**Metaphor Awareness for Multidimensional Practice:
A Proposal for Enriching Narrative Mediation with Expanded Metaphor Techniques**

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Abstract

Rooted in her worldview research, Goldberg proposes an addition to the powerful model of narrative mediation with more explicit metaphoric techniques. Narrative mediation with the addition of metaphoric work may thus be able to engage the entire, multidimensional conflict narrative more consciously. Goldberg builds on her work with Blancke in *multidimensional conflict resolution* and Winslade and Monk's *narrative mediation* and her own research on *worldview* to add metaphor analysis and skills more explicitly to narrative mediation than has been done thus far. This addition to the narrative model responds to the practice need described in her research with Blancke and others for multidimensional practice, work that effectively engages cognitive, emotional, somatic and spiritual intelligences of both practitioner and clients. Although narrative mediation is already more complex and nuanced in this regard than many other models, this article theorizes that the addition of more explicit work with metaphors might expand its range. The article grounds the reader in key elements of narrative and metaphor analysis and the practice of narrative mediation. It then reviews the discussion of metaphors and their use in conflict resolution practice before proposing ways in which the metaphoric analysis and skills could be expanded or made more explicit in narrative mediation in ways that would expand its ability to engage multiple dimensions of conflict. The author concludes with the results of preliminary work on metaphor use in public policy conflicts gathered as a participant observer and proposes theoretical and practical enhancements to narrative practice that could be developed in the future.

Keywords: conflict resolution, narrative mediation, metaphor, multidimensional conflict resolution, change, empowerment, conflict transformation, alternative dispute management, narrative analysis, metaphor analysis, mediation

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Introduction and Overview

All change is essentially an act of imagination. Anyone negotiating with parties stuck in their old limiting worldviews and attempting to help them shift knows this is true. Metaphors could be a key discursive lever for a shift and help in *imagining* and *bridging* from the old to the new. Some preliminary observations seem to point to an association between metaphor and shift that suggests that future research and work should develop this connection. However, it is already known that metaphor's powerful indicators and tools for transforming conflicts, and in this article I propose that the important work done on metaphors in mediation (most notably by Smith, 2005a; 2005b; 2005c, but see also Gelfland & McCusker, 2001; Schön, 1993; Cohen 2003) should be engaged actively in narrative mediation, and vice versa, and that both narrative and metaphoric skills and techniques may have a great deal of insight and power to offer many conflicts, including environmental-public policy and other large-scale, multiparty work in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In terms of my own research on *multidimensional conflict resolution* (Goldberg, 2016), I am particularly interested in joining these two approaches as both are multidimensional and more so, together.

I will begin by grounding the reader in key elements of narrative and metaphor analysis and the practice of narrative mediation, and multidimensional conflict resolution. We will then review the discussion of metaphors and their use in conflict resolution practice before proposing ways in which the metaphoric analysis and skills could be expanded or made more explicit in narrative mediation in ways that would expand its ability to engage multiple dimensions of conflict and key shifts.

Background:
Narrative, Metaphor Analysis, Mediation, and Multidimensional Conflict Resolution

This article builds on previous work by Goldberg and Blancke (Goldberg & Blancke, 2011; 2012; Goldberg 2016) proposing a need for practice that engages multiple intelligences and ways of being so that our work responds to the complex way humans experience conflict and its transformation, and brings the intelligence of the whole practitioner to bear, for instance, explicitly making an attempt to engage somatic, emotional, spiritual, as well as cognitive intelligences.

That work, in turn, is an outgrowth of a number of multidimensional trends in thinking. New work on effective conflict and leadership (Strozzi-Heckler, 2007a; 2007b; 2014; Palmer & Crawford, 2013) and psychological change and trauma healing (Levine, 1997; Hanson & Grand, 1998; Yoder 2005; Haines 2007) are increasingly showing that the way we experience conflict, and the way we heal from it, are somatic. *Somatics* comes from the Greek: "the living body in its wholeness" (Hines, 2007, xx) and includes a series of practices that treat "the body as an essential place of change, learning, and transformation" (Hines, 2007, xx). Similarly, new research on leadership and success point to the critical importance of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; 2011). At the same time, recent developments in conflict resolution, psychology and law are responding to the key role a sense of transcendence, or spiritual intelligence, plays in many human lives (Hall 2005; Aten & Lech, 2009; Goldberg & Blancke, 2011; 2012). Goldberg and Blancke have developed emergent language and a framework for *multidimensional conflict resolution* or practice that acknowledges and engages multiple levels of human understanding and existence.

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Narratives are already multidimensional in many ways. Stories are central to all conflict, and all conflict resolution. Weed (2004), summarizing Sternberg's groundbreaking theory of hate (2003), commented: "Think of someone you dislike, and the story of what he did to you leaps to your mind. We cannot hate without a tale to tell" (p. 45). Narratives inherently link, for instance, emotions and cognitive frames. They open space for spiritual frames to resonate and recall visceral and embodied insights about the conflict. This has been especially well developed in the *Environmental Dispute Resolution* (EDR) subfield in the work of Lewicki, Gray, and Elliott (2003) on frames and how they shape conflicts. Sternberg also notes the transformative power of narrative to shift that hate. This power has been developed in the conflict resolution field through the practice of narrative mediation.

Winslade and Monk are the originators of narrative mediation, which is a form of mediation that deliberately tracks and responds to the narrative construction of the conflict. Winslade and Monk (2000) describe narrative mediation as work where the mediator works to deconstruct "the discourses that are helping to produce the conflict" (p. 106). This means that intervention into the narratives changes the conflict. The narrative focus and therapeutic roots (Winslade and Monk are narrative therapists and used their knowledge of that work to translate it into mediation) mean that narrative mediation is already designed to engage, at different times, cognitive, emotional, and somatic intelligence, although the last is implied, not developed, in the literature. There is little attention to spiritual intelligence, although the reflective and respectful aspects of the approach would make it more likely that a narrative therapist would reflect back and respect the spiritual or transcendent needs of parties, than, say, an evaluative mediator. Could the process be more responsive to multiple dimensions, if, for instance, metaphoric skills and analysis were more emphasized? I theorize that, at least, metaphor analysis like the kind proposed here might make it more likely that the mediator would attend to things not normally prescribed by her or his own worldview, as the effort to track and reflect on the embedded meanings in metaphors as well as narratives necessarily involves thinking in multiple frames.

Narrative and Metaphor

It is important to first explain the power of narrative and metaphor in some more depth before proceeding to connect narrative mediation and metaphoric practices. Metaphors usually reflect incoherent, often unconscious ways of framing knowledge that can shed light on mediator and party worldviews, values, and ways of making sense of their worlds. Narratives reflect the conscious way we order our own worldview. I will start with metaphors, as they are the key focus of this paper.

Originally dismissed as merely descriptive aspects of language, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson revolutionized the understanding of metaphors as important frameworks for conceptual meaning in their book, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). From this beginning a larger set of theories have grown, now known as conceptual metaphor theory or cognitive metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Kövecses, 2002; 2005; Evans & Green, 2006). Work in this area has shown that metaphoric thought is central to the normal way we reason. In fact, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) say:

> If we consciously make the enormous effort to separate out metaphorical
> from nonmetaphorical thought, we probably can do some very minimal and unsophisticated
> nonmetaphorical reasoning. But almost no one ever does this, and such reasoning would never
> capture the full inferential capacity of complex metaphorical thought. (p. 59)

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Smith (2005a; 2005b) notes that this centrality to reasoning, and the fact that metaphors are an outwardly accessible reflection of inner norms and beliefs, makes them powerful tools for insight for mediators and negotiators. Metaphors also have power because they draw, not just on cognitive structures, but also poetic, imaginative, intuitive ways of meaning making, and in fact, are inherently multidimensional in their impact. LeBaron (2002) says eloquently: "We need creative tools because they have currency in the places where meaning is made and where expression is symbolic—levels not easily accessible through analysis….Metaphor, ritual, and story are tools to access this level" (p. 181). Ortony (2001) refers to this kind of impact when he notes that metaphors make meaning in a way that bridges the flowing continuity of consciousness with the limits of our tools for communicating, i.e., language (See p. 11). He also explains three ways that metaphors are particularly important in conveying this multidimensional meaning: compactness, vividness, and inexpressibility. Metaphors convey a great deal in a few words by presenting vivid, imaginative signposts that indicate elements of a journey. The hearer fills in the gaps with their experience and imagination in a way that conveys a great deal of information that is not necessarily spelled out. They also, through their poetic nature, allow the expression of the inexpressible. My mother, Mimi Goldberg (1961), a poet, said that a poem was a way of saying something, through the juxtaposition of words, that could not be said with words alone. Metaphors convey things we can't say directly, through image and implication. Consider attempting to explain literally "the thought slipped my mind like a squirrel behind a tree" (Ortony, 2001). The attempt would, inevitably, rob the communication of its very evocative meaning. As Ortony (2001) puts it, referring to the vividness of metaphors, "that metaphor lies much closer to perceived experience than a non-metaphorical equivalent because of their proximity to, and parasitic utilization of perceived experience" (p. 16). Because they use our own experience of reality to make sense of what is implied, "the emotive as well as the sensory and cognitive aspects are more available, for they have been left intact, in the transferred chunk [of meaning]" (Ortony, 2001, p. 17). Ortony (2001) goes on to say:

> These features of metaphor give it its great educational utility. It has been amply demonstrated that *imagibility* correlates very highly with *learnability*. Richness of detail in communicative potential provides a powerful means of moving from the known to the lesser well-known or unknown…The vividness of metaphor is not restricted to visual aspects alone: it extends to all sensory modalities as well as to emotive power. (p. 17)

This power is what I believe I began to see in the *Environmental Dispute Resolution* (EDR) processes where I did preliminary observations about metaphor and shift in conflict.

At its most basic, a metaphor is: an image or concept we are more familiar with, used to explain one we are less familiar with. Conceptual metaphor theorists differentiate the target and the source: the thing you want to explain is the target and the source is the metaphor, the more familiar thing used to describe the lesser known object. Of key interest to interveners is what these theorists call "correspondence mappings," "inference patterns," (Smith, 2005b, p. 11) and what Schön (1993) calls "generative metaphor."

Schön (1993) differentiates conceptual metaphors from what he calls "generative metaphor." This is key to him because he feels that for *Environmental Dispute Resolution* (EDR), "the essential difficulties in social policy have more to do with the problem setting [than] problem solving" (p. 138).

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He believes that problem setting is shaped and framed by the "framing of problems" which he has found "often depends on the metaphors underlying the stories which generate problem setting and set the direction for problem solving" (p. 138). Both *correspondence mapping* and *generative metaphor* refer to the way the concepts associated with the source may influence how we see the target; a "carrying over of frames or perspectives from one domain of experience to another" (Schön, 1993, p. 137). Schön (1993) connects this with "how we come to see things in new ways" (p. 138), a central concept, of course, for this field. One of the most telling examples from our field, that both illustrates the importance of understanding metaphors, and bolsters Schön's and my argument that metaphor analysis could be key for *Environmental Dispute Resolution* (EDR) cases, comes from Blechman et al.'s (1998) worldview research on the Northern Forest Lands Council Dialogue which discussed how metaphors have informed forest management practices.

Early metaphors for the forest included the 'forest as a wilderness', and the 'forest as a mine' from which resources are extracted. Gifford Pinchot, head of the (American) Forest Service at the end of the 19th century, introduced the metaphor of the 'forest as a farm'. The idea that trees are something to be grown and harvested became the norm for forest management. However, along with the farm metaphor came the idea of selecting one species of tree as a chosen 'crop' and seeing others as 'weed trees'. This has since been questioned by those who define healthy forests as including the maintenance of an entire ecosystem. Imagine planted rows of white pine, waiting to be harvested, compared to a diverse ecosystem supporting a forest of interdependent animals, insects, and plants, and you can see how powerfully metaphor and the "correspondence mapping" or baggage carried from source to target, can shape reality.

> Each metaphor for the forest, during the period of dominance, became reality. Instead of seeing each metaphor as one possible way to explain objects and relationships, those who accepted the metaphor believed that the stories related to the metaphor described the real world. These stories, in turn, prescribed certain roles, and those roles encouraged actions consistent with the 'characters.' To those who believed the story, the roles seemed natural and inevitable products of the 'way the world works'. (Blechman et al. 1998, p. 8)

Having worked with the Worldview Analysis Group (See Nudler 1990; Carstarphen et al., 1995; Docherty 1996; Blechman et al., 1998), and having created my own version of their metaphor analysis form to analyze Hungarian and Slovak orientations to the conflict surrounding the Gabcíkovo Dam (Goldberg, 1995), I built on their experience, and mine, when designing new worldview analysis methods using narrative and metaphor tools for my dissertation. The early work showed that although metaphors reveal much about speakers' unconscious beliefs, they also respond so much to context and reflect so much of what Angus and Korman (2002) refer to as "frozen or cliché metaphors" in our language that they were limited in their ability to reveal or situate respondent values or beliefs. "Frozen or cliché metaphors" are those that are in common use in our language, so much so that they have a collective, rather than an individual, meaning. In my subsequent work (2009) mapping the values that framed the work of the field and testing if different values-of-practice were correlated with different work on the ground, I found that using metaphor and narrative analysis together overcame these weaknesses, and exposed strong, useful patterns that revealed both the conscious and unconscious value patterns and beliefs of respondents. This

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made me strongly question why, apparently, metaphor mediation and narrative mediation techniques were not being used together. Could the attention to metaphors help narrative mediators see what their worldview would not normally attune them to? Would noting key metaphors for parties and how they are connected to shifts in the conflict bring real insight to narrative mediators?

My dissertation premise was that narratives, the way people tell their stories, reveal how they consciously organize and construct their understandings, what they value, what they exclude, and the larger constructing discourses of their society that they build on. Hidden in these narratives are many collected, culturally and experientially influenced sets of understandings and assumptions packaged as metaphors. Metaphor analysis reveals unconscious structures, and underlying assumptions about the world. Metaphors are a distilled method through which human beings carry and communicate a tremendous number of beliefs and frameworks. Because narratives are a constructed recounting of understood reality, narrative analysis reveals how the speaker thinks the world is constructed and organized, how they relate to the world and the subject at hand, what they think is real or good information and the analyst can gain insight into their moral and ethical values.

These particular aspects are listed as they correspond to the components of a worldview. Oscar Nudler (1993) defines worldviews as containing: "…various closely interrelated elements, namely an ontology, or a theory about the basic elements that populate the universe (for example, you can assume that only material entities are real or, else, you can believe in the separate existence of ideas, numbers, souls, etc.), a theory of world order, in other words, a theory about the ways in which those elements relate to each other (for instance, whether they are ordered in hierarchies or in networks or they are in a basically disordered state), an axiology or a value theory (which part or state of the universe, if any, you think is more valuable than others), an epistemology (how do you know, to what extent do you know, etc.)" (p. 4). Blechman et al. (1998) built on Nudler's conception, adding 'ethics' which includes statements about how one should act (p. 4). Both together can reveal a great deal about the respondent's worldview, meaning making, orientation, values, and beliefs and how they enact them through how they 'story' their life.

Narrative, Metaphor and Conflict

We gain access to this understanding through narrative and metaphor analysis when we engage how they work in conflict. Narrative analysis is powerful because, in the words of Catherine Kohler Riessman, a well-known narrative analyst, narratives are a "primary way individuals make sense of experience" (Riessman, 1993, p. 4). This is obviously key to understanding and responding to conflict. Winslade and Monk (2000) say:

> From a narrative perspective, people who present their problems to a mediator do so within an epistemological framework. They speak their problems into existence through the narratives they tell about them. They construct their stories out of the discourse that circulates in the conversational contexts of their lives and they construct their disputes out of the elements of these stories…If something is a problem within the dominant narratives with which the parties to a dispute are making sense of things, the challenge becomes to deconstruct the narrative itself, to see it as a framework of meaning rather than as an essential and enduring truth, and to open space for a different story to be told and for the performance of different meanings. (pp. 124-5)

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Walter Fisher, who is known for his contributions to narrative theory in the field of communication states that humans' natural capacity is "an inherent awareness of narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives" (Fisher, 1987, p. 5). Sara Cobb (1993) extended this argument to the conflict resolution field, explaining that conflicts involve competing or conflicting stories, which play out in negotiations.

Most people engaged in conflict, according to Cobb (1993), start with very rigid stories that cast their opponents in a negative light. Conflict narratives are, however, dynamic and change over time, allowing participants to change their perceptions of each other and transform conflicts. Cobb (1993) describes two variables that "make some narratives more potent than others" (p. 252). The two variables are *completeness* and *cultural resonance*. She sees the job of a mediator as to empower parties through supporting their ability to tell relatively powerful narratives (relative to one another).

Narrative Mediation as a Practice

How does this work in mediation practice? I will review key elements of Narrative Mediation, noting how it is currently multidimensional and implicitly engages metaphors. As mentioned earlier, narrative mediation, like conceptual metaphor theory, takes language as creative of, rather than reactive to, our social reality. Winslade and Monk (2000) say that parties "…tend to organize their experiences in story form…They act both out of and into these stories, shaping the direction of the ongoing plot as they do so" (p. 3). They see conflict parties as narrating what they call "totalizing descriptions" into what Cobb (1993) would call 'rigid' narratives casting their opponents into negative discursive positions. Totalizing, they say, gives one a rigid and total explanation for the situation. Essentializing, according to Winsalde and Monk (2008), explains actions as resulting from the essential nature of parties. In other words, parties tend to tell rigid narratives about each other that frame the situation as stuck, hopeless, and the result of the actions of their counterpart, who is essentially bad. These tend to be a series of stories about everything that went wrong, what Winslade and Monk (2000) call *conflict saturated stories*. Cobb, and Winslade and Monk see the job of the mediator as to "destabilize" these rigid narratives. Using Cobb's (2013) language, and in Monk and Winslade's (2000) language, the mediator supports the development of *counter stories* or *unique outcomes* – alternatives to the dominant conflict narrative which can support positive outcomes that the parties want. As such the job of the mediator is to strengthen those *counter stories* enough to hold real power during and after the mediation.

Since the underlying premise of narrative mediation is that individuals have creative power over their shared social reality, ethically, narrative mediators through their practice enact their beliefs that we are not driven by immutable essential inner faults, but that we write ourselves into and out of problems. "The spirit of the narrative mediation style is embodied in always speaking to people as if they are… creators of meaning rather than just recipients or objects of it" (Winslade & Monk, 2000, p. 158). They do this by using, to the extent possible, the parties' own key phrases of narrative description, not the mediator's. Winslade and Monk (2000) also say that narrative mediators need reflexive self-awareness about how their own cultural narratives might be shaping their responses and judgments and to "avoid attributing the conflict to any kind of essential deficit in either party" (p. 11). Further, they need to constantly check with parties to make sure they are allowing them to write their own stories to the extent possible (Microtraining, n.d., 1 and 2). In their words: "Relational practices that are not generated by

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the parties themselves may have a poor ecological fit in the living context of the persons effected by them, and the skills to implement them may not exist in the parties' repertoires" (Winslade & Monk, 2008, p. 33). Key to this tailoring work is cultivating curiosity enabling the mediator to stay aware of the possibility of constructions of reality counter to their own and listening for the multiple narratives echoing in any seemingly rigid and total story (Winslade & Monk, 2000). This, I feel, is essential work for any multidimensional mediator. The meaning of spiritual, somatic, emotional, and cognitive aspects of a conflict are inevitably shaped by the community and cultural contexts of the parties. The only way we can responsibly work with others in a way that respects their complexity is to do so knowing that they are complex in ways that are shaped by their community and culture, and they, in turn, shape the world they are making around them. Acute self-awareness and openness and curiosity of the sort Winslade and Monk recommend are essential for respectful, responsive, and effective work.

The philosophical and theoretical roots of narrative mediation lead to real differences in practice with classic mediation. Narrative mediation starts in individual sessions, so the mediator can build relationship and trust with the parties, hear things they might never reveal in front of the other party, and as a way to counter the "power of the first speaker" (Cobb, 1994). Winslade and Monk (2000) summarize this as "…the first speaker's utterance calls the other person into position in response…Sara Cobb is concerned about the possible limitation on what the second speaker can say if the first speaker has already laid out the ground." They go on, however, to say that although this is very important, they expand it to see "each speech act [as calling] the other person into position in some way" (p. 138). So, although the first speech can set the conversational frame, every rejoinder and response thereafter, from both parties, attempts to do the same. Another key difference comes from their commitment to social constructivism. If our reality is socially constructed, and as Cobb (2003) puts it, some stories are more coherent and culturally resonant than others, as mentioned earlier, and it is implied that a sense of privilege and dominance can saturate that social construction process. Some storytellers and stories are empowered by their connection to larger social narratives that support a sense of entitlement (Winslade & Monk, 2000). If, following Cobb (2003), our job is to empower parties through supporting them to tell stories that are powerful, relative to one another, then we need to engage the reality that some stories are privileged, and others are not. This means that for narrative mediators a stance of neutrality is problematic. Winslade and Monk (2000) say that in situations where "these degrees of variance over relational influence are present, mediators could be called unethical if they did not find some way of attending to power discrepancies" (p. 49). From their standpoint, the story that one group is more entitled than another can be made visible and challenged by parties in ways that empower the parties to recognize the stories constraining them and begin to create counter-narratives that resist them (Winslade & Monk, 2000). In their words, "discourses effect the extent to which a person's voice can be heard by another person" (Winslade & Monk, 2000, p. 60).

Our job, then, is to assist voices to be heard and stories told in relative balance. The goal of mediation is different here than in classic mediation. It is to "…[unearth] the competencies and resources of the participants in a respectful manner" (Winslade & Monk, 2000, p. 69). This can be surprisingly direct, to the eyes of a classic mediator. To show an example from Winslade and Monk's (2000) work involving an abusive relationship rooted in patriarchal entitlement:

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> We have found it useful for the mediator to help the person who is captured by exaggerated entitlement to imagine that he is someone who, in his own better judgment, would not want to abuse or hurt another person (p. 108). [They ask questions like] …Do you want a marriage within which you can respect each other? How important is it for you to have a marriage based on genuine respect and trust? (p. 111). If Mary were doing as she is told, would she be more likely to give out of love and desire, or out of duty? (p. 113)

These approaches seem to me to reveal the therapeutic origins of the work. Although classic mediators might balk at questions like these, if they flow directly from the needs and stated goals of parties, they are quite in keeping with mediation's goal of supporting the self-determination of parties. For me, this is also a clear connection between cognitive and transcendent intelligence. In fact, Winslade and Monk's (2000) book explicit ways a mediator can follow parties for whom spiritual meaning is key (p. 222). These kinds of questions ask the party to consider their higher values and goals, while connecting emotional needs with cognitive shifts. The multidimensional nature of the work means that it is understood and internalized on many levels, eliciting more profound transformation of a conflict. In the words of Winslade and Monk (2000):

> …it is our belief that an emphasis on discursive repositioning enables something far more potent than satisfying interests or meeting needs to take place. Discursive repositioning includes the conscious shaping, albeit in some small way, of the discourses out of which needs and interests are produced. (p. 62)

Implied here is that we have both the capability and the responsibility to challenge structural violence in our work.

Narrative Skills: Practical Components

Key skills and processes to achieve this include "double listening," "externalizing conversations," "mapping the effects," "accessing the story of hope and building a counter story," "sustaining change," and "documenting progress" (Winslade & Monk, 2008). I will not cover all of these but will enlarge on the idea of "sustaining change" and "externalizing conversations" as they are relevant here.

Sustaining change requires "…a story that can serve as an exit strategy" out of a conflict, that is "well formed [enough] to be able to carry the necessary weight of both the disputing parties' hopes for something different" (Winslade & Monk, 2000, p. 181). In order to do that, mediators need to help parties strengthen their alternative story so that it has a strong plot line with a coherent series of steps, a plausible rationale or motivation, and they have the ability to live in the story as new characters whose roles and personalities are congruent with their sense of self and their histories (Winslade & Monk, 2000). This could imply, following their discussion on entitlement and Cobb's insights about coherence and cultural resonance, an attempt to subvert larger social master narratives, like ones stating that women should obey men.

I want to note that although not discussed explicitly by either White, one of the leaders of narrative therapy, or Winslade and Monk, narrative mediation already uses metaphors in some ways. The concept of positioning (Winslade & Monk, 2000, p. 121), for instance, in terms of how a party is positioned, located and defined discursively, is described as a metaphor. *Externalizing conversations* are inherently

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metaphoric. They involve, for instance, talking about a conflict as if the conflict itself was an actor driving people in ways they do not want (thus externalizing the blameworthy aspects into something that can be challenged and engaged). Also, many of the examples in the books and the videos on narrative mediation show mediators using the metaphoric language of parties (Winslade & Monk, 2000; 2008; Monk & Winslade, 2013; Microtraining, n.d.1 and 2). Also, some of the techniques can be seen as inherently metaphoric, like externalizing conversations or "internalized other questioning" (Winslade & Monk, 2000, p. 177) which uses role reversal, asking one party to respond as if they were the other. The next section considers metaphors and how they are already being used by mediators.

Current Literature on Metaphors and Mediation

There is already a developing literature on metaphors and mediation, which, surprisingly, is not being connected to the literature on narrative mediation. The earliest work was largely about how conflicts are framed based on the source domain of their metaphors (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995; Haynes, n.d.; Mayer, 2000; Cohen, 2003; Haynes et al., 2004). This includes conflict metaphors like *conflict is war*, *conflict is a trial*, and so on. Haynes also started to look at the way interveners can help parties work with their metaphors, saying, "one task for the mediator is to help the clients use the metaphors that most closely express their view of the conflict and/or develop an organizing metaphor that is more conducive to cooperation and productive negotiations" (Haynes, n.d., p. 5). So, for instance, if working with a divorcing couple who are using war metaphors about their relationship, it may help to point that out and assist them to explore other metaphors that are more helpful for them. The most extensive and rigorous work on metaphors and mediation, particularly the use of conceptual metaphors or those that shape how we conceive of things, however, has been done by Martin Gannon (2001) and Thomas Smith (2005a; 2005b; 2005c). Smith (Belfast Presentation, n.d.) proposes that mediators can use a knowledge of how conceptual metaphors work in language to:

1) clarify each disputant's views so that each knows better what the other is saying;
2) find mutually familiar and acceptable terminology;
3) test the acceptability to each of using the metaphorical frame of the other; and
4) prepare to extend each disputant's metaphors so as to reveal common features.

These are, of course, in line with narrative mediation's goals of helping parties create robust counter narratives to live into.

Storrow and Georgakopoulos' (2014) work is interesting in that it examined how mediators see the systems of which they are a part through framing metaphors, which, of course, also shapes what happens in the session. Consider if the mediator sees him or herself as part of a relational "family" or as working with fellow staff with a shared purpose - steering a "ship" (Storrow & Georgakopoulos, 2014), and how those frames might shape their work. Storrow and Georgakopoulos' work also examined what metaphors reveal about how mediators see themselves and their role, which could be used in the critical self-awareness work of any reflective practitioner.

This sense of direct intervention through either expanding on the parties' metaphors or introducing new ones to shift the frame of the narrative, could be extremely useful to narrative mediators. I suspect that, in fact, many already do so to some extent, although possibly not deliberately. In fact, one of the

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key tools of narrative mediation, the *externalizing conversation*, works through making the conflict into an external object, a metaphor for their experience, as mentioned previously.

Schön's (1993) article was particularly interesting for its direct connection to *Environmental Dispute Resolution* (EDR) and multiparty cases, and to how metaphors can be used by intervenors. He argues that in these cases he has seen the power of naming and framing (metaphors) that make what he calls the "normative leap from data to recommendations, from fact to values, from 'is' to 'ought'" (p. 147). Schön (1993) contends that in order to use metaphors in a way that leads to real and not shallow, although potentially attractive, insight, (which is often the temptation), is to develop a complex understanding of the source and how it shapes our understanding of the domain - in fact to use metaphors consciously and intentionally. The challenge is that generative metaphors are usually tacit and that environmental conflicts are characterized by multiple stories. So, we need to "read" the metaphors we use to frame deeply, explore the insights revealed consciously, and be willing to see what is ruled out through this framing exercise as well as what is ruled in. He says that once we find a metaphor that seems to really explain and make sense of a situation the resulting clarity is powerful.

> This sense of obviousness of what is wrong and what needs fixing is the hallmark of generative metaphors in the field of social policy…In order to dissolve the obviousness of diagnosis and prescription in the field of social policy, we need to become aware of, and focus attention upon, the generative metaphors which underlie our problem-setting stories. (Schön, 1993, p. 148)

[He explores the example of the profound difference between an urban renewal project rooted in the metaphor of "urban blight" versus one focused on supporting a "natural community".] His solution is *frame restructuring* where the policy maker attempts to construct a "new problem-setting story, one in which we attempt to integrate conflicting frames" (Schön, 1993, p. 152) similar to Cobb's creation of a co-joint story as a successful outcome.

Finally, although not part of the literature on metaphor and mediation, I do want to mention the newer work of Sara Cobb (2013) on narrative and conflict resolution. Cobb's work examining the larger societal narratives that shape conflict and the power of rewriting framing narratives could add a great deal to Winslade and Monk's (2000) early conversation on dominant narratives of entitlement. In particular, narrative mediators may benefit from her insights in three areas: conversation as a *struggle over meaning*, *radicalized narratives*, and the *concept of destabilizing narratives* jointly as a way to legitimize both sides (Cobb, 2013). The concept of conflict conversation as a *struggle over meaning* highlights the way entitlement can operate and why it is used (to control meaning for the benefit of one side) which goes well with Winslade and Monk's (2000) concept of "totalizing descriptions" (pp. 5-6) but on a larger, societal scale. The 'all or nothing' thinking of individuals can, in fact, be bolstered similarly by "all against one" (Cobb, 2013, p. 116) discourses in the larger society. So, for instance, in my classroom, I found students much more resistant to nuanced, complex thinking in their own papers about their own conflicts in the immediate aftermath of 9-11 when the country as a whole was captured by 'all against one' thinking, although subsequent years found them again more nuanced and tolerant of ambiguity. In these polarized times, however, the ability to "destabilize" "rigid" narratives connected with larger, dominant, or this case 'fight for dominance', narratives, could point to an area of narrative intervention that has not been fully explored. Certainly, our larger social frames seem to be terrifyingly

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dominated by these dangerous narratives at this time. My hope is that the work of Schön and others can show how dangerous these mindsets are and those in our field can work to 'destabilize' narratives in a way that supports the real complexity of democracy again.

Results of Preliminary Observations

Although highly preliminary, I attempted to inductively track how metaphors work in conflicts, specifically public policy conflicts as a participant observer at five *Environmental Dispute Resolution* (EDR) multiparty, multi-stakeholder processes. Knowing I would be working on this article, I actively listened for metaphoric moments in the discussions I observed and noted their effect on the flow of the conversation. This included 28 hours of participant observation. I attempted to note metaphors whenever they came up but felt early on that something like simply counting metaphors would not be very useful, for, as mentioned above, many are 'frozen' or idiomatic ones and they did not seem to me to reveal a great deal or offer real moments of potential for interveners. So, what, then, was I looking for?

I started tracking the effect of metaphors when used deliberately by a speaker. I was stuck by a number of repeating dynamics I observed. I must, however, mention here a number of limitations to this very preliminary observational data. One is the highly self-selected nature of my attention, especially as I was a participant observer and had more to do than simply track metaphors. Second, I was the only person tracking metaphors, which leads to observer bias. Third, this was hardly a large sample size and so any conclusions drawn are highly speculative. However, granting all that, I was struck that the deliberate use of metaphors by parties seemed often to accompany a moment of shift. There were moments when one party was working to explain their thinking to another party, often associated with intense emotion, a need to have the other side understand, and using metaphors seemed to work as a way to communicate across a gap in understanding. The use of a more familiar source sometimes reached across the gap and caused a moment of real understanding, in fact, destabilizing the previous narrative and allowing the overall discourse to take a new turn. I was also struck by the way people often used metaphors to move from the language of debate, or attempts to convince, to the language of engagement, for instance shifting from technical or abstract to homey or inviting language. The effect was often to get people laughing and created a sense of connection, in fact humanizing and opening the conversation. It was also used to make the point more strongly and be more convincing, which sometimes brought conversation to a momentary pause, as people absorbed a new idea or really grasped the seriousness of the issue for the speaker. For me it harkened especially to Schön's (1993) ideas of how critical problem setting can be and how the metaphor shifts the focus and understanding of a public policy initiative. I felt I saw this happen on several occasions, as parties used metaphors to bridge gaps and shift discourses and thinking.

Deliberate metaphoric language tended to be associated with a very compelling argument, one that drew on both heart and mind, which a story can often do as well, or one communicated with a sense of real sincerity. This shows the multidimensional power of engaging the complexity of parties and mediators. The feeling often was that the speaker was departing from a practiced argument or a set of facts to make a deeper, more human plea or demand or connection. Often metaphors were used when the speaker wanted to communicate something of their emotions like a feeling: *this matters to me.*

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For me this pointed to the possibility that enhanced metaphor awareness skills, as well as metaphor intervention abilities, might be highly useful to narrative mediators, and in fact, both narrative and metaphor techniques could be of great use to mediators who work in complex, value-laden cases such as *Environmental Dispute Resolution* (EDR) cases.

Here are some specific examples I noted:

- Citizen stakeholders using metaphors constantly to find ways to bridge their understanding of multiple aspects of their situation with that of the agency with whom they were negotiating when their ideas were imperfectly understood.
- Using metaphors to build community by literally using the other's words in a public agency/ private business negotiation around regulations.
- A group changing the narrative and the metaphors for a region, very deliberately, to try and change the perceptions of that region. They were literally re-writing the story of that place and are changing how it is seen and felt and somatically experienced.

Some things I noted also point to limitations in the use of focusing on metaphors. So, for instance, I saw some processes where metaphors were not used often in a deliberate way and did not seem correlated with major decisions. Of note, those two meetings seemed to be more routine and less 'fraught' occasions, however. Also, I noticed that some people are naturally expressive, metaphoric speakers, and others are not. And some local cultures are marked by more metaphoric language than others. Often when trying to persuade or speak powerfully, I saw people using metaphors. However, it was not at all universal. For instance, in one case the engineers involved in a case often chose to persuade through clarity and fact.

From my own work in the classroom teaching how to use metaphors as an assessment tool, it is a normal occurrence that in any given classroom a few people take to metaphoric language naturally. A reasonable number can do so if they think about it, and a minority struggle desperately to come up with metaphors because they are so alien to them. Because of this, in the intake forms for multidimensional practice that I've developed, I have created a series of cards with images on them that show different classic metaphors for conflicts (a broken bridge, a garden, tug or war, armed combat, negotiation sessions, etc.) and hope they help some people access those hidden meanings stored in their unconscious. I don't think this variability at all decreases the import of the tool – it merely is a useful reminder that any given set of skills will be more or less useful, and need to be tailored, to the specific needs in the room.

Expanding Use of Metaphoric Components in Narrative Mediation: Practical Suggestions

Although there have been developments in using metaphors in therapy, for instance Ferrara (1994), and even work looking at how to use metaphors in narrative therapy (Lyness & Thomas, 1995; Legowski & Brownlee, 2001), there seems to have been little done to connect metaphor practices in mediation to narrative mediation. Although narrative mediators already use the metaphoric language of clients in naming the issues ('this whole mess' for instance, using the client's words), they don't necessarily expand or work with the metaphor, or if they do, it has not been well documented. In this section, I note some of the ways that metaphor engagement could support and deepen narrative practice

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and be useful in general to mediators. To recap some of the key points mentioned above, metaphors reveal unconscious values and beliefs, so working with them explicitly can help a narrative mediator, for instance, make visible patterns of assumed entitlement or support the goal of 'historicizing' a conflict: making visible the degree to which it is a product of time, happening right now this way, but perhaps differently in the past, which means it could be different in the future (See Winsalde & Monk, 2000, p. 149). Working with metaphors helps reveal hidden, unconscious assumptions and shows how parties' pictures of the world are clashing. It helps people understand the pieces of something that feels like a monolithic whole and get a handle on which pieces matter, and which can move or shift, changing 'essentializing' or 'conflict-saturated' narratives. As Schön (1993) notes, problem-setting shapes how problems are resolved and understood, so working with the complexity and richness of those frames and metaphors can be crucial to solving real problems with complexity and depth – extremely useful in *Environmental Dispute Resolution* (EDR) cases, and, again, something our country desperately needs at this time. Consciously working with the worlds of meaning embedded in metaphors, and transmitted by them, could help mediators make visible the 'correspondence mapping' or metaphor baggage being absorbed and acted upon. My observations seem to also imply that metaphors can be sites of transformation as well as tools of shift, and working with them can open powerful shifts in conflicts.

I believe this means that narrative mediators need to understand what metaphors do and how to listen for them; and know that they can elicit and enlarge on metaphors to make space to de-stabilize rigid or dominant or 'conflict-saturated' narratives to support creative, transformative, co-joint conflict stories that parties can live alternatives futures into. Similarly, mediators who are now using metaphors (who are few in number, but they exist) could elicit narratives from the metaphors being used. Even as simply as using the narrative technique of mapping the conflict: "Your description of this marriage uses a lot of war metaphors – taking the high ground, living in a minefield, etc. What has the impact been of living in this battleground, as you called it?" Such a question is what Winslade and Monk (2000) would call an 'externalizing question' and would enrich metaphor mediation, as the active use of metaphoric elements might enrich narrative mediation. Similarly, metaphors could be explicitly engaged during intake. I have designed an intake form for multidimensional mediators that would include working with parties to identify a metaphor for their conflict during intake, which could be used by the mediator as noted here, and at the end of their mediation the mediator could check to see what shifts might be indicated by changes in the metaphors used.

As well as a summary of the overall rationale, I want this section to include concrete tools mediators can use to work with and intervene in metaphors. Even simply listening for metaphors can give one a great deal of insight. One thing I've learned working with metaphors in trainings and classrooms is that most of us are not accustomed to listening for metaphors. So, for instance, parties do "correspondence mapping" - carrying 'baggage' from source to target - just as the members of the Forest Service did. Making this visible can reveal contradictions, stuck places, assumptions, and open space for new understandings and decisions. Much of the content in this section comes from Thomas Smith, who has trained many mediators in metaphoric techniques. I was able to look at a number of his resources when we collaborated for a workshop at the Association for Conflict Resolution in 2015. Smith often asks participants in his workshops to work on listening for the source, as a first step. Let's say you hear parties say, "We're just stuck" and "There's nowhere to go from here." What is the source here?

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What is implied? These are such common metaphors that are used so often we are hardly aware of them (possibly 'frozen' ones but they can still be useful). But they carry 'baggage' and can be transformative as well. So, Smith says, the mediator might simply ask, "If you could go somewhere else, where would it be?" Because metaphors are whole, visual, and symbolic, working with them can be an invaluable way to do an end-run around stuck cognitive frameworks and allow parties to see beyond their immediate constructs to the underlying frames supporting them, and then, question and shift those frames once they become visible. This would go beautifully with the goals of narrative mediation to work with parties own construction of their story, and enable them to shift it.

In essence, Smith says we have four possible ways to do this as we work with parties' metaphors. He says we can:

- join a party's metaphors and reflect them back, thus helping the parties become more aware of the underlying structures of their worldviews, values, and assumptions;
- expand on it, as in the example above, with similar results;
- co-develop it to open and expand the narrative, for instance in the search for new co-joint narratives;
- or we can question it, as Monk and Winsalde do with issues of entitlement in the earlier section.

Here are examples from Smith on how to do these things. He feels that by sustaining a metaphor, you sustain a familiar cognitive structure in a way that helps people feel heard and validated. If you hear, "I feel like there's no way out anymore," and say, "So you feel trapped?" you are entering into their worldview in a way that respects it. This, by itself, can allow people to 'see' their own frames and question or reframe them.

We can also use a metaphor to unify and synthesize by, for instance, showing or making connections between different parties' metaphors and frames. Smith gives this example from the "There's nowhere to go from here" scenario above: He might ask, "Are you both going to the same place? Is there a way to go there together? What would that look like?" As you see, this is a way to start building the co-joint narrative.

In the same vein, a mediator could elicit preferred futures by asking, "Would you rather be in a conflict that made you use different metaphors? What might they be if they were connected to your goals? What might that lead to?"

Smith recommends the following questions to help unpack assumptions about causation, show what is missing, and reveal unseen layers:

- What tells you that the problem comes from something he/she/they did?
- What indicates for you the impact you have on this particular situation?
- What tells you the degree to which you effect this situation?
- What strategy did you decide on as a response?

Other questions that can get at somatic aspects of unpacked knowledge are particularly relevant for multidimensional work:

- What did you feel when you first noticed this problem?
- What is the first response you felt inside?

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Similarly, you can ask: "How do you feel now?" when shifts occur in the mediation. Many of the responses to these questions are metaphors that you can then work with like:
"I felt pressure building up until I knew I was going to explode."

Another idea comes from my colleague Brian Blancke who adapted three or four column note taking from Senge as used by Vantage Partners in many of their trainings (Senge, 2006). He feels there are a few ways to do this, for instance, having each co-mediator track one party's metaphors or having one track metaphors while the other tracks issues and agreement points. The different foci are tracked on a piece of paper with however many columns are needed. This can help mediators track and analyze metaphors. As an example:

- Column one might list: what is being said.
- Column two might list: metaphors you note.
- Column three might list: what is implied – the deeper level of meaning here.

You can then reflect back to the party something like: you used these metaphors when talking about this – is there a pattern here, do you think, that could help us see something that is important to you? This is similar to my dissertation research with metaphors and narratives that allowed me greater insight into what values shaped the worldview of a practitioner and guided their practice, but here those skills empower parties to understand themselves and their conflicts. In both cases, triangulating and tracking metaphors and the narratives they create and are embedded in, lead to greater insight.

Narrative (and other) mediators can, in short:

- Do an intake that elicits metaphoric understandings in ways that allow parties to begin to understand the way their own unconscious 'storying' shapes their conflict;
- Learn to listen for metaphors as sites for transformation and shift, which three column note taking could assist with;
- Using Smith's tools and processes, engage consciously with parties' metaphors and the metaphors framing a case to create spaces for shift and expansion.

To Conclude

Lederach's Moral Imagination (2005) implies that the core of what we do is support "the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist" (p. ix). Michael White says, "We enter into stories, we are entered into stories by others, and we live our lives through stories" (Winslade & Monk, 2000, p. 52). Narratives and metaphors are key tools that allow us to re-imagine our lives and retell our stories. They are central to our lives, and central to our conflicts. They are also key to our ability to 'live' into new stories and change our conflicts and our lives.

My preliminary observations point to the potential of metaphors as cites and tools of transformation which reinforces my contention that metaphor work may add real potential to narrative mediation, including enhancing its multidimensional potential. While narratives reveal a tremendous amount about how we consciously 'story' and 're-story' our lives, metaphors reveal unconscious frameworks and assumptions that can derail our attempts to re-write our conflicts. Working consciously with both could

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create much more powerful, transformative, and multidimensional practice for parties and narrative (and metaphor) mediators.

My hope is that mediators can work with greater art, insight, and impact by using both narrative and metaphoric tools. I also hope that future research will reveal more about how the powerful discursive and worldview shift work of the combination of narratives and metaphors can support richer and more multidimensional conflict resolution practice.

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