Introduction to Special Issue on Museums, and Editor’s Thanks and Farewell

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As this issue was going into press, Peace and Conflict’s beloved founder, first editor, and eminent psychologist, Milton Schwebel, suddenly died. Milt was a much revered public intellectual, and a treasured colleague of many. He has had a broad influence within and beyond psychology, extending to education, political science, and health policy. His energy, creativity, kindness, and insightful analyses of contemporary issues were remarkable. He remained a concerned, incisive thinker, and was professionally active until the end of his life at 99. The first special issue of the series, “Pioneers in Peace Psychology,” in 2003 was devoted to Milt’s work and influence (Wagner, 2003). I am so pleased that Peace and Conflict published Milt’s paper, “Why America Doesn’t Fix its Failing Schools,” (Schwebel, 2012) in a special section entitled, “School Closings and Struggles for Educational Justice” guest edited by Michelle Fine. His paper observed that, at this moment in history, America is moving rapidly and radically in the wrong direction for fixing its schools as structural violence, disinvestment, and high-stakes testing erode the vibrancy of schools and America’s multiracial democracy. With power and courage, he named and critiqued what is happening to help us imagine what could be. I thank colleagues who wrote the obituary that begins this issue. Their quick and collaborative effort indicates the high regard so many have for an extraordinary peace scholar, activist, and person. Here’s to you, dear Milt, with love.

This introduction to the special issue of Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, my last as the journal’s editor, has two parts. In the first I introduce an exciting special issue on Canadian museums that speaks to peace and conflict in valuable, interdisciplinary ways. In the second I thank the many people who have made the journal such a vital forum for understanding peace and conflict.

Special Issue: Museums as Sites for Historical Understanding, Peace, and Social Justice: Views From Canada

This special issue of Peace and Conflict focuses on an influential and prevalent societal institution, the historical museum, and its relevance to peace and conflict. The issue emerged, in part, from my own scholarly work on representations of injustice and exclusion in museums (Opotow, 2011a, 2011b). It also emerged from a 2011 residence as Distinguished Visitor at Carleton University in Ottawa, which introduced me to two prominent Canadian museums: The Canadian War Museum and The Canadian Museum of Civilization. Through this visit I met Carleton University History Professor and Co-Director of the Carleton Centre for Public History David Dean. When David Dean visited New York months later, this special issue on museums, peace, and conflict began to take shape.

Viewing key psychological topics—memory, trauma, identity—through the lens of a kindred discipline, public history,1 can enrich our understanding of peace and conflict. Canada’s im-

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1 Public history is a discipline that applies history to social contexts and presents historical knowledge to the public.
Important museums on war, history and culture, and human rights offer an apt and thought-provoking context for studying how museums and peace psychology connect.

**Museums, Conflict, and Peace**

Although there is wide variation in their size and focus, a museum can be defined simply: a building or institution in which objects of historical, scientific, artistic, or cultural interest are preserved and exhibited. This issue focuses on historical museums, familiar institutions in large and small communities throughout the world. Often built and maintained to promote the remembrance of events, people, or groups, they exhibit evidence that narrates the past in ways that can interrogate a nation’s history and reshape its collective memory (e.g., Connerton, 1989; Urry, 1996). When such museums focus on past troubles, struggles, and inequalities they speak to peace and conflict in ways that can enable visitors to grasp the societal forces that gave rise to injustice, harm, and exclusion—lessons with relevance to social relations today.

Museums are not simply serene, neutral sites but holders of artifacts and narratives that speak to sociopolitical tensions that have given rise to protest. Museum exhibitions have provoked conflict about whose past is told, who narrates that past, and what is exhibited or omitted (e.g., Clifford, 1988). As an example of a prominent controversy, in 1995 the Smithsonian Institution planned to display the fuselage of Enola Gay, the B-29 bomber that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945. Veterans’ groups opposed the exhibit’s narrative on Japanese casualties, and the controversy became national news as historians, museum officials, and the U.S. Senate became involved (Linenthal & Engelhardt, 1996; Meyer, 1995).

Three prominent museums on Canada’s cultural, political, and military history offer a rich opportunity to consider how museums can speak to war, peace, and conflict narratively, creatively, and critically. The newest museum, The Canadian Museum for Human Rights, is slated to open in Winnipeg in 2014. The Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, focusing on Canada’s military past, opened in 2005. The Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa has roots going back to 1856, making it one of North America’s oldest cultural institutions. This museum, which has focused on Canada’s human history and cultural diversity, is currently undergoing controversial change as a result of governmental mandate. As David Dean describes in this issue,

> With a Conservative government that has been rebranding national identity in ways that emphasize the country’s military past, Canada has a unique story to tell when it comes to exploring how conflict and peace, dissonance and harmony, competing interpretations and common understandings, injustice and justice are represented (p. 325).

Because David Dean’s informative introductions speaks to the Canadian context, how historical and contemporary peace and conflict play out in this and other museums, and to the scholarship in this issue, my introduction to the papers is brief.

**Papers on Museums and Peace**

Three papers in this issue—one on each museum—are written by public historians who are established scholars of peace, conflict, and communication. Each knowledgeably and critically probes the resources, opportunities, and challenges of a particular museum, discussing how its representational goals have played out in practice.

The issue includes a section by nine students who were asked to develop proposals for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) as part of coursework for *Museums, National Identity, and Public Memory* (just when the CMHR, which was under development, issued a Call for proposals). Students’ thoughtful and creative papers proposed exhibitions on human rights violations experienced by individuals and groups in Canada. Their proposals allow us to see how museum exhibitions can begin with troubling societal issues: sterilization, eugenics, police abuse, institutionalization of vulnerable populations, anti-Semitism, and race-based quotas. The papers then succinctly and vividly convey key information that would be needed for such an exhibition. They then propose representational approaches to engage visitors.
Conflicts noted in these proposals occur at multiple levels—for individuals, families, communities, and the nation. Each of the proposals handles this sensitively, aware that histories they describe may rouse painful memories for visitors. Their proposals challenge us to consider what issues are exhibited in museums, the kinds of effort that produces them, whose past is exhibited, and whose past is ignored, erased, or forgotten.

Although there is a close and well understood connection between museums and the field of history, this special issue also reveals a close connection between museums and psychology. Both focus on difficult and hidden memories, national and personal identity, acute and chronic conflict, hidden and blatant injustice, trauma and healing, and the disruption and achievement of peace. I thank the guest editor, the authors, and the issue’s reviewers for their outstanding contributions to this issue and to our field.

Book Reviews

Five book reviews in this issue alert readers to recent, noteworthy books relevant to peace psychology. Trudy Bond reviews Jeremy Scahill’s *Dirty Wars: The World Is a Battlefield* (2013). She describes this book as presenting lessons from history that are not only important in their own right but also strikingly relevant today. As this issue is going to press, U.S. drone strikes in Yemen remain in world news. Sherrill Hayes reviews Nel Noddings’s *Peace Education: How We Come to Love and Hate War* (2012). She describes this book as a provocative examination of Western society’s fascination with war and notes that the author emphasizes structural factors promoting war and urges educators to critically examine the centrality of war in our society. Florette Cohen reviews Neil Kressel’s *The Sons of Pigs and Apes: Muslim Antisemitism and the Conspiracy of Silence* (2012), a book that focuses on a particular prejudice, Muslim’s hatred of Jews. She describes Kressel’s approach and psychological theories that can help us understand this expression of prejudice. Carol Rank reviews Thomas Matyok, Jessica Senehi, and Sean Byrne’s edited book, *Critical Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies: Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy* (2011). She describes the book as including founders of the field as well as new voices. It offers an overview of contemporary approaches and emerging issues in the field, and it discusses current theories, practices, and pedagogy. Caitlin Mahoney reviews Steven Pinker’s *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (2011). She discusses his provocative argument, based on scholarship in history, anthropology, economics, and other fields: violence has declined as the result of changing societal conditions and may continue doing so.

Afterward: Reflections on Peace and Conflict

Timothy Luke has been the journal’s editorial assistant throughout my term. He and I have constituted the editorial staff in John Jay College’s *Peace and Conflict* office. A diligent editorial assistant and an insightful scholar, Timothy has increasingly become familiar with peace psychology, a field that was new to him. His own research which aims at improving interviewing and interrogation techniques, bears some relationship to the work of peace psychologists concerned with ethical quandaries posed by such techniques (cf., Arrigo, Eidelson, & Bennett, 2012). In his work as Editorial Assistant Timothy has tracked journal submissions and their progress through the peer review process and been in touch with scholars worldwide. As we share an interest in the flow of topics in the journal over time, I asked him, as our work on the journal concludes, if he’d like to write a short commentary. His overview, the last paper in this issue, offers us his sense of the breadth and momentum of the field over the journal’s 19 years.

Both Timothy and I correspond directly with authors and reviewers and have both appreciated the collegiality of this increasingly anachronistic approach to journal communications. In the section that follows, I express my deep appreciation for the many people with whom I have worked and corresponded. They have contributed much to the journal.

With Warm Thanks!

I joined Milton Schwebel’s editorial board in 1997 and became an associate editor in 2001 during Richard Wagner’s editorial term, when
the journal initiated an impressive series on Pioneers of Peace Psychology and dealt with 9/11 and its aftermath. I am indebted to Milt and Dick for their wise advice and trust. They both left a wonderful legacy, and I have been privileged to build upon it. It has been an honor to serve the journal in various ways for 16 years—for all but a few early volumes.

It is important to emphasize that the journal is fundamentally a cooperative effort. The involvement of hundreds of people during my term has been critically important to the journal’s success. In Peace and Conflict’s first issue, Milton Schwebel, the journal’s founder and first editor, described the journal’s name as reflecting “the essential reality of human consciousness and social and societal relations. In the functioning of the mind and the relationships among people, peace and conflict are as inseparable as they are in the journal’s title” (Schwebel, 1995, p. 2). These human relationships extend to the very functioning of the journal and make it thrive.

Editorial Colleagues

The 17 scholars and practitioners on the journal’s editorial board, experts in a wide range of topics, live throughout the world (Australia, Israel, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Africa, the U.K., and the U.S.A.). They offer valuable advice, both on individual manuscripts as well as on new directions for peace and conflict research in psychology. Associate Editors Winnifred Louis and J. Christopher Cohrs, both wonderful scholars, have been terrific long-distance colleagues who are generous and astute in their assistance to the journal. Herbert Blumberg has been the journal’s book review editor and bibliographer since the journal’s first volume in 1995. The wonderful reviews you read result from his work. By July 2013 he had received more than 500 book reviews. The many that have been published greatly expand the journal’s breadth. Brett Stoudt is the journal’s methodological and statistical consultant. Because the journal welcomes a wide range of methodological approaches, it is essential to have an expert who is versatile. The breadth of Brett’s methodological and statistical knowledge is extraordinary, and he has been extremely helpful to me and the journal’s authors. I have appreciated Editorial Assistant Timothy Luke’s sustained work on and deep interest in the journal. It has been a pleasure to work with him.

Guest Editors for Special Issues and Special Sections

During my term, I have worked closely with several guest editors for special issues and special sections. They have greatly added to the sense of collegiality in this work, and I thank them for bringing their expertise to the journal. Suzanne Ouellette guest edited a special section, the “The Life and Work of Ignacio Martín-Baró” (Vol. 18, 2012). Michelle Fine guest edited a special section, “School Closings and Struggles for Educational Justice” (Vol. 18, 2012). Norman Duncan, Garth Stevens, and Christopher C. Sonn guest edited a special issue, “Of Narratives and Nostalgia” (Vol. 18, 2012). Debra Kaminer, Gillian Eagle, Garth Stevens, and Craig Higson-Smith guest edited a special issue, “Continuous Traumatic Stress” (Vol. 19, 2013). David Dean guest edited the present special issue, “Museums as Sites for Historical Understanding, Peace, and Social Justice: Views from Canada” (Vol. 19, 2013). Micheál Roe guest edited a special section, “The Life and Work of Peace Psychologist Ed Cairns” (forthcoming) on the late Ed Cairns, a much-respected, influential peace scholar who served as Division 48’s president in 2003. Each of these scholars has generously crafted a wonderful issue that brought emerging, important topics to the journal’s readers and the larger scholarly community. I also thank the scholars who have served as action editors during my term: Richard Wagner, Winnifred Louis, Christopher Cohrs, Julia Chaitin, Micheál Roe, and Fathali Moghaddam.

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The journal has been fortunate to have its home at John Jay College of Criminal Justice Department of Sociology, City University of New York. I thank Sociology Department Chair David Brotherton and Provost Jane Bowers who have generously supported the journal’s success by welcoming it into the college and supporting the journal’s work.
The Journal’s Publishers: The American Psychological Association and Taylor & Francis

The staff at the Journals Office of the American Psychological Association have been wonderful and helpful colleagues. I thank Daniya Tamendarova, Carol Jones, Susan Harris, Skip Maier, John Breithaupt, Rob Gaither, and Shwana Arnold for their work on the journal during my term. Through the end of 2011, the journal was published by Taylor and Francis, where Claire Filipi Cusack, Caitlin Dallas, and Jennifer Gunning were terrific to work with.

Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology Division 48 of the American Psychological Association

It has been a pleasure to work with the leadership of the Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology Division 48 of the American Psychological Association, the journal’s owner, during my term. I thank the Society’s Executive Committees, its presidents, and appreciate Treasurer John Gruszko’s and Newsletter Editor Michael Hulsizer’s work that supported the journal.

Authors

Without the authors who chose our journal as the venue in which they wish to publish their work, the journal would not exist. Authors published in Peace and Conflict live, work, and conduct research throughout the world and are at all stages of their career, from early career to emeriti. I appreciated reading all submissions to the journal and learned a great deal from them all, whether or not they were ultimately published in Peace and Conflict.

Reviewers

Peace and Conflict primarily relies on ad hoc reviewers who are experts in specific topics, contexts, or methodologies. Each year, more than 100 ad hoc reviewers have said “yes” when asked to appraise submissions to the journal. Their astute comments and thoughtful suggestions are exceedingly helpful to me and to the authors. Their advice ultimately benefits the field as well. The human relationships evoked by the peer review system are remarkable. Scholars offer candid, helpful advice to strangers without an expectation of recompense. Scholarly generosity extends beyond any one paper as editors, reviewers, and authors all contribute to a larger project—peace psychology scholarship. It is this extraordinary and cumulative generosity that produces each journal issue.

Looking Forward

My term as Peace and Conflict Editor concludes at the end of 2013. With Volume 20 in 2014, Fathali Moghaddam will be the journal’s fourth editor. A professor of psychology and director of the Conflict Resolution Program at Georgetown University, he joined the journal’s editorial board in 2007. Dr. Moghaddam has a deep commitment to the journal and to peace psychology, political psychology, and conflict studies. I have appreciated our work together during the transition period and am pleased that the journal will be excellent hands.

It has been an honor to serve as editor of this outstanding international forum for scholars in psychology and related fields who value peace and social justice. I am most appreciative of the many people who have been part of Peace and Conflict through working on the journal and reading it. It has been wonderful to be part of this extended and remarkable community.

References


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