adults as well.

This paper provides examples of how fantasy and dystopian young adult novels can be used to teach peace. Although not an exhaustive list of books in the genre, the novels referenced in this chapter represent those that are among the most popular with youth. All have also been adapted into films or are in the production process. Further, the themes identified in this paper represent only a small portion of what is possible, as these books address so many of the issues and controversies that peace educators seek to teach.

Importantly, the paper highlights how both what is and what is not presented in the books can be sources of important reflection, dialogue, and activities in a classroom. That is, while the selected novels tell important stories about peace, justice, human rights, and organizing for social change, it is important to note that they are weak on offering alternatives to violence and in modeling nonviolent conflict resolution. Further, while these books offer useful challenges to common stereotypes about good and evil and about social class, race, and gender, in some cases they also reinforce those same stereotypes. The impetus is on peace educators, then, to help students reflect on and discuss these stereotypes, why they are so pervasive, their damaging effects, and how they can be challenged.

Books discussed in this chapter include: The Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling, Veronica Roth’s Divergent trilogy, Suzanne Collins Hunger Games trilogy, and James Dashner’s Maze Runner series. The following section offers a brief description of each series.

**Descriptions of Novels**

J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series features seven fantasy novels about a boy, Harry Potter, who is a wizard with extraordinary powers. In the series, the wizarding world exists parallel to the “muggle” or non-wizarding world. Once Harry learns about his wizarding powers at age eleven, he is taken from the abusive care of his relatives and sent to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Throughout the stories, he and his friends at Hogwarts, along with Headmaster Albus Dumbledore and other supporters, fend off the evil advances of Lord Voldemort, an equally powerful wizard of the dark arts. Voldemort is seeking immortality and supreme control over the wizarding word and uses every form of manipulation and violence imaginable to obtain it.

Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* series centers on a highly structured society consisting of five groups or factions: Abnegation, Amity, Erudite, Candor and Dauntless. These factions allegedly consist of people with similar traits, beliefs, and jobs in society. Throughout the book, readers learn that the factions were started after some terrible war that leaders believe was due to selfishness, aggression, ignorance, cowardice, and duplicity. At age 12, young people take a test that determines in which of the five factions they belong. They may then choose to stay in the faction in which they were raised or become part of the faction revealed in their test, leaving behind their family and friends. Beatrice/Tris is one of the few whose test results are unclear—she is divergent. She elects to join the Dauntless, known for their bravery, and meets Four, formerly known as Tobias, who is also Dauntless (although it is later revealed that he, too, is Divergent). While seemingly a utopia, readers learn that all is not entirely well. Those who fail the initiation
into their faction, the factionless, are left to perform the jobs no one else in the society wants and suffer extreme poverty and discrimination. Government leaders utilize serums, tests, and simulations to control the minds of the citizenry. Further, the divergent are an anomaly and are considered dangerous. Leaders force the Divergent to undergo a series of emotionally and physically painful tests and simulations in order to assess why they are resistant to the mind control. At the end of the first novel, Tris and others are beginning to realize that they have been lied to and challenge the control executed by their leadership. In the second book, Insurgent, Tris and others participate in a rebellion intended to create a factionless society. Yet, as the final book Allegiant reveals, the leaders of the rebellion are not necessarily benevolent—they too are power-hungry and use manipulations, lies, intimidation and lies to get what they want.

Suzanne Collins was motivated to write the Hunger Games while watching TV. Collins found the media coverage of the Iraq war disturbing, given that her father was a Vietnam War veteran. She had also noted the increasing nexus between reality television programming and war coverage, and thus integrated this in her stories (Pharr & Clark, 2012). The Hunger Games takes place in Panem, a country that rose from the ashes of what was once North America. The book opens on the day of the Reaping, a ceremony in which a boy and a girl from each of Panem’s twelve districts is chosen in a brutal lottery to fight in the Hunger Games, a televised spectacle of horror in which only one winner can emerge (leaving the remaining 23 dead). The Mayor describes the disasters, including droughts, storms, fires, and the brutal war and subsequent scarcity that pre-dated Panem, and uses the Reaping as a way to scare citizens from ever dissenting. The protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, volunteers as tribute to replace her young sister in the Games. Katniss and her District 2 partner, Peeta Mellark, win the games, as they refuse to kill one another. This represents a major threat to the power of President Snow, and the people’s idolatry of Katniss begins to fuel an uprising that spreads across the districts in the second two books.

The Capitol keeps the remaining districts in control through surveillance, control, militarism and deprivation. While the Districts struggle to feed their citizens, the citizens of the opulent Capitol are rabid followers of fads and live with abundance and self-indulgence. In the second book, Catching Fire, President Snow resorts to increasing levels of violence to stave off the growing rebellion. The final book in the series, Mockingjay, focuses on the rebellion, which has been orchestrated by District 13, which had previously been described as nothing but rubble. At first Katniss admires the regimentation of District 13, which is seemingly in stark contrast to the excesses of the Capitol. She learns, however, that its leader, President Coin, is every bit as corrupt as is Snow and is no more hesitant to use fear, intimidation, lies and violence to obtain power. In the end, poised to kill Snow, Katniss decides that replacing one dictator with another is not what is needed and instead kills Coin. In the end, Katniss and Peeta are married with children and yet still struggling with the memories of the violence, killing, and control of which they were a part.

In Dashner’s Maze Runner trilogy, a set of boys wake up in a cement maze with no memories of how they got there. In “the Glade,” as they call it, the boys form a society, not un-similar to that depicted in Golding’s Lord of the Flies, with each taking on particular functions. They try to explore ways out, only to find that the area is guarded by horrifying creatures they call Grievers that will maim and kill any who try to escape. The boys have no idea what has happened to them
but know that someone is controlling the situation, as each week a box of supplies arrives. After the arrival of a girl, Teresa, they begin to learn increasingly more about the world outside of their compound and discover that they have been part of an elaborate experiment by a governing agency called “WICKED”—World in Catastrophe Killzone Experiment Department. WICKED has been instrumental in the segregation of a post-apocalyptic society in an attempt to cure the human race from a plague, “The Flare,” that killed much of the population. In the second book, *The Scorch Trials*, WICKED has adjusted the variables the boys must face now that they escaped the Glade. In the finale, *The Death Cure*, the boys must take the memories they have finally pieced together to challenge WICKED once and for all.

**Young Adult Fantasy and Dystopian Literature**

Young adult literature as a whole generally features several specific themes and concepts. First, protagonists are generally teenagers and are told from their point of view. Second, the protagonist(s) seeks to resolve some type of conflict, which is usually created by adults (either through their actions or their omissions). Third, this genre is marketed to teens, although not exclusively. Fourth, young adult literature often eschews “happily-ever-after” endings. Fifth, these books tend to feature coming-of-age issues, like relationships, sexuality, and drug use. Children’s and young adult literature can be an important tool for teaching otherwise abstract concepts, like genocide (Carger, 2007). Since traditional history texts are not often adequate for teaching peace and justice (Finley, 2003), fiction offers more detail and can thus provoke much more critical reflection and dialogue (Carger, 2007). Young adult literature prompts students to grapple with moral and ethical issues, thereby helping them develop their sense of social justice (Sambell, 2003; Wolk, 2009). Further, students learn “the value of diversity, the connectedness to humanity, and wisdom derived from historical memory” (Lea, 2006, p. 51). Scholars have recognized the importance of using literature to critique war and to promote peace (Wolk, 2009). According to many scholars, literary dystopias emerged in 20th century Western culture. The National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (2011) defines a dystopia as “a futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control.” Dystopian novels typically depict a world that is governed by fear and surveillance, with protagonists that generally struggle against this oppression (Hammer, 2010).

Braithwaite (2012) notes that the focus in dystopian children’s literature changed from nuclear holocaust (1960 – 1980) to pollution and greenhouse gases (1980 – 1990) to post-apocalyptic (1990 – 2000). As Young (2011) explains, “A new wave of dystopian fiction at this particular time shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone. It's the zeitgeist. Adults write books for teenagers. So anxious adults – worried about the planet, the degradation of civil society and the bitter inheritance we're leaving for the young – write dystopian books” (Young, 2011). Cart (2010) maintains that the trend in dystopian and apocalyptic literature for young adults is due to “our human folly that is to blame for the nightmarish future worlds these novels imagine” (p. 34). Reeve (2011) noted “The attraction of such stories for teenage readers is clear. Stuck in those awkward years between childhood and full adulthood, bridling against the authority of parents and high school teachers, they can draw a bleak satisfaction from imagining adult society reduced to smoking rubble. They are also, perhaps, becoming aware of the deep injustices in the wider world, which dystopian literature often reflects” (p. 35). Roth explained in an interview
that she sees her books (the *Divergent* trilogy), and dystopias in general, as an important way to explain the lives of teenagers who are beginning to realize the world is far from perfect and that it is adults, sometimes their own parents, who are responsible.

Miller (2010) argued that our over-protected teens crave dystopias because their lives lack adventure. Further, the near-constant supervision under which most of today’s teens live may be, even more than the Big Brother surveillance of the government, what is really at work in the dystopian novels. Teens seemingly deal with dystopias every day—-in their schools, communities, and homes. According to Parini (2011), high school “may even be more brutal these days, with an excess of testing and the watchfulness not only of parents and teachers but the big eyeball of the system itself, its vision intensified by video surveillance cameras, Facebook and the omnipresent Web, which tracks everyone down, puts every idiotic statement in the virtual concrete of electrons – forever.”

Fantasy stories, according to Pierce (1993), “instill in young people a sense that they can—and, in some cases, perhaps *should*—challenge the status quo when they see injustices in it.” Further, Yolen (1981) has maintained that young adults who read about the various cultures, languages, and peoples in fantasy literature are more inclined to accept the diversity of peoples in real life. Young adult literature tells stories about social issues but does not preach to readers, which resonates with teens (Sambell, 2003). These books are aimed at “empowering teenagers, especially girls, to speak up and act against injustice” (Bosch, 2012). As such, they can be an important resource for teaching about and for peace and justice. As Hintz (2002) noted, reading dystopian fiction is often the first opportunity a young person has to critically analyze social organization and institutions in a way that is safe, because it takes place in an imaginary world. Doll (2012) notes that young adult books “give kids the chance to experience difficult things on the page instead of in real life, both to prepare them for the possibility (or inevitability depending on subject matter) that those things will happen, or to help them empathize with those who’ve had such things occur.” Fantasies and dystopias, then, seem to be ideally suited for peace education. The following section provides descriptions of how peace educators can use the four book selected to teach nine key peace-related themes.

**Nine Themes for Peace Educators**

*Theme One: Violence and Injustice*

These books have much to say about violence and injustice, highlighting interpersonal, institutional, and structural forms.

Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, J.K Rowling’s characters grapple with numerous injustices. Harry himself experiences personal injustice, as he suffers abuse and neglect at the hands of the aunt, uncle and cousin with whom he lives. Harry feels all of his losses personally, and thus exemplifies the idea that “the personal is political” (Yandoli, 2012). In the *Divergent* trilogy, readers learn that while many view Tobias’ father as a community leader, he was terribly abusive to his wife and son, which forms the basis of Tobias’ fears.

The way that *WICKED* manipulates the boys, the way that it not only deprives them of knowledge but actually wipes out their memories, is a clear example of institutional violence in the *Maze Runner* series. Similarly, there are repeated examples of institutional violence in the
Harry Potter series, for instance, when Sirius Black is wrongly incarcerated and abused by guards at Azkaban Prison for twelve years.

In the Divergent trilogy, Roth demonstrates structural violence and injustice. The five factions have allegedly been created in order to establish a society in which conflict and violence cannot exist because their root causes—distrust, deceit, ignorance, cowardice and selfishness—have been weeded out. Yet at the same time, the series asks readers to grapple with who has really made the most just and ethical decisions, as each book reveals yet deeper layers of abuse of power, manipulation, and deception.

Peace educators can help students understand that abuse and neglect in homes, like that endured by Harry Potter and Tobias, is all too common in U.S. society. An estimated one-third of the world’s women will endure an abusive relationship during their lifetimes (UN Commission on the Status of Women 2000). One in ten children suffer from maltreatment, one in sixteen endure sexual abuse, and one-tenth witness abuse in the home. In 2012, 1,593 children died from child abuse (Child abuse facts, 2014). Clearly peace in the world is not possible when there is not peace in one’s relationship or home.

Students can also examine the reality of the types of institutional violence and injustices depicted in the books, such as government manipulation and experiments on marginalized people and the outrageously high rates of incarceration in the U.S. From the Tuskegee experiment, where 399 impoverished African American men suffering from syphilis were denied treatment for the sake of medical advancement (Landau, 2010), to infecting Guatemalan’s with syphilis (Stobbe, 2011) to the CIA’s MKULTRA mind control experiments during the Cold War, to injecting prisoners with Agent Orange (Wabash, 2012) and more, the U.S has a long and sordid history of experimentation and coercion not that dramatically different from what is depicted in Dashner’s books.

No country incarcerates a greater portion of their population than does the U.S (Wing, 2013). A recent study found that approximately 10,000 people each year are, like Sirius Black, wrongly incarcerated (10,000 innocent people convicted each year, study estimates, n.d). 87 people sentenced to death row had their criminal convictions dismissed in 2013 (Studies: Exonerations for Crimes Reaches High in 2013, 2014).

An important part of peace education is to help students see the interconnectedness of issues and forms of violence. Peace educators can use these books, then, to help students see the connections between interpersonal, institutional, and structural violence and injustice, as all are the result of power inequalities (Iadicola & Shupe, 2012).

Theme Two: Classism and Privilege

The Harry Potter series highlights the dangers of classism. The society is divided into wizards and muggles (non-wizards), and those who are born to muggle parents, like Hermoine Granger, continually face harassment, even being called “mudbloods.” The “pure bloods” represent themselves as defenders of the natural order, and like in U.S. society, the extremes some take to defend the status quo both are and result in violence. They also use divide and conquer tactics,
trying to convince others that mudbloods are a threat. Clearly this is a powerful commentary on both class and race.

The *Hunger Games* trilogy also addresses classism. In contrast to the deep poverty of the Districts, the Capitol, reeks with affluence and excess. Individuals eligible for the Reaping (and thus potential candidates to participate in the Hunger Games) can help provide for their families by submitting their names multiple times for the chance to fight in the Games. In exchange, they will receive a ‘tessera,’ equal to one year’s supply of grain and oil.

The Capitol’s favorite phrase, “May the odds be ever in your favor,” is, according to Finke (2013), indicative of the series’ critique of inequality and injustice. “The poor must rely on the luck of lottery to avoid the grisly battle of the Hunger Games, while the wealthy offer supportive slogans, peppy spokespersons, and luxury accommodations for those unfortunate youths awaiting their deaths. It’s all about controlling the narrative.”

Valdes (2013) comments that the popular dystopian novels echo the economic anxiety so many hold today. For instance, in the *Divergent* trilogy, Beatrice “Tris” braves the horrifying initiation into the Dauntless faction rather than being “cast into the streets” with the undesirable factionless.

Peace educators can use the series and films to generate discussion about inequality in the U.S. Given that, the U.S is the fourth worst country (out of 141) in terms of income inequality (Research Institute, 2013), as of December 2013, income inequality was at its worst since 1928 (DeSilver, 2013) and in 2009 CEOs made 185 times more than the average worker (Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, n.d.), students can be asked to consider how the U.S is increasingly like the societies depicted in these books. Rather than bad luck and poor choices, peace educators can help students see that, just like the poverty depicted in these books, poverty in the U.S is the result of policies and programs that benefit some at the expense of others.

Peace educators can also use these books to make visible the ways that the poor are treated. Are there names like “mudblood” that are used to demean or degrade the poor? Why are the poor often depicted as unkempt and dirty? How do those images help foreground public policy and violence? Does U.S. society also push the poor to the streets, like the factionless?

*Theme Three*: Governmental Oppression, Surveillance and Control

While it is clear that participants in the Games will be under constant surveillance, citizens of Panem only gradually come to realize that they, too, are always being watched, and the knowledge that nothing they do is private indeed shapes their actions. In the Hunger Games it is clear that the constant surveillance and routine threats of and actual violence by the Capitol create a generally tamed populace that is suspicious and distrustful of others. As Fentin (2012) explains, “Beyond surveilling the community through technological means, the most effective attempts to control the feelings and thoughts of the people employed by the state in these novels is the use of citizens themselves as enforcers of the law for their neighbors and friends” (p. 49). This distrust prohibits collective action. Protagonist Katniss Everdeen distrusts pretty much everyone, even Peeta and Haymitch, two of the people who are most on her side during the Games (Wezner, 2012).
As Fentin (2012) explains, “While denying citizens access to important information and generally controlling the flow of knowledge, the state in dystopian novels frequently relies on propaganda and the dissemination of lies that support stasis and control” (p. 45). In the *Divergent* trilogy, readers learn that various leaders have, over time, lied to the people, engaged injected them with painful (both physically and emotionally) serums and forced them to undergo torturous simulations, all as part of an experiment conducted by the Bureau of Genetic Welfare to correct previous wrongdoings of the US government and “purify” the population’s genetic make-up. The series thus features both overtly corrupt governmental leaders and those that appear to be more benevolent, yet instead of aiding the populace by curing the “genetic damage” that was inflicted when the faction system was created, they have further segregated and hindered the population by placing higher value on those with supposedly “pure” genetic codes and those who are “damaged.”

James Daschner’s *Maze Runner* trilogy shows the dangers of government control. Officials use ignorance, fear, and often violence as methods of controlling the people. Throughout the series, those people, like Thomas, who are immune to the plague pose significant importance to WICKED and are thus particularly targeted.

This is an important theme for students to grapple with, as the idea of “benevolent oppression” is commonplace in the U.S. That is, citizens are increasingly asked to accept certain forms of surveillance and control, in particular after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Government officials and pundits claim that widespread access to phone records (such as the PRISM program coordinated by the NSA), police infiltration of non-violent Muslim organizations and liberal political groups (Apuzzo & Goldman, 2012), and targeted surveillance of peaceful protesters will keep the nation safe. This is far from new, however, and these books can be a springboard to examine historical examples of government surveillance, such as the COINTELPRO scandal (Goodman & Moynihan, 2014). Peace educators can use these books, then to generate critical dialogue about the effectiveness, ethics, and costs and benefits of these measures that are purportedly about national security. For instance, it is hard to argue that it was good for international relations it was disclosed (by NSA contractor Edward Snowden) that PRISM included the illegal tapping the phones of international leaders like German Chancellor Angela Merkel (Ball, 2013). Avant (2005) and Cornelissen (2011) have noted the increased use of private or corporate actors as security providers, drawing concerns about what the ACLU has called the “surveillance industrial complex.” Further, these books can prompt discussion about the degree to which Americans give up their privacy for not just security but also for the convenience of easy consumption (Ritzer, 2005).

The *Harry Potter* series features a slightly different take on adult control of youth in its challenge to the authoritarian and repressive educational system that Dolores Umbridge brings to Hogwarts in *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix*. Umbridge is clearly most interested in obtaining power over others, and in particular, Harry Potter. Umbridge makes Harry write “I will not tell lies” repeatedly with a special quill that carves the writing into his arm instead of on parchment. A smiling Umbridge explains to Harry, “That’s right... because you know deep down that you deserve to be punished, don’t you Mr. Potter?” Umbridge represents the systemic violence perpetrated by schools when they control and demean students through corporal punishment and other dominator-style (Eisler, 2000) tactics, which are often supposed to be “for their own good.”
Peace educators, then, can help students identify these forms of violence in their own schools and, importantly, help them challenge systemic violence.

Theme Four: Militarism

Suzanne Collins clearly intended the *Hunger Games* trilogy to critique U.S militarism. For instance, President Snow uses military-style groups to observe and punish. Oxymoronically called “Peacekeepers,” these men and women are driven to this role not out of sadism but in exchange for forgiveness of their debts. “Those who refuse to serve or who otherwise threaten the nation, like former Peacekeeper Darius, are made into Avoxes—they are enslaved and their tongues are removed so as to render them voiceless and to serve as “grimm reminders in the Capitol of the penalty for breaches of security” (Clemente, 2012, p. 25).

Although most who participate in the Games are thoroughly unprepared, the “Careers” are trained from birth to compete. “They are taught to crave the honor and glory a Games victory portends, and are trained killing machines. This education parallels the upbringing of Spartan boys trained for war. The Careers have a higher success rate in the Games due to both training as well as perhaps a desensitization to bloodshed; they are psychologically better prepared to face the trauma and emotional aftermath that killing another human being entails” (McGunigal, 2012, p. 7).

Although initially it seems as though the more egalitarian District 13 is less militaristic, it “can be even more controlling than the Capitol” (Collins, 2010, p. 36). District 13’s leader, Alma Coin, is equally violent as is President Snow (Werzner, 2012).

“The computer codes on the wrists of the inhabitants of District 13, for instance, resemble the bar codes on commodities purchased in grocery stores today, making the people of the district seem often more like automatons than humans…Just as Snow dispatches adversaries with poisoned drinks, Coin works to have Mockingjay eliminated; she also brings the war to a pointlessly bloody conclusion by using Al-Qaeda-like terrorist tactics that not only kill Primrose Everdeen and other noncombatants but also add to the grievous wounds the Mockingjay sustains. Coin also wants to keep the Games going, using them, one assumes, to control her enemies, real and imaginary—just as Snow did” (Clemente, 2012, p. 27).

When President Coin suggests that the children of the Capitol should be force to fight in the Hunger Games, Katniss realizes that “Nothing has changed” (Collins, p. 432).

The *Divergent* trilogy both challenges and reinforces militarism. While the books critique mind control that leads to senseless killing (as in when the Dauntless are given a serum that forces them to kill other factions), they also show that the Dauntless themselves train in militaristic ways. In particular, the film adaptation of *Divergent* features military-like uniforms, weaponry, training and destruction. Similarly, WICKED operates with SWAT-like efficiency, and, later when the boys interact directly with its representatives, it is clear they will stop at nothing to quell the dissent.

The US is a militaristic society. Military spending accounts for 47 to 54 percent of domestic federal outlays each year (War Resisters League, 2013). We have more than 700 military bases and facilities around the world and a military larger than the next 15 countries combined
(Goodman, 2013). In 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. called the U.S. the “greatest purveyor of violence in the world.” The 2013 Global Peace Index, an assessment of the degree to which nations are peaceful on a 22 quantitative and qualitative measures, placed the U.S 99th out of 162 (Vision of Humanity, 2013). Key to this assessment was the nation’s military expenditures and deployments, access to guns and high rates of gun violence, and continually increasing incarceration rate.

Little has changed. Further, there is “…the deep conditioning of the society to valorize military cultures” (Feinman, 2000, p.11). In militaristic cultures, qualities like hierarchy, authority obedience, discipline, efficiency, pragmatism, rationality, competition and force are highly valued (Marullo, 1993). Bacevich (2005) explains that militarism results in the “tendency to see international problems as military problems and to discount the likelihood of finding a solution except through military means” (p. 2). We are taught that military responses are essential and that the militaristic qualities described above are superior to other such as empathy, acceptance, ambiguity, and nonviolence. Martin Luther King Jr. noted that it would be impossible to fix any other social problem when the US remains "a nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift" (Greenwald, 2013). Further, just like Suzanne Collins observed (Koenig, 2012), Giroux (2012) and others have noted that violence and punishment are often media spectacles. “The production of extreme violence in its various incarnations is now a show and source of profit for Hollywood moguls, mainstream news, popular culture and the entertainment industry and a major market for the defense industries” (Giroux, 2012). As Frankel (2012) explains, “Collins warns us that an obsession with bread and circuses can lead to a dark future of apathy and callousness regarding others’ suffering, something we already see in American citizens as they laugh at people’s misery on Fear Factor or Survivor” (p. 58).

Peace educators can use these books to facilitate dialogue about U.S. militarism, discussing the scope, extent, and forms it takes. Discussion can also address opportunity costs—that is, what is NOT being prioritized and funded when resources and monies are spent on military engagement and preparation. Further, students can become detectives of sorts, examining other forms of popular culture and other institutions (policing, for example) for the degree to which they have become militarized.

**Theme Five: Failed Institutions**

All of these books feature governments as failed institutions. They highlight the ways that politicians offer short-term measures so as to placate the masses, “thereby masking complex and enduring problems” (Clemente, 2012, p. 22). In the *Harry Potter* series, it is not just the Ministry of Magic that is inept at curtailing the violence of Voldemort but also the educational system, the healthcare system, and other institutions that are either inefficient, ineffective, or corrupt. The Ministry of Magic repeatedly fails to hold accountable those who commit horrific crimes while harshly punishing persons who are guilty of nothing. Trials are a sham, run by biased officials who seek to maintain the status quo. For instance, in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the Ministry is quick to believe that it was Hagrid who opened the chamber. He is afforded no presumption of innocence.

In the *Hunger Games*, *Divergent* and *Maze Runner* series, the authors criticize governmental leaders for caring more about their own agendas and power-trips than about the needs of the
people they are supposedly serving. Consistent with the literature on young adult dystopias, these novels make it clear that adults who create and run these institutions are deeply flawed. Peace educators can help students identify other failed or ineffective institutions in the U.S. For instance, even with the changes to healthcare colloquially described as “Obamacare,” 15.9 percent of the population still does not have health insurance (Levy, 2014). Politicians claiming to care about educating youth continue to decimate school budgets and hamstring the creativity of teachers and students with ever-more standardized testing. And, when schools are dubbed “failing” based on these test scores, rather than invest more resources, the teachers, parents and students are demonized and the school faces additional deprivation or even closure (Paton, 2014).

Theme Six: Gender Role Stereotypes
Many of these books feature female heroines. As Bosch (2012) notes, many of these books are aimed at “empowering teenagers, especially girls, to speak up and act against injustice.” Yet while they in some ways challenge gender stereotypes, in other ways they reify them. Female heroines “play the game,” calling on their “feminine wiles” when doing so is to their advantage. Feminists tend to be divided about the Potter series, with some seeing it as sexist and others maintaining that it is progressive (Yandoli, 2012. Critics contend that the series perpetuates gender stereotypes (Schoefler, 2000; Heilman, 2003; Dresang, 2002; Gallardo-C. & Smith, 2003). While Harry Potter is a sensitive, empathetic character and Hermoine Granger is smart and shows great leadership, both still conform to gender roles norms in other places. Harry is the protagonist who saves the day, while Hermoine is, like so many girls with leadership qualities, dubbed a bossy know-it-all and is disliked by many at Hogwarts.

Katniss Everdeen is a fierce protagonist who can hunt and who takes care of her family, yet simultaneously she plays the game of weak women in need of a man’s help to survive. She realizes that the supposed love affair with Peeta is good for both of them in terms of attracting sponsors who will help them make it through the games and, while she eventually comes to terms with her actual feelings for her partner from District 12, she is often cruel and inconsiderate to him, suggesting the age-old stereotype of the evil women who manipulates to get ahead.

Roth explained that she initially wrote Divergent from the perspective of Tobias, but after about 30 pages, found her own writing to be boring. Instead, she began using the perspective of Beatrice “Tris,” who, as like so many women, was struggling with the push toward selflessness, albeit in an extreme way because of her birth into the Abnegation faction. Roth explains that she intended to challenge stereotypical gender role expectations with Tris (Editor, 2013). Critics contend, however, that Tris spends a lot of time in the Divergent trilogy wondering about and wooing Four/Tobias. The film version emphasizes the relationship aspect of the story and spends an inordinate amount of time with cameras closely focused on actress Shailene Woodley’s, who plays Tris, face. In The Maze Runner, most of the characters are males who adhere to the stereotypical masculine posturing. Many distrust the only female character, Teresa, perhaps partly because she is the sole female but perhaps also in part due to stereotypes about females being conniving.
Peace educators can help students identify the many gender role stereotypes that still persist in U.S. society. Rather than biologically-prescribed, peace educators can help students see that gender is socially constructed and that popular culture is one of the most influential means of teaching boys and girls how they are “supposed to” behave. Further, peace educators can help students see the dangers in these stereotypes, from the increasing numbers of young people dieting, suffering from eating disorders, or undergoing dangerous surgeries due to unrealistic body images (Wolf, 2002) to the stifling of boys’ emotional development based on the “tough guise” (Katz & Earp, 2013). These stereotypes are closely tied to inequalities in wages and opportunities. For instance, a 2014 study found that women who earned 4.0 grade point averages in high school make less, on average, than do men who graduated with 2.5 GPAs (Berman, 2014). As of May 2014, women hold only 4.8 percent of Fortune 500 CEO positions (Women CEOs of the Fortune 1000, 2014).

Theme Seven: The Absence of Race
Although the race of the characters is not necessarily always described, the default, it seems, is almost exclusively white. Film adaptations of the stories to date have reinforced that view, with few of the characters having anything but light skin. In fact, when the producers of the Hunger Games cast a young black girl (Amandla Sternberg) as Rue, even though she was described in the book as having darker skin, some fans lit up Twitter with complaints (Rosen, 2012). Like popular films, these authors and directors are creating what Vera and Gordon (2003a, p.15) refer to as sincere fictions of the white self...deliberately constructed images of what it means to be white.” The “white self” is the “concept of white Americans proposed by white American moviemakers,” who present whites as morally and intellectually superior persons who are “powerful, brave, cordial, kind, firm, good-looking, generous [and] natural born leaders” (Vera & Gordon, 2003b; 1998).

Peace educators can help students see the lack of racial diversity of the characters in these books. Given that the U.S. Census Bureau reports that by the year 2050 minorities in the US will compose over half of the country’s population. The “Hispanic” population alone will increase by 188 percent from 2000 to 2050, at which time they will make up nearly a quarter of the total U.S. population (US Census, 2000), peace educators can help students assess why these books fail to reflect the very real demographic shifts. Educators can use this conversation as a springboard to discuss media images of specific groups, the danger of racial stereotypes, and the ways that racism is institutionalized in the U.S. For instance, literature has documented that Black, Latino, Asian, Middle Eastern and Indigenous persons are often presented in media as violent gang members, drug dealers, martial arts specialists, terrorists, and savages, respectively (Henderson, 2010; hooks, 1999; Lindsey, 2013). Lindsey (2013) notes that, “for marginalized communities, in particular, representation in mass media can both reify and challenge stereotypes of their respective communities” (p. 22).

Theme Eight: Organizing for Social Change
These books generally feature one primary heroic protagonist. While dystopias are supposedly about social change, Basu (2013) argues that they instead fail to offer a thoroughly new conceptualization of society and, as such, can be considered far more conservative. In particular, as Reeve (2011) noted, dystopias tend to reinforce the same sort of rugged individualism that results in oppressive societies in the first place.
However, these protagonists are typically supported by others, often other youth, who organize to challenge oppression and injustice. Although often slow to occur, these main characters eventually demonstrate the importance of collective organizing. For instance, it is clear that although Harry Potter is the eventual hero, he would not have been able to take on Voldemort and his supporters without the loyalty of his friends. A particularly good representation of collective organizing is Hermoine’s efforts to rally the students at Hogwarts to create Dumbledore’s Army. Further, a main theme of the series is that the power of love (Lily Potter’s love for her son, specifically) can guide, protect, and offer a challenge to evil. In the Divergent trilogy, Tris must rely not just on Tobias but even friends whom she has previously hurt (emotionally and physically) in order to challenge the leadership. Likewise, Thomas works with many of the other boys, some of whom who suffer tremendously, in order to find and battle WICKED.

Peace educators can use these examples to help students see the power of community organizing to make social change. Students can discuss why grassroots groups and organizations are often more effective than efforts made by governments or non-profit and non-governmental organizations. Some have argued that there is a glut of non-profits and NGOs, many of whom are seeking the same funding sources and, rather than work together to help those in need, compete with one another (Finley & Esposito, 2012).

**Theme Nine: Use of Nonviolent Tactics**

These novels show glimmers of civil disobedience, but otherwise do not present strong representations of nonviolent activism. Instead, they show that the most effective way to challenge evil and oppression is through fighting. As Heit (2011) explains,

> Sometimes we characterize acts of force, violence, and deception as evil, but frequently both good and evil characters will resort to these methods. Indeed, the use of force often seems necessary in order to defeat the forces of evil, and characters who attempt to negotiate peacefully with villains are frequently depicted as woefully naïve. And we find the hero almost invariably confronts the villain with the same sorts of deception and violence that the villain wields (pp. 16-17).

Although Harry Potter is clearly the “good” character in the series, he too uses lies, deception, threats, and a great deal of violence. So much so that he grapples with precisely how much he is like Tom Riddle, who became Voldemort. In the Hunger Games, Katniss betrays friends and attacks without provocation. Her entire demeanor is aggressive and decidedly not conciliatory. When Katniss learns about the rebellion in progress, she doesn’t suggest that they organize any of the hundreds of nonviolent direct action techniques like strikes, boycotts, marches and sit-ins that have been effective tools for making social change on both small and large scales. Likewise, in the Divergent trilogy, Tris turns quickly to deceit, manipulation and violence as a method of conflict resolution. All of these characters clearly live with guilt at the wreckage they are partly responsible for, leaving readers with the possible message that violence is difficult but necessary. Pavlik (2012) notes, “The trilogy portrays oppressive violence as a primary political tool. This is not, in itself, a new departure, for fantastic fiction is full of violent responses either by or toward perceived enemies. From The Lord of the Rings (1954-55) to the Harry Potter series (1997-2007), there is little arbitration or conciliation when dealing with enemies, but much combat and
battle” (p. 30). As Fentin (2012) explains, “there is no mechanism for citizens to vote, make choices, or even organize peacefully for change. Only resistance and outright rebellion present routes for citizens of Panem to change the structure” (p. 57).

Peace educators can help lead students in important discussions about how and why the protagonists use violence most frequently to solve their problems. Students can learn about Gene Sharp’s 198 methods of nonviolent action and can identify examples of them in the books, in their own lives, and in history (Sharp, 1973). Peace educators can introduce students to the many examples of nonviolent campaigns that have challenged dictators, stopped atrocities, and introduced more democratic forms of governance, such as those documented in the Global Nonviolent Action Database (available at http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/campaigns-not-movements). Further, dialogue can address the after-effects of violent responses, such as the guilt Harry, Katniss, Peeta, Tris and Thomas all feel about their violence. This can generate consideration of forgiveness, truth and reconciliation processes as well.

Conclusion

Peace education is “…the educational policy, planning, pedagogy, and practice that develops awareness, skills, and values toward peace” (Reardon, 1988). If the goal is to teach students positive peace, or the absence of all forms of structural violence and oppression such that people’s needs are met (Galtung, 1969), then young adult fantasies and dystopias such as those described here can be an important tool. They offer an innovative method to make seemingly invisible issues visible (Lin, Brantmeier, & Bruhn, 2008), of both informing and inspiring students (Finley, 2011). Fiction novels can help young people develop their social imaginations, which Greene (1995) defined as “the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, and in our schools” (p. 5). According to Wolk (2009) “Teaching for social imagination is helping students to question the world we have and envision a better world we could have. Dystopian novels offer unique opportunities to teach these habits of mind” (p. 669).

As noted in the Introduction, this chapter has by no means offered an exhaustive account of these genres or even of the selected books. For instance, there is a growing body of literature about using dystopian novels to teach environmental themes, as many of the novels in this genre focus on planetary destruction (Bosch, 2012; Hammer, 2010). It is my hope that this article helps educators see the power of fantasies and dystopias as a teaching tool that, when accompanied by critical reflection and dialogue, can enhance students’ knowledge and empower them to be agents of social change in their schools, communities, and in the world.

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INNER LIONS: DEFINITIONS OF PEACE IN BLACK WOMEN’S MEMOIRS. A STRENGTH-BASED MODEL FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Abstract

Through a close reading of memoirs by six Black women authors, “Inner Lions” connects peace studies to issues in public and mental health. Evans defines “womanist peace” as Black women’s willful quest for health and freedom. A framework for race and gender-centered definition of peace is created through six key concepts that address complex personal and public challenges facing Black women: body, mind, spirit (health) and social, economic, political (freedom). The author’s methodological process begins from an online database of 500 Africana women’s global narratives. Black women’s voices from around the world engage readers in dialogue about what it means to be peaceful, particularly from the standpoint of those historically and systematically attacked. Each of the six authors highlighted offer narratives that activate our imagination while providing a deeper understanding from which to develop effective health praxis, especially in the area of mental health.

Keywords: Africana narratives, womanist peace, intellectual history, mental health, praxis.
Introduction

This article provides critical cultural dialogue for peace studies scholars and identifies practical tools Black women can use to enhance peace in our lives.

“…when I first began doing family history research in the South, I began having a series of recurrent dreams about lions. I believe these lions are me, myself. Perhaps they are my deepest African self…. I have begun to make peace with my own inner lions. …In Buddhism, the lion’s roar is the mark of eloquence and power of the Buddha’s speech. …Every now and then, a lion must roar. It is part of her nature. If my life’s story is of some benefit to others, that will be a fine roar.

~ Jan Willis, Dreaming Me: Black, Baptist, and Buddhist.19

Black women define peace in poignant ways, particularly given the disproportionate level of violence visited upon our lives worldwide (United Nations, 2000).20 From a position as experiential experts on violence, Black women’s voices of how to define and establish peace should be given wider consideration in peace studies. Most formal academic training and publications in peace studies foreground macro-level, structural, institutional, or government definitions, mainly from the perspective of those who hold power or privilege. Even outstanding programs like Peace and Justice Studies at Wellesley College that offer compelling courses (such as “Feminist Interrogations of Peace Studies”) emphasize contributions of White women (i.e. Virginia Woolf, Betty Reardon, and Cynthia Enloe), to the exclusion of Black women or other women of color.21 Yet, even Betty Reardon acknowledged in her groundbreaking text, in Women and Peace: Feminist Visions of Global Security, that the intersection of race, gender, and colonialism complicate the concepts of “positive peace” and “human rights” (Reardon, 1993, pp. 76-77).

In this article, I explore ways that Black women’s intellectual history and Black women’s psychological process can contribute to definitions, discussions, and constructions of peace. I foreground insights of Black women who have endured inhumane conditions and yet have embraced the difficult imperative to creatively fight back against centuries of attacks on Black people, families, communities, and nations. Specifically, I argue that Black women’s actions have contributed to “building a better world,” and Black women’s ideas can deepen our commitment to continuing peace struggles (Bethune, 2002). As a prime example, Jan Willis, a religion professor at Wellesley College demonstrates the multilayered and complex ways peace work takes place in Black women’s lives. Willis chose the path of non-violence during the 1960s

20 The United Nations Gender and Racial Discrimination Report of the Expert Group Meeting noted, “Discrimination emanating from categorical distinctions on the basis of sex and race have historically intersected in multiple and diverse ways, and have taken specific forms during particular historical conjunctures, such as in the contexts of slavery and colonialism. The dominant structures of power often relied on violence to sustain their patriarchal and racial boundaries.”
Black Power Movement in the United States. However, she did not relinquish her capacity to “roar” and create conditions which bring about “the cessation of suffering” while on her Buddhist journey (Willis, 2008).

The term “literary mentoring” means that readers can gain insight from books in a similar way they gain guidance from mentors. In Black Passports: Travel Memoirs as a Tool for Youth Empowerment (2014), travel memoirs provide insight from authors about how to engage life, school, work, and cultural exchange. The same principles of ABCs (attitude, behavior, choices) can be applied to mental health concepts and practice. There is a wealth of information offered by authors like Willis, who are explicit in their desire to pen narratives that help others on their journey. In closing her book, Willis writes: “Every now and then, a lion must roar. It is part of her nature. If my life’s story is of some benefit to others, that would be a fine roar” (Willis, 2008, p. 345).

Grounded theory readings of Black women’s autobiographies, including the Willis narrative, chronicle experiences of personal peace and quests for social justice. Authors’ most frequently referenced ideas include: peace of mind, peace and love, justice of the peace, disturbing the peace, peace offering, peace and justice, nonviolent peace, rest in peace, peace and quiet (calm, tranquility, serenity), a moment’s peace, keeping the peace, peace be with you, peace treaty, offering, domestic peace, social peace, peace sign/symbol, peace-making, peace keeper, peace officer, peace demonstration, peace activist, peace movement, war and peace, Prince of Peace, Peace and Freedom Party, Peace Corps, Nobel Peace Prize, and Versailles Peace Conference. By amplifying these voices, we add dimension to our work for humanization and harmony.

This article explores intellectual history rooted in Africana women’s lived experiences. I uncover definitions of peace from six very different life narratives: Vivian Stringer (American basketball coach), Sylvia Harris, (American horse jockey), Jan Willis (American Buddhist religion professor), Maria Bueno (Cuban community mother), Fiona Doyle (Australian Aboriginal land rights activist), and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (Liberian president). The womanist peace framework emerges from ideas by scholar-activist Angela Davis and engages research by several Africana women including: Verna Keith (sociology), Layli Maparyan (women’s studies), Corliss Heath (public health), Soraya Mire (FC/FGM activism), and Kanika Bell (psychology).

**Peace and Social Location (Theory and Method)**

Black women’s intellectual history is inextricably linked to peace studies. As outlined in Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954: An Intellectual History (2007), Black women’s scholarship exemplifies empowerment education and advances four central characteristics: applied research, cultural standpoint, critical epistemology, and moral existentialism. In the 1800s women like Maria Stewart, Frances E. W. Harper, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Anna Julia Cooper wrote that the disadvantaged position of Black women based on race and sex was one that allowed for and required Black women activists to lead the country into the true possibilities inherent in both liberal and radical ideals of democracy. The quest for peace through meaningful work is Black women’s living legacy (Evans, 2003).
Intellectual History and Memoir

African American women like Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune actively engaged in World War I and World War II peace movements. Organizations like the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) clearly demonstrate Black women’s involvement at the epicenter of historic peace movement work. In the edited volume, *What Kind of World Do We Want?: American Women Plan for Peace* (Litoff & Smith, 2000), Bethune’s leadership of NCNW is a well-documented attempt to shape 1940s policy within Congress, the United Nations foundation, and Committee on the Participation of Women in Post War Planning (CPWPWP). Bethune’s letters to colleagues and influential politicians offer rich insight into the attempt to shape the public policy area of peace.

In her June 1945 *Aframerican Woman's Journal* article, “Our Stake in Tomorrow’s World,” Bethune outlined how Black women have much to contribute to the “transition” from war to peace (Litoff, p. 221). Having attended the San Francisco International Security Conference which established the United Nations, Bethune had an introspective view of the global peace infrastructure building process. She wrote to NCNW members that, “The extended horizon that has so rapidly appeared for women during the war has opened new areas which of necessity have brought rich experiences. Women have found themselves in new fields of work and service which have given them an unparalleled opportunity to develop new skills and habits of thought and behavior—a new kind of mental attitude and stamina, essential in tomorrow’s world. May we accept the challenge to work together toward a new world of peace and security! It will take great skill in human relations—it will take common sense and an alert consciousness of national and world problems” (Litoff, p. 220-21).

Mary Church Terrell, another CPWPWP activist who served as the NCNW treasurer, rightly argued in her 1944 speech “Human Relations and Transition to Peace” that, “there can [not] be any peace during the transition period or any other time, until colored people are granted all the rights, privileges and immunities to which they are entitled as citizens.” Terrell’s post-WWII sentiments echo her 1915 speech to the International Speech Congress, in the Hague, Netherlands which she delivered in German. Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom was founded in 1915 and, as the first president, Jane Addams was instrumental in including Terrell in international peace conference talks (Terrell, 1940, p. 329).

Despite (or perhaps because of) the various deadly challenges Africana women from around the world face, definitions of peace are useful to inform public health, mental health practice, corporate and environmental policy, and problem-solving initiatives to eradicate gender and race-based oppression (Davis, 1990; Avery 1990). Accessing Black women’s voices provides empirical data to more clearly define concepts of social and individual peace for culturally-appropriate solutions.

In the broader picture, peace is a very common theme in Black women’s narratives; of course, some pen the concept much more frequently than others. For example, in a “peace” word search of narrative texts, Layli Maparyan’s writing topped the list with 72 references, while President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf followed with 67 references. Maparyan’s text is largely an explication of five other women’s memoirs, but her own story is very much concerned with the concept of...
peace, particularly at the spiritual level. Of course, President Johnson-Sirleaf’s narrative chronicles the civil war in Liberia that lasted over a decade, so peace was paramount in her story, mainly concerned with national affairs.

Hundreds of Africana authors steeped their prose in peace by using the word several times in their text. Their interest in finding peace is no wonder considering the challenges that they faced. Black women’s memoirs address a multitude of challenges in health, violence, and access:

- Enslavement, hunger, genocide, war (Cooper, Bashir, Nthunya, Twongyeirwe)
- Surviving foster care (Rowell) or child’s murder (Diallo)
- Exile (Assata, Cruz) or Imprisonment (Cross)
- Bulimia (Armstrong) or HIV (Brown)
- Gaining activist/political power (Assegid, Brown, Brazille, Cotton, Seacole)
- Violence in marriage or family (Collier, Shakur, Swafford)
- Spiritual guidance or leadership (Bowman, Easton, Gray, Smith)
- Race, color, and identity (Haizlip, Jones, Langhart)
- Making a living as an artist (Ringgold)
- Fighting African oppression of lesbians (Nkabinde)
- Depression (Danquah, Harris, Herrin)

A careful reading of historical and contemporary data show how thousands of Black women activists, writers, and educators articulated practical ideas and useful plans for peace. Through primary documentation such as Bethune’s comment that Black women must serve in “zones of activity which call for equally vital, strong, if not spectacular leadership,” it is clear that Black women have been inextricably linked to national and international peace activism (Litoff, p. 220). Like the intersection of race and gender in peace studies, the specific topic of inner peace has been relatively understudied.

**Inner Peace and Health**

“The pursuit of health in body, mind, and spirit weaves in and out of every major struggle women have ever waged in our quest for social, economic, and political emancipation.”


As duly noted in a recent *Peace Studies Journal* special issue on disability studies, identity plays a very large part in “the health and well-being of society” (August 2013). Citing Black theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw’s intersectional analysis, scholars argue that, “Within and across groups defined by gender, ethnic, or sexual orientation, from a DS [disability studies] perspective, disability suggests possibilities for social justice” (Blaser, Kanavou, and Schleier, 2013, pp. 14-15).

Black women struggle in hostile social environments that degrade their history and downgrade their worth, so self-love is a healthy, revolutionary, and very necessary practice (Brown & Keith,
2003). Black women’s insights of race and gender can expand discussions of the social impact on inner peace from an intersectional and international perspective.


In 1987, Angela Davis delivered a speech at Bennett College entitled, “Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired: The Politics of Black Women’s Health.” The speech, taking its title from Mississippi Civil Rights Movement activist Fannie Lou Hamer, detailed health disparities like heart disease, arthritis and hypertension, diabetes, cancer, and AIDS and how these issues are exacerbated by poverty and political disenfranchisement. In the speech, published in *The Black Women’s Health Book: Speaking for Ourselves* (White, 1990), Davis offers a clear and straightforward look at six fundamental elements of Black women’s experience: body, mind, spirit (health), and social, economic, and political (emancipation). Davis’s list of six health imperatives is intimately connected to Black women’s quest for personal and public peace.

Based on word use of the word “peace” in their autobiographical writing, six authors were selected as examples of these main themes. The authors are, literally, all over the map, ranging from an American college basketball coach, horse jockey, and religion professor to a Cuban community mother, Australian Aboriginal land-rights activist, and Liberian president. Black women’s life stories are filled with invaluable gems of self-love despite insurmountable personal, political, and social challenges. The terms, “clarity, hope, choice, joy, salvation, and justice” open doors for broadened understanding based on Black women’s positive and adaptive ideas.

Africana women are not a monolith, so a systematic approach to survey over 500 women’s autobiographies garnered significantly diverse results, including over 159 narratives that reference the term “peace” in life stories.
Diversity and Complexity: 500 Black Women’s Lives

“A simple dichotomy of strength versus vulnerability is counterproductive for capturing the diversity and complexities of Black women’s lives as they affect emotional well-being.”


The source for identifying Black women’s narratives was made simple through the Sesheta online database, which catalogs over 500 Africana women’s published autobiographies. Of those listed, well over 200 narratives were searched for the word peace: 159 texts reference “peace”; 23 texts had over a dozen references; 19 used the term “inner peace”; and 14 used “world peace.”

The collage of 159 voices shows that regardless of time or place, Black women’s relationships to health, well-being, and non-violence all represent a disadvantaged social position even though experiences vary greatly in different countries on the African continent, Caribbean, Europe, and the Americas. In the African diaspora, Black women have penned life stories that offer insight into the shifting kaleidoscope of violence and harrowing social experiences with domestic and sexual violence, foster care or forced child home systems, public humiliation, inadequate health care, employment discrimination, and disenfranchisement that have negatively impacted their physical and mental health.

Yet, Africana women also write about the beautiful and powerful array of ways we have not only...
survived attack, but how we have effectively created lives of meaning and beauty for ourselves and for others. While these narratives clearly identify “vulnerabilities” due to Black women’s social location, the womanist theoretical analysis focuses on complex “strengths” that can be gained from reading life stories and the complexity this reading offers to peace studies (Brown & Keith, 2003).

After identifying major themes central to Black women’s experience, recognizing six authors’ contributions brings the themes into focus. Each use of the word “peace” in narratives encapsulates a relevant concept and, together, these definitions create a foundation for a better understanding of inner peace and mental health:

Table 1 - Six main themes of womanist peace, representative authors, and narrative definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>Vivian Stringer</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind</td>
<td>Sylvia Harris</td>
<td>Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>Jan Willis</td>
<td>Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Maria Bueno</td>
<td>Joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Fiona Doyle</td>
<td>Salvation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf</td>
<td>Justice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I chose authors with the most pervasive use of the word peace, who exemplified the heart of the category, or who were community elders to represent the group. This methodology of using only searchable texts unfortunately eliminated valuable memoirs such as Tina Turner’s narrative that chronicled how Buddhism and chanting impacted her path from domestic violence to a life of creative, professional, and personal freedom. Hers is a classic tale of transcendence but the methodology did capture more obscure voices of women who may not have otherwise been identified. These narratives form just the beginning of a necessary dialogue about locating and engaging resources authored by Black women.

Narrative Definitions of Peace (Findings)

Many narratives by those like Jan Willis and critical observations by scholars like Angela Davis define health in terms of “body, mind, and spirit,” while others referenced “world peace,” “poverty,” or multiple social issues, so these six main categories shape the investigation. The key word categories are below:

Table 2 - Narratives of body, mind, and spirit themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body - Physical Peace</th>
<th>Peace of Mind</th>
<th>Spirit - Inner Peace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Copeland (2)</td>
<td>2. Anderson (3)</td>
<td>2. Brown (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Harris (2)</td>
<td>4. Cameron (10)</td>
<td>4. Danquah (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though there is not a vast representation of Black women’s issues or voices in United States peace studies scholarship, Black women have written insightful definitions of peace personally, socially, institutionally, and institutionally. Research approaches that reveal patterns in the African diaspora are especially useful.

**Table 3. Narratives of social, economic, or political themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social - Several Peace References</th>
<th>Political - World Peace</th>
<th>Economic - One Peace Reference</th>
<th>One Peace Reference (cont.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Haizlip</td>
<td></td>
<td>15. Clark</td>
<td>15. Reynolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>17. Cook</td>
<td>17. Rice-C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Holdsclaw (6)
6. Jones (9)
7. Leslie (1)
8. Stringer (8)
9. Williams, S (1)
10. Williams, SV (3)
As historic scholar Dr. Anna Julia Cooper stated, Black women around the globe offer a “calorimeter” to measure social justice from critical intersections of race and gender.

**Spirit: Jan Willis**

The origin of this study was an epiphany after reading the narrative of Dr. Jan Willis, now Professor of Religion at Wesleyan University. Willis was a student at Cornell University during the Black Power Movement struggle and after assisting with arming students for campus battle and takeover of the administration building, she retreated to Tibet and India to study Buddhism. Instead of joining the Oakland Black Panther Party, she decided that she would move her life towards further study of peace. Not as widely known as Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, or Elaine Brown, Willis chose to contribute to the struggle for Black equality in a different way…spiritually. In *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (2000), Margo Perkins highlights Davis, Shakur, and Brown, but Willis is not discussed because her narrative was published after Perkins’ work. The “activism” by Willis is markedly different from the Black Panther involvement by several other women of the 1960s. In her autobiography *Dreaming Me: Black, Baptist, and Buddhist* (2008), Willis shows that revolutions are both external and internal; her life also demonstrates that making peace while advancing just causes is an essential but protracted process.

Jan Willis chose peace when given a distinct opportunity to pursue a path of guns and armed struggle. It was a difficult, but important choice:

> I was, and am, a Pieces, always deliberating between choices. … Amid the revolutionary timbre of the times, I was tossed and pushed along, it seemed inevitably, toward violence. But then, just before taking the fateful step, I bolted. My whole being—mind, body, and soul—bolted. And even though doing so made me feel like a coward and chickenshit deserter, I had to turn away from it.
Because she refused to “pick up the gun” as so many others did in that era, she admitted feeling like she had betrayed the cause of social justice. Writing about the Black Panthers in Oakland she recalled that her choice to cancel the meeting came just months before Fred Hampton’s assassination in Chicago:

True, I had learned to shoot a piece. I had even helped deliver guns to the Straight [at Cornell University] when I had to. But I had also marched, nonviolently with King. And I had wanted to talk with those Klan folk who’d burned a cross in front of our house [in Docena, Alabama]. “To thine own self be true,” the saying goes, and my sister, San, had always said, “Trust your first mind.” I decided not to meet with the panthers. (p. 146)

The choice to return to Nepal instead of going to Oakland seems to haunt Willis all these years later, even though her conviction indicates that she did the right thing. Given the generations of violence and terror visited on Black communities, peace and non-violence have always been contentious choices.

Body: Vivian Stringer

In the book Spectacular Leap: Black Women Athletes in Twentieth-Century America, Jennifer Lansbury traces the history of Black women athletes. Lansbury brings to light champions who shape their bodies publically, despite racist and sexist stereotypes such as “mammy” or “jezebel.” Beginning in the 1920s, college athletics was often the surest path from poverty to educational access. Then, as now, many Black women chose to endure the often public ridicule of their bodies, because the goal of college graduation would have been much harder to achieve without a sports scholarship. As shown in Vivian Stringer’s narrative, the price is often high.

In many nations, by law or custom, males have defined females as property and male domination was always a central part of African enslavement. In 2007, radio disc jockey Don Imas created a spectacle and animated an image of Black women based on longstanding stereotypes. The trope of jezebel, through the tool of popular media, added power to familiarly vicious images used to dominate, shame, enslave, and dehumanize generations of Black women.

Vivian Stringer grew up in a small Pennsylvania town and demonstrated her athleticism through softball, field hockey, and basketball in college at Slippery Rock University. Her autobiography, Standing Tall: A Memoir of Tragedy and Triumph (2008), presents her rise to the position of head coach of the Rutgers University women’s team and assistant coach of the 2004 U. S. Olympic women’s basketball team. Stringer cites values instilled by her father, a coal miner, as the basis for her work ethic, strength, and ability to lead thirty years of young women through grueling physical contests in high-stakes public arenas. She also learned fortitude through the family challenges of her daughter’s diagnosis of spinal meningitis and her father’s eventual loss of both legs due to work-related illness. The Imas comment came after the 2007 national championship game, and Stringer had to manage not only the pressure of post-championship stress for her team, but also had to choose how to facilitate a response to public humiliation on a national level. Imas' choice of the term "nappy headed hoes" called upon stereotypical negative
imagery of women's “bad” hair and a fictionalized hypersexuality: both often used to excuse abuse of Black women.

The Imas incident and Stringer’s response highlight the vulnerabilities of Black women in public spaces, especially when they willingly place their physical selves in arenas. Thus, her definition of peace as “clarity” offers a uniquely powerful counter image, claiming peace in the midst of a national media storm of hate and hurt. Stringer's victory over adversity is only one example of many by U.S. Black women athletes who have found peace either through their athletic ability or in competition. Additional sports narratives include Layla Ali (boxing), Misty Copeland (ballet), Zina Garrison (tennis), Sylvia Harris (horse racing), Serena Williams and Venus Williams (tennis), Chamique Holdsclaw (basketball), Marion Jones (track), and Lisa Leslie (basketball).

Laila Ali's use of peace is especially interesting because the nature of her sport, boxing, is predicated on raw violence. Ali, the daughter of boxing legend Muhammad Ali, boasted an undefeated professional record of 24-0, but some of her toughest fights were outside of the ring. Her life story revealed her survival of molestation as a youth and the mental impact boxing had on her determination to persevere and protect herself. Ali's book Reach: Finding Strength, Spirit, and Personal Power (2002) clearly is written to inspire a younger audience and includes large type and motivational quotes. After completing the book, Ali gained acclaim in the public eye for moving from boxing to ballroom dancing. As a highly competitive participant on the popular television show, Dancing With the Stars, Ali's positive personality came to the fore, and she traded in gloves for glittering gowns. Ali writes about finding peace through her mother’s example of spirituality, even as she embraced her father’s boxing career.

Many athletes reveal the difficulty of their personal struggles while in the public eye. Chamique Holdsclaw’s story is especially poignant because the championship WNBA basketball player wrote her book for the same reason as Jan Willis: to help, especially those who are also struggling with depression. In large part due to a mother who suffered from alcoholism, Holdsclaw grew increasingly depressed and after having attempted suicide, she wrote:

To prevent anyone from having the horrible experience that I did, I started traveling around the U.S.A speaking with different groups about my mental health issues. I’ve since come a long way from being a shy person who didn’t understand the power of her voice to a woman who feels comfortable connecting with thousands and advocating for mental health. Depression is a disease like any other, and awareness needs to be raised so that we can more easily talk about this very personal issue. I’m trying to do my part to help eliminate the stigma and take away the shame that is associated with this disease by talking openly about it, and by writing this book. (Holdsclaw, 2012)

Given the immense public pressure Black women athletes are under in their work, comments like those by Don Imas further erode their health. Unfortunately, public humiliation of Black women’s bodies is a long-held American cultural standard.

Some American authors who were not athletes also faced very public challenges, like Marian Anderson, the opera singer denied the right to sing at Constitution Hall (and consequently...
performed under magnanimous pressure in front of 75,000 people at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C). Also, Anita Hill’s *Speak Truth to Power*, detailed her struggle to maintain dignity under national pressure during the 1991 Clarence Thomas Supreme Court confirmation hearings. Singer David Ruffin’s ex-wife also revealed the struggle from being a private partner in a public relationship. Further, authors wrote about struggles which include alcoholism (Allen), bulimia (Armstrong), foster care (Cameron), incest (Collier), poverty (Green and West), and abusive relationships (Winfrey). As each story shows, violation of Black women’s bodies, truly impact peace of mind and peace of mind is difficult enough to maintain without public scrutiny.

**Mind: Sylvia Harris**

At least two Black women’s narratives chronicle activism against Female Circumcision/Female Genital Mutilation (FC/FGM). Wiris Dirie’s *Dessert Flower* was made into a movie in 2009 and the model-turned-activist set an early stage for greater awareness. Two years later, Soraya Miré published *The Girl with Three Legs: A Memoir* (2011). She detailed the social pressures and cultural mores that led to her painful circumcision at ten years old and subsequent forced marriage to an abusive cousin. A filmmaker whose activism cost her close family relations, Miré insisted that she found a way to live and work despite the fact that her activism caused her mother and other family to disown her. Her activism also resulted in several death threats from Somalian and Islamic fanatics bent on silencing her. Miré wrote that after facing physical and emotional pain, she turned to her activism as foundation for her peace of mind (Miré, 2011, p. 277).

Africana authors write of their desire to calm their mind through various means like meditation (Easton) or by carving a fruitful career in academe (White). Two authors’ narratives showed their struggle to reconcile adoption by a White family and the mental disruption that caused in their identity development (Black and Carroll). Psychology and peace of mind in these narratives are case studies in survival and quest to calm the sea of doubt, insecurity, and mental torture coupled with physical terror or displacement. Writing is a well-known means of catharsis and healing; most authors indicated that even if the process and aftermath of writing presented mental difficulty, penning their experiences contributed to their overall sense of well-being.

In some cases, the body itself seemingly is an enemy. For example, the narrative that most readily illustrates the need for increased focus on Black women’s mental health is Sylvia Harris’ *A Long Shot: My Bi-polar Life and the Horses Who Saved Me* (2011). Born of two military parents and raised in Santa Rosa, California, Harris began riding horses before she was a teenager. After her father left because of her mother’s illness, Harris suffered an emotional breakdown. At the age of nineteen, she experienced several days without sleep and followed by visions of an end-of-the-world holocaust. After a public manic episode in a store where she pulled down several shelves of seaweed soap, she became a repeat visitor to the Oakcrest mental health facility. Mental institutions became a constant part of her life, even after having had three children (who all were removed from her care). Eventually, after a period of homelessness, a mission center director who learned of her love for horses bought her a bus ticket to Ocala, Florida; once there, she again began to work again with horses, which greatly improved her
health (2011).22

She began to ride, then professionally race horses in order to keep her life “level.” At the age of 40, she became only the second African American woman to win a major thoroughbred horse race. Describing “peace of mind” as a sunrise in a small town, Harris wrote that peace is the hope that each new day offers her to make sense and more effectively deal with her physiological illness. Her son’s attention deficit disorder (ADHD) diagnosis and doctor’s requirement for him to take Ritalin, deepens the need for greater attention to mental health, and the problematic role played by large pharmaceutical corporations. Clearly, corporate accumulation of wealth has irretraceable impact on several areas of Black women’s lives, including access to treatment.

Economic: Fiona Doyle

It is difficult to accept poverty, especially after a lifetime of labor. By writing Whispers of This Wik Woman (2004), Fiona Doyle, granddaughter of Awumpun (Jean George), sought to legitimize her grandmother’s story to stake her claim in financial awards to Aboriginal people in the northern Australian communities of Napranum (Weipa South) and Aurukun, Cape York. After fighting for rights on several levels, Jean George was chosen to sign an agreement between native communities and state parties. But Doyle reveals this signing did not mean the end of Jean George’s struggle for basic living funds:

One part of her life is ending ... What more can be said? It’s over two years since the ‘historical signing’ took place, in March 2001, between the four communities, Comalco/Rio Tinto and the government. On reflection, I wonder how my grandmother has benefited from the signing of the agreement. How exactly will her descendants benefit? Who can speak for all our different groups properly and fairly? Our different clans must be well represented. Who can speak for my family and, just as importantly, who will listen? There are millions of dollars at stake and the alternative is the starkest poverty. Who is going to determine how the terms of the funds distribution are set up and if it is done fairly? Nana often questions me. ‘Baby, what time them mob gonna pay up?’ ‘Nana, they put im in big fund,’ I tell her. ‘What! How come? They should come straight to us. Them other black fellas gotta only take care of their own mob. We, we take care of our own business.’ Nana still awaits her old-age pension from fortnight to fortnight. She often forgets if it’s pension day or whether she would have money in her bank account or not. (Doyle, 2004)

Evan after the agreement and trickling down of funds, her mother and grandmother do not have enough to eat.

‘Nana, what you doing here?’ I asked. ‘I just need hot chips and little bit money to catch taxi home, baby.’ Before seeing me she had been asking relatives for a few dollars. She had expected money to be in her bank account. My stomach knotted up as I gave her the money that she and my mum needed to buy a feed and get home. Two people, two

---

women, with the richest connection to rich, rich country and look at them. Is there something that is not quite right? (Doyle, 2004)

Indigenous communities are perpetually in struggle with colonizing agents. Though much attention is paid to the role of men in political agreements and employment trends for Aboriginals, the long and treacherous history of treaties continues to impact generations of women and their children as well.

Doyle’s own story is interwoven with the story of her grandmother, and she defines George’s peace in terms of connection to “her Savior, great-grandchildren, and spending time with loved ones (Doyle, 2004). This concept of peace is also complicated because she uncovers that peace agreements between state and community representatives are often made difficult by rifts between generations and ethnic antagonisms. Doyle carries on cultural history through tribal dance, but her narrative clearly implicates inter-tribal and inter-family jealousies as a cause that negatively impacts the ability of families or communities to gain a secure financial basis for children. Doyle unflinchingly shows that intra-racial wars for primacy too often exacerbate interracial wars for adequate material resources. Like blackness in many countries, Aboriginal identity demonstrates complexity and diversity of the issue. Social mores are clearly tied to economic standing, and cultural mores are not stagnant or one-dimensional.

Social: Maria Bueno

Maria de los Reyes Castillo Bueno, called “Reyita,” is an elder of the Sesheta collection of women authors, and her life spans almost all of the twentieth century. Her story, recorded by her daughter, recounts her 94 years of life in Cuba as a Black woman who was painfully aware of race: Reyita was dark skinned with close-knit African roots. She recalled her grandmother Antonina (nicknamed Tatica), was taken from Cabinda, Angola, near the Congo. Tatica was abducted with her two sisters, who also were captives in Cuba. Tatica died in 1917 and Reyita’s story exemplifies that African enslavement is still recent history.

Given the multi-generational exploitation of Afro-Cubans and skin color discrimination within the Cuban community, Reyita made a conscious decision to marry a “White” Cuban, even though his family rejected her for her blackness. She bore 12 children and in the year 2000, had 118 family members including grandchildren and great-grandchildren documented in her narrative. She traced her childhood and told her story in terms of the many dreams dashed because of her race and gender…and because of her dark skin

Bueno’s “Afro-Cuban history from below,” ties race and gender experiences from Africa through the Caribbean to Europe and North America in ways that transcend Africana women’s homogeny but unmask unmistakable parallels of oppression and determination. In the final section of her book, “Speaking from the Heart,” Bueno writes:

I’ve enjoyed living. There have been sad times and happy times. It doesn’t grieve me to have lived! If I had to start all over again? I’d do it with pleasure, but with my own voice, in my own place, putting into practice all the experiences acquired through my struggle and my efforts. That would
be worth it. I’m not worried about whether I’ve acted well or not. I’ll always live at peace with myself, because I believe I always did what I had to do. I have walked along with life, I haven’t been left behind. And so, at ninety-four years of age, I feel good as new. Life is reborn with every dawn and so am I. (Bueno, 2000, p. 170)

Like Sylvia Harris, Bueno found hope in each new day and she made peace with her life, as is. Bueno’s attitude at the end of her long life’s journey, prompts provocative questions about our own mortality and allows us to reflect about when we might comfortably settle into our own daily happiness. If we celebrate ninety-four years, will we be able to express similar contentment? At what point in our own lives might we begin to appreciate each moment as an opportunity to restart our attitude, behavior, and choices? Is joy in each day of life only the capability of elders or like Harris, can we claim that joy now?

The challenge to find and keep joy in the midst of struggle for basic human rights remains a fundamental issue for Black women in the diaspora. However, we are not without joy and we are not without power. Black women’s quest for political power has steadily improved, most notably with the 2005 election of the first woman president on the continent of Africa.

**Political: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf**

Africana women's inner peace is often tied to securing peace for families, communities, and nations, thus authors' definitions inner peace solidifies the popular adage, "no justice, no peace." The Honorable Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first woman president of any country on the continent of Africa, penned a narrative that signal expands dialogue of peace in terms of securing justice. In the autobiography, *This Child Will Be Great: Memoir of a Remarkable Life as Africa’s First Woman President* (2009), the author had to fight for peace at every level of social location. She sought power in personal and familial realms as well as national and international arenas. Having married her high school love who later turned abusive, she had to survive domestic violence. After choosing divorce, she worked to provide a foundation for her four sons, even while working and studying abroad in order to secure a better future for herself and her family. On her rise through economic branches of government, she endured unending sexism, and she experienced political persecution during national turmoil which resulted in a fourteen year civil war.

Johnson-Sirleaf's political victory was tumultuous at best because of the colonial history of Liberia—colonized by "returning" African Americans in the mid-1800s. Black colonizers from the United States created social inequities by dominating the resources and holding power over the larger population of indigenous Africans of the area. President Johnson-Sirleaf steeps her memoir in words of peace most prominently by citing the Liberian Declaration of Independence where she commits herself to leadership "...in order to secure these blessings for ourselves and our posterity, and to establish justice, insure domestic peace, and promote the general welfare..." (p.5). She argues that women's leadership is just as essential to national growth as all other types of unity and equity, especially ethnic and economic. As a survivor of her husband’s abuse, Johnson-Sirleaf's declaration of "domestic peace" is imbued with multi-layered meaning. Like other Africana women authors, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, poet
Sonia Sanchez, and philanthropist Deborah Santanta, who participated in Russian peace movement during her quest for spiritual peace, Johnson-Sirleaf embodies inner peace on several levels that can operate as a much-needed springboard for further study.

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Investigating Black women’s conceptual understanding of peace—especially our own struggles for peace in daily living—offers a vantage point from which to meditate on how peace can be found within lives too often shattered by violence. Moreover, intellectual history, with special attention to Africana women’s autobiographical voices, offers an inside view on how Black women around the world define the idea of peace in their lives and work.

The healing process for women of color entails an additional variable of race, so a womanist interpretation of Black women’s autobiographies offers both a critical subject and a critical lens from which to view the subject.

**Womanist Peace**

“A womanist research agenda is needed to contribute to the process of understanding the liberating function of spirituality in Black women’s lives….

Moreover, we need new theories; theories that will tear down the walls of demarcation between disciplines; theories that will enable researchers and health care providers to counter negative images and formulations of Black women; theories that will attend to the diverse life and cultural experiences of Black women; theories that recognize there are different ways of seeing reality as it pertains to Black women’s strengths, resilience, and struggles…; and theories that will allow Black women to communicate their personal experiences of oppression with the hopes of developing interventions that are consistent with Black women’s ways of “knowing.”

~ Corliss Heath, “A Womanist Approach to Understanding and Assessing the Relationship between Spirituality and Mental Health.”

Building on the foundation of Black women’s intellectual history, this work engages Black women’s theoretical frameworks in order to define peace and health in terms of Black women’s experience. Angela Davis rightly connected personal and political aims. Alice Walker’s original definition of womanism named Black women’s “willful, courageous, and outrageous behavior” (Walker, 1983). With these combined lineages, I define womanist peace as Black women’s *willful quest for health and freedom*.

**Africana Womanism**

Several collections of Black women’s feminist thought are now in print. Though there are a wide range of approaches, Black women writers have used to define their ideological positions, there are certain points that are nearly universal. In *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Though* (1995), Beverly Guy-Sheftall identifies basic premises regarding activism at the intersection of race and gender. Like the multiple interpretations of Black feminism,
womanism has evolved beyond Alice Walker’s initial definition. A new generation of scholars has employed groundbreaking thought of Clenora Hudson Weems’ Africana womanism and Chikwenye Ogunyemi’s African womanism and applied the fundamental ideas to multiple areas of analysis (Phillips, 2006). Scholars from many disciplines, especially theology, have broadened usage of the term womanism and initiated thought-provoking dialogue about the variant shades of womanism, feminism, and Black feminism (Coleman, 2006).

Existing scholarship on inner peace clearly shows Alice Walker’s classic definition of womanism is highly appropriate for this project, particularly given the starting point of Jan Willis’s text. Specifically, social ethicist Melanie Harris connects Alice Walker with Jan Willis in her article, “Buddhist Meditation for the Recovery of the Womanist Self, or Sitting on the Mat Self-Love Realized” (2012). Harris uncovers the inherent connection between Black theorists and Africana authors. Harris offers “reflections on how engaging Buddhist texts as a Womanist scholar opens up a new perspective on the Womanist theme of self-love and how this can shift our understanding of the Buddhist self.” The recognition that self-love is the glue between Buddhism and womanism is a powerful one, and Harris skillfully reads Willis’s experiences through Walker’s lens resulting in a rich convergence of ideas of how to practice self-love, even in a Buddhist tradition that seeks to eliminate the “ego” of self.

In the afterword to Willis’s narrative, feminist scholar-activist Bettina Aptheker admits that finding inner peace is not an easy commitment, especially for those who have survived sexual attacks and who are committed to fighting injustice committed against women. Those who have balanced peace and self-defense definitely deserve our attention. While much scholarship documents Black women as survivors of violence, trauma, and torture, too little is written about Black women’s role as actors and thought leaders in non-violence and peace studies. A clear example can be found in a leading text on the topic: Cultivating Inner Peace: Exploring the Psychology, Wisdom and Poetry of Gandhi, Thoreau, the Buddha, and Others (2011). Paul Fleishman is a psychology scholar who trained in psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine, where he also served as Chief Resident. In Cultivating Inner Peace, he acknowledges several highly visible activists in his text (Gandhi, Thoreau, Buddha, and Walt Whitman), but African Americans are missing from the text and women are scarcely heralded as thought leaders or community organizers.

My model of Africana womanism and the specific strength-based, activist approach to mental health is grounded in the Clark Atlanta University Africana Women’s Studies program founded in 1982, where Dr. Shelby Lewis served as founding director. Dr. Lewis worked in Uganda with a Gender Mainstreaming Program to diversify African higher education. In her Journal of Political Science career path essay, she credits communication with Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf for helping her to gain a clearer understanding of the need for gender mainstreaming and “in what ways women engage education and development on their own terms (Lewis, 3). Lewis, whose degree is in political science and who served as an appointed member of J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, grounded the Africana Women’s Studies program in an international and interdisciplinary agenda of women’s scholar-activism. Lewis and the program personify the foregrounding of woman-centered problem-solving research, upon which peace studies should more heavily lean.
Four documents published in 1985 provide course syllabi and bibliographies from the original program curriculum. Professors of the era collectively shaped the discussion on mental health:

Mental health issues—Dominating this theme is research on mental health services for Black women and strategies for coping with a pathological environment. Recommendations for changing the environment, rather than merely coping with it, are seldom discussed. Likewise, research on self-destructive reactions to the pathological environment, for example, drug abuse, alcoholism, depression, etc., as well as forms of physical and psychological abuse directed at Black women, is grossly lacking. (Lewis, 1985, vol. 1, pp. 131-132)

Recognition that the racist and sexual fabric of the national environment is pathological—not Black women—is a sea change of perspective. The framers of these syllabi knew better than to simply blame those without power for creating the conditions of their disenfranchisement. Topics in the bibliography include: service needs and intervention strategies; strength, coping, and adaptation strategies; alcoholism; depression and suicide; rape and other forms of physical abuse; drug abuse; Black women and the criminal justice system; and psychotherapy.

Scholars listed in the syllabi and bibliographies include women who are now recognized as formidable foremothers of Black women’s studies: Patricia Bell Scott, Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, and Delores Aldridge. Delores Aldridge continues to her commitment to Clark Atlanta University by serving on the Board of Trustees, demonstrating the endurance, commitment, and longevity of many Africana scholars from the 1980s. This foundational Africana women’s studies curriculum included two class in Black women’s psychology: “The Psychology of African American Women: A Systems Analysis” taught by Charlyn Harper at Atlanta Jr. College (now Atlanta Metropolitan State College) and “Personality Development of the Black Woman” taught by Susan Brown Wallace at Hampton University.

Both courses emphasized investigation of non-Western sources (i.e. Yoruba, Toni Bambara’s 1970 The Black Woman anthology) and moved beyond defining Black women’s mental state as pathological. Consequently, Africana womanism and Clark Atlanta University’s foundational curriculum provide a uniquely suitable frame for understanding dimensions of Black women’s inner peace.

**Inner Peace and Mental Health**

Black women’s mental health issues are complex and must be dealt with soberly if we are to fully recognize the depths of oppression’s impact. Brown and Keith (2003) rightfully state in their seminal text *In and Out of Our Right Minds: The Mental Health of African American Women*, Black women’s “social location” uniquely—and most often adversely—impacts their mental health. In *Women’s Lives: Multicultural Perspectives*, Kirk and Okazowa-Rey define social location as “micro (personal), meso (community), macro (national), and global (international) environments that overlap to define a person’s circumstances. Regardless of geographic location or historic time, unyielding systematic racism and sexism has too often driven Black women to self-destruction--literally.
Dr. Layli Maparyan, professor of Women's Studies and Executive Director of the Center for Women at Wellesley University provides the most expansive textual treatment of peace. Though her book, *The Womanist Idea* (2012), is not entirely autobiographical, the chapters construct an argument for "Luxocrity" that builds up to her powerful narrative in the final part of the book. "Luxocrity" is rule by light and Maparyan explores five women's memoirs to examine how their life stories contribute to an idea of womanism in general and spiritual activism in particular. In the final chapter, Maparyan reveals a devastating experience that riveted her entire being and placed her in a position to make a life-altering choice. Maparyan defines peace in terms of "good vibrations" (p. 42). While some might be inclined to make fun of a light-hearted concept of peace, her light heart becomes impressively sobering when reading about the weighty impetus for Maparyan's turn to peace. Her choice to pursue inner peace became an emotional imperative after the suicide of her daughter.

Maparyan's story, involving her daughter Aliyah jumping from a fourteen story building, complicates ideas of mental health in compelling ways, because Maparyan's reflection does not attribute her daughter's choice to end her life to textbook definitions of mental illness. Further complicating the issue was Maparyan’s learning that Aliya’s paternal great, great, grandmother had also committed suicide. By tracing her daughters temperament growing up and her constantly keen awareness and seemingly in tune nature of otherworldliness, Maparyan notes there was no discernable unhappiness in the weeks leading up to her daughter's passing. In fact, they had just taken a trip together overseas and her daughter was visiting her brother at the time.

Evidence showed that the impetus for the jump was a movie she was watching where the protagonist jumped off a building and into another plane of the universe. Aliyah simply jumped to the other side. Maparyan is unblinking in her questions about the nature of her daughter's choice, and the decision to not give into a narrow definition of the meaning of that choice in order to adhere to what would be an acceptable “official story” by social standards (Maparyan, 300). Instead she opted to embrace a spiritually, open-ended interpretation which lead to a much more enlightening approach than to simply assign blame and sink in to desperation or despair. Maparyan's exploration of peace results in a commitment to vigilant spiritual activism, which includes employing a "radical forgiveness" in order to emerge from whatever disaster we face as humans (and especially as Black female humans). Maparyan's candid recollection of her daughter's joy is clouded by her palpable sorrow, but the beautiful portrait of her daughter's soaring spirit forces readers to question the realm of mind and spiritual understanding in which we choose to operate. Simply put, Maparyan supposes that Aliyah’s experience is an opportunity to question what we think we know about the universe. Her profound peace does not come from ignoring realities of suffering, but seeking to expand her understanding of life’s possible meanings.

Finding and fostering peace is not a Black woman’s struggle alone; everyone is faced with this human challenge. But here, I focus on Africana women who offer intriguing definitions of peace in order to provide much-needed tools for health. Institutions from the Center for Disease Control to the World Health Organization document the impact of race, nationality, and gender on health. “*Inner Lions*” facilitates the spread of ideas which can positively impact how Black women perceive, discuss, and act in peaceful ways. This dialogue is essential at a time when violence against Black girls all over the world continues unabated, Black women’s health issues
remain preventable but deadly, and Black girls increasingly initiate interpersonal violence, especially in the United States.

Black women in every nation face challenges directly attributable to socially constructed racist, sexist, and capitalist environments. Women’s memoirs document ways in which Black women have created disruptions to violent circumstances. Authors write about interventions made on their own behalf and intercessions they have made on behalf of others. The lessons that Black women have conveyed in their autobiographies offer guidance to those on the journey to a more holistic life and balanced world.

Symbol of Womanist Peace

Peace is a simple concept with many complicated precepts. Defining radical peace requires context and raises interesting questions: Does peace mean non-violence? Is there room for self-defense in peace activism? Can a boxer be a peace advocate? What does it mean when someone commits acts of violence against herself? Is inner peace an act necessary to bring about world peace? What compromises are required when managing peace and international politics? Whether a self-pronounced survivor or a peace activist, these women’s voices offer insight, meditation, solace, and direction to those seeking peace in this generation and the next.

Angela Davis began and ended her 1987 speech with a reference to Audre Lorde, a lesbian feminist activist poet who battled cancer. Citing work conditions that contributed to Lorde’s illness, Davis connected the individual health of Black women to the environmental and economic stressors that impact our condition. Davis wrote, “Politics do not stand in polar opposition to our lives. Whether we desire it or not, they permeate our existence, insinuating themselves into the most private spaces of our lives” (Davis, 1990). In sum, an Africana womanist foundation for analysis of peace assumes two premises: 1) Black women’s ideas are directly related to their social location and experiences and 2) Black women’s ideas contain perspectives that can affect change in the pathological or violent environments that negatively impact our lives. Womanist peace allows us to simultaneously reach back into history and mindfully prepare for the future.

Accordingly, the concept of womanist peace is best depicted by the combined symbol of the ancient ankh and the modern peace sign:

*Figure 2 - Womanist peace sign* (design by S. Evans, 2014)
While the “nuclear disarmament” social and political component of peace is imperative, cultural, physical and spiritual definitions of life and value for both women’s and African diaspora perspectives is also paramount.

The symbol of a peace sign within an ankh, has seemingly been present in popular culture since the 1960s. Soon after British artist Gerald Holtom developed the 1958 peace sign which first appeared to advance activism around nuclear disarmament, jewelry and art began to circulate, though never enjoying wide use.

Figure 3 - Womanist peace sign (“vintage” jewelry, dated “1960s”)  

23 Necklaces description: Very Rare Authentic peace sign from the 1960s. This Ankh pendent Has always been one of my favorites. The Ankh is an ancient Egyptian character that means “Life”, a symbol for Eternal life. The Peace symbol was designed by British artist Gerald Holtom for a Nuclear Disarmament protest in 1958. He combined the Semaphore signals for the letters N & D. The peace sign soon became the universal symbol for Peace. Together the message is clear and a powerful statement of the 60s decade. Accessed July 7, 2014 https://www.etsy.com/listing/166897877/vintage-1960s-authentic-handmade-ankh.
The womanist peace symbol addresses multidimensional areas of Black women’s micro, meso, macro, and global social location. It also provides a creative and culturally relevant approach to conceptualizing the meaning of peace in line with Black women’s intellectual history.

Narratives by contemporary Black women reveal terms like, clarity, hope, choice, joy, salvation, and justice. However, many of these themes are also found in ancient African philosophy and can be easily connected to the root of Africana history that date back to concepts like Maat (justice). The ankh, from which the symbol of women’s studies derives, symbolizes life, so womanist peace brings together racial and gender history in significant ways. Yet, a symbol is nothing without action. As Bethune insisted in a 1934 speech delivered at Hampton University, we must “translate scholarship into the language of the street,” so practical application of these ideas must necessarily be addressed (Bethune, in McCluskey and Smith, 2002).

Practical Peace

“Unless we are able to go inside of ourselves and touch and breath fire, breathe life into ourselves, of course, we [can’t] be healthy.”

~ Bylyye Avery, “Breathing Life into Ourselves: The Evolution of the National Black Women’s Health Project.”

Wangari Maathai, one of the Africana autobiographers listed in this research, set a lasting example with her work in the Green Belt Movement. At the close of her narrative Unbowed (2007), she wrote, “I have joined with other women Nobel Peace laureates...to address and prevent the root causes of violence by spotlighting and promoting the efforts of women’s rights activists, researchers, and organizations advancing, peace, justice, and equality” (Maathai, 2007, p. 305). Fittingly, it is important to find a way to impact the world through practical service and to “do the best I can,” through practical service. My chosen means to “improve the quality of life” have been through higher education and by creating youth mentoring curriculum. My focus on publishing research to improve Black women’s mental health is a natural extension of my work in Black women’s intellectual history. Like Maathai, I understand that collaboration with like-minded scholar-activists is essential for effective work, and hope to share and exchange resources with those in many areas.

Black Women’s Memoirs as a Tool for Mental Health

Dr. Kankia Bell, a psychologist who combines research and practice around Black women’s mental health, is one such colleague who exemplifies women practitioners deeply situated in community work. Dr. Bell is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Clark Atlanta University who teaches courses in forensic psychology, cross-cultural psychology, and psychological testing. She is also a co-founder of ATL Psychotherapy and Consulting Services, LLC, where she specializes in several types of therapies, including work with youth facing charges in the Fulton County Juvenile Court. Her location in Atlanta, Georgia and work at an HBCU (Historically Black College or University) situates her at the heart of southern Black women’s United States demographics. In her research, she has explored Black college women’s identity development and in her practice, she specializes in race and gender as well. Her range of assessment areas shows the large number of mental health issues in need of attention:
...I have extensive experience providing evaluations related to ADHD, bariatric surgery and organ transplant hopefuls, parental fitness, psychosexual issues, vocational and career exploration, autism spectrum disorder screenings, and general intellectual, academic and personality testing. I specialize in an eclectic mix of cognitive behavioral therapy and insight-oriented therapy geared toward assisting the client in discovering his or her own answers and taking control of his or her own life. I treat children, adolescents and adults and particularly specialize in young children with attachment disorders, abuse histories, and foster care placement, teens negotiating identity issues and coping with chronic oppositional behavior, adults coping with occupational or relationship stress, chronic medical problems, and women's issues, and older adults confronting life's changes. Sometimes the support of others with similar experiences is therapeutic. I also lead revolving therapy groups for specific populations such as adolescent girls, parents caring for children with behavioral problems, or socially anxious adults (italics added). (Bell, 2011)

Dr. Bell’s approach to therapy mirrors a collaborative, collective, strength-based, problem solving approach indicative of Africana womanist values. Her “insight-oriented therapy” does not reduce Black women’s lives to a deficit model; she assumes her clients have the answers they need and her job is to simply guide them to available resources.

When asked her definition of peace, Dr. Bell answered, “balance.” In a magazine feature, she commented on the importance of professional mentoring for Black women in all areas, but especially in higher education and in fields of social and behavioral sciences, given the disproportionate impact of public health issues. Her professional training extends our understanding of the topic of mental health and how it relates to broader policy implications (Stevens, 2011).

Black women’s intellectual history (theory) is a natural partner with mental health work (practice): together text and therapy form an invigorating, critical, and interdisciplinary praxis that “honors Black women’s ways of knowing.” Dr. Bell’s and others who work in the area of Black women’s psychology can provide research to facilitate answers to pressing questions. Using the wealth of intellectual history resources, like the Sesheta database, we can learn more about Black women mental health. We also need more research about practitioners’ approaches, particularly relating to spiritual, mental, social, economic, and political peace.

There are a multitude of topics to consider when thinking about women’s mental health. The Psychology of Women textbook outlines basic topics that impact how we look at women’s lives: gender stereotypes, gender bias, childhood, adolescence, attitudes, personality, work, love, sexuality, motherhood, physical health, psychosocial disorders, violence against women, race and gender perspectives, and activism (Matlin, 2007). These topics can easily be seen in women’s narratives who use “peace of mind” to situate their stories. Black women’s definitions of peace will be of interest in several arenas, including policy studies and social science, psychology, humanities, religious studies, higher education and youth development. Though my work clearly incorporates several of my interdisciplinary interests, at base, my interest in the topic is deeply personal.
Angry Black Women: Beyond the Art of War

Like many narratives in the Sesheta database, the seeds of my quest for inner peace were planted in soil of trauma. I am a survivor of several instances of sexual violence. As a result of several attacks in my childhood, I found myself harboring suicidal thoughts at the age of 11 years old. Fortunately, a compassionate teacher took a personal interest in nurturing my spirit. Because she taught dance, I was able to develop a healthy relationship with my body, despite the apparent lack of societal regard for Black girls’ physical safety and well-being. Although I suffered several more attacks in my adult life, I have found much of the peace articulated in other women’s narratives highlighted here. Black women are stereotyped as “angry”; in truth, given the amount of violence to which we have been routinely subjected, we have much to be angry about. The choices that I was forced to make as a young girl slowly evolved and solidified into a steadfast determination to be happy "in spite of." But if you are not angry about level of violence against women and girls, you simply are not paying attention.

I have observed how righteous anger has destroyed the joy and health of many Black women. In that observation, like Jan Willis, I have chosen to pursue peace through self-love and nurturing habits of non-violence. This is an interesting exercise for me because I love martial arts. Having survived, several attacks, I was drawn to Kenpo, Tae Kwon Do, and even cardio kick-boxing. Because I had been punched and kicked, I felt good punching and kicking things back. But over the years, I have been drawn to other therapeutic outlets like massage therapy, hypnotherapy, Feng Shui, and Qigong.

Finally entering college at the age of 25, I found my way to women's studies classes, where I learned the social, political, economic contexts in which male domination has developed. I enrolled in Black studies classes where I learned the role that the social construction of race played in interpersonal and structural violence. Black women's studies became the critical lens through which I could better understand what I had personally experienced. After reading Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences, I uncovered “intrapersonal” reflection as a main interest, which explains my attraction to mental health research.

Given a vital access to health care that came with my student status, I enjoyed several sessions with a Black woman therapist who helped me begin to walk through my past and find forgiveness, healing, and overcoming shame. I am grateful for the three counselors with whom I have had the privilege to work over the years and find solace knowing I have somewhere to turn for help if I need a relatively objective sounding board.

As a professor of Black women’s studies over the past decade, I have enjoyed presenting materials for student consideration and guiding a new generation of researcher through interesting and deceptively simple topics such as Black womanhood, love, and community service. Much satisfaction also has come from exercising my creative energy, which has included penning Chronicles of the Equator Woman: The Recipe for Justice Soup (2013), a short story in which a time-traveling Black woman saves planet Earth. In Chronicles I wrote:

I have always been an Equator Woman and peace has not come easily…. Because of my
endless travels, I remember my lives only in vague vignettes, but my purpose has become increasingly clear: to affirm peace and serve as a mediator for justice. (Evans, 2013)

In college, graduate school, and as a faculty member, I found my voice and my research on social location has enabled me to help others find their voice as well.

I define peace as art. Of all the lessons Bethune taught in her school, one student remembered most her urging: ‘In whatever you do, strive to be an artist’” (Ihle, 1992, p. 91). One of my goals is to continue create art by weaving together ideas and action. Poet Sonia Sanchez embodies how powerful art can be, particularly when creating art about peace. Her *Peace is a Haiku Song* mural project reflects decades of her positive work and shows the beautiful impact that her kind energy has by bringing creative people together (Sanchez, 2012). In my life, I have witnessed how art and creative energy can be an effective response to violence. As seen with some select martial arts, creative energy also can be used to confront, re-define, and re-direct negative energy. When handled by masters, art can stop violent attacks without resorting to violence.

Ultimately, I am still a fighter; I identify as both a Black feminist and a womanist and embrace the necessity of activism to directly impact ongoing inequities. Fittingly, I have found Morihie Ueshiba’s *Art of Peace* a useful narrative text which to learn. Ueshiba founded the martial art Aikido, and though he was trained as a Japanese Samurai warrior, he created a system of self-defense predicated on love. Developed in direct opposition to Sun Tzu’s much touted 6th century Chinese text *The Art of War*, Ueshiba transformed how he processed conflict into a positive and productive system that redirected violent energy of the attacker without internalizing negativity or returning the aggression. Mastering the art of peace, and embracing the warrior within is exactly what Jan Willis accomplished by researching her personal history, which included enslavement and rape which resulted in her light skin color. She embraced her African self-perception and penned her life story for the benefit of future generations. She wrote peace into her life.

Inner peace alone is not enough. As Bethune wrote in her 1926 NCNW presidential address, “So today the peace of the world is a matter of concern…. Bear in mind, therefore, that the various units of our body are all linked together to form an engine of service far greater than that of any private or individual matter.” Individual transcendence is not enough. Yet, ironically, without inner peace, world peace is unlikely. Texts like *Radical Peace: Refusing War* (2010), written by Vietnam War conscientious objector William Hathaway is instructive. Hathaway shows that, unless we deal with our own individual negative attitudes, antagonistic behaviors, and choices of interpersonal violence, social and structural violence will not end.

As Black women, participation in violence is not always an option: war comes to us…on our bodies, minds, and communities. For many Black women, choosing peace is a radical act that involves negotiating non-violence despite a barrage of routine racist and sexist attacks. It is especially difficult to navigate peace when non-violence is coupled with a very necessary plan for self-defense. In his 1903 classic, *Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. Du Bois penned a question

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piercing the heart of the dehumanization process of Black people: “how does it feel to be a problem?” To crack the fundamental threats to peace for Black women, the same question can be asked. And, like the point of Du Bois’ essay, Black women ourselves, cannot be defined as the problem to be solved.

Whether in literal or spiritual sense, much of Black women’s history has inherently involved solving the problem of moving through violent world in search for health and freedom. As Maparyan notes, “radical forgiveness” is a very real process for Black women who have been hurt so much, so often, by so many (2012). We must forgive others and also allow compassion for ourselves as we constantly undertake battles for our self-defense.

A commitment to radical peace means feeling, thinking and acting in ways that do not purposefully harm others but also in ways that acknowledges the specific challenges that Black women face. In essence, rejecting violence does not mean ignoring the realities of the existence of violence. In Black women’s experiences world-wide, violence (psychological, domestic, interpersonal, environmental, or structural) is almost impossible to ignore.

The world is violent and has been so for all of recorded human history. People, animals, and elements bring death and destruction. But so much violence is unnecessary and preventable. Black women who articulate a commitment to personal, social, and universal harmony in their lives represent a “radical” act. For Black women to insist on inner peace and to create conditions that improve the quality of life for others is a radical act because it is a human act.

This article presents a study of self-definition and self-possession by women who are survivors of systematic racism, domestic violence, cultural genocide, public humiliation, heartbreak, political corruption, or self-doubt. We are constantly told to be silent but, like Jan Willis wrote, “every now and then, a lion must roar. It is part of her nature.” Africana narratives help others find their voice. These voices holler back at a world that perpetually claims that Black females are irrelevant and that our pain should be tolerated without complaint. But we keep speaking, writing, creating, dreaming, and rising. And we have a fine roar. 25

25 Listed below are samples titles by Black woman authors who frequently cite “peace” (over 10 references) in their autobiographies. For the full list of 150 autobiographies, visit http://www.sesheta.net/.
Stephanie Covington Armstrong, Not All Black Girls Know How to Eat: A Story of Bulimia (2009)
Donna Brazile, Cooking with Grease: Stirring the Pots in American Politics (2012)
Theresa Cameron, Foster Care Odyssey: A Black Girl’s Story (2002)
Anna Julia Cooper, A Voice from the South, By a Black Woman of the South (1892)
Darlene Collier, Married to Sin (2013)
Dorothy Cotton, If Your Back’s Not Bent: The Role of the Citizenship Education Program in the Civil Rights Movement (2012)
Celia Cruz, Celia: My Life (2005)
Ahuvah Gray, Journey to the Land of My Soul: An African American Woman Tells the Story of Her Journey to Judaism and Jerusalem (2010)
Faith Ringgold, We Flew over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold (2005)
Mary Seacole, Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands (1857)
Afeni Shakur, Evolution of A Revolutionary (2010)
The Song of Inner Lions
I paint sculptures, Black
My piano (keyboard) roars
Lighting lion prints
~ Stephanie Y. Evans, 2014

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