



Cross-cultural storytelling: Impact on community collaboration and healing

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Esti/Ester Cole, Ph.D. & Chuck Hollister, Ph.D.

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Disclosure

- **The presenters affirm that there are no conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, that could be perceived as influencing the content of this presentation.**



- Presenters' Bios:

- **Esti/Ester Cole , Ph.D. ester.cole@sympatico.ca was a psychologist in private practice. For many years, she supervised teams of school psychologists, was a multicultural team coordinator, consulted internationally with NGO, and was an adjunct professor of graduate programs. Her numerous publications and lectures on effective consultation models, impacted multicultural intervention services on a continuum. Cole, a CPA Fellow, has held key leadership professional roles in both Canada and the United States. At APA , she was for years a member of the DRN Advisory, COR, BPA, EDI – Collaborative, Work Groups, and Committees. She served on CRSSPP and is currently a COR &CJP member .Esti is an AJP EC member and the Chair of its Education Committee. She is a recipient of several Awards of Merit.**



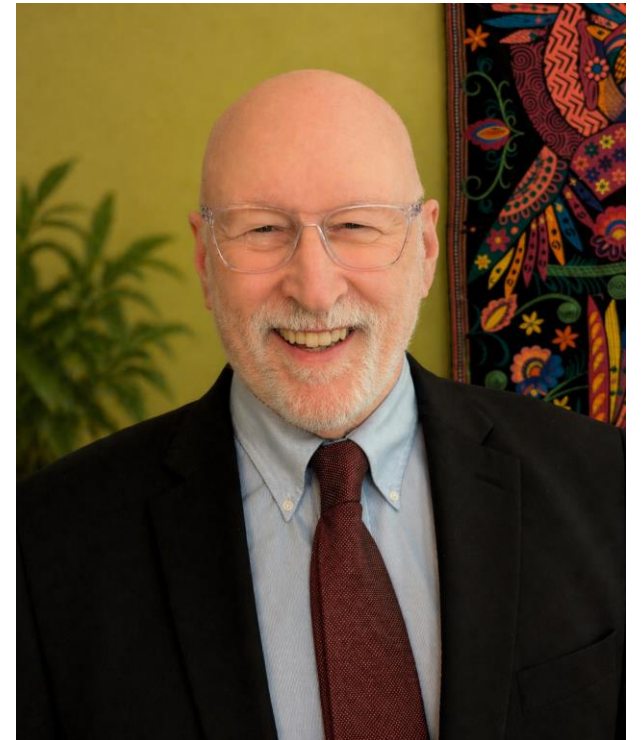
Chuck Hollister, Ph.D.

Licensed Psychologist · CEO & Director of Professional Affairs, Missouri Psychological Association

Chuck Hollister is a three-time APA Fellow, a licensed psychologist, and CEO and Director of Professional Affairs for the Missouri Psychological Association. He is a nationally recognized speaker on advocacy, storytelling, and working across the aisle.

He is a member of APA's Council of Representatives, past member of the Strategic Plan Update Committee, and the Advocacy Coordinating Committee. He has received national recognition for his leadership, including Division 31's 2025 Psychologist of the Year and the Karl F. Heiser Presidential Award for Advocacy.

Chuck is currently on APA's ballot for President-elect.



Learning Objectives

- Participants will learn how to:
 1. Better recognize the elements of storytelling important in creating empathy, understanding, and purpose.
 2. Strengthen a shared understanding of narratives that are generalizable in dealing with life's challenges through growth-promoting processes.
 3. Embed Human Rights, cross-cultural morals, and Ethical Codes training competencies for teaching and practice.
 4. Interweave Social Justice and interrelatedness of peoples and systems in consultations and mental health services.
 5. Identify growth promoting opportunities for cross-cultural respectful consultation pathways in order to promote reciprocal learning.

Psychology and storytelling

**“A person is a person
through other persons”**

(A Zulu Idiom)

**“ The human mind is a story processor, not a
logic processor. Everyone loves a good story;
every culture bathes its children in stories.
Among the most important stories we know
are stories about ourselves...”**

(Jonathan Haidt)



She helped
pass a bill that
benefited a
million
Missourians.



Stories create connection

What people feel

EMOTION

What draws you in

IMMERSIVE

What people remember

MEMORY

What people understand

MEANING

Who they identify with

IDENTIFICATION

What to do next

DESIRE FOR ACTION



The memorable part is rarely the statistic alone. It is the human image that gives the statistic meaning.

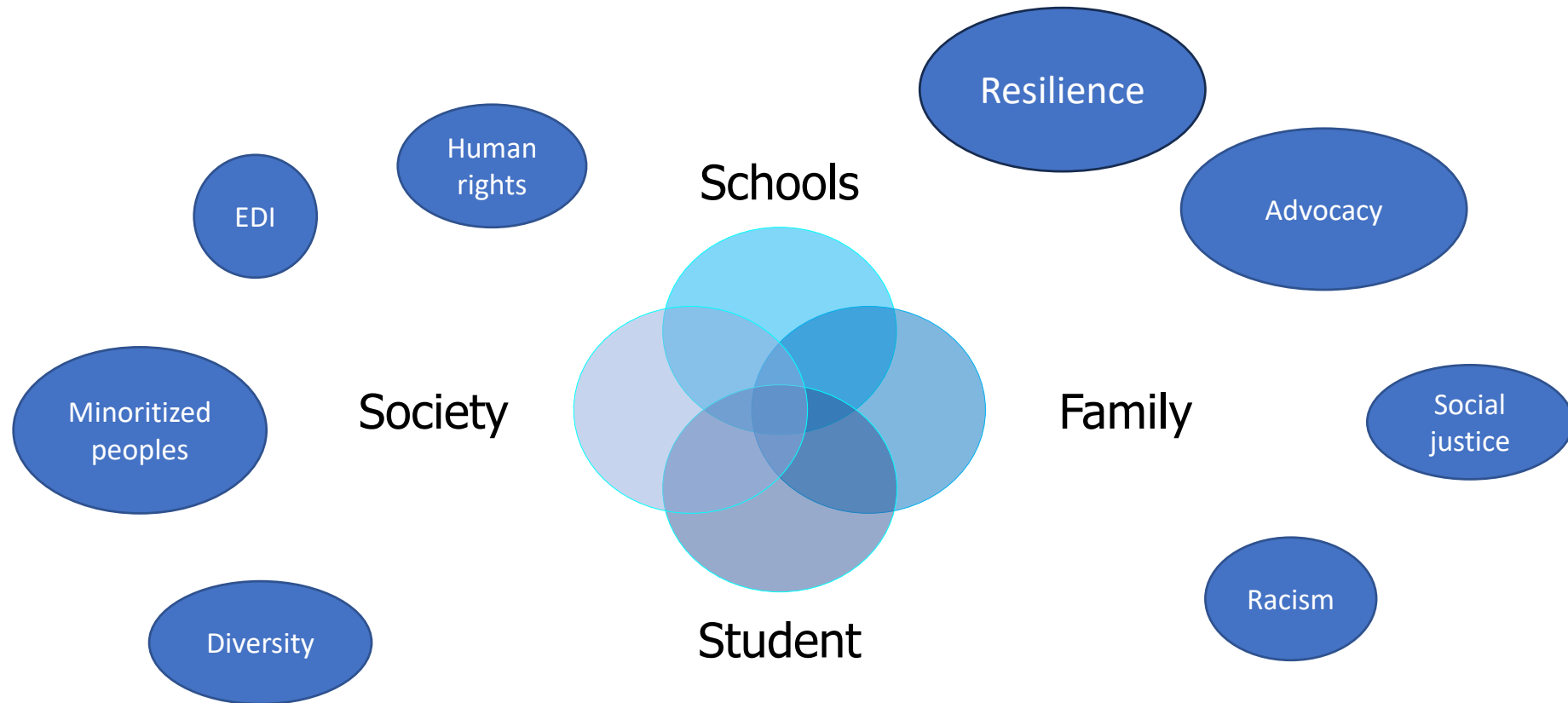


How many times more
memorable are stories
compared to facts and
figures?

22

Attributed to Jerome Bruner

Sources of Stress/Stories Points of Intervention



Function of the Folktale

- Recreational, pedagogical
- Outlet for imagination and dreams (in the face of taboos & repressions , permitted a certain liberation from daily living)
- The use of metaphor, humor, oral literature
- Example : *The Merry Widow* (Judeo – Arabic)

(Elbaz, 1982)



Why Narrative Power?

- **Biblical narrative acts as critical commentary/counterargument to law**
- **Sustainable narratives (Aesop's fable *The fox & the grapes*)**
- ***“ Sharing our stories is a way of opening our heart. And it is one of the best ways we have of opening the hearts of others”.***

(Taub, 2025)



Cross-cultural psychological power

- Effectiveness of stories – enhance learning outcomes, multiple intelligence, adult learning, literacy development, identity, empathy
- Effect on cognition- release of Oxytocin, stimulates cortical...
- Change in negative emotions, elicits emotions for better functioning
- Formulation of mental images, visualization ,therapeutic effect
- Tool in education, “there is a positive correlation between the narrative style & the retention rate ...”.

(Gupta & Jha, 2022)



Multicultural
competence
include
storytelling *

- **Cultural awareness of self and others**
 - **Challenging own bias**
 - **Cultural humility**
 - **Culturally informed practice**
-
- *NASP, APA, CPA



The Dream Catcher Legend

- **Originated from Indigenous North American traditions**
- **Why is the legend and its cultural significance so popular?**
- **Use of the Dream Catcher in interventions with children/youth who experienced Type I&II traumatic events (example related to wars , refugees)**
- **Creating communal stories as a therapeutic tool.**
- **Art as visual stories, drama, role-playing, group projects. Examples (The ICI)**

Hanna's Sabbath Dress

- A popular children's book by Itzhak Schweiger –Dmi'el
- Why did the folktale remain timeless?
- The gift, the promise, the test, the choice, the miracle-magical thinking
- Messages, traditions, values , practice

Children's Voices

- Group story by Newcomer students –
- *“Saber the lion and Elvis the cobra”*
- Writing my story with words and art
- Leaving my country
 - When I moved to country x, new schools
 - How I felt
 - Advice for other children

Monitor on Psychology— Emerging Trends

- **Storytelling strengthens psychological science's impact- Research requires translation of its impact (less jargon, more mattering)**
 - **I- Communicating effectively with the public**
 - **II- Psychologists continue to learn how to frame findings clearly , share via multiple venues**
 - **III- Including more science communication in training, adding public significance statements**
- (Deangelis, 2026)**

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And at the end...

Q&A ?



Your impact stories ?



Takeaways



Thank you for creating our collaborative story
today!

