

African adolescents Podcast #1 5

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SPEAKERS

Elleke Boehmer



Elleke Boehmer 00:07

I'm Elleke Boehmer, and you're listening to a podcast hosted by the accelerating achievement for Africa's adolescents based at the University of Cape Town and the University of Oxford. This is the first podcast in the second series, recorded in 2021. Hello, I'm pleased to introduce this accelerate hub podcast on narrative intervention and motivation. It's the first in our second series of podcasts on subjects related to intervention and storytelling in African contexts. My name is Elleke Boehmer, and I'm a writer and novelist, as well as being the CO lead of workpackage three in the accelerate hub. I'm also a professor of world literature in English at the University of Oxford. I'm delighted to be joined by three experts on narrative and intervention, each of whom approached these topics on their own particular expertise relating to education, psychology, storytelling, and motivation. I'll introduce them in a moment. A word on the accelerate hub, based at the University of Oxford and the University of Cape Town funded by the Ukri gcrf. The accelerate hubs goal is to improve outcomes for 20 million adolescents in 34 countries across Africa. It sets out to achieve this by identifying interventions that have the potential to interpret improve multiple outcomes related to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Joining me in this conversation about narrative motivation and intervention are eluded Mahali Robert mu Pandey and Tamsin Russia. I'd like to take a moment to introduce them, in alphabetical order. Aloo Dima Holly is a Chief Research Specialist in the Inclusive Development Programme at the hSrc in South Africa. Her research experience ranges from youth social justice work to using participatory methodologies for work in the sociology of education. She's published research reports and book chapters, including in studying well black, as well as journal articles on black woman's tented collectives and black women activism. Robert Pandey is a critic, editor, writer and literary scholar. He is professor of English in the School of literature, language and Media at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. Roberts first book was some kinds of childhood and his new book is the lively the scandalous times of a book last published earlier in 2021. It explores interventions that alter reading habits and critical thinking among African children. Tamsin Russia is a Wellcome Trust intermediate fellow in public health and Tropical Medicine at the centre of excellence in Human Development at the University of the Witwatersrand. Tamsin is a clinical psychologist and has led many randomised controlled trials of parenting and mental health interventions, including the AMA Gugu intervention, she'll be touching on this work here. In her current work, she leads the UNICEF, wh o caring for the caregiver package, and she has established the beacon cohort

also de Robert in terms and thank you so much for joining me in this conversation today. Together, we're going to explore how motivation and storytelling helps to ground interventions in particular contexts, and helps to make them relatable for people. So to begin, I'd like to come to each of you in turn and ask about your experience with narrative or story as a means of teaching, encouraging, and motivating people. Beginning with you alluded to, how in your work, do stories help to deliver a message or facilitate an intervention?

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Thanks, Zelicah. I'm happy to be here today. Um, well, I'm sure some of us have heard the TED talk with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie where she talks about the danger of a single story, the danger of a single story as robbing people of dignity, because it makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. So I'm approaching storytelling in the context of socio historic intervention. And for me the greater example of countering a single story a very damaging single story Then the hashtag movement, black girl magic. And this really developed because there was an increased global desire by and from black women to connect with other black women for identification, promotion of wellbeing, protection to for social justice issues as a form of creative expression, creating spaces of radical self care and just as a community building exercise. So for me, in my context in South Africa, how I've seen kind of the, the, the lived manifestation of, of this movement is through the rise of black women centred collectives, who are crafting these unapologetic spaces centred, very deliberately on the lives and lived experiences of black women to counter you know, these historical narratives where we have been marginal man I use we, as a black woman, who also writes about black women and who involves myself, who include who I include myself in this movement.

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Also, you know,

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already in the late 60s, when we think about in South Africa, the black consciousness movement Beco was already in black consciousness defining what would be the kind of antecedent of, of black girl magic black consciousness as this inward looking process that rejects whiteness, and instils in the black community, self determination and pride but also really critical I think, to this black girl magic movement is poet and writer, Audrey Lord's work, whose early writings on black radical thought and on women organising together with Beco kind of form this antecedent to what these growing collectives I see doing and what these growing collectives in South Africa are doing. So, in a world that seeks to devalue the contributions of black women, this hashtag becomes this necessary testimony of self affirmation of revolutionary work of telling your own stories and telling our own stories that young black women are doing for and by themselves in their own spaces the world over. The hashtag becomes this really powerful global tool that explains the ways in which recognition of black merit or black excellence intersects with social justice, promotes positive acknowledgement, and celebrates the physical beauty of, of black women in a world that otherwise invisible izes the black and brown body or objectifies it. So Black girl magic is this virtual space that attempts to alter the dominant narrative that holds white supremacy as

definitive. And it says, Since we our black woman's shared humanity has been proven historically insufficient, it's time now to tell our own stories, and identify and revel in What is distinctive, what is enough? And what is magic about black girls and

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Elleke Boehmer 08:18

fantastic eluded, it's so interesting, out there a number of threads that would be great to pick up on but but first to move now to Robert, and to talk about how stories and storytelling has worked in your practice. Robert,



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thank you very much lucky. I've been involved in at least two major storytelling intervention projects. One of them a few years ago here in insurance big, it was called the African storybook and funded in such a way by South African Institute of distance education. So, the idea was to collect as many stories as possible that was scattered around Africa, which we located within the oral storytelling tradition, the understanding was that children and reading enough and and reading much what of what is relevant to to them, if we needed to interfere in terms of literacy, and there, I found out that I needed to intervene in my own way, besides the research project or the collectors project, so to speak, because we simply collecting stories, but not interpreting them. And I thought that there was a danger in simply collecting with the understanding that the more we collect, the more does children read and I thought that was a it was problematic, because it does not always translate into reading and what kind of Reading that we do. So I wanted to think in terms of how collecting from the oral tradition and making it on the only source of storytelling was dangerous, because the oral tradition can be overpowering, and can to some extent swallowed the voices of children that need also to tell their own stories. And the news stories may not image. So I did a storytelling intervention of my own from there, where I wanted to see how the individual voice of children could be covered from that oral tradition. And we speak of innovation and how to how to structure a voice that can rise above the weight of oral tradition. So that we do we do really speak to individual children's choices and voices. Then the second one, which is very recently in 2021. It is a Cadbury, you know, the milk chocolate company, which in partnership with nally belly trust, who are concerned more with the telling of children, stories, stories for children for enjoyment. So they partnered up and came up with an idea about it, it's called reading for to succeed project is the literacy project that argues that children read better when they can see themselves in the stories that you tell, which is true, because to some extent, if children read books that they do not relate with, the field is strange and the message is missed. And then the other idea around Cadbury and nally berry sternum interventions is that if you introduce reading at a younger age, like under 10, and children read a lot for read literature that is in their own languages. And that is relevant to them, you can almost be assured of academic success in the future, because reading competencies acquired it in much earlier stage, but also reading for pleasure should be acquired at an earlier stage of one's life. So those are the stories that we that they are trying to generate. And after having found out that 2% of books published in South Africa, for children, only 2% of them are written in local languages. So they wanted to bridge that particular gap. So it's a literacy project that tries to intervene and correct the imbalance that we find in our reading culture in reading success in South Africa. So that's in brief what I can say, I am I was involved in this particular year. And in then the theme of the category, and the nally berry

project is that about generosity and goodness, so that we should be able to drive a particular moral in a particular attitude when we tell stories, but goodness and generosity, but without moralising, thanks. That was

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Elleke Boehmer 13:23

a really key point, I think, which also came through in what Elijah was saying about black women's stories about the power of being able to see ourselves in the stories we hear, and the stories that we listen to and read. We will I'm sure pick up on that later. I'd now though like to turn to Tamsin, our our third speaker and, and and and ask her for her take on narrative and motivation. Townsend,



13:59

thank you. And it's great to participate today. I come from a public health background and work mainly in public health. So I think within public health, we deal with our own set of stigmas and sort of ways of marginalised marginalised voices in the interest of sort of inverted brackets health. And I think COVID is is a good example of that. But I think there's often there's motivate this idea that people should be uniformly motivated to participate in a way with a medical intervention or a health objective. And so I wanted to just spend some time today talking about an intervention that we developed in a rural part of South Africa that did have a storytelling element. And it was focused on helping HIV positive mothers disclose to the HIV negative children who were primary school age, and the intervention had a lot of different components of helping children to co create stories around their family with their parents, as part of the process of just Losing there were board games, playing cards, a number of different storybooks. And certainly all of those influence motivation, but I wanted to just focus on the mother's HIV story. So although the intervention came out of a piece of formative work, we were mothers of this age group of children with EMF as the real challenge we're facing, and we need interventions to to support us around this, we still went into the intervention design, knowing that HIV is very stigmatised, it can be quite emotional and difficult to talk about, and that we're not starting from a situation where there's necessarily high motivation to participate. And so we, we just tried something out that worked very well. It was called my HIV love story. And it involved the lay counsellor, who was counselling the mother not to start with a regular question that you saw in public health interventions, which was tell me about when you got HIV infected, or tell me who infected with HIV, but in stages, to ask them either to close your eyes, they're both together. So it was building a feeling of trust and vulnerability, allowing vulnerability to be present. And then asking the mother to costume and back and remember the first time she had that feeling of love the butterflies, and developing a story together with the mum using some arts activities around, you know, those kinds of feelings, I think it was a really important part of the the intervention for a few reasons. Firstly, I think that it changed the tone of the counselling a lot, in a sense that mothers were allowed to put some of their own frame and experience and context to the disclosure process from the beginning. It also made some quite strategic changes in the nature of the relationship between the counsellor and the mothers. So we would, you know, cancers and mothers had related to us that they would often just feel that they could go to the shared space where there was choking and laughing about common teenage experiences, for example. So I think just allowing it sounds like a simple thing, but allowing a woman who has largely been sort of labelled as being HIV positive and is having interventions directed at her the opportunity to frame her own story. And to find a

positive place to start certainly helped us and we had very high uptake and very hard to disclose. And I think a lot of what the formative work told us in woman's own words was that they felt humanised and by feeling humanised, they felt like they could trust the intervention, or they could at least try and be open to the intervention and offer. So I leave it

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Elleke Boehmer 17:39

there. Thanks so much, Tamsin. Again, a really fascinating testimony from, from your experience with with storytelling and intervention. I mean, there are a number of different ways we can go and I'm sure we'll we'll end up circling through all of them. But just just to move the conversation as a Word to the next phase, I'd like to turn to each one of you in in the reverse order in which we we just heard from you and ask you, it's a very concrete question. I'm really struck by how all three of you from your different perspectives have talked about the real importance of stories of the self. And framing your own story, being able to tell your own story, validate your, you know, how you feel about your body or validate your experience or, you know, see yourself in the oral tradition? And what in your different projects, and particularly helped with framing that story of the self? I'm really thinking of very practical techniques. You know, did did you use certain props? I was noticing alluded to you, for example, talked about, you know, hashtag black girl magic. Where was social media helpful in that example? And yeah, if you could just talk a bit about the props that you've used, and the techniques that have been that have been particularly helpful, Tamsin, I mean, you can perhaps just sort of as a work continue the baton, from what you were just saying.



19:30

I think certainly creating an environment and a space and a tone where stories are welcome is key. And obviously I focused mainly on maternal and child health and child and parent mental health. So I think for us activity and play, and being able to talk through something while doing activity has always been a really helpful tool. So using card games and things that you can do while having a discussion certainly helps around difficult psychological discussions. I think also that what, what we found helps a lot is that, you know, somebody needs a place to start. Or if you say to somebody tell me your last story, they can often get caught and a little worried about what your expectation of the last story is. And so I think having these simple tools that that started a very simple place or give a bit of direction, when did you first fall in love? Or tell me your last story that gives you something to hang on to as a storyteller? No. Okay, I'm going to begin my plot at this place. And I'm going to introduce you to some really important characters, I think using tools and activities that are not so directly focused on the individual, but kind of creates a storytelling environment where there's an openness to where the story is going to go.

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Elleke Boehmer 20:51

So interesting times, if I can just pick up on one thing, so that we can as a web, because this is an audio, medium conversation, you know, we we'd like to see what this thing is. So you talked about card games, what kinds of cards are these these prompts to be the women to tell their stories to their children. So



21:16

we had a very simple, what we called the HIV disclosure card, which was a body map really, that the mom would use, and she had a series of stickers. And so the game involved her telling a story and teaching the child about viruses in a broad way. And specifically naming HIV is kind of using little sticker dots to say, you know, sometimes infections come into our body, and then our T cells, and they had a little sticker that they could put on. So it really gave her a script with the child to talk about the process of infection through to take medication. And this helps me to stay well, because what mothers had told us was the hardest part to imagine doing was to say it out loud. But the literature told us that if you said out loud, it's a lot easier for you and for the child. And so she could just rhythmically go straight on to. So I have HIV and HIV in my body and repeat the story as related to her as a way to go forward that just as an adult, if that's a simple enough example for you. And we're sort of activity helps.



Elleke Boehmer 22:22

That's, that's so evocative, and I was really struck, and this might be a good bridge to moving to Roberts example. And I was really struck by your saying that they moved rhythmically to then talking about being HIV positive. Dude, rhythm, or similar techniques come into either of your projects, Robert, that you were telling us about? The, you know, the oral tradition project or the reading to succeed project? Could you tell us a bit about the techniques or the props that you used?



23:03

Yes, yes, thank you very much. The techniques are really, what I wanted to do was not to scare the reader. So I used the technique of like a sci fi, I'm actually telling a traditional story, when I wasn't. So, what you do then is to try to seduce the reader, that this is kind of familiar, you have a once upon a time to start with. But then what happens after that, praise is not once upon a time is in, in, in a long time ago, but in the present. So I used a technique to which you can call this cancellation, you play some theme in terms of tradition in the past, but then you move you you kind of change perspective to the present. But the idea being as in traditional storytelling, is that if you want to really pass a message, and they wanted to be very effective, do not personalise it, do not say it happened to you to the person right in front of you. Because people have got defensive self defence kind of mechanisms, the moment the story is pointed at them, they might not understand it, or they might resist it. So I would still be able to say this happened somewhere, and then change the characters, or that the message is very, it's very, like putting in to the person. Let me give an example of what I did with a story that was dangerously political, but which I took form from oral tradition. And when I told the story, it was a children's story that I told that that is the year in 2017 that there was a coup in Zimbabwe, and Robert Mugabe was overthrown. In that story. I did not quite know that he did resonance with the political temperature in Zimbabwe, at that time in I went to read the story there. So the story was about a, from an oral tradition, about how animals were faced with a, with a drought, and every one of them threatened with death. So what do you do so so what what what you can do, you can read whatever you like, from there about what that route is, it could be political, it could be in, in, in many senses, and that what what seems to have happened, that it was a political drought and people needed to do something about it. So, one animal stood up and said, let's dig a well, so that we all survive. And, and another animal, the hare

said, I'm not gonna do that, because in the past, you guys have not worked with you before. And I don't like you, because your good habit of drinking all the water when we find it. And you have the tendency of wanting to eat me, when you when you prefer not have meat. So I'm just saying it in brief. So a b, b technique, there are dentists to say, okay, these are animals. But what I shift from there now is the moment the the hair is found, in this point is punished for not participating in the, in the project, I introduced the different techniques, and these taken from rights reading, the rights reading environment, where I read human rights into a traditional story that had nothing to do with human rights. Because the in the traditional story, you would probably celebrate the the ways in which human rights or animal rights are not respected. When when you know, you celebrate that when the hair is punished, you celebrate, but you never get to understand why they here has got an individual choice to make, he does not have to participate in this in this project collective project because it's inimical to his own interests. So So I read it that way. And some people were in the audience, some of them, you know, coming from the establishment itself, decided that what I was doing was to be reading about the fermenting political discontent in the country, where everybody was being forced to go into agriculture to save the country, but it was not working.

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Elleke Boehmer 27:21

And and very example of, of how traditional story can work to distance. A particularly difficult situation from people that they're finding very difficult to talk about. alluded to turn now to you. And still on this question of techniques, our props. Tell us talk. So interestingly, about these prompt cards, body map, Robert has talked to more about sort of oral codes and this technique of distance iation. You touched earlier on social media, I wondered what, what particular techniques and props worked well in in your intervention with storytelling.



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So I think there are a number of devices really, that these black women centred collectives use from poetry, prose, storytelling, but I think was great when Tamsin spoke about in the context of her intervention and working with the mothers that creating a space where stories are welcome. You know, these open spaces where stories are welcome, is the first step and really critical to the success of the method. And so for example, with one of the collectives, the feminist stock fell, which is eight black women coming together, their whole mission was not only to create a space where stories are welcome, but to create a space where black woman can feel safe to speak, to speak their stories, to provide a counter narrative to the single story, and the perception and historical perception of black women as caregivers as reproductive vessels who are not allowed to be, for example, beautiful, or sexual. And then also, I really appreciated how Robert spoke to his intervention as not only about children's literacy, but also about representation. And I think that's also another thing that's critical about this black girl magic hashtag is about representation. It's about identification. Another one of the women in the feminist stock fell. Cohort collective lebohanga masango is a sought after poet and she wrote a children's book called Burmese magic beads, about friendship between a group of primary school aged black girls who admire one another's beautiful African hair. Because hair is so Political for black women, Audre Lorde. She reminds us that that that organising and reflecting on current issues is really a pragmatic framework to work around structural violence. So for example, feminist stock fell, held in Oregon to an event called the hair soiree where women raising black children were invited to come and discuss and get information on how to care for

their children's hair. So that's a very pragmatic discussion and workshop stemmed from the recognition that there's so much politics and pain around something that might seem superficial to others, but is actually extremely coded and loaded for black women. Another collective, the for black girls only collective FBg do. They they enact their mission in a number of ways. So they use visual arts, they use film, they use writing, they use dance and poetry to kind of execute their work, to share and analyse and produce knowledge about contemporary black girlhood and black womanhood. What I think ultimately is really important is Audrey Lorde has this really important essay called poetry is not a luxury so all these methodologies you know, poetry and prose and dance and visual art, they might seem inconsequential, to some. But Lord reminds us in our essay poetry is not a luxury, that's something like poetry is not to be taken lightly because it's a manifestation of ideas and experiences that haven't yet been crystallised. Like because the speaker also writes about the power of poetry for black people. And he talks about how with us with Africans, music and rhythm are not luxuries, but part part and parcel of our communication. And so poetry and these safe spaces where stories can be told, provide a self exploratory and freeing space that works against the historical silencing of our story's

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Elleke Boehmer 32:07

so so fascinating. I was, I was really noticing in the responses that each one of you gave the emphasis on, on the one hand safe spaces and creating spaces where we can share our vulnerabilities be open about our vulnerabilities. But then also the fact that sometimes stories have dangerous content or potentially painful content as in an HIV disclosure story or a story from oral tradition about the hare who, you know, hogs all the water, and that can be interpreted politically. So moving on to the stage in our discussion where we are thinking about, you know, moving forward and recommendations that we can glean from our experience that we might want to let others know about, you're also involved in implementing interventions in various African contexts. I wondered if you had any thoughts. And now I'd like to move to the first order that we had alluded and Robert Townsend, I'd like to ask about how you balanced in your work, that very, sort of fragile and very, very crucial interchange of safety and feeling secure and safe in a story sharing a story against the often necessarily quite dangerous material that the stories unfold. You can take that in and I leave, I'm leaving the question quite open. So you can take it in different directions. And if you need a moment to think of it, I realise that you've just been speaking aloo de and, and, as it were putting the ball in your court again. You you you may want to pass on on to Robert, if you wish, and I'll come back to you. But anyway, I mean, maybe I can leave it open any Would anyone like to offer any thoughts about this? By recommendations and balancing safety and danger? Robert?

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34:26

Okay. No, it was not really is triggering insights that I was going to share our just thinking aloud in saying the kinds of because it's, I think a Saluda was talking about poetry. And what it does that is to some extent, precursor to form the thought. So I was just thinking of the way we came into these kinds of story interventions in a repressive space, a dangerous space, and you need to pick up a voice We had to read a poem by metabo Rocha, the Jamaican poet, it was quoted this poem, we used it, we pretended that all we were doing is to dramatise it, we were simply reciting it. And, and then it gives birth to spoken word activism in Zimbabwe. And now there's a plethora of organisations around spoken word activism. But it's just started off by

saying we just reciting so the beauty of the poem was in the recitation, rather than in the content, and the content remained very dangerous. So you could say the poem to, to in front of people that could arrest you, but then they will be more entertained by the recitation by the voice, and then think about the content when you're gone, then they realise you actually dangerous, but you're gone, you're outside of that particular space. So that's one thing I was just thinking of, as you were asking what the recommendations might be. But but but one thing I would say about the recommendation will be the issue of relatability. That if people can relate to what you're saying, and relating in two ways we're relating doesn't mean I agree with you, it might just mean I do identify with what you're saying. But I might just decide not to take it further. So you can relate with the content, but not necessarily agree with, with what somebody is saying. And you as a as a storyteller, you can survive some very dangerous situations that we when you created that kind of ambiguity, between the relatability and identification. And by time people join the dots, you are gone. But the message has been delivered. Thank you.



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Yeah, I mean, I think even beyond relatability and certainly the context, I'm looking at absolutely relatability but also there's power in numbers, right? So it's the collectivity, it's, it's the group, the grouping. And the Organising has as, as collected, which is what you know, these women are doing so you know, another example is, is the pay collective. This is a collective of 11 black female artists who realised that the art world in South Africa is a white boys club. And these are all undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Cape Towns and the Kayla's School of Fine Art, which is a really kind of elitist school where black students are in the minority. And it be recognised the lack of recognition that black women individually were getting in, in South Africa's art landscape. And they pointed that as the reason for uniting. So it's kind of ironic that in order for their individual practices to be recognised, they had to form a collective. But what was amazing was that the original frustration, that was the catalyst for them joining forces, led to this collective of women becoming extremely significant and influential. So I think, the relatability Yes, the identification, yes, as who they are as black women, but also the importance of the group, the importance of collective mobilisation, and organising.



Elleke Boehmer 38:30

Fantastic lady and, Robert. In your experience, Tamsin, do you do? Have you had any similar related experiences about balancing danger and difficulty against safety and sharing comfortably?



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And I feel like it's, it's potentially a bit shallow, but I think almost in the opposite direction thinking about because I work in public health, I think I've had more experiences of people who come from a health background, feeling so concerned about danger, that they feel a need to control an intervention so much that it becomes very relevant to them, but not at all relevant to the person who is supposed to be supported by the intervention. So I think you can think about danger in a number of different ways. And I think, for myself as a person who designs intervention, I think it's also important for us to reflect on what danger are we bringing for

people and what barriers might we place in them being able to harness what we are able to give in a meaningful way their own lives? So, you know, the hundreds of systematic reviews will tell that and hundreds but a lot of systematic reviews will tell you that if you can have the best working intervention ever in, in health particularly and people don't take it up. Or people use it in a way they're not Bruce do. And so I think it's important for us also, to just reflect that these ideas of danger, these ideas of difficult truth are created by ourselves. That's part of our story. And I think we have a responsibility to try and make sure that we hold that it can be very helpful, it certainly be have been helpful in my life to help me kind of be motivated in my own work. But I think stories can change and stories are alive. And stories can be reinterpreted. And I think so that I am a guru work, it was very much about saying, there is there is difficult things to talk about. But you can talk about difficult things. And you know, and difficult things help you then build a different story, not spoken about things become more dangerous. So I think it is really just about, for me about reflecting on what do I bring? What do I consider dangerous? And why do I consider a dangerous content or approach? And I think engaging like with your intended target, as opposed of I call it and being able to embrace the other a little bit and feel that uncomfortableness or, you know, in our current formative work in eight countries, people don't always want to do everything the way I suggest. And, you know, as someone who's trying to help somebody else that does, of course, create an uncomfortable. So I don't know if I'm really on topic, but I have to

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Elleke Boehmer 41:30

know that I that's fascinating and absolutely, absolutely on topic. eluded did you want to come in there?



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No, I just thought it was a really important point. I haven't been speaking in this conversation in the context of my own, my own, you know, research that I lead, but certainly as researchers and as scientists, we arrive with our own set of narratives and our own stories. And and, and that's critical to remember our own social identities. And it's critical to remember that the people that we work with, that they we need to be led and guided essentially, but by their own stories. So Tamsin, I think, is flagging something really important.



42:13

Yeah, I was just thinking of some interventions that were made in the past. One example being where you you should you say, the government must intervene, to help children who are starving. And and then you write stories that promote the need for government to feed the people or to feed children. And that, in some places resulted in what was called the food for work, where if you cannot afford the food, you're going to wait for it on government projects, like digging wells, deep wells, like like resurfacing roads and all this. And in the end, what it then did was to create a dependence, even amongst the children, who realise that all you needed to do was not to think about anything else, outside of food for work. And in my own story, for the Cadbury project, I did a study in which a dog decided that his master was taking too long to marry. And he was not feeding him well. So he decides that if the the master gets a wife, then he will be properly fed himself because there'll be every need to have food in the

house. But it backfires, because he leads the master to a Python, that now kind of squeezes him in his coils in a coils and his ribs crushed. So it was kind of a study about the between the structure the intention, the motivation for, for an intervention, and how it depends out and the outcome might not be intended. So we should be thinking in terms of matching these two, intention and the outcome. And in the outcome may be immediate, but it might also be long term, and one needs to be thinking about what kind of story we tell and what his outcome might be. Is it the intended one, and how to ensure that it is exactly the intended one, knowing that studies also provide us opportunities to to have many interpretations. So what kind of interpretation are we we are we gunning for that ensures the outcome that we really need? So I think this could be a source of potential danger if we don't work it out properly. Thank you.

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Elleke Boehmer 44:37

What what is so interesting about the example, you just use the Robert and, and also about what Tamsin and Olivia were saying is, his is that emphasis also on stories as reinterpretations? You know, every story is is a kind of its Not only a representation, but it's also often a reinterpretation of other stories or, or parts of stories that we have heard stories have that amazing freedom of allowing us to, to bring our own interpretation into into a story to give a different perspective. And, and to relate the story to our particular situation. With that in mind, and moving now to to our conclusion, I wondered if I can take a motif from, from from, from storytelling, one tradition of storytelling anyway, the fairy godmother, if if there were a fairy godmother, and she or he was to say, to each one of us, you know, you have a big budget, and you can compose and set up your own storytelling intervention. Just off the top of your head, I would like this to be as spontaneous as possible, what would be the thing that you would recommend in the context of the different projects that you have touched on and I'm going to go this is our last round, again, to go back to the order of Tam's and Robert and Alou de, and then we'll close. So Tamzin, putting the ball in



46:34

and might be coming of left field. But, you know, the first thing that came to my mind when you said unlimited budget, I think like I wouldn't, I couldn't think of a single storytelling intervention I would want to do, but I would want to have a really powerful campaign that helps people understand that individualising something making it relevant, salient to the lives of Love does not mean that you can't scale it, it doesn't mean that it has less meaning or, you know, and so I think what I come up against a lot in public health is this belief that as soon as something become sensitive, as soon as something takes time, worries about a story worries about the perspective of the participant, it's not scalable, when a lot of the things that you're talking about are such a natural part of culture, that you don't, you know, it's already it's the scalars, the ones that should be convinced, because I think, you know, for the rest of us, especially my lived experience of working around interventions in many countries is some of the things that donors or vendors would tell me way too complex for an intervention. And for, you know, inverted backwards African population, I think, are so simple. They're so simple, and they're so relatable. So I think I would run a big public awareness campaign to help people understand that, you know, making something resonate for who, for your target audience is probably likely to be far more scaled. And I think some of eluded what allude is talking about in the hashtag is, is a perfect example of that when things are when you willing to just like the fire instead of control the fire, I think things can really have impact.

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Elleke Boehmer 48:25

Fantastic, thanks so much. So public awareness campaign. Robert, how about you and your, your your wish? about storytelling?



48:37

Yeah, if fairy mother were to come out, say, there's one thing that's that I really think is burning in my heart at the moment, and which we have not yet mentioned in our podcast, that is the COVID vaccination drive in all this. So I was just thinking of, if one way to ever Badgett and, and come up with a project where adults and children co create stories about the pandemic, for instance, the experience of the pandemic, because what we tend to see is adults writing for children and reading for children for or for adolescents, or, you know, like creating on their behalf. I would like to see the adolescents themselves create on their own behalf. And I would like to see how they would need to navigate to very powerful stories around the vaccine, for instance, there's the what is called the artefacts of vaccine brigade, very strong in terms of its stories, and the visuals and the videos and the narratives they bring to support the arguments, and then the pro vaccine ones. So that socialisation at the moment amongst children will be based on whether somebody has been vaccinated or not. And I would want to see how children would in how adolescents will create that kind of narrative that makes adults vulnerable. because they are the ones who are dying the most. And this time around is the children that you don't necessarily need to be protecting. But the adults have been put in a very vulnerable position, that they are the ones who need to be protected, so they can take care of their children. I want to see how this change of paradigm can be articulated as an add in the history intervention, around identities around the power in your best what I would wish to, to see.

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Elleke Boehmer 50:32

Thank you so much. Thanks, Robert. That's great. I heartily wish for that to eluded your god model in relationship storytelling and intervention.



50:46

Um, off the top of my head, I don't think mine is particularly novel. But I think it's really important. I think in the interest of countering single stories that we've been told for decades and centuries, it's about reclaiming the stories of the past. I mean, I think this is something one of the participants in the Beco narrative narrative workshop for workpackage. Three brought up Ellika is understanding who we were who we were, in order to understand who we are now, understanding that we have a centre we have people whose shoulders we stand on, we have people who have faced the troubles and have had the experiences that we experience now. There's nothing new, we all have an origin, origin and a past. And I think it's about highlighting and acknowledging and knowing and learning those stories of the past, bringing them to the fore and seeing what conversations we can have about those stories of the past, what they mean in the present, how they impact us now what we can learn from them. So it's about learning who we were our history, stories of our heroes, our women heroes, these stories don't get told they don't get highlighted. Many of us don't know them, they certainly don't get taught

in schools. And you see a lot of interventions and literature and you know, different kinds of efforts to bring those stories to the fore. But I think there's still a lot of work to be done, and interest to be raised around that kind of thing. So yeah, if the money were endless, I think it would be about, you know, excavating those stories of who we are, you know, those places of origin, objects, people, all of that telling those stories, and, and having young people kind of hear them, understand them. relate them to who they are now, or how you know, or maybe not, or how different things are now, that conversation between past and present, and future and more importantly, what can we learn about the stories of the past, to help us to go to where we want to be going in the future? would be my wish list, I guess.

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Elleke Boehmer 53:15

Thanks so much. So our recommendations, each one of them very strong. Narrative interventions going forward, reclaiming the powerful stories of the past, relation to women and to men, but in relation in particular, to groups overlooked to co create stories between adults and children in particular, in the present moment about the COVID response and vaccination. And then your idea terms and of scaling up and convincing the authorities through a public awareness campaign about the absolute vitality and necessity of storytelling in our lives to deliver messages and debate us. Fantastic points on which to close. And I'd like to thank you all again, in Mohali, Robert Pandey, Rashad from the accelerator. Thanks so much for joining us today and participating in this conversation. Thanks very much for listening to this podcast to have a listen to others in this ongoing series on intervention, storytelling, and many other configurations.