Earthquake Survivor Support Activities:
Learning from the 'Popoki Friendship Story' Project

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Abstract

Aiming to create a safer and more secure society, the paper looks critically at the disaster discourse in Japan and the creation of collective memory about the disaster, suggesting the importance of counter-memory and the building of an affect community. It focuses on the 'Popoki's Friendship Story' project which was begun by the author after the 11 March 2011 Great Northeastern Japan Earthquake. This banner drawing project employs three key concepts: (1) Popoki's methodologies (non-verbal, creative critical expression); (2) diverse connection; and (3) flexible sustainability, and aims to connect the disaster area with places throughout Japan and the world in order to engage in mutual support. Working with the idea that peaceful societies have resilience against disasters, the paper first introduces the theoretical framework. It then describes Popoki's Friendship Story Project, and discusses lessons learned from it. The final section looks at the implications of the project for community building and disaster and/or peace education.

Keywords: Art-making, collective memory, counter-memory, affect community, Popoki's Friendship Story, disaster education, peace education, GNJE, GHAE

Introduction

The triple disaster (earthquake, tsunami, nuclear plant accident) that occurred in Northeastern Japan on 11 March 2011 shocked the entire world and raised serious questions about how to deal with disaster. As a peace scholar, I understood that high levels of communication and respect for diversity are essential for creating both peaceful societies and for coping with disaster. And as a peace activist, I wondered what I could do to help bring back smiles to the faces of the displaced people and to help them to have hope. My solution was to begin activities in the disaster area using drawing which later became known as 'Popoki's Friendship Story Project', the details of which will be discussed in the following pages. This short article will introduce those early activities and discuss the implications with regard to the preservation of the stories of those who experienced the disaster, community building, and educating for disaster prevention and peace.

The discussion presented here is based on participatory research during activities conducted by the author in the disaster area. This methodology provides opportunities to hear directly and in a timely manner the voices of those affected by the disaster (hisaisha), as well as other voices. This methodology reflects the subjectivity of the participants, and the primary objective was to provide assistance for those in need. It is based on my personal experiences and those involved in the Project, and we are hopeful it will contribute to making the world a little bit safer.

The article consists of four sections. The first looks at the theoretical basis for this research. The next introduces the Popoki's Friendship Story (PFS) Project and discusses some of the things we have learned. The final section reflects on the implications of this work for community building and education for disaster prevention and peace.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis for this paper rests on work in post-structural feminist international relations and the normative field of peace studies. The focus of 'peace' in this context is not only on organized forms of violence such as war or armed conflict, but also on other ways in which power is used and abused. It is based on an understanding that bodies, emotion and affect play a significant role in ways of knowing, and that these are important in thinking about the creation of collective memory of traumatic events. In our current less-than-peaceful societies, certain groups are identified as 'socially disadvantaged' or 'disaster disadvantaged.' These categories emphasize particular types of gendered and racialized bodies, suggesting that for example women, disabled, elderly, and ethnic minorities would be at a disadvantage at times of disaster. In a truly peaceful society, these categories might not even exist. Ideally, people would be connected to one another, help each other, human lives and human processes of production would be in balance with the natural environment, and all living creatures would be able to live to their fullest potential. In such a society, cooperation and team work would be possible during times of crisis. In our less ideal societies, cooperation is possible but it is not to be taken for granted. Eliminating both visible and invisible violence, creating space for diversity, and making strong connections among people in everyday life are an important prerequisite.

Of course, one could search the entire world without finding an example of a society as peaceful as that outlined above. Moreover, even in seemingly peaceful societies, when there is a large disaster, many social problems which had previously been hidden except to those directly affected become visible. Others, however, remain invisible and ungrievable (Butler 2008:3). For example, the Great Hanshin/Awaji Earthquake (GHAE; 1995) revealed deeply rooted gender differences as the burden for clean-up, care, and daily living fell heavily on women even though they might have also had jobs, as men tried to return quickly to their work places. This disaster also showed that people with limited Japanese language skills had trouble getting to evacuation centers and receiving supplies, and many people without families (particularly older men) were dying alone in temporary housing. In order to create peaceful and resilient societies, it is important to understand how particular groups are made invisible, and how these processes are normalized. That understanding is also important for recovery, risk reduction planning and education. Perhaps the lessons learned after disaster can also be used effectively to create safer societies, and to address long-standing problems such as discrimination. Unfortunately, however, the stories of some of the most vulnerable are not available because in the midst of the confusion they were never recorded, or they disappeared in the process of the construction of collective memory of the disaster.

Disasters are a part of human existence, and since they happen repeatedly, passing on the knowledge gained during the crisis is very important. My particular interest in this regard concerns who are to be included in the category of hisaisha (victim) and how the experience of the disasters can be expressed and passed on. After a disaster, a new social category – 'disaster victims' - is identified by the media and people working in the disaster area. At first, the precise meaning of the term is vague and changes depending on how, and by whom, it is used. For example, after the Great Northeastern Japan Earthquake (GNJE) there were a variety of hisaisha: those caught in the tsunami, those who lost homes or family, those outside of the three main disaster prefectures (Fukushima, Miyagi, Iwate) who were affected by the earthquake, those trapped in Tokyo unable to return home due to loss of power and transportation, those who suffered trauma from not being able to tear themselves away from the television, and many others. Gradually those identified by

the media and other sources as belonging to this category called 'hisaisha' begin to be restricted to those who experienced the disaster in particular ways or under particular circumstances. This marking of the boundaries of the category is the beginning of what I will call the disaster discourse.

After a disaster, images of those affected are passed on to others outside of the area through the media. As the disaster discourse grows, the category of 'victim' begins to include particular people sustained by these media images. Once identified, support for them begins to become institutionalized. At the same time, those who experienced the disaster begin to accommodate themselves and their descriptions to this institutionalized identity known as 'hisaisha'. Citing Foucault, Leisenring (2006:308) describes how survivors unconsciously form identities as survivors, disciplining themselves to conform to these institutionalized images. This is visible in Japan today; once the identity of hisaisha was established, people began to conform to that image. When hisaisha speak of their experiences, their stories also begin to conform to the general image of survivors. People discipline themselves with regard to decisions about their legitimacy as speakers, and also with regard to the content of their stories. Some of the stories are too painful to tell, but others go untold because the story-teller feels his/her position and/or content are not appropriate or legitimate. Eventually what began as a collection of very diverse experiences becomes melded into a single pattern of 'collective memory.' In the course of this process of the construction of collective memory, the issue of legitimacy concerning who should be able to talk about their experiences becomes very important.

In the process of the construction of collective memory, not only the content of the stories of experience, but also the words and expressions used in the telling of those stories, and the position of the person doing the telling, all combine into what becomes accepted as narrative of the experience. These narratives are based on verbal expressions, some oral and others written. Knowledge of the experience is based on these narratives, but the experiences of those who cannot, or do not express themselves with words do not become part of this knowledge. The stories of those whose subjectivity, legitimacy and narrative style/skills/content are recognized thus form the basis for the blending of knowledge and power that become the discourse on the disaster. Unless particular efforts to incorporate alternative forms of expression and/or content are made, the discourse of the disaster will not include that knowledge, and it will not be a part of the collective memory of the experience.

Since the collective memory formed in this way plays an important role in the knowledge and behavior of future generations, it is very powerful (Foucault 1989:124). This is why it is also important to pay attention to counter-memory which includes a diverse range of voices and experience (Verberg 2011:27). Subjectivity is important in relating and sharing the experience of disaster, and modes of expression are significant in that process of relating and sharing. Reliance on verbal and written expressions of the experience of disaster occurs within a hierarchy of possible modes of expression in which language is at the pinnacle. The exclusion of other modes of expression thus serves to reproduce hierarchies of power/knowledge which from the beginning silence particular voices. In his discussion of counter-memory, Foucault focuses on the ways individuals resist official versions of historical continuity (Foucault 1977). Through affirming the legitimacy of all participants, voices and expressions, especially those not usually highlighted, Popoki's Friendship Story Project engages in this process. The experience of each individual is unique, and it is the dynamism of the variety of memories that can help us to understand and recover from disaster. Rather than universalizing the experiences into one, it is therefore important to recognize and learn from a wide range of diverse experiences.

Human communication is dependent on, but not restricted to, the use of words and language. Many emotions and feelings cannot be expressed in words, and words might not be the best method of doing so. Affect, whether acknowledged or not, is also an important means of communication (Thrift 2004:60). Affect is important in how and what we communicate to others, and in our understanding of what others communicate to us. It involves a different form of thinking from speech, and we use it to express our understanding of our world and situation. Affect differs from verbal expressions in the ways it is communicated over time and space, and allows for the sharing of emotions such as empathy through the creation of an affect community. The idea of the supporting one another across borders which underlies Popoki's Friendship Story Project is an attempt at forming such an affect community.

Popoki's Friendship Story Project uses drawing as a method of expressing emotion and affect. Many people, when hearing the word 'drawing' in this context, will immediately think of art activities for children, but here it is used with people of all ages, and participants include hisaisha, disaster volunteers, and a wide range of other participants in and outside of Japan. According to Grushka, art can be a "platform for the negotiation and construction of meaning" (2005:356). Art allows us to express and explore our understanding of the world without the restrictions imposed by words. When, as in disasters, we are exposed to unimaginable situations, art can be a very important vehicle for understanding our world and overcoming the obstacles presented by such intense change.

Art and bodily expressions are intensely political. For example, the experience of the tsunami is one that cannot be expressed completely in words. Photographs and other visual media are used to help to fill the gap between experience and narrative, but even using such images, it is impossible to convey the totality of the experience. In the construction of collective memory, the processes of inclusion and exclusion are political processes which have enormous implications for future generations. Non-verbal expressions can be difficult to 'hear' and tend to be sidelined in favor of other, often more spectacular, stories of disaster.

The next section describes the work of Popoki's Friendship Story Project, showing how it pays attention to what is being said, but gives legitimacy to both silence and to other forms of expression. This approach has highlighted a very important aspect of disaster: being safe and feeling safe do not necessarily go together, and if we are to have peaceful and resilient societies, both must be addressed.

Popoki's Friendship Story Project

Popoki's Friendship Story (PFS) project is an activity begun after the 11 March 2011 disasters by the Popoki Peace Project. The methodology focuses on art-making and entails simply drawing freely on a long cloth. The PFS activities began in April 2011 and continued frequently until September, slowing with the coming of winter. The content of the drawings changed over time, and as time passes, the differences between the disaster area and other places have become particularly visible. Initially people everywhere were eager to draw, but now some people outside of the affected areas have begun to forget, or to feel much less connection. In the disaster area too, people are no longer in evacuation centers, so it is more difficult to meet them. Now we are using displays and other new ways to continue to involve people in the project.

The PFS is based on three key concepts: (1) Use of Popoki's methodology, e.g. involve the senses, affect, emotions, body; (2) Diverse connection, e.g. not one-way but multi-directional, not 'giving' but connecting, sharing and working together involving free participation by diverse

people in a variety of locations; (3) Flexible sustainability, e.g. long-lasting but changing as necessary. The first concept is a way of accessing diverse memories, including perhaps counter-memories, based on the earlier discussion. This is particularly important in terms of including the voices of children and providing spaces for joint work between children and adults. The second concept involves connection and diversity. In this sense, diversity refers to all aspects of connection, including actors, methodology, level, etc. Diversity of actors is essential for the creation of a peaceful society, and connection which transcends boundaries of time and space through the creation of affect communities is important. The third concept stresses the need to change over time.

The PFS project was begun in April of 2011, just one month after the earthquake. The impetus was that I was asked to join a group (jointly sponsored by the Kobe City Council of Social Welfare, Kobe Coop, and Kobe YMCA) going to Miyagi Prefecture to investigate possibilities for volunteer work. In preparation for my first trip to the disaster area, with the help of the Popoki Peace Project, I prepared a cotton banner (45cm x 5m), drawing a large picture of Popoki on one end and asking Kobe University graduate students to make some initial drawings. I took the banner to evacuation centers and invited people to draw on it freely. The invitation was met with enthusiasm; everyone - children, adults, volunteers, local residents, fire fighters, police – had a drawing to contribute. Many of those drawings brought out personal stories, many of which were told for the first time. This demonstration of the power of art-making was an extremely powerful and moving experience.

Having felt potential of the cloth for gathering stories, we continued to use it. In May we engaged in activities with it at evacuation centers in Ōtsuchi-cho and Kamaishi, Iwate Prefecture. In June, we had activities at various Popoki Peace Project events, including those in Nishinari Ward, Osaka (a community with many day laborers and homeless people) and Nada Challege. During the summer holidays, activities were held in the disaster region but also abroad (for example the Czech Republic, Guam, US). In the course of these activities, I realized that behind each of the drawings lies a story. Whether the drawing is the cartoon character Anpanman or cats swept away by the tsunami, the drawing has meaning at that particular time for the artist and forms a part of the story of that person's life. In addition, I realized that as people draw, they talk. The conversation might be about what they are drawing or about other things, but as they engage in drawing and talking, they begin to connect. Often without even realizing it, they talk about their experiences and say things that they might not otherwise have discussed. This is one of the ways the banners contribute to memory and counter-memory of the disaster experience. In the course of these interactions, people learn new things about others and begin to become friends. In other words, they begin to form an affect community. After watching this process, I decided to name the activity 'Popoki's Friendship Story' project, honoring the stories behind each drawing and the emerging friendships.

By the end of August, there were twelve banners, stretching to a combined length of more than sixty meters. Each of the many drawings from the disaster area show the changes in the ways people felt about their experiences over time. At the same time, the banners with many diverse drawings make a separate, big story. In order to record the experience of the disaster during the first six months, I decided to make a book of the PFS project.

While at the beginning it was thought the project would last for a few months, it is still continuing. Of particular note are activities at the AMDA Ōtsuchi Health Support Center Yellow House Kenbikan which opened in Ōtsuchi-cho on 18 December 2011. This community center had its beginnings in connections between local community members and medical relief volunteers

from AMDA (Association of Medical Doctors of Asia) in and around Kamaishi right after the earthquake. In May, a group from AMDA and Popoki Peace Project jointly held PFS project activities. Staff at the center currently use Popoki's banners in order to try to prevent isolation and suicide in temporary housing through inviting residents to draw or look at the drawings, and also in activities for children.

The PFS project is useful in that it is easy to implement, and allows people to express themselves as they are at any particular moment. Unlike art therapy where the emphasis is on the final product, here we are more concerned with the creative process. This means that the program can be implemented by volunteers, even those without much experience. In addition, unlike activities using paper which is then thrown away, this banner project works in a longer time frame. Displaying the banners at a later date allows for contributing artists to reflect on their experiences, and also enable others to know what people were feeling when the banner was made.

Lessons from Popoki's Friendship Story Project

We learned many things during this first year of the PFS project. Here I will introduce some of them.

(1) Popoki's Methodology: The meaning and importance of drawing as a means of expression

As discussed earlier, while we tend to rely on verbal communication, human beings have a range of ways in which to express themselves. Sometimes people cannot, or do not, use words, but are happy to use other forms of expression. The first time I tried the PFS project in Miyagi provides a good example. I asked a high school student if she would like to draw something. After looking at the picture of Popoki, she asked me about him and we started talking about cats. While we laughed and chatted, she drew four cats, consulting and joking with the others around her about how to draw them. Afterwards she told me that the cats had been swept away in the tsunami, and said she would be happy if we came back and displayed the cloth so that she could be reunited with them. This girl did not talk about her experience in the tsunami, nor did she discuss what might have happened to her cats. At the same time, the drawing helped her a bit to process the experience of the disaster and her feelings about her cats. These cats were the first example of drawings of pets and people who were 'gone' but they were followed by many others. Sometimes the artist began slowly to talk and share their story, other times they remained silent. I rarely saw anybody cry when they drew. If anything, those who seemed so sad or tense before they started drawing seemed to relax, and by the end they might not look happy, but they definitely seemed to be more calm and peaceful.

The way people spaced themselves on the cloth was also interesting. When adults decide where to draw, they distance themselves from other drawings, but children do not necessarily follow the same rules. Sometimes they draw on top of another person's drawing, either unintentionally or on purpose. One particularly interesting example involved a spiral drawing of the tsunami done by one child. Most people tried to stay as far away as possible from that drawing, choosing other parts of the cloth on which to draw. A while later, another child came and drew flowers on the spiral tsunami, transforming the frightening wave into a garden of flowers. After that, people no longer tried to avoid that part of the cloth, but drew wherever they liked. While no one said "scary" or "safe", they were able to convey these feelings through the drawings. This is just on indication of the importance of feeling safe. Another interesting detail involves differences

in the way people in different countries draw. For example, people in both the US and the Czech Republic made larger drawings and left more space between them than people in Japan. These differences may reflect different ideas about personal space and boundaries.

In the disaster area, the only cartoon character drawn by small children was Anpanman. Of course, Anpanman is very popular and is very easy for small children to draw. The original Anpanman was written at after World War II by Takashi Yanase and reflects his desire for peace and to help overcome the widespread hunger and poverty at that time. It may be that one of the reasons so many children whose lives had suddenly changed so much chose Anpanman is that it makes them feel more secure. In addition, the happy faces of the children as they drew Anpanman speaks to the success of the PFS project in meeting the goal of bringing smiles to the faces of people in the disaster area. Of course, people also smiled when they drew their favorite animals and foods, or things they dislike such as nuclear plants or the tsunami, or even when they drew sad things such as people or pets they had lost, as in the above example.

Until around June 2011, people used the cloth almost exclusively as a way to express their own thoughts and feelings. Particularly at the beginning, when we took out the cloth in evacuation centers, children would come running over to draw. Of course life in evacuation centers can be tedious and the opportunity to draw on a long cloth is unusual, but the drawing also presented an opportunity to express things that they did not/could not express in words. Two examples using words, not pictures, are of a small child who wrote "Stupid tsunami! Stupid earthquake!" and an adult who wrote "Give back Ōtsuchi!" These examples belie the media stereotypes of hisaisha as stoic people from Northeastern Japan who never show their anger or grief. On the level of individuals, these are personal expressions but when viewed from the perspective of the construction of collective memory, they provide examples of counter memory.

During activities, everyone was invited to draw, regardless of age or status. People outside of the disaster area and those who had come to the disaster area as volunteers or professionals often expressed reluctance, saying they had no authority (legitimacy) to draw. While children and young people were happy to draw, adults had more trouble. Many adults, especially men, were reluctant to pick up a pen and said they were not (good) artists. Many of these people wrote messages rather than drawing, and others who initially said they could not draw found that once they started, they could not stop. From these reactions, it was possible to see how people viewed their legitimacy and how they saw themselves in relation to the disaster. Interestingly, many volunteers who drew said afterward that it had given them an opportunity to reflect on their experience. For some who experienced the disaster, seeing the colorful drawings made by volunteers and other adults made them begin to talk about their own experiences. In some instances, volunteers and hisaisha drew together. When they could not think of what to draw, they drew outlines of their hands or feet. This provided a different way of communicating and leads to opportunities for connection.

Judging from the number of expressive drawings, it is safe to say that using Popoki's methodology with drawing on a long cloth is an effective way of helping people to share affect and emotion. There are challenges, however, especially with adults. If children are drawing, it is much easier to get adults involved. Many adults say they are poor at drawing and show hesitation, while others depend entirely on verbal expressions. Older men are particularly difficult to engage. Even if they do not draw, the involvement of adults can provide opportunities for volunteers to chat with people in evacuation centers, fulfilling an important need of hisaisha for conversation, communication, and diversion. In fact, most adults did eventually become involved. We believe that their involvement speaks to the relevance of this project, and also to its potential for challenging gender and other stereotypes.

A further difficulty is that many adults, even after hearing explanations, did not understand the concept behind the cloth, believing it to be a one-way method for giving messages of support. This lack of understanding is a reflection of the disaster discourse which includes not only those directly affected but also ways in which to react to, and deal with, disaster. The frequency of this misunderstanding also underlines the importance of challenging the disaster discourse and suggests that in addition to counter-memory, there is also a need to constantly question understandings about 'what to do.'

(2) The Meaning of 'Diverse Connection'

The meaning of the cloth (banner) is not just the length. Cloth is light and flexible, and can be used in tight spaces, on the seats of chairs, or practically anywhere, and it is fun to unfurl the banner and look at all the drawings. In addition, the long cloth symbolizes connection. This connection exceeds the limits of space and time. Symbolically, and perhaps in reality, with enough sections we can eventually connect the disaster area with Kobe or other places, even those outside Japan. Similarly, the cloth goes beyond the boundaries of time to connect the feelings and thoughts of people in Kobe who experienced the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake with others who experienced the GNJE last year. For some, the PFS project is a way for them to connect: "I want to go, too, but I don't have the strength. So at the very least I can send my thoughts by drawing…." Others, after seeing the cloth and/or finished book, begin to cry saying, "It makes me remember…." For some who experienced the earthquake in Kobe, seeing the banners and/or book inspired them to talk for the first time about their experiences seventeen years ago. These are examples of the ways the cloth contributes to the creation of an affect community.

Some of the connections made through the cloth were physical and continued over time. For example, although once people leave evacuation centers it is difficult to find them, in August we went looking for a family that we had first met in an evacuation center in Ōtsuchi in May. After we reconnected, the family sent a telephone strap made of wood from buildings destroyed by the tsunami, and we were able to support those activities. Another example is that we displayed PFS banners at the opening of the AMDA Ōtsuchi Health Support Center, and Popoki is part of their community building work. For example, an acupuncturist at this center uses Popoki not only to entertain children, but also to help them to relax when she treats them. Another kind of connection, for example by the Osaka Tosabori YMCA, is when people make their own banners and continue the project on their own. The publishing of Popoki's Friendship Story has also enabled us to renew and deepen connections. What is most important in this context is that the cloth provides a way for people to meet and talk and share stories about their experiences. Recovery will take many years, and connection is a very important part of that process.

The connection through the cloth was not limited to Japan. While there has been tremendous international support since the GNJE, the disaster discourse promulgated by the media and other information sources tends to emphasize Japan and Japanese people, and images of the disaster take on a strong sense of nationalism. A good example of the way this crosses borders is that of an international student who first drew a person in national dress and a personal message of support. When asked if it would be all right to include the message in the book, she requested to change the message, something she did three times. The final version was no longer her personal message, but one expressing everlasting support of her country for Japan.

This connection between disaster and national identity can be viewed critically through the cloth by using drawing and words to think about differences between Japan and other countries.

For example, through connecting people in Japan, Guam, and the US we were able to look at our common problems, such as US military bases and nuclear issues. We also connected children in Osaka, the Czech Republic and the disaster area though drawings of their favorite things. Connecting with other countries in this way not only allows for learning about one another but also contributes to the building of an affect community. In this process, what we stressed most strongly was the importance of thinking about others who are in need. In other words, we tried to express through the cloth that regardless of how difficult one's situation might be, it is always possible to think of others, and we are always happy when people think of us. This is one of the important lessons from the experience of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.

The above has been a description of how the cloth joins people together beyond differences in time, location, or situation. Drawing joins one person to the next, and then to the next, until it crosses borders and travels back and forth between Japan and other places. Friendships are born through these connections, and the foundations for a transnational affect community are laid. This is an important part of Popoki's Friendship Story, one that allows for diversity and also sustainability.

(3) Flexible Sustainability: Learning from the Cloth

As we have seen, many lessons have been learned from the PFS project. In terms of sustainability, here I will introduce three aspects. The first, related to the above discussion, is about differences in the way time is experienced. In the summer, we displayed the banners at a school in the disaster area. Looking at the banners against the background of blue sky, I could feel the passage of time in the way the number of banners had increased. At the same time, it also made me feel that the passage of time is different in the disaster area than for the rest of Japan.

The drawings probably are helpful for each artist to express his/her feelings, and some look forward toward the future, while others do not. In August, we visited Ōtsuchi-cho. A five-year-old boy drew a series of heroes. He said that they were not strong, but were nice and could transform themselves to get the "bad guys" and keep everyone safe. Another boy drew three figures holding hands and then added the words, "Let's overcome recovery!" Under normal circumstances, a five-year-old would not know words like 'recovery' and would not think about such things. The experience of the disaster has had a huge impact on his life and growth. We can see the impact on the flowing cloth, which has its own special version of time. Another example is that of a woman who right after the disaster wrote on the cloth that she would definitely get another house. In September she was somewhat pessimistic, and in February she had again decided to get a house no matter what. For those who have lost friends and relatives who have not yet been found, messages have changed from those of 'waiting' to asking to be 'watched over'.

The second aspect of flexible sustainability concerns the construction of hisaisha. This is related to the child mentioned above who knows words like 'recovery'. In August, when we held activities in Miyagi Prefecture, some primary school students began writing messages such as "Ganbare Tohoku!" This clearly reflects what was written on the many message cards they had received, and is not something that these children who were already trying so hard needed to say to themselves or to each other. When we told them they could write anything they wanted, they slowly began to draw and at the same time began to talk about their dreams and hopes for the future. This example shows that the children are very aware that they are hisaisha and were trying to behave in a manner in keeping with that identity. They have limited opportunities to express

themselves to others except as hisaisha, but when reassured that they could draw whatever they wanted, they drew other things.

The third point is about listening and hearing the voices of children. After a disaster, children's lives change suddenly and dramatically, and they try to find explanations for those changes using information from adults and other sources. It is very important to look at the disaster from the point of view of children. In particular, learning from children themselves how they protected themselves or what they did can be very useful in helping children to survive future disasters. Children have their own ways of perceiving risk and exchanging information about it, and these might not be readily accessible to adults, especially researchers (Tanner 2010: 343-345). Another important aspect of involving children is that the experience of the disaster has lifelong implications. For example, among the volunteers going to northeastern Japan from Kobe are many young people who were children at the time of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Many told me that since they were too young to be of help then, the least they can do is go and help now. The subjectivity of children in disaster should be understood within a very long-term perspective.

A final point about sustainability is the problem of cost and distance. The PFS project itself entails very little expense – cloth and magic markers are relatively inexpensive. However, transportation costs between Kobe and Tohoku are extremely high. Flexibility and creativity are necessary in order to sustain the PFS project, in spite of the distance.

Conclusion: Challenges for Community
Building and Peace and/or Disaster Prevention Education

This article began by suggesting that a truly peaceful society is one that is also has resilience to disasters, and that Popoki's Friendship Story can contribute to the creation of such a safe and resilient society. In working to create such a society, it is important to acknowledge and accept diversity, and include many different voices in the collective memory of trauma. This was discussed in the context of the disaster discourse, the legitimacy of hisaisha, and ways of expressing and knowing of the experience of disaster. Popoki's Friendship story project is one way to gather alternative stories and produce counter-memory.

This concluding section will reflect on the implications of the PFS project for support, community building, and peace and/or disaster education. The first reflection has to do with methodology. The PFS project is based on, and run by, the Popoki Peace Project. In this work, the presence of the make-believe cat Popoki is very important. Because Popoki is not human, the rules of human society do not necessarily apply. It is possible to tell Popoki secrets or share things that one might not otherwise discuss. Popoki can be a child, student, parent, pet, friend…or any combination of these or other roles. Because he is not human, Popoki can sometimes offer comfort, security, and hope in ways that are different, or perhaps not possible for people to provide. In so doing, Popoki brings smiles to unhappy faces. Imaginary friends and comfort are important for everyone, regardless of their age, although sometimes children need to be present in order for the adults to indulge themselves. Popoki does nothing special. He just sits there, next to everyone. But his presence is important.

In terms of usefulness for disaster and/or peace education, the PFS project offers several hints. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the project is not to send messages, but to share what is important to us and to support one another. Even when people in other countries misinterpreted the meaning, it provided a good opportunity to know one another and to share. Whether within one community, country, or across borders, this communication allows people to put their own

situation into perspective and to help others, while at the same time helping to build affect communities. The PFS also contributes to the development of empathy, helping people to feel closer to those in situations with which they themselves have little or no firsthand experience. As such, it is useful in community building, but also for disaster prevention education and education for international understanding and peace.

Another important implication comes from using PFS in Kobe. For some people in Kobe, learning about PFS project inspired them to break their seventeen years of silence and talk about their experiences during the earthquake. This is a clear reminder that the recovery of peoples' spirits is different from that of buildings and cities, and that both the process and timing are different for each individual. We need to incorporate these long term aspects of disaster into our teaching and learning. We can recognize the importance of PFS as a symbol and tool for connecting us today with disasters, wars, or other events in the past. As such can be both a useful tool for peace and/or disaster education, and also a way for people experiencing recent disasters to learn from those who have had similar experiences in the past.

Popoki's Friendship Story's banners contain many stories, drawn by many different hands. No requirements were made about who could participate, or what they should draw. However, as we have seen, by August, children in the disaster area were disciplining themselves as proper hisaisha and writing messages such as "Gambare Tohoku!" to fit that identity. It took a lot of encouragement to convince them that they were free to draw whatever they pleased. The important lesson for peace and/or disaster education from this example is that expectations that children will respond as 'victims' limits the range of possible expressions and content. Legitimacy is of course a related issue, as is the question of whether it is possible to combine a variety of diverse experiences into one comprehensive whole. This lesson is relevant to how we record this history. For example, when making collections of narratives of the disaster experience, it is important to be careful not to erase agency through expectations for universal expressions of what it means to be a victim and/or survivor. This situation shows one in which the PFS project helped to look critically at the disaster discourse, and also provided a way for children to directly convey their own voices. If given a change, even very small children can play an important role in recovery and it is important to recognize this.

As time passes, connecting people in and outside of the disaster area has become an important aspect of this project. This involves such key concepts as subjectivity, alternative modes of expression, and diversity. Using drawing, we have created a record made by people during the months after the disaster. In displaying the banners, we have been able to bridge differences in space and time and share those drawings, expressions, and experiences. We have met many people, and are working to deepen our connections. The publication of Popoki's Friendship Story is helping in that process. In that the PFS reflects a multitude of voices expressed and connected in diverse ways, it can be seen as having helped to convey counter-memory and contribute to building an affect community.

The drawings on Popoki's Friendship Story elicit empathy and interest, encouraging people not only to participate in voluntary activities but to look at, and become involved in, their own communities. This is also an important contribution to disaster and/or peace education not only because it promotes interest in community work, but because it helps to expose people to different ways of life, environments, and values. In learning to live together, we can create societies which are peaceful and resilient in the face of disasters. In this regard, the PFS project contributes to the building of a safer and more secure society. The creation of an affect community that is connected but respects diversity and sustainable but flexible provides a base for helping one another on an

everyday basis, not only at times of crisis. This in turn contributes to a peaceful society, and a peaceful world.

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