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## Telling Our Stories: Developing Cultural Identity

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- [Amy] And again, I'd like to welcome everybody to our day one of our virtual conference on personal narratives. Our guest editor for today and for the, throughout the week is Dr. Trisha Self and she will be introducing our speaker shortly. Dr. Trisha Self is an associate professor and chair in the Communication, Sciences and Disorders department at Wichita State University in Wichita, Kansas. She's a board certified Child Language Specialist, and coordinator of the Autism Interdisciplinary Diagnostic and Treatment Team Lab at WSU. So Trisha, I'll go ahead and turn it over to you. Thank you so much for putting together a great week.

- [Trisha] Thank you, Amy. As Amy mentioned, this continuing education event is in partnership with the American Board of Child Language and Language Disorders. Also known as ABCLLD. I'm on the board of ABCLLD, and just want to mention to today's attendees that if you think you have advanced knowledge, skills and leadership in child language and are interested in becoming a Certified Child Language Specialist, you'll find resources at our website that described the process. The web address is [www.childlanguagespecialist.org](http://www.childlanguagespecialist.org). Those of us who are specialists have found many benefits to being certified as an expert in child language. One being that we're all dedicated to ensuring that children receive high quality services. So I invite you to become a specialist. I'd like to thank all of you for joining us today. We're fortunate to have Dr. Carol Westby with us who will present Telling Our Stories: Developing Cultural Identity.

Now, it's my pleasure to introduce our speaker. Dr. Westby is a consultant for bilingual multicultural services in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and an affiliated professor at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. She is a fellow of the American Speech Language Hearing Association, is board certified in Child Language, has received honors of ASHA and the distinguished alumnus award from Geneva college and a university of Iowa. She has published and presented nationally and internationally on

theory of mind, language literacy relationships, narrative expository development and facilitation, assessment and facilitation of written language and issues in assessment and intervention with culturally linguistically diverse populations. Welcome Dr. Westby. We're looking forward to your presentation today.

- [Westby] All right, thank you so much, Trish. It's just a little bit of an intimidating presentation several months ago, when a Trish and Linda Schreiber called me and asked for suggestions of who to ask to talk on this topic, I gave them my favorite people, the people that have really informed what I do. And then I get an email informing me that I was the speaker the first day, which I hadn't counted on because so much of my work, I use this, the information, from the speakers you will hear the rest of the week, and we are indeed privileged to hear from the speakers who are outstanding in this area of personal narratives. The end of this session, you should be able to explain the foundations of personal narratives and why they're a critical aspect of development, to describe influences of culture on personal narratives, and to identify strategies to promote the telling of the tailed coherent personal narratives. Now, why are personal narratives important?

Narratives are a universal genre, primary mode of thought. They're important for establishing and maintaining social relationships. Most conversations involve sharing our personal stories. The ability to produce coherent personal narratives is associated with the development of self identity and psychological wellbeing. And the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves guide our behavior. Narratives vary across cultures in terms of the reasons that people tell stories, who tells them, how children are socialized to storytelling, how stories are structured or organized, and the types and frequency of story, content and theme. Why is it important for us to be aware of cultural variations in narratives? Well, if we're not aware of those cultural variations, we may evaluate students' narratives inappropriately. If culturally linguistically diverse students are enabled to comprehend and produce the personal and fictional stories with the

expected Euro American function structures and content, they are at risk for academic difficulties. If schools focus on only Euro-American stories, students who are not from that cultural background do not see themselves validated in schools, and that can affect their development of a positive self-identity. And if schools value stories from only mainstream culture, mainstream students don't learn of the larger world. Number of years ago, I had a project called tails talking about life experiences and stories, and it had a twofold goal. One was to teach native American children mainstream stories so they could perform better academically in school. But the other equally important goal was to teach them the stories of their culture. The elders told us that in the past between first and last frost, the children would hear the stories of their culture. But now between first and last frost, they're watching television and playing computer games. For our logo, we use the turtle storyteller, which represents grandmother's passing down traditions. That baby turtles represent rebirth and life learning experiences of the next generation. Turtles are symbols of mother earth and wisdom to the people of the Pueblo. As long as turtles are around the village, the Pueblo will thrive. As long as you have your stories, your culture thrives. Here you see a picture of blue water who was one of the storytellers who came to work with the children and here she's teaching them a strength story. Let's go to the video here. This is one of the stories she taught.

- Once, there was a woman who was sitting in her rocking chair, rocking, weaving, and rocking and weaving. And then she heard this buzzing and looked up and there was this annoying mosquito that was fencing around her eyes and ears and nose. And she reached up and got rid of the mosquito.

- [Westby] All right, let's go back to the slides. This past February, I was in Rapa Nui or Easter Island. It's one of the most remote places on earth. It's a very small Island in the South Pacific, 2000 miles from the nearest land. I was there during the time of their Tapati festival, which is the celebration of their culture. Imagine my surprise the one evening when we went to the presentation and it was the Chi-Chi competition, a string

storytelling competition. Oh, go to the video please. I was so excited. I was thousands of miles from Albuquerque seeing string stories. This was a very small Island so it didn't take me too long to find the women who were responsible for this. They reconstituted the Chi Chi that was being lost. The string stories tell the history of their culture and how they had come to that Island. Okay, let's go back to the slides. Now, there are a number of types of narratives. There are the personal narratives we tell about our experiences. There are fictional narratives. There is an interaction here. The better you can tell a personal narrative, the better you are at comprehending and telling fictional narratives. The fictional narratives from your culture also give you an idea of how to organize your personal narratives.

And then by adolescents, students can tell life stories. That's a selective set of those autobiographical experiences. And we use them to explain how we've come to be the person we are, and it projects a sense of purpose and meaning into our future. Now, there is concern when children don't see themselves in the stories around them, Tomi Adeyemi is a young Nigerian American author. She has the bestselling series, Children of Blood and Bone. She was interviewed recently on Good Morning America. And here's what she said. I've been writing since I was a kid, but I didn't realize until I was 18 that in all the stories I would write, I don't really make my characters white or biracial.

And so when I was 18, I was like, wow, you don't even think you belong in your own imagination. It's damaging but it was also sad. But I also realized I needed to use writing to correct it in myself and hopefully help other people imagine themselves on the dragon and getting the romance and putting out the fire. And Robin Roberts asked, "Why do you think that was so?" And she responds, we didn't see it. We have stories, we have magazines, we have movies, we have television. But if you don't ever see someone who likes, looks like you, your subconscious goes, "Oh, I don't belong there." So you're writing and you're like, "I don't belong in my own imagination." I had to

reteach my brain. So I use my books to teach people. You can be your own protagonist. You deserve to be your own protagonist. Now our personal stories are dependent upon our autobiographical memory, and that's our personal memory for experiences. The events, the times, the places, the emotions associated with those experiences. There are two components to autobiographical memory. Semantic facts and the episodic remembering, being back in that place. This past new years, I was in Nepal. I have a fair amount of facts about, I know that Mount Everest is 29,000 feet. I know that Annapurna is 26,000 feet. It's the 10th highest mountain in the world. I know that Annapurna is the most dangerous mountain to climb in the world. A third of the people who have attempted that have died, only 4% of the people who have climbed Everest have died.

So I have factual information, but that's different than taking a small plane and flying alongside Mount Everest. It's different than getting in a tiny helicopter, going around behind Annapurna, landing at the base camp at 14,000 feet and trying to hike in 14,000 feet when the snow was almost up to my knees and my shoes kept falling off in the snow. That's the episodic part of that memory. Now autobiographical memory is sometimes called mental time travel. When I'm telling that experience, I am time traveling back to being on that mountain. The research shows the better you can time travel to the past, the better you can time travel to the future. And that helps you regulate.

Now before COVID, I usually would go to an exercise class every day everyday at the High. Now I walk the park for an hour. I don't like exercising. It's not something I've looked forward to. I'd be quite happy to just kind of stay in the house. But why do I do it? I like travel. So I think back to the trip a little over a year ago, when I'm in Morocco, and we had to climb in the high Atlas mountains because the guest house was at the top of the mountain. I was the oldest person on that trip and I was the last person up the mountain, but I got there. So I'm thinking of that. I need to stay in shape because

I'm planning this trip to Rapa Nui. I need to physically be able to do it. So those memories contribute to myself regulation. Individuals that have language impairment for just about any reason have deficits in autobiographical memory. This is a friend of mine was born without external and middle ears, has very severe bilateral loss, but has a master's degree in Speech Language Pathology. And she talks about her autobiographical memory problems. Everything gets confused or muddled together, mashed together. I have a vague idea of where I was, but when people talk about actual specific places like the highlight of a trip, it didn't really stick with me. All the camping trips we took became one big camping trip, even if they didn't happen in the same year. Now, autobiographical memories differ in Western and Eastern culture. And in Western cultures, when people pull up those memories, they talk about themselves. They give a fair amount of detail about a specific event, and they tell that memory through their eyes, through the first person. People in Eastern and collective cultures, when they retrieve that memory, retrieve information about what a lot of other people in that experience were doing.

They even might combine pieces of several events. They might tell that experience in the first person, but they might tell it as though they're observers in third person. And here's what I mean by that perspective taking, let's say I was driving and I was in an accident, if I'm telling it from first person, I am telling it as I am looking out, holding the steering wheel, looking at what's happening. If I was still driving for that accident but I was retelling this experience from third person, it's like I'm an extra person in the car looking on what I was doing. Now, individualistic and collective cultures differ in what they attend to in the experience. and even in looking at pictures. Western cultures tend to be much more individualistic. Eastern cultures, Latin cultures, much more collective. Let's say, you're looking at this picture of me and my friend Poncho. And afterwards, I asked you, "What do you remember about that picture?" People from Western cultures are more likely to have focused on me and Poncho, there was two of us. They might have noticed, yeah, you're in the temple, they might have remembered a little bit more

about what we were wearing. We were sitting down, I didn't have my shoes on. People from Eastern cultures will pay almost as much attention to everything else in the picture. And when they retell what they saw, they might say, yeah, it's a Buddhist temple, must not have been in China cause that's a skinny Buddhists. And China usually has chubby Buddhists. And oh, look there lady, she's behind the rope. Should she be behind her? That's not an appropriate thing. And she has the camera. Is it okay to take pictures of the Buddha? Oh, somebody has given some offering to the Buddha. What did they give to the Buddha? So a difference in what people attend to, in the original experience, and even in photographs of those experiences. Now, personal narratives provide the foundation for our agency and self identity. Agency is our role in pursuit of a goal. Who is doing what to whom? It's that quality that enables us to initiate an intentional action to achieve a goal.

Mike Adams has looked at how children show the development of agency in their narratives. And he says, preschoolers don't really show agency. They're just kind of telling what they're doing in terms of their roles as the little brother, the big sister, but elementary school children start showing quite a bit of agency. In their stories, they're talking about what they want and how they're going to get it and what they're hoping for and why they're afraid that they might not be able to get it. Adolescents become autobiographical authors of their story. They reflect on their dispositional traits. What kind of person am I?

Courageous, creative, timid, shy. They integrate experience from their past with ideas they have about the future to form a narrative self. And they do this by engaging in autobiographical reasoning. That's not just pulling up the past memory. It's self reflection, talking about that past, forming links between the elements of one slide, how you're seeing yourself now and relating how you see yourself to the past, and present and the future. That's how you develop a self identity. Now there are several types of agency. There's the direct personal agency where you bring your influence to bear on

yourself and others to get what you want. There's proxy or relational self where you rely on others to act on your behalf and get what you want. And there's collective agency where you work together with others to share yours and their future. Now, Mick Adams has particularly looked at a great deal of agency. And he says, there are usually four reasons, five reasons for which we engaged in agency. We're trying to master a physical or psychological skill. We're trying to achieve something or increase our prestige. We're trying to take responsibility or empower ourselves. But he says for most people, or agency, the outcome we're seeking is communion. We're engaged in activities largely because we're motivated to form connections with other people. Now it's very important that these life stories be coherent.

Even young elementary school children are developing some cultural concept of biography. And by that, I mean, what does your culture say? It's important to put in your stories. So even young children are starting to be aware of that. Doing elementary school, they get good at temporal coherence. They become knowledgeable of the predictable sequence of events. In early adolescents, they get good at causal coherence explaining connections between themselves, their thoughts and their actions and events. And in later adolescence, they now can tell stories that are thematic coherent. They begin to see patterns or principles about themselves and how those link into and determine their response to experiences. Bliss and McCabe have given us one framework for looking at personal narratives of children. And they say when you hear that narrative, ask yourself, has the child maintained the topic? Is it sufficiently informative? Is the youngster giving me enough information? Is there good event sequencing or the events in a chronological or logical order? Is there good referencing? Can I keep track of the people and the locations? Is there conjunctive cohesion? Has the child use temporal and causal markers? Keep those in mind now as you listen to this story from ten-year-old David, who has a language impairment, let's go to the video.

- I actually saw two spiders in the house and I thought, one is alive and one is alive, but the other one isn't and other one was. Actually, I actually, makes, I actually So I make sure it wasn't alive, so it was. It was, it was hiding from me, and once I came back and brush my teeth, I was looking for something in the mirror and my Well, and then, finally a spider came on my face and then I actually get it off and it feels creepy.

- Yeah, so you thought, was that the spider that you thought was?

- [Westby] Okay, lets go back to the slide. Now, my colleague Barbara Collado is trying to figure out just what was going on in that story. And if we look at it, he's done what Alyssa McCabe calls a leapfrog narrative. The order of the events are not clear. We're not sure if he brushed his teeth and saw the spider or saw the spider and brushed his teeth. We were never clear how many spiders there were and where are the spiders were, and there were no temporal or causal conjunctions. David is the child who brought Barbara and my attention to the importance of personal narratives. I had not given much of any attention to personal narratives before I worked with David, I had done a great deal with fictional narratives. David had been a perfectly typically developing child until he was around four and a half. And then over a few days period, he seemed not to attend to his mother very much.

And then he awoke one day, not being able to talk and not understanding anything his mother said to him. He was diagnosed with Landau-Kleffner, a rare neurological seizure disorder that attacks the language areas of the brain. David came to us about three years afterwards, he received a lot of medical intervention, had been taught signing for a while and comes to us. He had some language back and Barbara spent a couple years building the basic language skills. At 10, as you heard him, he was sounding fairly good. There were clearly discourse issues, but what happened at 10, David started saying, "Why am I 10 and everyone else in my class is nine?" Why can they do things faster and it takes me so long? Why do I have to go to Los Angeles a couple

times a week? And as Barbara and I talked, we said he needs to understand what happened to him. He needs to know his story. So we worked with his parents over a period of time, helping David tell his life story. And in doing that, we had to build his ability to coherently relate events. Here Barbara had taken his group to the natural history museum on a day, they happened to be having a program on spiders, which we know David didn't like, but here he finally goes up and said, then I decided to do it. And he was remembering a book Barbara had read with him about You Can Do It, Bert about the little bird who had been afraid to jump off the branch. In working on his life story, there were four aspects of self we wanted to develop. The unique self. David, what are your likes and desires?

What are the kinds of things your family does? We wanted to develop a positive self. At 10, he was showing depression. All he could see was ways that he wasn't as good as other youngsters. We worked with the family to become aware, "What are the things you're good at?" We helped him see the Mark changes he had been making over the years. The family got him enrolled in swimming and he became a very successful competitive swimmer. We wanted to help him build a coherent self. Who were you before, during, after the illness? And we wanted to help him be able to see a future self. And his family scouting was very important. And David wanted to be an Eagle scout.

This past December, he achieved the rank of Eagle scout. Only 4% of boy scouts achieved that rank. Now adolescents need to become autobiographical authors. And to do that, they have to be aware of the traits they have. They have to know their physical traits. Am I tall or short or scrawny? And their internal traits. Determined, resourceful, respectful, clever, conscientious. Now the majority of students we're working with have language impairments. So they particularly have quite limited vocabulary for these concepts. So we're going to need to develop that vocabulary. And we do that through stories and helping the students also reflect on themselves. One of our staff was assigned to a charter school for American Indian Adolescents and this

particular year, she and the Special Ed teacher who taught literature worked together and the whole unit that year was on biographies and helping the students learn to write their own autobiographical life. One of the books we used with Salt in His Shoes. Michael Jordan was not always tall. And he was rejected from playing ball with the other boys in this neighborhood cause he wasn't tall enough. He heard you could grow tall if you put salt in your shoes. So he did that but that didn't help him grow tall. And his dad says well, just keep practicing. So he practiced and practiced. And even though he didn't grow tall at that time, he got to be so good that he was able to join the rest of the boys in playing basketball. He was persistent. He was determined. We did the bow book Balloons Over Broadway about Tony Sarg who created the helium balloons that first flew in the 1928 Macy's day parade.

We did this book because I live in Albuquerque. It's the balloon capital of the world. All kids know about balloons. They see balloons. Everyone's going to go to balloon fiesta. And in recent years, the balloons will come and launch off the school sites. So that was the reason we use this book. What can we say about Sarg? He was creative. He was intelligent. He was imaginative. Just a native American charter school, we did native American books, the unbreakable code about the know of a host code talkers. Their ability to develop a code that was never broken, was credited for the success we had in winning the war in the Pacific.

What kind of men were these? They were taken off the reservation. They were locked up in a room together and told to develop a workable code. What did it take for them to do that? This was a very popular book with the students. Matthew Henson was the African American who made it possible for Robert Perry to get to the North pole. What were his characteristics? We had to talk about the characteristics. The students had to provide evidence from the story. He was tough and he was strong. How do you know? Well, when the dogs gave out, he pulled the sled. He was curious and adventuresome, what showed you that? He managed to get himself around the world, getting on lots of

different boats. He was conscientious and responsible. How do you know? He did what not only what he was told to do, but he was always looking out what else should be done. And he was doing it before he was asked. And it was those traits that Perry saw in him that caused him to be asked to join that expedition. And then what about your traits? How do you show that you're determined, that you're persistent, that you're curious? Now, for the students, we needed to build the language that you have to have for temporal and causal coherence. We had to build their ability to use these temporal and causal words. I was also surprised a lot of these students didn't, still did not know the months of the year, the seasons of the year. And it turns out that's very important in our personal narratives as you get older, to link those experiences in time. We also needed to help them be able to express these relationships in linguistically coherent ways.

This is a book we've used the past year with our older students, *The Wild Robot*. A transport plane is taking a cargo of robots someplace and it crashed lands on an Island and only one robot survives, it's Ross. When Ross awoke, how did she feel? She felt curious, why? Because she didn't know where she was and what the bright light was. So we're explicitly teaching them how to coherently talk about what happened and when it happened. Okay, now, McLean says the stories we generate are based on a master narrative that we get from our culture. McLean says pretty much in every culture, there are some people that, they take part of the master narrative, but they have to develop an alternative narrative. In her article, she talks about how women do it, but we've all seen in the last couple months, how in the United States, African-Americans have to have alternative narratives. Now those master narratives, as I said, are coming from the narratives of your culture. Joseph Campbell in 1948, introduced this idea that all cultures seem to have hero journey myths and Campbell says those myths has several functions. It helps you have a sense of all about the world about you. It gives you a way to explain how your world came to be and why it is the way it is. They teach you what's important in your culture and community, and they

give you a model for your own development. Out of Western culture, the classic hero's journey stories was Odessa's in the Odyssey. Out of Eastern culture, it's the Monkey King and Journey to the West. Now, those hero journey narratives are highly influenced by the cultural value system. We can look at countries around the world and put them on a continuum from highly individualistic to highly collective, Western cultures and English speaking cultures. So Northern and Western Europe and English speaking cultures are highly individualistic.

You develop an early independence. You take responsibility for yourself. Tasks are more important than relationships. Your own goals take priority. Cognitive skills are independent of social skills. Collective cultures, you depend on others. You're responsible for others. Other people's goals are more important than your own. Relationships are really important. Both the Eastern and Western cultures have superhero stories now. The first superhero story came out in 1938 and that was Superman. If we look at Eastern and Western superheroes, they're both journeys stories but there are differences.

In Western superhero stories, the mentors are usually absent or dead. Superman's parents died. Spider-Man's uncle got shot. Typically, the hero fights a lonely battle. Until recently, the heroes have been largely white straight males. The focus is on external struggles and lots of action verbs, and fighters achieve their prowess through their physical strength. In contrast, Eastern superheroes usually have a strong living mentor. They work in groups. The focus is on internal struggle, internal struggles, and the fighters are ones who are portrayed as being respected for the wisdom they've given through martial arts. Now the Marvel comics and DC comics are making their comics very diverse with people from all different cultures and women, but on a blog quite recently, a fellow from Malaysia said, you put an Asian in the story, but you made him think like an American. Cultures prefer different emotions. Our emotions are very important in those autobiographical memories. People in Western cultures tend to

prefer high arousal happy emotions. And if given a choice for a vacation, they like exciting vacations. Eastern cultures are more likely to prefer low arousal emotions and are normally likely to take select vacations that are calming. Now science says the children are socialized to this very early. She showed children, elementary school children, in Taiwan and in California pictures. Some of the pictures the children were very, clearly happy, but calm and peaceful, and in other pictures, the children were exuberant and very active. And she asked the youngsters, "Who are you more like?" The children in Taiwan chose more of the pictures where the youngsters were engaged in happy, calm, peaceful activities.

And the youngsters in California chose the much more active pictures. Now she said, "You will see that in children's books." And she talks about some of the books she found in Chinese, in Taiwan. Well, I couldn't find those books, but what she commented about the books was that the people, the characters in the book don't have wide toothy smiles, they have closed smiles. So I looked for some books published in the U.S., but written by Asian American authors and I found the same thing. Notice, nice little smile, girls are content, but compare that to these wide toothy smiles in stories written by Westerners. So I did a recent study looking at photographs of leaders around the world.

You see Barack Obama with a wide toothy smile, and you see the Chinese president Xi Jinping with a nice little closed smile. Okay, now on Wednesday, Marlene Westerveld will be talking to you about the Global Tales project that she is leading, and I'm fortunate to be a participant with that. We've been collecting stories from 20 children in different countries around the world. So far the main story we've analyzed, just tell me a story about a time when you had a problem and you had to fix it, tell me what happened and what you had to do to fix it. Now I help collect and analyze the U.S. stories. We wanted stories from a nation country. So I contacted a friend there, Kai-Mei Chen who's a professor and she collected 20 stories from Taiwanese story children.

And I helped helped her analyze them. And after I did, I said Kai-Mei, the stories your kids told aren't anything like the U.S. stories. I then emailed Marlene, and I said Marlene, give me the stories of, from all the English speaking kids we have. And she did. I went through and I looked at the stories and coded them for what's the topic. 12 of the 20 stories of the children in Taiwan were about school. Eight of them working hard to achieve a good grade or win a contest. Four of them, school responsibilities. They showed up and either didn't do what they were supposed to, or didn't have what they needed. In contrast, over half of all of the stories told by the 80 English speaking children were about peer relationships.

And most of those stories were fighting and arguing, which concerned me. Kai-Mei Chen and I spent a long time. Why are there these differences? Here again, not surprisingly, the culture is going to influence what you talk about. We've already talked quite a bit about collective versus individualistic cultures, but cultures can also vary empower distance. High power distance cultures, people who are in power or above you, the teacher, the parents, the boss deserves respect. You obey and listen to that person.

Eastern cultures, much higher power. Western cultures, we try to pretend there's low culture and even teachers have to gain respect of children. So Taiwan, high power distance. Cultures also vary in how comfortable they are with uncertainty and Kai-Mei agreed that Taiwan, we don't like uncertainty, and high uncertainty, avoidance cultures put rules in place, and you were obey the rule. Western cultures are low uncertainty. They don't make rules, and if you make rules, people don't want to follow them. Okay, how much have we seen that in the last three months? You can't make a rule to tell me I have to wear a mask. Where did these differences come from? You can trace them back 2,500 years to Confucians and Socrates. Confucian ideals say that education's goal is to achieve harmony and anyone can do well in education if you work and you respect authority, and the teacher determines the nature of the education and you get

joy once you achieved that educational goal. Socratic thought says the purpose of education is to develop critical thinking. And a big point of Socrates was to learn how to question and engage in logical argument. Academic success is more dependent on what you come with. Education should be student-centered and students expect the learning itself to be fun. As Kai-Mei and I talked, she said from the time we're little kids, we're told how important education is. So she said, I'm not surprised for 10 year olds doing well in school is really, really important. Another thing that happened, a number of the Taiwanese ten-year-olds in response to that story got assistance from the parent or the teacher, that was extremely rare for the English speaking children. I think they were saying something in power distance. And then Kai-Mei Chen said, "If you do well in school, you avoid uncertainty."

Now I had expected to see more examples of collective interactions cum stories, peer stories in the Chinese children. And we didn't see many, but I think that was the age of the children and the fact they were focused on doing well in school. But remember that the three stories they produced were collaborative stories compared to the English speaking stories. Very few stories even mentioned school, all of the ones that did mentioned having some difficulty in school, but none of those stories dealt with how the kids overcame the difficulty.

As I mentioned, the majority of the stories were fighting and arguing. And initially I was really bothered by that. And then as I looked more carefully and thought about socialization in individualistic cultures, and I found that Mashford-Scott article where she says, when you see preschool kids arguing, that's the perfect time to intervene and help them develop agency, and teach them how to stand up for their rights. And it's like when I look back at the argue and arguments, it wasn't so much that the kids were being nasty to one another, but they were asserting, what is my right, here is my desire, and this is what I should do? Now, the ability to tell coherent stories is really important for the development of our agency, our cultural self identity and our mental health.

Trauma affects people's ability to tell coherence stories. There's been a therapeutic program for adults who have experienced trauma called narrative exposure therapy. And what they do with these adults is help the people learn to coherently tell their life stories, and surprisingly, just telling your life story coherently results in a reduction of some of those posttraumatic stress symptoms, particularly the intrusive memories of that trauma. The nightmare from that trauma. Well, Europe has seen this tremendous influx of refugees. Germany within a year resettled 1.2 million people. They had thousands of children who needed mental health support, and they developed a KIDNET variation of narrative exposure therapy.

That's also proving to be helpful in reducing the trauma symptoms of these children. This approach has been, it's being used also with children with autism, children who have had developmental impairments. And the only caution is it's going to take you longer to build the language skills. Now, why would telling your life story coherently help reduce these trauma symptoms? Well, what the neuroscience literature shows us is that trauma disrupts our memory. It disconnects the hot part of the memory from the cold part of the memory.

The hot memory is the sensory perception of that experience, the sight, the smell, the sound, the pain, that gets separated from where and when it happened. It's like there's a wall between those two aspects of the memory and what NET or KIDNET is going to do is break down the wall and bring those memories together. And the ultimate goal is that the child can coherently tell his life story. You put out a timeline, a ribbon, you work with the caregivers, tell me about times that were really good. You put flowers for the good experiences. What were the trauma events? You put rocks for the trauma events. When I read about this, I realized in a way, this was what Barbara and I were doing with David. We help him tell his life story. Now in both Europe and in Africa, they've trained lay people to do this. If you're working with youngsters that have really experienced significant adverse childhood experiences, of childhood or significant war trauma, As

SLPs, we don't have the level of mental health background that we need. So do this jointly with mental health people, or what you're really good at doing is you can help the children learn how to talk coherently about those flower experiences. And the beginning of those flower experiences, make them experiences that you, yourself have had with the child. That way, you know what you've done, what the child has experienced, and you can help those children talk coherently about it. So if you've done a fun activity in a therapy session, in the classroom, for example, let's say we will sometimes go through a series of lessons where we're reading books about rockets. We're building rockets. We're going to go launch the rocket, then talk about when we launched it. What did you hear?

What did you smell? What did you see? Oh yeah, you smelled, the smoke you heard, oh, it was really loud. What were you thinking? Oh, you know, a lot of our science experiments don't work. Do you think this rocket's really going to go up? How did you feel when it launched? Oh, we were so thrilled. Finally, a science experiment that works and look how far it went. How did your body react? Oh yeah I jumped, I jumped back. I was kind of startled by it. Then you want to really localize that in the detail of the when and where, what did we do? Where were we?

We're on top of the Hill at Northern Wood Park. When were we there? Tuesday, September 6th at nine o'clock in the morning in September. What was the sequence that we went through to launch that rocket? You use icons to help the children know the components to include in those memories. And having children tell their life stories, turns out it reduces the severity and the frequency of those intrusive memories. And again, what's happening? Let's say the youngster is 15, the firework goes off in the past. When that firework would go off, he would be panicked that the people are coming and shooting at his house. Now he's like, that was when I was in El Salvador and the gang came and they shot up. It's not now, I'm safe in Albuquerque. Locating those traumas in time, help people reduce the intrusiveness of those memories. People

that do narrative exposure therapy use a closet metaphor. They said what happens with these bad memories, it's like these bad memories have just been shoved into the closet and you go by the closet or in the closet. And everything just falls out all over the place. You're taking each memory, you're looking at it, you're analyzing it. And you're putting it back in the closet where it belongs. So it doesn't just pop out. That's a memory that belongs back five years ago, not now. We began this session with a native American story, and we're going to end with a native American story. Leslie Marmon Silko is a member of the Laguna Indian tribe. And in her book ceremony, she tells the story of Tayo, a war veteran who has come back from a war with PTSD. And it's how he heals himself by immersing himself in the stories of his culture. And that book opens with the statement.

I'll tell you something about stories, he said, they aren't just entertainment, don't be fooled. They are all we have, you see, all we have to fight off illness and death. You don't have anything if you don't have stories. Maya Angelou has said there is no greater agony than bearing an untold story with inside yourself. And Salman Rushdie has said those who do not have the power over the story that dominates their lives, the power to retell it, rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it, change it as times change truly are powerless because they cannot think new thoughts. I have learned how critical to our mental health and children's social, emotional development personal narratives are. Over these next several days, you're going to be learning a lot about personal narratives that will give you insight as to how to facilitate personal narratives in children to enable them to develop a positive cultural identity. Thank you for joining me today. And it looks like we have a few minutes for some questions.

- [Amy] All right, thank you so much, Carol. We've really learned so much and appreciate you sharing your areas of expertise with us and such an important topic. Let's see what questions we have coming in right now. All right, here's the first

question. Are there any other packaged interventions out there that you recommend clinicians used? Use, excuse me?

- [Westby] Oh, I will make a mention about KIDNET. And as I said, if kids have had real trauma, an SLP shouldn't be doing that whole thing herself, but you can do the methods. I realized that's what we did with David. You can paint, could do those strategies, the chapter is available for free online that really describes this in a little more detail. I don't think I put that connection up, but I could track that one down. When youngsters indeed have had a really serious trauma, you want the mental health people dealing with that piece. In terms of thinking of a number of cell programs, and I taught some about that last year at this time I did the session on childhood ACEs. And I think in that one, I talk about some cell programs. I talked about a program for preschoolers out of Wisconsin where you're helping kids learn to talk about emotions, talk about experiences.

- [Amy] Okay, great, thank you. Here's the next question. What are some cultural and personal aspects of pronoun use in children's personal narrative using first person versus referring to one self by name or third person?

- [Westby] Oh, very, very interesting important question. Yes, some languages you don't refer to yourself as I, and that occurs more in collective cultures where they're more likely to tell it through third person. When you tell the story through third person, the emotions are less strong, and one hand telling the story through third-person eyes reduces the intensity of the trauma. So I'm glad you asked that. I forgot to mention that. That is something that differs, cultures that are less likely to use those first person pronouns are more likely to those narratives through a third, through the eyes of a third person.

- [Amy] All right, thank you. Are there any resources for narrative development for adults who have had trauma?

- [Westby] Well, and that's where I realized that net therapy first was developed with adults. What I would say again and here, when I've talked to people, I have some colleagues who work very closely with mental health people. What you can do is as an SLP, you know what makes for a coherent narrative? A couple months ago, I was doing a workshop and there was a social worker in the front row. And in the breaks, he kept talking to me. He said, this is what I've been working with adults. He said I never realized there were these language problems that was, that were creating difficulty cause I'm trying to work through having them, tell me their experiences. He said, "I realized they can't produce coherent sentences." I'm thinking back, I need to help them know, learn how to even use those temporal and causal markers. So even with adults, helping them be able to tell coherent personal stories. And you realize, again, the literature on trauma shows, individuals who have had trauma have difficulty telling a coherent story about anything. So that's where the SLP can begin with that. Some of our staff have worked jointly. They do the sessions jointly with the mental health worker. Others, I have a real good friend who collaborates very regularly with the mental health people of knowing how to build the language part, explaining to the mental health person what the individual should now be able to do as they talk about some of the trauma issues.

- [Amy] Okay great, thank you for that. And then two more questions, and then we can go ahead and wrap it up there. And for anybody who does need to log off at this time, you are certainly more than welcome to do so. Or you can stick around for these final two questions. Okay, so Taiwanese stories are created with a monochromatic culture whereas the students in the U.S are developing narrative skills within a multicultural context. Wouldn't this be a significant factor?

- [Westby] I'm not quite clear of what you're asking. In the U.S, the main framework that school uses are the Euro-American stories. On Friday, you're going to hear from Alyssa McCabe, who I admire tremendously and Alyssa in 95, wrote a book called chameleon readers, and how all readers have to learn to, around the world, have to learn to comprehend and produce stories of all types. And that's what we see people now talking about. Children around the world need to be chameleon readers, and with children in the U.S, very frequently, again, people haven't recognized the stories the children come with. They haven't been supported in those stories. That's been true of African American children. A lot of times it was felt they really couldn't tell a very good story because the mainstream culture didn't understand the structure of their story. When kids or anyone goes across cultures, it can take time to figure out how to understand a story. Tomorrow, I've got a book group and the book we were told to read was Sand Talk, and it's written by an Aboriginal person. And for the first half of the book, I could not figure out what was going on. And even though I know something about Aboriginal culture, so I don't know if this is getting some of what the person asks, that it's why we do have to help children learn the structure, the content of stories from around the world.

- [Amy] Sure, thank you so much for that explanation. And one last question. This person is saying that she loves the idea of using biographies as part of a literature based therapy. Do you have a list of books and coordinating lessons for expanding on the character traits?

- [Westby] That's a good thing for me to write up. Thank you for doing that. I edited a newsletter. That's something I could do because indeed, as you mentioned, I'm going to contact the SLP that did that because there were a whole series of books she used throughout that year. You might question why we were using picture books and these were high school students. How did we get away with that? And we needed to use, we use the picture books because we wanted stories that were short enough and not take

weeks to get through and to make the point. And we were concerned about the high school students looking at that, but what the SLP did was use the stories. And then the high school students went and shared those stories with a native school for elementary school kids. So as they learn the story, they said your job now is to go and teach this story to younger children. And that made them quite accepting of the story even though our initial agenda was for them to understand the traits of the characters.

- [Amy] That's a great idea. If there are any resources that you would like to pass along to me, I'd be happy to upload those to the course and, or send them onto our participants today. That would be fine of you, if that's something you'd like to do.

- Okay. They're giving me some ideas and so I'm just sitting home and not traveling all this time, some additional things to work in writing, thank you.

- [Amy] Sure, all right. Well, we can go ahead and wrap it up there for today. Once again, Carol, thank you so much for joining us. It's always a pleasure and we learn so much from you. So I think this is a great way to kick off the rest of the week and hopefully our, all of our members today can join us for the rest of the week. Just know that if you aren't able to join us for the live webinars, each one will be available as a recorded course in our library within one to two days typically after the live event. So we look forward to seeing everyone again soon. And thank you again, Dr. Westby. We really appreciate it.

- [Westby] Thank you too.