ON DOVE'S WING:
LIFE STORY NARRATIVES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION
LEARNERS FROM THE JUSTICE INSTITUTE OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

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ABSTRACT

My thesis is a 4-part narrative study of the learning associated with the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program at the Justice Institute of B.C. (British Columbia). This is a comprehensive continuing education program considered by many to be the most reputable of its type in Canada. The Justice Institute offers courses in conflict resolution, mediation, and negotiation through the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training.

I define narrative broadly as a framework for interpreting life experiences. There are two questions that guide my research: (a) What is the experience of conflict resolution learning for adults? and (b) how does this experience fit into their biographies?

I use a life story approach to explore these questions in the context of my own life and the lives of 5 other participants: Kate, John, Kevin, Sandy, and Sydney. A life story is taken to mean an account of someone's life, in whole or in part, shared with another person. I have written the life stories in the thesis using autobiographical and biographical methods. My own story is based on a series of personal reflections, journal entries, and my interactions with other research participants. It appears in two parts, at the beginning and end of the thesis, to distinguish my roles as researcher-learner-storyteller from the roles of those interviewed. Data for their narratives come from two individual interviews, two focus groups, and a written life story. I use information from these sources to reconstruct a story for each participant that highlights the meaning of conflict resolution learning.

Learners for this study were selected using different criteria. I was familiar with 4 of the 5 participants. Some degree of prior relationship was important because it allowed me to collect the personal stories of other people. All of the participants, except Kate, had graduated from the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program during the past 3 years.

The life stories, including my own, are the primary narratives. They are preceded by several chapters which I call "secondary narratives" because they contextualize and serve as frames for entering into the life stories. Secondary narratives include: stories about my research, accounts of conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute, reference to three socio-historical movements which framed the
evolution of conflict resolution in Canada, and a chapter on three adult learning
theories. The three movements are the human potential movement, ADR (Alternative
Dispute Resolution), and the historical role played by the Mennonites as
peacekeepers. I refer, in this last context, to VORP (Victim-Offender Reconciliation
Program). The three learning theories are constructivism, socially situated learning,
and transformative learning.

I situate the primary and secondary narratives in an interpretive/
phenomenological framework. There are six characteristics from this tradition which I
use and describe from my point of reference as the researcher: (a) reflecting on and
interpreting learners' personal experiences, (b) honouring participants' knowledge,
(c) attending to narrative as craft, (d) respecting complexity, (e) modelling empathy and
collaboration, and (f) integrating individual narratives of learning into broader
frameworks of social discourse.

After presenting the life stories in part 3, I analyze and interpret them in part 4.
When working on this final stage, I themed the narratives collaboratively with each
participant and then looked at the stories as a whole by myself. I discovered that the
meaning of conflict resolution learning, for those I interviewed, can be expressed as
five variations of authenticity. I explore these variations through a series of reflective
questions and elaborations. My work concludes with thoughts about my own story and
some considerations for the use of narrative in educational research.
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Kevin K. and Thursday. They know what it means to live with a thesis writer.
DEDICATION

For Mom and Dad who waited a long time for this thesis
Part 1

Stories of My Research
CHAPTER 1
A PERSONAL TALE:
GIVING VOICE TO MY LEARNING IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A Professional Introduction

I first learned about conflict resolution 6 years ago while working as an elementary French Immersion teacher. The staff wanted to build a collaborative school culture that would strengthen the sense of community among parents, teachers, and administrators. As we considered different options, our interest turned to conflict resolution. We decided to explore this area by inviting a trainer from the Justice Institute of B.C. (British Columbia) to give us a workshop. The institute's Centre for Conflict Resolution Training is well known across North America for its programs in mediation, negotiation, and conflict resolution.

I remember our staff inservice clearly. It took place one day after school in a grade-seven classroom. The teachers compressed themselves into students' desks. An old overhead projector glowing through a haze of dust particles shone its light on a white, textured screen dangling from the blackboard. While we waited the trainer from the Justice Institute stood at the front of the room beside the projector and a flipchart. Her name was Paula Temrick. She was one of a small group of core trainers that had developed the Justice Institute's conflict resolution programs at the beginning of the 1980s.

When everyone was ready the workshop started. Before talking about conflict resolution Paula spoke about conflict in general and the range of emotional and physical responses it generates. She described the anger cycle. A graph was used to show the different stages of anger arousal. A change in skin tone, rapid acceleration of the heart rate, a decrease in oxygen to the brain—all of these were powerful images of conflict at its worst.

Following this activity, the emphasis of the workshop shifted to using conflict resolution skills in practice. Staff members were invited to participate in role plays at the front of the room with Paula assuming the mediator's role. In the first demonstration she showed us how to intervene in a playground dispute. Another role play was much more personal. It involved a husband and wife team embroiled in marital conflict. This time angry words sent sparks flying through the classroom. Tension filled the air while
the audience watched, waiting to see what would happen. Paula divided her attention between the husband and wife. The two disputants were encouraged to focus on the problem rather than throwing barbs at one another. Gradually, the level of anxiety decreased. Paula was able to diffuse a volatile situation.

This workshop seemed to touch many staff members on a personal as well as a professional level. I was impressed with Paula's gentle, yet assertive interventions. She seemed to connect with people on a deep, human level. Once this connection was in place the disputants were able to see the real issues underneath the dispute, as if masks had been lifted.

I had never seen conflicts resolved in this way. At the time I had been teaching for about 9 years. I had observed many conflicts in the schools where I had worked; sometimes in my own class, sometimes in the staffroom, and sometimes among other educators. Although I did not like interpersonal differences--especially when they involved me--I saw them as a reality of working for a large organization such as the public-school system.

**My Own Battle With Conflict**

I would soon learn how destructive conflict could be. Approximately 2 years after the workshop, I decided to accept another teaching assignment. The prospect of working at a new school excited me and I was looking forward to a change.

Such hopes were short-lived. Almost as soon as the school year began some of the parents started complaining about my teaching. As the weeks progressed, the complaints became more frequent. One day I would be told that my programs lacked academic rigour; I was giving too much attention to the Fine Arts. When I made a mistake correcting a Math assignment concern was expressed about my knowledge of this subject area. One of the parents criticized my understanding of prehistory, citing the timeline I had chosen as inaccurate. She also challenged my French language and grammar skills. Although there were just a few parents behind these charges, they orchestrated an effective campaign of phone calls and letter writing to different school officials. My transition into a new school became a nightmare.
Witches and Witch Hunts

By October the attacks against me had intensified. My evenings and weekends were spent fighting headaches and nausea. I continued to teach in the classroom but went home every night feeling as if I had been dragged into the eye of a hurricane and shaken violently. I felt vulnerable and depressed.

After a certain point in time I began to realize that it was not my teaching but who I was as a person that was being attacked. I had experienced conflicts before in my role as a teacher, some of them more serious than others, but I had not encountered this degree of intimidation. It was apparent that some of the parents simply did not want me to teach their child. I had the feeling that I was being attacked for being different. I was not a jock. I was not married. My interests were in the creative arts and humanities. A parent who phoned me after school one day expressed concern that a witch hunt was under way. I was the witch—or wizard.

During this period I spent much time talking through the conflict with my partner, my family, and my colleagues. Talking with others helped me to keep the situation in perspective. My challenge was to remain focused. I also began looking into alternatives for confronting the harassment.

On Halloween evening I began receiving anonymous phone messages on my answering machine at home. These became a pattern. Several nights a week, many times each evening, rude and threatening messages were left. I contemplated changing my phone number but decided to try other options first.

The calls continued. One evening I returned home to hear a death threat on my answering machine. It was after 9:00 p.m. I felt terrified. I decided to take the tape to the police station. During the next several days the police monitored my phone lines. It was early December. Within a few days the police had identified three of my students as the callers. A constable came to our school and arranged for the callers and their parents to meet me as a way to say “Sorry.” The students were also asked to write me notes of apology.

By now the first term was drawing to a close. Many negotiations had taken place over the past few weeks to try and find a peaceful resolution to what had become a frustrating conflict for everyone involved. Although the phone threats ceased, there were still several unresolved issues. Just before Christmas the School Board decided
to close down the class. Both the students and I would begin the New Year in other schools.

**What Does It Mean to Be in a Place of Conflict?**

This is how a particular narrative of conflict entered into my life. I have described some of its underlying elements. Others are confidential or buried and forgotten. Some still carry pain and fear when recalled back into memory. For 2 or 3 years I retold my story many times, recreating the images it left imprinted on my mind and reliving my emotions. I shared it with friends as well as colleagues.

I share it again, this time in writing. I strive to understand conflict and to dwell on some of the questions it has left in its wake: What does it mean to be in conflict? How do we arrive at a place of difference with others? What makes a conflict at work different from a conflict at home or in the neighbourhood? How do some conflicts become stressful and threatening and others exciting and rewarding? And most importantly, how can I develop a sense of agency when responding to conflict?

By writing about my conflict I have started to make sense of some of its dimensions. I want to continue my learning through the storying of my experience. This involves understanding and interpretation. There are certain elements that precipitate conflict but there are many interpretations of what really happens. Every time I tell my story I need to decide what is important for me and what is not. What I believe triggered the conflict may differ from other people's beliefs. Yet it is critical that I continue to reconstrue meaning from my experiences; otherwise the conflict will remain hidden.

When I began teaching 14 years ago I worked hard and assumed that my intentions would speak for themselves. In hindsight, this seems naive. While honourable intentions are important, I now realize they must be matched by effective communication. This is a shared responsibility. In order for others to understand me I must reveal myself as a person and vice versa. How else will individuals understand one another? This is something I learned a few years ago. Being in places of conflict helped me to understand the relationships I had with others and the skills that could help to keep those relationships balanced.
I also came to question the power dynamics underlying conflicts. What types of power do disputants have? How is their power being used? Who serves to benefit from using power in a particular way? Power can be used to facilitate collaboration or to impede it. Inequalities among disputants often reflects larger social and political inequalities. Learning how to resolve conflicts successfully may require a deeper understanding of power imbalances.

Power, like voice and authority, are dynamics that I began to reconsider after living through different types of conflict. I did not feel competent in my ability to resolve conflicts. As a child, I had internalized the message that differences were undesirable and should be avoided. It was better to strive for harmony rather than fan the flames of discontent. This was an important principle of Christian theology.

As I grew older, I came to realize that some conflicts are short and spontaneous; some are ongoing and pervasive, and some are systemic. I think what shocked me when I became a teacher is how individuals working for an organization could suddenly become the targets of aggressive confrontations. I saw many instances throughout my career in which parents or other members of the public would bring pressure to bear on those in the public school system. This abuse of power was intended to give priority to the needs and interests of one individual or group. Public expectations about what should be done served as a political agenda that in turn influenced what actions, if any, would be taken in a particular situation.

In my case, many actors became involved in either sustaining or trying to settle the conflict. My work as a teacher became part of the public presentation of the conflict. It was difficult at times to keep track of the different levels of communication and to know who was saying what. I was frightened by what might be happening. Yet in hindsight, I believe it is critical for individuals to stay informed of how their organization works and how power is being enacted at different levels.

When conflict strikes it is preferable to try and resolve it in a spirit of goodwill and cooperation. However, these are not always values shared by the participants. Sometimes it is necessary to reach a settlement anyway. I now believe that, in addition to seeking collaboration, conflict resolvers must also address the restoration of human rights and justice. These are threatened when harassment is involved.
There is something about understanding the world in a grain of sand that has prompted me to story my experience one more time. I have learned a great deal from this conflict. It taught me about motivation and intent. It taught me about collaboration and negotiation versus other forms of conflict management. I learned how easily the tide can shift in human relationships from one moment to another. I learned how conflicts can escalate as much through inaction as action. Most of all, I learned to take pride in my identity and to value the important relationships in my life. While I was battling my conflict there were many caring people around me. Their roles as listeners was an ongoing source of support. Being in conflict reminded me about what it means to be human as well as what it means to be a teacher. For me, these two considerations have become one.

Moving Ahead: Rediscovering Conflict Resolution at the Justice Institute

This story would be incomplete without referring to the events which followed the closure of my class and my own growth as a learner. After moving into another school I heard about the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program at the Justice Institute. Although I was familiar with the institute, I did not know that it offered continuing education courses for adults. I thought it might be beneficial for me to learn more about conflict resolution, although I did not associate it with my personal needs. Even though I had been in a serious conflict I thought of the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program as an avenue for improving my professional skills as an educator. I decided to enter into the program by taking a course recommended for prospective applicants. The course is called Critical Skills for Communicating in Conflict.

I went to the Justice Institute one Saturday morning at the end of September 1993. At that time the institute was located on a mound of gently rolling, carefully cultivated hills overlooking the city of Vancouver and the Pacific Ocean with its sailboats and barges anchored offshore. Fragrant infusions of autumn leaves filled the air.

The setting was ideal for the type of training I was about to receive. Almost immediately, the course began speaking to my being. I began learning about different conflict styles and how to use "I statements" to express a feeling. I felt like I was learning how to connect with people in a way that was rejuvenating. In the spaces
inside the curriculum I heard how to show respect for others, how to collaborate, and how to build understanding with others. These were skills I had not acquired as a child. My interest in conflict resolution for professional development suddenly became an interest in my own growth. I realized that there were concrete skills I could learn to interact with others during conflicts. These skills would also help me to be a better communicator in general.

Certain areas of the curriculum carried special significance for me. One was empathy. I recognized that my tendency when listening to someone was to focus on what I wanted to hear rather than what the other party needed me to hear. By practising active listening skills I came to understand what real empathy meant.

I also came to understand the importance of self-disclosure and assertiveness. These were skills for identifying and expressing my personal needs. I found these skills particularly challenging to use with those in positions of power. However, I have also learned that when my needs are important to me and my intentions are respectful, that is absolutely essential for me to negotiate my own interests; otherwise, I forfeit my right to self-expression and choice.

Another area of learning was understanding anger. In the past I had interpreted anger as an expression of dissatisfaction rather than a legitimate feeling of frustration or hurt. People’s anger scared me. When I became angry it was often because I had reached a high level of frustration. One of my responses was to be passive-aggressive. Conflict resolution helped me to understand my own anger and the anger of others.

After this introductory course, I enrolled in one further course and then registered in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. For 2 years I took 30 days of training. Sometimes this required time away from teaching and paying the costs of a Teacher on Call. I felt this money was well spent.

One of the primary ways in which students at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training learn new skills is through role plays. The simulations take place in small groups and are based on real-life events. Some students in each group are role players while others observe the dynamics of the conflict and interventions that are used by the facilitator. One of my early role plays was a pivotal learning experience. I was in a course called Making it Hard to Say No—Negotiating with Difficult People. I would later realize that it would have been better to take this elective further along in
my training. However, I did not have this insight at the time and was motivated to learn as much as I could. During my first role play I was wedged in between two women. One was the disputant. She sat opposite me. I was the negotiator. My role was to apply my skills to help resolve the conflict. Another student watched what was happening. After the simulation ended, the disputant said, “You didn’t get through to me!” I tried again with the same response. I felt the heat redden my face as exasperation and embarrassment welled inside me. What this illustrated for me was the critical importance of matching my behaviours to my intents. If the disputant didn’t share my perception of the situation then I wasn’t reaching her. The role play reinforced, for me, the need to clarify my motivations and to check other people’s perceptions.

For someone used to academic learning, this was a different type of learning. Allowing myself to experience failure as well as success was part of the training process. I felt a strong sense of commitment to my learning even though the role plays often triggered many emotions. I also had difficulties on one of my assessments after the course work. Had I not believed in the value of what I was doing, I would not have worked towards the completion of my certificate.

**Living the Learning**

The real value of my training was outside the classroom as I used my skills at home, at work, and in the community. As a teacher, I continued to encounter conflicts at the workplace, both as a participant and as an observer. One of my most difficult challenges at an early stage in my training at the Justice Institute was to confront a colleague about a situation that was affecting my teaching. My skills were rough and the session painful. Yet I was glad that I addressed the situation rather than letting it fester and create further harm. Another level of learning would occur when my skills were stronger and I could openly articulate my needs to administrators. In all of these situations I entered into the discussions with a commitment to be respectful and genuine about what was happening.

I have also found mediation skills to be very useful for helping me to resolve conflicts among students. I believe it is important to teach children how to use conflict resolution skills for themselves so they will not always require an adult mediator. A few years ago the school district where I am employed purchased violence prevention kits
for classroom teachers. These kits include lessons in empathy, interpersonal problem solving, and anger management. More recently, the provincial government has mandated a new program called Career and Personal Planning which focuses on key life skills.

As well as using conflict resolution at work, I have applied my learning to my interactions at home, among family members, and in the community. Bringing new patterns of communication into longstanding relationships has been an interesting exercise, one akin to an actor learning a new role. At first, it felt unnatural for me to use conflict resolution skills just as it was unnatural for other people to hear my scripts. Those who knew me best knew my behaviours and points of vulnerability.

Today I continue to strive for a style of communication that works for me. Sometimes when I am tired or feel impatient my conflict resolution skills fly out the door and I choose screaming or sarcasm above paraphrasing and summarizing. There is no magic Band-Aid for healing conflict. Still, I feel that my training in conflict resolution has been invaluable. It has provided alternative frameworks for me to view conflict and to understand my options in difficult situations.

Dwelling on the Learning

This is my tale of conflict resolution learning. It is one part of my life story. Whenever conflict steps into my life it seems to encourage a new dialogue with myself. I wonder how the conflict developed, why the other party behaved in a particular way, why I behaved the way I did, and what precipitated the conflict. I think about who I am and what type of relationship I want to have with others. I also think about the kind of life I want to live and how much responsibility I have in creating a better world. My learning is ongoing.

I have been at my current school for about 4 years since it opened. It is a small school located just inside Richmond, an island city connected by bridges to Vancouver. During the day planes can be seen flying overhead as they prepare to take off and land at the international airport.
When I think about how our school has evolved I feel proud. Our staff is committed to building a sense of community for our students. This is important since many of them are recent immigrants. We want them to feel welcome and happy in their new home. The school is their connection with other people. The types of relationships they experience will become signposts in their memories. Every year we host special events such as pancake breakfasts and potluck dinners to bring students and their families together with teachers, administrators, and other staff members. These points of connection help us to understand those who share our world.

During the past 4 years the landscape around the school has also changed. I remember when there was no grass. Now there is a large field connected to a public park. Areas for playing baseball and basketball have been developed. An Adventure Playground has been installed and anchored in sand. Wooden benches have been placed around the equipment so parents and grandparents can watch their children play. About 3 years ago we invited the mayor and the students to plant daffodil bulbs at the base of young oak trees that mark the perimeter of the school yard. Their soft, yellow colours reappear every spring.

I see these changes and I am reminded of the balance in nature. After the wet, stormy rains of winter, spring returns calmly bringing with it new invitations to dream and hope.
CHAPTER 2
OPENING THE DOOR: AN OVERVIEW OF MY RESEARCH

On Dove's Wing is a narrative study of conflict resolution learners; narrative meaning stories. It presents the stories of six adults who trained in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program at the Justice Institute: Kate, Sandy, John Sydney, Kevin, and I. All but one of us were graduates. In this thesis I use a life story framework to explore the significance of our learning. Life, learning, and education are not strangers meeting nervously for the first time. They play a constant, though complex role in one another's existence. This is true of stories as well. Learners live through stories with as much energy and conviction as stories reside in them.

The challenge for me as a researcher was to give meaning to these narratives of relationship. Eventually, I decided to present my own story in 2 parts. The first part, chapter 1, describes the circumstances which prompted me to undertake this study. The second part is the close of the thesis and takes the form of culminating reflections. I include my stories at the entry and exit points of this work for two reasons. First, I want to offset my unique experiences as researcher-learner-storyteller from those of the other participants. Second, I want to leave space for the voices of other learners. Their life stories appear in part 3 and are based on a series of interviews that took place between August 1995 and March 1996. I interviewed each learner individually twice and then arranged two focus groups for all of the participants. Many of the individual interviews took place in my home around coffee and muffins while the winter rains of Vancouver slid down the windows of my sun room. The group sessions were woven in between the Christmas holiday and the New Year like a web spinning our conversations through time while merrier memories of turkey and the Yuletide lingered nearby.

This is how I collected my data in collaboration with the other learners. We were able to bond as a group because many of us knew one another. Kevin was the only learner in this project who had gone on to become a coach and instructor at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. Kate and Sandy were friends of mine. We knew each other from the days when we had practised our conflict resolution skills in an independent study group and had served as one another's mentors. I had met Sydney while practising my research skills at the Justice Institute. She was part of a class I had observed. Following this, she had agreed to an interview. John was the only
participant I had never met. At the first focus group I would learn that some of the other participants were acquainted with one another.

I mention these connections because a sense of relationship was an integral part of the research process. Without this, I could not have entered as readily into people's lives and explored the meaning of their learning.

The life stories of the 5 participants are preceded by several chapters organized into 2 sections. I like to think of these opening chapters as secondary narratives since they contextualize and give meaning to the life stories. Within each chapter there are also several mini narratives. Sometimes these appear intertextually; that is, as short accounts woven into the main discourse. In chapter 4, for example, I have included short stories about the history of conflict resolution training from some of the first instructors who worked at the Justice Institute. Sometimes the mini-narratives are my own meta-analysis. I use this approach again in part 3 when I present my own voice in between those of the learners. Occasionally, the intertextual narratives are vignettes taken from my interviews that seem better placed outside the life stories.

I use the terms primary and secondary narratives to distinguish the life stories from the material in chapters 2-6. I do not mean to suggest that the secondary narratives are less important. In fact, researching and understanding the secondary narratives required several additional months of reading and interviewing individuals whose stories had entered into those of the learners.

An ongoing challenge for me has been to give meaning and shape to the notion of story. By referring to the organization of my work I have already introduced what I believe is a key characteristic of narrative: the notion of stories within stories. Sometimes these stories are our own, sometimes they have been reclaimed from other sources, and sometimes, a combination of the two. It is difficult to tell one tale without thinking of another. I invite you to consider how stories influence and enter into one another as you read about conflict resolution learning.

Despite their layered and gregarious nature, they also retain an underlying wholeness otherwise we would not be able to recognize them as stories. From this perspective, it could be argued that my authorship takes precedence over my primary and secondary categories and transforms all of my work into one grand narrative.
This tension between the whole and its parts is inherent to narrative and highlights the importance of audience or reader participation in trying to understand the text from as many vantage points as possible. Young refers to the multiple contexting of narrative:

Stories are implicated in as well as distinct from the occasions on which they are told. Their implication is a matter of context and their distinctness is a matter of frame. Contexts are the continuities between stories and some aspects of their surround, and of other relevant events. Frames mark the discontinuities between stories and these other present or pertinent contexts. Contrasting puzzles about stories thus present themselves to narrative analysis: one, distinguishing stories from contexts; and the other, connecting stories with contexts. Stories can be seen as contextual events that are situated and occasioned or they can be seen as discrete objects that can be detached and resituated.

(1987b, p. 69)

This shift between contexts and frames will be evident throughout my work. This is another reason why I included several secondary narratives in the first few chapters. As well as serving as narratives by themselves, they are also frames for entering into the primary stories of the learners.

By now you may be wondering what other qualities of story I have integrated into the thesis. What, if anything, separates a story as literary creation from a story as research? How will I apply narrative structures to explore adult learning? In order to answer these questions, I will describe my project in depth, how I came to narrative, and its implications for educational research and conflict resolution.

**Research Purpose and Questions**

When contemplating this study I searched for a way to represent my experiences of conflict resolution learning along with those of other adults. I didn't want to evaluate the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program; I wanted to explore how adults interpreted its meaning in the forums of their public and private lives. There were two questions that guided my research efforts: (a) What is the experience of conflict resolution learning for adults? and (b) how does this experience fit into their biographies? At what point in their lives, for example, do they begin training and in
what type of circumstances? How, if at all, do they apply conflict resolution skills to their personal and professional lives after they complete their formal education at the Justice Institute?

I was seeking a research framework that would allow participants to view their learning holistically. The Conflict Resolution Certificate Program emphasizes the practical application of skills. Learning how to resolve conflicts through the Justice Institute is not an abstract or theoretical process but one, it is hoped, that will be used regularly in diverse settings such as the home, workplace, and community. Having a research framework that would allow learners to interpret the meaning of their learning across settings was important to me.

I also wanted participants to make connections in their learning that were personally relevant. Their subjective knowledge would be my primary source of information. I would need to listen to and analyze participants' responses and construct a picture of their learning. In theory, every learner could construct different meanings from conflict resolution. How would I reconstruct and represent these individual chronicles of experience and reflection? And how could I include my own description of learning while maintaining the integrity of my research role?

Narrative in Educational Research

Exploring the Meaning of Research: My Own Journey

Deciding how to enter into the lives of other learners took me several months. Before discovering narrative I had to rediscover the meaning of research. When I began my journey I assumed research was a uniform process. “Learn how educational research is done,” I thought, and my study would fall in place.

I interviewed many educators with this outcome in mind. When different individuals interpreted the same research method from different points of view, I was confused. How would I be able to develop a framework for my project if there was no consensus about how to proceed? I finally realized that I would never find such a recipe. Even if it existed it would quickly be adjusted according to the tastes of those who used it. I began to understand the significance of personal interpretation better after taking a course on adult learning theories which depicted learning, not as the
acquisition of empirical knowledge but as the internal construction of meaning. This also characterized my exploration of research methods in education.

Although I felt comfortable situating my work in an interpretivist paradigm, much of the literature on conflict resolution learning, I discovered, was grounded in another paradigm, that of scientific objectivism. Learning, according to objectivists, is an external process that can be represented objectively, not an internally constructed process. This understanding conflicted with my own meaning of research and the process I wanted to follow in this project. I had experienced conflict resolution learning as part of my being. I had participated in courses with my body and my mind. How, I wondered, could research on learning be separated from the learners themselves?

My excursions into educational research also confirmed the extent to which knowledge about learning has been rationalized and fragmented. This is the case in conflict resolution as it is in other areas.

Two recurrent difficulties plague conflict resolution researchers. The first is our, as yet, modest ability to analyze conflict from an interdisciplinary perspective. We are inhibited in that by our own training and by the organizational structure of the university. Our discipline-bound languages and conceptual frameworks, and our jealous guarding of home turfs compound the problem . . . .

A second obstacle to good conflict analysis is the meager opportunity to test our work. If we do the research for policymakers, our recommendations are often too threatening to established policy and structures, too arcane in presentation style, or too little thought through in terms of policy implications to be useful. (Wehr & FitzSimmons, 1988, p. 475)

For several months, I wandered from one university library to another trying to develop an overview of dispute resolution. I read psychological, sociological, organizational, educational, political, legal, and other perspectives. How did these fit together? And how could I represent my knowledge in a clear, personalized format?

This was the path I travelled as a researcher. My three insights--(a) that knowledge was interpretive, (b) that learning needed to be situated in the learner, and (c) that traditional interpretations of conflict resolution were fragmented across disciplinary lines--allowed me to reorient myself and continue my journey with a firmer sense of purpose. I realized that the question I needed to ask in order to understand conflict resolution was not, "How should I do my research?" but rather "What does it
Why I Chose Narrative

I was attracted to narrative for several reasons. I love creative writing and knew that the kind of research I wanted to conduct was as much aesthetic and interpretive as it was rigorous and analytical. I also knew that stories were not closed frameworks. It would be possible for participants, myself included, to construct narratives that reflected our individual meaning systems.

It is in the telling of stories that people begin to make sense of their meaning systems. Forming and articulating a frame of experience requires them to focus on the essence of their thinking. What kind of organized tale will help others to understand their personal experiences? What information will their story include and exclude? What will its significance be for others? How will others understand the twists and turns that have shaped their discourse? In disclosing our narratives, we are inviting others to enter our space of being, to participate in the sense-making, to empathize with our experiences as fellow human beings, and to respond in kind.

A story can be defined as a unit of meaning that provides a frame for lived experience. It is through these stories that lived experience is interpreted. We enter into stories, we are entered into stories by others, and we live our lives through these stories. (White, 1992, p. 80)

This is the definition of story I have adopted for my research. The notion that people live "storied lives" is one commonly associated with psychology and borrowed by other professionals, including those in education. Bruner, for example, distinguishes between two fundamental forms of cognition, a logo-scientific mode of thinking and a narrative mode, each with its own methods of operating: "They differ radically in their procedures for verification. A good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds. Both can be used as means for convincing another. Yet what they convince of is fundamentally different: arguments convince one of their truth, stories of their life likeness" (1986, p. 11). Whether or not the two forms are as clearly distinct as Bruner suggests will likely be an ongoing topic of discussion. Polkinghorne, another psychologist, describes stories in less polarized terms, stating that "our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative with the stories that we tell and hear told,
with the stories that we dream or imagine or would like to tell" (1988, p. 160).

Educators such as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) have adopted this conceptual
framework for their research on public schooling. Others in the field of Adult Education
have also drawn on storytelling methods in their own inquiries and practices.

Within adult education and related circles, a number of
counselling approaches are currently employed that are
rooted in one version or another of the ‘story’ model. With roots in disciplines as diverse as gerontology,
anthropology, and narratology, these include practices
associated with labels like life review, guided
autobiography, reminiscence therapy, bibliotherapy,
oral history, and personal mythology. In addition, two
influential movements in present-day adult education,
namely feminism and popular education, share the
conviction that storytelling is intrinsically empowering:
that through the sharing of personal and corporate
stories consciousness is raised, knowledge is generated,
community is created, and a vision is stimulated that has
transformative powers. The current epidemic of storytelling
well outside these circles only testifies to the strength of this
conviction. (Randall, 1995, p. 5)

Stories represent a type of knowledge that can be used to inform as well as transform.
Their value for educators and other professionals depends on the objectives and
contexts with which they are associated.

The ability to story experience is an interpretive process that is consistent with
the way in which adults learn. Daloz argues that “in the great tales lies the syntax of
our lives, the form by which we make meaning of life’s changes. A good story
transforms our vision of the possible and provides us with a map for the journey
ahead” (1986, p. 22). Whatever academic requirements this work fulfilled, it also
challenged me to understand the lives of those who had taken the same program as I.

The particular approach to narrative I have used is known as the life story. Like
other forms of research, it is subject to a variety of interpretations. When Bertaux and
Kohli wrote about the life story they noted that its multiple applications seemed to
preclude the possibility of a standard methodology (1984, p. 215). Twelve years after
their work was published, I would concur with this assessment.
I have accepted a simple though commonly accepted view of the life story as an account of someone's life in whole or in part that is shared with another person (see Denzin, 1989; Mann, 1992). This carries different implications for research, including the assumption that people do have a story to tell.

Part of the interpretive equipment furnished to us by our culture is the idea that we "have" a life story, and that any normally competent adult has one. In this nontechnical use, the notion of the life story means something like "what events have made me what I am," or more precisely, "what you must know about me to know me," where knowing a person specifies a range of . . . activities and relations by the knowers. (Linde, 1993, p. 20)

I would argue that we hold many versions of our life story, not just one. The narrative told to the researcher is one shaped by a number of influences, including the purpose of the research and the focus of the topic being examined.

In this project I have also identified the life story with the notion of a journey described by Daloz (1986). Each journey of conflict resolution learning, I assumed, would be framed and contextualized by an individual's life experiences across time and space. Some learners might share one grand story; others might share a more tightly framed version of conflict resolution as part of their overall biography. I would try to respect participants' freedom to tell the tale of their choice.

The construction and articulation of a life story are processes that develop through reminiscence and reflection. DeConcini (1990) notes the etymological connections between remembering and telling a story:

The etymologies for our English words for narrate and remember are the Latin narrare and memorare. In Latin, these infinitives are synonymous. Both translate "to narrate, to tell a story." . . . Etymologically, then, memorare, far from referring to some totally inner mental process or state, involves a telling--and a peculiar kind of telling at that. The Latin term suggests that to remember implies telling a story. (p. 62)

One implication of this is that participants with better memories will be able to share their stories in greater detail than those who have difficulties reflecting on their pasts. However, researchers can also stimulate the recall of information through reflective questions and active listening skills. Young's (1987a, p. 19) description of storytelling as a shift between two worlds, the Taleworld and the here and now, was reflected in
participants' responses to my interview questions. Whenever they recalled an event that seemed significant to their learning, I would encourage them to reconnect with that memory.

Linde (1993) offers two additional considerations of the life story. She says that it expresses "a point about the speaker, not a general point about the way the world is" and that it is told and retold over and over again (p. 21). Her first point is suggestive of another statement made by Ochberg, one that highlights the notion of intentionality:

Narrators try to convince others, and themselves, to take a particular view of their lives: to see them as coherent, dedicated, triumphant—or perhaps as unfairly constrained. Often, these efforts at narrative persuasion matter because of the contrast they draw between a preferred account and a less palatable alternative: a latent subtext, which is never described explicitly but which is always threatening to emerge. (1996, p. 97)

The challenge for narrative researchers is to identify these subtexts. And what about the intentions of the researcher? If participants are trying to make a point about their lives then surely the researcher is engaged in a similar process of argumentation. While I concede that stories reflect many hidden levels of meaning, I shall explore these in a spirit of inquiry and proceed carefully when trying to understand conflict resolution learning.

Linde's (1993) second point, that storytelling is a repetitive act, also has different implications for narrative research. Not only does research become possible because individuals can retell their stories but it allows researchers a role in this process. The life story approach is highly interactive. After I had listened to participants' life stories, I shared my own. Each set of interviews I held with a learner had a particular set of dynamics that shaped the way in which a story was told.

One can only know how another experiences his or her life though how it is told, and the telling of the life is in itself constitutive of those two lives—the teller’s and the researcher’s. The ‘life as it is told’ takes place within the ‘interactional stream of experience’ of both subject and researcher. Thus how we know another’s experience of their life can only be through an engagement between each other’s ‘interactional streams of experience’, communicated through language and governed by the social and cultural context of that situation. And the telling and the hearing of the life story is not somehow bracketed
out of each of our lives; the communication of the story is both about the life told and constitutive of it and the researcher’s life. The telling is an event in the life, as well as a construction of that life. (Mann, 1992, p. 273)

This is an important premise on which this project developed. As Guba and Lincoln have aptly written, “to suppose that it is possible for a human investigator to step outside his or her own humanness, for example, but disregarding one’s own values, experiences, and constructions, is to believe in magic” (1989, p. 67). Stating who I am and who the other participants are constitutes the content and context of the life stories in this project.

This approach to narrative provides more artistic licence than the life history approach, for example, which aims at an accurate, realistic depiction of someone’s life. I wanted learners’ stories to speak with passion as well as insight. As well as drawing on the interpretive elements of narrative from psychology, I have used certain rhetorical strategies in my work from literature such as the use of different voices.

If the application of narrative to research seems unusual, think about what is gleaned by reading or listening to someone’s story, what we learn about ourselves, other people, and the world we inhabit. A well-written story teaches and informs through poetry and language, rather than science. “We have forgotten how magnificently the great novelists have contributed to our understanding of ourselves, and of the complex nature of humanity . . . . The return to narrative suggests that we reconsider the value of the form and function of stories in all areas of human life, but especially in education . . . .” (McEwan & Egan, 1995, p. xii).

These are the two influences that inspired my work: an understanding of narrative from psychology which has been applied to educational studies of personal experience and a more literary understanding of narrative as craft. One is an interpretive framework for constructing knowledge; the other provides spaces and strategies for entering into and representing my work. As a learner and as an educator, I have felt the power of stories in people’s lives. I wanted to reawaken this spirit and understanding when exploring adults’ learning in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program.
Bringing Narrative Research to Conflict Resolution Learning

The application of narrative research to conflict resolution is a recent occurrence. Examples include the work of Duryea and Potts (1993) and Cobb's (1993, 1994) application of narrative theory to empowerment and intentions in mediation. Another body of literature dealing with conflict in the context of moral development and decisionmaking also exists (See Kilpatrick, 1992; Peckover, 1990; Tappan & Brown, 1989). Most of the literature on conflict resolution training has focused on strategies, models, and products of learning without referring to the learners themselves and the role played by training in their personal lives and relationships. A de-emphasis on biographical methods is evident in specific areas of conflict resolution such as mediation: "While the events of mediation are often emotional and dramatic, most of the books and stories we read are detached and abstract. They reduce practice to a series of technical formulas that seem far removed from the experience of a mediator caught in the heat of conflict between a couple, co-workers, towns, or nations" (D. M. Kolb & Associates, 1993, xiii). My research is intended to develop a better understanding of an area that cuts across the different areas of conflict resolution: adult learning. As well as understanding the practices of dispute resolution I also believe it is important to understand the meaning individuals attribute to their learning while becoming practitioners and upgrading their knowledge and skills.

Characteristics of This Study

Each research project reflects particular assumptions, values, and beliefs about knowledge. These comprise the methodology. Before discussing the significance and organization of my research I would like to try and articulate those characteristics which distinguish my life story approach. They are most often associated with the interpretive/phenomenological tradition. Although this tradition accommodates many different schools of thought, I will summarize it briefly before focusing on my own research.
Phenomenology: Interpretive Influences on Narrative

Phenomenology as a philosophy and form of inquiry developed during the nineteenth century as part of the interpretive tradition. This tradition emphasized that knowledge was not external or objective but internal and subjective. Each individual, it was maintained, interprets a phenomenon such as learning differently. The goal of phenomenological inquiry became to try and understand how an individual constructs meaning from personal experience.

Although this seemed straightforward, questions about interpretive research began to emerge. What kind of methods, for example, would best allow researchers to access an individual's meaning systems? Was it important for the researcher's own interpretations of a phenomenon to be taken into consideration as part of the inquiry or would it make more sense to "bracket" them in order to focus on those of the participants? Was it possible to separate the two? Different responses to questions such as these eventually led to different phenomenological perspectives informed by different knowledge frameworks.

It is not my intent to discuss the differences among phenomenologists. Instead I would like to focus on those interpretivist approaches I have used in my role as researcher. They include: (a) reflecting on and interpreting learners' personal experiences, (b) honouring participants' knowledge, (c) attending to narrative as craft, (d) respecting complexity, (e) modelling empathy and collaboration, and (f) integrating individual narratives of learning into broader frameworks of social discourse.

Reflecting on Learners' Personal Experiences

Phenomenology is concerned with how individuals experience life; in other words, how they come to understand a phenomenon. What implications does this have for educational research? One is that phenomenology is highly personal. It is not a type of research that seeks to generalize or to quantify. Phenomenologists want to explore the meanings that people attach to their experiences. It is the taken-for-granted events in our life that typically provide some of the most fascinating insights when studied phenomenologically. These meanings are disclosed as the phenomenologist comes to understand people's interpretation of their life
experiences. This is what identifies phenomenologists with the interpretive tradition.

What we know of the world, we know only through our experience of it; our experience of the world is all that we have, and this is all that we can know. We cannot even know another person’s experience of the world. The best that we can do is to interpret the experience of others . . .

And to interpret the expressions (and thus the interpretations) of others, we have to rely upon our own lived experience and imagination. The most that we can do is to “identify” our own experience of the experience as expressed by others. (White, 1992, pp. 78-79)

In this study, I chose to explore the meaning systems of a few adults as a way to understand the significance of conflict resolution learning. I used a narrative framework to facilitate the process of interpretation. My goal was not to try and determine what conflict resolution learning “really” was but to enter into the world of each participant and try to understand conflict resolution learning from an individual’s own perspective. I knew that the interpretations of those I interviewed would be situated in different biographies and social backgrounds. I wanted to ground participants’ understandings in their life stories.

I began my thesis by telling you how I came to conflict resolution. I shared my background as a way to show you who I was, what kinds of experiences were part of my biography, and what motivated me to do this project. Researchers in education and the social sciences refer to this as “situating” the study. The life story approach was one way to situate my reflections of learning as well as those of the other participants.

Honouring Participants’ Knowledge

One of the most important implications of an interpretive phenomenological view of knowledge for me was that I would honour each learner’s meaning systems. This is what makes narrative research rewarding: trying to understand, value, and represent the diverse ways in which people construct meaning. Personal narratives of experience are often seen as alternative knowledge frameworks since they cut across traditional disciplines and boundaries.
I chose to honour learners' stories in different ways. First, I allowed them to tell the tale of their choice. I did not want to question the authenticity of their narratives. Whether or not the story actually happened was not my primary consideration. I assumed that the narratives would reveal insights into students' learning on some level. I also assumed that the stories would speak by what they omitted as what they included.

As I was interviewing, it became evident that there were many stories inside each individual, some hidden and concealed, some half-revealed like a secret that has slipped into the open, and some articulated but without shape. This is how learners make meaning.

I also tried to honour the narratives of learners when restorying their experiences. After I wrote the draft of a particular story, I asked the learner to edit and change the narrative in order to make it authentic. During the focus groups several adults mentioned that they felt honoured to have been invited as participants in this project.

**Attending to Narrative as Craft**

When I think of a good story, I think of the creative and thoughtful ways it has been given life. I think of the tones, textures, and hues that are used to paint with language and of the metaphors that bring pictures softly to mind like the sun filtering through the trees at unexpected intervals. I think of narratives and I am reminded of the researcher-as-artist as well as researcher-as-interviewer-and-data-gatherer.

Rich descriptive texts are essential for representing phenomenological findings. This is how the meanings of lived experiences can be articulated and re-presented for others. Narrative inquirers must be able to represent people's meanings while imbuing them with fresh insights, to enter into the silent spaces in people's lives as well as the crowded, busy ones, and to discern details as well as major themes. This requires interpretation as well as description.

This is where narrative and phenomenology intersect. The process of constructing a story involves many interpretations. They may be interpretations about content, about framing, about voice, about tone, or about point of view. They may be decisions about resonance. A well written text will display empathy for the characters.
As readers, we will want to try and understand the experiences of the characters. The sensitivity and language adopted by the narrator will speak to our hearts as well as our minds. How a storyteller interprets the meaning of a story will determine which tale is told and whether or not other people will identify with the result. Representing people's experiences as narrative requires skill, imagination, and reflection.

The art of storytelling has been acknowledged by educational researchers in various ways. Connelly and Clandinin (1990, pp. 7-10) note how the manipulation of time as well as the balance between the whole and its parts are essential. Elsewhere they describe the internal and existential elements that influence the crafting of a text (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, pp. 423-425). These include the use of voice, signature, and narrative form. Van Manen, uses the term “poetizing activity” (1990, p. 13) when referring to interpretive phenomenology. Rasberry speaks of “crafting a life” when writing stories of self (1994, p. 5). Randall (1995), in his work on stories, refers extensively to the interrelationships between life, story, and art. All of these descriptions reinforce the image of narrative researcher as raconteur.

I will not pretend to have mastered this art. I chose to keep the stories of learning in the thesis simple yet whole. I tried to highlight events and understandings that spoke to the experiences of each learner as they revealed themselves to me. I wanted readers to feel what it was like for each adult to have gone through conflict resolution training. In crafting stories of learning, I wanted to show what made one person's experiences different from those of other individuals.

Another consideration was balance. I wanted the life experiences of each conflict resolution learner to add depth to the narrative, rather than dominate it. The significance of life events, for me, was that they would contextualize the formal learning that had occurred and create a framework for developing each participant's story through time.

These are some of the considerations that became important to me as I wrote the narratives in this work. Although the stories were finally committed to paper, I continue to edit and rewrite them in my mind.
Respecting Complexity

Although phenomenologists bring a particular focus to their research, they do not attempt to oversimplify the meaning of what they discover. Human experiences have multiple edges to them. Inquiries which honour this complexity tend to be authentic.

It was important for me to keep this in mind when thinking about how to frame my interview questions around learning. Although I was familiar with different models, typologies, and definitions of adult learning, I did not want to impose these on participants. One of the reasons I chose a life story framework was that it would allow participants to integrate, as they chose, both their formal and informal learning experiences in conflict resolution across time and space.

As the interviews progressed, it became evident that much learning had not occurred in the classroom. It had occurred at work, over coffee with friends, in the angst of a confrontation with a neighbour or spouse. Conflict resolution in this way resembles other forms of adult education.

What adults learn in the context of formal education does not necessarily come from the content of a program: It often includes several other dimensions, such as social interaction outside the classroom and cultural experiences. Sometimes adults learn more about themselves by dropping out of a program than by staying in it. Therefore, to become better acquainted with adult learning, it becomes necessary to understand the processes through which adults have constructed what they know. (Dominicé, 1990, p. 201)

I encouraged learners to integrate their narratives and to include experiences on and off campus.

The adults in this study had not just arrived at the Justice Institute as empty vessels waiting to be trained. They had come from a particular place and time with a wealth of learning experiences. They wanted to learn conflict resolution so they could take the skills back into their lives in order to deal with difficult situations. An educational program such as the Justice Institute's would become part of their evolving life stories. To try and understand the significance of participants' formal training without understanding their life contexts would be to ignore personal motivations, expectations, and values embedded in the learning. Conflict resolution
students, like other adult learners, are real people whose formal education is shaped as much by individual histories and hopes for the future as it is by institutional experiences.

I decided to treat learning as part of the biographies of learners after noting other precedents in adult education literature. Daloz’s work (1986) inspired me to think about learning as a lifelong journey. Like the characters in mythic tales, the conflict resolution learners in my study had ventured into new lands. Their journey had begun outside the Justice Institute and continued into the training classrooms. As I conducted my research participants were contemplating which directions they would travel in the future.

Other biographical approaches linking formal and informal learning also exist. As early as 1961, Houle had noted: “If we are ever to understand the total phenomenon of continuing education, we must begin by understanding the nature, the beliefs, and the actions of those who take part to the highest degree” (p. 10). Dominicé (1990) coined the term “educational biography” to reflect his life history method. These two words together remind me once again of the personal life contexts underlying adult education.

Merriam and Clark (1991) researched the ways in which formal learning intersects with areas of development in adulthood. In studies of this type it is clear that learning is not so much what people do in the classroom but how they engage with life and reflect on its meaning. This is what promised to give richness and wholeness to the phenomenon of conflict resolution. I wanted to respect the complexity in each participant’s biography of learning.

Modelling Empathy and Collaboration

Phenomenologists emphasize the need for ongoing reflection and thoughtfulness in carrying out research. Van Manen (1990), for example, refers to pedagogic thoughtfulness as a way to keep educational research focused on the individuals it serves. Ongoing reflection is needed to remain sensitive in carrying out a study of this type. It ensures that research remains ethical and that the interests of the participants are kept in the foreground.
Although I knew most of the learners before starting my research, it created a new space for us to meet and share stories. There was a sense of empathy and collaboration that helped to make this possible. These were values that I attempted to develop. They were also skills that we had practised in the context of our conflict resolution training. Empathy and collaboration are rooted in a willingness to understand how other people see the world.

Knowing the participants ahead of time was not enough to bond with them in the interview context. I had to listen to their feedback at every stage of the research process and proceed collaboratively. Even though the kind of relationship I had differed from one participant to another, it was important to me to model respect. I found that the way in which participants responded was equally empathic. Colaizzi (1978, p. 64) refers to the complete and uninterrupted attention that the researcher must bring to those interviewed. It is this kind of sensitivity which makes narrative-phenomenological research different from other forms of research in which the researcher is distanced physically and often psychologically from participants.

As researchers, we cannot work with participants without sensing the fundamental human connection among us; nor can we create research texts without imagining a relationship . . . It is in the research relationships among participants and researchers, and among researchers and audiences, through research texts that we see the possibility for individual and social change. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 425)

Integrating Personal Narratives of Learning Into Broader Frameworks of Social Discourse

An understanding of individual experience from a broader social perspective is emphasized by some interpretive researchers more than others. Although I began my research by focusing on the individual meaning-making of learners, I discovered that their voices could not be separated from the voices of teachers and program planners, from those of parents, children, and spouses, from bosses, and from others working in the dispute resolution field. The story of one individual's learning took its meaning from the communities in which it was situated. Conflict resolution learning is not cerebral. It engages learners in an ongoing process of interaction with others as a way to integrate skills, knowledge, and values.
A social view of narrative, therefore, must integrate teaching with learning. This is consistent with the notion of a learning community which Michael Fogel, an instructor in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, used to describe the collaborative interactions among trainers and students (personal communication, June 3, 1996). I concur with Ramsden who says that "teaching is an activity that assumes an understanding of learning" and that teachers should place themselves in the roles of learners in order to become better researchers and instructors (1988, p. 13). Teaching, learning, and program planning are about relationships as much as they are about individual understanding. Narrative research must take the social context of personal experience into consideration. The organization of my thesis into primary and secondary narratives is one way in which I have recognized this connection.

The webs of social discourse that characterize learning make it difficult to say when stories begin and end. Sometimes the participants in my study told tales of childhood when they had faced conflicts. Sometimes they spoke about training in the classroom. Sometimes the narratives that were shared were the stories that danced in their minds as they prepared for an interview with me and suddenly re-experienced an event of long ago. Personal narratives of learning are not carved in stone. They develop spontaneously and episodically as individuals reflect on the journeys they have travelled as learners. As participants in this project narrated their lives, tales of the self were nearly always woven into the tales of others as part of a shared learning experience.

How the stories of individuals connect to those of others is a topic of ongoing research. Do the stories of individuals determine the grand narratives of society or vice versa? Critical theorists and ethnographers argue that personal knowledge must always be understood as part of a larger, evolving social world: "Narratives form a cultural contract between individuals, groups, and our social universe. If narratives give our lives meaning we need to understand what those narratives are and how they have come to exert such an influence on us and our students" (McLaren, 1993, p. 203). What are the implications of this statement for conflict resolution? How are the narratives of learners enmeshed with the narratives of trainers, program planners, community organizers, and politicians? How are the narratives of our culture embedded in our identities as learners? And which types of social narratives will help to nurture and sustain the storied experiences of adults in training? Stories, like
learning, do not exist in isolation. They exist within each other and through each other. In attempting to understand the meaning-making of individuals, it is important to remember the communities of which they are part.

**Significance of This Project**

When planning this study, I was asked to justify its value. At the time my explanation was short and skeletal. I have since come to realize that there are many ways I might frame my rationale even as there are many ways to begin a journey. From an educational perspective, stories provide insights into what learners are thinking and how they construct meaning. By entering into their worlds, narrative researchers and educators can discover similarities and differences among students. "When one considers the classroom as a setting where each person is a character in a developing story one tends to delve more deeply into the essence of each character rather than make quick judgments about students and their actions" (Sakai, 1993, pp. 3-4). Stories serve as a framework for understanding and supporting learners.

On a broader level, an awareness of how adults construct meaning provides important feedback to program planners and administrators. One of the recommendations following three surveys of students at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training this year was to review learning objectives, materials, and processes in order to improve program articulation (Keith Wilkinson Consulting, 1996, p. iii). The perspectives of learners, like those of other participants, reflect how a program is being received and conceptualized.

The distinctiveness of education can be examined in terms of the meaning it holds for each component of the structure. The perspectives of sponsors, learners, operatives, and constituents overlap and intertwine in a complex of expectations and interventions. Education cannot be encompassed in factual explanations of its organizational structure and movements of the process; these weave a web of meaning for all participants . . . These meanings express implicit philosophical assumptions and commitments to education's symbolic roles. (Chamberlin, 1974, p. 135)

In the case of conflict resolution programs, some assumptions may be that conflict is a destructive force in human relations, that conflict which damages relationships may be
precipitated by a lack of appropriate knowledge by one or more parties, and that structured, educational interventions can minimize or prevent negative outcomes in conflicts. Without questioning learners and other participants, such assumptions are difficult to confirm. Institutions are not static entities. They comprise communities of discourse which take their meaning from the perspectives of different individuals.

Clues as to how adults perceive conflict have surfaced in recent years as part of broader studies on learning. One significant finding for this study is the relationship between everyday conflict and the ability and motivation of adults to participate in formal learning. Merriam and Clark found that approximately 10 times more learning occurs for both men and women when things are running smoothly for them at work and in their love relationships (1991, pp. 181-182). “We can see that pain and conflict appear to be major factors that impede learning when things are going badly in a person’s life” (Merriam & Clark, p. 184). Dominice notes the ways in which conflicts of the past may motivate adults to attend programs later in life:

As they trace their education throughout their lives, people reveal that they often enter adult education classes to repair, compensate for, or fill in the gaps of the past. They dream about the university because earlier in their lives they did not have the chance to study. They embark upon personal development because they hope to overcome and to recover from wounds of the past. They decide to upgrade their work skills in order to move ahead. In the narratives, continuing education is always presented as a kind of further stage in the process of schooling. (1990, p. 206)

Understanding the significance of learning focused on resolving conflicts may provide important insights into the processes of learning generally and how they can be maintained during difficult periods in adulthood.

A sense of what it means to confront conflict on a daily basis is implicit within my work. Conflict is a primary source of stress and dysfunction for many people. It challenges family dynamics and friendships as well as professional and working relationships. While it is often destructive and painful, it can also present opportunities for personal growth, autonomy, and insight. How does a comprehensive program aimed at resolving interpersonal conflicts fit into family, work, and community cultures? Is there something we can all learn by studying conflict and our responses to it? In the
In final analysis, we must wonder if adult education programs in conflict resolution will change the way we conduct ourselves. Will they help us to be more judicious, democratically-minded parents, better partners in our primary relationships, more tolerant and understanding workers, more informed and active citizens? What difference will conflict resolution training make in the larger scheme of things? I have chosen not to quantify the effectiveness of training but to ask learners directly what meaning a conflict resolution program holds for them in their life contexts. By naming their learning, the adults in this study may help others to understand the significance of their experiences.

Critical insights into conflict resolution learning may further contribute to a growing body of knowledge about conflict and dispute resolution from social science perspectives. Canary, Cupach, and Messman note that "conflict in interpersonal contexts enjoys a high research priority among scholars examining close relationships" and cite four primary reasons for this: (a) the correlation between healthy relationships and constructive conflict management, (b) the centrality of conflict in theories of human development, (c) the psychological and physical risks of violence, and (d) the need to understand conflict as an enduring social and communicative influence (1995, pp. 1-2).

In short, narratives allow researchers to understand education, not as a fixed entity or technical process, but as a community of individuals with real-life experiences. The way adults understand their learning will vary. This is why the life story approach is well suited to my research. Just as there are many interpretations of learning, so are there many levels on which to read a story. "A good story is a kind of hologram of the life of an individual, a culture, or a whole species. Each of us hears in it, with ears conditioned by our own history, what we most need at the time to understand" (Daloz, 1986, p. 24). The development of multiple understandings is essential for improving training and education for adults. As conflict resolution programs continue to expand those who are entrusted with their survival—administrators, planners, and instructors—will need to think critically and imaginatively about the learning that is taking place. Only then will it be possible to develop strong links between theory, practice, and research.
Conclusion

In using narrative to understand adult learning, I have argued that personal experiences are a rich and critical source of information for researchers in conflict resolution. As well as illuminating what happens in the midst of learning and clarifying assumptions about training, stories serve to keep us connected and inspired as communities of practitioners and theorists. Individual narratives of learning and identity acquire new meaning when they are related to social narratives which have influenced their development and ultimately will either sustain or discourage their survival. "Our personal stories can only ever be recounted with reference to some combination of larger stories in which we live and move and have our being. These are the stories of the families and communities, the cultures and creeds, the gender and class, in which we are always characters in turn . . ." (Randall, 1995, p. 352).

Without ethnic wars, labour negotiations, domestic violence, and other disputes there would be no need for conflict resolution training. These represent some of the most damaging, yet representative forms of social interaction visible today. Even as they speak to the chaotic and destructive side of human nature so too do they challenge our ability to strive for peace, justice, and understanding in relationships. The adults in a conflict resolution program bring this hope with them.

As we tell our stories and come to care for our Selves, we find to our great joy that we are less alone than ever before. We find that others, too, are wounded and struggling, and we reach out to each other in ways that were not possible before, when we were hiding and pretending. We begin inevitably to care for others, for everything. (Nelson, 1994, p. 120)

I enter into my inquiry with this same feeling of connection and humanism. Like the author above who uses writing for healing and self-exploration, I hope that the stories in the thesis will offer you nourishment and opportunities for dialogue. At the heart of every well-crafted story is the offer to enter into and share the same world as the characters. The characters in this study are real people; their invitation, no less compelling. What better way to understand conflict resolution learning than by understanding the lives of the students? By sharing their stories students from the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program can strengthen our knowledge of one another as fellow learners in the search for peace and community.
Organization

This thesis is divided into 4 parts, each with its own unifying theme. The first 3 chapters comprise part 1. Its purpose is to provide an overview of my research and to introduce myself as the researcher.

Part 2 looks at adult learning through different lenses. In chapter 4, I discuss conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute. I describe the organization and history of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training before focusing on its programs and dimensions of learning. In the following chapter, I look at the Justice Institute's training as part of a broader socio-historical context in which a culture of peace education developed. I conclude part 2 with a chapter on adult learning theories and explain how they can serve as frameworks for understanding and interpreting different aspects of conflict resolution learning.

All three chapters in part 2 are detailed. In chapters 4 and 5, I offer a complete description of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training and its programs, since there are few published materials available which might otherwise provide this kind of overview for the reader. It is also important to understand the history of conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute because the programs have continued to evolve since 1981. Some dimensions of learning have remained the same while others have changed.

I have included a comprehensive overview of theoretical perspectives on adult learning for those who may be unfamiliar with this area. Although theories are bounded systems, they do offer valuable contexts for making sense of knowledge in ways which often stretch our thinking. Staying informed of these perspectives is also one way to strengthen our understanding of the links between research and practice.

The focus of part 3 is the life stories of the 5 participants. Each narrative is prefaced by a section that sets the context of the story. I have attempted to honour participants by including their wishes for special wording, punctuation, and grammar. Although the theme of each story differs, I have framed the narratives around four common elements: (a) the research context; that is, the relationship I had with each participant, (b) the purpose of an individual's learning in conflict resolution, (c) the learning process, and (d) the products or outcomes of learning. I chose this structure after reflecting on the interview data. The purpose-process-products framework also
corresponds to the idea of a journey that served as a metaphor for the life stories.

Although I developed a particular focus for each narrative, I tried not to oversimplify the complex set of life experiences in which each participant's learning around conflict resolution was embedded. One of the strengths of narrative, I contend, is that it allows personal experiences to unfold in a dynamic stream of interaction. I did not want to minimize the intricacies of each participant's story.

Immediately before part 3 is a page called "Notes to the Reader." This is a reminder of the kinds of considerations I have just outlined that influenced the presentation and organization of learners' stories.

After presenting the life stories in part 3, I analyze and interpret them in part 4. This section contains 2 chapters. In chapter 12, I theme the stories individually and then as a whole. I conclude the thesis by returning to a series of personal reflections on my work in the context of my own life story.

This thesis is intended for practitioners as well as scholars and researchers in the conflict resolution field. Whether you are a student, instructor, program planner, mediator, or negotiator I hope that you be able to identify with the readings on a personal level. I hope this expectation is one that is not beyond reach. Daloz's (1986) desire to have his writing resonate for different audiences is a challenge which I too have faced. His words echo in the context of my work:

As I began writing this book, I struggled with the tension between writing a "scholarly" work on the one hand and something with a broader appeal on the other. Gradually I came to see that what I wanted most was to tell a good story, to engender good conversation. I have tried to do that, and because I am writing about what I do, I have attempted to remain a visible storyteller. (Daloz, p. 2)

Some stories in this study may resonate for you more than others. Some may have to be revisited and reconstrued over time. Like other stories, the narratives in the thesis are an invitation to linger and to explore in the context of your own life. I hope they signify the start of a conversation about conflict resolution learning that will continue.
Chapter References


CHAPTER 3
THE LIFE STORY APPROACH: MY RESEARCH DESIGN

I begin this chapter by explaining my decision to use life stories. I continue with a few words about my own life story and the significance of autobiography in education. The remainder of the chapter is about how I collected the life stories of other learners from the Justice Institute. This was the emphasis in my work. I describe my research in 3 sections: (a) Preparing to Collect Stories, (b) Gathering Stories, and (c) Restorying and Theming the Narratives.

Why Life Stories?

Although researchers use such terms as life story, life history, and oral history inconsistently, these biographical approaches are becoming increasingly common in educational and social science research. I chose a life story framework for many reasons:

1. Like other forms of narrative, the life story offers a framework for participants to construct meaning of multiple life experiences. The use of life combined with story makes this connection explicit. In order to understand conflict resolution learning, I would need to understand how participants constructed meaning within life contexts of personal significance.

2. Life story approaches allow the interpreter to frame the narrative of choice. The story told may represent someone’s life in whole or in part. In this study it was important for participants to speak about events and periods of significance for them while acknowledging the connections between formal and informal learning.

3. Life story approaches are commonly used for retrospective accounts. I wanted participants to reflect on their learning over time.
4. Life stories are not based on the same truth claims as life histories which attempt to document someone’s life as accurately as possible. “The life story approach attempts to represent the experiential truth of the life lived. That is, to give expression to the person’s own story, as they tell it, of their lived experience” (Mann, 1992, p. 272). This was consistent with the interpretive epistemology of my work. I viewed my research as a preliminary attempt to understand conflict resolution from many different perspectives. All of the stories shared with me, I assumed, would offer important insights whether or not they were historically accurate.

5. Life story methodology may be biographical or autobiographical (Denzin, 1989, p. 42). In this study I wanted to represent my own story of learning along with those of the other 5 participants from the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. My experiences, like those of other learners, were personal as well as socially situated. To hide my voice would mean concealing my presence as the researcher and as a participant. Toward the end of the project, the other five learners were also encouraged to do some autobiographical writing as part of the focus group activities.

6. Biographical approaches such as the life story require a close working relationship among the researcher and participants in order to explore and give voice to the narrative. This collaborative process is similar to the one used by students at the Justice Institute when they are shown how to resolve conflict. I felt confident that the kinds of methods I used to interview would be compatible with the values reinforced by the conflict resolution training.

**Beginning With Self: Autobiography as Life Story Research**

During the past several years, the number of works on autobiography as a form of educational research have grown dramatically. These works reflect increased interest in narratives of personal experience and the ways in which they serve to inform communities of discourse and practice. Within the field of Adult Education autobiography and journaling have also been explored as tools for individual learning
and development (See, for example, Brady, 1990). Graham says that "if concepts like teaching and learning are fundamental to any discourse on education, then just as surely investigations into these concepts have moved quickly beyond common-sense notions to uncover other unspoken and tacit dimensions" (1991, p. 1). This is one of the strengths of personal experience methods of research.

What is autobiography? And what is autobiography as research? Even with an understanding of autobiography as narration rather than description and a form of writing in which the author is the subject there is still much room to interpret this term, says Starobinski:

The autobiographer is clearly free to confine his narrative to a single page or to extend it over several volumes. He is free to "contaminate" the narrative of his life with events he witnessed remotely, in which case he becomes a memoirist as well as an autobiographer (like Chateaubriand). He is also free to ascribe precise dates to the various stages of his writing and to direct his attention inward as he writes; autobiography is then contaminated by elements of the private diary, and the autobiographer at moments becomes a "diarist" (once again like Chateaubriand). Plainly, the defining criteria of autobiography do no more than establish a rather ample frame within which a wide variety of particular styles may be practiced and exhibited. (1970/1989, pp. 171-172)

I came to this research through my own experiences in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. I was inspired to begin with my own life story after being assigned Krall's (1988) article to read in a research class at university. I thought it was important to write my own life story before expecting others to do the same. I spent several weeks reflecting on my learning and its personal significance. I recorded my thoughts in a research journal.

After reflecting on my life and keeping track of my memories in the journal I began crafting my story. There were many versions that evolved. The first version was akin to the confessional tale described by Van Maanen (1988). The story was self-revealing but focused more on my life rather than the importance of my learning in conflict resolution. I had to find a suitable balance between the two. This was also a challenge when writing the biographies of other learners.
Another element, that of voice, tested my skills throughout this project but was particularly visible when I wrote my autobiography. Who was the "I" that would be revealed? Was there only one I or were there several? How far did I want to explore dimensions of self as a way to understand conflict resolution? Questions of subject identity were related to issues of self-disclosure and the type of relationship I wanted to establish with the text in front of me. The self was not a fixed entity; it was always shifting, sliding, and transforming itself. Constructing my story meant freezing aspects of my identity in order to represent them on paper. I finally decided to present an integrated picture of myself as Teacher, Learner, Researcher, Author, and Editor. My experiences with conflict resolution had engaged all of these roles.

By the time the first focus group arrived I had thought about my life story in detail. I shared my understandings of my learning with others and was given feedback. I wrote another version of my autobiography to present at the last focus group. I continued to reflect on my autobiography while completing my research. Whenever I developed a new insight I would revisit and make changes to my narrative as I did with the stories of the other participants. In the remainder of this chapter I describe my research into their life stories.

Preparing to Collect Stories

Participating in Communities of Discourse

A research project never just happens. It emerges in the context of one’s personal identity and a particular community of discourse. The community that developed for this project involved different groups of people. One group was my thesis committee. Dan, my supervisor, had been my instructor in a course on adult learning. He supported me while I developed an appropriate conceptual framework for my research. Carl was the person who inspired me with his own love of stories to use narrative. He is a poet and creative writer. The third committee member, Marg, is the Program Director at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Learning. I will describe her responsibilities there in the next chapter. She took an active role in this project by providing information, facilitating contacts with other individuals in the conflict resolution field, and editing my work.
These three individuals represented one level of discourse that was both personal and academic. Their support was invaluable. We communicated with one another regularly as questions and issues about the research emerged. This was important because of the inductive nature of my research design. I presented my thesis proposal in April 1995 and met with my committee members individually and collectively several times after that date. In consultation with one another we began to develop criteria that seemed the most appropriate for my study. These criteria also became more focused as the project emerged. Some of the basic expectations for my work included: a strong rationale for my work, ease of access for conflict resolution practitioners as well as scholars, attention to the silences as well as crowded spaces in individuals' stories of learning, articulation of the contexts as well as content embedded in the learning, and a balance between writing and interpreting the stories. These were considerations that remained in my mind throughout the project.

Another level of discourse came from my thesis support group. This consisted of other graduate students who had studied with me in preparation for our comprehensive exams a year earlier. After we passed this element of our program we decided to remain together and change our mandate to that of a thesis group. We continued to meet in one another's homes and to discuss our work in progress. At one point we hired someone to share ideas on thesis-writing with us.

The type of discourse represented by my peers was also informal and academic. Sometimes we talked about personal matters, although we made an effort to concentrate as much as possible on the research process. Although none of us had ever completed a thesis we used our knowledge of different subject areas, our questions, our intuition, and our writing capabilities to review and challenge one another's work. I also arranged, as part of my research design, for two members of my peer group to share their feedback on my interview transcripts.

The third community of discourse came from my colleagues at school. Two other teachers, including my job-share partner, were also doing graduate work at university. In September 1995 a new principal arrived at my school. He too was an ardent lover of narrative who had worked with Carl. My principal promoted the use of narrative in the classrooms and as part of teachers' professional development. When I remarked one day that the worlds of university and elementary school seemed very different he gently reminded me that they were in fact one. When I wanted to learn
about narrative he allowed me to borrow several of his books. When I was composing my stories over the summer he offered to read them and provide feedback.

These were the three communities in which I situated my research. The individuals in these communities provided their knowledge and guidance in areas of theory, practice, and inquiry. They allowed me to articulate my needs, desires, and concerns and to ask questions. I believe there is a strong link between the discourse we speak in practice and the texts we write as researchers. By working with different communities I was able to consider different frameworks of understanding. My interactions with my colleagues and peers modelled a process of communication and collaboration that entered into my interviews with participants.

**Choosing a Research Site and Participants**

**Site**

I chose the Justice Institute for three main reasons. First, I was familiar with the program and how it operated. Second, its geographical proximity meant that I could have regular access to plan and coordinate my research project. The third and primary reason is that the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program is the most comprehensive and reputable continuing education program of its type in Canada. Working with students from this program would offer me an in depth understanding of learning.

**Participants**

There were two types of criteria used to select participants: (a) macro and (b) micro. The first related to my overarching goals and ethics as a narrative researcher. These criteria were considered more important than the micro criteria used to operationalize my goals. I will refer to the macro and micro categories as **General Criteria** and **Specific Criteria**.
**General criteria.** I assumed that each learner would bring a rich story of learning to my study. The richness would be in the experiences and interpretations shared with me. Listening to the narratives would require time as well as a certain level of rapport with participants. After much reflection and discussion with my committee I decided to conduct in depth interviews with a few learners rather than devise a large-scale study. The actual number of participants was not predetermined but left as a consideration that would be answered as my research evolved.

Although the initial intent was to use a network or snowball method of selection (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, pp. 381 - 382), this did not prove to be as significant as the relationship between myself and the research participants. It became clear that it would be easier to converse with people who were familiar to me. This type of purposeful sampling was justified because it would allow me to enter into participants’ lives without formal introductions. Given the type of personal questions I wished to ask, a positive rapport between the participants and I was critical.

Participants were also chosen because of their varied experiences and backgrounds in conflict resolution. When deciding who might be included I asked the first two interviewees if they had any recommendations. Did they know anyone who might have a unique or rich story to share? I also talked through my choices with my thesis committee and thesis group. Four of the five participants were familiar to me. All of them had wonderful tales of learning to tell.

**Specific criteria.** The most important criterion at this level was the common training received by participants in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. Students who had graduated during the past 3 years were chosen because the organization of the program was different prior to that time. Although participants had taken different electives their core training was consistent. I also focused on graduates because I wanted participants who had had time to apply and reflect on their conflict resolution learning in various life contexts.

Following my pilot interviews, I made one exception to my choice of graduates. The participant in my first pilot interview, Kate, had an extremely rich story and was able to articulate her reflections on learning clearly. Although she had completed her course work, she needed to redo her negotiation competency assessment. I chose her for both of these reasons. The ardour and depth of her narrative would, I felt, provide
important insights into conflict resolution learning. The fact that she had to redo one of her assessments was a common occurrence among adults in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. Four out of 6 participants in this study, including myself, had to redo either the mediation or negotiation assessment. Kate’s experience in this regard promised to illuminate the experiences of other learners.

Other reasons for selecting participants included: accessibility (students from the Lower Mainland region were selected; that is, the area surrounding Vancouver), gender balance, availability to participate in individual and group interviews, contrasting work roles or backgrounds, and the ability to communicate clearly in English.

**Ethics**

**Authorization to Begin Study**

Since this project involved ongoing contact and communication with other people, ethics were a priority. Three levels of approval were needed before I could start my research. The first was formal acceptance of my research proposal by my thesis committee. This was granted following a committee meeting in April 1995.

A second level involved permission from Pat Ross, Dean of Career and Community Studies at the Justice Institute, and Marg Huber, Program Director at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training (see Appendix A). Specific approval for using the Justice Institute’s name was included in the authorization. Later I requested permission to reproduce two documents from an introductory conflict resolution training manual (see Appendix A).

The third level of approval for my proposed study came from the Ethics Committee at the University of British Columbia. For this, I completed a 9-page form and submitted samples of my contact letter to learners, a consent-to-participate form, and telephone contact form.
Pilot Interviews

I conducted two pilot interviews in October 1995. These were intended as opportunities to practice my interviewing skills and to strengthen my interview guide (see Appendix B). In this sense, the pilot interviews fulfilled an ethical responsibility to think through my research ahead of time.

Each pilot interview lasted 1 hour and was tape recorded and transcribed. This included debriefing comments. One participant was a member of my study group from the Justice Institute, Kate; the other was a professional colleague who had completed the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. Copies of the pilot interview transcripts were distributed to members of my thesis committee for their feedback before I started the formal interviews.

Contact Procedures

After receiving formal approval for my study and conducting the pilots, prospective participants were contacted by mail. I gave the names of individuals I knew from the program who might be interested in my research to Marg Huber, Program Director at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. She contacted these individuals from the Justice Institute. A package was sent to prospective participants which included a letter of invitation from myself, a letter from Marg, and a response form (see Appendix C). After students indicated a willingness to participate I was contacted by the Justice Institute. I telephoned participants who wished to participate, explained my research project to them, and then, if they wished to continue, scheduled the first interview time and location (see Appendix C for telephone contact form).
Gathering Stories

Overview

I constructed the primary and secondary narratives in the thesis from different sources of information. In the case of the life stories, each learner was interviewed twice individually and twice in a focus group. During the focus group every participant participated in reflective writing activities. This included preparing and completing a life story for homework in between the group sessions. The interview transcripts as well as the reflective writing served as my main sources of data for the biographies of the learners. My own writing was autobiographical and included my experiences as researcher as well as learner. Data for chapters 2-6 came from the primary interviews as well as additional interviews and written documents, both primary and secondary. I will elaborate on data collection in the following sections: (a) Life Story Interviews, (b) Focus Groups, (c) Follow-up Interviews, and (d) Document Analysis. I will describe these processes and explain how they were used to write narratives of conflict resolution learning.

Life Story Interviews

Overview

Two individual interviews were held with each participant. Flexibility in location and scheduling was important. Several of the interviews were held in my home, although both male participants preferred to be interviewed at their place of work. All individual interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Each session averaged 2 hours and yielded approximately 35 pages of typed data. I transcribed verbal utterances, duration of pauses, and any emotional responses. Transcriptions for learner interviews were checked a second time for accuracy.
Interviewing Strategies

**General.** In the first chapter I described the significance of empathy and collaboration in interpretive research. One way to externalize these values is through the skills of active listening such as open-ended questioning, summarizing, and empathic response. I used these regularly when interviewing. What was fascinating for me was that the other participants had also learned these skills as part of their conflict resolution training. I believe our shared background facilitated my work as researcher and helped the interviews to remain inclusive. I was not a stranger staring passively at my research “subjects” but a colleague. I wanted to hear the stories of those who had gone through the same program as I. During the interviews I tried to remain empathic and collaborative. I had to learn to be a better listener: to talk less, to shorten my questions when I remembered, and to respect each participant’s need for silences and pauses. Through careful listening and careful focusing, I was able to develop my interviewing skills and begin to appreciate the rich layers of meaning in each participant’s life story.

**Open-Ended questioning.** These are used to obtain detailed information rather than yes or no responses. My goals were to open a conversation, rather than close it and to strive for nuances and details in each participant’s life story rather than a quick explanation. Following the pilot interviews, I had modified and augmented my initial list of interview questions. This process of refining the questions continued throughout the first few interviews. The final interview guide (see Appendix D) contained many more questions than those on my pilot interview guide. I did not want to use the questions in a standardized way, although I attempted to ask questions from areas that I thought were important for understanding conflict resolution learning in a life story framework. These areas also reflected a sense of movement through time and space and were therefore consistent with the notion of a journey used by Daloz (1986). Areas of inquiry included the learner’s background, entry into the program, learning processes (formal and informal), application of skills, outcomes, and future plans for using the learning. I also asked learners to clarify their understanding of particular terms such as conflict and interests. Once I had inquired into general areas, I followed through with specific questions related to the participant’s personal
experiences of learning.

**Summarizing.** Summarizing was used to help me check my understanding of what was said at different points in the interview. It also: (a) provided a break for participants after sharing their story, (b) gave them an opportunity to hear my version of their story, (c) validated what had been said, and (d) helped me to articulate my own thinking and prepare myself for the next question.

**Empathic response.** Empathic response means acknowledging the content and context of what has been said so that participants feel heard. Acknowledging participant responses allowed me to confirm and validate their meaning for each learner without judging their underlying validity or logic.

**First Individual Interview**

As in a mediation or negotiation session, I attempted to develop a rapport with each learner before beginning the formal interview. When the interviews were in my home I had muffins and tea prepared. At the beginning of the first session I took several minutes to explain the purpose of my research, to describe the interview process, and my expectations. Much of this information had been presented in the mailout package. I encouraged participants to disclose information at a level of personal comfort, to share any thoughts the questions triggered without being confined to a specific answer, and to interpret my questions as they chose unless otherwise directed. Participants were assured their names would not be used in the published stories. They were also promised an opportunity to review and edit the narratives that I wrote. Other details included: the time required to participate in the research project, a promise to destroy the research tapes, my intent to publish further articles based on this study, and the right of participants to withdraw at any time (see Appendix E for directions to participants as well as the individual consent form). After the consent form was signed I turned on the tape recorder and began the interview.
When I interviewed my first participant, I kept asking her to remember stories about her learning. I was influenced by my reading of Chase who argues: "If we want to hear stories rather than reports then our task as interviewers is to invite others to tell their stories, to encourage them to take responsibility for the meaning of their talk. A successful interviewer manages to shift the weight of responsibility to the other in such a way that he or she willingly embraces it" (1995, p. 3). In Sandy's case, however, I found that my requests for stories were a real challenge. She had difficulty remembering stories and I wasn't sure how to shift my responsibilities as a researcher to the participant. "Not everybody is comfortable with being asked directly to tell a story. The request seems to block people who may think they do not tell good stories or that story telling is something only other people do" (Seidman, 1991, p. 65).

Following this initial experience, I re-examined my approach and expectations for storytelling. I decided to adopt a process similar to that used by Seidman (1991) who recommends a series of three 90-minute interviews in phenomenological research. I found I was able to model this process in two, 120-minute interviews; anything omitted could be revisited in the group interviews. I decided that I would focus the first interview on the background and life experiences of the participant. What had motivated them to take conflict resolution training? What kinds of expectations did they have for attending classes at the Justice Institute? The purpose of the first interview was to develop a rich context for stories to be developed later.

I typed a summary of the first interview in my journal. I included my initial impressions and questions. The interview was then transcribed and a follow-up list of questions prepared that were specific to the participant's reflections of learning. I left approximately 1 week between the first and second interviews for the participant and I to reflect on our initial conversation.

**Second Individual Interview**

I began the second interview by noting my impressions from the first interview and explaining my goals for the session. My first few questions were the follow-up ones I had prepared. I found this to be invaluable for exploring learners' meaning systems and clarifying any assumptions I may have had at that point.
After the follow-up questions which took approximately 30 minutes, I inquired about the participant's current learning and future expectations. By now participants were able to tell their stories freely because I was familiar with the context and background of their learning. While listening to participant's responses I kept an eye on my interview guide to see whether key areas of an individual's learning and life story had been omitted.

**Focus Groups**

**Overview**

Focus groups were held with different purposes in mind: (a) to provide further opportunities for reflection and clarification of content areas discussed in the individual interviews, (b) to include participants in interpreting the meaning and significance of their own stories, (c) to allow narratives to be refined and retold as well as new ones to be introduced, (d) to allow an opportunity for each adult to share his or her story of learning with a broader audience, (e) to help stimulate recall of further information (Benner, 1994, pp. 108-109), (f) to provide opportunities for transformative learning, (g) to synthesize prior information in the form of a written life story, and (h) to bring closure to the project.

Much preparation was required for the first focus group. I reread literature in key areas: (a) focus groups (Krueger, n.d.; Morgan, 1988), (b) phenomenological interviewing (Benner, 1994; Seidman, 1991), (c) strategies for understanding learning from the learners' perspectives (Griffin, 1988), (d) life story methodology (Dominicé, 1990). I also prepared several handouts to help organize the first group session (see Appendix F). These included: (a) a review of my research questions, objectives, and assumptions, (b) guidelines for focus group participation, (c) an agenda, (d) statements taken from individual transcripts, (e) homework directions for a life story assignment, and (f) samples of graphic organizers to be developed in preparation for each participant's life story. As moderator for the sessions, I also had personal notes which I used to keep the session focused. The only handout used at the second focus group was the agenda, although I had follow-up questions from the first focus group prepared to ask participants (see Appendix F for agenda and questions).
The two group sessions were held in a common room in one of the participant's housing cooperatives. The room contained tables and a sofa. There was also a small kitchen area we used for making coffee, tea, and snacks. One group session was held just after Christmas; the other at the start of the New Year. This scheduling seemed symbolic of our own growth. Like the passage of time from one year to another we had also passed new milestones in our development as conflict resolution learners. We had all completed our course-work and were actively using the skills and knowledge in our everyday lives. A sense of temporality, a critical element of storying, was reinforced by the birthdays of 2 participants in between the focus groups. We celebrated these holidays and the conclusion of the interview process with chocolate cake and tea.

As with the individual interviews, the focus groups were tape recorded and transcribed. Two tape recorders with external microphones were used. This provided back-up copies of the whole-group session and allowed me to record the conversations of two small groups at the first session. Accurate transcription of focus-group conversations was a challenge because of the multiple voices which could sometimes be heard simultaneously. Another unusual feature of the tape recording was that I also recorded whatever participants wrote and presented out loud to the rest of the group. What was written and what was read aloud did not always match. Discrepancies of this nature did not worry me. I thought of the focus groups as an opportunity for people to connect and share their stories. Whatever data I obtained would complement the individual interview material.

First Focus Group

The first focus group was held Saturday, December 30, 1995 from 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. As adults entered, introductions were made and greetings exchanged. Some of the group members knew one another, although this was the first time the identities of participants were made known.

The first meeting was divided into two parts separated by a coffee break. The first part was a whole-group session; the second began with a whole-group discussion and then shifted to small-group work. These are described in the next section.
Whole group session. One of the participants began the session by asking if it would be possible to reschedule the second focus group. It was interesting for me as a researcher to note how the learners worked collaboratively to negotiate this last-minute change. The group decided to reschedule our last session 5 days later to Wednesday evening, January 3, 1996.

After these arrangements were made, I spoke to the whole group. I began by reviewing my research questions, objectives, and assumptions. I had these listed on a sheet in front of me. A handout on focus group guidelines was then given to participants and discussed. It included technical points such as speaking clearly and audibly as well as suggestions for listening and sharing ideas. Discussion of the handout was followed by the presentation and acceptance of the agenda.

With these objectives and guidelines established, I asked everyone to reflect on the process and content of the individual interviews. I solicited general feedback as well as specific information about what the interviews had confirmed, challenged, or offered as a surprise. Several participants said they had continued to reflect on the individual interviews.

The next whole-group activity involved preliminary analysis of comments made by individuals during the individual interviews. I had read all of the individual interview transcripts ahead of time and extracted what I believed were significant comments related to conflict resolution learning. I interpreted them as “significant” using three criteria: (a) they provided insights into the meaning of conflict resolution learning, (b) they were representative of a learner’s meaning system, or (c) they contrasted sharply with other comments made by learners. The result was a 9-page handout which I gave to participants at the first focus session (see Appendix F). No names were included beside particular transcript comments. Participants were given 30 minutes to scan this handout and to choose the statements that were the most significant to them in terms of their own learning. A limit of seven statements was suggested. Several adults admitted they did not know which statements belonged to them because of the similarity among comments. After prioritizing the items, each adult was asked to use the statements chosen to write one or two paragraphs about the meaning of conflict resolution. “Imagine,” I said, “that someone walked into the room and wanted to know what conflict resolution learning was all about. What would you say? How would you represent the essence of your thinking?”
Participants worked diligently on this exercise. I also participated. When everyone had finished, we shared our writing with other group members. This was followed by a broad discussion of the process we had just followed. During this larger debriefing the learners spoke about gender issues in conflict resolution learning, power issues, cultural influences on conflict resolution, and the difficulties of teaching assertiveness skills. Our discussion was followed by a coffee break.

**Homework discussion.** Following the coffee break I explained to participants that I would like them to write an abbreviated version of their life story and to present this version at the second focus group. I outlined my expectations which included developing two graphic organizers to brainstorm ideas for the life story. Everyone expressed a willingness to do the assignments.

I took 30 minutes to explain models of the graphic organizers and to suggest options. I asked participants to do one graphic organizer on the settings in which they used conflict resolution learning and another one showing their development through time. One of the options available was a life line which I modelled on Merriam and Clark’s work (1991). I was, of course, assuming that each learner had, in some way, grown as a result of their learning. The purpose of assigning the graphic organizers was to help the participants organize their ideas for their life story writing.

**Small group work.** As well as having opportunities to discuss their homework, I also thought that it would be useful for participants to have a “trial run” at sharing their life stories. Dominicé (1990) uses a similar approach but provides more time for this activity.

I asked participants to separate into two small groups and to share their life stories with one another. Those who were listening were asked to help support the speaker and to suggest what other details might help clarify specific aspects of the story for others. Group conversations were tape recorded.

This was the first time that I was able to share my own life story in depth. It was difficult for me to self-disclose outside of my research role. However, I felt that this level of disclosure was important to help balance the power dynamics in the group and for me to personally experience the process I expected others to follow.
Following the small group work, the whole group met briefly and then adjourned for the day. It was now 3:00 p.m. and everyone was tired.

**Second Focus Group**

The second focus group took place on Thursday, January 4, 1996 at 7:00 p.m. It lasted 2 hours.

**Changing the agenda.** The main objective of this focus group was to listen to the life story of each adult. I also wanted time to ask a few follow-up questions from the first group session.

These plans were modified in response to an opening comment by one of the participants about the level of self-disclosure required in the research project. I thought it was important to address this issue before proceeding further. Other group members contributed to the discussion. Different points of view were expressed. Some participants commented that they felt the degree of self-disclosure had helped them to understand their learning in conflict resolution, although the individual who first raised the matter felt that too much self-disclosure might be more appropriate for counselling purposes.

The discussion on self-disclosure led to a shorter but engaging discussion of confidentiality. One participant was concerned about being identified by co-workers as a result of the research being published. Another expressed reassurance because I had promised everyone an opportunity to read and edit the life story I would produce from my research materials.

The group continued to discuss these process issues. Following the formal session some of the participants discussed the issue of self-disclosure further over tea and cake. I also offered one participant the right to withdraw from the study. This option was not chosen. However, I did receive permission from the participant to conduct a follow-up interview in order to see whether the concerns raised were important in terms of the learning that had taken place in the conflict resolution program. They were not, the participant said.
Although this introduction to the last focus group was unanticipated and felt uncomfortable to me at the time, it was an invaluable learning experience. It served to remind me of the sensitive and deeply personal roles we take on as narrative researchers. I wondered if the concerns around self-disclosure had been prompted by the first group meeting or by the life writing assignment. I also wondered to what extent the group discussion might become a catalyst for further learning. The session confirmed the value of interpretive research since each adult brought different perspectives to the conversation that had taken place.

**Life story presentations.** After the group discussion, the time line for the evening was adjusted. I took a few minutes to ask participants the follow-up questions I had prepared. Then it was time to present the life stories. The group members had put a lot of effort into their writing. Many shared personal experiences that related to their learning in conflict resolution. Emotion was shown by one learner when presenting the life story. Kate pulled different objects of personal significance out of a bag while recounting events from her past. The participant who had raised the issue of self-disclosure chose to frame the life story from a professional rather than personal perspective.

After a student had presented, the group discussed the significance of learning as articulated in the life story. I noted the group's comments on a piece of chart paper and then took these observations home to record (see Appendix F). The evening ended with refreshments and conversation.

**Follow-Up Interviews**

I conducted follow-up interviews with core trainers and both coordinators who have worked in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program to understand and contextualize the life stories of the learners. I conducted personal interviews with Marje Burdine and Michael Fogel. These were tape recorded and transcribed. I talked to Marg Huber, current Program Director at the Centre for Conflict Resolution, many times by phone. Several telephone interviews were also conducted with core trainers. I took notes of all phone conversations. Consent forms to participate in the study as well as sample interview guides for follow-up interviews are located in Appendix G.
Other follow-up interviews were conducted when I researched the history of conflict resolution in Canada. I discuss these interviews later in this chapter under “Restorying the Narratives.”

**Document Analysis**

**Primary documents.** In addition to interview transcripts, I used primary documents which included the Mission and Vision Statement at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, letters written by Marg Huber to other individuals about the conflict resolution program, and survey results on conflict resolution students.

Another primary source of data was my journal. It served multiple functions. It was a place for recording information such as the titles of important references and appointment times. Journaling stretched my thinking skills and creative writing abilities. In this sense, I was modelling the process I would follow in my narrative research. By recording my ideas, I was also engaging in preliminary analysis of my data and beginning to frame my interpretations. When writing my research I used my journal to refresh my memory and confirm information.

**Secondary documents.** Secondary or published documents were used to help interpret the meaning of conflict resolution learning. For example, course manuals from the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training were used to understand the Justice Institute’s programs. Brochures from the Mennonite Central Committee helped me to understand the historical role of the Mennonites in the conflict resolution field. Other secondary sources included graduate theses and dissertations obtained locally and through interlibrary loans as well as numerous works on conflict resolution, narrative research, and adult learning.

**Restorying and Theming the Narratives**

Aoki (1992, pp. 29-34) refers to the dual tasks of narrative inquirers as storying and theming. One is collecting and writing the story; the other is the interpretation of the story. The first stage I see as delicately collecting a cocoon and carrying it home; the second as nurturing and sustaining the cocoon so that it will become a butterfly.
Both involve the same creature yet one has been magically transformed. Narrative inquirers must not only collect information diligently, they must rejuvenate their findings in rich and evocative texts.

Yet it became apparent to me as I was doing research that there were many stories to collect and many possible ones to write. Although I was familiar with each participant's narrative(s), I had to make choices about which one I would present. In this section I will use the term restorying to denote the transformation of the oral stories into a completed written narrative. This was followed by theming. Both stages involved several smaller steps. These are described under each section.

**Restorying**

**Preliminary Analysis**

I began the restorying by reading the interview and focus group transcripts for one learner at a time, trying to get an overall sense of the meaning attached to conflict resolution. I also read the written life story from the focus group.

This was a form of preliminary analysis. I did not try to categorize information or look for themes at this time. I wanted to develop some initial impressions about the learning that would enable me to proceed with more systematic analysis.

My readings provided two insights. I recognized that each individual's learning in conflict resolution could be interpreted in terms of purpose, process, and outcomes. I decided to use these as elements for reconstructing each individual's life story.

The second insight was that learning in conflict resolution was embedded in a variety of contexts. I realized that it would be essential for me to try and articulate these contexts in order to situate the narratives of personal experience. This led to the second stage, embodiment.
Embodiment

I had done extensive reading on conflict resolution, narrative, and adult learning. However, when I read my data and was preparing to reconstruct the life stories, I began to re-enter these contexts with greater focus. The ways in which I framed and contextualized the stories of learners from the transcripts, I realized, would result either in texts that informed and inspired or in texts that lacked depth.

I realized that one of the criteria for producing a rich text would be the contexts in which it was situated. Narratives cannot just be written; they must be placed somewhere. This was essential in the case of conflict resolution.

Almost nothing exists in isolation, certainly not conflict. Conflict is both a cause and an effect emerging from complex human interactions. Conflict can exist within an individual, between two persons, between a person and a group, and among groups. Conflict often carries with it intense emotions such as fear, anger, alienation, and anxiety. Conflict also generates a variety of coping responses, ranging from complete withdrawal to enthusiastic acceptance, and everything in between. One thing seems certain: without an understanding of the contexts in which conflict emerges, finding ways of managing it in our children’s and our own everyday lives is almost impossible. (Sheanh, 1996, p. 15)

Rather than start writing the stories right away, I decided to try and understand their contexts better. This required further research and many follow-up interviews. I refer to this phase of my research as embodiment. I was reflecting on the stories and trying to ground them in frameworks of meaning for others. The contexts I explored were as follows:

**The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training context.** The immediate context, that of the learning environment, had many different dimensions. There was the organization of the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program as well as its conceptual and theoretical frameworks. In order to understand the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program I contacted the former coordinator of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, Marje Burdine. This resulted in a formal 1-hour interview (see Appendix G) as well as several follow-up visits and phone conversations. I also spoke in person and by phone with four trainers who had worked in the program from an
early date (see Appendix G). Marg Huber, the current Program Director and a member of my thesis committee, provided ongoing information about the Justice Institute's programs and edited my written work for detail and accuracy.

**The social and historical context.** This included the history of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training's programs as well as the broader social-historical framework in which they evolved. I identified this larger framework as a culture of peacemaking that expressed itself through different social movements. I focused on three movements because of their connections, philosophical and practical, to conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute. These three movements were the human potential movement, ADR, (Alternative Dispute Resolution) and the work of the Mennonites. Understanding the social and historical dimensions of conflict resolution training would, I hope, provide insights into the metanarrative from which tales of conflict resolution learning took their meaning.

Marje Burdine, Marg Huber, and instructors from the Justice Institute were interviewed about the history of conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute as well as their interpretations of how it fit with other social-historical movements of the day. I also spoke with several individuals associated with the Mennonites' work as peacekeepers. Eric Gilman was particularly helpful for providing me with an overview of the Mennonites' history, their theology, and their efforts in VORP (Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program) in Langley, British Columbia. I talked with the executive director of the Mennonite Central Committee about the role of this organization. He mailed me pamphlets describing this role in detail. I also read extensive secondary materials on the conflict resolution movement in North America. Finally, I spoke with Michael Fogel, one of the core trainers, and Marg Huber about ADR. Consent forms and interview guides for this section as well as a letter to Eric Gilman are located in Appendix G.

**Narrative and adult learning contexts.** In addition to my readings in these areas, I spoke regularly with Dan, my thesis supervisor, about adult learning and with Carl, my methods advisor, about narrative. In both instances I used my own research as the framework in which to understand the theory in these two areas.
Peer Review

I would continue to spend much time in reflection thinking about the contexts as well as individual experiences of learning in conflict resolution. One strategy I used was to talk to other people. When I had first designed my research framework, I had asked two friends who were also graduate students in Adult Education to read my interview transcripts and provide feedback (see Appendix H). The purpose of the peer review was to help me consider different perspectives and significant themes when moving into the writing stage.

Preliminary Writing

After I had researched the contexts of conflict resolution learning thoroughly and discussed the interview transcripts with friends, I prepared to write the life stories. I began by immersing myself in all of the data for one learner at a time and took notes of significant themes. Then I extracted what I believed were meaningful sections of text and organized them into categories using a combination of manual as well as computer cut-and-paste techniques (see Morse, 1991, for a description of computer-assisted analysis on the Macintosh). I reflected on the categories and determined: (a) a central focus for the participant's story and (b) a sequence for presenting information in the categories.

After I had finished, I typed my initial story into the computer, trying to capture the essence of a participant's learning. I developed my story using the purpose, process, and outcomes of learning. I also decided to included a fourth element, my relationship with the participant in question. This included such information as how I knew the participant and where the interviews were held.

There were many considerations I faced when writing, including organization and voice. I decided to develop the story in sections using sub-titles that were personalized for each learner. As I was typing I had to think about the order of material in each category. Sometimes I had to bring together information across categories or between sentences. Connecting different units of data also required that I do some editing at this stage, eliminating unnecessary words, adjusting tenses, and focusing on units of meaning that would ensure the ongoing development of the story.
I decided to blend my voice with that of the participant's. I distinguished the two through a combination of spacing and indentation. Any words that I found necessary to change in the participant's speech were bracketed. I included both data from the interviews and group sessions as well as the life story written by participants for the final focus group. I did not distinguish between these sources when reproducing the words of a learner.

**Critical Analysis**

After writing a preliminary draft, I edited it several times for fluency, organization, and relationship to my original research questions. The criteria I used were: (a) focus; I wanted each story to reflect the distinctiveness of conflict resolution learning for a particular adult, (b) authenticity; I wanted the learner's voice to have priority over mine, and (c) framing; I tried to include life events that would give meaning to the reflections of conflict resolution learning through time and space.

After writing and editing a particular story, I gave each participant an opportunity to read and edit the life story using guidelines I had developed for this purpose (see Appendix I). Learners had approximately one week to read this initial draft.

**Restoration**

Restoration included changes made to the above draft. These changes came from participant recommendations as well as my own ongoing editing. Each time I wrote another draft I would show it to the participant. For most learners, this involved an additional 2-3 visits with me. Participants would share their feedback and I would share mine. We considered content, organization, language, punctuation, and other aspects of the narrative. It was the ongoing dialogue between us that gave direction to the restoration. It was important for me to honour participants' wishes regarding the construction of their stories. This included general as well as specific requests such as the particular use of punctuation and grammar. I had followed a similar process of consultation with participants who contributed ideas to the first few chapters of this work.
Theming

In this section I use the term theming to describe the process of analysis and interpretation of the learners' life stories. There were two parts to this process: (a) theming the individual life stories from part 3 and (b) cross-theming the stories. The framework I used is an adaptation of Aoki's work (1992).

Theming Each Story

A theme may be described as the unifying focus in a work. It is the main topic or idea that gives meaning to the details. There are two other definitions of theme that The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English notes: (a) "a prominent or frequently recurring melody or group of notes in a composition" and (b) "the stem of a noun or verb; the part to which inflections are added" (Allen, 1990, p. 1265). In all of these instances, there is a sense of ongoing presence and, in the grammatical usage, a sense of imperative in the role played by a theme.

All of these definitions are inherent to the process of theming. In this chapter I will follow guidelines used by Aoki who refers to theming as "a form of experiential inquiry (some call it existential inquiry) that calls for reflective thoughtfulness" (1992, p. 32). His work shows that theming consists of three elements: (a) identifying the theme of a story, (b) developing reflective questions from the theme, and (c) elaborating on the questions.

My purpose in theming each story was to focus on the meaning of conflict resolution learning for each participant before looking at cross-themes. I also decided that it would be important to include the learners in this stage of my research as well. I wanted to see what meaning they attributed to their experience in conflict resolution after going through the research process. I contacted participants and spoke with each one by phone for approximately 25 minutes. We discussed the purpose, process, and outcomes of learning and the meaning(s) these terms held for each person. The theme I wrote for each learner's story was based on what participants shared with me. I integrated their wording into my own.
Cross-Theming

My objective here was to look at all of the stories in order to determine significant themes that would answer the question: What is the experience of conflict resolution learning? I read each life story several times and made notes of key elements. I then compared my notes for each narrative in order to determine themes that ran across the stories. This process was repeated several times as I generated a list of what, I felt, were significant themes. After this point, it became apparent that the themes I had generated were all variations of authenticity. I described and elaborated on each variation.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I explained my choice of the life story for developing a better understanding of conflict resolution learning. I then described the steps I followed for writing my autobiography and the biographies of other adults from the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program.

Before concluding this chapter, I want to emphasize the relationship between life-as-text and text-as-life. My research did not take place in a vacuum but was constantly subjected to events taking place in the lives of participants and I. Sometimes individuals would need to change appointment times. Sometimes the phone would ring during interviews. Once a team of construction workers started drilling through an office wall during one of my sessions until they were asked if they could complete the job later. On another occasion, I managed to complete a draft of my chapter on the Justice Institute when I discovered that the requirements for the Certificate Program in Conflict Resolution had just been changed. Further, a recent provincial election had resulted in a restructuring of government ministries--one of the ministries I had named in reference to the Justice Institute’s funding was suddenly obsolete.

On a personal level, I also experienced conflicts while conducting my research. The stresses of writing up my research while working part-time resulted in discussions about budget and my need for quiet time with my partner. My responsibilities as a public-school teacher meant that I had competing responsibilities when completing my
research. Report card time was particularly intense. These incursions from the real world were ongoing. I could not separate myself from them. Even as I attempted to story my research it was also storying me. I was learning and living through my research.
Chapter References


Part 2

Storying Adult Learning in Conflict Resolution: Practice and Theory
CHAPTER 4
CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING AT THE JUSTICE INSTITUTE OF
B.C.

Discovering the Justice Institute

My Memories

In my story of learning I referred briefly to the Justice Institute's original campus on a hill high above the ocean. A series of paths and concrete stairs connected one building to another. The higher you climbed, the more rewarding the view. Beautiful landscaping and foliage made this a prime piece of real estate.

The building where most conflict resolution classes were held sat at the lower end of the hill. It had a reception area, administrative offices, a small snack-shop, and a theatre. When courses were in session staff from the snack-shop would carry coffee and muffins in a wicker basket into the classrooms or hallways. There was also a small lounge area where students would sit on sofas and congregate around the phones. At lunch students had the option of eating out at nearby restaurants or going into the courtyard that hid behind the main building. We often chose the latter and used the time to socialize and reflect on our courses.

These were some of my first memories of the Justice Institute while it was in Vancouver. Shortly before I graduated, the institute was relocated to an adjacent community, New Westminster. The new facilities, like the old, include a gymnasium, library, cafeteria, theatre, media centre, firearms range, as well as classroom and office blocks. These areas have been updated to reflect current teaching and learning needs.

The physical layout of the Justice Institute, I would learn, corresponds to a comprehensive organizational structure and a large network of individuals who work there. What is this system of organization? How does the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training fit into this structure? In order to answer these questions, I will look first at the institute's overall organization and then describe the way in which conflict resolution programs became a part of that organization through a process of historical events that began after one mediation course was offered in 1981. This historical context is important, not only in terms of how programs came to be organized, but in terms of the
values, theory, and methods that would become an integral part of adults' learning.

After tracing the historical development of conflict resolution training and describing the programs at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, I will discuss the theoretical framework for conflict resolution learning. This will include reference to the win-win model, experiential learning, and the notion of apprenticeship. Additional information about learning comes from surveys which the Centre has conducted on its students. These offer critical insights into the points of view of the learners themselves. I will review the findings of surveys conducted to date and note their implications for learning. The chapter ends with a summary.

To reiterate, the sections in this chapter are: (a) Discovering the Justice Institute, (b) Conflict Resolution Training: An Historical Overview, (c) Conflict Resolution Programs, (d) Learning Frameworks, (e) Staying Informed of Learners' Needs, and (f) Chapter Summary. After you read this chapter I hope that you will have a better understanding of the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program and the influences that have proven to be significant in defining and shaping its learning. In the next chapter I will look at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training as one of many organizations that supported the development of a peace culture and peace education programs in Canada.

The Justice Institute's Organization

The Justice Institute of B.C. is a post secondary educational institution in British Columbia founded in 1978. The institute has a Board of Governors appointed through an Order in Council and a president who reports to the board. The Justice Institute's mission is to enhance "the quality of justice and public safety by developing and delivering training programs and educational services to practitioners and the public" (Justice Institute, 1996, front cover). The Executive Committee and the Program Committee contribute to the institute's operations in areas such as policy-making.

Programs are delivered on and off campus. In 1993 over 30,000 students used the Justice Institute's services (Justice Institute of B.C., 1994, cover). The main campus in New Westminster houses six academies--the Corrections Academy, Courts Academy, Fire Academy, Paramedic Academy, Police Academy, and Provincial Emergency Program Academy--as well as a division, Career and Community Studies.
The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training is part of this last division. It runs the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, the largest program offered at the Justice Institute. All training in conflict resolution is in the form of non-credit, continuing education courses. A similar emphasis is evident in other programs throughout the institute.

The six academies are run by directors whereas Career and Community Studies is administered by a dean. The unique, multidisciplinary structure of the Justice Institute is designed to support cross-training opportunities since the maintenance of public safety and justice often requires multiple service providers. A central organization encourages team-building at administrative, instructional, and student levels.

Contract courses and training are offered off site through a variety of delivery systems. These include satellite centres, regional facilities such as community colleges, and distance education methods. The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training is exploring the use of multimedia and the Internet to deliver training. The Justice Institute's Media Resources Centre produces video tapes for in-house and external training. Multiple delivery systems are intended to reach diverse groups of clients at home and further afield. Contract training targets local, provincial, national, and international clients in areas served by the academies and Career and Community Studies division.

Other arms of the Justice Institute include the Educational Services Division and Finance and Administration Branch. The first looks after student registration and faculty training as well as library and media services; the second is responsible for the business and operations of the institute. Another entity, the Pacific Traffic Education Centre, is operated by the Justice Institute and the provincial insurance corporation to provide traffic safety programs.

Funding for the Justice's Institute's services come from a variety of sources. This includes a core budget from the Ministry of Education, Skills, Training, and Labour, contracts with other provincial ministries, and training contracts and tuition fees. A registered charity, the Justice Institute of B.C. Foundation, exists to help fund scholarships, research projects, and additional training resources. Each academy may receive financial support from other government ministries, although no primary ministry is connected to Career and Community Studies. The department receives
some financial assistance for administration and staffing but programs are offered on a cost-recovery basis. This also applies to conflict resolution. Additional revenues are channelled back into the program or redirected into general revenues for the institute.

**Career and Community Studies**

The courses taught in Career and Community Studies reflect the diverse and interdisciplinary nature of this department. In addition to the courses offered through the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, courses are available in areas such as Child and Youth Care, Counselling, Crime Prevention and Community Safety, Residential Care, and Training for Trainers. Adult learners come from a wide variety of personal backgrounds and work contexts, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, business, industry, education, and social services. They take training for different reasons including career preparation and professional continuing education. Career and Community Studies offers instruction on site as well as through other organizations and facilities, including provincial community colleges. Contract training is available for clients on and off campus. Instructors from the Justice Institute travel regularly throughout British Columbia, Canada, and occasionally to other parts of the world to train adults in specific areas of expertise.

**Conflict Resolution Training: An Historical Overview**

The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training did not come into existence until April 1987. However, mediation courses were taught as early as 1981 and the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program was introduced in 1986. The way in which dispute resolution services evolved is an important part of the Justice Institute's history. It offers insights into the history of conflict resolution in Canada and the nature of adult learning. The story of conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute begins with the efforts of a group of people who collectively provided the vision, administrative support, knowledge, and instructional resources. I spoke with some of these individuals when conducting my research on the Centre for conflict Resolution Training. Their narratives made this chapter possible.
The Formative Years: 1981-1985

Marje Burdine, the first coordinator, pioneered the vision for conflict resolution programs at the Justice Institute. She began working there in 1981 as an outreach coordinator in an area known as Community Programs. Marje was one of two coordinators in the department. She was responsible for professional and outreach programs; the other coordinator was responsible for public programs. Both reported to a program director, Pat Ross.

At the time she was hired, Marje’s primary responsibility was to organize conferences on family violence. They were held throughout the province and brought together different groups of professionals. After working in her role as Outreach Coordinator for a year and a half, Marje began to realize how extensive family violence was in British Columbia and that few professional resources were available to help people in small, rural communities. She believed that the isolation of rural communities contributed to racial tensions, discrimination, and alcohol and drug abuse (M. Burdine, personal communication, March 21, 1996).

Although little was known about mediation at the time, Marje believed that training in this field would help meet the needs of such communities. In late 1982 she attended a 2-day training program on divorce mediation offered by Sheila Kessler in Seattle.

Marje decided to incorporate the principles she learned to her responsibilities as an outreach coordinator back home at the Justice Institute. She spent 6 months researching the practice of mediation. Drawing on this research, she developed a mediation training manual and received permission to offer a 3-day course at the Justice Institute. She expected about 20 people to attend. When the first day of the course arrived 35 people lined the hallway. Desks and tables were taken out of the classroom to make room for this enthusiastic group (M. Burdine, personal communication, March 21, 1996). In retrospect, the response to this first course foreshadowed the ongoing demand for training in the conflict resolution field.

Interest in mediation remained high during the months that followed. Marje offered her course repeatedly to different groups of participants, primarily professionals from law, social work, and corrections. Although well received, its continuation raised a number of questions. How, for example, would Marje fulfill her
responsibilities as an outreach coordinator and provide mediation training at the same time? Who would benefit most from taking courses? And what would students do with their mediation skills after returning to the community? How appropriate was it to practise mediation after taking a short course? Would mediation actually be used in a preventative way by paraprofessionals with families at risk of becoming violent as Marje hoped?

Answers to these questions were not immediate. Mediation training continued at the Justice Institute and Marje came to assume responsibility for the newly-emerging area of conflict resolution training.

During the first couple of years training remained focused on family and divorce mediation as well as community mediation. The first instructors included Peter Renner, Dale Trimble, Lee Rengert, Tony Tobin and Bronach Cannelle. Peter had attended the mediation workshop given by Sheila Kessler. Dinah Stanley and Fran Grunberg also worked with Marje. At one point Marje offered a 2-day training session for local trainers in other fields as a way to find potential mediation instructors. This is how Joan Balmer came to work at the Justice Institute.

Another way in which individuals become instructors was through their performance as students in Marje’s mediation class or through their professional association with her. Individuals with strong interpersonal and conflict resolution skills were invited to become trainers. In the early 1980s a core training group was developed that included Joan Balmer, Paula Temrick, Michael Fogel, and Karen Haddigan. Stacey Holloway came a short time later. Other individuals would join the team and become senior trainers. Over time many other instructors and coaches would be added.

The training process for new instructors followed a mentoring/apprenticeship model. They would begin their transition to the role of instructor by working as skill coaches in the classroom and then working as co-trainers alongside Marje. Eventually co-trainers became independent instructors. Throughout this process members of the core team observed one another in classrooms and tried to provide as much mutual support as possible. The kinds of guidelines that distinguish the roles of coaches and instructors today (see p. 85) were not yet in effect. “We were all students, coaches, and trainers all at the same time . . . One day we’d be teaching with each other or we’d be coaching for one another or we’d be a student in one another’s course” (M. Fogel,
Trainers considered themselves to be members of a learning community and enjoyed their collaborative roles. This collaboration took place on and off campus. They discussed their work at lunch and visited one another at home. Karen Haddigan recalls that some instructors made the decision to share their fees in order to co-train (K. Haddigan, personal communication, June 4, 1996). Members of the core group also volunteered for West Coast Mediation Services, the first community-based mediation organization in British Columbia. At one point, they also discussed forming their own mediation company. Paula Temrick described the connection among the trainers as “high-level camaraderie” (personal communication, October 1, 1996).

Every instructor brought different skills and experiences into the mediation classroom. Trainers were hired on a course-by-course contract basis. Their time was divided between the Justice Institute and outside employment. Joan was a member of an independent, organizational consulting firm that focused on managerial training. She also had a background in Adult Education. Karen worked for a non-profit housing cooperative. Michael was a lawyer from the United States and was completing a graduate program in Counselling Psychology while engaging in a private practice of mediation. Stacey worked as a clinical nurse specialist at Vancouver Hospital in Adolescent Psychiatry. She had worked with Marje in the Family Violence/Sexual Assault Program. Paula had experience in television production, counselling, Theatre/Visual Arts instruction, and program leadership.

The success of conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute is due to the efforts of many individuals including this core group of pioneer instructors who worked with Marje to produce a quality continuing education program in dispute resolution. Most continue to teach at the Justice Institute. They offer advanced courses and help to design new electives and upgrade courses and instructional materials.

For those who pioneered the conflict resolution program, the early and mid-1980s were times of great excitement. Karen said instructors were inspired by the high public demand for mediation courses as well as a recognition that the Justice Institute’s training represented a new way of approaching conflict (personal communication, June 4, 1996). This sentiment was echoed by Joan. She described conflict resolution training as a new “paradigm” that provided learners with other options for resolving disputes. This was important during the 1980s, a time of social,
economic, and environmental upheaval and fast-paced change (personal communication, August 29, 1996). Stacey recalls that many of the learners who came for training during this period were looking for support and help with life in general whereas today there seems to be more of an emphasis on the professional and career applications of conflict resolution (personal communication, August 31, 1996).

During this early period precise goals and expectations for the training were still being articulated. Conflict resolution was generally understood to be "a set of ideas that gives an individual tools to handle conflict more effectively in their lives. It's a way of thinking, perceiving, and acting and it comes with a set of attitudes as well as skills" (K. Haddigan, personal communication, June 4, 1996).

The task of developing a program that reflected these principles would take time. There were few published materials available on dispute resolution and course manuals had to be consolidated from many different sources. This was one of Marje's strengths as a coordinator, to produce new materials.

There were also several challenges and conflicts that the core team faced. This was true at the instructional as well as student levels. The precise roles of trainers and coaches had to be worked out. As well as acquiring knowledge of the dispute resolution field, instructors had to learn training interventions. Collaboration among the trainers, Paula noted, helped to keep the curriculum cohesive and consistent (personal communication, October 1, 1996). This would remain an important consideration when new courses were added.

As demand for mediation training increased, additional instructors were hired. Dividing instructional responsibilities among trainers became a topic of concern. The kinds of group dynamics that pervade other organizations now tested the core team. "We had our conflicts and actually being part of a relatively small community we were able to address those conflicts relatively effectively but I think we were generally a group of like-minded people that believed very strongly in what we were doing. We really liked our associations with each other and the synergy that seemed to occur when we all got together" (M. Fogel, personal communication, June 3, 1996).

On another level there was concern about how students and members of the public would view the new mediation training. Although there was positive feedback from learners, trainers noted two concerns: (a) a tendency among some students to view their learning as a form of therapy and (b) a belief that a 3-day mediation course
would qualify individuals to become professionals. Although many students were experienced human-service workers, some came to the training expecting to work on their personal psychological and emotional well-being. This expectation was reinforced by the backgrounds of some trainers in areas such as counselling, therapy, and human relations. As well, many students took conflict resolution courses at a point in their lives where they were in personal or professional transition; they were “putting themselves through because they wanted to come out the other end as something else in the world--as a mediator or as a negotiator or something else” (M. Fogel, personal communication, June 3, 1996). Guidelines for conflict resolution training would be needed. A clear emphasis on skills, rather than therapy would help learners as well as instructors to understand its underlying objectives. This would require self-awareness and limit-setting by all those involved. In time structures were also built into the courses which helped keep learning focused on conflict resolution objectives. Instructors such as Stacey now emphasize to students at the beginning of a course that it will not be “group therapy” (personal communication, August 31, 1996).

The second concern related to professional standards of practice. Marje recalls how she felt about students calling themselves mediators after a 3-day course:

This began to really worry me because we were only providing the tip of the iceberg to prepare people to become mediators. Also, my original hope was that the training would prepare community-based, lay mediators to work proactively with families and community support services. Instead, we were attracting interdisciplinary professionals--lawyers, counsellors, managers, and school administrators--who wanted to become mediators. Given this focus, it seemed irresponsible to offer only a 3-day course and imply that this was sufficient training to become a professional mediator. I then contacted Tony Tobin, a crown counsel at the time, to help me design and deliver a 5-day, Mediation Level 2 course.

(M. Burdine, personal communication, March 21, 1996)

The addition of a higher-level mediation course helped address the need for ongoing training.
It was at this point that the single mediation course format began to evolve. The Mediation Level 2 course confirmed the developing interest in mediation in British Columbia. Support in this area came from students as well as other individuals. The Ministry of the Attorney General invited Marje to organize a provincial mediation conference. The conference was held on February 4, 1984. It included as presenters leading mediators from Canada and the United States, including Jay Folberg from Oregon, Lee Rengert from the University of LaVerne, California, Terry Amsler from the Community Boards program in San Francisco, and Andrew Smith from Saskatoon. Approximately 150 people attended.

The conference provided opportunities for mediators to network and exchange information in their areas of expertise. Similar opportunities came from Marje’s participation in the national mediator’s association, Family Mediation Canada, and The Network: Interaction for Conflict Resolution, a charitable organization affiliated with Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ontario. She also spoke at a conference run by the Academy of Family Mediators in the United States. Contact with other professionals was essential for communicating with others in the field and for developing training resources.

With the Mediation Levels 1 and 2 courses being offered on a regular basis, Marje observed that students continued to have difficulties in particular areas such as moving from positions to interests and dealing with anger and hostility. Given that mediation is an assisted negotiation, it became clear that a course in negotiation would help with some problem areas. Next were the theory, concepts, and skills for dealing with interpersonal conflict and in understanding and managing anger. Lee Rengert, a professor at LaVerne University in California, was contacted to design and offer a 3-day course on dealing with anger and Dale Trimble collaborated with Marje on a 3-day interpersonal conflict resolution course.

In addition to Lee Rengert, other individuals such as Mario Bartoletti and a team from the Centre for Dispute Resolution in Boulder, Colorado were sponsored by the Justice Institute to offer courses in Family Mediation and Child Protection Mediation. This form of professional inservice for students and instructors, also in effect today, reinforced the notion of a learning community.
After the first negotiation and anger courses were well established, students suggested a second-level course on negotiation skills and Bronach Cannelle, a labour negotiator, was contracted to help with the design and delivery of Negotiation Level 2. By this time many students were taking the conflict resolution courses primarily to increase their skills in negotiating or dealing with interpersonal conflict, rather than to learn mediation. This significant shift in the development of the program indicated that the future focus would be comprehensive in terms of conflict resolution rather than narrowly defined as mediation training.


By the mid 1980s there was growing demand from adults, particularly professionals from the human service fields, for conflict resolution courses. As the popularity of the courses increased, new challenges emerged. One was the need for specialized courses that would allow students to build on their basic training. Another related to the transfer of credits. Many adults were taking post-graduate studies in areas such as law and social work and wanted their training in conflict resolution acknowledged by their respective institutions. In 1985 the only evidence that students had completed their training at the Justice Institute was a transcript listing individual courses.

Considerations such as these led to the development of the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. The six core courses and additional electives were streamlined into one framework. Marje and the dedicated team of instructors who worked with her recognized that the certificate would be making an important statement about students' skill levels. Many of those who graduated would later work as mediators and negotiators; they would be viewed as specialists. Yet there were no external criteria for assessing their effectiveness in these areas. In order to give credibility to the certificate and the perceptions around it, two assessments, one in mediation and one in negotiation, were added as required elements of the new program.

The Conflict Resolution Certificate Program was first implemented in 1986. At the time it was created, it was one of only two such programs in North America, the other being in Oregon (M. Burdine, personal communication, March 21, 1996). Although the first graduating class from the Justice Institute's program comprised only
four students, this number would quickly increase.

By the late 1980s the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program had started to attract large numbers of students. It is interesting to note that the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training came into being one year after the new certificate program was introduced. This was not coincidental. Marje and her co-workers believed it was important to house the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program within a particular department at the Justice Institute (M. Burdine, personal communication, May 24, 1996). The decision to form a centre acknowledged the need for a clear identity and administrative structure for conflict resolution training.

Within a period of a few years, the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program was recognized as the most comprehensive training of its type. Marje Burdine, the coordinator of the conflict resolution program, remained at the Justice Institute until 1993. During her last 2 years there the number of adults active in the certificate program doubled from 300 to 600 students (Day & Gibson, 1993, Appendix 2, cover letter to participants).

The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training Today

Marg Huber succeeded Marje Burdine as Coordinator of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training in 1993. In 1994 this position was upgraded to Program Director. As she reflected on the history of conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute, Marg explained to me that “it was the collective vision, ideas, passion, and wisdom of core people that resulted in the creative program that began to be developed. It was the synergy that made it work. The result of this strong beginning is a program today which continues to flourish and to attract large numbers of students” (personal communication, August 29, 1996).

During the past several years the Centre has undertaken many new projects and training programs. The organization has expanded, moving well beyond a small core of trainers and a handful of students. In the next section I will focus on the Centre today and its objectives for the future. In order to understand its work and the kind of learning that takes place, it is important to understand the roles and values that characterize the individuals associated with the Centre. The success of a program requires the dedication, foresight, and cooperation of many different people. Without
the support and hard work of instructors, coaches, staff, and support personnel it would be difficult for the Centre to build on its history. I will describe their roles and then discuss the Centre's Mission and Vision Statement.

**Personnel**

**Program director.** Marg Huber assumed her role at the Justice Institute after working many years in the conflict resolution field:

I was one of the fortunate individuals who became aware of mediation training at the Justice Institute shortly after it was first offered. My first course confirmed that this was the area I wanted to work in. While I had previously been an adult educator in the areas of communication skills and other related topics, I now knew that I wanted to work exclusively in the area of conflict resolution. I shaped my private practice to specialize in conflict resolution/mediation training and mediation practice. I volunteered whenever there was a chance to learn more. I went to every event I could where I could meet people in this field. I dedicated myself to becoming an active proponent and practitioner. In the area of community mediation, I was able to secure funding, office space, and a staff for a community mediation agency that was previously floundering, Westcoast Mediation Services, and chaired the board for several years, during which time the agency had over 40 mediators. I have always felt a great passion for the practice of mediation and have experienced the transformative opportunities it presents for people. Having been a part of that experience has had a profound effect on my life. This is also true for most of the trainers and coaches who work on this program and have over the years. Shortly after I completed my mediation assessment (1986) I became increasingly involved in coaching and subsequently training in the program. I was a senior trainer at the time of assuming my role as Coordinator. (M. Huber, personal communication, May 11, 1996)

Marg has a strong interest in conflict and culture, First Nations dispute resolution processes, and assessment procedures. She has presented at conferences on these topics over the past 6 years.
**Staff.** In addition to Program Director, staff members at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training now include three part-time coordinators, four program planners, three program assistants, and an administrative assistant. One coordinator looks after special projects and coaches and acts as a backup person to the program director; one is in charge of curriculum development which includes revising and updating courses and training manuals; and one looks after course exemptions for students who wish to receive credit for previous training elsewhere. Each planner is responsible for one of the following areas: (a) in-house programs at the Justice Institute, (b) competency assessments for students, (c) co-sponsorship of courses with provincial community colleges and institutions, and (d) contract training, which includes arrangements for the First Nations Negotiation Skills Certificate Program (see “Conflict Resolution Programs”).

**Instructors and skill coaches.** In 1994 the Centre officially changed the term *trainer* to *instructor* to reflect the roles of those who deliver programs in the classroom. Instructors and coaches work for the Centre on contract. Senior instructors have a longstanding association with the Centre. They have played a primary role in developing courses and have been active in various areas of the dispute resolution field. They include members of the core instructional team from the mid-1980s as well as others who joined the team at later dates.

Senior and core instructors are responsible for delivering the course content and monitoring the teaching and learning environment. Coaches are experienced practitioners who support instructors in the classroom and assist with small group work. Teams of instructors and coaches have been formed to develop and deliver training in specialized areas such as Business, First Nations Negotiation Skills, Intercultural Conflict Resolution, and Family Mediation. Most instructors live in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island regions of British Columbia. Some are hired from other areas of Canada and the United States to offer specialized courses on site. There are 25 instructors and over 100 coaches working in conjunction with the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program.
Consultants. The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training hires consultants from time to time to assist with program development, organization, and implementation. Currently there is a consultant investigating the use of multi-media applications for learning. There is also a regular First Nations consultant who assists the program director and program planners with First Nations courses and programming needs.

Mission and Vision Statement

The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training is guided by a Mission and Vision Statement that was drafted in 1993 and completed by January, 1994 (see Appendix J). The development of this document became a priority for Marg Huber when she took over the coordination of the conflict resolution program. She believed it was important to have a statement that reflected the values of all those associated with the Centre rather than one written by management. Not only would this recognize the team of highly dedicated instructors and coaches, but a stronger identity for the Centre would emerge. With these objectives in mind, all staff members of the Centre and the instructional team were invited to help create a Mission and Vision Statement over a 4-month period. The final mission statement reaffirms the Centre's dedication to interest-based dispute resolution processes at the individual, organizational, and community levels. The vision identifies key values and outlines how those who work at the Centre will strive for leadership and excellence in dispute resolution training. These values are important because they guide program planning, instruction, and learning. Stacey Holloway said that one of the strengths of the conflict resolution program from her point of view is that it provides a context for people to develop and internalize moral values such as honesty, respect and sensitivity, and empathy; often, she added, these prosocial skills are not part of individuals' prior life learning (personal communication, August 31, 1996). In order for these kinds of values to become part of the learning experience, it is necessary that the instructors understand and model them. The Mission and Vision Statement reflects the values that are important to those at the Centre.
Applying theory to practice. This is the first value listed. The sentence expressing this value reads as follows: "As a learning community we make an ongoing commitment to the challenge of putting into practice constructive dispute resolution in our relationships with colleagues, students and the larger community" (Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, 1995, Our mission/our vision). The reference to a learning community again reinforces the idea of teachers as learners expressed by Michael Fogel, one of the instructors (personal communication, June 3, 1996).

The reference to "putting into practice" conflict resolution training has other implications. One is the significance of modelling. "'Walking the Talk' means we commit to not just teaching but fully living all the principles of our training in all aspects of our lives" (M. Huber, personal communication, June 24, 1996).

The connection between theory and practice is mentioned later in the Vision Statement in reference to experiential, practical, theoretical, and philosophical elements of learning. It is important, said Stacey Holloway, for instructors to keep up with current readings and understandings of conflict resolution theory, to design classroom-based experiences which help learners make sense of the theory, and then to challenge students to interpret it in light of their own personal experiences. Theory, she believes, is a critical link for enhancing practice (personal communication, August 31, 1996). As you read the stories of learners in part 3, you will also see that one of the most appreciated aspects of the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program is the emphasis on deconstructing academic knowledge through experiential role plays so that the learning becomes accessible and enjoyable.

There are many different theories of mediation now being discussed in conflict resolution literature. These include transformative mediation, settlement-based mediation, and several others. I refer to these briefly in the next chapter. What I discovered in talking with instructors from the Centre is that they encourage students to reflect on different models and critiques of conflict resolution and to consider the context within which a dispute occurs. The value of theory from this perspective is that it becomes a tool for critical thinking.
Awareness, respect, and acceptance of self and others. This is a touchstone value on which the training is based. Individuals must be aware of their own values, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and behaviours before they can alter their responses to conflict. Respect for self is essential for respecting others. I am reminded of a comment shared with me by Marje Burdine which highlights this relationship:

I believe that people have a fundamental sense of fairness, integrity, and a need and value for respect, wanting to be respected and wanting to be able to respect others. Now sometimes I think that’s not the case. But I choose to believe that it is because if you start from that premise you’re going to get more of that. People want to do the right thing, whatever that means to you and me. So what this program allows people is more opportunity to facilitate or to be involved in doing the right thing, which is treating other people with respect at the same time as being respected. (M. Burdine, personal communication, March 21, 1996)

The Vision Statement emphasizes the shifts in attitude and behaviour that accompany self-awareness. It connects respect for self and others to interest-based problem solving; that is, a process of resolving conflict that is exploratory, collaborative, and directed at addressing the needs of all parties involved.

Joan Balmer stated that conflict resolution training is instrumental in helping individuals take care of themselves but not at the expense of other people (personal communication, August 29, 1996). The ability to understand oneself while being empathic and respectful is the theme of a recently published work by Goleman (1995). Entitled Emotional Intelligence, its author argues that the emotional development of an individual is as important to human intelligence as cognition.

There is growing evidence that fundamental ethical stances in life stem from underlying emotional capacities. For one, impulse is the medium of emotion; the seed of all impulse is a feeling bursting to express itself in action. Those who are at the mercy of impulse—who lack self-control—suffer a moral deficiency: The ability to control impulse is the base of will and character. By the same token, the root of altruism lies in empathy, the ability to read emotions in others; lacking a sense of another’s need or despair, there is no caring. And if there
are any two moral stances that our times call for, they are precisely these, self-restraint and compassion. (Goleman, 1995, p. xii)

This balance between self-awareness and respect for others is a value of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. There is a story by one of the learners in part 3, Kate, which illustrates this delicate, yet critical skill, of balancing one’s internal awareness with external interpersonal skills. Being attuned to one’s emotions is integral to this process.

As an adult learner at the Justice Institute, I thought that my instructors and coaches modelled respect for themselves and others. They demonstrated this through active listening, a concern for the individual learner within the larger group, and a commitment to collaborative problem solving. Unlike some academic environments, the learning environments in my courses were friendly and open to dialogue between students, instructors, and coaches.

**Diversity.** This value is preceded by a statement recognizing the different ways in which individuals and cultures approach conflict. During the past few years, the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training has attempted to make its training culturally inclusive through various means including the formation of a steering committee to explore this area, professional inservice opportunities for instructors and coaches, and the introduction of new courses and programs. Culture is interpreted broadly to embrace gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, special needs, age, and other factors. Multiculturalism includes programs focused on justice and inclusion, citizenship, self-worth, and treating others with dignity and respect. Attention to cultural pluralism reflects both the diversity of North America’s population and regard for the ways in which culture enters into conflict and dispute resolution processes. Duryea (1992) makes an interesting comparison between multiculturalism and the principles of conflict resolution:

Multiculturalism mandates recognition of the unique qualities of each person and the valuing of diversity; dispute resolution focuses on each individual’s unique interests, including goals, fears, hopes and concerns. Multiculturalism requires that all Canadians advance their understanding of each other, working towards harmony; dispute resolution provides the tools through which this may be done. (p. 1)
The author of this report, Michelle LeBaron Duryea, headed a large-scale, 3-year project on Multiculturalism and Dispute Resolution run by the UVic (University of Victoria) Institute for Dispute Resolution between 1991 and 1994. The aim of the project was to investigate the relationship between culture and conflict among immigrant populations in British Columbia. An advisory committee helped facilitate the process while researchers were hired to interview immigrants. The result was a series of six publications, including a literature review and bibliography (Duryea, 1992), research on five communities in Vancouver, British Columbia (Duryea & Grundison, 1993), and educational training materials. Marg Huber participated on the advisory committee and served as a researcher and pilot project co-trainer for this project. One of the adult learners whose narrative appears in part 3 was also involved on this committee. His background and connections in the field of Multiculturalism made him a valuable group member.

Leadership in the dispute resolution field. This value occupies a central position in the Vision Statement and is supported by six objectives. These include, among others, demonstrating personal integrity and ethical conduct, being open to change and innovation, responding to community needs, and being collaborative with other members of the conflict resolution community.

There is already evidence of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training's leadership. The Conflict Resolution Certificate Program is regarded as the most comprehensive of its kind in Canada and is considered by many to be one of the three leading programs in North America along with those offered by the Harvard Negotiation Project and the Centre for Dispute Resolution (CDR) Associates in Denver. In 1995 the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training delivered 15,000 student training days in approximately 300 courses (M. Huber, personal communication, May 14, 1996).

Multiple forms of learning focused on meeting student needs. This value acknowledges "experiential, practical, theoretical and philosophical components of the learning process" (Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, 1995, Our mission/our vision). This statement takes different learning needs and styles into consideration while focusing on the centrality of the learner.
Both Joan Balmer and Stacey Holloway emphasized that the instruction at the Justice Institute begins with the learners' current levels of understanding and awareness, giving them the opportunity to take two or three steps forward. Instructors do not attempt to impose a rigid curriculum on individuals. The focus is to provide a safe learning environment with different options for learner participation included in the instructional objectives. One of the responsibilities of instructors, said Stacey, is to offer activities which will be successfully challenging; that is, that will challenge participants’ learning and support them to reach these goals through a variety of activities (personal communication, August 31, 1996). Classroom learning should offer a set of meaningful experiences which students can take and transfer into their own lives.

**Fair, consistent, and objective methods of evaluation.** The Justice Institute is the only organization in Canada that does program assessments in mediation and negotiation. Its leadership in this area is recognized internally at the Justice Institute and externally by professional groups and associations. An ongoing objective of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training has been to reassess its own evaluation practices on a regular basis:

We frequently run statistics to check the average pass rate on a regular basis, as well as the pass/fail rate for each assessor, and attempt to get a handle on all factors which may be influencing a change in the pass rate (e.g. assessors’ expectations, training effectiveness, rate at which students are progressing through the program, student integration of skills, sufficient practice opportunities, utilization of assessment prep courses). We have made and continue to make changes in our assessment process to increase its effectiveness as a measurement tool. This is a very challenging area. (M. Huber, personal communication, May 11, 1996)

The evaluation scale used for student assessments has recently been changed to further emphasize that passing an assessment does not mean competency to practice mediation. Beginning September 30, 1996, students will also be able to do the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program with one assessment or two, depending on their individual goals to use mediation, negotiation, or both. I will describe the evaluation process further under “Conflict Resolution Programs.”
Discussions are also under way to establish professional standards of practice for mediators working in specific areas. The Justice Institute may become the central organization through which candidates are assessed on behalf of practitioner membership associations or government ministries requiring mediation services for specialized areas of practice for their ability to meet standards defined by those groups. The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training has had ongoing input into the development of standards for Family Mediation Canada.

During the past year and a half the Justice Institute was contracted to design an assessment process for two external applications: (a) the Family Justice Reform Project (Ministry of the Attorney General) and (b) the BC Arbitration and Mediation Institute. Design work for both was conducted by Marg Huber and Lee Turnbull, Program Coordinator at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. The first project required devising a process that was culturally inclusive without relying on a particular model or skills. The second project was "the first of its kind in Canada for commercial or generic applications of mediation. It is not yet available to the public but will be shortly. Successful completion will entitle the applicant to receive the designation "Chartered Mediator" (M. Huber, personal communication, May 11, 1996). The Justice Institute has been contracted to conduct the assessments for both of these projects.

This kind of attention to evaluation and assessment reflects different needs and areas of concern. On a basic level, it relates to standards of practice. These continue to be developed as the field of conflict resolution itself evolves. Further, there is growing acknowledgement that these standards will need to be adapted to specific groups of practitioners. Although there is an overlap between different kinds of conflict resolution practices, areas such as family mediation also involve skills which may not be used in commercial mediation and vice versa. In all of these instances, the focus on assessment is part of the ongoing professionalization of dispute resolution.

**Participation, collaboration, and consultation.** This is the final value listed. Participation has already been discussed in terms of the learning community that emerged among the original instructors as they began developing new courses. It was also discussed in terms of the team-building behind the Mission and Vision Statement. Finally, I spoke about participation on different levels within the classroom. Not only is it important for instructors to model the skills and values of the program but
to provide a safe environment for students to learn and make connections with the training in their own lives.

Collaboration is evident within the Centre itself and with other professionals and practitioners in dispute resolution. In addition to the development of assessment standards already mentioned, the Justice Institute's Centre for Conflict Resolution Training is involved in the following networking activities: (a) it helps other provincial organizations and colleges establish mediation or conflict resolution training programs (e.g. Alberta and Saskatchewan); occasionally organizations with a longstanding history of association with the Centre develop their own in-house programs based on the Justice Institute's model, (b) local mediation membership organizations are given financial assistance and the use of the Justice Institute's facilities to hold meetings, (c) it co-sponsors conflict resolution courses with community mediation centres to assist in strengthening the financial viability and public exposure of those centres, (d) it sponsors ongoing education for its own graduates and co-sponsors mediation practice sessions with several ADR training providers (e.g. Continuing Legal Education, UBC (University of British Columbia) Faculty of Law, UBC School of Social Work), (e) students who have taken conflict resolution courses elsewhere may be given transfer credits, (f) the Centre supports and participates in dispute resolution conferences, (g) many of those who work at the Centre have membership in local, provincial, or national professional associations, (h) links have been developed with organizations such as the National Coalition Building Institute for cross-referencing training components and providing an opportunity for involvement in conflict resolution peace-related activities on national and international levels, (i) core courses of the program are integrated into the curriculum at other colleges (e.g. Camosun College's School of Business in Victoria, British Columbia) or recommended by faculty in university programs (e.g. University of British Columbia's School of Resource Management as well as the School of Social Work) and (j) the Centre, in cooperation with the Fraser Region Community Justice Initiatives Association, makes a VORP practicum available to students who have completed their Justice Institute mediation assessment. All of these forms of collaboration have increased the visibility of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training and reconfirmed its commitment to a growing and dynamic field of practice.
The History of Conflict Resolution Training in Perspective: Summary

The Justice Institute first began offering mediation courses in 1981. They were well received and within 5 years a comprehensive training program, the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, had been introduced. With the development of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training in 1987 an administrative body was created that would overlook program planning and implementation. Since 1994 the Centre has been guided by a Mission and Vision Statement. This statement provides insights into the types of values and goals embedded in conflict resolution training.

Conflict Resolution Programs

Overview

There are two programs currently offered by the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program and the First Nations Negotiation Skills Certificate Program. A specialized Family Mediation program with an integrated practicum is planned for the Fall of 1997. This will include training requirements stipulated by Family Mediation Canada. Three components of the new program are currently being piloted. A diploma program in Conflict Resolution was piloted 4 years ago in conjunction with the Criminology department of a local college. This program was discontinued.

In addition to its two foundation programs, the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training provides contract training to organizations and government ministries. This often involves modifying or developing special courses.

We train senior management, middle management and front line employees. Many clients express an interest in having all of their staff take at least some training in conflict resolution or negotiation through the Justice Institute. Approximately one half our student population is supported financially to some degree in their studies here by their employers.

At the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, we receive many requests for expanded programming in the areas of resolving workplace conflict, harassment mediation, union/management negotiation training, and a range of other workplace-related areas. We are constantly developing
new courses and updating current ones to reflect the most recent developments in the field and requests from the community.

In the past year, we have begun training on an international level, and more extensive training is currently scheduled for both Malaysia and Singapore within the next four months. These training courses have their own particular demands based on cultural factors, and have to date been very well received. There is a very great interest in workplace related conflict resolution training in these countries.
(M. Huber, personal communication, May 14, 1996)

In September 1995 Marg Huber delivered two courses on Resolving Conflict in the Workplace to middle and senior management and Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) representatives in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In July 1996 she offered a further two courses to senior management representatives from several different companies in that city. These trainings are coordinated by a partner training organization in Kuala Lumpur. As a result of the trainings, several contracts are anticipated with Malaysian organizations. Links between the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training and other international clients are discussed further in the next chapter.

The emphasis in the Justice Institute's training is on mediation and negotiation. These are generally the most common forms of dispute resolution. Training in other areas such as arbitration and international negotiation are available elsewhere. A look at the Centre's two programs reveals their underlying content and organization. This is my objective below. I will focus on the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program since this is the program identified with my research. Following a description of the programs, I will describe different dimensions of conflict resolution learning as they relate to all courses offered at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training.

First Nations Negotiation Skills Certificate Program

The First Nations Negotiation Skills Certificate Program has existed since 1994 and has been offered several times since that date. The program is delivered on a contract basis only to First Nations communities throughout British Columbia. Its purpose is to provide community participants with conflict resolution and negotiation skills to effectively negotiate contracts with government, business, and industry, to strengthen relationships, and to empower communities to resolve conflicts at all levels.
This is critical at a time when land claims and treaty negotiations with the provincial and federal government have intensified.

Several adaptations have been made to the regular training offered by the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training in an attempt to offer the First Nations Negotiation Skills Certificate Program within the cultural contexts of the learners. First, training is conducted in band members' own communities. A training team with extensive experience in First Nations' issues has been developed to deliver all training. A First Nations member of the team is always present to ensure the content is culturally relevant and presented in context. Practice and assessment role plays are designed from community situations. The curriculum is adjusted on demand to reflect the needs of the training group and community while maintaining program goals and standards. Efforts are under way to make all training materials culturally specific. These adaptations and others make the First Nations Negotiations Skills Certificate Program unique.

The program is delivered one week each month over a 6-month period. The training concludes with a negotiation assessment which may be retaken at no additional charge to encourage successful completion of the program. Many of the courses are the same as those in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program but with an emphasis on negotiation. This includes a Team Negotiations course as well as one on Intercultural Issues in Negotiations. A Skill Check course and Assessment Preparation course are also included. Course content ensures that the training remains practical and supportive.

The Conflict Resolution Certificate Program

The Conflict Resolution Certificate Program is the largest and most popular program at the Justice Institute. When it was implemented in 1986 only a handful of students enrolled. Today there are over 1,400 adults registered in the program. These numbers bear witness to the program's popularity.

The program has four key objectives: (a) to provide students with the theoretical and practical elements needed to resolve interpersonal conflict, (b) to provide students with skills to facilitate conflict resolution among other people, (c) to assess students' conflict resolution skills, and (d) to provide opportunities for specialized applications of
dispute resolution (Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, n.d.). These objectives are updated regularly as part of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training's goal to be a leader in the conflict resolution field.

Admission

There is no screening for admission. The program attracts students with diverse backgrounds and needs. This diversity reflects the diversity in society and makes the classroom a dynamic learning environment. Adults generally take courses for personal or professional reasons. Some students, like myself, begin the training for work-related reasons but discover its personal value as well. The Conflict Resolution Certificate Program provides a basic foundation for individuals wishing to pursue a career in the conflict resolution field or to augment their dispute resolution skills in their own fields of practice.

Graduation Requirements

The program's basic requirements have remained intact since the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program was introduced, although significant changes have recently been made. Adults are still required to take 210 hours of training but the required courses have been reduced to 119 hours and elective course work has been increased to 91 hours. As of September 30, 1996 students will have the option of not taking the advanced mediation course and mediation assessment. The rationale for this change is that there is now increased emphasis on specialized and advanced mediation courses in the dispute resolution field. Students who are not taking the program to pursue work in mediation will not require this level of specialization and therefore have the option of replacing their mediation assessment with 5 days of electives that focus on their own areas of interest.

There are no time requirements for completing the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. Some students take the program over a period of 4 months while others may take up to 5 years. The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training recommends a period of 18-24 months in order for adults to have time to practice and integrate the skills taught in courses and to benefit from recent course developments.
Courses. The first core course provides an overview of conflict resolution. Adults may now choose between two introductory courses, Dealing with Interpersonal Conflict or Resolving Conflict in the Workplace. Following this, students are required to take Dealing with Anger, Negotiation Skills Levels 1 and 2, and Mediation Skills Level 1. Level 1 courses are 3 days in length whereas Level 2 courses are instructed over 5 days. Each core course comes with its own training manual published and updated regularly by the Justice Institute to reflect current theory and knowledge in the subject area.

A wide range of electives is available to complete the remaining training hours required for graduation. General as well as specialized courses are available. The first group includes courses such as Critical Skills for Communicating in Conflict, Building Consensus, Group Dynamics, and Criticism: How to Give and Receive It. Specialized electives focus on family, business, cultural, and group applications of conflict resolution. Examples include Mediating Harassment Complaints, Conflict in Organizations, and Welcoming Diversity. At the time of my research 25 electives were offered as options in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program.

Competency-Based assessments. Students take their assessments following their core courses and electives. Assessments measure students' ability to apply skills and concepts taught in the program. It is common for many students to achieve a rating of Further Work Required on their first assessment attempt. Assessments can be retaken. However, as with the original assessment, a fee is charged to cover staffing and organization costs.

Each assessment is evaluated according to a predetermined set of criteria. The basic format of the assessments is the same but the skills required for mediation are different than those for negotiation. In each case students are asked to demonstrate their skills through a simulated role play. The role play, along with a description of key skills that will be evaluated and the evaluation criteria, are mailed to students after they have formally applied for an assessment. The role play is one hour in length. The other role players are coaches in the certificate program. The session is videotaped and a trained evaluator observes from the side while recording notes on the student's skills. Following the role play, the student leaves the room to complete a written self-evaluation in isolation. The coach and evaluator remain in the room to
discuss what happened. The student is then brought back into the room and the role play is discussed, the student's self-evaluation is considered, and a result is assigned. Categories of evaluation have recently been renamed as follows: (a) Further Work Required, (b) Satisfactory Demonstration of Skills and Concepts Taught in the Program, and (c) Strong Demonstration of Skills and Concepts Taught in the Program. In borderline cases assessors may request a second opinion from the program director. This option is also available to students for a fee. Assessments provide important information to students about their skill levels and mastery of content areas but are not intended to evaluate the abilities of students to work as professionals in a given area of practice. This point was emphasized in my interviews with instructors at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training.

In addition to the detailed package mailed to students, there are other resources available to prepare for assessments. These are: (a) videotapes of previous assessments available though the Justice Institute's library, (b) coaches or instructors who may be hired to supervise students' skills ahead of time, and (c) assessment preparation courses. Special arrangements are offered to out-of-town students who may take their evaluations in their home communities.

Learning Frameworks

All of the programs and courses in conflict resolution are guided by certain principles, models, and approaches which act as frameworks in which to understand learning. The principles have already been addressed in terms of the Mission and Vision Statement. In this section I will describe three other frameworks which I believe are essential for understanding the type of learning provided by the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training: (a) experiential learning, (b) apprenticeship, and (c) the win-win model of conflict resolution. Experiential learning and the win-win model are more widely discussed than apprenticeship at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. Experiential learning and apprenticeship are both conceptual frameworks for understanding adult learning processes; the win-win model is a particular framework for resolving conflict. All three frameworks overlap. They embrace attitudes, beliefs, values, theory, and practice which, when integrated, result in a particular learning experience. How these elements are combined, however, depends on a particular
instructor or student. In other words, the ways in which learning is facilitated, supported, and experienced are not prescriptive. What is significant for one individual may not be for another.

I begin this section by looking at the specific model used to resolve conflict, the win-win approach. I then show how experiential learning and apprenticeship offer frameworks for applying win-win principles in practice. Experiential learning is a term used to describe the kind of learning that takes place at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. This orientation is often seen as an alternative to academic programs. What is experiential learning? What does it look like as far as conflict resolution programs are concerned? I will then examine the notion of apprenticeship as a model that is experientially-based. The main context for apprenticeship at the Justice Institute is the role play. I will explain how role plays can be used to train apprentice mediators and negotiators.

The Win-Win Model of Conflict Resolution

In the early stages of their training students are asked to self-evaluate their response to conflict using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (1974). This helps sensitize students to the wide range of conflict styles. It also offers a framework for thinking about win-win. The Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument is a booklet of questions from which students select answers. Based on their responses, students are matched with one of the following conflict management styles: (a) competing, (b) collaborating, (c) compromising, (d) avoiding, and (e) accommodating. An individual's response to conflict may be characterized by more than one category. Results from the self-evaluation are discussed and used to introduce the win-win model used for training.

Fisher and Ury (1981), negotiators with the Harvard Negotiation Project, are credited with developing the win-win model. The model provides a framework for collaborative dispute resolution. It assumes that at least one of the parties wants to reach an agreement from this perspective. This is different from zero-based conflicts:

Zero-sum conflicts are those where what one side gains, the other loses. So if it were possible to quantify these gains and losses, if A gains ten, B loses ten; and if you add these two up the total comes to zero. In such conflicts there is no community of interest on which to base a
The terms interests or needs are commonly used in the context of win-win. Many people refer to Fisher and Ury’s (1981) model as an interest-based process. What exactly does this mean? The glossary in one of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training manuals defines interests as “the needs, wants, fears, concerns or priorities (substantive, procedural or psychological) which should be considered in forming an agreement between parties to a dispute. Interests are the motivators behind positions” (Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, 1995, p. 46). An interest-based approach therefore is one which moves parties from their demands or positions to an understanding of their underlying needs or interests. The rationale for working from an interest-based perspective is that it will produce a better agreement for all those involved and enable the relationship between/among the parties to be maintained or enhanced. This in turn will facilitate the ongoing implementation and success of an agreement. Kevin’s story in part 3 highlights the value of interests as a way, not only to understand the motivators influencing one’s own behaviours, but as a way to understand and connect with others. Interest-based negotiation highlights the need for self-awareness as well as empathy.

Ordover (1993) offers another way to think about interest-based problem solving. He distinguishes it from dispute resolution processes that are rights-based or power-based. Interest-based resolution does not focus on which party is “right.” All too often both parties are “right” depending upon how you ask the question. Nor is the exercise of power relevant in getting past the dispute. Instead, through discussions the parties try to understand the nature of the problem they face, their individual interests to be protected, and the options available to solve the problem. The solution will seek to accommodate the interests of both parties in solving the problem. Where successful, the case will resolve in a WIN-WIN fashion. (Ordover, 1993, p. 4)

As conceptualized by Fisher and Ury (1981), there are four central concepts in resolving conflict from a win-win perspective: (a) separate the disputants from the problem, (b) focus on underlying interests, (c) create options for mutual gain, and (d) use objective criteria to form an agreement (Fisher & Ury, 1981). These are the frameworks followed in interest-based training programs, including those at the Centre
for Conflict Resolution Training. The Justice Institute is moving away from a staged model for the resolution of conflict in its introductory course, referring instead to elements of collaborative process which reflect the current, more fluid, varied, and hence inclusive approach to conflict. This addresses both the internal and external work necessary for mutually satisfying outcomes. However, in negotiation and mediation courses a staged model is still used (see Appendix J). This model includes a preparation stage and the following stages which are modified according to context:

2. Clarifying the Issue(s).
3. Exploring Interest(s).
4. Resolution.

These four stages are not intended to be linear; often a mediation or negotiation requires moving back and forth among stages. Depending on the nature of the dispute and the context in which it is resolved, the sequence as well as the content of a stage may need to be modified. The win-win model is not meant to limit practitioners but to provide a framework for the collaborative resolution of any dispute. It is a macro framework. Each stage also has several micro skills which must be learned. Some of these apply to a particular stage. Others such as questioning may be used throughout all four stages. The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training introduces students to the structure of the win-win model first and then builds in specific skills that support it.

**Experiential Learning**

The win-win model provides a structure and knowledge for resolving conflicts. It is the way in which this knowledge is applied in class that makes the Justice Institute’s training different from academic programs. When Marje Burdine began offering mediation courses at the Justice Institute, she brought with her a background in experiential learning from University Associates, a California-based organization. In the context of her own education experiential learning was seen to be a way of putting learners into a given set of experiences and allowing them to extrapolate their own principles of learning (M. Burdine, personal communication, May 24, 1996). This differed from traditional learning methods in which students merely assimilated knowledge from an external source.
Several years ago when I was taking a conflict resolution course at the Justice Institute a student in one of my classes asked a question. Rather than responding with a solution, the instructor encouraged the learner to reflect further on the personal needs underlying the question. On another occasion the same instructor invited an adult to draw a conceptual map on the blackboard as a way to make thinking visible for the rest of the class. In both instances the adult educator’s response validated students’ experiences and personal knowledge as the basis for further inquiry and group discussions.

Approaches such as these became identified with experiential learning. Exactly what this term meant was clarified when D. A. Kolb’s (1984) work was published. According to Kolb, our experiences as human beings are the basis of our development, our ability to adapt to different situations and to interact with others, and ultimately, the framework in which all learning, formal and informal, occurs.

This perspective on learning is called “experiential” for two reasons. The first is to tie it clearly to its intellectual origins in the work of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. The second reason is to emphasize the central role that experience plays in the learning process. This differentiates experiential learning theory from rationalist and other cognitive theories of learning that tend to give primary emphasis to acquisition, manipulation, and recall of abstract symbols, and from behavioral learning theories that deny any role for consciousness and subjective experience in the learning process. It should be emphasized, however, that the aim of this work is not to pose experiential learning theory as a third alternative to behavioral and cognitive learning theories, but rather to suggest through experiential learning theory a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior.

(D. A. Kolb, 1984, pp. 20-21)

This integrated perspective is evident in the experiential learning model (D. A. Kolb, 1984, p. 42). It shows learners drawing from four modes of experience: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. These processes are integral to learning and build on one another. Learning can start with any one of these processes, although balancing them is challenging.
How can one act and reflect at the same time? How can one be concrete and immediate and still be theoretical? Learning requires abilities that are polar opposites, and the learner, as a result, must continually choose which set of learning abilities he or she will bring to bear in any specific learning situation. More specifically, there are two primary dimensions to the learning process. The first dimension represents the concrete experiencing of events at one end and abstract conceptualization at the other. The other dimension has active experimentation at one extreme and reflective observation at the other. Thus, in the process of learning, one moves in varying degrees from actor to observer, and from specific involvement to analytic detachment. (D. A. Kolb, 1984, pp. 30-31)

The four learning modes represent a cycle. Adults can enter the cycle at any point and from there begin to integrate the other processes. Kate’s story poignantly illustrates the dialectical interplay in her own learning between these different modes.

Experiential learning for many also represents an emphasis on hands-on training. It is the application of the skills in context that allows the different learning processes to unfold. The emphasis on courses at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training is on practice rather than theory or scholarship. Sandy, one of the learners, expressed this distinction:

I really like academic kinds of learning. I love to learn and I love to go and sit in a course and be told or fed information. But this kind of learning was much more that that. It was a demanding kind of “You’re not just going to take this in and be knowledgeable; you’re going to change the way you are, you’re going to change the way you deal in the world, and you’re doing to do it right now with this people. It was kind of scary beginning to learn something and being asked to practice it and integrate it and perform. At the same time it was a much more valuable way of learning.

Other learners in this study echoed Sandy’s comments. Although hands-on learning was frightening at times and brought forth a wide range of emotions, everyone found it to be very valuable because they were able to integrate different strands of learning.
Instructors' own experiences as mediators and negotiators in the community help to retain this practical focus. Feedback from practitioners is used to modify the processes and skills passed on to students.

The way the model originally worked was if you and I were involved in a mediation you would tell me your point of view, I would then paraphrase back what you said before I had an opportunity to say my point of view. Well some of us were realizing that was really hard to do out in the real world... And so we changed the model based on real world effect... I would not feel comfortable teaching if I weren't mediating because I learn something in the classroom that I can take into a mediation and I inevitably learn something in a mediation that I can take into the classroom. (M. Fogel, personal communication, June 3, 1996)

Learners at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training experience real-life conflicts through simulated role plays. Role plays are used in various ways and at different stages of a course. Short role plays are integrated into every course. In the core courses a full day is set aside for students to demonstrate their skills in a one-hour role play. These role plays are similar to those used for competency based assessments. In both cases the simulations are videotaped.

The placement of role plays in each class also follows a sequence. Each conflict resolution class begins with an overview of the content area and skills by the instructor. Demonstrations are used within the context of this whole-group presentation. Input and questions from students are discussed at this time. Before students divide into role-play groups instructors review guidelines for working with others as well as specific skills that will be practised.

Groups consist of two to four students. This includes one or two observers. The content of the role plays may trigger the emotions of participants so it is important for adults to be sensitive to the needs and skill levels of those practising their skills. Role players may request a particular level of conflict or resistance from their counterpart as well as specific feedback from observers. Several coaches as well as the primary instructor circulate among the small groups and provide support. The ratio of coaches to learners is approximately 1:5. Coaches help to keep the role plays on track and help to stimulate reflection on what is taking place. Learners are encouraged to reflect on their skills in progress as well as retrospectively in the debriefing session. Simulations
are experiential in nature and provide a context for students to see their skills applied.

As individuals enter the learning situation, the approaches that are used help to bring out their belief systems, theories, and ideas. Views are exchanged as learners respond to one another and share their personal needs and perceptions. Such active participation allows people to test their assumptions and later integrate them, along with newer or refined ones, or even to make substitutions. If we view this process from the experiential perspective, all learning becomes relearning.

Experiential modes of learning involving interpersonal interaction, whether in real-world settings, in games, or in a simulated environment are vehicles for ensuring the sense of accomplishment and the strength of self-esteem that successful action provides. Other people who are part of the action setting contribute an additional element—namely, emotional involvement. Participation with others serves to increase motivation and helps to reinforce the event in one's mind so that what has been learned will not be lost... Thus, there is a motivation that the action provides and a concomitant investment of self in the process. (D. A. Kolb & Lewis, 1986, p. 104)

**Apprenticeship Learning**

As simulations of real-world experiences, the role plays also provide a context for apprenticeship. Although this term is not used extensively at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, there is evidence of apprenticeship occurring through the interactions among coaches and students. Understanding what is happening in these situations will provide further opportunities for using apprenticeship models of learning.

Adult educators have recently begun to understand how apprenticeship might be used to develop learners' thinking and problem solving skills. I will discuss this further in chapter 6. For now, I would like to identify and elaborate on the concept of apprenticeship. On a basic level, it is about transmitting knowledge among two or more individuals, one of whom is the learner and at least one of whom assumes the role of a master teacher. Apprenticeship is based on specific assumptions about partnerships and the processes that will serve best to develop the skills and knowledge required of learners in a given area of practice.
In some ways, apprenticeship is like mentorship. In both there is at least one individual who is more informed and experienced in a given area than the other. There is also an understanding that the more knowledgeable person will support the learner over a period of time. "Mentors give us the magic that allows us to enter the darkness: a talisman to protect us from evil spells, a gem of wise advice, a map, and sometimes simply courage. But always the mentor appears near the outset of the journey as a helper, equipping us in some way for what is to come, a midwife to our dreams" (Daloz, 1986, p. 17).

Yet the two forms of learning differ in other regards. Mentorship emphasizes relationships; apprenticeship emphasizes a broad range of skills and learning outcomes which include technical or performance-based behaviours as well as social and emotional learning. While mentorship is a process that is nurtured, apprenticeship is one that is often strictly regulated. An understanding of apprenticeship must consider the processes that have been followed historically.

In traditional apprenticeship, the expert shows the apprentice how to do a task, watches as the apprentice practices portions of the task, and then turns over more and more responsibility until the apprentice is proficient enough to accomplish the task independently. That is the basic notion of apprenticeship: showing the apprentice how to do a task and helping the apprentice to do it. There are four important aspects of traditional apprenticeship: modeling, scaffolding, fading, and coaching.

In modeling, the apprentice observes the master demonstrating how to do different parts of the task. The master makes the target processes visible, often by explicitly showing the apprentice what to do . . . .

Scaffolding is the support the master gives apprentices in carrying out a task. This can range from doing almost the entire task for them to giving occasional hints as to what to do next. Fading is the notion of slowly removing the support, giving the apprentice more and more responsibility.

Coaching is the thread running through the entire apprenticeship experience. The master coaches the apprentice through a wide range of activities: choosing tasks, providing hints and scaffolding, evaluating the activities of apprentices and diagnosing the kinds of problems they are having, challenging them and offering encouragement, giving feedback, structuring the ways to
do things, working on particular weaknesses. In short, coaching is the process of overseeing the student's learning.

The interplay among observation, scaffolding, and increasingly independent practice aids apprentices both in developing self-monitoring and correction skills and in integrating the skills and conceptual knowledge needed to advance toward expertise. (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991, pp. 8-9)

The quality of learning is reflected in the depth and variety of experiences between the expert and novice. Knowing how to sequence and integrate these experiences requires an understanding of student needs and learning outcomes.

One way in which large groups of students can be apprenticed is through group work. The balance between large and small group work in conflict resolution classes is an example. The instructor is the model who demonstrates tasks for the whole group. Further modelling comes from the coaches who provide feedback and support in small groups. Role plays provide an opportunity for learners to approximate the kinds of skills and processes taught in a particular course. Students are not expected to be competent in these areas but they are encouraged to begin working towards independence. Role plays also allow students time to try out micro skills. As adults progress in their conflict resolution program they become better at integrating their skills. A small group format provides a safe and comfortable environment for apprenticeship learning.

The extent to which apprenticeship modes of learning are implemented in the context of conflict resolution training depends on a variety of factors, including the motivation of the learners, the type of relationships in the classroom, and the amount of time available for participants to remain with the same coach over an extended period. On many occasions students have input into the people in their group role plays. Adults are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to form groups which will support their own growth.
Staying Informed of Learners' Needs

Update

I have shown how the programs at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training reflect particular values and approaches to learning. Successful program planning also requires an understanding of learner needs. These needs are constantly changing as society itself changes. The kind of conflict resolution training offered today is very different than 15 years ago. Programs at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training must take into account the nature of the dispute resolution field as well as broader social, political, and cultural shifts at home and abroad:

The field has grown rapidly in recent years. There is a proliferation of university programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels on conflict resolution in the United States and Canada. The theoretical base of the field is greatly expanded; much new material is being released. As such, the content of our courses and manuals increasingly reflects the greater knowledge of the field. Based on field research and ongoing learnings from practice, the way we "do" mediation or even conflict resolution is different from when we started the program 10 years ago. So if you took Mediation 2 in 1987, there is a great deal you would not know that you would need to know!

Consider the impact of culture--something this field more or less ignored for some time. Over the past 10 years, mediation has been taught and practiced in North America using a model based on Euro-American values. To be culturally inclusive means we need to revisit the way we teach all aspects of process to ensure we address the many different ways people approach and resolve conflict; and we need to work towards greater cultural diversity among our instructors and coaches and greater cultural diversity in the classroom. And our current instructors and trainers need further training and sensitization to cultural issues as they relate to the content and as they play out in the classroom. This work is ongoing. We are all learning together. We have developed a multicultural team of facilitators who have designed two new intercultural courses which they will offer in October 1996. I refer to "culture" in its broadest sense.
Recent changes in B.C. in child protection and harassment policy have resulted in mediation being written into legislation. Here at the Centre we must be constantly attentive to legislative changes that are occurring across Canada that affect mediation practice, so we can accurately reflect these areas of practice in our programming, and speak to these changes in our classes. This also may mean developing or expanding courses to enable students to meet the requirements of standards of practice in certain areas.

We have also augmented our elective courses in the area of group or multi-party process to reflect a growing interest in this area both in organizational settings as well as public policy, environmental or resource management areas. The Justice Institute does not need to necessarily provide all training to meet all needs, but we certainly need to be aware of those needs, and potentially link with other training providers who play a role in specialized areas of practice. Sometimes we provide the core skills for those entering specific areas of practice, and the service provider provides specialized training (e.g. Victim-Offender mediation).

In general, the program has expanded in its knowledge base and become more specialized. This is very exciting and also places considerable demands on us with respect to programming and ongoing networking, because the larger picture is changing constantly. (M. Huber, personal communication, June 24, 1996)

**Surveys**

In addition to using course evaluation forms, the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training conducts surveys of its students. Two sets of large-scale surveys have been undertaken in the Centre’s history, one in early 1993 while Marje Burdine was still coordinator and one in early 1996 under the direction of Marg Huber. I will describe the manner in which these surveys were conducted and review their findings briefly. Although it is sometimes difficult to interpret the significance of learners' feedback, it remains an important source of information for their perceptions and assessment of conflict resolution programs of the day.
The 1993 Survey

This survey was conducted 2 years before the Justice Institute moved its premises from Vancouver to New Westminster. The mailout targeted students who were enrolled in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. A random group was selected to receive a questionnaire that was designed and administered by an independent agency, Pace Consulting, in conjunction with the program coordinator and planners at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. Most questions were multiple choice, although some were open-ended. Ten percent or 74 students returned the survey. Sixty-eight of these were considered valid. There were 3 groups excluded from this study: (a) students not enrolled in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, (b) those who were inactive; that is, had not taken courses for over two years, and (c) graduates of the program.

A description of the survey and its findings were published in June 1993. This publication included an executive summary, description of the research methodology, results analysis, and several appendices, including survey results and a student profile. The mail survey results analysis lists and, when applicable, tallies responses to individual questions. It is interesting to note background statistics on the learners: 42% of respondents lived in Greater Vancouver, 32% in other areas of British Columbia, and 10% outside of the province; almost two thirds of the respondents were female and 78% in the 33-53 age group (Day & Gibson, 1993, p. 9). Participants were typically professionals (e.g. educators, social workers, community developers) or from the business, management, or administration sectors. A majority of respondents showed interest in organizational and family dispute resolution with education and labour being the next two most popular forms of conflict resolution. Students expected the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program would help them in several areas of their life including areas related to work, home, and career. Almost one half of the participants, however, said that a conflict at work or in their careers/professions had motivated them to enrol in courses at the Justice Institute. Only 3% entered because of a personal event and 4% for personal development. The backgrounds and motivations of learners provides insights into the overall nature and significance of the program at the time the survey was administered.
As far as preferred learning activities were concerned, respondents expressed the most enthusiasm for role plays assisted by coaches. Interest in unassisted role plays was much lower. In a separate question about improving courses, the most common proposal was increased contact with instructors and coaches. This was followed by a suggestion for more role plays. Day and Gibson (1993, p. 29), the authors of the research, noted that case studies and team or class projects represented a viable alternative for studying conflict in real-life situations. However, these methods were not common in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program at the time. The survey confirmed widespread satisfaction with supervised role plays as a primary learning activity.

Respondents also had the opportunity to express general, open-ended feedback. A wide variety of comments were given in this section, ranging from concerns about scheduling and fees to statements about the effects of the training in adults’ personal lives. Generally a high level of satisfaction was expressed by most respondents. Many said they would like to see the program continued and expanded into other areas, including public education. Several students also commented on the competency assessments. Feedback again varied with recommendations for change as well as support of the methods and processes used at the time. Although many different opinions were expressed in this section, I was able to gain a sense of the personalities behind the comments because of their narrative structure. Those who responded to the survey appeared committed to their roles as learners. They applied their understandings and skills in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program to different areas of family life, work, and education.

The 1996 Surveys

In February of this year surveys were sent to 3 different populations of students at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training: those in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, non-certificate students, and graduates. The survey for adults enrolled in the certificate program was identical to that used for graduates. The third survey, sent to non-certificate students in five consecutive classes, was similar in format but slightly shorter. Surveys were mailed to a random sample totalling 400 students across all three categories out of a possible 1,841. The rate of return for all
three groups was between 26% and 34%, a much higher response rate than the 1993 study conducted on students enrolled in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. Keith Wilkinson Consulting was hired to prepare the 1996 surveys and to report on their findings.

The identification of 3 distinct groups makes cross-referencing possible in this latest group of surveys. Non-certificate students provided different responses in several areas: (a) they had taken fewer courses than adults in the other two groups, (b) they received a higher level of financial support from their employers which included a full salary for 70% of respondents, and (c) they expressed less interest in intermediate level training and networking.

Responses from certificate participants and certificate graduates, on the other hand, were similar. Both groups found their training to be extremely useful, both wanted to pursue further training, and both received limited financial assistance from their employers. Those still enrolled in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program expressed a desire for opportunities to practice their skills, while graduates looked for networking opportunities. Seventy-one per cent of graduates were interested in meeting national standards for mediators now being developed.

One area of difference among certificate participants and graduates was their work categories. This difference is significant when compared to the 1993 survey results for those active as certificate students. A small majority of certificate students listed themselves as educators on the 1993 survey. On the 1996 survey, educators/trainers ranked third. The most commonly cited work category was manager followed by counsellor. Two other work-related differences appear between Conflict Resolution Certificate Program students in 1993 and 1996. Those who listed themselves as mediators/facilitators ranked 4th on the latest survey, while mediation/conflict resolution ranked 13th on the earlier questionnaire. The second difference is that lawyers are now ranked 13th compared to 8th on the earlier survey. These differences in work categories from 1993 to 1996 are notable for several reasons. First, they suggest a growing diversification in conflict-resolution related work and the ability of the field to sustain such diversity. Second, the high number of those listed as mediator/facilitator on the 1996 returns may suggest that more students identify themselves with this role or that there has indeed been growing demand in the marketplace for conflict resolution professionals who can use their training from the
Justice Institute. Third, there has been a marked increase in management/organizational applications of conflict resolution. This confirms the high level of interest on the 1993 survey as well in organizational dispute resolution. And fourth, the number of lawyers using dispute resolution has now been balanced by other groups of professionals. It will be interesting to compare these short-term trends with the results of future surveys.

Although the backgrounds of non-certificate participants was similar to those of the above group, the backgrounds listed by graduates differed. Mediation and counselling followed education with management listed fifth and human resources/labour management relations listed sixth. Different work areas for graduates suggests: (a) that different options are available for graduates following completion of their certificate training, (b) that education and counselling remain lucrative work areas, and (c) that graduates may define their roles more broadly than the other two groups in order to work in different areas. The term educator/trainer, for example, could apply to different contexts as could the terms mediator and counsellor. Overall, the backgrounds listed for 1996 participants indicate areas of personal interest, labour needs of the marketplace, and the way in which conflict resolution training connects with these two areas.

Another area of contrast among 1993 students active in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program and their 1996 counterparts involves their expectations for using conflict resolution skills. Application of the skills at work was the main expectation listed by students on the earlier survey. Their motivation to participate was also prompted by a conflict at work or in their careers. However, on the latest survey certificate participants listed personal and family life contexts as the expected or actual category of application. This was followed by professional mediation and negotiation and then workplace applications. Only one student entered the certificate program at the request of an employer, while 100 took the program of their own accord. Although the most recent data again demonstrate diverse training applications, there is re-acknowledgement of its personal as well as professional value. In 1996 adults view their learning within several frameworks dominated by personal and family issues; these lead professional contexts slightly. Other applications include areas such as public relations and advocacy, teaching/training, and leadership. The expectations and motivations of adult learners in conflict resolution are related to personal,
organizational, and community needs. The addition of new courses at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training and a value statement that emphasizes diversity have both encouraged participation from a wide range of adults.

Although the 1996 surveys included open-ended questions, they were different questions than those asked in 1993. Participants in the earlier survey were asked to summarize their key learning in a sentence. They responded with short answers such as listening, consensus, empowerment, and communication effectiveness (Day & Gibson, 1993, pp. 6-7). On the 1996 questionnaire, certificate program participants were asked about the most positive aspect of the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. Responses were again highly individual. The most commonly mentioned, in order of frequency, were: instructor calibre, supportive, participatory learning environment, role playing, and applicability of the skills. Certificate program graduates, on the other hand, listed growth in self-awareness/confidence, new skills learned, the conflict resolution model, and role playing with feedback as the four most positive aspects of their training. One reason to explain the different priorities assigned by program participants versus graduates may relate to questions of integration and application. As graduates begin to use and apply their training in their various life contexts, they also have time to reflect on its essential qualities. Over time they may begin to appreciate the deep and personal values of the program as well as its technical applications.

Another open-ended area on the 1993 survey was suggestions for program improvement. In 1996 this question was more specific, referring to improvements in course content, program design, and Justice Institute facilities and services. The three most frequent responses for program improvement by certificate program participants were: (a) reviewing and revising the assessment process, (b) providing increased opportunities for mentorship and informal support, and (c) improving course articulation. Graduates listed (a) internship or practicum opportunities, (b) restructuring the assessments, and (c) the need for information workshops at the beginning of each program as their three highest recommendations for program improvement. Recommendations to improve assessment procedures and to continue developing/supporting learner needs were common to both groups.
The 1996 survey results have been printed in a separate report (Keith Wilkinson Consulting, 1996) which also includes an executive summary and 17 recommendations. These recommendations cross-reference all three sets of survey findings. Recommendations may be grouped into the following areas: (a) the need for strategic planning to support training based on an understanding of the conflict resolution market worldwide, (b) a review of learning objectives, activities, and procedures, (c) greater emphasis on career and work internships/opportunities, (d) reconsideration of course times and locations--there is a demand for 2 and 3-day workshops in the city of Vancouver and communities outside the metropolitan area, (e) use of different media to promote the Centre's programs, (f) articulation of professional standards for recruiting and providing feedback on the performance of instructors and coaches, (g) the development of culturally diverse training materials, and (h) the establishment of a financial services office to provide bursaries and funding for students. These recommendations reflect the growth of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training to date and attempt to project future needs and trends. Implementing the recommendations, however, will take time and ongoing collaboration among program participants, administrators, and instructors.

**What Do the Surveys Tell Us?**

The survey conducted by the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training act as a barometer for assessing different elements of the program as well as learner satisfaction and recommendations in these areas. Like any survey, however, results might be interpreted within different contexts, including the limitations of the questionnaires themselves. In the case of the 1993 survey, for example, students were asked to spend about 20 minutes filling out their responses. This may have limited the amount of detail provided. Further, the open-ended questions on both sets of surveys reflect the meaning-making of both the respondents and those who assess the results. This subjective element is apparent by the way responses were grouped, for example. Although frequency of responses is one way to assess findings, a singular open-ended response may also yield critical insights into the programs.
These limitations aside, the surveys do provide a framework in which to understand the learning processes and understandings of adults. All four surveys conducted in 1993 and 1996 confirmed the popularity and success of conflict resolution training. Such satisfaction was evident from the questionnaire material as well as from the increased rate of survey returns in 1996. Adults believe that their learning is personally and professionally relevant in their lives.

From this perspective, the surveys offer further rationale for more extensive studies to map the meaning-systems of learners. This is the intent of this project. Although informative, many of the answers on the surveys are short and difficult to interpret. Some of the most helpful answers were those in which participants had an opportunity to develop their thoughts on open-ended questions. Narrative writing allows adults to interpret and integrate their ideas beyond the boundaries of multiple-choice questions.

In my own research I asked learners questions that are similar to those in the surveys. However, I did not generally limit responses. I also adapted questions to fit the interview context and stories that were shared. This means my findings cannot be standardized in the same ways as those of surveys. The narratives you will read in part 3 situate adults' learning in conflict resolution within a personal life-story framework. As I was collecting and writing the narratives I reconstructed them many times. This again is a different type of challenge than making sense of surveys. Despite the differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches, each has its own integrity. I described the surveys conducted by the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training because I believe they provide another important framework for making meaning of adults' learning.

On a broader level the surveys serve to inform program planning and development. Responses from learners confirm the number of variables that must be taken into account when preparing and delivering conflict resolution training. Such considerations are reiterated in this year's Executive Summary of the surveys. Despite the high level of satisfaction expressed by respondents, there is still much work to be done as the dispute resolution field continues to grow and professionalize. Knowledge of conflict theory, instructional practices, learning theory, market trends, and other areas is required. Growing diversification of the dispute resolution field and high demand for conflict resolution courses places additional demands on program
providers. Yet the ability of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training to offer programs that are pragmatic and well received will depend on the extent to which it remains informed about organizational, social, and global trends. The use of surveys represents one step in this direction.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I described the organization of the Justice Institute and one of its divisions, Career and Community Studies, in which the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training operates. I then described the history of conflict resolution training to show how programs at the Centre evolved over time and became associated with a particular type of learning. This learning was defined by the instructors and coordinators who worked at the Centre. As it developed, conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute was identified with a particular Mission and Vision Statement that emphasized core values including collaboration, respect for self and others, diversity, and leadership in the conflict resolution field.

Other external influences also influenced the type of learning that emerged. These included the theoretical frameworks offered by the win-win model, experiential learning, and apprenticeship. These were used to develop the goals, philosophy, and values of those working at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. The win-win model was consistent with collaborative problem-solving methods. Apprenticeship reinforced the idea of community and cooperation in which adults could become skilled dispute resolution practitioners. Finally, experiential learning provided recognition for individual learning modes and the need for adults to balance reflection with concrete activities. All of these elements were consistent with the learning framework that was developed during the early 1980s.

The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training encourages adults to take an active role in their own development as learners. The Centre’s Mission and Vision Statement as well as material included in training manuals focuses on the connection between self-awareness and the ability to relate to others. This connection is embedded in the dispute resolution model. An emphasis on active learning also acknowledges individual differences among learners. This recognition appears in the surveys used to gauge students’ needs and preferences as well as in the choices available to adults to
complete their training. Such choices include course scheduling and completion dates as well as input into the role play and assessment processes. Student-centered activities provide opportunities for adapting training outcomes.

Since 1981 when the first mediation course was offered by Marje Burdine, conflict resolution training has grown exponentially at the Justice Institute. This growth is reflected in the backgrounds of those who take courses on site, in provincial colleges and institutions, and through contract agreements. In order to remain relevant, the training must stay in touch with its clients at home and in other geographical areas. Developing clear, long-range learning objectives will be a part of this task.
Chapter References


CHAPTER 5
UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT RESOLUTION LEARNING AS PART OF A LARGER STORY: THE METANARRATIVE

Stories Within Stories

The story of conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute of B.C. is many stories in one. It is the story of the Justice Institute and the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. It is the story of Marje Burdine, Marg Huber, and the dedicated team of instructors, coaches, and staff who worked with them. It is the story of every adult who has taken or who is enrolled in programs at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. And it became my story from the time I developed an interest in conflict resolution to now while I work on my thesis. Each of these narratives has in some way contributed to the overall story of conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute as I have come to know and understand it.

Stories are not closed entities, random memories, or isolated historical events. They are embedded in a variety of intersecting contexts which give them meaning. These include the life stories of participants in this study. Stories give pattern to life as it is constructed and reinterpreted across time and space. "A narrative, and that particular form of narrative that we call a story, deals not just in facts or ideas or theories, or even dreams, fears, and hopes, but in facts, theories, and dreams from the perspective of someone's life and in the context of someone's emotions" (McEwan & Egan, 1995, p. viii). The shape of a story is related to the context in which it is embedded and the elements which have been used to create it.

This is also true of different areas of conflict resolution and the learning they involve.

In much the same way that words are dependent on multiple levels of context for interpretation, conflict intervention processes such as mediation are interpreted differently depending upon the contexts in which they are enacted.

Taking this principle to heart means grasping the essence of operative contexts and appreciating their intermingling . . . . At the broadest levels, context is discussed as culture or community. (Folger & Jones, 1994, p. 223)

Just as the learners, instructors, and staff at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training
have shaped the story of conflict resolution at the Justice Institute, their tales are part of a broader social and historical context that includes other conflict resolution practitioners and professionals. It is important to try and understand this historical context in order to: (a) identify some of the other stories connected with the conflict resolution field, (b) articulate similarities and differences among conflict resolution organizations and practitioners, and (c) develop metanarratives of learning. The training offered by the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training derives its identity from external as well as internal influences.

It is the global level that I would like to now address. Learners build meaning from experiences which are situated in macro as well as micro contexts. In this chapter I will focus on the social and historical contexts of conflict resolution training. In the next chapter, I will show how theoretical perspectives from adult education can be used as additional levels of metadiscourse to frame and give meaning to adults' narratives of learning.

The questions that guide this chapter are: What kind of peace culture emerged in Canada between the late 1960s and early 1980s? How did this overlap with conflict resolution as a form of peace education? Although histories of dispute resolution in our country are still being developed, there is sufficient documentation to show a connection between social movements, their philosophical ideals, and educational outcomes. While mediation and conflict resolution programs were being planned and implemented at the Justice Institute, movements were under way in North America to change individual behaviour and resolve conflict using non-violent methods.

My intent is not to present a comprehensive historical overview of these influences but to describe briefly three movements that have important links to the stories in part 3. These movements include the human potential movement, the work of the Mennonites, and the evolution of ADR.

These three movements can in turn be contextualized within a much larger North American peace movement that can be traced as far back as the War of 1812 and the opposition it generated in the United States. Over time four distinct forms of peacekeeping emerged: liberal peace reform, progressive social change, moral pacifism, and personal peacemaking:

- Liberal peace reform is identified with conflict resolution, international law, and world order designs, while progressive, peaceful social change is identified with
nonviolent activism, anti-intervention movements, and international solidarity efforts.

Moral pacifism and personal peacemaking both emphasize personal as well as social change. The difference is that moral pacifism regards nonviolence to be an absolute principle, whereas personal peacemaking is essentially about living the Golden rule, treating others with kindness and respect, and personal life-styles. Personal peacemaking tends to be a diffused cultural orientation rather than a direct part of peace and justice campaigns . . . Moral pacifism is identified with conscientious objection to war, refusing to serve in the military or pay taxes for war. (Peace, III, 1991, p. 23)

The onset of several world wars this century prompted different responses from these peace groups. Liberals supported American entry into World War I whereas progressivists and pacifists did not. “Under duress, pacifists and progressives formed new bonds, welding together the concepts of peace and justice, and creating new organizations such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation, American Friends Service Committee, and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom” (Peace, III, 1991, p. 25).

Ideological rifts also separated peace groups during the Second World War. With the development of nuclear technology, however, public attitudes towards American participation in foreign wars began to shift dramatically, resulting in new alliances. When Americans were called to battle in yet another war during the 1960s a new anti-war coalition began to take shape that included pacifists, liberals, and radicals, each with their own objections to growing militarization.

It was in the period after World War II and the start of the Vietnam War that interest in conflict resolution crystallized. The first conflict resolution movement was associated with the University of Michigan during the 1950s when the Journal of Conflict Resolution and the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution were founded (Harty & Modell, 1991, p. 721). The goal of this movement was to bring together a group of professionals who would develop conflict theories that would serve policymakers in maintaining peace. Others who supported conflict resolution and programs of nonviolence joined forces during the 1960s with social rights activists in the context of the civil rights movement. Conceptions of peace began to take on hopes for social justice and human rights as well as the cessation of war.
It is against this backdrop that I will examine the three social movements in Canada as they began to emerge in the late 1960s. "Conflict resolution expanded considerably later in the seventies with contributions from the interdisciplinary fields of psychology, political science, sociology, law, history, social welfare, communications, anthropology, education, and international relations. Later, distinctions arose between interpersonal, intergroup, and international conflict resolution . . ." (Stomfay-Stitz, 1993, p. 169).

One outcome of this growth was the rapid and burgeoning growth of peace education. Adult educators as well as public school teachers, women as well as men, were active participants in these programs. An understanding of the the three movements in this chapter highlights the sense of community and culture that began to emerge at the Justice Institute and continues to evolve.

An Overview of Conflict Resolution in Canada

The Human Potential Movement

The human potential movement, like the two other movements in this chapter, developed in response to social and historical conditions which began in the 1960s and continued into later years. Although it included many different forms of practice ranging from yoga and meditation to more structured educational programs, the human potential movement was basically an attempt to help adults stay in touch with their own personal needs in the midst of large-scale crises such as the Vietnam War and race riots. A common thread that ran through different forms of the human potential movement was an emphasis on humanistic psychology (Shaffer, 1978, p. 124).

As with the earlier humanist "revolts," humanistic psychology developed from a reaction to behaviorism, the predominant psychological orientation of the first half of the century. Commonly referred to as the "third force" in psychology, humanism rejected the view of man espoused by both behaviorists and Freudian psychologists. While humanists could accept Freudian and behaviorists' contributions to understanding human nature, and behaviorists' efforts to make psychology an exact science, they were distressed by the lack of concern these two
positions had for the complexity of human beings. What was lacking, they felt, was a recognition of man's individuality, potentialities, creativity, and freedom. (Elias & Merriam, 1980, pp. 113-114)

The human potential movement represented an effort to try and reaffirm these values. The application of humanistic psychology to education resulted in renewed attention to the emotional and personal needs of learners rather than on performance outcomes. One of the underlying elements of humanist psychology was that behaviour was not simply an external phenomenon but the result of internal perception:

Perception is a key concept in humanism for it explains behavior. A person's overt behavior as well as attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and values are all a product of personal perceptions. In order to understand another's behavior one must enter that person's world. An empathic identification with other human situations lays the foundation for the humanist goal of promoting a better world for all of humanity. (Elias & Merriam, 1980, p. 120)

I am again reminded of the links between this quote and Goleman's (1995) recent work on emotional intelligence. Kate in part 3 describes the importance of confronting emotions as part of conflict resolution training. Kevin describes how the development of compassion is linked to the use of interest-based skills such as empathy.

The most prominent form of adult education to emerge as part of the human potential movement was the encounter group. This was a type of personal growth program for adults that emphasized self-exploration and open communication. There were many different forms of encounter groups but the most well known was that of the Esalen Institute in California. The structure and content of its encounter groups was based on earlier training programs, notably the T-groups (training groups) used by Kurt Lewin during the 1940s. Lewin helped to form National Training Laboratories (NTL) which was a form of training to sensitize managers to the interpersonal dynamics in their organizations. NTL had a profound impact on adult education and human resource development. D. A. Kolb (1984) notes the impact of Lewin's training on experiential learning:

In particular, it was the spawning ground for two streams of development that are of central importance to experiential learning, one of values and one of technology. T-groups and the so-called laboratory method on which they were based gave central focus to the value of subjective personal experience in learning, an emphasis that at the time stood in
sharp contrast to the "empty organism" behaviorist theories of learning and classical physical-science definitions of knowledge acquisition as an impersonal, totally logical process based on detached, objective observation. This emphasis on subjective experience has developed into a strong commitment in the practice of experiential learning to existential values of personal involvement, and responsibility and humanistic values emphasizing that feelings as well as thoughts are facts . . . .

Equally important, there has emerged from the early work in sensitivity training a rapidly expanding applied technology for experiential learning. Beginning with small tasks (such as a decision-making problem) that were used in T-groups to focus the group's experience on a particular issue (for example, processes of group decision making), there has developed an immense variety of tasks, structured exercises, simulation, cases, games, observation tools, role plays, skill-practice routines, and so on. The common core of these technologies is a simulated situation designed to create personal experiences for learners that serve to initiate their own process of inquiry and understanding. (1984, pp. 10-11)

The use of encounter groups in the 1960s drew on the same principles and instructional format as those used by NTL in previous decades.

The human potential movement was a pervasive influence on individuals who grew up in the 1960s. This included most instructors at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training (M. Fogel, personal communication, June 3, 1996). Training programs similar to Esalen's were offered in Canada to business executives and others interested in self-growth. Kevin in part 3 refers to his training at Life Spring, for example, and connects it to this learning at the Justice Institute.

Different instructors that I interviewed during my research spoke about attending self-awareness programs. For Joan Balmer, involvement with these programs has been a primary force in her life. Organizations such as Esalen, she says, can be viewed as one of many forms of "education" that provided individuals with insights into their personal and spiritual development with the possibility for transforming their being (personal communication, September 11, 1996). Joan's growth has been shaped by learning experiences in many different areas and in connection with many movements and organizations. For example, she attended T-group sessions offered by the United Church during the 1960s as well as sessions at Esalen. The emphasis in both cases, she said, was on examining one's personal experiences, although Esalen
encouraged a much deeper exploration into the mind-body-spirit connections (J. Balmer, personal communication, August 29, 1996). Joan also took two courses in Confluent Education through a collaborative arrangement between the University of California at Los Angeles and Brandon University, Manitoba. Her instructors travelled to Canada from California as well as other areas of the United States. This form of education during the late 1960s emphasized the importance of values and emotions in children's personal development. Joan studied as well at Cold Mountain, an organization on Cortes Island that offered courses in self-awareness, personal growth, and spirituality. These kinds of programs which became more prominent during the 1960s and have continued until today share a view of learners as human beings who have the capacity to become actualized and integrated agents of their own being. This involves the capacity for self-awareness as well as the ability to act on that awareness.

A belief that education begins with the self is evident in different areas of conflict resolution training today. A survey of participants in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program conducted this year indicated that most adults intend on using conflict resolution skills in the context of their personal and family lives (Keith Wilkinson Consulting, 1996, p. 4). On another level, an introductory training manual used at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training begins by highlighting the interconnection between self-awareness and one's response to conflict. This is consistent with the values embraced in humanistic psychology.

The 'inner work' of conflict resolution is that which helps us examine our own ways of approaching conflict. The goal of inner work is to heighten our awareness of who we are and how we function, and to challenge beliefs, attitudes and approaches which create obstacles to our ability to work collaboratively with others. The more we know about ourselves, the more we will be able to understand others.

Because our attitudes and feelings drive our behaviour, it is essential that we understand this connection and its impact on our interactions with others. It is not useful or ultimately successful to only learn 'skills' and 'strategies' without also fundamentally believing in the philosophy behind them. (Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, 1995, p. 1)

I have called Kate's story, "The Inner Work of Conflict Resolution" because it highlights this connection in the context of her own learning.
Certain commonalities also exist between Esalen and the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training in terms of their instructional technology. One of the instructors from the Justice Institute described experiential learning as a laboratory-like process, an association that resonates with the work of NTL:

For me, experiential learning means the role playing and the exercises and all those other things that we instructors with the students build into the courses. At the same time we use the classroom as a laboratory for using those skills and ideals and philosophy and values to deal with what's going on right there in the classroom. The classroom is life. You get 20 people together in a room for 3, 4, or 5 days; each brings his/her own "stuff" into the group and all that potential conflict. Even in the small groups, there are conflicts that occur that they get to work on--that to me is experiential learning. (M. Fogel, personal communication, June 3, 1996)

John, one of the learners in this study, describes conflict in terms of group dynamics. One of the implications of using the classroom as a laboratory is that it will deal with real-life conflicts that emerge in the process of learning. This becomes everyone's responsibility.

As for instructional format, Esalen trained participants in groups of 8-12 whereas the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training provides instruction in groups of 20. The duration of programs in both organizations is relatively short. Facilitators are present to interact with students and support their learning. Students at Esalen and the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training are expected to take responsibility for their development by seeking out ways in which they can make positive changes to their lives. Encounter groups as well as conflict resolution courses illustrate similar training formats.

These two forms of adult education differ in other respects, however. The human potential movement in the 1960s and 1970s was seen as an alternative movement. Its main emphasis was on self-growth and group exploration rather than the resolution of conflict. The Mission and Vision Statement at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training highlights harmonious relationships within the community. Here the individual is seen as an integral part of society. A functionalist or equilibrium paradigm is helpful for understanding the Justice Institute's training from a sociological perspective.
Another difference between Esalen and the Centre relates to the emphasis given to group process. During the late 1960s and early 1970s programs such as Esalen's were criticized for their psycho-therapeutic orientation. Some objected to the emphasis on inner work used as a form of adult education. "In response to the concerns of management personnel, reputable group planners and staff members learned to be cautious about claiming programs can restructure personalities or cause overt changes in leadership behavior. They try to alert potential enrollees to the differences between programs designed to achieve educational goals and those designed for therapy" (Watson, 1980, p. 20). This, as noted in the last chapter, was also a concern when conflict resolution courses began at the Justice Institute. Although many instructors there have backgrounds in psychology, counselling, and the helping professions, instructional emphasis is not on group dynamics or personal therapy but on the development of an individual's knowledge, skills, and values in dispute resolution. Adults may engage in self-exploration but not as a requirement of the curriculum. The human potential movement was seen by some to be a form of alternative therapy unlike experiential learning.

In summary, the human potential movement was an historical phenomenon that preceded the Justice Institute's training. Both are linked through their philosophy of human nature and their training formats. Despite the emphasis on skills acquisition, programs at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training have retained their humanist values.

ADR

Another historical link with the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training is ADR. One of the difficulties in describing ADR is understanding the contradictory ways in which the term is used. A general definition is that ADR is any non-coercive or non-adversarial process that uses third-party intervention to resolve conflict. Such processes include mediation, for example, as it is taught at the Justice Institute.

The application of ADR as an intervention may also be understand in terms of its social origins. It was first proposed in the 1970s as an alternative to adversarial methods identified with the justice system. "A major official impetus for the growth of ADR was a 1976 American Bar Association-sponsored National Conference on the
Causes of Popular Dissatisfaction with the Administration of Justice. The conference concluded that alternative form of dispute resolution, in particular mediation and arbitration, would ease congested courts, reduce settlement time, and minimize costs" (Scimecca, 1991, p. 30). Further support for ADR came from Chief Justice Warren Burger in the 1980s who saw it as a constructive alternative to litigation. Other judges echoed his views. Judge Richard Enslen from the U.S. District Court, for example, voiced his frustration with the American court system:

We find ourselves unable to address each other in the informal tribal manners that we once did and we find ourselves turning more and more to the courts for resolution of what we could have solved and did get solved in the family, in the neighbourhood, with the corner grocer, with the school teacher, with the pastor or whomever. What would have been resolved in an informal fashion now suddenly finds itself seeking a resolution in the courts. (1986, p. 3)

The institutionalization of conflict resolution symbolized widespread discontent with a system that seemed top-heavy and bureaucratic. When ADR was first implemented it was often used in community mediation contexts.

As individuals began to understand ADR it was clear that it could also be used within the judicial system in some cases. This raised new questions. How would a system viewed as adversarial be able to accommodate harmony or consensus models of law? What criteria would be used to decide which cases were litigated and which ones were resolved through mediation or other processes? And what were the implications of diverting potential litigation cases away from the formal court system?

These concerns have been addressed during the past several decades. The professional responsibilities of ADR practitioners in court-annexed situations as well as the responsibilities of those in private ADR practices continue to be explored as well as possibilities for collaboration. It has become clear "that the appropriateness of a particular method depends on a number of factors, such as the type of dispute and the relationship and situation of the disputing parties" (Eisler & Kelly, 1990, p. 3). ADR options within this framework may include legal interventions such as mini-trials and formal litigation. It is also clear that what happens in the judicial system is not separate from but reflective of what is happening in society. "Conflict is becoming more and more a part of our life . . . . The adversary system wasn't invented by lawyers. Our society is a competitive society" (Linden, 1986, p. 11). An understanding of ADR must
take into account the contexts in which it operates, the underlying motivations of the disputants, and the types of outcomes desired in a specific conflict. In this sense ADR is less a method or a process than it is a holistic response to conflict.

Experiences with ADR in the United States served as models for the implementation of ADR in Canada. Mediation proved to be especially popular. As early as 1974 a Mennonite agency began setting up a community-based mediation project in Ontario. This will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter. In 1984 Family Mediation Canada was formed and by 1989 nine Canadian provinces had mediation organizations (Eisler & Kelly, 1990, p. 8). The historical development of these projects parallels the development of mediation training at the Justice Institute during the early 1980s. As mediation gained acceptance among practitioners, the need for formal training became critical.

Although they began using ADR at a later date than some other groups, members of the legal profession played a significant role in its overall development. Their efforts were carried out collaboratively with their American counterparts throughout the 1980s.

We’re fortunate in Canada to have this great and lovable neighbour beside us where everything seems to happen and where we can watch it before it happens to us. We can see how they grapple with these problems, sometimes successfully, sometimes not so successfully, and they become a kind of early warning system for us. (Linden, 1986, p. 11)

Pirie’s (1987) report for the Law Reform Commission of Canada provided an overview of alternate dispute resolution in Canada and recommendations for the future. One year later the National Task Force on ADR was established under the Canadian Bar Association. Canadians began to adapt dispute resolution to their own social and legal contexts. Pirie (pp. 112-114) referred to a belief that Canada was a more peaceful and gentle country than the United States but that successful implementation of ADR would require a clear understanding of our identity as Canadians and ongoing public education to inform people about the benefits of dispute resolution.

The use of ADR today is widespread in both legal and non-legal sectors. An indication of its popularity in Canada is provided by Eisler and Kelly (1990, p. 6) who listed ADR practices in British Columbia at the time of publication. These included three high-profile community mediation centres, the International Commercial
Arbitration Centre, the UVic Institute for Dispute Resolution, the Mediation Development Association of British Columbia, and the Justice Institute's Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. Continuing Legal Education has also served an important function in promoting ADR processes in British Columbia. In prior years, for example, it has sponsored a visit from staff at the Centre for Dispute Resolution in Colorado (M. Burdine, personal communication, May 24, 1996). The 1980s witnessed a rapid increase in the formation and promotion of alternate dispute resolution practices.

An overview of ADR as a movement is essential for understanding the conflict resolution field. In many ways the two have become one. The ADR field is so vast that it now embraces most interest-based practices. Its diversity is important for several reasons: (a) it suggests that there was not a uniform ADR culture but rather a blend of mini-cultures, (b) the ability of any profession to sustain diversification confirms a market for such practices, (c) each sphere of interest such as community mediation or arbitration requires different kinds of expertise--this is consistent with recent developments at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training to offer training in specialized areas, and (d) the fact that different groups of practitioners and professionals identify themselves with a shared history reconfirms the common values and vision underlying their work.

Practitioners of conflict resolution work at different levels, ranging from the interpersonal to the international. They operate in different domains, such as the court system, public policy, labor-management relations, inter-ethnic relations, or international diplomacy. They derive their ideas from a variety of sources, such as law, psychotherapy, management theories, group dynamics, peace research, decision theory, the study of conflict resolution in traditional societies, and theoretical models based in the entire range of social-science disciplines. Despite the diversity in level, domain, and intellectual origin that characterizes the work in this field, there are certain common threads--shared insights and approaches to practice--that run through all of its manifestations. Thus, it can probably be said that, with different degrees of emphasis, all of them call for a non-adversarial framework for conflict resolution, an analytic approach, a problem-solving orientation, direct participation by the parties in conflict in jointly shaping a solution, and facilitation by a third party trained in the process of conflict resolution. (Kelman, 1993, p. ix)
Kelman’s description oversimplifies the conflict resolution field. However, his words would likely be accepted by many of those involved with ADR. When I spoke with Marg Huber, Program Director at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, she explained that many practitioners would like to remove the A from ADR: “After all, it is not just an alternative—it is often integrated into the court system as well as external to it. Also “alternative” implies second choice or “backup” whereas it is a full option in its own right” (personal communication August 29, 1996). Michael Fogel, an instructor at the Centre and a former lawyer, told me that he is working with people to shift the way that they define ADR from a definition of Alternative Dispute Resolution to Appropriate Dispute Resolution (personal communication, June 3, 1996). What this means for him is a “systems” approach involving several dispute resolution tools utilized as the conflict develops. This could include options such as negotiation, mediation, neutral fact-finding, arbitration, as well as other processes along this continuum depending on the situation and parties involved.

\textbf{The Work of the Mennonites}

Certain religious groups have played a significant role in the history of North American peacemaking and conflict resolution. In Canada the Mennonites have taken a visible and proactive role in this area. Much of their work has been coordinated through the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the relief and development agency of North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. Since the 1970s the Mennonites have organized and participated in conflict resolution projects ranging from mediation centres, research, conferences, and educational programs to community-based ventures. They have administered some of the projects themselves, shared others, and, in some instances, initiated projects which are now managed by non-Mennonites. In this section I will describe how the Mennonites came to be peacemakers, clarify the role of the MCC, and provide details about one of the most successful conflict resolution projects in Canada, VORP.

The Mennonites’ participation in the dispute resolution field is related to their background and theology as well as to their understanding of social justice and reform. Although there are many groups (conferences) of Mennonites, their historical connection dates to the Anabaptists in Holland as well as to other groups in
Switzerland and Germany during the time of the Protestant Reformation. The name Mennonite is derived from Menno Simons, a former Dutch priest. Anabaptists set themselves apart from Roman Catholics and other Protestant Reformers through their beliefs in the separation of church and state, the need for individuals to affirm their acceptance of Christian principles through baptism as adults, and the rejection of violence. In the latter, Mennonites refused to defend themselves against aggression, their rationale being that killing someone would deny that individual the opportunity to know Christ (E. Gilman, personal communication, May 28, 1996). Rejection of violence became a fundamental part of the Anabaptist tradition.

It is easy to dismiss these men as fanatical idealists, lacking a sense of realism in a world of hate and violence. This is true only if we dismiss the fact that their idealism was not naive or utopian, but firmly committed to a reality higher than the system of this temporal world. Their view of non-resistance was not based on expediency, but on principle, the principle that Christian love should pervade all relationships of life. (Klippenstein, 1979, p. 2)

During the Reformation many Anabaptists were persecuted for their religious beliefs and had to flee their countries of origin. The need to keep moving would become part of the Mennonites' history because they would need to live in areas where they would feel safe and free to practice their beliefs. Another factor that influenced their emigration was an agrarian lifestyle. Throughout the 1800s different groups of Mennonites in Holland, Switzerland, and Germany emigrated for both reasons, many of them moving into Russia and the Ukraine, others moving directly to North America. Those who came to the New World settled in Pennsylvania and eventually in southern Ontario. The desire for peace remained of utmost importance.

In choosing to emigrate to Canada in the 1870's, the question of military exemption was of highest priority for the Mennonites. For many, Canada was chosen as the "Promised Land" instead of the United States because of the guarantee of military exemption, a guarantee which the Russian Mennonites established clearly before leaving their homeland. (Klippenstein, 1979, p. 6)

The onset of the First and Second World Wars placed considerable strain on Mennonite communities in Canada and they were constantly required to renegotiate
their pacifist stance with political leaders of the day.

The Mennonites combined their pacifist beliefs with social reform. They believed it was vital to act on their beliefs--hence their emphasis on "word and deed" (E. Gilman, personal communication, May 28, 1996). The powerful connection between religious values and social action is demonstrated in the role of the MCC. This North American agency was formed in 1920 by Mennonites who sent food to famine-stricken areas of Russia and the Ukraine following the revolution. During the 1940s MCC was active developing alternate service opportunities for conscientious objectors and establishing relief programs in Europe after the war. Today the MCC is a large, international organization of over 950 staff and volunteers working in 50 countries. Community-development, economic, social, technical assistance, health, and education programs are combined with Christian ministry at home and abroad. MCC's subsidiary organizations include American and Canadian branches, the MCC Peace Office, and the Mennonite Disaster Service. The Peace Office serves as a resource to the international ministries of MCC through consultation, study, interpretation and formulation of biblical responses to peace and justice concerns such as: war and revolution, North-South economic inequalities, church-state relations, conscientious objection and human rights. The office oversees a connection to the United Nations, and works with the Peace Council of the Mennonite World Conference. (Mennonite Central Committee, n.d.b)

In Canada the MCC works in Aboriginal communities, Mental Health outreach, peace development, victim-offender services, and other areas of social and Christian reform. All Mennonite conferences belong to the MCC and send delegates to its Annual General Meeting. The actions of the MCC confirms the Mennonites' commitments to their faith in deed as well as word.

It is in this context that the MCC has conducted its North American peace work. In 1950 MCC delegates met in Indiana to discuss peacemaking from a biblical perspective. The agency's commitment to peace education in different countries, including Canada, remains strong.

Much has changed in our world since 1950, and we as churches have also changed. While the people of God have given a strong witness to peace during this time, the forces of violence have not diminished. We have seen a vast growth in technological means of destruction,
with the development of nuclear bombs and missile systems. We have experienced wars in which highly sophisticated weapons distanced many soldiers from seeing the enemy as human beings. While the East-West power struggle which led to a massive build-up in destructive capacity has ended, conflicts between rival groups threaten the hope for peace in many parts of our globe. People everywhere long for an end to war and strife.

As our congregations have reached out to become more diverse, we have grown in our awareness of the effects of sin and the need to be peacemakers. We have learned that violence can be done not only in warfare, but also through economic structures. We have seen the world's fragile ecosystem endangered by careless treatment of the natural environment. We have struggled against that effects of racism. We have come to realize that violence can reach into our churches and into our families.

As our churches have done at various points in history, we find it helpful to once again state clearly our convictions regarding the church's calling to be God's people of peace. (Mennonite Central Committee, n.d.a)

In Canada the MCC also pioneered different forms of community-based mediation. Mediation for criminal offenders was tested as early as the 1960s. "In 1968 the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) of Ontario appointed a study committee to seek a concept for dealing with offenders without bricks and mortar. It considered how forgiveness and making a fresh start, without forgetting the past, 'could be a central concept in an alternative to the criminal justice system as it was operating'" (Wright, 1991, p. 78). In 1975 the MCC implemented its first Victim-Offender Reconciliation Project (later known as Program) under the VORP acronym. As its name implies, this was a form of mediation between victims and offenders of crime. The project was so successful that it stayed in operation and became a prototype for others in the dispute resolution field.

VORP represented an alternative to traditional forms of justice. Its significance can be interpreted within three contexts: (a) ADR, (b) mediation, and (c) theology. The importance of VORP in the first context is that it put many goals of the ADR movement into practice.

Although the project name highlighted reconciliation, the organizers increasingly saw VORP as a testing ground for several ideas. Meeting the victim face to face and repaying the losses were viewed as ways of
encouraging offenders to take greater responsibility for their actions. Although victims received the concrete benefits of restitution, the VORP process was also a way of challenging victims' stereotypes about 'offenders' through personal contact. Beyond these readily apparent notions, however, the organizers developed a distinctive emphasis on empowering lay participation in the justice-making process. The goals of restitution and personal encounter could have been met through court-ordered restitution or apologies. But as it evolved, the programme developed a stronger view that the victim and the offender should be the ones to decide how much would be paid, and according to what timetable. (Peachey, 1989, p. 18)

The VORP philosophy also reflects an orientation towards mediation commonly referred to as transformative. The goal in this type of process is to humanize the mediation environment by getting victims and offenders of crime to meet one another face to face. This, it is believed, is essential for helping them to start changing their understandings of themselves and others. The emphasis in this form of mediation is on altering perceptions. This is different from settlement-based mediations which are problem or outcome-oriented rather than process based. The potential for transforming relationships as well as solving the “problem” is an approach emphasized by Bush and Folger (1994).

When an offender comes to VORP there are two questions that need to be addressed: (a) What will it take to make this work? and (b) Where do we go from here? (E. Gilman, personal communication, May 28, 1996). In most cases, the mediation is a single event in the lives of the victim and the offender and the relationship between the two is not ongoing. This differs from most family mediations or commercial mediations which may involve different levels of complexity and histories of relationship among participants.

The final level of significance relates to the Mennonites' theology. A commitment to VORP is consistent with the Mennonites' pacifist beliefs. In this context it raises important questions about the roles and responsibilities of Christians as peacekeepers. How should Christians view others? How does God call us to relate to people? How does God view crime? And what is God seeking in situations of injustice? (E. Gilman, personal communication, May 28, 1996). These are the kinds of theological implications and questions associated with Mennonite peacekeeping
There are many VORP programs in Canada today including one set up by the Langley Mennonite Fellowship in British Columbia. In 1985 this particular VORP became a non-profit society, the Fraser Region Community Justice Initiatives Association, as a way to expand its services and obtain government contracts. In addition to VORP, the association is active in other areas, including conflict resolution work in churches, community mediation, and individual mediations.

Because VORP has played an important role in the history of dispute resolution in Canada, it is worth noting how it operates. Each VORP program has its own training program and procedures. Clients are individuals who have committed offences ranging from property damage to assault. They are sometimes referred to VORP through diversion programs. This is an alternative sometimes used for first-time offenders. The belief in such instances is that mediation, rather than retribution, will be an appropriate intervention.

In Langley, British Columbia VORP mediations are facilitated by volunteer mediators who receive 36 hours of training in mediation, victim-offender issues, and specific aspects of criminal justice. The mediation process follows the same 4-step model taught at the Justice Institute with some modifications. VORP emphasizes preliminary work or initial contacts with each disputant prior to beginning a mediation. Unlike some mediation models the one used by VORP does not require disputants to talk directly to one another. The parties have the option of talking through the mediator. The training and mediation processes have been adapted to reflect the philosophy of restorative justice as well as the needs of victims and offenders.

The Metanarrative: Developing a Sense of Conflict Resolution Culture

I began this chapter by referring to two forms of narrative, grand narratives and local or individual narratives. I showed that there were many stories represented in the Justice Institute's training but that these were part of a broader framework. This chapter has looked at three movements in Canada to discover what this broader framework might be. How do the human potential movement, ADR, and the work of the Mennonites contribute to an understanding of conflict resolution learning? Is there a shared culture among them?
All three movements overlapped in time and setting. They began in the late 1960s and continued into the 1990s, first in the United States then in Canada. Their development grew out of social and political reforms of the day as well as growing disillusionment with government, world war, and the criminal justice system, symbols of power, authority, and patriarchy.

The kinds of social values associated with ADR, the human potential movement, and the work of the Mennonites also supported the development of a peace culture. There was a feeling that difficult personal and interpersonal situations could be resolved collaboratively. Regard for others as well as self was at the core of humanist psychology. The three movements in this chapter were grounded in humanistic principles of caring and connection. The human potential movement reflected its philosophy through programs geared toward personal development and introspection. The significance of ADR was that it emphasized alternatives to traditional forms of conflict resolution and mediation. The Mennonites maintained the sanctity of the individual through their concept of restorative justice and the link between the individual and the community. Marje Burdine, the first coordinator at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, compared her personal philosophy of conflict resolution to the underlying principles of VORP:

The criminal justice system hasn’t proven to be effective in remedying behaviour which is destructive, abusive, or disrespectful. It is, however, a Court of Last Resort if or when other options are not effective in addressing the problem. Mediation, on the other hand, is ideally “The Court of First Resort”. It assumes that the responsibility for resolving the problem rests with those individuals who are involved in the conflict. It also provides a structure which requires respect, clarity, and integrity in reaching a resolution. The Conflict Resolution Program provides training in how to carry this out. It is a powerful tool for social change and for peacemaking and peacekeeping in our communities. (M. Burdine, personal communication, March 21, 1996)

I feel confident that when you read the stories of learners in part 3, you will be able to identify their humanistic orientation. Sometimes humanism is described as peacekeeping, sometimes as self-awareness, and sometimes as personal or social transformation. In all of the narratives conflict resolution was understood to be more than just a set of external behaviours that could be applied to resolve conflicts.
Descriptions by students and instructors suggest that conflict resolution learning is a complex and integrated process in which many humanism plays a central role.

From an historical perspective, the development of a conflict resolution program at the Justice Institute based on humanism is important for several reasons: (a) it emphasizes the connection between the individual and society which made a culture of peace possible, (b) it lends support to transformative dispute resolution processes in which the focus is on relationship-building as well as settlement, and (c) it reflects the type of educational interventions that have been used since the 1960s to train adults in conflict resolution and peace education. This is the topic of the following section.

**Developing a Culture of Peace in the Classroom**

**The Relationship Between the Peace Movement and the Justice Institute’s Training in Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution programs such as those at the Justice Institute represent an educational response to the peace movement. This connection is explicit as well as assumed. “I recall there were times when we would introduce a class and we would say that this is a grassroots peace movement and that’s what I believe we saw in this” (M. Fogel, personal communication, June 3, 1996). Marje Burdine, the first coordinator at the Centre, believed that conflict resolution was a pragmatic alternative to assist in social change. She conceptualized the training at the Justice Institute as the peace movement from a skills perspective. Even with a strong belief in peace and the peaceful resolution of conflict between people, there is often a lack of skills to enable this belief to be carried out. I often think about this with advocacy movements such as the peace movement. Without the skills, these strongly motivated groups often demonstrate behaviour which contradicts their belief system. So, what I value so much about the conflict resolution program is that it enables people to live their lives in a manner consistent with their values. (M. Burdine, personal communication, March 21, 1996)

Other instructors identified with the social reform aspects of peacekeeping. Karen Haddigan said that although instructors focused on interpersonal skills rather than a broad social movement, there was a “flavour of change the world” in what was taking place during the early 1980s (personal communication, June 4, 1996).
The current program director at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, Marg Huber, has operationalized values associated with the peace movement by ensuring that training is developed that addresses conflict and culture in the multicultural community, First Nations communities, and the international arena. At a recent retreat many instructors and coaches expressed interest in becoming more involved in community-development initiatives and social reform. The Mission statement of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training focuses on building harmonious relationships among individuals, organizations, and communities. The Vision Statement has been defined as a shared vision and the community as a learning community. The skills and values embedded in conflict resolution programs at the Justice Institute are compatible with those of the peace movement.

**The Larger Picture: Adult Education for Peace**

Peace education was also a focus of other adult educators during the 1970s and 1980s. Within the field of Adult Education there were strong traditions and practices of social reform, humanism, and critical pedagogy. Peace education was part of an overall concern for global understanding aimed at the elimination of social injustice, discrimination, and violence, real as well as symbolic. “As early as 1928, adult educators gathered in Cambridge, England, for the first world gathering under the banner of the World Association for Adult Education, with Albert Mansbridge as Secretary and Thomas Masaryk, President of Czechoslovakia as President” (Hall, 1988, p. 167). Several leading adult educators of the day were also peace educators. Jane Addams, the founder of Hull House, a residential centre for the disadvantaged in Chicago, was one. She was committed to social reform and nonviolence in many different areas.

> From her Midwestern roots Addams’ perspectives grew to encompass world citizenship as a new kind of internationalism . . . .  

> Addams adhered firmly to her Quaker pacifist views on nonviolence and opposition to all wars, in spite of the perceived just causes for World War I. Her reputation as a most revered American degenerated because of her strong stand on war. Near the end of her life she was attacked for her unyielding stand against U.S. entry into World War I. (Stomfay-Stitz, 1993, p. 56)
Other adult peace educators included Mary Parker Follett, one of the first advocates of organizational conflict resolution, and John Dewey. Like Addams, his pacifist views were part of a progressive social and educational philosophy. He believed that peace education could promote interpersonal understanding and cooperation. "Dewey represented the new breed of liberal peace worker who sought to expel war through social-progressive reform techniques of popular exhortation, general condemnation; legal reformation, and educational revision. He believed it was possible to educate the masses directly against the dangers of the armament race" (Howlett, 1987, p. 448). Contributions by adult educators early this century played a key role in promoting world peace.

As part of the anti-war sentiment following World War II and the Vietnam War there were renewed calls for adult peace educators. Organizations such as COPRED (Consortium on Peace Research, Education, and Development) in the United States and UNESCO were active in this area. Helena Kekkonen, Secretary General for the Association of Finnish Adult Education Associations, argued that adult educators should focus on two goals: (a) the promotion of international cooperation and understanding, and (b) critical analysis of social problems "with a view to achieving social justice" (Kekkonen [note misprint in author's name], 1981, p. 54). These two objectives were compatible with UNESCO's 1976 Recommendation on Adult Education.

Although programs and courses at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training have focused on local and national rather than international conflict resolution education, this has recently broadened. An example is the training conducted by Marg Huber in Malaysia. British Columbia's geographic and economic ties with the Pacific Rim, Canada's reputation as a peacekeeping nation, and the reputation of the Justice Institute for quality training are three reasons why the Justice Institute is well positioned to be of service in the area of conflict resolution in Pacific Rim countries (M. Huber, personal communication, February 5, 1996).

We need to be prepared to think in global terms these days--interpersonal conflict does not have national boundaries. And the opportunity to work in different countries with those whose cultural values differ substantially is enormously challenging and enriching. We are not exporting a Western-based process but rather learning how to clarify with participants the universal human values and principles in which our work is grounded that transcend those cultural
differences. The work is still enormously personal and reaches people on that level. (Marg Huber, personal communication, August 29, 1996)

Opportunities for international cooperation involving students and instructors are being developed. One project is support for an international student to attend the Justice Institute.

This year we are sponsoring a student from Eritrea for the whole certificate program. He will be housed at trainers' and the director's homes and his airfare will be paid by the university with which he is associated. His experiences of conflict and his dedication to living out new ways when back in his country will enrich the learning experiences of our students and training team. One of our trainers first met him at a recent international conflict resolution conference in St. Petersburg. (M Huber, personal communication, June 24, 1996)

International students have attended the Centre's programs before but this marks the first attempt at formal sponsorship. The Centre for Conflict Resolution Training has also developed links with the Earth Stewards Network, an organization based in Washington State. Earth Stewards focuses on community-based tree planting projects around the world as a way to combine respect for the environment with peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Since 1987 more than a dozen peace trees projects have been undertaken. In November 1996 an instructor from the Justice Institute will accompany Danaan Parry, the Executive Director of Earth Stewards, on a tree planting mission in Vietnam. The group, together with local community members, will develop a friendship forest park. Last year Daanan also presented an inservice to instructors at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training and addressed a graduating class of certificate students. Other joint ventures between the Justice Institute and the Earth Stewards Network are anticipated.

Kekkonon's (1981) second goal for adult peace educators, that of critical analysis of social problems, is consistent with the Justice Institute's mandate in social justice and public safety. Conflict resolution training addresses both areas through experiential training and an interest-based model of resolving conflict. As the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training moves into the next century it will be interesting to note what other kinds of social reforms are attempted.
The Role of Women in Peace Education

Some of the most influential supporters of peace education this century have been women. As early as the early 1900s women's organizations such as the Woman's Peace Party organized. Individuals such as Jane Addams and Fannie Fern Andrews, the founder of the American School Peace League, were active during this early period. Women have also played a prominent role in the history of conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute. Both directors as well as most core trainers in the early 1980s were female. This distinction is less visible today with men and women sharing instructional responsibilities.

Women's participation in peace education have been discussed in historical, theoretical, ideological, and experiential contexts. The significance of their work, for some, remains open to interpretation. Studies conducted during the 1980s identified militarism with traditional, patriarchal models of power that contrasted with feminine perspectives on peace. Wheeler and Chinn's (1991) recent work reiterates this link. It suggests that feminist peace processes support self-awareness, empowerment, consensus, and personal transformation. Forcey (1993) acknowledges values shared by women's studies and peace studies but expresses concern about essentialist assumptions underlying such comparisons.

An understanding of gender in relation to mediation and negotiation practices is another area of ongoing research. D. M. Kolb identifies three ways by which women may influence the negotiation process: "a relational view of others, a contextual understanding of issues and interests, and a communicative view of strategy" (1992, p. 2). Unfortunately, opportunities to apply these perspectives may be absent from negotiating tables where men set the agenda.

Some feminist critics argue that women who participate in ADR processes are reinforcing traditional power imbalances. Hill (1990), for example, notes the absence of feminist principles in a negotiation course for law students:

The feminist perspective . . . shares a great deal with the quality-of-justice argument for alternative dispute resolution. It suggests that the process has a tremendous effect on the substantive results obtained. It further suggests that the choice of process is important, in its own right, as a means for remaking the legal system to take account of women's perspectives, for making women's voices heard, and for generally improving the
relationship between the legal system and the people it is supposed to serve. The traditional legal system fails under this perspective because, in addition to the failings discussed above, it uses objectivity, adverseness, hierarchy, and abstraction as its primary tools. The traditional legal system is based on these ideals. (pp. 340-341).

Feminist critiques are important for students and instructors of mediation. Can mediation provide a safe context for power-balancing, for instance, when a woman has been abused? Or does mediation serve to reinforce patriarchal values? What are the implications of a woman mediating a dispute involving male participants?

Answers to these questions are the topic of much debate. The Justice Institute's training emphasizes the importance of safeguarding practice for women and developing high standards of competency for those who wish to become professional mediators and negotiators. The Centre has worked hard to listen to feminist concerns. Continued research into the roles of women will help to clarify their roles as peace educators as well as the extent to which their participation has maintained or challenged traditional power alignments in the conflict resolution field.

Questions of gender and power may also serve to inform questions of race and culture. Marg Huber, Program Director at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, chairs the Board of the Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society. This organization provides services to women of colour who have experienced violence in relationships. An understanding of such agencies may provide insights into the connections between feminism, multiculturalism, and mediation.

I also encountered questions of gender and power during my research. Kevin talked about his committee work with battered women. He said that he now considers himself a feminist. Sydney, another learner, referred to her experiences in the workplace and how patriarchal power structures within organizations serve to promote rather than resolve conflicts. She described how her training at the Justice Institute had reinforced her belief in honesty and integrity as key values for her interpersonal relationships.
**Peace Education Programs**

During the past 10 years there has been a prolific increase in the number of peace education and conflict resolution programs in North America and other parts of the world. Different educational providers offer different learning formats ranging from short workshops to continuing professional education and accredited graduate programs. By 1987, 46 per cent of American colleges offered at least one peace studies course; 14 colleges had graduate programs at this time (Peace, III, 1991, p. 192). Several peace institutes and foundations have developed in connection with universities or government agencies. Their focus is on diverse forms of conflict resolution and peace settlement from community mediation to international human rights.

Traditionally, many conflict resolution training programs reflected a behaviourist orientation. However, they now encompass a wide range of educational, political, and sociological perspectives. Delattre (1991) conducted a study of the ideologies underlying conflict resolution programs in American colleges and universities. In contrast to the interdisciplinary approach called for by Wehr and FitzSimmons (1988, p. 475), Delattre (1991, p. 237) argues that programs at the higher education program should be firmly grounded in traditional disciplines such as history and political theory in order to develop a rigorous body of conflict resolution literature and scholarship. This conservatism is challenged by a workshop publication of the Unesco Institute of Education in Hamburg. It says that it is important not to adopt an institutional view of education that focuses on curricular methods or outcomes but on developing principles for learning about peace.

> Human rights cannot be taught like a language course. We cannot develop education for Human Rights and Peace if people do not gain an awareness of the conflictual and oppressing situation in which they have to organize their every-day life, if they do not make use of proper categories for interpretation and analysis, if effective means of action are not proposed. This kind of education is both a pedagogical challenge and a political task. (Unesco Institute for Education, 1992, p. 5)

This view of peace education is framed from a critical social theory perspective. It emphasizes the systemic and political nature of conflict.
A review of the social movements described in this chapter—the human potential movement, ADR, and the role of the Mennonites as peacekeepers—confirms the differences as well as the shared experiences among conflict resolution providers. As we prepare to enter a new century, there is at once a sense of growing diversity—of cultural pluralism—as well as a sense of common front among those who call themselves peace educators. The Mennonites and other dispute resolution practitioners have their own projects but they continue to interact with other conflict resolution educators. Two examples of this collaboration are professional development and training. Trainers at VORP sometimes take courses at the Justice Institute to complement their own in-house training. Similarly, instructors at the Justice Institute may refer adults who are interested in working in the criminal justice system to those in charge of VORP. Recent discussions between staff at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training and the Fraser Region Community Justice Initiatives Association have resulted in an agreement whereby candidates at the Justice Institute who pass their mediation assessment will be eligible for a practicum at VORP. Dispute resolution practitioners from many areas participate in the Mediation Development Association of British Columbia (MDABC), an organization that promotes the ongoing professionalization and development of mediation through development of standards, workshops, and other activities. The current president of MDABC, Lee Turnbull, is also Program Coordinator at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training.

Collaboration among peace educators and practitioners also occurs on a national level. The Network: Interaction for Conflict Resolution, is a charitable organization at Conrad Grebel College, a Mennonite institution at the University of Waterloo. It is active in the conflict resolution field throughout North America sponsoring conferences, supporting research, and bringing professionals and practitioners together. Staff and instructors at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training present at and attend Network conferences regularly.
Chapter Summary

This is an overview of the broader social and historical culture in which the Centre for Conflict Resolution is situated. Although I have only focused on three movements and their links to peace education, it is evident that the conflict resolution field is diverse.

The life stories of adults in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program must take into consideration the social and cultural contexts of learning as well as the personal contexts. This is a theme that will re-emerge in the next chapter. An understanding of adult learning, it will be shown, requires an understanding of individual meaning systems as well as an understanding of the ways in which learning situates itself in social contexts and cultures. By linking personal biographies of learning to these larger frameworks we can begin to relate local narratives of conflict resolution to its metanarrative.
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CHAPTER 6
THEORIES OF ADULT LEARNING:
THREE FRAMEWORKS FOR STORYING CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The Significance of Theories

In the last two chapters I described learning at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training internally and in relation to broader social and historical movements. In this chapter I shift from practice to theory. What do educational theorists mean when they talk about learning? How do conflict resolution programs reflect current understandings in this area? In keeping with the interpretive framework of the thesis, I have assumed that learning means different things to different people. One way to think of this chapter is a view of conflict resolution learning from the outside in rather than the inside out. In other words, I will try to understand conflict resolution training through an adult education framework. I will concentrate on three perspectives: (a) constructivism, (b) socially situated learning, and (c) transformative/transformational learning.

I include a chapter on theory with several considerations in mind. First, theories provide a concrete structure and vocabulary for understanding different dimensions of learning. In this sense, they function like camera lenses. Each lens we use allows us to view the world in a particular way, yet each one also has specific limitations. It is important to know what the lenses are so we can develop greater flexibility as photographers. The advantage to changing lenses is that we can alter our perspective and produce a different kind of picture. This is the case with the three learning theories in this chapter. Each of these offer certain insights into conflict resolution training, yet none is all-encompassing. They must be interpreted and reinterpreted in light of one's personal experiences and understandings.

This brings me to a second point. Theories are fixed conceptual frameworks. Their value lies in their ability to link knowledge in particularly convincing and logical ways. Their existence shows that someone has attempted to analyze and integrate different strands of knowledge; in this work, understandings about the meaning of adult learning. When the phenomenon is complex, such as an educational program, theories attempt to organize information in a way that facilitates, rather than overwhelms understanding. "At an informal level theories or notions about how the
world operates guide how and when we get up in the mornings, find our way around in
the world, and do our daily work. At a formal level, theories structure the world of
science (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 121). Theories frame the world by connecting
information and articulating relationships of importance.

These same structures can also be self-limiting. If theories illuminate certain
relationships, they also ignore or overlook others that are beyond their frame of
reference or that evade understanding. In spite of their creators’ efforts to clarify
understanding in a given area, not everyone understands theories in the same way.
That is not to say that theories are untrustworthy. It would be difficult to plan programs
or develop research without them.

Theories represent a form of discourse that seems formal and academic when
compared to stories. Bruner’s (1986) work is based on the distinctions between these
two types of knowledge. It is essential to try and understand conflict resolution using
both. Theories bring important relationships to light and provide their own discourse
for discussing these relationships. However, theories need to be challenged and
tested in practice.

One way to do this is through stories. By relating narrative to theory we can
develop understandings of areas such as adult learning that integrate formal
knowledge and personal knowledge. This is one of my objectives in this chapter. After
discussing each theory of learning, I will try to show how it might be applied within a
narrative framework. Whatever theory educators use, they need to be conscious of
how it might be storied and restoried. Wehr and FitzSimmons argue “that the most
revealing analysis of conflict is done through a mix of theoretical perspectives” (1988,
p. 475). Comparing perspectives from adult education with the narrative interpretations
of learners provides one framework for this purpose.

A third reason for including theories of adult learning in my work is that they
correspond to understandings identified by learners from the Justice Institute. Although
adults did not frame their thinking theoretically, what they say can be interpreted using
the theories in this chapter. I will draw on my understandings of adult learning
perspectives when framing and analyzing the participants’ stories.
As you read their narratives you may wish to consider which elements are informed by theory and which ones seem to escape systematization. What do stories include that theories do not and vice versa? Which type of knowledge seems to clarify the nature of adult learning? Which type limits understanding? Does one theory seem to fit an individual’s experience better than another? Or is it more rewarding to combine the different theories to produce an overall understanding of conflict resolution learning? How might narrative be integrated with theory? Only by challenging our knowledge of both will we be able to develop stronger connections between adult learning theory, practice, and research.

By concentrating on adult learning perspectives I also wish to encourage a sturdy link between adult education and conflict resolution. This is a connection that has not always been visible or nurtured by practitioners and theorists. I believe it is time to re-acknowledge conflict resolution as a form of adult education when adults are the primary educational participants. Continuing education courses at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training represent a rich and significant form of adult education.

An understanding of adult learning perspectives also carries important implications for instruction, program planning, and the meaning of training. Along with philosophies, mission statements, and models, theories shape the ways in which programs emerge and are developed.

From an instructional-design perspective, it seems . . . that the practice of instructional design must be based on some conception of how people learn and on what it means to learn. From a learning-theory perspective, it also seems quite obvious that the value of learning theory rests in the ability to predict the impact of alternative learning environments or instructional practices on what is learned. (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992, p. ix)

Educational researchers and learning theorists share responsibility for interpreting and reconstructing the meaning of learning. Their efforts should integrate the personal and social dimensions of learning as well as formal and informal experiences. A good theory, like a good story, shows sensitivity to the lived experiences of individuals and generates new ground for discussion and reflection.
Chapter Overview

I will begin this chapter with a summary of recent findings in adult learning to contextualize the theories that follow. When discussing each theory I will use a standard format. First, I will provide an overview of the theory. Then I will ask “What is learning?” and use the theory to explore this question. Third, I will explain how learning is facilitated most effectively within this framework. Fourth, I will reflect on how principles embodied in the theory might be integrated into a narrative understanding of conflict resolution. I refer to this as “Restoring/Restorying the Theory.” I will finish my description and analysis of each learning theory with a summary before looking at the next theory.

There are two other points of clarification I would like to make before entering into the chapter. First, the theories I have selected are not exclusive to adult education. Constructivism, in particular, is commonly applied to children’s learning. Nonetheless, each perspective has special implications for adults and their education. Some of these implications relate to individual development, others to life experiences and social identities, and others, to how learning is integrated into practice. I would argue that socially situated perspectives and transformative learning are better suited to an understanding of adult learning than children’s learning. The significance of this statement should become evident as the chapter progresses.

My second point concerns the more specific topic of selection criteria. How did I choose three particular theories? There are different answers to this question. First, as I stated earlier, the three theories I have chosen provide strong conceptual frameworks for understanding the areas identified by the learners in this study as significant. Second, the theories represent what I have found to be the most comprehensive and articulate answers to the question, “What is adult learning?” In order to understand conflict resolution learning, I believe we must first try to respond to this more basic question.

A third and more compelling reason for selecting the perspectives relates to their interpretive orientation; that is to say, a view of knowledge as internal and constructed rather than external and instrumental. This is consistent with my approach to narrative as discussed in chapter 1. My objective is to explore learning from multiple perspectives. Interpretive theories are most appropriate since they acknowledge the
unique constructions of learners. I have assumed that each perspective will illuminate some aspects of adult learning without attempting a global definition.

In chapter 3, I noted that the learning at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training is often described as experiential. Although different definitions and models such as Kolb's provide some insights into this term, Jarvis notes that "the concept of experience itself remains largely unexplored by those learning theorists who write about it" (1995, p. 65). After reflecting further, he says

experiencing . . . may be conceptualized on one level, as the subjective awareness of a present situation. However, that awareness occurs only in the light of previous experiences, and consequently the subjectivity is determined by individuals' past biographies and the socio-cultural milieu in which they experience situations . . . . Adults bring to potential learning situations their memories of the interpretations which they have placed upon past experiences . . . (Jarvis, 1995, p. 66)

In order to understand learning, it is necessary to understand how people reflect on and make meaning of their experiences. This is why I have chosen the theories in this chapter. They provide frameworks for making sense of learners' biographies within larger sociocultural contexts.

The interpretivist orientation of these theories is, for some individuals, an area of concern. While it is true that the perspectives are derived largely from cognitive psychology, socially situated and transformative learning are also derived from other disciplines, including sociology and anthropology. I do not wish to suggest that internalist or interpretive theories are better than behaviourist theories. Both are important for understanding different types of learning. Since the 1950s, however, there has been growing support for the view that learning is less a change in behavioural performance than it is the construction and representation of internal meaning. Learning, according to interpretivists, is a fundamental shift in conception stemming from reflection and reorganization of experience.

For most of the first half of this century, behavioral laws provided the most prominent conceptions of learning. Learning, according to behaviorism, is a change in the behavioral dispositions of an organism. Learning behaviors, according to behaviorists, can be shaped by selective reinforcement. Since learning is equated with behavioral outcomes, behavioral laws excluded the role of mental operations . . . .
Learning, according to cognitive psychology, is concerned not so much with behavioral responses, but rather with what learners know and how they acquire it.... The mind is the agent of learning, and so it is both appropriate and necessary to study it from a mentalistic perspective, according to cognitive theorists. Unlike the behaviorists, who were only concerned with what learners do, cognitive psychologists are interested in what learners know and how they come to acquire it. (Jonassen, 1991, pp. 5-6)

An Overview of Adult Learning

Educators and philosophers have struggled to define and understand learning since Ancient times. Yet surprisingly, it has only been during the past several decades that formal attention has been given to adult learning. To some extent, this is because adult education itself has only recently developed as an independent field of study. Its emergence created a disciplinary framework for exploring theories and practices of adult learning and teaching.

Much of what we know about how learning takes place draws from work conducted in the first half of this century by educational psychologists and somewhat later by developmental psychologists. As adult education became more clearly defined as a field of practice and study, efforts were directed toward determining what, if anything, is unique about learning in adulthood. (Merriam, 1993, pp. 5-6)

Malcolm Knowles (1980) addressed this area by publishing his now classic theory of andragogy, his term for adult education as contrasted with pedagogy, the education of school-aged children. Although Knowles's ideas were widely debated, he earned widespread recognition for the adult education field.

An integral part of andragogy was Knowles's view of the learning-teaching relationship. He argued that this relationship should be characterized by three principles: (a) that adults can learn, (b) that learning is an internal process, and (c) that some ways of teaching and learning are more effective than others (Knowles, 1980, pp. 55-57). He believed it was important for instructors to model empathy and respect. Adults, unlike children, were mature, autonomous individuals who would excel as learners given proper support. Knowles's philosophy appealed to adult educators...
interested in self-directed and humanistic forms of learning.

As well as andragogy, a variety of other theories embracing psychological, sociocultural, and gendered perspectives have lent insights into particular areas of adult learning this century. From developmental psychology, educators have acquired a better understanding of human cognition and the internal processes used to guide human behaviour. From feminist theories, they have been sensitized to the learning needs of women and the power dynamics embedded in society and education. And from sociocultural theories, they have been encouraged to examine learning in its cultural and situated contexts.

Theories of adult learning this century reflect an increasingly complex world and diverse backgrounds among learners. The level of education required to earn a living, the number of careers held by individuals during their lifetime, demand for expertise in given occupations, and the emphasis on lifelong education all reaffirm the significance of adult learning. As we prepare to enter a new century its value cannot be understated. The rapid acceleration of technology and the growth of a global economy give new meaning to the term, learning society.

Conflict resolution training is part of this world. It is impossible to talk about conflict without reference to ethnic wars, international trade negotiations, labour disputes, and discrimination. Understanding how to resolve these tensions must take into consideration the biographies of adults and the ways in which they construct meaning from their experiences. In chapter 2, I emphasized that learners bring their histories and identities into the classroom. These are situated in personal as well as social contexts. In conflict resolution as in other areas, the development of adult learning theories is linked to the need to understand this complexity. The perspectives in this chapter—constructivism, socially situated learning, and transformative learning—take several steps in this direction.
Constructivism, Socially Situated Learning, and Transformative Learning

Constructivism

Overview

Constructivism is the term used to describe the constructed nature of knowledge. “Constructivist” refers to individuals or theories which follow this perspective. Hence, we say that socially situated learning and transformative learning are constructivist, since they are based on a view of cognition that emphasizes the constructed, dynamic nature of learning. Constructivism is the theory of constructivist principles. There are many different aspects of constructivism but I will focus on those most relevant to conflict resolution learning.

Constructivism can be traced to the work of George A. Kelly, a psychologist, who published extensively during the 1950s and 1960s. His theory of constructive alternativism was designed to understand human personality from the point of view of “the clinician, the historian, the scientist, and the philosopher” (Kelly, 1955, p. 5). His view of the psyche was based on three assumptions about the universe: (a) that it really does exist, (b) that it is constantly changing in time, and (c) that everything in the universe operates synchronously (Kelly, pp. 6-7).

What Is Learning?

Adults learn, constructivists maintain, by developing and using their own constructs. Constructs function like a pair of glasses: they allow individuals to see the world from a personal perspective. Where do people obtain their constructivist glasses? As individuals interact with the world, they develop certain beliefs and reasonings based on their experiences. “Each experience with an idea--and the environment of which that idea is a part--becomes part of the meaning of that idea. The experience in which an idea is embedded is critical to the individual's understanding of and ability to use that idea” (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992, p. 4). The meanings we attribute to certain experiences eventually become part of our thinking. We use them to form assumptions, develop beliefs, and to make judgments about how to behave in
given situations. Meaning systems, the structures that we use to understand and interpret the world, become our own personal constructs:

Man looks at his world through transparent patterns or templates which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed. The fit is not always very good. Yet without such patterns the world appears to be such an undifferentiated homogeneity that man is unable to make any sense of it. Even a poor fit is more helpful to him than nothing at all.

Let us give the name constructs to these patterns that are tentatively tried on for size. They are ways of construing the world. They are what enables man, and lower animals too, to chart a course of behavior . . . (Kelly, 1955, pp. 8-9)

Once we have a system of constructs in place, they serve as a framework for interpreting the meaning of new and unfamiliar situations. This act of interpretation is known as construing. We cannot construe meaning from situations without our constructs. Like glasses, they enhance certain elements of perception while reducing or filtering out others which distort our view. Interpretation or construing involves focusing on select aspects of experience, referencing them to our pre-existing constructs, and then evaluating their overall significance. At some point our interpretations of reality become an integral part of who we are.

We construe, then, by ascribing some property that serves both to link an event with certain other events and to set it in contrast to those with which it might most likely become confused. This construed dimension, embodying both likeness and difference, this reference axis, is what we call a construct. And constructs are personal affairs; regardless of the words he uses, each person does his own construing. (Kelly, 1958, p. 230)

When we encounter experiences which are incompatible with our system of personal constructs, we must either reconstrue the information to fit our constructs, change the constructs, build new constructs, or reject the experience altogether. Constructs may not always be based on logical reasoning but unless they are challenged, they remain functional agents of meaning-making.
Summarizing Kelly's ideas, we can say that learning is real because it exists in the mind of the learner, it is dynamic because individuals use their constructs continuously and actively throughout life, and its modus operandi is to find meaning by imposing order and regularity on understanding. There are two basic learning processes at work:

- how learners construe (or interpret) events and ideas, and how they construct (build or assemble) structures of meaning. The constant dialectical interplay between construing and constructing is at the heart of a constructivist approach to education, whether it be listening to a lecture, undertaking a laboratory session, attending a workshop, reading a text, or any other learning activity.

(Candy, 1987, p. 319)

How Is Learning Facilitated From a Constructivist Perspective?

What kinds of considerations are important for facilitating learning from a constructivist perspective? What kinds of constructivist interventions would be applicable to a conflict resolution training classroom? According to Kelly, constructs are highly individual; they develop through personal experience. How we see and understand the world is directly correlated to that experience and our understanding of it.

This has several important implications. First, it suggests that no two people acquire knowledge in the same way:

A critical component of constructivism is that there is no ultimate, shared reality, but rather, reality that is the outcome of constructive processes. Thus, when two people are carrying on a discussion concerning some issue, there is always uncertainty on the part of Person B as to whether Person A “really” understands the point being made . . . . there should be uncertainty. A is constructing an understanding that cannot be identical to B's. Each has constructed an understanding and revised it as necessary to permit them to certain agreements (the discussion), but this does not suggest that their understandings are identical.

(Duffy & Jonassen, 1992, p. 5)

Compare this to objectivists' theories of learning which emphasize a universal reality
that all learners are expected to identify and understand: “Students are not encouraged to make their own interpretations of what they perceive; it is the role of the teacher or the instruction to interpret events for them. Learners are told about the world and are expected to replicate its content and structure in their thinking” (Jonassen, 1991, p. 10).

Given the personal nature of learning, instructors who subscribe to constructivist views will acknowledge the multiple interpretations of learners rather than rigidly follow a prescribed curriculum. While there may be specific skills and knowledge that instructors wish to pass on, there will also be an understanding that students will interpret these from personal frames of reference. Learning is facilitated by: (a) beginning with the learners' own experiences as the starting point of instruction since those experiences are associated with particular sets of beliefs and understandings, and (b) providing opportunities for everyone in the classroom, learners and instructors, to share their perspectives.

What is central, in our view, is the development of learning environments which encourage construction of understanding from multiple perspectives. “Effective” sequencing of the information or rigorous external control of instructional events simply precludes that constructive activity. Also precluded is the possibility of developing alternative perspectives since the relevant information and the proper conclusion are pre-defined in traditional instruction. (Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy, & Perry, 1992, p. 25)

Candy (1987, pp. 320-321) notes a common conception that all constructions are equally valid. Some learners, however, may have constructs that are based on illogical or faulty reasonings. One way to check the validity of constructs is through group discussion and other opportunities for sharing in the classroom.

How can constructivist principles be applied to conflict resolution learning? When I think of the win-win model and the skills it involves I think of a structured curriculum with predefined learning outcomes. After all, adults have come to the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training to learn specific methods for resolving conflict. Or have they? Whatever curriculum is presented, students will understand it in the context of their own meaning perspectives. One of the points in Sandy’s story is that conflict is a matter of perception. How you view conflict, she says, is critical in terms of how you choose to respond to it.
Different students and instructors referred to the connection between learners' expectations and the meaning they construe from their training. Sandy said that "people go into the program because they already value the learning." Some of the senior instructors told me that many learners in the classroom today have a firm sense of what they want. Although this is not the case for everyone, conflict resolution training provides alternatives for students to internalize the curriculum according to their personal expectations and insights. Joan Balmer said that each class of students creates its own learning environment collaboratively with instructors and that this may be frustrating for those who expect a more structured format (personal communication, August 29, 1996). Stacey Holloway said that one of the changes to conflict resolution training from earlier years is that today it is less "scripted" or "pre-packaged" (personal communication, August 31, 1996).

Learner-centered training can occur through a variety of experiential, theoretical, and reflective activities on and off campus. Participants referred to significant classroom experiences such as a particular role play or a teaching intervention that had prompted them to construe meaning from an event. They also talked about ruminating on course material from the Justice Institute when they were in bed. And several spoke about the "light-bulb" experience of suddenly experiencing the joy of learning in a completely unexpected context. All of these examples highlight individual meaning-making.

The interest-based model provides another framework for students to explore their constructs and the constructs of others. One of the primary objectives of using an interest-based approach is to understand what is important to someone else in a conflict. The dialogue that is embedded in this process externalizes each participant's meaning system. Sydney expressed how conflict resolution learning allowed her to appreciate multiple points of view:

People really do see things differently. You can see the same thing happen and you can have five people watching it and see it in five different ways. Now on some level I knew that but I thought, "I know they see it that way but listen, here's my way." Then I realized how people see things is very important to them. If I want to really understand people and know them, I have to see it from their perspective and somehow get into that place. I can be seeing something one way and my spouse or my children or my friends or my colleagues
are seeing it in a very different way. That does not mean that it is a judgment against me or that I should take it personally. I think that helps. It frees me in relationships and in my expectations.

To what extent should instructors challenge learners’ system of constructs? Ramsden (1988, pp. 21-22) argues that if we want students to change their ways of thinking we must confront their old ways of thinking and provide ample time for personal reflection. However, Perkins explains that constructivism places heavy cognitive demands on learners:

Much constructivist instruction is anomaly driven, in the Piagetian spirit. It aims to confront the learners with situations that make the inherent inconsistencies in the learners’ naive model plain and challenge the learners either to construct better models or at least to ponder the merits of alternative models presented by the teacher . . . this “conflict-faced” path has very high cognitive demand. Learners are asked to compare and contrast an entrenched but barely articulated model with a newly sketched model (by themselves or the teacher) with which they have very little working familiarity. No wonder learners often have a hard time with this path. (1992, p. 162)

Although constructivists argue for multiple perspective-taking, there is disagreement about whether or not this should engage students in high-conflict thinking and how this should be done.

What are the implications of working with cognitive dissonance in the conflict resolution classroom? While it appears that some students are led to the Justice Institute’s program because they have developed a greater level of self-awareness, others may not have. What are the risks/advantages/disadvantages of changing students views about conflict? It is important, Stacey Holloway said, for students to feel challenged in their learning without feeling overwhelmed, unsafe, or too vulnerable (personal communication, August 31, 1996). This requires ongoing sensitivity to learner needs and expectations within the context of a particular course.
Restoring/Restorying Constructivist Learning in Conflict Resolution

1. Learning begins with the learner, not a prespecified curriculum. Which kinds of stories of self provide an appropriate starting point for formal conflict resolution learning? How might learners and instructors explore one another's stories of conflict? How might trainers obtain this information prior to the start of instruction? What opportunities are there for reflecting on, recreating, and reinventing new stories?

2. Changes in behaviour require changes in conceptual understanding. How might narratives provide a way for students to link the mind and body; that is, behavioural responses to conflict and perceptions of the need for such responses? How might behavioural training be used to reduce cognitive overload? What role might stories play in encouraging students to change their behaviours and understandings of conflict?

3. Some ways of construing and constructing are more valid than others. What makes some stories of conflict resolution better than others? What are the consequences of misconstrued or misinformed stories about conflict? How might instructors intervene to help students re(w)right or complete their stories as a way to prepare them for using conflict resolution skills? Are some kinds of stories more effective than others for understanding self and others in conflict situations?

4. Knowledge and understanding are negotiated internally through the processes of construing and reconstruing meaning and externally through communication and dialogue with others. How can stories help adult learners to be effective negotiators of their own knowledge and learning conditions? What kinds of narrative frameworks might lend themselves better to negotiation? How do language, form, voice, temporality, and plot influence the ability of students to negotiate as storytellers?
5. Cognitive change and development are essential for learning.
How might stories be a vehicle for introducing students to a new model of conflict resolution? How might stories support and encourage personal shifts in thinking about conflict resolution processes?

Summary

Constructivism highlights the role of cognition in adult learning. According to this perspective, learning is not imposed but the result of selective meaning-making. The processes of building new constructs and construing meaning are dynamic; they continue throughout the life span. In this sense, constructivism recognizes the ability of adults to be active agents in their learning. Learners are recognized as autonomous and self-directed. How they perceive their world and their place in it also influences their capacity to learn. The more we experience, the more we are challenged to find meaning in our learning. Constructivism stresses the need for flexible, yet robust frameworks for interpreting and re-evaluating knowledge. Adults will not only have to reconstrue information as they mature but reflect critically on the underlying constructions they use to make such interpretations in the first place.

Constructivism is significant for conflict resolution training for several reasons. It establishes the source of learning as the mind rather than the body. This shifts the emphasis from performance outcomes to the internal processes underlying those outcomes. This is consistent with the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training's emphasis on inner work. Although one way to think about learning is as the acquisition of tools, this is not enough for resolving conflicts. Learning how to resolve disputes also requires the ability to reflect on the underlying meaning of conflict and resolution and to act in a manner that is consistent with interest-based problem solving.

From the point of view of program planners and instructors, constructivist theory calls for creative program planning and flexibility. Curricula which include opportunities for learner participation and decision-making are essential. One area of conflict resolution training in which this is evident is the assessments used at the end of the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. Students are required to complete a self-evaluation as part of this process. Opportunities of this kind will help adults to think about conflict resolution in new and creative ways.
When carried to the extreme, constructivism suggests that learning is an isolated activity that is limited to the inner recesses of the mind. "It establishes a sharp dichotomy between inside and outside, suggests that knowledge is largely cerebral, and takes the individual as the nonproblematic unit of analysis. Furthermore, learning as internalization is too easily construed as an unproblematic process of absorbing the given, as a matter of transmission and assimilation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991b, p. 47). This is why socially situated theorists emphasize the contexts as well as content of constructivism. I continue now with this theoretical perspective in adult learning.

**Socially Situated Learning**

**Overview**

Whereas constructivism is derived from cognitive psychology, socially situated theories are based on understandings gained from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas, including cross-cultural psychology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis. Jacob (1992, pp. 312-324) classifies social learning perspectives in two primary categories, intrapsychological and interpsychological. Intrapsychological theories examine individual cognition in particular contexts (e.g. grocery shopping) whereas interpsychological theories look at cognition in terms of social interaction among individuals. It is not my intent to compare and contrast individual perspectives in this area but to focus on commonly-held understandings and determine their significance for conflict resolution.

**What Is Learning?**

Socially situated theorists understand learning as meaning-making but say that it only makes sense to talk about knowledge construction from a social perspective. Learning is not just cognition but cognition in context. "An approach to learning or a conception of a particular phenomenon is not something that is 'inside' a student but something 'between' the student and the task or concept. It has both personal and situational elements but cannot be meaningfully reduced to the sum of both sets" (Ramsden, 1988, p. 20). When discussing this interrelationship theorists referred to
"learning in situ" or "learning by doing" for which it was used as a rough equivalent (Lave & Wenger, 1991a, p. 31).

How does this framework apply to conflict resolution learning? There are many different applications of socially situated learning. Adults, for example, take conflict resolution training because it is relevant to their everyday lives. Their learning at the Justice Institute is also shaped by their social contexts and roles outside the institute. I realized this time and again as I interviewed adults in this study. John’s experiences in intercultural conflict resolution were framed by different social influences than Kevin’s work as a mediator or Sydney’s work in business and marketing. Conflict resolution students shape their understandings of conflict through culture as well as through their identities in a given community. What conflict resolution means to one group or individual will vary according to social context.

For Europeans the thought of missiles whooshing overhead from both the US and USSR has led to a focus on the East-West conflict. In Northern Ireland, peace has a more immediate focus, the end to the years of killing. For Palestinians peace means having at last a homeland. For Nicaraguans peace means an end to US aggression. For most of the Third World peace means an end to structural violence as well as ending the direct oppression of despotic governments such as those in Chile and South Africa. The daily violence against women is appropriate content for peace education in Canada and elsewhere. (Hall, 1988, pp. 165-166)

For adults in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, peace may mean gender or power balances, assertiveness on the job, the ability to negotiate a parent-teen conflict or labour-tenant dispute, or simply a sense of confidence confronting difficult situations. Adults carry their interpersonal needs and relationships into the Justice Institute when they assume their roles as learners in the classroom. Even as conflict develops in complex social frameworks linked to power and authority, so too are the frameworks in which adults learn to mediate, negotiate, and resolve conflict.

Like constructivists, socially situated theorists have particular understandings and terminology they use to frame their thinking. An example is the idea of participation. Social theorists argue that individuals learn by interacting with other people, adopting the practices of a culture, and negotiating their membership and social roles within the communities in which they participate. All of these operate
conjointly to influence the purpose, process, and outcomes of learning. Take, for example, a bricklayer. The bricklayer may join a union, observe other bricklayers, follow customary practices within the union, and over time, develop a degree of expertise in the trade. The learning serves a purpose—to acquire employable skills. It is pragmatic, it has occurred within a community (the union), it has been refined over time, and it has strengthened an individual’s sense of identity through processes of social interaction and discourse with other bricklayers and through an understanding of the bricklaying role itself. By situating the bricklayer in the larger community of bricklayers and in the trade union specifically, we can understand the purposes, processes, and products of learning in context. Learning is not the act of remembering how to lay bricks or alternatively, simply doing the work. It is a process of engagement with a particular social context and culture.

Whether the example is a bricklayer, a mediator, or a conflict resolution student in the classroom, learning can be understood as socially situated. Culture and community are frameworks for supporting learners and engaging them in practical activities, for providing roles that will be recognized by other people, and for structuring the learning process. How adults enter into communities, the roles they assume, and the meaning they find in these situations will distinguish one learner from another. Yet without these, adults would not be who they are. Their identities are embedded in social contexts and engagement with them is a part of everyday life. Communities are bounded social systems that provide meaningful opportunities for discourse and learning.

If learning is related to our roles-in-context, how dependent are we on those environments? What happens, for example, if we change work roles or move to another culture? Can we take our learning with us?

Presumably, the success of a learner changing work contexts, and therefore integrating into new participation frameworks, would depend upon his or her ability to move between modes of coparticipation. This ability could be described in two quite different ways. One could assume that participation is schematized and that what is transported by the effective learner is an expanding repertoire of participation schemata. This reintroduces the notion of learning as structure acquisition. Alternatively, one could insist that participation is not schematized that way, and that what the effective learner learns is how to actually do
practices. (Hanks, 1991, p. 20)

This is a complex issue. It appears that active participation, strong problem-solving, and clear communication are essential for learning.

One framework for understanding the social context of adult learning is provided by Lave and Wenger (1991c). They use different constructs to illustrate the ways by which learning occurs within a culture or community of practice. One of these is the notion of "legitimate peripheral participation" (LPP):

"Legitimate peripheral participation" provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice. A person's intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice. This social process includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills. (Lave & Wenger, 1991a, p. 29)

The authors refrain from applying their theory to formal education, although they admit such application "will turn out to be a fruitful exercise" (Lave & Wenger, 1991a, p. 41). Whether or not one draws a connection between LPP and the culture of schooling, Lave and Wenger's work is an attempt to reconceptualize socially situated learning:

Existing confusion over the meaning of situated learning and, more generally, situated activity resulted from differing interpretations of the concept. On some occasions "situated" seemed to mean merely that some of people's thoughts and actions were located in space and time. On other occasions, it seemed to mean that thought and action were social only in the narrow sense that they involved other people, or that they were immediately dependent for meaning on the social setting that occasioned them. These types of interpretations, akin to naive views of indexicality, usually took some activities to be situated and some not.

In the concept of situated activity we were developing, however, the situatedness of activity appeared to be anything but a simple empirical attribute of everyday activity or a corrective to conventional pessimism about informal, experience-based learning. Instead, it took on the proportions of a general theoretical perspective, the basis of claims about the relational character of knowledge and learning, about the negotiated
character of meaning, and about the concerned (engaged, dilemma-driven) nature of learning activity for the people involved. That perspective meant that there is no activity that is not situated. It implied emphasis on comprehensive understanding involving the whole person rather than "receiving" a body of factual knowledge about the world; on activity in and with the world; and on the view that agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute each other. (1990a, pp. 32-33)

I would like to talk briefly about one of the skills identified, that of negotiation. Constructivists, as we have seen, understand negotiation as a form of meaning-making. As soon as learners begin negotiating with other people, however, negotiation becomes an interpersonal or communicative act. It is one of the key skills in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. An understanding of negotiation in terms of LPP may help clarify the value of negotiation in this learning context.

Socially situated theorists describe negotiation on both micro and macro levels. As a micro skill, negotiation allows adults to share and validate their understandings with other people. Examples of this type of negotiation include discussing politics with a friend, predicting the weather with a neighbour, or arguing about the price of an item at a flea market. According to Habermas, our ability to communicate at this level depends on how well we follow certain principles. These principles or validity claims provide a framework for negotiating.

They are implicit in all communication, but we become especially aware of them when we are forced, during a conflict, to justify our arguments. In every interaction (face-to-face, organizational, and political-economic policy-making levels), a speaker may speak more or less comprehensibly, sincerely, appropriately, and truthfully. Each of the four criteria allows us to see when interpersonal agreement has been distorted, and how different types of misinformation influence participation in face-to-face and collective decision making. (Welton, 1993, p. 85)

The notion of validity claims is compatible with the interest-based process taught at the Justice Institute.
On a macro level, negotiation refers to the means by which a culture passes on its values from one generation to the next. “The most general implication is that a culture is constantly in process of being recreated as it is interpreted and renegotiated by its members. In this view, a culture is as much a forum for negotiating and renegotiating meaning and for explicating action as it is a set of rules or specifications for action” (Bruner, 1986, p. 123). An understanding of cultural negotiation subsumes an understanding of negotiation as a set of micro skills. The ability of learners to negotiate cultural practices will either maintain or challenge the status quo.

Terms such as LPP, membership, social roles, and negotiation offer frameworks and signifiers for thinking about the socially situated nature of learning. Like the phenomena they describe, concepts such as participation and negotiation are themselves situated in the worlds of those who interpret them.

How Is Learning Facilitated From a Socially Situated Perspective?

How might conflict resolution students in the classroom learn from a socially situated perspective? Social learning theorists agree that learners must not be passive recipients of knowledge but active members of a community. This is not an analogy but a way to relate instruction to the real world in which learning takes place. Community signifies that every learner has a role, that the roles are socially meaningful, and that individuals are part of a larger context in which participation and cooperation are essential.

To talk about academic disciplines, professions, or even manual trades as communities or cultures will perhaps seem strange. Yet communities of practitioners are connected by more than their ostensible tasks. They are bound by intricate, socially constructed webs of belief, which are essential to understanding what they do . . . The activities of many communities are unfathomable, unless they are viewed from within the culture. The culture and the use of a tool [that is, conceptual understandings] act together to determine the way practitioners see the world; and the way the world appears to them determines the culture’s understanding of the world and of the tools. Unfortunately, students are too often asked to use the tools of a discipline without being able to adopt its culture. (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989, p. 33)
In order for participation in a community to be effective, it must be focussed on authentic tasks. Authentic activities are those which members of a culture would typically practice. Bricklayers lay bricks. They do not talk about laying bricks or read books about how to lay bricks; they lay bricks. This task is authentic for several reasons: (a) it is pragmatic, (b) its value is recognized by other people such as those who want to buy a house, (c) it requires certain skills and knowledge, (d) it links conceptual understanding to actual practice, and (e) it is based on the needs of the learners as well as those of the community.

Authentic learning environments may be expected to vary in complexity with the expertise of the learner. That is, the child would not be confronted with the complexity of the adult’s world—indeed, the child’s world is not that complex. Similarly, the economic world seen by the average citizen is far less complex than the world seen by the economist. Hence, when we propose an authentic environment and a complex environment, we are referring to authenticity and complexity within a proximal range of the learner’s knowledge and prior experience. (Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy, & Perry, 1992, p. 26)

This same expectation can be applied to conflict resolution students who develop their skills over time as they become stronger mediators, negotiators, and conflict resolvers. Role plays in the classroom simulate real-world environments which allow individuals to learn authentic tasks according to their skill levels and self-confidence.

Another way to think about authentic learning is in terms of cognitive apprenticeship, a term used by socially situated theorists such as Lave and Wenger (1991c). As in conventional apprenticeships, students learn by observing the instructor (“expert”) and modelling authentic tasks. However, priority is given to the thinking skills underlying the tasks. The objective is not to produce competent technicians but flexible thinkers who will carry their understandings into multiple, real-life contexts. “In this sense, the goal of learning supersedes the task in which it is embedded . . . . although apprenticeship derives its instructional power from knowledge in use, the goal of cognitive apprenticeship is to then decontextualize that knowledge to make it transferable by practicing these problem-solving techniques in a variety of contexts” (Flower, 1994, p. 119).
If we apply the cognitive apprenticeship model to mediation training at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, we would need to consider the ways in which mediators are required to think and consider how instructors might reveal their thinking visible to students. One of the strategies used by those who support cognitive apprenticeship is to have the instructor talk out loud while performing a skill.

Farmer, Buckmaster, and LeGrand (1992, pp. 42-43) describe five stages in cognitive apprenticeship for adult continuing education: (a) expert modeling that gives learners the whole picture of what they are to do, (b) opportunities for learners to practice the learning task and to reflect on their performance, (c) further supervised practice, (d) internalization of skills, and (e) generalization of learning. These stages, like those in conventional apprenticeships, are sequential and involve ongoing interaction between expert and novice.

What changes, if any, would be needed to implement cognitive apprenticeships in training classrooms at the Justice Institute today? Adopting the model described by Collins, Brown, and Holum (1991) would require: (a) explicit identification of the thought processes underlying use of the skills--instructors and coaches would need to continually make their thinking visible, (b) greater emphasis on student reflection and problem-solving, (c) the development of novice-expert partnerships/groups based on the skill levels of apprentices, and (d) opportunities for specialization combined with opportunities to transfer skills across different domain areas. Specialization at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training has already been addressed through the development of courses in areas such as family mediation and intercultural negotiation.

Three benefits of cognitive apprenticeships for adults are: (a) they show learners all of the tasks, big and small, embedded in a particular learning practice, (b) they provide expert support to help learners take risks and avoid dangers, and (c) they demystify practice while integrating personal and professional knowledge (Farmer, Buckmaster, and LeGrand (1992, pp. 46-47). Cognitive apprenticeships are intended to produce expert thinkers and practitioners. Their function in the classroom is to model the diverse and complex nature of social learning outside the classroom.
As with other forms of learning, it is important to note the limitations of this learning model. Some of these were raised during an interview I had with an instructor from the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. One issue is the extent to which authentic tasks can be transferred into the classroom.

Real apprenticing would be taking a student and having that student work with me in a mediation environment or in a facilitation environment or in a public participation process or working with me in a training situation helping me design a training course, helping me think about different exercises that I might use for a training course, actually presenting a piece of that with me. So I guess apprenticing grows and develops along a continuum as the relationship grows and develops. (M. Fogel, personal communication, June 3, 1996)

Another obstacle in replicating authentic learning experiences in the classroom are the limitations of time and space. Courses at the Justice Institute are between one and 5 days in length. This provides little time for entering into the thought processes of the instructor and for developing relationships between apprentice and expert. Possibilities for extending the apprenticeship outside the classroom might again be considered. Another limitation is the number of students in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program--1400--in relation to 23 instructors.

I also wonder about the concepts of novice and expert. What do these terms include and exclude? Does expertise really draw apprentices into a community of practice or distance them from it? How consistent is the notion of expertise with that of a learning community?

I don't feel I'm an expert mediator and I don't think I'm an expert trainer. The less expert I feel the better I am at what I do. So when I think of professional (anything) I suppose that for most that means expert. Having said that, the less expert I perceive myself to be, the more professional I feel. That's how it works for me. And that's been an interesting transition over the years for me to become another learner in the classroom as well as another learner in mediation. I'm not here to fix this for you; I'm here to work with you, as another human being, in a stressful situation. And in the classroom I'm a facilitator of learning in which I'm learning at the same time. (M. Fogel, personal communication, June 3, 1996)
Restoring/Restorying Socially Situated Learning in Conflict Resolution

1. **Adult learners bring their social identities into the classroom.**
   How might narratives be used to help learners articulate these identities to others?

2. **Learning takes place within communities of discourse and practice.**
   What roles might stories play in reinforcing a sense of community among students in the classroom?

3. **Negotiation is a critical skill for learning and for becoming a legitimate member of a community of practice.**
   How might storytelling help students to become effective negotiators? What kinds of criteria would be required in preparing and delivering the narratives to other people?

4. **Adult learners move towards full participation in a culture or practice through a series of graduated stages.**
   Could storytelling follow this same structure? For example, could adults begin by sharing a short story with a partner and then, over time, develop longer narratives to share with larger audiences? How would this benefit or disadvantage some students?

5. **Learning involves becoming better at a task by working with experts in a field of practice.**
   How do narratives enter into the relationship between novices and experts? How might stories be used by experts in cognitive apprenticeships to make their thinking visible?
Stories are a powerful tool for communication and reflection. In what kinds of ways might learners and trainers be encouraged to share their stories as a way to reflect on conflict resolution practice? (Instructors are currently encouraged to use examples from their own lives in demonstrations and to think out loud). How might the sharing of stories lead to generalizations about aspects of practice?

Summary

Socially situated perspectives emphasize the contexts in which learning takes place. These contexts include the immediate interpersonal environment as well as the larger sociohistorical culture. The learning process influences and is influenced by these contexts. Learning is not only situated in context; it is situated through a series of interactions and engagements with that context. The term participation refers to situated cognition as well as to the means by which learners enter into sociocultural communities of practice. Cognitive flexibility, collaboration, and negotiation are some of the skills needed to become a member of a community.

Skills as these have been integrated into formal learning environments through the use of cognitive apprenticeship. This model attempts to situate learning in authentic activities through a series of interactions between expert teachers and their apprentices. Although similar in format to traditional apprenticeships, cognitive apprenticeships emphasize the acquisition of thinking and problem-solving skills.

Socially situated perspectives offer many insights into conflict resolution learning. They provide frameworks and conceptual tools for understanding the training that occurs at the Justice Institute. When learning is understood as situated cognition the learning environment, as well as the social roles and identities of students, become critical elements for analyzing what takes place in the classroom. Context and culture act as important frameworks for determining the authenticity of learning activities such as role plays. Without reference to the social world, programs aimed at resolving conflict would have little meaning.
Transformative/Transformational Learning

Overview

Transformation is about change. When learning is referred to as transformative it means, on the most basic level, that it has produced change deep within the learner. The change manifests itself in the way adults view themselves, others, and the world around them.

In talking about transformation, we are talking about a passionate and personal experience, an experience which profoundly affects, even shatters, identity. It is difficult to convey the depth of this change through metaphor. If one has never had such an experience no description could convey anything but sentimentality. And our cultural discomfort with intense experience, our acceptance of the superiority of reason, and the current post-modernist zeitgeist in which self-change is expected in a weekend suggests an inability to deal with such change in its true intensity. (Waters, 1991, p. xviii)

Personal transformations are like epiphanies: they change “the fundamental meaning structures in a person’ life” (Denzin, 1989, p. 70). There are different types of epiphanies, different events which trigger their occurrence, and different implications for those who experience them. Yet they result in a different sense of self and one's place in the world. “Transformational learning shapes people: they are different afterward, in ways both they and others can recognize. The process can be gradual or sudden, and it can occur in a structured education environment or in the classroom of ordinary life” (Clark, 1993, p. 47).

An understanding of transformative learning carries different implications and responsibilities for adult educators. What is their role in helping bring about personal change? What kinds of interventions will help to facilitate personal growth?

Conflict resolution trainers, like other adult educators, face three basic concerns: (a) whether or not their programs are potentially transformative, (b) how instruction might facilitate personally significant learning, and (c) what kinds of precautions and considerations are needed to develop transformative learning programs. Can programs such as those in conflict resolution be a catalyst for triggering critical self-reflection and personal change?
There are several theoretical frameworks in Adult Education for understanding questions of this type. The works of Paulo Freire, Laurent Daloz, and Jack Mezirow have drawn the most attention to date. Freire discusses transformative learning in terms of widespread social change; Daloz looks at the role of formal education for adults; Mezirow addresses how adults transform their beliefs through critical self-reflection. In this chapter, I will refer primarily to Mezirow's work since it represents the most comprehensive theory of adult learning. I will also describe Stephen Brookfield's work on critical thinking because it draws heavily from Mezirow. Brookfield, however, gives more attention to the role of critical thinking in interpersonal relationships, an area directly related to conflict resolution.

**What Is Learning?**

Learning, for Mezirow, is "the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action" (1990b, p. 1). This is a constructivist definition. Mezirow recognizes that adults make interpretations all the time as part of their daily existence. Sometimes they need to make judgments about how to perform a task. Often they need to interpret what other people mean when they communicate their ideas and intents. Both of these types of interpretation require little effort. Once in a while, however, something causes adults to challenge their underlying beliefs or values. This requires deep meaning-making and reflection. The result may be a re-evaluation of their beliefs and even life changes. If this happens the process has been transformative. Newman (1993, p. 171) says this process is much like looking at the filters we use to view the world and deciding which ones distort our vision. All learning changes people. Yet reflection on the premises that guide one's life is, for Mezirow, "the most significant learning" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 224). To use constructivist terminology, we not only reconstrue the meaning of an event, we modify or replace our constructions. Transformative learning changes who we are and how we look at ourselves. After a transformation we can never be the same person again.
To highlight the importance of this type of learning, Mezirow borrows Habermas's classification of knowledge. Earlier in this chapter I referred to Habermas's view of communication as a practical form of knowledge since it enables human beings to interact with one another. He identified two other types of knowledge, technical knowledge and emancipatory knowledge; that is, knowledge of how to do things and knowledge of the social and political forces that influence our existence. These three types of knowledge--practical, technical, and emancipatory--can each be identified by a particular type of learning.

Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests has captured the imagination of many adult educators and social thinkers. The idea that not all learning can be pressed into a single mold spoke to educators living and working in a world in which technical control over things and people seemed all-pervasive. A philosophy of adult learning influenced by Habermas starts with the affirmation that human beings are material and historical beings who have the potential to learn about nature, others, and the self. This learning is cumulative through time and is embodied in our ideologies, institutions, and social practices. It is also true, claims Habermas, that human learning can be blocked and distorted. In sum, human beings have the capacity to become active, reflective creatures. But the conditions of our lives (the institutions and values that shape us) often prevent us from acquiring the competencies needed to develop and unfold our many-sided potentialities. (Welton, 1993, p. 83)

Transformative learning refers to emancipatory knowledge since adults begin to change their understanding of their role(s) in society and the kinds of social and psychological assumptions they acquired as children. This ability to "let go" is freeing.

Although he accepts the idea of emancipation, Mezirow is concerned with how this type of knowledge transforms the individual rather than society at large. His theory is intended to show the significance of personal transformation in adulthood. Mezirow uses his own terminology to explain how adults are transformed. He says they form interpretations by using two primary frames of reference, meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. Meaning schemes are the individual rules that we learn in order to go about our daily lives: how to eat, the effect of pushing on a door in order to open it, where the sun will rise, and so forth (Mezirow, 1990b, p. 2). Meaning perspectives, on the other hand, are the set of integrated beliefs we develop over time.
They contain the premises for making judgments and decisions. It is our meaning perspectives that allow us to make moral and ethical decisions.

All learning, Mezirow says, involves problem-solving and reflection on meaning schemes or meaning perspectives. "There are four ways to learn: by refining or elaborating our meaning schemes, learning new meaning schemes, transforming meaning schemes, and transforming meaning perspectives. Reflection of content and process pertain to all, reflection of premises transforms meaning perspectives, only" (1994, p. 224). Here again Mezirow is highlighting learning which gets us to examine the core of our being in order to make life-altering changes.

These distinctions help to explain the meaning adults make of their learning in conflict resolution. On a basic level, conflict resolution learning is about changing a behaviour or meaning scheme. When students take the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (1974) they begin to understand how their responses to conflict influence the outcome of a situation. Many conflict resolution programs remain at this behavioural level. Communication is understood as a technical process: master the techniques and you will be able to reduce your stress level and communicate better. Transformation of meaning schemes is a common outcome of those learning conflict resolution.

In some cases learning may also include the transformation of meaning perspectives. This would require students to critically examine their beliefs and assumptions about conflict in relation to their overall values, their way of looking at the world, and their relationships. Adults cannot get rid of conflict but they can question how they perceive and respond to it. What kind of self emerges when conflict occurs? What kinds of beliefs help the self to interact with others in a healthy, non-judgmental way? The more important the relationship, the more committed adults will be to re-evaluating their underlying values about conflict.

The interest-based skills taught at the Justice Institute may be a catalyst for transformative learning. Instructors and students have commented on the significance of conflict resolution as a process of critical self-reflection. "As the years progressed some of us realized that it had to be more than just skills based, that we really had to talk about the values and the philosophy and the attitudinal shift that had to occur if these skills were actually going to have meaning" (M. Fogel, personal communication, June 3, 1996). Recognition of this appears in the Centre's Mission and Vision
Statement as well as in training manuals. Kate’s story is another example of how the external work of conflict resolution is linked to “inner work.”

Before we attempt to understand others, we need to increase our awareness of our own experience of conflict. Based on our early experience in life, we formed core values, beliefs and attitudes about conflict. These core values, in turn, affect how we perceive the world. Our perception becomes reality. Feelings also arise from our core values and beliefs.

When we approach a conflict situation, all these factors come into play and result in our response to the conflict and the other person or persons.

Awareness of our beliefs and assumptions can actually contribute to our success in dealing with and resolving conflicts. (Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, 1995, p. 1)

An understanding of meaning perspectives is consistent with the emphasis on inner work that must accompany behavioural change.

According to Mezirow, transformative learning can only occur in adulthood. Children, he says, “must learn the rules of society before they can raise questions about the principles upon which the rules are predicated” (Mezirow, 1992, p. 250).

The process of transformation requires something to transform. What is transformed varies from one individual to another but is temporally situated in the past as a belief, assumption, value, or way of engaging in life. Social acculturation and family upbringing influence the development of presuppositions during our formative years. The process of maturation represents the emergence of an evolving self within a particular social and psychological framework. Only in adulthood are individuals able to critically reassess their identities through self-reflection. Their roles as parents, workers, and citizens, provide contexts for them to re-enter their worlds as children and adolescents. They can begin to rewrite their life scripts as needed. Transformative learning begins by understanding and reflecting on old ways of being, thinking, and acting.

This again is significant for conflict resolution training. Although programs such as peer mediation have become increasingly popular for school-aged children, the kinds of learning they generate may not be the same as those in adult programs. If transformative learning requires a framework of life experiences then conflict resolution programs for children would not be transformative; at least not in Mezirow’s
How Is Learning Facilitated From a Transformative Perspective?

Adults may experience transformative learning gradually or suddenly depending on their personal circumstances. Sometimes transformations occur over a period of years while individuals develop a sense of identity. Sometimes a crisis will suddenly unleash confusion and uncertainty. Mezirow refers to situations such as these as disorienting dilemmas. Although they are characterized by ambiguity, turmoil, and self-doubt, they can be the catalyst needed to change one's meaning perspectives.

Adulthood is the time for reassessing the assumptions of our formative years that have often resulted in distorted views of reality. Our meaning schemes may be transformed through reflection upon anomalies. For example, a housewife goes to secretarial school in the evening and finds to her amazement that the other women do not have to rush home to cook dinner for their husbands as she does. Perspective transformations may occur through an accretion of such transformed meaning schemes. As a result of the transformation of several specific meaning schemes connected with her role as the traditional housewife, she comes to question her own identity as predicated upon previously assumed sex stereotypes.

In addition, and more predictably, perspective transformation occurs in response to an externally imposed disorienting dilemma--a divorce, death of a loved one, change in job status, retirement, or other. The disorienting dilemma may be evoked by an eye-opening discussion, book, poem, or painting or by one's efforts to understand a different culture that challenges one's presuppositions. Anomalies and dilemmas of which old ways of knowing cannot make sense become catalysts or "trigger events" that precipitate critical reflection and transformations. Changing social norms can make it much easier to encounter, entertain, and sustain changes in alternative perspectives. (Mezirow, 1990b, pp. 13-14)
Adults enter into conflict resolution training at different points in their lives. Some may begin taking courses after months or years of growing awareness that their old assumptions and ways of dealing with conflict are not working. In this case, the training becomes part of their growing self-awareness. Other adults may attend classes to acquire certain skills or upgrade their professional credentials. Suddenly, they experience a disorienting dilemma and end up re-examining their underlying beliefs. As with other transformative learning situations, conflict resolution students may experience gradual or abrupt change in their lives.

When referring to the conditions of transformative learning, Mezirow repeatedly emphasizes the roles played by critical self-reflection and interpersonal communication. He distinguishes critical reflection from other forms of reflection because it involves questioning the premises of one's beliefs. Although critical reflection in general is important, critical self-reflection is the most significant form of learning because it involves reassessment of who one is. Whether or not this leads to change depends on several factors including the need for change and the actions one is prepared to take as part of transformative learning. Adults may discover that their underlying beliefs are serving them well and do not need to be transformed. What is important is not only the product of critical self-reflection but the motivations and processes which give it meaning.

Communication with others can serve an important role in transformative learning. Through social discourse adults can test the validity and logic of their belief systems.

Discourse is used here to refer to that special kind of dialogue in which we focus on content and attempt to justify beliefs by giving and defending reasons and by examining the evidence for and against competing viewpoints. We search out those we believe to be most informed, objective and rational to seek a consensus in the form of a best collective judgment. We settle for a best judgment, given a careful assessment of reasons, arguments and evidence. But the best judgment is good only until new evidence, arguments, or viewpoints are encountered. Then the process of discourse continues, often in a series of one-to-one encounters ... Local consensus is always subject to review by others, so the ultimate consensus is ideally universal. Discourse is central to human communication and learning. (Mezirow, 1994, p. 225)
This links transformative learning to social learning, the other knowledge domain represented in Habermas's thought. Such a connection is significant in Mezirow's work because it reaffirms the broader context in which learning occurs. Adults do not develop their system of constructs in isolation; they develop them through the influences of socialization and acculturation. One way to test the premises of one's beliefs is to share them with others.

During the past few years there has been much attention given to Mezirow's work and the roles of adult educators in facilitating transformative learning. Discussions have focused on the ethics of such intervention as well as debates about the need to apply personally significant learning to social action. Mezirow has responded to his critics by restating the value of transformative learning in the classroom.

The relationship between educator and adult learner in this kind of learning is like that of a mentor trying to help a friend decide how to deal with a significant life problem that the friend may not yet have clearly identified as the source of his or her dilemma. The educator helps the learner focus upon and examine the assumptions—epistemological, social, and psychological—that underlie beliefs, feelings, and actions; assess the consequences of these assumptions; identify and explore alternative sets of assumptions; and test the validity of assumptions through effective participation in reflective dialogue. Professional adult educators have this cardinal function in addition to the roles they play as content specialists, group process facilitators, academic counselors, trainers, social workers, social activists, or administrators of educational programs.

We professional adult educators have a commitment to help learners become more imaginative, intuitive, and critically reflective of assumptions; to become more rational through effective participation in critical discourse; and to acquire meaning perspectives that are more inclusive, integrative, discriminating, and open to alternative points of view. By doing this we may help others, and perhaps ourselves, move toward a fuller and more dependable understanding of the meaning of our mutual experience. (Mezirow, 1991, pp. 223-224)

The classroom serves as an important forum for discourse and validity-testing.
The actions that adults decide to take as a result of this dialogue will vary among individual learners and their circumstances. However, Mezirow clearly says that whatever course of action is chosen, transformative learning must include praxis; that is, follow-through action which may be personal or social (1990a, p. 356).

Brookfield’s (1988, 1995) writings demonstrate the challenges as well as the benefits of teaching adults how to become critically reflective learners. An overview of his own conceptual framework is offered in his 1988 publication, Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults To Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting. Here Brookfield defines critical thinking as the “active analysis” of one’s personal experience and beliefs (1988, p. 41). Critical thinking helps individuals to develop an awareness of the principles and criteria they use to interpret reality, make decisions, and develop their personal ethics. As soon as we stop challenging our beliefs, Brookfield says, there is a danger that we will think and behave in ways that counter our own best interests.

The learning associated with critical thinking is personally significant if it demonstrates the following characteristics: (a) it is recognized as “profoundly important” by the learners, (b) it is often triggered through crisis or discomfort, (c) it results in a reconstruction of self, and (d) it involves questioning the premises of one’s assumptions in relationships (Brookfield, 1988, pp. 215-216). Like Mezirow, Brookfield identifies significant learning as transformative.

Whether critical thinking is required in the classroom, in the workplace, or at home it is a catalyst for understanding ourselves and others. In order to build strong relationships we need to be critically reflective. Brookfield’s ideas resonate with the interest-based approach demonstrated in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. His description of empathy is an example:

If we want people to look more critically at ideas and behaviors that we feel are questionable, we must try to help them examine these objectively. It is not enough simply to accuse those who disagree with us of operating under false assumptions. For any effective communication to take place between people, there must be a readiness in those involved to try to understand each others’ perspectives. Before I accuse someone who maintains that “watching sit-coms rots the brain” of operating under false assumptions, I must be prepared to enter that person’s mental framework of understanding so that I can understand this idea from his
or her viewpoint. I must try to appreciate the framework within which that person is forming beliefs about the world. Having done this, I must then lay bare my own assumptions on the matter. These two conditions hold true for discourse on a whole range of matters. (Brookfield, 1988, p. 47)

Learners at the Justice Institute are shown how to explore the needs and interests underlying a particular conflict rather than judging someone. This process of exploration requires trust, respect for others, and time. Yet it is important to try and understand who people are by identifying their underlying belief systems. Brookfield refers to these as “authentic frameworks of understanding” (1988, pp. 47-48). The role of critical thinking in interpersonal relationships is to help us connect with people so that we can understand the world from their point of view.

This was something I had to learn in my role as a teacher. When I began my career I was intent on being a first-rate instructor. The way in which I achieved this goal was by dedicating all of my time to planning, instructing, and correcting. These activities in turn reinforced my idea of what it meant to be a good teacher. Although I wanted to support students in their growth, I was not leaving enough time to check their perceptions and needs as well as those of their parents. This was a difficult lesson for me to learn. Only when conflicts jolted my thinking was I able to understand the need to let go of my assumptions about teaching and re-enter my role through the thinking of others. This is what Brookfield means by becoming critically reflective:

We teach to change the world. The hope that undergirds our efforts to help students learn is that doing this will help them act toward each other, and toward their environment, with compassion, understanding, and fairness. But our attempts to increase the amount of love and justice in the world are never simple, never unambiguous. What we think are democratic, respectful ways of treating people can be experienced by them as oppressive and constraining. One of the hardest things teachers have to learn is that the sincerity of their intentions does not guarantee the purity of their practice. The cultural, psychological, and political complexities of learning and the ways in which power complicates all human relationships (including those between students and teachers) mean that teaching can never be innocent. (Brookfield, 1995, p. 1)

Critical thinking means taking time to separate ourselves from the situation at hand, to
reflect on the needs of others, and to check out our assumptions. This process is essential, not only for resolving conflicts, but for building healthy relationships before problems surface.

Teaching others how to be critical thinkers is also important. Brookfield provides different strategies for this purpose, including the use of role plays. His ideas help to explain why role plays are important in conflict resolution programs.

From role playing how people might react in typical situations, we are more likely to gain a fully rounded appreciation of the particular mix of thought processes, attitudes, perceptions, and emotions informing their actions. Role play is, therefore, invaluable as a prompt to perspective taking. It is also a useful training device that can help us prepare for emotionally charged or interpersonally complex situations we will be involved in at some later stage. It can get us used to having to make difficult choices in ambiguous circumstances. Although it can never prepare us fully for the experiential actuality of dealing with real anger or confusion, it can help us be less thrown when these necessities actually arise. (Brookfield, 1988, p. 105)

In role reversal participants analyze their own performance as well as their perceptions of the other role player. Brookfield says this is probably the most powerful role play activity, although its dramatic effects may override its underlying purpose. Simulations, along with other activities such as critical incident exercises and critical questioning, are designed to help adults explore their meaning systems from multiple points of view.

Before concluding my discussion of transformative learning in education, I would like to briefly mention another framework offered by Daloz (1986), that of mentorship. The roles played by instructors, he says, are those of mentors. Effective mentoring can in turn lead to transformative learning for students. We need to nurture our students on their journeys of learning. Reflection on our roles as mentors provides a starting point for transformative learning and education: “What changes do I want to see in my students? What kind of responsibility do I accept for them? How do my students see me, and what do they want from me? How do I respond to their hopes, their fear? And can I learn this or is it just so much magic?” (Daloz, 1986, p. 18). As Brookfield does, Daloz reminds us that instructors need to question their own assumptions and expectations before expecting students to do the same.
Restoring/Restorying Transformative Learning in Conflict Resolution

1. Adult identities are developmentally as well as psycho-socially situated. Mezirow emphasizes that our upbringing and socialization play key roles in how we see ourselves and the criteria we use to construct our meaning perspectives. How might narratives be used to help adults understand the different influences that have shaped their underlying values and assumptions?

2. The most significant kind of learning is the transformation of meaning perspectives. What kinds of narrative might facilitate personally significant learning?

3. Ongoing self-reflection is critical for meaningful adult learning. How might the Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument (1974) and the win-win model be combined with narrative forms of expression such as story writing, life writing, drama, or oral storying to help adults make meaning of their classroom learning in relation to their own underlying values and beliefs?

4. Transformative learning may occur gradually or suddenly. What would be the implications of using a series of role plays and follow-up activities such as narrative writing to trigger transformative learning from one stage of learning to another? Are some role plays suitable for prompting sudden transformative learning experiences? What preparations and safeguards would help students who experience a disorienting dilemma? How might a journal of self-reflections that stays with students as they advance from one course to another help them to develop critical self-understandings? How might this journal also be used in other settings such as the home or workplace?
5. Critical self-reflection involves an evaluation of one's assumptions and beliefs.
What kinds of thinking used to evaluate one's beliefs might also be applied to students' self-assessments of their mediation and negotiation skills? What role might narrative play in this learning process to help students become critically self-reflective?

Summary

In this section I discussed Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and related it to Brookfield's work on critical thinking. Mezirow's work carries strong implications for adult educators in general and for conflict resolution trainers in particular. It carries the understandings of constructivists and socially situated theorists to another level. Mezirow agrees that knowledge is construed within certain social and psychological boundaries says that we must constantly question the premises and assumptions embedded in such knowledge. Transformative learning theory looks at how we have come to be who we are. There is a sense in Mezirow's work, as in Daloz's, that learning occurs through time and space in the form of a journey. As adults travel they become aware of different influences on their lives and the meaning they make of those influences. Only when they stop will learners be able to take stock of their surroundings and ask whether they are travelling to the right destination. Only when they ponder the meaning of their journey will they begin to understand its overall role in their lives.

The significance of Mezirow's work for conflict resolution training is that it reinforces the importance of critical self-reflection. While it is possible for students at the Justice Institute to learn the technology of resolving disputes, such technology or behavioural interventions will not be as meaningful as learning that also involves some form of inner work. Our actions as mediators and negotiators should be guided by a clear understanding of who we are as individuals. Brookfield's work is an important resource in identifying some of the ways that adults can be challenged to think critically.
While self-reflection is essential, it may not be enough to change the social and political structures which have constrained or suppressed an individual's thinking in the first place. This has been a topic of ongoing discussion among critical theorists who emphasize the social context of learning. This is also a topic debated among conflict resolution theorists and practitioners. Helping adults to examine the premises of their thinking is one way in which to deal with conflict. Developing strategies for social reform may or may not represent another type of learning. There would appear to be markedly different approaches to viewing conflict as a form of interpersonal communication and conflict as a product of systemic power imbalances in society. As the field of dispute resolution develops, it will be necessary to address both of these areas and to frame teaching and learning strategies accordingly.

Chapter Summary

This brings my chapter on adult learning theory to a close. I began by talking about the significance of theories and the organization of the chapter. I then discussed the context of adult learning theories before focusing on three particular frameworks: (a) constructivism, (b) socially situated learning, and (c) transformative learning.

Like the previous two chapters, this chapter was intended to give meaning to the types of learning that occur at the Justice Institute. I argued that it is impossible to understand conflict resolution learning without understanding adult learning. How one understands "learning," however, depends on the theories and constructs one uses.

Constructivism, socially situated theories, and transformative theories each help us to understand different aspects of learning. Although they focus on particular areas, an understanding of all three perspectives provides a rich overview, I believe, of interpretivist thought.

This brings us to the end of part 2. As you enter into the life stories ahead I hope that you will occasionally flip back into the first two sections to remind you of the contexts that give form and meaning to adults' learning in conflict resolution.
Chapter References


Part 3

Life Stories of Five Conflict Resolution Learners
NOTES TO THE READER

The following section contains the life stories of five learners from the Justice Institute. I would like to draw your attention to the following points:

1. Every story begins with a section to contextualize the reading.

2. The following elements were included in every story: (a) research context (that is, the relationship I had with the learner before and during the research), (b) learning purpose, (c) learning process, and (d) learning outcomes or products.

3. I invited participants to choose pseudonyms for themselves.

4. Each story contains two voices, mine as researcher-narrator and that of the participant's. Single spacing and indentation have been used for the participant's voice in each story.

5. The way in which I framed each story reflects my own understandings of adult learning. I have integrated my knowledge of conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute and adult learning theory as well as my personal experiences of learning.

6. Participants read and edited their own narratives prior to publication. The writing and interpretation of the life stories was a collaborative effort.
CHAPTER 7
KATE'S STORY: THE INNER WORK OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Setting the Context

Somewhere in the vast acres at the back of being, the heat beats down on dusty rocks, the breeze sings in dried grasses, the bark of an ape echoes in the stillness. There is a part of me there. Forever. A part of me wanders the vaults of great museums where stand my favourite exhibits; as the bombs fall a part of me still feels an ancient grief and terror; a part of me is forever in the longhouse smoke dancing with the spirits. I fly with the eagles and swim at night in clouds of phosphorescence above a reef around an island called Paradise. I walk on diamond carpets of snow and from the decks of great ships I gaze at swollen oceans and catch my plate as it slides across the table. A part of me is always there, and always in me are the meetings with experience forming a labyrinth through which I roam. A fragment from these archives transforms, in the present, into something I've never seen before. I see reality as layered, glimpsed occasionally through preconceptions, once in a while unmasked, and I am enchanted by the elusiveness and mystery of it. In the place where there are no boundaries I am the rocks, the smoke, the oceans, and sometimes I weep with the ghosts of the future and smile at the memory of my cats chasing shadows.

Kate included this text in the life story she wrote for the last focus group. I think it is a wonderful piece of writing to introduce not only her experiences, but the spirit of the works that follow. Kate’s poetic language draws us into her world. Her narrative of learning is embedded in her reflections of life.

I asked her to explain how elusiveness and mystery are connected to conflict resolution. She explained that learning is the process of coming to understand an aspect of reality that has been shrouded in obscurity. This, she said, is the joy of learning, of suddenly being able to make the invisible visible.
Kate’s learning at the Justice Institute has served as a catalyst for her to reflect on her own meaning perspectives and to transform her understanding of them. Learning how to resolve conflict, she believes, must be anchored in practical experience in order for this inner work to take place. Knowledge that is decontextualized or academic is incomplete. She strongly supports the experiential and pragmatic learning opportunities provided in the Justice Institute’s training.

Kate’s references to bombs are not metaphorical. She was born at the beginning of the Second World War and was in the centre of London during the V1 and V2 bombings. She started working in the 1950s in London when opportunities for women were very limited. Since then she had lived, travelled, and worked in a variety of communications-related environments on three continents with peoples of diverse cultures. She studied Fine Arts in England, South Africa, and at three colleges in Canada and has exhibited her work internationally. She was married and chose not to have children. She has over 10 years experience as a practitioner and instructor of the martial art, Tai Chi. She considers life itself as an ongoing learning process, and her own life in particular as a rich and diverse journey of exploration.

After saving enough money to take a year off from work in 1980 and with only a vague idea of what she wanted to explore, she began a library search based on, in her words, the question: Why do people fight? She began to realize that she was focussing on war and the many different elements and theories about conflict. Twelve years later when she heard about the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, she was excited because it promised to provide solutions to the unanswered questions from her research. While she had been reading and thinking about conflict in the early 1980s, other researchers at the Harvard Negotiation Project had developed the win-win model of conflict resolution.

When Kate entered the Justice Institute in 1992 her learning not only started to answer the unresolved questions from her earlier inquiries into conflict but also accelerated her understanding of her internal coping mechanisms. While studying conflict resolution, and after moving into a building which she felt was reminiscent of where she had lived during the war, she experienced flashbacks and body-memories which precipitated a year of intensive therapy.
It was during this point in time that I began my research. After inviting Kate to be a pilot participant in this project, I asked her to join the final research group. She agreed. During the interviews she spoke about conflict on many levels. I felt like I was being carried gently back and forth across time and space like a hammock stretched across the ocean while the waves of life swept below me. Kate's mind was a map of conflict resolution; her tale, a looking glass.

Following the interviews and focus groups, I constructed her life story. This resulted in further discussion between us about the significance of Kate's learning in conflict resolution as part of her biography. Many months had passed since I interviewed her and she wanted to reconstruct her story according to her current thinking. It was important for both of us to "get it right." For several days, we sat, talked about her learning, and then worked collaboratively on the writing and editing processes. The narrative you are about to read was very much a joint undertaking.

This dialogical process is consistent with the objectives of interest-based negotiation. You will see that this has been a critical skill in Kate's learning. It was therefore appropriate that it served a role in the storying of her personal life experiences.

I have placed her tale first in this section for several reasons. First, she was able to reflect on and describe her experiences articulately. Second, her life experiences connect war as a global phenomenon to conflict on an everyday level. Not only did she survive world war, but she lived and worked in different social contexts where power and prejudice created other types of conflict. In the following story I will focus on the inner work which Kate has undertaken to deal with the trauma experienced from World War II.

Third, Kate is one of many students such as myself and two other participants in this research project who were not successful in one of their final assessments at the end of the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. She did very well on her mediation assessment but had difficulty with negotiation. Kate has decided to wait before doing her reassessment. Her reflections of prior learning are connected to her desire to return and complete her training.
I have also chosen Kate's story to lead this section because I believe that you will find her reflections of learning to be powerful as well as empowering. They foreshadow the spirit of optimism that characterizes the narratives of other learners in the pages ahead.

The importance of Kate's story, for me, was that it highlights the roles played by self-awareness and self-management in the learning process. These, she believes, are essential for realizing the full potential of conflict resolution in practice. She stressed to me that you cannot avoid meeting yourself in the learning process. This is the inner work described in the conflict resolution course manuals.

Uncovering Our Masks:
Conflict Resolution Learning as Self-Understanding

One of my best self-portraits is a large 5 ft x 3 ft painting of myself in a doorway with a white face, the clown's white-face mask, and wearing a top hat and a multicoloured shirt. I did that because that was how it came into my head. Then I went into the library and I thought, "What is the mask? What is the white face?" I came across wonderful literature on the Fool being at the interface between order and chaos which is exactly the place where the artist is. This is what makes art fascinating because you just don't know creation until after it has happened. Many years later I find that what I'm dealing with is a coping mechanism from infancy which has triaged elements of emotional experience. Substantial tracts of memory and feeling have been, and still are, inaccessible to me--masked and hidden from view. While for the artist art is not therapy, its metaphorical language is there to read.

I was born in the middle of a 5-day air-raid at the end of December 1940, and before I was 6 months old I'd been strafed in my pram--"strafed" meaning the discharge of ammunition, a sweep of ammunition from an aircraft's guns. Bullet-type ammunition. The aircraft flew really low, they were just over the treetops and would shoot at whoever happened to be below. At 3 1/2 years I was claimed by my paternal grandmother and taken to live in the centre of London, because she was working for the American Red Cross and had just returned by convoy from the US. She employed a nurse-companion to
look after me because she did a lot of travelling. We lived in a hotel on Sloane Street and it was bombed with me in it. My father was in the air force and lived abroad after the war. I was told my mother had died. Food was rationed until 1954. I still have a couple of ration books.

I've written personal journals since I was 16. They are really like letters to myself, bringing the past into the present. Memory plays tricks but I have records! I have nearly 40 years of written records, questioning, questioning. I knew for many years that I would need help in dealing with my questions but on the very clear understanding that what I was dealing with was a healthy response to intolerable conditions. I also knew that if I went for help in my twenties I would have been told to find a husband and have babies.

I was about 51, I think, when I realized—it suddenly dawned on me—that I had never been able to envision my own future. I could talk to other people about their career paths, I could do planning with other people but I had never ever done it for myself and whenever I sat down and looked into my future it just simply didn't exist. I then understood that my learned programming as a small child had been: "All I have to do is survive today because there is no tomorrow." I didn't go to school until I was nearly 8, I guess because of post-war confusion and also my being an unwanted child: nobody knew what to do with me.

When I began role-play at the Justice Institute I really became aware how my early programming was echoing in the present. I had to ask somebody questions and I was completely incapable of doing that. I just froze. And I thought, "Oops, that's really weird." I couldn't do it. I stumbled through it. It was so full of terror for me. I couldn't do it and I had no idea why. So that really raised the issue: What was going on for me? I started looking into that and it became more and more clear that there was emotional trauma involved in negotiating on my own behalf.

It was one of my unconscious scripts that was affecting my ability to negotiate. I had \( x \) number of years of emotional scripts. I had \( x \) number of years of cultural scripts, a lot of which were thoroughly dysfunctional. Some of them are mine, some of them
exist within the society and some of them exist within other societies that I have lived in. The conflict resolution program highlighted for me the necessity of, "If I want to be a healthy human being with healthy relationships--and I don't consider really destructive relationships to be healthy--I certainly don't think wars are healthy things--it highlighted that I had to do personal work. So as you go through the Justice Institute's program you start being given alternatives in terms of behaviour.

Practising the negotiating skills in the program and relentlessly probing the terror in my inner work revealed a deeply embedded personal program which associated guilt with lack of trust. For me, it was very, very bad not to trust someone who demands trust and asking questions was a very visible demonstration of not trusting. So safety is maintained by not asking questions, by remaining silent and masked. No wonder I have been unable to negotiate on my own behalf.

Through my inner work I've come to understand imprinting. I think the terror-response, paralyzing terror, was an early-life imprint which I am coming to understand resonates in my daily life. My brain coped by splitting knowledge of it off, making it not accessible. Just because the grown-ups declared VE Day had no impact on what was already imprinted. It may be masked but it doesn't go away; it vibrates beneath awareness all the time.

The key to transformation with inner work is the preparedness to experience all over again what has been intolerable. What I perceived in negotiation was threat. When I started doing the emotional work I was not able to distinguish the difference between the terror response of an infant who was powerless and the adult learning a skill. The terror came from below consciousness and was overwhelming and, until I actually started paying attention to it, was driving me in the role play. I was paralyzed. I was speechless. I was immobile. The learning involves recognizing the triggers and then managing them. You're practising replacing one set of behaviours with another.
Inner work is very intense. It's often very painful; it's sometimes very difficult. In the conflict resolution work one of the things which I think may be the most important is that you cannot avoid yourself. If there's something going on for you inside that interfere with the clarity that is necessary to be open-minded, neutral, you come face to face with it. Face-to-face with yourself.

I started doing conflict resolution at the age of 51 with 51 years of baggage: emotional habits, thinking habits, behaving habits—that had had years to become really entrenched in the crinkles of my brain. So I had to start deconstructing the distressing patterns in order to transform them.

My feeling is that if we got this kind of skills-training in early life we'd have a lot less conflict when we became adults. You're learning the art of negotiation and the art of being able to deal with differences graciously and that to me is a life skill. We have to be able to deal with the fact that life is process.

I like the idea of meeting people's needs and having my own needs met. I have really come to understand in the conflict resolution program how getting stuck in positions and solutions is really the way people relate to each other so often and then end up fighting when really they haven't articulated what it is they want out of the relationship or out of the situation. They've come to a solution: "Well, this is what I want!" and have never examined it further.

There is a point at which being an ordinary sort of human being and managing relationships in a constructive way becomes possible for somebody with my experiences. The work that I realized needed doing was to get the really bad stuff out of the way, start practising the really good stuff which is the skills and the outcome of that is helpful and is healing and is empowering. Then one is a healthy, functional member of a society.

As I sat and listened to Kate's story I thought of my own learning, of the way in which conflict resolution had engaged my being. I too had constructed meaning from the training in the context of my own biography and evolving states of awareness. Only through critical self-reflection had I begun to make sense of my own masks.
I have known Kate for over 2 years. We first met in a conflict resolution course at the Justice Institute—Mediation 2, I think. I didn’t really get to know her at that time, although we both expressed interest in forming a study group. Several months after the course ended we reconnected with each other for this purpose. We formed a study group with two other women—Sandy, whose story you will read later, and Trish. Sandy and Trish were married with children. Kate and I were single. All of us shared similar interests in learning conflict resolution. We knew conflicts could be stressful. We knew that the way in which we responded to conflict could dramatically influence its outcome. We valued the kinds of skills being taught at the Justice Institute in developing collaborative, respectful relationships. Finally, all of us were interested in working as professional mediators. We saw the study group as an opportunity to practice our skills in a safe, supportive environment. It connected us to one another and to the world of conflict resolution.

This was how I came to know Kate. She participated actively in the study group. I could see that it was serving a purpose in her life as well as the lives of the rest of us. Kate would later tell me in the interviews that she had gone into conflict resolution because it resonated with her own value system. She was also interested in drawing on dispute resolution skills in her work. What was exciting for her, she said, was learning and practising mutually beneficial ways of managing differences in relationships.

Shortly before entering the Justice Institute’s program I did some work with an employment counsellor to establish the touchstone of my value system. No such assistance existed in my youth, including the social climate for it. The employment counsellor and I worked with a book called Wishcraft by Barbara Sher who feels that unless you are doing work in the real world that is congruent with the touchstone of your value system, you will neither be satisfied in that work nor do a good job. And, for me, when I went through that process, I came out with healing, communication, and building bridges as the three things that formed the touchstone of my value system. I found the conflict resolution philosophy resonated, to a considerable extent, with my values.
I also had a friend who was doing the conflict resolution program. I helped her with role play when she was going through her assessments and because I seemed in tune with the material, she suggested that I explore the Justice Institute's program.

I entered the program in 1992. I was excited by it because it continued where my own research into war in 1981 had stopped. That research had resulted in a sculpture— a war trophy—inspired by the Pulitzer prize-winning photograph by Huynh Cong Ut, of Phan Thi Kim Phuc running from the napalm in Vietnam. How to pre-empt or resolve conflict had remained unanswered.

The study study group in which Kate and I participated remained active for many months. Sometimes we met less frequently but nearly always the phone would ring unexpectedly with a request to meet again, like a fraternity celebrating bimonthly reunions. When one of us decided to take our negotiation or mediation assessments at the Justice Institute we would schedule extra practices. We hired coaches from the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training to come into our homes and give us feedback on specific skill areas. Each coach offered different kinds of guidance, some philosophical, some pragmatic. We had to integrate these recommendations into our own understandings of conflict resolution. There was no magic formula for success, we would discover, only a set of values, skills, and attitudes that we would need to develop over time through practice and ongoing self-awareness.

The assessments proved to be very challenging. Only Sandy passed both her mediation and negotiation assessments; the rest of us had to redo one assessment. We were discouraged by the results but we knew that we would continue to learn while we were preparing for our reassessments. Although our immediate goal was to graduate from the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, our real objective was to feel capable in our abilities to face conflict in the real world.

When I began doing this research study, several months had passed since the study group had met. After experiencing difficulty with her negotiation assessment, Kate recognized that she would need to do further personal work before completing the program.
I failed the negotiation assessment. And it was very, very interesting for me going through that. Initially, I had not wanted to take it partly because I knew at the time I wasn't ready for it. However, it was well worthwhile taking because it highlighted even more clearly than role play my own terror response.

Looking at the tapes, I can see that the person who was my negotiating partner was not being terrorizing at all. He was being very reasonable. He was a bit defensive but he was certainly not being threatening—which was what I'd perceived him to be.

When I probed my experience of the assessment, I realized that I'd left my body—for want of a better way of putting it. Part of me had fled to safety and the part left behind merely blundered as best she could. I felt caught between two loyalties—between the people I was representing and I “had to please” and the person with whom I had to negotiate and also felt I “had to please.” It was an intense and extraordinarily useful experience. I chose to explore it and realized I had to do a lot of personal work in order to complete the program.

Conflict Resolution Learning as Art: Using Skills to Transform Being

Shortly before I began my thesis Kate had moved into a new housing cooperative. I remember the first time I visited her. As I came through the doorway of her living room, my eyes were drawn to several works of art gracefully displayed on shelves, the floor, and the wall. They included sculptures, masks, and a large, framed picture of a woman sitting in a chair behind bars.

The drawing is part of a series of 54, entitled the Threshold Series. The story about my mother having died when I was born was not true. When I came over to Canada I had to fill out her date of death on the immigration forms so I’d written to the registrar of births and deaths in the UK and received a letter back saying “No Record of Death.” That she was still alive was confirmed by my father but he wouldn't give me any more information. She'd been institutionalized after my birth. I never did see her--she died 3 years after I
arrived in Canada. In the whole series of drawings I used the image of a bird to denote freedom, and in her drawing the bird is large and flies through a window, free.

Kate's detailed and life-like art spoke to her vision and creativity. I was astonished. This was a side of Kate I had not seen before. The research process gave me the opportunity to talk to Kate about her art. I would discover that there was an overlap between her creations and conflict resolution learning. She understands both as processes that can be transformative. The experiential orientation of role plays at the Justice Institute, she said, serves different purposes. Demonstrations by instructors provide a model for student learning. This is critical for helping learners begin to develop new ways of behaving and responding to conflict. Learning through experience, whether in art or in conflict resolution, also means that the knowledge, skills, and values are being grounded, tested, and shaped according to the context and capabilities of those who use them. This is essential for personal transformation.

Art is the eyes with which I regard the world and the soul that I bring into that world. The artist in me is all-pervasive. It pervades everything else and it's not something that's just done in the studio, it's something that is there in everything. Everything. It's always going on. It's always in my head like I visualize the process of conflict resolution. I see it as a visual process. Now art is not just a visual activity. It's a tactile activity, it's a kinesthetic activity, it's a spiritual activity, it's a value-based activity: it's all those things for me. So it's all-pervasive.

There's a lot about conflict which comes out in my art which makes it very content-based art as opposed to purely aesthetic art. What's been going on in my traumatized self has expressed itself in my art. I've created the war trophy and another piece from a similarly powerful archetypal photograph, this time by Eugene W. Smith of a mother and child, victims of the Minamata Disaster in Japan in 1974. Mercury from the chemical company upriver had contaminated the water and fish and, of course, the major part of the diet of these people was fish. I call the piece Minamata Madonna and it is in bronze. A lot of suffering has appeared in my art which has made it difficult to approach for some people.
Conflict resolution is itself art: it's the art of relationships, it's the art of constructing relationships. I'm looking at a soulful definition of art here and I see that conflict resolution is very much an art. I would hope that what I bring to either creating a space, what I bring to carving a piece of stone, to creating a painting, to creating a bronze, that I would bring the same sensibility into crafting relationships through conflict resolution. Conflict resolution teaches us tools. The way we use those tools is our own art.

One of the things about the program which touched my values is that you can transform something which could be horribly destructive into something that actually could be very creative. If you hold a strong position on something it's almost inevitable that you're going to get into conflict. For me as an artist that has a predictable quality to it and I really like the unpredictable because you never know what is going to come out of it.

The skills training in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program complement my value base. The courses haven't become too academic and that's one of the reasons I like them. They are very skill based. They're not skills which are as yet commonly learned. My feeling is if we got skills training like this in school we'd have a lot less conflict when we became adults. You will do what you are most practised at. So if you're most practised at avoiding conflict or avoiding your triggers or ignoring triggers, that's what you'll do.

Why I talk about the difference between the academic and the practical is because one of the things I've realized as an artist is that the unknown is very comfortable for me. Potential is very comfortable for me. Chaos, to a certain extent, is very comfortable for me. One of the things I find with academia is that as soon as the artist speaks there is something in academia which has to pin down and control things and there is something in the artist which is always trying to get away. A lot of what it means to be the artist cannot be captured.
I don't learn well from books; I learn well experientially, visually, and kinesthetically. I found so useful the instructors' role-play modelling of the skills. I found it easier to see an alternative path when it was modelled for me. I would love to see a research wing to the Justice Institute which would combine an academic component and where you could also bring conflict resolution specialists together who would take real-life conflict situations such as the lead-up to the Gulf War and ask the question: "How could we play this in a different way?"

Over the years I've realized that because I have an intellectual understanding of something doesn't mean that it translates into living, breathing behaviour. One of the people I have interviewed for my research into racism is a sixth-generation Black Canadian. When I asked her whether I could talk to her about her experiences, the first thing she said was: "Well, first of all, don't give me your credentials." I found that so fascinating because it is in passion and emotion that prejudice exists. Like the person I heard the other day who is an expert on Native Affairs: he had the credentials. He didn't have the passion.

I like the Justice Institute's program because it's dealing with emotion, how we learn to manage emotions and how, when we are so emotionally involved that we can't see clearly, be able to say, "I'm really upset. I'm really angry and I cannot see things clearly. I'm going to have to take time out until I calm down." This is a skill. Until you've learned that skill you'd probably go head on and carry on with that argument, maybe irrevocably, because there are things that come out in disputes that can damage relationships. You're getting into the blood and guts as opposed to simply the theoretical.

In watching role plays it's very easy to see that something expressed in the wrong way can turn a relationship. In Mediation 1, my instructor was Greg. There was a young woman in the course who was a lawyer. She had an intellect that was like a crystal structure. What she was so interested in in the mediation was the emotional dimension. I think maybe it was something she had difficulty dealing with. Anyway, Greg was going to demonstrate a mediation scenario and she volunteered to be one
of the participants. She did everything she possibly could to be difficult. She went through a whole range of completely impossible behaviours from stamping her feet on the floor to becoming silent and sullen. It was like watching a very tense movie because we were waiting to see how Greg would handle this situation. Greg was like a painter with a palette of colours. When the lawyer acted out he simply would draw on another skill. He had this whole palette of skills and they were all different. And he was able to work with her without losing himself; he never lost it; he was quiet and calm and patient and always curious and always listening but very skilled--even backing her right up against her own commitment because right at the beginning of mediation you get a commitment from the participants. She could not get out of it. She sat down and she had to start problem-solving. And when it was over, everybody in the class acknowledged that it had been quite a pivotal experience for us, Greg included, because he had been pushed up against every single skill that he had ever learned.

Living the Learning: Applying the Skills

Role plays at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training provide a framework for helping learners make the transition from a formal learning environment to everyday settings at work, at home, and in the community. I asked Kate to talk about the application of her skills and knowledge off campus. Could she recall specific instances in which she had used the skills? What were her experiences away from the classroom and how did these fit into her overall learning in conflict resolution?

Kate described this as a developmental process. She first needed to identify which opportunities existed for using the skills before she could practise them. Over time she noticed how her skills became stronger. She emphasized the significance of embedding her skills in the values inherent in the win-win philosophy. As well as noticing the ways in which her own negotiation skills became stronger she began to notice how the skills could benefit others.
The more I got into the training, the more I was able to recognize in the world outside the opportunities and the more familiar I became with using the skills. After my first role play I simply started practising asking questions everywhere—in the bus, going shopping—didn’t matter where I was and it was very easy with total strangers. I eventually became very good at asking questions.

The win-win theory is based on transformation and, for me, it is both practising the skills and doing the inner work which effect the transformation. If people are determined to fight, they’re going to fight because that’s what they want but there is a realm where, with sufficient skill, a conflict can be transformed. So actually I am able to be the agent of the future. I think the most important thing I learned was that I am able in the present to work toward creating my own future; I have the emotional tone of the relationship in my hand at every moment.

In learning the skills—in learning the listening skills, in learning the understanding skills, in learning the questioning skills, in encompassing the value base of going for a win-win solution—we have a choice over a situation rather than being victim. So if I have a difference of opinion with somebody who’s hot under the collar, with the skills which the Justice Institute’s conflict resolution model and training provide I don’t have to respond in a like manner to that person. I have a choice and I can work with that person. I see that the beingness of the conflict resolution skills can go out into the world and can affect people’s beingness with each other even on a grand scale.

In practising the skills and becoming comfortable with them, I can see a substantial change in the way that I deal with people. I can see others falling into the same traps I used to fall into and I can see the alternatives—particularly with assumptions. I’ve found in many situations that people will speculate about what’s going on for somebody—they don’t ask the person directly, and then that speculation takes on a life of its own. So everybody ends up dealing with each other on a purely fantasy level.
I feel for people who have inner programs or self-talk which deny them a sense of entitlement—who abandon themselves in order not to be abandoned by others—that some work will be advisable to transform undeservingness into entitlement. It is difficult for me to accommodate the idea that a skills-only facade would be an effective basis for negotiating. It takes a lot of energy to support a facade and it is so much more relaxing to be authentic.

In my learning process, between the theory and the practice, there is a shadow phase where I don’t have full ownership of the skills. It is a feeling that they are floating out there somewhere, not yet settled in the crinkles of my brain. Susan Hanson told us it took her seven years to fully absorb and be able to be really comfortable and almost unconscious of using the skills. In one of her courses when I was feeling particularly at a loss, she cheered me by saying “confusion precedes comprehension.”

I’ve learned that transformation can be recognized in tiny incidents. After failing my negotiation assessment and starting the emotional work I was in the elevator with a neighbour. I was on my way to do my laundry and my neighbour and her new partner were on their way to the beach. She said to me, “It seems like a bad choice to me to do laundry on a beautiful day like this. We’re going to the beach.”

My response was: “I feel really good about my choice to do laundry and I’m sure the beach will be enjoyable for you too” . . . with a big grin. This resulted in her exclaiming “Oh!” and looking really surprised. What is important to note is that my damaged self would have accepted without question someone else’s definition of my choice as bad.

At first these tiny incidents feel clumsy, self-conscious, but opportunities crop up all the time and eventually the feeling of entitlement becomes part of self. What I have noticed in practising identifying boundaries, interests, and issues is that it is enabling me to establish clarity. I understand it is now being called “emotional intelligence.”
Eyeing the Future

Since I have known Kate I have seen her commitment both to her inner work and to her outer work, using the conflict resolution skills on a regular basis. Whenever we see one another we share stories about the ways in which we have used our training. Recently Kate shared her experiences with me about an unexpected opportunity that came along for her to do informal mediation. The mediation involved the management of a small business. Opportunities to share our understanding of situations like these serve as additional learning opportunities.

One of the implications of experiential learning, I believe, is that it will continue as long as we are around to experience life! There are many different contexts and settings for learning about conflict resolution, ranging from interpersonal to intergroup and from local to international levels.

One of Kate’s specific objectives as a learner is to return to the Justice Institute and redo her negotiation assessment. This is the last requirement she has to complete her certificate.

I asked her to share her broader goals with me as well and to talk about any projects she might be contemplating. This is what she said:

I have a personal goal: to be free of whatever the crippling dysfunctions have been which have really seriously affected my ability to negotiate on my own behalf. So the quality of my future is going to be totally different from the quality of my past. That’s my decision and what I’m achieving.

Many, many years ago I said to myself that I didn’t want to die saying, “If only” knowing that I had no more time. I feel fairly comfortable at this point, if I died tomorrow I wouldn’t be saying, “If only” because I’ve tackled whatever it was I felt was necessary to tackle at the point that I felt it was necessary to tackle it.

I’m getting close to the end of a phase and that closure will come when I get through the Justice Institute’s program because then a whole bunch of other stuff will go into action. There will be another gateway that I go through. I feel that across that threshold I will bring a great deal of experience, knowledge, and understanding to my conflict resolution practice.
My particular field of interest is intercultural communication and the deconstruction of prejudice. I'm putting together a workbook on prejudice as part of a life-skills workshop series I intend teaching. I taught arts courses as well as Tai Chi for many years. One of the instructors at the Justice Institute said that if you are going to be working with conflict resolution that you are a troublemaker, and I am ready for that! In addition to my own original material on prejudice, I am bringing in the conflict resolution skills as a way of both self-understanding and managing oneself in relation to other people's behaviours. I've lived many parallel lives. Their convergence is most exciting.
CHAPTER 8
JOHN'S STORY: A PORTRAIT OF INTERCULTURAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Setting the Context

This story looks at conflict resolution learning from a cultural perspective. Culture will be discussed in terms of social interaction among individuals and groups at different levels.

The learner featured is John. He is a graduate of the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. His personal biography, including his learning at the Justice Institute, has been defined by intercultural experiences.

John is concerned with weapons other than bombs used to wage large-scale conflicts, weapons such as prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. Conflict rooted in culture includes human rights abuses, workplace discrimination, religious intolerance, and other expressions of difference from local to international levels. Some are minor and can be resolved with little outside intervention. Others such as ethnic conflicts may rage for centuries.

John was raised in India and spent four years in Iran prior to moving to Canada. Since 1978 he has worked in different multicultural areas including Interfaith, Human Rights, and Community Mediation. His current position is government manager. This role brought him into contact with Marg Huber, Program Director at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. After taking one course at the Justice Institute he decided to enrol in the entire Conflict Resolution Certificate Program.

When the time came for me to meet John I wondered what I would learn. I had never met him. Arrangements were made for me to conduct the interviews in his office.

The first interview took place Monday morning at 9:00 a.m. John was just beginning his work week. Several phone messages had been left on his answering machine. As I began setting up my recording equipment, new phone calls came in. One was about a human rights project for school students. John needed to finalize his plans in order to meet a printing deadline. He accepted a couple of other calls and then put his phone on Call Forward.
I could see he had many responsibilities at work. The extent to which Canada has become multicultural is reflected in the growing workload of government offices in British Columbia and other provinces. Despite his formal commitments, John took time to share his life with me. It appeared that he viewed this as opportunity to continue his learning. When I asked a question he contemplated its implications carefully and asked me to clarify what I was seeking. There was an ardour and conviction in his words. I felt a spiritual quality to our conversation as we talked about how different groups of people relate to one another as human beings.

John has thought about how different cultures interact for a long time. He was a teenager when he witnessed a mob scene between an individual and a group. Since then he has seen many other clashes among people from different cultures. Memories of these conflicts have left him with vivid and disturbing images of the underside of civilization.

When I asked John about his learning in conflict resolution he spoke about the classroom as well as the workplace and community as a forum for social and cultural discourse. The same kinds of dynamics that characterize groups in other settings find their way into public education. Part of John's story is how other students and instructors at the Justice Institute accepted or rejected his contributions as a learner.

He told me that learning to resolve differences cannot only be about knowledge and skills, it must also engage individual attitudes and beliefs. Skills without empathy have little value. If we are to build a more peaceful world, he said, we must be willing to connect with one another as fellow humans. I am reminded here of a recent work which talks about reclaiming the spirituality of education. Palmer, the author of this book, says that "what good teachers have always known--is that real learning does not happen until students are brought into relationship with the teacher, with each other, and with the subject. We cannot learn deeply and well until a community of learning is created in the classroom" (1983/1993, p. xvi). This is consistent with Daloz's (1986) notion of mentorship among instructors and learners.

John believes that conflict resolution is part of a much larger process of community-building, one that begins with strong self-worth. His learning is inspired by his desire to build communities of acceptance locally as well as internationally. I can seen why faith is a crucial cornerstone for enabling his vision of peace.
The Roots of Intercultural Conflict

As part of the human experience, when you're going through life you'll observe conflict in many different ways and the kinds of triggers that set off an emotional response to differences. The way in which we respond is, I think, dictated to a large extent through our experiences as a group. If conflict is simply a conflict of ideas or it hasn't reached a point where it's more competition than it is conflict, then perhaps it might even be productive to have that competitive spirit. I suppose that may be considered to be positive stress. But when it starts becoming harmful then it doesn't help anyone to allow that harm to continue; if we did, we would be neglecting our duty.

I see some conflicts arising out of misunderstandings. Misunderstandings can arise from stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes. Competition, or perceived competition for resources, ideas, or power is another motive. I also see conflict arising out of extremely poor self-esteem, people trying to assert or develop their self-esteem by putting somebody else down. These individuals will find a reason for conflict, some difference they can latch onto. It may be more the excuse than the genesis of the conflict. Not having studied this as a science I may not be articulating this very well but these are some of the reasons for conflict.

The way the conflict expresses itself may be simply an exchange of different opinions. A conflict of ideas may escalate further—whether it gets to a heated exchange, whether it leads to anger, whether it leads to violence between people, or whether it leads to vindicative, revengeful action. It may be reflected in systemic discrimination against individuals, or a group of people, and start leading to group action. Such action can be quite varied in its manifestations.

Another source of conflict is what I observed within the conflict resolution classrooms. Here's the scenario: let's say that I'm taking a course on conflict resolution and we are trying to practise some of the skills that we have learned. Before we even start our formal learning there are various dynamics already taking place around communication that are deeply rooted in our culture. These dynamics are sometimes
spoken and sometimes not spoken. They are going to set the stage for what will happen later regardless of the skills being practised. They may even overcome the use of skills.

Instructors and students bring to the classroom assumptions about other people and they make judgments. Following their judgments, they make conclusions as to who it is they're going to interact with and who it is they're not going to interact with; or, if they're going to ask a question, who they would like to direct the question to; or who they would prefer to have as their partner in the dialogue and who they would like to exclude from the circle of dialogue. This is an instantaneous chemistry that's taking place. It's happening very, very quickly and pervades the fabric of everything else that happens from that point in time.

**Group Dynamics in the Classroom:**
**Considerations for Conflict Resolution Learning**

How, I wonder, do these cultural dynamics affect the process of conflict resolution learning? John said that while he was a learner at the Justice Institute he observed different kinds of interactions among the students in his groups. Each group functioned like a mini culture that had influenced his personal learning. Some groups worked well; others were off task or hierarchical. Several times John felt (and was told) that his participation had been suppressed or discouraged by other learners because of his ethnic background.

In order for conflict resolution training to be successful, John said, there must be an understanding of the ways in which individuals' skills and knowledge are shaped by their attitudes. Even if students do not yet demonstrate inclusive attitudes, one of the strengths of the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program is that it teaches empathy as a skill. Application of this skill, John believes, is essential for students who wish to continue in their program. When members of his group were empathic he feels he learned more: students stayed on task and were able to follow through on directions and expectations for an assignment. When empathy was lacking he experienced more off-task behaviour, power imbalances, and a feeling that time had been wasted.
Instructors also contributed to the culture of the classroom. John believes it is essential for educators to model empathic and inclusive behaviour. He noted that each classroom had its own culture that contributed differently to the learning process.

I wonder at what point conflictual relationships within groups stop serving a legitimate role as far as trying out conflict resolution strategies and becomes a tool of discrimination? While the idea of the classroom as a laboratory described by Michael Fogel earlier in my work has value, it may also serve to promote the same kinds of social injustices that have given rise to the conflicts in the first place. When is the spontaneity of interpersonal conflicts a healthy tool for learning? And what types of structures are needed to maintain a respectful learning environment?

John’s story is about the conflict resolution classroom but it could be about any classroom. Understanding the ways in which cultural attitudes shape the processes and outcomes of learning are important for any educator. Being a learner is much like being a citizen: in both cases, individual interests are part of a larger collective. Successful learning communities, like successful societies, will develop strategies for co-participation and acceptance. These strategies are linked to individual responsibilities as well as mechanisms for resolving differences based on mutual respect. By understanding John’s personal experiences of learning we may be able to identify some of these responsibilities for learners in general.

I’m not a teacher so I don’t know the technical differences between definitions of learning. I’m only using lay terms in describing the purpose of the learning for me. I ask myself: “We’ve been hearing something these last few days. How can I apply this knowledge? Is there a practical application? Can I use the skills often enough so they become a part and parcel of my being?”

I had to go through an unlearning process and then a relearning process. I suppose there’s always a certain overlap between skills and knowledge: in order to have one, you need the other. So you put those together and you develop a way of responding to or handling a particular situation.

There were two or three things that happened when I took the conflict resolution courses at the Justice Institute. One was that sometimes when I was put into a group, no learning occurred. Every time we had a group exercise there was a reason for it: it was to take a skill, practise it, own it, make it
part of our second nature rather than just listen to someone speak about it. If we weren't practising and if other things were happening at our table, then we had missed that opportunity.

One particular incident comes to mind: we were given a task to do as a group exercise. At one point I figured—and I think a couple of other people figured—that the group was not doing what it had been asked to do; it was going off on a tangent. I tried on one or two occasions to intervene, to try and express to the group that we were off on a tangent and that we might want to just take a minute to redefine what it is we were there for and get a common understanding of our task. They would not even acknowledge the intervention and the discussion went on. I remember thinking to myself, "That was a sizable chunk of time that was lost."

If the people involved were on topic, but they were simply not talking to me, then I would listen very carefully to what they were saying and try not to think about the intergroup dynamics. Instead I would try to concentrate, focus on what was happening, and see how that related to what we had learned earlier in the class. Rather than stewing in frustration, I would try and turn that into a learning experience because then I could see what was going on in the group, see what was expected, and why it was or wasn't being achieved. I would ask myself: "What would I have done in this situation? Could this have been done differently? How would I have framed or reframed the question? How would I have responded to what I had just heard?"

The only difference in the learning process was that now I was observing, not participating. That was not very difficult. If there was nothing relevant going on within the group, then I would pick up my book and read, look at the scenarios, and develop an imaginary scenario, or try and relate it to an experience that was fresh in my head. I might have said, "Ah! This is what happened there! What if I had taken this approach? What might a possible outcome have been?"

What would happen in some of the groups during my training was that when students sat around the table, two or three would assume the leadership or a certain sense of dominance; they would direct what was going on and either overtly or covertly, develop a hostile attitude towards others. So a
conflict started to develop right there which prevented learning from happening; it got in the way so often I think it negated that particular exercise. I felt this personally and other people communicated to me that they felt the same way: a certain sense of belligerence or hostility. It would take away from the learning experience. We just never got to the point of doing what it was we were supposed to be doing. There were frequent discussions, arguments, and we'd never get to the point. I suppose that would have been an opportunity for somebody who had gone through the program to do some good mediation or negotiation right then and there, but when you have, sometimes, 15 minutes, half an hour, it just didn't work.

I know that when we would sit in a group sometimes there were people who would not want to sit next to me or communicate with me or direct their questions to me. They didn't feel comfortable for their own reasons doing that. Other people in the group noticed that interaction and would either ignore it, or come and speak to me about it later to acknowledge what had happened. Or they would intervene and then their intervention would set up a certain dynamic. They would later ask me: “Why aren’t you more assertive? You know what these people are trying to do. Why don’t you respond?”

I would come back to the issue of the learning process and say, “Well, what are we here to do? Are we here to try and resolve culturally based problems, or try and sensitize people around the table to certain issues and develop more appropriate responses, or learn the skills that are being taught in conflict resolution?” I would have assumed that our purpose was to develop a whole different set of skills. We were to try and unlearn some of our previous habits and then relearn the skills of acknowledging and understanding.

It's difficult to express the range of feelings I felt in these instances. Sometimes I don't think I felt upset or angry. I think there comes a point when you see certain things happening and you say, “Well, it's happened many times before.” You either detach yourself from it or try and do something else. After a few years you come to realize that it's a numbers game: there's a certain percentage of people who will react to you in a particular way.
Where you bump into that percentage, you just accept it.

What struck me also was: These are a group of people who ostensibly are trying to get themselves trained in resolving conflict. Conflict has its roots in differences in beliefs and values. I think what needed to go on there, for me, was an indication that they were willing to develop a certain mind set, a certain attitudinal process, as well as knowledge. These two elements needed to progress simultaneously. I look at this like building a house. Both are very important blocks that you put together as you continue building. If the blocks are missing it results in an inherently weak and incomplete structure. This was the case in some of my learning: things were not coming together the way they should have.

There were some people taking courses in bits and pieces who should not have been there. They either should not have been there because their behaviour and attitudes were the antithesis of what was being taught, or because they did not try to model the kind of deep listening needed by the process. There are some people with so much baggage that if you threw them into the conflict resolution program it would be difficult for them to overcome the set of experiences they bring with them. That set of experiences threatens to constantly intrude into everything they try to do and might subsume the skills being taught. So if there was an intervening program available that could prepare them, that might work. I think there needs to be some way of assessing whether they have completed one stage of learning before they proceed to another.

Empathic listening and empathic behaviour are key to the whole process; they are the foundation for conflict resolution. I look upon the foundation as developing trust in the ability to communicate and feeling as the other person feels. If these are expected, interveners will encourage the parties in a conflict to be empathic. I don't know how to articulate this: under all our exteriors, the hard shells, the rough exteriors, the not-so-rough exteriors, there beats a heart and you have to search for it. Perhaps we need to communicate with our hearts and not our heads.
I frequently hear that you can't teach people attitudes; all you can address is their behaviour. I'm not sure. I've heard that so often it's become a truism in teaching. If it is true, then I think we really need to examine the attitudes of students entering the program because their behaviour might not be congruent with their attitude. There will always be so much conflict between their expected behaviour and their attitudes that they'll be conscious of their every move, every word they say. Sooner or later they will be under so much stress that they may not be able to function, or a behaviour more congruent with their attitude will break out.

I do think that attitudes often can be addressed because they're intertwined and based on beliefs and values. In some instances, we can go to the cause and find out what motivated someone to develop a particular attitude. Another set of experiences might have allowed them to change their attitude.

When the groups were working well, when students were participating together and on task, the learning was exceptional; it was very strong. I was constantly saying, "Wow! This is the way!" If there was an anger situation and I managed to diffuse it, suddenly I realized, "Hey, this is what this is all about! It works!" Or I would feel that there was still a lot more work to be done: "Let's go home, let's review what it is, let's talk in front of the mirror and try to get this right." Even when I was role playing and somebody else was mediating I watched how that person handled or intervened in a particular situation. I was learning. I was constantly learning.

For this learning process to be effective—and it is for the most part—the experiential process is very important to learning--participants need to practice some of the skills they have picked up and understand how important their role is to everyone else's learning. If they aren't learning with that consideration in mind, the process isn't going to work for them or the other students.

When a group comes together to learn its members have responsibilities. Not only are these covert, they should be overt: this is why we're together, this is our role. Maximum learning will take place if we assist one another and include everybody in the process. If we find that isn't happening, we should go
and seek that inclusion.

There are many reasons why people may not get included; for instance, someone's personality which has nothing to do with prejudice. I think we need to be clear about that. I would not call every situation one of prejudice otherwise I would water down the term. Some people are naturally shy. The group's responsibility is to provide encouragement up to the limits of that individual's comfort. Responsibility also means that whatever is said by someone will not be ridiculed by other group members; all points of view are valid.

Two Stories, Two Defining Moments

John's assessment of learning is not merely philosophical. It is grounded in his personal experiences. Throughout his life he has been sensitized to the ways in which people from different cultures relate to one another.

During the interviews he described several conflicts he had witnessed. In this next section John describes two particular scenes in his past. The first was a mob he observed during his teenage years. The second was a workplace conflict that occurred after he graduated from university and was managing a factory.

John told me that events such as these were life-shaping. He described his memories with scientific precision. Although the conflicts happened long ago, their powerful legacies have not been forgotten. John's understanding of culture inside and outside the classroom has been framed by these kinds of events. While part of him seems to acknowledge that conflict among different people is a reality, there is a quiet optimism in his voice as he puts forth his ideas about community-building.

This is what John said when I asked him about the two events involving intercultural conflict:

I can think of a conflict that involved Hindus and Muslims as cultural groups in India. I'm neither a Hindu nor a Muslim. I can also think about a potential situation that took place in a little factory that made printed circuit boards. I was manager. The first situation involved groups in conflict; the second involved an individual and other employees.
The experience involving Hindus and Muslims was one I remember so clearly that I think it was a defining moment in my life. It must have happened in my closing school years or in my early college years. I would have been between the ages of about 15 and 17. I was over at some friends' place one afternoon. They were living in a home that Mahatma Gandhi had used when he had come to town. It was called Bapu Bhavan which means “the Father's house.”

The servant cook of the family that I was with had just left for the day. We were sitting outside. Soon she came running back terrified and said that there were a group of people that were going to kill her. They were coming after her. My friends' mother immediately took her into the house and, I think, hid her under a bed and came back out again.

When the group came into the courtyard I saw that they were a mob, a frenzied mob. Right away I was struck with a lot of fear because a group that is irrational will do anything spontaneously. They demanded to know where the woman was and threatened to burn the place down or harm us.

My friends' mother had a lot of presence. She had worked with Mahatma Gandhi and could bring that connection and experience to bear on the group. She said that the cook was not there and that they should be ashamed of themselves. She continued talking to them and the group left.

I think that conflict left me pondering. Here were a group of people and an individual who had probably never met. One person was being judged by her membership in a faith group and a crowd was going to kill her for that reason. In this situation one group had the power. There were other times when the reverse was true. Both religions had individuals who were violent. You can spend a hundred years or a thousand years building good human and community relations and all that work can be destroyed in a matter of minutes or hours or days.

The other situation I referred to involved a workplace conflict. I was managing a factory. It was located behind my house. My family owned the factory in partnership with a few other people. We had six people working for us. I believe that five
of these individuals were Brahmin Hindus. If you’re familiar with the Hindu caste system, you will know that the Brahmins are the highest caste in India. In the Hindu system you’re born into a caste and then your whole life gets guided by your rank.

This was how the conflict began: I needed a supervisor for the factory. I advertised and the person who replied came with very good skills and references. His interview went well and I decided to offer him the job. Before I did that, we left my office and went down to the factory to have a look around. I introduced him to some of the workers there. When we came back to the office, I asked him, “Now are you prepared to start working?”

He replied, “Before I accept this offer, you should be aware of something.”

I said, “Yes?”

He continued, “I’m a Harijan” (which is a lower-caste Hindu). “If I enter that workplace, chances are that the Brahmins will not accept my authority as a supervisor. They may refuse to work or they may get out and go because I’m an Untouchable.” He told me that at his last place of work when people found out that he was a Harijan they had stoned him and chased him out of the gates of the property.

I asked him to come back the following day. The next morning I explained to the group who he was and described his background. I suggested that if any of them had any problems working for this individual they should let me know now and they were free to leave. I told them there was a line between the outside world and the factory. I said, “I can’t change your attitudes. I’m not asking you to do that. However, when you walk onto this property you have to leave them outside. When you come here to work there are no social classes and structures and you will respect that.” Fortunately, they agreed. They all stayed.

Going back to the mob incident I described previously: it got me thinking about the destructiveness, the pointlessness of that kind of conflict. It was constructed on a lie. It was not constructed on anything meaningful. If I remember correctly, it started with a rumour: “This person desecrated a place of worship.” Well, it may not
even have happened but word travelled around the city. Then years of pent up emotion came along and the two religious groups erupted into conflict. The servant was not even involved personally. She had left the house when some people recognized her as a member of the opposite religion and decided to come after her. So much of the world’s conflict has its roots in stereotyping and prejudice and misunderstanding and somebody spreading a rumour.

What had we done as a society to develop relations between people so that when rumour started they would have first said, “Let’s check this thing out!” or “Let’s sit down and develop another way to resolve it!”? Thousands, millions of people, die from actions that have no logical premises. The human tragedy is incalculable.

Conflict based on culture is one of the most wide forms of conflict involving groups. I’m talking about intergroup conflict that is culturally based if we extend culture to include religion. I always ask myself if religions weren’t expected to be the repositories of all that is noble in human beings. They unfortunately are also the basis for harm and evil.

It became very clear to me as I was developing my own experiences that there was an inherent, a latent potential for conflict, violent conflict, based on stereotyping and the prejudices of people, who they are and their belief systems—and that this conflict can erupt any time. If we don’t develop effective responses, we are leaving ourselves open to continuous reaction, putting out fires all the time without a considered response.

Taking Action: Towards Intercultural Understanding

I am touched by these two stories. I realize that the images of conflict in John’s mind are much more destructive than my own experiences. He is not only talking about stress or disagreements; he is describing life-and-death scenarios. Intercultural conflict is motivated by intolerance and hatred.
John's life story does not end with such images, however. I mentioned earlier that he is a person of faith. Although he has experienced the pain of conflict he has also worked hard to build understanding among communities of people. Throughout the interviews there was a spirit of hope that characterized his work.

After moving to Canada in 1978 John began volunteering with community groups and organizations. Some of his first projects were in the field of Interfaith, a forum for people to come together and share their spiritual beliefs in a supportive environment. He also volunteered with the Vancouver Multicultural Society and other multicultural organizations. When the provincial government decided to set up a ministry responsible for multiculturalism, he developed its operating policies.

Another key responsibility was his involvement a few years ago in a highly publicized conflict involving Sikhs who wanted to wear their turbans in a local veterans' legion. John was one of the participants who helped facilitate the resolution of this dispute. It was another pivotal experience in his life, he says. Bringing two opponents face to face and helping build cross-cultural understanding carry with them immeasurable rewards.

These were the kinds of projects that predate John's learning at the Justice Institute. They were also an important link because they demonstrated that conflict resolution could serve as an element of community-building. The effective use of dispute resolution in incidents such as the legion controversy showed John that there was hope, he said. He decided to take courses at the Justice Institute to strengthen his own conflict resolution skills. He hoped to apply them to his work with community groups and to his role as a government manager.

John's understanding of conflict resolution shifted after his first course. He recognized that the skills taught at the Justice Institute would not only be useful professionally but could also benefit him personally. This is another reason for his optimism. He knows that he was able to understand himself better and to re-evaluate his own attitudes and beliefs in situations involving conflict. When John talks about group dynamics, he acknowledges that he is also a group member and shares responsibility for developing an awareness of himself and others. Culture is not some abstract entity nor is it about others. It is how people choose to interact within a community based on their underlying values and beliefs.
From this perspective, the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program helped John to identify his attitudes, values, and beliefs around conflict and, when necessary, develop other ways of responding to it. He openly acknowledges that his own attitudes and beliefs were challenged through his course work at the Justice Institute. He realized that his active listening skills such as the use of empathy needed improvement. Sometimes he consciously decided to practise his skills at home while at other times his learning occurred serendipitously as he was reflecting on a particular situation.

I wonder if this is what makes John's story important for understanding conflict resolution learning on a cultural level, the balance between self-understanding as well as an effort to understand others? Adult learning groups in the classroom are semi-structured cultures. Students bring their own experiences and values to these groups and test them in dialogue and activities with others. After the day has finished individuals return to their homes and places of work. Here the cultures and learning dynamics differ from those in the classroom. Perhaps the process of intercultural learning is one that bridges all of these different contexts. Perhaps one of the responsibilities of those in a multicultural community is to reflect on different strategies in practice. This is where the integrity of an individual's personal knowledge may be tested according to the boundaries of a given culture. Sharing insights from practice may then serve as valuable food for discussion when learners return to class. Becoming a legitimate member of any community requires opportunities for learners to apply their knowledge.

When I think of John's learning in conflict resolution, I see his participation in different communities of discourse. However, I also see a learning process that is individual. This individual process parallels but challenges the boundaries of the group experience. John has already described how, when his group was not on task in the classroom, he would devise alternative learning methods for himself. He will now talk about his learning at work, in his friendships, and with family members. His interpersonal relationships in these areas allow him to reflect on the meaning of his broader group experiences. It is these situations that he can weigh his own experiences as a conflict resolution learner against those of others. This requires ongoing reflection and evaluation of his skills, attitudes, and knowledge.
Culturally-based conflict involving communities is what motivated me to enter the Justice Institute's program. Having started the program for that reason, I recognize that conflict resolution in the workplace is also important to me. A very interesting spinoff is how all the principles can be used in one's personal life. While I didn't go into the process thinking I would benefit personally from it, I have. I continue to rely on the principles that I've learned in conflict resolution and apply them to my personal life.

I recognized from my training in conflict resolution that I carry a lot of baggage around with me, a way of doing business that can contribute to conflict. I have had to go through an unlearning process and then a relearning process. I discovered how to re-examine my gut reaction to a situation, how to unlearn it and say, "Hang on a second. What's in the larger good rather than my personal well-being? How does that contribute to a win-win situation for everyone?" I think the training brought home the central themes, the central ideas, the central philosophy of this whole process very quickly, very clearly. It has stayed with me ever since.

I come here to the office. I work with people who come into conflict either between themselves or when dealing with the community. I also have a life outside my office and it is full of social interaction. There are agreements and disagreements that come up in these contexts. I'm trying to apply the skills I have learned. I don't think I'm anywhere close to having them as second nature but certainly I feel that what I have heard and learned definitely has application in my life. The Conflict Resolution Certificate Program represents the kind of ideals and principles that I would like to espouse and become part of me.

I don't know if the transformation process, if one is needed, has been completed--perhaps initiated but not completed. I'm a very poor listener. I think in many ways I am superficial in a discussion. People will make statements and I will just leave them there, rather than trying to listen carefully and responsively. A person will not even be sure whether I know what is being said or have any interest in it.
Something that I was trained in was: if you want to get your point across you dominate the conversation, you overcome the other person with the powers of persuasion. I think my belief now would be that I first get a deeper understanding of what the other person is trying to say, respond empathically to what I've heard, keep a level of trust, model some of the behaviours that I would expect, and remain collaborative.

It is easier for me to slip into the old way of doing business when I'm around familiar people. Things just go along the way they always have: the discussions and the interactions, and I don't reflect back as much. I don't think there's anything preventing me from using my learning in conflict resolution. I have done it sometimes in family situations. I have also used the skills I have learned in other contexts and they have worked.

When I was in India I went and visited my parents in February. My parents are getting old. I have two sisters. We've been trying to help our parents plan their living arrangements, their lives, what they're going to do in their later years. Part of that planning involved looking for a new apartment for them to live in and refurnishing their apartment. My father had very different views about what to do. My mother had very different views. My two sisters had very different views. Consequently, over a period of time--I'd say a couple of years--we'd never really come to any consensus. During one visit, I got them around the table and started to lay some ground rules for good communication so that we could each have our turn to speak, value what the other was saying, try to understand, and explore some of our real interests and needs.

It seemed to work in that situation. My parents are now in an apartment of their own and they appear to be happy.

I'm trying not to use a cliche by saying that the conflict resolution program will make me a better person but I'm at a loss to put something else in its place. What it means, I think, as a human being is my being able to build better relations with others: human relations. Second, if I have a role in interjecting myself in a conflict resolution process, I will have a deeper understanding of what's going on for the people so that
I can be an effective intervener or facilitator. It's that old adage: Before you go and start trying to fix things between others, you've got to start work at home first. I think that if I were to be successful in my personal growth it would be far easier, meaningful, or genuine for me to bring people together. If you don't imbibe or model the basic ethical principles or the operating principles of this process, then I think applying them becomes a little superficial. It becomes a facade.

**Conflict Resolution Learning in Broader Perspective: John's Own Model**

I find that John's accounts of his learning keep me grounded. As a graduate of the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, I can relate to what he has said about deep listening and the challenges of internalizing certain skills. I share his belief that the skills will only be authentic if they are grounded in the values of empathy and compassion.

I admire John's sincerity. Perhaps some of his faith comes from his own journey as a learner as he has attempted to model the kinds of values he believes are essential for a peaceful world. I wonder what meaning his training at the Justice Institute holds in the larger scheme of things?

As a result of his experiences, he has developed a theoretical model of his own to illustrate the importance of conflict prevention as well as conflict resolution. Both are part of community-building. I share this model with you because it is has been developed through John's learning experiences in and out of the classroom. It is his way of looking at the world. John is constantly thinking about how to use his learning. The model is an attempt to synthesize his knowledge. He would like to see the principles of conflict resolution used in international, as well as community arenas. John is excited about his learning and the possibilities of applying it in his current work.

Certainly the resolution of conflict, I think, is an important social initiative. It is needed to build peaceful communities.

The flip side of conflict is cross-cultural understanding. I believe that cross-cultural understanding can prevent conflict from happening in the first place. Part of that whole continuum within community-building is both conflict resolution and
conflict prevention.

In an ideal world prevention is better than cure. If we can develop a community and, in the process, build positive learning--people who have such strong relations with one another that conflict won't arise or if they did have a difference of opinion they will have a mechanism to deal with that before it expanded and escalated into unpleasant forms of conflict--that would be the best way to go. Unfortunately, that will never happen because of our belief systems and cultural norms. Everything ingrained through thousands of years prevent that kind of ideal community from being built. While we're trying in our schools to develop understanding, good human relations--'catch them while they're young' kind of thing--conflict is going to take place; that's a fact of human life that is going to stay with us. What we need to do while we're trying to build good human relations is to also put in place effective conflict resolution mechanisms and look upon each conflict as an opportunity to continue striving for good human relations.

I see it as part of a continuum. The way I've defined that continuum is that if \( x \) is a point of conflict or discrimination, then one side is the preventative end and one side is the reactive end. The first step in prevention is building self-worth. The second one is building positive human relations through cross-cultural understanding. You can't respect others until you respect yourself; that's why self-worth is a vital starting point.

The next two steps include full participation and institutional acceptance. Both of these work together. They are both integral to community-building, the holistic term for my model because it encompasses everything. Full participation and institutional change are parallel steps. You're asking someone to go and participate fully in the community but at the same time you are working at community institutions to ensure they remain open. If you say, "Okay, take part in the democratic process, go exercise your right to become involved in a political party, but the party says, "Sorry, we don't want people of your kind here" then it's not going to work.
If, despite taking these steps, we come to a point of conflict, then we need to have in place a conflict resolution program, a no-fault program that will not only address the conflict but will provide the opportunity to go back and do true community-building beginning with that first block: self-worth.

CHAPTER 9
KEVIN’S STORY:
THE MISSION OF A CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROFESSIONAL

Setting the Context

I think human beings are social beings and I can’t imagine them surviving on their own. Everything I do is only exciting and worthwhile if I have someone to share that with. If I were to have the most wonderful accomplishments in the world and if I were to realize them on a deserted island by myself I wouldn’t feel like that’s achieving anything. Somehow in our basic existence comes a need to share, this need to be part of a social environment.

I want to connect with people at a meaningful level because that’s what my purpose in life seems to be. The conflict resolution skills help me to actualize my beliefs. The Justice Institute’s training helps make that transition from judgment to curiosity. I think that transition in itself helps me to be more compassionate. It’s difficult to be compassionate when you’re being judgmental. If you care about exploring another person’s interests, I think you will connect with them at a deeper level. It’s a more sensitive level of connecting, of forming a relationship.

Everything I do in a professional way, except a small amount of accounting, has this interest-based philosophy going through it. Interests have been defined in many ways by many people. I think of them as the motivators for why we do things. They are beneath what is really important to us. Interests are the foundation for all the conflict resolution courses at the Justice Institute and can be adapted to most situations and cultures. The Justice Institute’s model of interest-based conflict resolution is almost a value system. The ability to be empathic, to connect at that level of compassion does touch people in a very special way. I hear over and over again how people enter the program and by the time they come out they’re either changing careers or thinking about changing careers and going into something more meaningful.
These are Kevin’s reflections on his learning in conflict resolution. He was born and raised in Vancouver and now lives in the same neighbourhood where he spent his childhood. He worked for 10 years with an airline company and during 2 of those years served as a Load Master on a Hercules freighter which travelled around the world. Following his employment in the airline industry, Kevin spent 8 years studying to become a Certified General Accountant. Years later he met his present wife and was encouraged to take the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. While training he began co-mediating in private practice and was later asked to work as a coach at the Justice Institute.

Kevin remains active in many different areas. Although mediation comprises half of his workload, he continues to coach and teach at the Justice Institute, designs and instructs his own conflict resolution courses, participates on professional committees, and does some accounting. Since learning conflict resolution skills, he has collaborated with his wife, also a mediator, in numerous areas including mediation therapy, divorce and separation, discrimination and harassment, and organizational conflict. He spoke passionately about his career and the close relationship he holds with his wife.

I have placed Kevin’s story after John’s for two reasons. First, both accounts reinforce the notion that our learning as individuals takes place in larger social frameworks. Kevin values conflict resolution because it provides a framework for developing strong and healthy relationships with others.

His narrative also addresses the topic of responsibility introduced in the previous story. This is the second reason I have put them together. While John talked about the responsibilities of individuals in a culture, Kevin looks at the roles and responsibilities of learners as they evolve over time. He describes, for example, his responsibilities as a student at the Justice Institute and as a mediator and instructor later in his learning process.

I have chosen to present Kevin’s learning as a series of stages since this was how he described it to me during the interviews. Each stage offered him a different perspective of his responsibilities as a learner and how he could connect with other people from an interest-based perspective.
The first stage was Kevin's entry into a self-awareness program. This provided a foundation for his training at the Justice Institute. His early learning in conflict resolution, the second stage, he says, was gut-wrenching because it challenged many of his beliefs around conflict. The third stage was his transition from a learner in the classroom to private mediation. The final stage is his current level as a professional with several years of experience behind him as a coach, mediator, and instructor.

The emphasis on stages is important for several reasons. It confirms that learning does not occur overnight but is incremental. Although Kevin continues to rely on many of his basic skills from the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, he has continued to reassess and refine them through his roles as a mediator, coach, and teacher. One of my goals as a life-story researcher was to try and determine what distinguished his learning at key intervals.

The reference to stages also shows which kinds of skills and responsibilities precede and follow one another in the process of becoming a conflict resolution practitioner. Kevin's early learning suggests that the ability to connect with other people must first be grounded in self-understanding.

His growth as a conflict resolution learner involved overcoming challenges. Through his narration, we see that dedication and perseverance are required to become self-aware, to confront conflict, and to facilitate the resolution of other people's conflicts.

Although each stage reflects different kinds of experiences, the real learning for Kevin was to integrate his interest-based skills, values, and knowledge as he moved from one stage to another. After learning the mechanics of interest-based conflict resolution he learned how to apply his skills to different mediation and teaching contexts.

Kevin is a self-described pragmatist. His words are clear and straightforward and he is easy to understand. Yet our conversation about interest-based projects always returns to the broader purpose underlying them. Whenever Kevin talks about interests I know that he is thinking about what one of his own instructors told him at the Justice Institute: that it is important to know where conflict resolution skills fit in the larger picture. An understanding of interests or motivators is important, not only for helping others to resolve conflicts, but for understanding his own learning.
I try to look at the why’s rather than forming a judgment. I think there are two sides to that: one is to help myself in the critical thinking process for what’s important to me. The second is helping others to do their own critical thinking with well-placed, well thought-out questions, as opposed to shutting people down by offering solutions.

I still do make judgments and get challenged on that. My wife is probably the most non-judgmental person I’ve ever known and she gets very upset when people are judgmental. When I become judgmental she gets upset with me and we talk about it.

I also realize that it is important for me to gather information and judge or assess that information and make a decision based on that assessment. I also need to know whether or not I understand the other person. What was the motivation that caused someone to behave in a particular way? What another person does makes sense to them at that point in time, otherwise they wouldn’t do it. Once I understand the motivation underlying the behaviour I then need to make some kind of assessment as to what I’m going to do with that because understanding by itself doesn’t normally create change.

One of my instructors at the Justice Institute mentioned to me at one time that we not only have to manage the conflict resolution process—being the model—and also demonstrate some skills—being the communication skills—we also have to know where we’re going with them. In my early days of training I didn’t really know where I was going or when I was there; that strategy was missing for me.

If you’re in negotiation, interpersonal conflict resolution, or mediation, sometimes if you look at the words being spoken you get a certain picture and that may or may not be where you are going. For me, it’s always a matter of taking a step back and looking at the bigger picture and saying, “What is this really about?”

I listen to Kevin speak and I can tell that he has learned much since his days at the Justice Institute. I am struck by his motivation and commitment to what he is doing. He is very focused. In some ways, I think he is on a mission. He made this reference himself at one point. It is not a religious mission but a conflict resolution mission, one
that requires compassion as well as knowledge and skills. There are many different areas that Kevin has worked in and many more he would like to enter. It seems that the road to peace is long. Yet he is excited about what he is doing and eager to move ahead one step at a time.

Kevin's multiple roles distinguish his learning from that of the other participants in this study. This is one of the reasons I invited him to share his story. He has successfully made the transition from a student in the classroom to a professional.

I also invited his participation because I admired his friendly interaction with students in the classrooms while I was a student at the Justice Institute. Coincidentally, he was one of the role players for both my mediation assessment and negotiation reassessment. His wife was my evaluator for my mediation assessment.

One of my memories of Kevin as a coach relates to a role play I was doing with other students at the Justice Institute. I was practising my negotiation skills. During the role play Kevin walked into the room, observed what was happening, and then gave me feedback on how I could explore someone’s interests in depth using open-ended questions.

It was an isolated piece of learning yet one that served me well throughout the program. Now in my role as a researcher I have learned that the shift from judgment to curiosity is integral to Kevin's own story. Communicating with others from an interest-based perspective, he says, has allowed him to develop strong personal and professional relationships.

He shared his narrative with me at his home where he has an office. This is how I heard about his journey from student to professional.

**Beginning the Journey: The Point of Readiness**

Kevin's learning in conflict resolution was contextualized by earlier learning. About 18 years ago he went through a period of transition during which time he began to re-examine his underlying beliefs, his relationships, and his overall purpose in life.

He was led by a friend to attend Life Spring, a self-awareness program involving three separate courses. It is one of several programs of its kind offered across North America and other parts of the world.
This experience, Kevin noted, prepared him for his training later in conflict resolution. Both programs reflected an interest-based philosophy, although the Life Spring courses emphasized introspection more than skill-building. From this perspective, the programs were complementary.

Kevin stressed that he was able to learn at this point because of his personal readiness. His desire for change was an important motivator. This is significant given the content of the Life Spring and conflict resolution programs; both involve inner work that requires ongoing practice and reflection. Kevin described the circumstances which led him to Life Spring and what he learned.

I've always believed that my purpose in life was to have children and provide our society with continuing life. Having children was always very important for me, and for one reason or another, I never had my own. That left a very serious question in my mind: What am I doing here and what is my purpose in life? It wasn't enough that I just be here and enjoy life. I struggled with that for a number of years and finally came to grips with the realization that my purpose in life was to interact with other people and to make a difference in their lives.

I remember being at the airport in Los Angeles one year at the Empress Lounge looking through a book by this photographer with beautiful pictures of Canadian scenery and people. At the end he said something like, "My purpose in life is to create beauty in people through my photographs. A measure of that success will be that when I am gone people will look back on my life and say, "Yes, you made a difference."

That was so meaningful for me at that point in my life. I had this feeling that there was something better out there than what I had. That readiness got me into Life Spring and the conflict resolution followed. I was motivated to not only take the courses but to make some changes in my life.

I had been going through a transition. I had always been very competitive and would avoid conflict wherever possible until I was cornered and then would come out quite aggressively. I played sports and competitiveness, I think, carried over into my personal relationships.
A lot of my internal conflicts come around my internal beliefs and values. I had adopted traditional John Wayne beliefs. My value sets at that time came from an external source.

My evolution started when a good high school friend of mine went through the Life Spring program. We were like brothers. We played football together. We played the stock market together. We did everything together; we were very close. After he finished Life Spring he hugged me and told me how much he loved me. I thought, “This is something that guys don’t do; guys shake hands, they don’t hug each other.” He had started his own personal evolution. I thought, “That’s really interesting; there is a lot more to this life than kicking butt on the football field.” It was that experience that created the fire in me to discover what this better life was all about. So I took the same kind of awareness courses.

I started looking at my beliefs and values: Why do I have them? What works for me? What doesn’t work? I started realizing that most of them weren’t working for me. Where would I go to replace them? Would I pick another movie star? Try to remember what values my father had or my mother? I was looking for a new set of values. The courses at Life Spring helped immensely.

The important ingredient was that I was ready. Had this program come along at a different point in my life I may not have been ready; I may not have embraced my learning to the degree that I did. So personal readiness or personal motivation for change was essential. I’ve had experiences with other people who have been sent to Life Spring or the Justice Institute to get fixed and didn’t appear to have very much motivation to change. What I experienced in those situations was a fair degree of resistance and probably not a lot of change. That would indicate to me that being motivated to learn and to internalize this material is a big factor in how successful you’ll be with it.

The process at Life Spring was to look inward and disclose at the same time. I was aware of the context going in and chose to do that kind of work. The first course was a very gentle introspection of who participants were, who I was. It was a 55-hour course
over 5 days, so it was extremely intensive. What I got out of that was that I have some value, I am worthwhile—which was a really powerful message because I had been quite introverted and that allowed me to realize that I have value as a person.

The second course basically taught me that if I want to have a relationship with another person, I have to consider the other person as having some value; it's a two-way process for the parties in a relationship.

I did a third course which was like an Outward Bound kind of course up in the mountains around Lake Tahoe for 10 days. It was ropes courses and mountaineering in the daytime and Mom and Dad's issues and interpersonal issues in the evening. From that point of view, it dovetailed quite nicely with my training in conflict resolution.

The theme I see running through the conflict resolution program is the whole idea of interests. It reinforces that if you want to be heard and understood the best way to do that is to earn yourself a hearing by listening actively and understanding the other person first. So it's a recognition that we do have something to say and we have some value that we want to put out. And if we want that message to be received, we have to be willing to receive a message from the other person first. The Life Spring courses were more, "I'm okay, you're okay" and how to deal with each other. They encouraged a level of honesty which is the interest level of honesty as opposed to the facades we can put up. So I think in many ways the dovetailing between the two programs was close.

Early Learning in Conflict Resolution: The Gut-Wrenching Stage

After completing his training with Life Spring, Kevin spent several years studying and later working as an accountant in industry. In 1990 he decided to go into private practice as a financial planner. Although this transition from a salaried position to self-employment carried a lot of risks, it also generated a lot of self-awareness, he says.
It was during this period that he met his current wife. She was a mediator herself and was very familiar with the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. She encouraged Kevin to take the first core course.

He began training at the Justice Institute. He found the first course to be demanding because it was challenging his previous beliefs and behaviours around conflict. Rather than avoid conflict he was now expected to confront it from an interest-based perspective. The intensity of learning in a structured environment and the need to practice the skills off campus added to his sense of frustration.

Kevin admits feeling resistant at this time. After he completed the first course his wife encouraged him to take it again. This time he began to understand its underlying value. After one or two additional courses he started making connections between what he was learning in the classroom and his relationships outside the classroom. The emphasis in conflict resolution, like Life Spring, was on developing self-awareness and the skills for becoming a conflict resolver. Both programs addressed interest-based communication.

Although Kevin refers to his learning at the Justice Institute as “gut-wrenching,” he began to see dramatic evidence of its benefits. He was still employed as an accountant when he began his training. Once during a busy month-end period at work he used his negotiation skills to ask his employer if he could attend a conference in Seattle. His employer agreed. The key to success in this instance, Kevin says, was his ability to identify and meet his employer’s needs as well as his own while negotiating the visit to Seattle. Although classroom learning was difficult for him, it was providing him with important social and communication skills based on the win-win philosophy. He talks about his early learning:

The first stage was one of absorbing a lot of information and trying to internalize it. During that process I felt like I had to take some risks; I put myself in some embarrassing situations with my colleagues. I found that I was taking those risks frequently when I didn’t know what I was doing or what the outcome would be. I was overwhelmed and challenged.

I was so confused after taking Conflict Resolution 100 (the first core course in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program) that I took it again a couple of weeks later. It was about confronting conflict and dealing with it. That was a huge stretch
after 45 years of avoiding conflict. All of a sudden
I had to address it and address it on a personal level.
I think I really fought that first course, not consciously
but subconsciously.

I have been a pretty pragmatic, judgmental
person by nature and being judgmental didn't fit with
what I wanted my purpose in life to be. I had to really
do a job with overcoming my willingness to judge and
making that paradigm shift to curiosity. I had learned to
avoid conflict because I equated it with pain. If I
avoided conflict, I avoided pain. The flip side of that
was: if I confronted conflict, I encouraged pain.

This was demonstrated to me when I took the
Thomas-Kilmann self-evaluation to assess my conflict
style. I scored really high with the Avoiding style and
the Competitor style and nothing in between. I've been
able to reduce my Competitor style dramatically and
increase my Collaborative style. My Avoider style
has reduced marginally. It's been really difficult for me
not to avoid conflict.

Conflict to me as a person means having a
difference with another person. Along with that comes
some real anxiety that says, “In order for me to deal with
this conflict, things are going to get worse rather than
better.” It's not comfortable and it's not easy. That's
the way conflict has been in my past. Whenever I've
tried to deal with conflict I've gotten hurt one way or
another. The result is that it never gets resolved.
Each time you stuff something, when somebody says
something that hurts and you stuff it, I think it does
two things: it takes a piece out of your relationship
and it takes a piece out of your self-esteem. Pretty
soon you don't like the other person nor do you
like yourself. Over a number of years those things
build up to the point where we no longer have a
relationship nor do we think very highly of
ourselves.

You do take on pain when you confront
conflict and it's really helpful to have a long-term
view of it because after a very short period of time
you start realizing that it was necessary in order to
keep relationships healthy and to keep yourself
healthy. I feel like today I have one of the strongest
relationships with my wife that I can imagine having
with any individual and it’s because neither she
nor I will avoid conflict when it comes between the
two of us.

When I took Conflict Resolution 100 again a couple of weeks later light-bulbs went off for me. I dropped my defences. I started realizing that I needed to be open to these new ideas. Intellectually, I had understood the first time around but I had thrown up a lot of roadblocks. The second time around I realized I had to be open to those thoughts and process them objectively and, if they made sense, let them in; if they didn't make sense, put out a legitimate argument but don't just get confused and walk away.

It wasn't until I was two or three courses into the program that I started thinking that this really has the capacity to make a difference in people's lives. I don't think you can go to a class and integrate this kind of material overnight, particularly where it flies in the face of what you've learned or been programmed to for 30, 40, 50 years. It takes a long time to replace that system with this new system of communicating. I think the conflict resolution program is the kind of program that grabs you and doesn't let go. Just because you walk out of the classroom doesn't mean that you let go of this stuff and leave it there. Your mind is constantly working on it and it's when you don't have the pressure of the classroom that the light bulbs go off and you are able to say, "Ah ha! That's what this is all about!"

I don't necessarily learn well by seeing a demo and being put into a situation to practise it. What I need is to have a demo or a lecture or some information. Then I need time to go away and integrate my learning. Once I've had a chance to integrate it then I need an opportunity to go out and practise. For me, that's what was missing in the Justice Institute's program. I'm not sure if everybody needs that. People learn in different ways and that tends to be my way of learning.

I've never been one to accept what other people say as being gospel until I've had a chance to examine it and know that it makes sense and will work for me. When I've had that opportunity to do that introspection and convincing myself that, "Yes, it does make sense and it will work for me" that's when I can embrace the learning. I think there has to be an acceptance of it and it is what I want. Then it is a matter of letting it through my conscious and subconscious. I think that's
an ongoing process. What I mean by integration is a way of communicating, having this way internalized to the point where you don't have to think about what you're doing: you do it instinctively.

It wasn't questioning skills or listening skills or assertiveness skills that allowed me to examine my values. It was a need to clarify my values and know where I was coming from. Otherwise I couldn't do what I was doing and know that I could be comfortable with what I was saying.

Becoming a Practitioner: Co-Mediation and Coaching

Halfway through his conflict resolution training Kevin began working in the mediation field. He co-mediated sessions along with his wife. Although he had his own financial planning practice, he wanted to also try working in conflict resolution, an area that was more congruent with his new values.

He recalls the impact of his first divorce mediation. It was a frightening experience to sit in a room across from angry clients. Kevin used his interest-based skills to try and develop a deeper understanding of situations such as these and how he might be able to assist individuals in difficulty. Although mediation could be challenging, it also promised to transform relationships.

Kevin continued his program at the Justice Institute while working as a mediator. Like other students, he encountered difficulties on one of his final assessments. After failing his negotiation evaluation, he reflected on what he needed to do in order to be successful. One week later he took the reassessment and received a standing of Strong. Following his graduation, he was offered a position as a coach in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program.

Kevin's transition from the conflict resolution classroom to the workplace marked another key stage in his learning. It's significance can be interpreted on different levels. Like the beginning of any new career, it had its own challenges and risks. However, the transition allowed him to pursue his conflict resolving goals. It also reinforced his commitment and motivation to remain in the conflict resolution field. Finally, it provided wonderful opportunities for him to apply his learning to real-life contexts, an opportunity lacking for many learners. This stage in his learning would allow him to mature in his roles as a practitioner and to eventually become a
recognized professional.

One of the advantages of co-mediating and coaching was that in both cases he could work with other professionals who would support his growth. In a sense, he was participating in two forms of mentorship while working alongside trainers at the Justice Institute and other mediators in private practice. This form of support facilitated additional learning.

The fact that he continues to coach and mediate demonstrates his commitment to both areas. Kevin outlined his transition into the conflict resolution field and the kinds of learning he experienced in his work as a coach and mediator.

I started my mediation practice co-mediating after 15 days in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. I was actively co-mediating through the last half of the program.

Conflict resolution provided me with a business. I'm not in this field as a volunteer, I'm not in it to solely connect with people, or to do good work in my life. I'm here to earn a living at it. In that regard, part of my mission is to move into areas that will generate a reasonable income. So I also have a pragmatic and economic perspective.

In the early years I worked with my wife--it was me learning and her teaching. My first thing to learn once I got past the certificate program was how to mediate separation and divorce. I began working with high-conflict couples. That was a whole new learning experience. I got my first divorce mediation as a co-mediator and my initial thought was, "What am I doing in this room with these angry people? This was not what I signed up for." I realized after a while that they weren't so much angry as they were hurt and that I could help them. That awareness was tremendously insightful for me, that I could actually take people going through a major life crisis and do some good for them.

One of my first professional commitments after graduating was to present a workshop at a provincial conference in 1991 on the financial aspects of separation and divorce. As a result of that and coaching, my network began to grow.

I then joined the B.C. Mediation Association as a director and have been for the last 5 or 6 years. That enabled me to work on a lot of committees which have been learning experiences in themselves.
One of the most impactful committees was the committee studying abuse in mediation. I was the only male in a group of about 30 women, a lot of them from safe houses that were telling stories about survivors of brutal attacks. That made me really examine my values and think about what I was doing and what I wanted to do with the rest of my life.

I think from that point on I started to consider myself a feminist and am proud of that. It doesn’t mean that I’m less male; it means that, hopefully, I am starting to understand the feminine perspective. That’s the direction I want to go as opposed to the more typically male, competitive process because I don’t see that as working very well. One just has to look at our global community and all the warring in the world to realize that this competitiveness just gets us into very destructive kinds of situations. I don’t mind moving in a more feminine direction if it’s going to change that dynamic.

Following my committee work with mediation and abuse, I graduated from the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. I said on my graduation night that the program was one of the most difficult things I’ve ever done. I’ve done some really difficult things in my life but that measured highly because it was such a stretch; it didn’t come naturally. That’s why I referred to it as gut-wrenching.

The month that I was certified, there was a shortage of coaches and an assignment available in Quesnel. I was called to start coaching on an emergency basis because I happened to be familiar with the staff at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training. That started my coaching career. Without coaching it would have been very difficult to make the transition into mediation. Coaching provided a degree of income, it provided a tremendous opportunity to network, and to practise my skills. For those three reasons the coaching was very important; it enabled me to make the transition a lot quicker.
The Responsibilities and Challenges of a Professional Mediator: 
Post-Certificate Learning

It has now been several years since Kevin began his careers as a coach and mediator. He has worked in many areas independently and with other colleagues. As well as divorce and separation mediation, he has worked with clients on harassment, criminal injury, and child protection. His most recent experience involves multi-party organizational conflict resolution and issues related to developing respectful workplace programs.

He has clearly reached a different level of learning, one characterized by his professional experience and insights into practice. He is recognized as a senior mediator in British Columbia and receives regular invitations to participate on mediation and special-interest committees.

As a professional, he has many different roles and responsibilities. In addition to coaching and mediating, he now teaches a financial divorce mediation course. He has also developed his own mediation training business. As part of his responsibilities in this area, he designs and instructs courses and prepares training materials. Much of his learning in these areas is derived from new areas of application for mediation as well as the skills they require.

There are also many informal learning opportunities that emerge in between his professional commitments. Last summer while in Switzerland, for example, he was introduced to the project leader of a peace and disarmament program at the United Nations. Kevin was asked what he thought about teaching conflict resolution and anger management skills to Canadian peacekeepers.

Opportunities to network also come by mail. He recently received word about a project in Australia to develop interest-based electoral campaigns. This caught Kevin's eye and he wrote back requesting further information.

Kevin remains highly motivated in his conflict resolving roles. He thrives on new challenges and opportunities to extend his learning. Although his experiences have surpassed those of many learners, he continues to use the same fundamental skills he acquired at the Justice Institute. The language he uses is the same type of language he used when explaining interests to me when I was learning mediation and negotiation. In his personal as well as professional relationships he strives to connect with people from a collaborative perspective and to shift from judgment to curiosity.
Although Kevin says that he is probably at about the halfway point on his own learning continuum, it is clear that his extensive background has enabled him to reflect on his purpose as a mediator and trainer from many different perspectives. This stage of learning is characterized by integration and assimilation.

I asked him to share some of his experiences. I also asked what he has learned about the professional roles and responsibilities of mediators. We talked about alternative philosophies of mediation as well as questions of ethics and self-disclosure.

**Reflections on Mediation**

Some people think the purpose of mediation is to come to an agreement. Some people believe that it’s to transform the parties into a collaborative entity. I believe both are valiant goals and products of the mediation process. They both involve looking at people’s interests and building relationships in a meaningful way.

My personal objective as a mediator is to be able to understand human behaviour to the point where I can maximize my effectiveness and be able to help two people negotiate through very difficult times. I believe that when a person does something or says something it makes sense to them at the time. If I don’t agree with it or think that I would like to change that behaviour, I probably have a better chance of having that behaviour changed by trying to understand what the underlying motivator was rather than passing judgment on the action. In my mind, I can create what I perceive to be a more favourable change by being curious, not judgmental and authoritative.

I feel like I am a good mediator. I can mediate children’s issues with parents that are extremely hurt and angry. I can do that because I can be truly empathic; I can put myself in their shoes; I can connect with them on a compassionate level that I never could have before. Every time I get stuck with clients I go back and re-examine what I’m doing and how I’m doing it. Invariably, they’re stuck because they’ve gotten very positional and I haven’t helped them to move to their interests. When I go back and
start challenging them to think through interests, they typically become unstuck. That reinforces in me the significance of this interest-based process.

I want to be able to touch people at a deep level and I think this program is allowing me to do that. I know now that when I work with, for example, separating and divorcing people, they come into my office in a lot of pain and they go out with a little bit less pain. So I know I'm making a difference there. I know I'm making a difference in the people that I train or teach. I know I'm making a difference with some of the people in coaching. That really speaks to a big part of the purpose in my life.

In a mediation context we are taught to deal with the present and future. At the same time I believe that we need to talk about the past enough to understand what happened in order to move forward and create a set of behaviours that are going to work in the future. Self-disclosure for the clients, to a certain degree, is appropriate in those circumstances and even helpful in the transformative process. However, we need to be very careful not to get into going in directions where clients don't want to go.

An area of debate that we frequently have as mediators and students in this field is: How much counselling do we do? How much mediation do we do? Where do we draw the line? I think there is a gray zone and I think answers to these questions depend on a couple of things. One is what your clients need and want and what they agreed to. The second variable is the mediator's personal skill level. If your clients are coming to you for support in negotiating an agreement and you take them into some kind of behaviour modification, I don't think that's professionally serving your clients. I think that's crossing well past the gray zone and into an area lacking professionalism and judgment.

I was invited to Halifax to do some coaching and training in the Child Protection Mediation Program. That was my first insight into professionals taking people too far with questioning. I was coaching at the time. The person that was doing the mediation was a very skilled counsellor and he took one of his clients too deep to the point where that client broke which is not the purpose of Child Protection Mediation.
That let me know that there is a limit to where you want to go in mediation with your questions.

One context in which I have seen mediation and counselling successfully linked is in the area of mediation therapy. I did co-mediation with my wife and partner. We took clients through an interesting decision model to determine whether or not they were going to stay together or come apart. That was a really interesting learning process to realize that there is room for therapy and mediation in the same room as long as your clients want it and you know what you're doing.

My personal belief is that almost any dispute can be mediated or conciliated. Almost. What I like to think is that the main criterion that stops us from handling certain disputes is our own personal growth experiences and skills as a mediator. The more skilled and experienced, the more we grow as mediators, the better we will be able to handle the more extreme disputes. Self-disclosure is a piece of that. As you learn to manage self-disclosure along with the mediation process and the emotional climate you become more skilled.

**Reflections on Training**

After working in mediation with other professionals I started my training career. I did some training in Winnipeg for the University of Manitoba and in Saskatoon for the John Howard Society. Later I started my own training business locally.

Training has been a constant source of learning for me. One of the ways for me to really solidify my learning is to try to teach it. An example right now is my move into multi-party, organizational conflict resolution. I've started writing a manual on how to do that. Whether or not that manual ever gets published or I end up teaching a course are not the reasons why I'm writing the manual. The reason I'm writing the manual is to help me solidify my learning. Once I do that I would certainly be able to teach it. But that's not my primary goal. My primary goal is to learn and preparing myself to teach is one of the most effective ways for me to do that.
I have examined the conflict resolution field in a great more detail than I would have had I not been trying to teach. One of my fears is to stand up in front of a group of people and look foolish or ill-prepared. That doesn’t mean that I need to have an answer for everything but I need to be credible; I need to know what I’m talking about.

I think when you see a trainer demonstrating a skill in most cases they do it very well because they’ve done it a lot and in front of a group. Even when you’re coaching you’re demonstrating, not necessarily the whole process, but little bits here and there as to what kind of questions or interventions you would come up with. That process of doing it more combined with thinking about it more results in being able to do it better. There are other components such as being genuine and spontaneous and engaging. I don’t know if those qualities can be learned or taught. In every situation you’ll find a range of abilities.

Placing the Learning in Perspective

I find this is a really exciting time in my life where I’m past the point of the gut-wrenching learning where you have to learn so much in such a short period of time. Once you get there the learning that comes after is a lot more fun. That’s where I’m at right now: I’m really enjoying the learning. I find that the challenge is more of an intellectual challenge rather than a survival challenge. I think that’s more enjoyable getting into an intellectual debate rather than a survival kind of situation. I don’t ever think I’ll finish learning.

An example of how I have continued to learn relates to one of the models I was shown in my training, the Intent, Action, Effect model. The first level of learning I was shown was to resolve the conflict by clarifying the intent. This seemed superficial to me, so I kept digging and questioning anyone who would listen--there are great benefits to having colleagues in the field.
The next level of learning that came through was this idea that the effect frequently caused an "injury." If this injury was not dealt with, the conflict would probably not be resolved. Clarifying the intent just didn’t do it.

Through further inquiries, I learned that it was necessary to discuss: What happened to create the injury? What was the effect? How would the injured party prefer to be? What needs to take place in order for that to happen? Each of these questions need to be asked in depth and with a great deal of sensitivity. One could ask if this is counselling. The answer to that is not as important as: Is this what needs to happen to help a person resolve a conflict when an injury has been piled on top of injury over many years? We use the skills and knowledge that we have. I always want more of both.

I had the good fortune to be tutored by my wife and partner who is highly skilled in this field and has a mental health background. She likes to go where it is the most challenging and because she is my tutor, I have followed. This path led us through: separation and divorce mediation, high conflict couples, abuse and violence in mediation, mediation therapy, victim offender mediation, child protection mediation, harassment and discrimination mediation, and now respectful workplace mediation. Each of these required a slightly different model and a higher level of content knowledge. The common threads that runs through all of them are: an ability to move from positions to interests, an ability to be sensitive and engage fully, and a demonstration of caring and integrity.

My belief in being interest-based goes well beyond resolving conflict. It is truly a philosophy or way of life. In addition to using it for interpersonal conflict resolution, negotiation and mediation, I have used it to overcome self-doubts, manage staff, clarify values, reduce stress, problem solve, make decisions, plan for the future, and communicate more effectively.

Kevin’s enthusiasm for conflict resolution learning is infectious. Throughout the interviews he has talked about many new and exciting possibilities for the field and for himself. His knowledge and skills provide a framework to his understanding of his mission as a conflict resolver.
After listening to Kevin, I asked him to try and pull together the threads of his learning. What does he feel he has gained from his experiences at the Justice Institute? And what might onlookers observe now in his communication skills that may be different from before?

They would probably say that I have stopped telling people what to do. That's a big one: I was very free with my advice. I think I've always been a fairly good listener. I've never been good at standing up to someone when I feel I'm being attacked. Now I'm much more ready to stand my ground.

The conflict resolution process is an interest-based process for addressing life's challenges. The assessments were a lesson in humility as well as a challenge to pull myself up from the depths of despair. In going through the learning, I looked at and changed some basic beliefs and values with the result that both my relationships and self-esteem were enhanced. It has given me a new purpose in life: to touch people in a more meaningful way at an emotional level and to be able to say, "I was here and I did make a difference."
CHAPTER 10
SANDY’S STORY: FINDING HOME

Setting the Context

Home for me is a very comfy, cozy, wonderful place. I just love being there and I love being there with my family. A joke in my age group is that the kids are still at home. For me, it’s a treat to have them coming in and out with things that are going on in their lives. At the same time I look forward to them having their own places and building their own space. I don’t have a fear of them leaving or sense of “It’ll be horrible; it’ll be an empty nest.” It’s almost like then I’ll have two other homes to be involved with and to enjoy.

Sandy was part of my study group in conflict resolution. One day many months ago she invited me into her home. Her house is a beautiful wood-framed structure across the street from the ocean. When you look out the front window you can see the Vancouver skyline in the background. In order to reach the ocean you have to cross the street and carefully climb down a clay ledge tattered by patches of overgrown grass. The descent will only take a minute. Or you can stay on top and wind your way along a well-worn path to Kitsilano Beach while the ocean breeze sweeps your face. This is where Sandy walks. She lives with her husband, a family physician, and two grown-up children, her older son and a daughter both in their twenties.

Sandy is 49 years old. When I visited her the Christmas season was approaching. Sometime in between our discussion of conflict resolution she showed me handicrafts and gifts she had made. She had sewn a bedroom ensemble of sheets, pillows, and a bedspread for her daughter. Everything matched. She had also made some bees-wax candles, their edges twirled and decorated with tiny star stickers. All of these items were exquisite. I could tell that much care had gone into their creation. I could tell that her home was a warm and special place.

Ever since I have known Sandy I have felt at home. Somehow she has the ability to make me feel relaxed like I am walking with her on the path by the ocean. She is an attentive listener with a warm smile and a good sense of humour.
Her ability to make others feel at home is not only part of her personality, it is an important thread in her conflict resolution learning. I have known Sandy for over 2 years. She has taught me much about what it means to listen and to be empathic. When I was preparing to redo my assessment in negotiation she lent me the videotape of her own assessment. She had done extremely well. When I watched her role play on tape I again saw her calm voice and relaxing body language.

Sandy married at a young age. Her roles as mother and spouse taught her much about what it means to be in relationship with those she loves, what it means to build a sense of family. Sandy has also learned about relationships through an extensive history of organizational work in different communities. Each organization has functioned like a family with its own ups and downs.

The two previous stories in this section were those of male learners. Sandy’s narrative and the one after it are tales of women. As learners, they talk about conflict in their lives through their roles at home, at work, and in the community. Their words are gripping and down-to-earth. In some areas Sandy and Sydney, the learner featured in the next life story, extend the themes developed in earlier narratives; in others, their images and understandings of learning are highly personal. An understanding of their experiences as students and as women is important for determining the connections between the two.

Sandy’s decision to take conflict resolution training marked a changing set of circumstances in her life, circumstances which challenged the ways in which she viewed her roles and relationships. Although she did not have a particular learning outcome in mind when she went to the Justice Institute, she was aware of her need to spend more time on herself.

One way to think about her story is in terms of responsibility. As well as the fact that her story extends the notions of community from the last two chapters, I have placed her narrative after John’s because it presents a very different view of responsibility. Both John and Kevin referred to individual responsibility in terms of giving back to society. Conflict resolution, they said, provides a way to strengthen interpersonal relationships in the community. Sandy’s story of learning is about too much responsibility. She says that her sense of responsibility to help others competed with her personal needs and became a source of conflict in itself.
Sandy is striving to reach a balance in her life and to make sense of her learning. Her children are now young adults and she has decided to cut back on some of her community projects. Her learning in conflict resolution has taught her that it is alright to spend time in reflection before embarking on new adventures. Home can be a quiet place for reflection as well as a gathering place to connect with others.

The Need for Conflict Resolution in the Home and Community: Frameworks for Sandy’s Learning

Students who take conflict resolution training come from particular social backgrounds. These backgrounds integrate specific roles and responsibilities that shape the purpose, process, and outcomes of their learning in the classroom.

Sandy’s experiences included her roles as mother and spouse. She also had a history of over 15 years of leadership roles in the community in areas such as the public school system, municipal and provincial politics, and other agencies such as the YWCA (Young Women’s Christian Association). Her responsibilities included lobbying and organizational work.

These endeavours brought her into contact with many different people. She was able to get a firsthand picture of conflict in groups. Sandy believed that it was important to be open-minded and collaborative when dealing with disagreements. She also realized that it was important to have skills in order to move individuals from their old ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour to a place of common ground. Good intentions by themselves, she discovered, were not enough to resolve conflicts.

Sandy believed the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program would provide her with the tools she needed to deal with conflicts more effectively at the community level. Her expectations were met. She also discovered a place for conflict resolution in her family relationships. In the following section Sandy discusses the background that led her to take courses at the Justice Institute as well as her own emerging beliefs and needs around conflict.

I am the oldest child in a family of two girls, was always very academic in school, did my degree at the University of Toronto, married right after I graduated, started a family, and raised two children--a boy who is now 26 and a girl who is 21.
During that time of raising kids I was very active in the community. Shortly after our daughter was born we moved to northern B.C. That was a very significant experience in my life because it was the first time I'd lived in a small town—5,000 people. I became quite involved in community organizations, in organizing community groups. I was politically active as a school board trustee and then as a municipal councillor and recreation commissioner.

Community work continued to be very much a part of my life. Moving back to Vancouver I already had a lot of ideas and knowledge about how to be involved in things and so got quite involved in the city as well.

In my community roles I often came across a lot of conflict, conflict between groups and individuals and that's what led me to take the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. I had heard about it and wanted my participation in the community to be better. I knew of the program from friends who had taken it and I also knew that it was very much on a bent that was comfortable for me. It was really kind of: "Yes, I already agree with that approach and I want to reinforce my ability to handle things in that way and be better at it." I think it was the sense of knowing where I wanted to be and not knowing how to get there.

People go into conflict resolution training already wanting to reinforce the values that it encompasses; it's a kind of self-selecting thing. When I've talked about the program to my friends they have said that that's already the way I have approached things in the past or have made comments like: "Oh well, that's very much you" or "That would fit for you." I'm not sure that you could take somebody who doesn't value interest-based principles and who thinks that it's completely wrong and a waste of time, put them through the program, and find them totally changed.

Conflict had never been something that I was afraid of in the past. I think I always have seen conflict as an opportunity to change or to improve on something. I just wanted to do it better. I knew that in any conflict situation I wanted to come out with a win-win approach; I wanted to build on the relationship with that person I was in conflict with, not make it worse or destroy it
or come out with a solution and then never speak to each other.

I studied psychology in university because I had this innocent idea that I wanted to understand people’s minds better, understand what motivated people and led them to different behaviours—the emphasis being on understanding—not because I wanted to change or manipulate them, just understand what was going on. A big impact of my learning was recognizing that people are motivated for different reasons, lots of times things that you would never have thought of because it’s not your own life experience. So it’s understandable that they may react in a different way from how I would react because they’ve had a different experience.

One of the things I really learned from the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program is that conflict is more a perception than a reality in a lot of cases. I really notice that more now. People often jump to think we are in conflict over something and in reality we aren’t. We are actually, in some cases, even on the same side of the issue, even agree. We perceive that we have a difference of opinion and we may not because of not exploring it further or because of almost exploring it in a careless way rather than a careful way. We build on the differences instead of what we have in common and what connects us. There’s almost a societal, built-in need to disagree. I’m finding that really quite interesting, the impact that it has on us as a society for keeping us from achieving all that we could together. I think that the Justice Institute’s training is hugely valuable in that aspect—moving individual people from that place of looking for the conflict to the similarities or the ways in which we connect.

I chaired a number of my kids’ schools’ committees. There’s always conflict of what parents’ expectations are of the school. Within the parent group itself there’s always conflict of one persons’ ideas of what they’d like to see happen versus someone else’s. On city council there were lots of different interest group conflicts: what residents wanted, what sports groups wanted,
and what town businesses wanted. Then in my own neighbourhood I've chaired our Neighbourhood Residents' Committee for about 12 years now. That's always fraught with what's going on in the neighbourhood: concerns about traffic and parking and development and different people's perceptions of what should happen.

I know that sometimes in community dealings there have been situations where I have felt that I went into the situation honestly listening to the other person's side of the story and trying very hard to balance the assertiveness on my part in getting my needs across and listening and recognizing the other side's needs, came out of it with the feeling that a good solution had been found—that the other side's needs had been met—and yet recognizing that there wasn't a good feeling afterwards. Why were there bad feelings? Because the solution was not what they came into the situation with they didn't perceive the solution as being fair. I think that was probably one of the things I went into the program thinking: "Why is that? What was wrong in the way that happened?" I think I did not get across in those meetings that I was genuinely concerned about the needs on the other side and looking for a solution that would meet both needs. I think that was a big part of it. I had that concept of being open and listening to the other side but I also had a tendency to think that I knew what their needs were and jump to a great conclusion, instead of bringing that person with me so that we could come to that conclusion together. I think that's why, in the end, even though everybody would be happy with the solution, they weren't happy with each other.

I think probably the biggest thing I learned later at the Justice Institute was the need to ask questions, check out what people are really thinking. It's a difficult one because what happens is that, from my perspective, my intentions are good. I go away thinking, "Well, I really cared about the other person's feelings or needs or what was happening with them and I was really trying to work out something that was good for them" having made an assumption. The result is that the other person feels unheard, doesn't see that you do care what their point is, and goes away angry or dissatisfied. Then, for me, what happens is that I feel kind of hurt by that because I think my intentions
were good. It's a really big thing to learn how to do that better.

Raising children also teaches you about thinking about somebody else's needs versus your own, being able to step outside of what you want to do and accommodate somebody else on a daily, 24-hour kind of basis. I think that being a mother had a big impact on my understanding of some of the principles underlying conflict resolution.

When I went home to visit my parents in 1990 I noticed how everything my father did annoyed my mother, she just constantly would find fault with him. I suddenly saw in him somebody who was trying very hard to please her but there was no pleasing. I thought, "I don't want to end up there. It was seeing something in my parents that I could see happening in myself. I didn't want to go down that road. We get to a point in our retirement where we're so lucky to be alive and still be together and it's spent spatting over things." I think that I went home and suddenly looked at Mark as, you know, sort of the little boy who just wanted to be appreciated and loved for who he was and that was in me too. If I could give that then I might get it. What happened for us is that I decided to see him in a different light, somebody who after all—we'd been married for maybe 20 years at that time—and he's still here and he obviously cares and wants to be here, so let's be happy and celebrate that.

I went through a period of time in our relationship where I think I saw him as standing in my way of being what I wanted to be or being myself. I was constantly seeing things that he said as a criticism of me and reacting to them defensively. For instance, he's very athletic and he really loves sports. I like some activities but I see them as more of a social thing than a physical challenge. In his non-acceptance of where I was with that, I felt like somehow I wasn't as good or good enough and resented that. My response to it was to belittle him--how foolish he was, how he wasted his time playing, and didn't do anything meaningful in life. So this started to be a real source of conflict between us. It just went back and forth where he belittled my time in meetings, flaky meetings, you know, "What did you accomplish?" So it just got to be a battle of wits.
I've never been in a position to declare war on a worldwide scale and still I can't help but feel that a lot of what gets us to that place is old ways of dealing with differences of opinion. When you just look around your own little circle of contacts it's so different from how we have been raised to respond and react to things. When you see the difference it makes when you change that reaction, you can't help but say it's not part of the way we have been dealing with things traditionally throughout the world. I think the old way is very much a closed-circle-of-wagons kind of approach that focuses on “What do I want to get out of this?” and “How do I want to manipulate the other side of this situation to get what I want?” It's so focused on defence and arguing my case and building my case and convincing the other side that my case is better than their case. It closes off understanding. That really is a spiral downward.

I've always had a feeling that people are very much the same and have been from the beginning. Looking back over history not a lot has changed in relationship terms. Yeah, we've made some great discoveries and new ways of living and quality of life but how we relate to each other hasn't really changed a whole lot and our own individual needs, I don't think, have changed at all. I always start from that point, that what's important to me and not so much what's important to me but what is really basic to what I need as a human being, is pretty much the same as what is basic to you and what you need as a human being. I always try to go back to that whenever I am with people or in situations where there seems to be a difference of opinion or a situation where somebody is getting on your nerves and you think you don't have anything in common with this person: in my own mind, go back to that sense that I have a whole lot in common. We're very much alike. We are, in fact, human beings with very common needs. Where is that place where we can connect and meet and understand each other? That's the thing I want to build on, not words that sound like we're different.
Rekindling the Home Fires: The Power of Conflict Resolution

Sandy's university education and her experiences as a mother, spouse, and citizen taught her that perception plays a key role in conflict. Her visit to her parents was a vivid reminder of what could happen when individuals stopped trying to understand one another. She described this as a turning point in her life, 4 years before she took conflict resolution training. It motivated her to re-examine her own family relationships.

Another important turning point came just before she went into the training. Her husband had been offered what appeared to be a rewarding career in the United States. The family began preparing to leave Canada and put a bid on a new home. At the last minute, however, there were concerns about conditions in the work contract. The family decided to stay in Vancouver.

Although these two events, the visit to Toronto and the fallen job offer, were not causes of Sandy's entry into the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, they were significant influences, she says. They both served to confirm the importance of her family and her home. The training not only provided an opportunity to learn new skills but to try and develop a sense of where she was going in her own life.

Sandy applied her skills at home and in the community and noted the ways in which they influenced her relationships, in subtle as well as dramatic ways.

In the past when you had an argument or disagreement with someone you were a part of that; I mean, you were creating it as much as the other person. What I found after I went away from the program and into real life was that dealing with people in a different way resulted in a different reaction. It was creating a different response and therefore the situation was much easier.

I think that I always had a sense of the way to get there is to sit down and talk, open your mind, be receptive to where somebody is coming from. But I wasn't always aware of the little messages that I was giving off that were shutting that down. So my learning consisted of acquiring the tools and developing an awareness of how I was part of not realizing my own goals.
Role plays in the classroom gave me a greater awareness or understanding of how other people were seeing me versus what my intentions were. They provided the opportunity for honest feedback. When I said something and the other person replied, "That makes me feel like blah" I wondered how that could be when it was not my intention to produce that feeling. How was it when I intended something very different that they got this message? Then I recognized how much that happens and the need to be aware of it.

The role plays I found very scary, being in a performance mode, knowing that the people in the room with you also know what you're trying to achieve, and feeling somewhat judged--whether people judge you or not. There's that sense of feeling whether you've measured up or not, being in the company of people who value the process and are trying to learn it and seeing how hard it is to make that happen. The reality was that it was a lot easier to use conflict resolution skills in the outside world because in the role play people were trying very hard to react in a way that they see people react in life but they are reacting to a different stimulus.

I remember the very first course I took. They asked you in the role play to create your own scenario. I created the scenario of conflict between me and my mom. They turned on the camera and rolled it, we went into this thing and wow! There was all this emotion that came up, an unleashing of emotion that I was so awful to my poor surrogate mom in this role play. I thought, "Wow!"

The instructor kept stopping me and saying, "Well, wait a minute," you know, "Now what are you saying here?" and "Give her a chance to answer" and all this kind of thing. It really took me by surprise to have it on video. Then to go back and see myself was a whole different experience than going home and remembering a conversation you've had with somebody. It was a real revelation of how I am in my relationship with my mother. I wished I hadn't picked that scenario but, in fact, I learned a lot about that relationship in my life: what wasn't working in it and how I was contributing to what wasn't working.
One of the things I always go back to is a lot of times when you are criticizing someone else it's about yourself. There was an instance with another role player at the Justice Institute. He was the mediator in the scenario and I was with another role player. We were just acting this thing out and supposedly talking about what our views were. He was constantly chastising us and at the end of the scenario was quite upset that we hadn't listened to him; that was making him look bad as a mediator because we weren't listening and doing what he said. I remember sitting there thinking, "I wonder why this person is even taking this course?" then going home and thinking, "How is that me? How am I maybe doing some of the same thing?" So there were lots of opportunities for learning more about yourself.

One of the impacts of role plays was that they were everyday situations that I may not have thought of as being conflict situations. You think of conflict as being after you've gotten into it and you're fighting and you're in trouble--then that's a conflict. But if you don't get to that stage, if you go into the situation and you sit down, talk, and work out a solution then somehow it doesn't seem like it was a conflict. So one of the things the scenarios did was alert me to what the potential for conflict is out there and why sometimes you get into a conflict and sometimes you don't. They were really worthwhile because they were very hands-on. It's so much different than reading a story or a theory in a book and actually sitting down with somebody and working through something.

In terms of my relationship with my husband, I think that the conflict resolution program has had a wonderful impact on helping me to recognize triggers, to recognize my old ways of responding, stopping, and finding a new reaction. A game I played with myself at the beginning of my training recognizing that there were some things about our relationship that I didn't like and that I wanted to change was to decide in my own mind that this thing that I didn't like about our relationship wasn't in fact the way it was--it was different--and to see it in terms of how I liked it. Maybe it's just my perception but I'm much happier.

One of the areas of conflict for my husband and I in the past had been around our kids' choices. I think that I have always been comfortable with allowing them to make their own choices and to learn from their mistakes. He has always been more worried about that, wanting to
help them or influence them to make the right choice, what he perceives as the right choice. That would be a source of disagreement for us. I think he felt that because I'm with the kids more he wanted to tell me how I should be influencing them differently and that would just blow up into an argument. Since doing the conflict resolution program I am much more understanding of his need to influence that change and to put it in a positive light. Instead of "You're overcontrolling" to be able to say things like "It really worries you that they're making this choice and where will that take them?"--just to allow him to explore what's bothering him. It's made a big difference, I think, in his own ability to deal with his discomfort.

My daughter announced she wanted to buy a Jeep YJ. My response to it was: "Oh, that would be pretty neat!" you know. "Have you looked for ads in the paper?" (She was looking at ads). "Have you found anything that looks interesting?" She wanted me to go to a dealer with her to test drive a Jeep and to find out about a new Jeep versus a second-hand Jeep. I said, "Sure, I'd be happy to do that!"

My husband was beside himself: Why would she be buying a Jeep? A Jeep was an impractical vehicle to own and she couldn't afford it. She should be doing other things with her life than thinking about buying Jeeps or buying cars. I guess in the past I would say to him, "So, she'll probably figure that out but she's got to figure it out herself. So leave her alone. If that's the case, she'll come to that conclusion." This time I just said to him, "It really worries you that Julie is heading down this path and not looking at some other things in her life that she should be doing. She's focused on some things that don't have a lot of meaning to you." And that just opened a whole different conversation. I think that conversation opener worked so much better instead of: "Here's my point of view and I hear your point of view but," you know, "that's your problem!" It really has nothing to do with Julie or her Jeep or her choices. It really had more to do with our relationship and being able to talk about things and to explore things a little further.

My husband has always been a very supportive person in whatever I do. I think the message that he gives me is that he admires the way I do things or handle things and at the same time he doesn't see the conflict resolution skills as something he could implement himself. I think that it's partly his training and the fact that
he went through an educational program that was based on a scientific model that looked at things from a very factual place. Things are exactly what they are. My education was much different: things aren't always what they seem to be. I think that's the difference there, he wants things to be measurable and results-oriented and if you can't measure it then there's something not quite right. Yet I have this feeling that I have had an influence on him, changing how he looks at things a lot of the time. He vacillates between admiring the principles of conflict resolution and being influenced by them and wanting to see them as something that is kind of flaky and wanting to be skeptical.

My son, who is in law, and I have some spirited conversations sometimes when I talk about some of the principles of the conflict resolution program. He gets skeptical about some of the ideas and at the same time I think that he would be very receptive to the program but it would have to come from someone else, not from me. I would love him to do the program as an adjunct to his training because I think that he would fit into it quite well.

My daughter has always been very much her own kind of person. She has her own ideas, her own ways of doing things, and she's gonna do them. At the same time she has always been very much interested in what I think about things--what I would do, how I would handle something. Certainly throughout this program she has often come to me and said, "So this is what's going on. What would you do?" you know. We've talked a lot about the program and the ideas and she seems quite interested and willing to try it out, to incorporate some of it into her thinking.

I feel really good about my immediate family relationships. I'm really comfortable with my husband and my kids. Both kids are still living at home so they're there everyday and they have adult lives that are filled with all kinds of events. There just doesn't seem to be any conflict in the family. I'm not sure if it's so different or if it's that perception thing--whether in reality there isn't conflict. It may be that when things arise they don't upset or anger me in the way they may have in the past. I'm more ready to deal with it and to be confident that the outcome will be good.
I have also used conflict resolution skills with other people at home and in the community. A recent situation was the death of an aunt. There are four sisters involved in this: my mother and her three sisters. One sister died and my mother ended up as the administrator of the estate. There has been a great deal of fear within the family about one other sister, one of my aunts who has always been difficult and a problem for everyone to get along with. Nobody wanted to phone her or deal with her because she reacts in such a negative and violent manner, it seems.

It fell to me to be the liaison with this aunt. It just seemed like “Sure,” you know, “I’ll give her a call and find out what’s going on and see what she’s thinking.” The conversation with her was so easy, was not fraught with what seemed to be happening with everyone else. I could see why. She would say something that sounded very threatening or blaming and people would immediately react to that and get defensive. I just listened and tried to understand and explore what she meant by that or what was important to her, just turned the whole thing into a very easy, relaxed conversation that was actually very warm and caring and connecting. There was no friction at all. Yet if she called and someone else answered the phone there would be an escalation of emotion. It meant to me that this program works, just staying in that place of listening to the other person, being open about what they’re saying. Being prepared to understand and reflect back to them takes you in a whole different direction and a mile down the road to building a solution or even a relationship.

I can think of other situations. Someone wanted to expand their property and other neighbours didn’t want that to happen. In situations like that everybody likes to talk about the other side—how unrealistic they’re being. It’s not buying into that but being able to rephrase things in a positive light for both sides. What a huge difference that makes in people being able to move from their own position to accommodating the other person’s needs. Before I would listen to each side of the argument, allow one party to rail against the other, and just try to understand individuals’ frustration or discouragement without helping them to change their perspective of the other person. It’s one thing to be understanding and supportive; it’s something else to be able to move people from
wallowing in their frustration to a place of recognizing the other person’s frustration.

One of my friends recently went through a divorce. In the last 3 or 4 years I’ve been a sounding board for her without wanting to give any advice. Since I started conflict resolution training she has expressed--well, it sounded like frustration to me--that she wanted advice. What would I do in this situation? How would I handle this? I’ve always been resistant to doing that. So in this case I used the program to say, “Well, you know, something that I learned in this course was the need to find out what’s important to your ex-husband in this situation” and walked her through a whole mini-mediation of how you handle it. I was uncomfortable that it was advice-giving. She came back to me afterwards and said that it just worked so well for her. It was a whole different approach to how she had been dealing with the situation and it had an amazing impact on their discussion and coming to some resolution. So that was encouraging. It gave me a way of helping somebody through something rather than just listening reflectively. It was really a sharing of the tools.

I finished the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program last March and since that time it seems to me that there has been no conflict in my life. When I really think about it that’s not true. There have been lots of little situations but they have never felt like conflict to me. I’ve just gone into it differently without feeling like I need to build my case--that’s disappeared. There’s been no sense of “Before I go and talk to this person I’ve got to get my case all together here.” It’s been much more of a “Oh well, there’s a problem here so we should just sit down and talk about it.”
Confronting Old Demons

Sandy’s enthusiasm for conflict resolution was tempered by feelings of responsibility. Her relationships reinforced this feeling. As we have seen, one of her friends asked her for advice about how to interact with an ex-husband. She began to feel that her learning was placing additional responsibilities on her shoulders. Her response was to rebel.

Going through the program I found myself suddenly with a very reactionary outburst to a situation. It was almost like the program was saying: “This is the wrong way to do it.” I was rebelling against that. I was taking a program that I valued and believed it and agreed with but at the same time attempting to understand and constrain internal anger was creating a powder keg that would suddenly, surprisingly burst. I often found myself feeling angry about something, in my own head wanting to react in a very angry way, making up all sorts of wonderful phrases, you know, that I would tell this person. The conflict resolution training doesn’t take you away from that altogether but at least you are able to recognize that this would not be helpful. “I do have another way of dealing with this that would be more effective. So calm down and let’s go a different route here.”

The other interesting piece that has happened for me since the program started is this sense of a huge, overwhelming responsibility to always do it right, to always be the one to solve it or to mediate it or to make it okay. I’m finding myself almost in conflict right now because every time I get involved like in this interview process or with something in the community, I have this huge sense that I took this course for a reason and it was somehow a global reason to make a difference. The training left me with this sense of how huge the task is. It’s simple when you just deal with it yourself in the community with the people around you and in your friendships. But you start to really see that what’s happening for you and your little network and family is what’s happening globally. You start to see that world war has a very simple beginning.
The last thing I need is a greater sense of responsibility. Responsibility for others is a theme with me. People come to me for advice a lot and sometimes it feels like being dumped on, always hearing complaints or woes. I realize that one of the things I’ve learned to do well is listen and I listen with heart. So I take other people’s needs very seriously and take them on myself with a sense of where I can help. It results in me taking people under wing and maintaining relationships that aren’t doing anything for me.

The year that I took conflict resolution training was a time-out kind of year for me. I wanted to stop doing a lot of the stuff that I’d been involved in. I wanted to do something for me, for my own personal growth. The Conflict Resolution Certificate Program was a perfect opportunity because it was something that I agreed with and valued and wanted to know more about. It was like spending time on myself. It feels like it got turned into doing things for other people, finding a better way of dealing with others. So I’m thinking, “Well, what about me?”

Applying the conflict resolution skills with my family is much more difficult than in the community I would say. With family the longevity of a relationship brings with it a whole lot of baggage and habits, of what our expectations are of each other. Those are really hard to hurdle, to change in myself, to put that baggage aside and start fresh. I think from a community perspective there’s some of that in ongoing relationships, in situations that you’ve been a part of for a period of time but even then it’s easier to make the change because it’s not as deep or personal.

I think probably the one person I find really the hardest to make the change is with my mother. There are lots of little triggers in that relationship. I think it’s a combination of the closeness of the relationship and the distance. She’s in Toronto and I’m here in Vancouver. So our relationship has been a telephone relationship. It’s easy on the phone to let things pass by or to not address some things directly. Consequently, they stay there and fester.

Recently we’ve had a lot of company this year and I’m feeling like I’ve had enough and feeling at the end of my rope. The other evening my husband and I went out and he said, “You know, I’m thinking that I don’t really like having visitors.”
And I said, without thinking, “Oh, that’s because you’re selfish!” and immediately realized this is a conversation stopper. I right away felt so deflated with myself. Why on earth would I say that? I didn’t know how to get out of it. I just sort of lost it for a while there. What I wanted to do was back up and not say that.

Of course his reaction was, “Yeah, I could expect you to say something like that. Yeah, that’s how you would see it.” He just went into a tirade of: “I could expect that you wouldn’t understand. Here I am trying to share my feelings with you and I could expect you just to knock me down.”

I found myself sitting there thinking, not saying anything and just thinking: “He has every right to feel this way. He’s absolutely right.” I think I was so stunned at myself saying that.

It was a great learning experience because of what it unleashed, a good example of why that sort of thing doesn’t work. I learned from that. It will come up again because we’re both feeling like we’ve had enough. I know that when we are without guests and have some time to be alone and to talk again I’m sure that it will come up and that it will be an opportunity to say something, that it was an unfair thing for me to say because I was feeling exactly the same way.

I think that was a good example of an old trigger. I think that I was frustrated with having lots of company and feeling that I’m the one who does most of the work around having out-of-town guests, that I put a lot into making people feel welcome and showing them around and the sense that he doesn’t do as much. So probably there’s some background resentment there. It was almost: “If you think that this is too much then you must be really selfish because I’m putting out a lot more than you and I’m just making it to the end here.

The things that are standing out for me right now are the failures I guess because knowing you can do something better really highlights your failure when you don’t. One of the things I think is interesting is that in the last year and a half since starting the program I have developed new ways of being worse at some things.

Something that comes to mind is having a situation where in traffic some guy rolled down his window and yelled at me and called me a stupid bitch. I can’t remember what he thought I should have done differently. I responded by just looking at him and saying, “Shut up, you brainless dick!” and thought, “Now there’s a good response to the word “bitch!””
and thinking about how the word bitch makes me feel and thinking that "brainless dick" was a good way to make him feel the same way and afterwards thinking, "Holy Dinah!", you know, "I wonder if I'm feeling frustrated and held down by this program?"

Every once in a while I just have to really let loose. It's not something that I ever would have said before and it seemed really funny to me that, in the middle of doing this wonderful program, I would come up with this new, great, terrible response. That's a minor situation, I think, because I certainly had no ongoing relationship with this other driver in traffic. However, I can think of another situation where again in the middle of this program I had a conflict with a neighbour who was parking his car in front of our house and leaving it there for a month at a time while he went away. Given the parking situation in the neighbourhood and the stuff that we had been through, it seemed like an unfair and particularly unneighbourly thing to do. Everybody on the street is aware of parking problems.

So I left a note on his car because I didn’t know the individual, asking him not to leave it there for long periods and got no response from that. Then one day he was out working on his car in front of my house. So I went out on the porch and again asked him if he would not leave his car for weeks on end. He yelled back at me that it was a free country and he'd park anywhere he damn well pleased. Instead of using some of the skills, I just immediately reacted and said, "Fine. I'll call the city and have you ticketed under the 3-hour bylaw" and shut the door and left the situation. It just escalated into a bad-relationship instead of an opportunity to really find out what his frustration was around parking, what his situation was, and looking for some sort of solution that would work for him. It was again a good lesson that there were some opportunities lost in shutting the door into a "Do it my way or the highway" sort of response. I think the value in the conflict resolution program was in understanding where I could have taken that situation and what could have developed from it, knowing that I was the cause of closing the door.

All of us in the program, including the instructors, are human and we have come from different backgrounds of learning. We're all trying to change or move in a different direction. It's not easy and it takes a lot of work. We're all going to slip.
One of the things the program did was strike a chord for persistence, to say that's a natural thing, that's going to happen and it doesn't mean that there's something wrong with the concepts or they don't work in certain situations. Rather it's a matter of persisting until you get it right, so go back and try again. Go back, be more open, think where I may have made a mistake in this whole thing, where I got off track, and how I can get back on a more ideal track.

**Striving for Balance**

Since graduating Sandy has had more time to reflect on her learning. Although she still talks about it as a process, an adventure, or a set of tools, she is also trying to make sense of it as a series of options that will find a place in her life. She understands that it is important not always to apply her learning from a care-giving perspective but to listen to her own needs during times of conflict.

What exactly has she learned? Is it anything new? How will dispute resolution be a part of her future? How will she internalize this learning experience as something she can own without feeling obliged?

Sandy does not have the answers to all of these questions. She is lingering on them. She identified this research project as a stepping stone in her learning process.

It has been over 9 months since my first interview with Sandy. I telephoned her yesterday and asked what she had been doing recently. She said that one of her activities had been to participate in a small group of conflict resolution graduates who were discussing their futures in the conflict resolution field. The group shared ideas and resources that will help them make the transition to the job market as mediators.

Today Sandy lives in the same house by the ocean but she continues to hang onto new dreams for the future. Her daughter has moved away to attend college so Sandy now has another home to visit. Together with her husband, she has also decided to purchase recreational property on a nearby island that will serve as a quiet retreat from the busy pace of the city. Sandy says they want to simplify their lives. I wish them much peace.

What is conflict resolution? To me it's a peace plan, learning how to create peace in the world at a worldwide level and discovering how personal that learning is and enters into your life. For me, it has been awareness development, keeping me alert to where I'm at, how I'm
doing, and what I need to improve.

It seems to me that there is less conflict within me than before and that I approach potential conflicts in a different way internally. I am at greater peace with myself. When I lose that I know the way back. Conflict resolution is a good tool for reminding me what is most important to me, for keeping my values front row and centre. I respect my choices and defend them against myself.

I can hardly contain my joy of life--there are so many opportunities I have trouble focussing. I don't pursue in depth because I don't want to miss out on variety. I get bored. I want to keep tasting new experiences and I want to have time for old comforts and loves. I have a sense of being on a path, a wonderful, enlightening, enriching, joyous path. I don't know where I'm going but always it seems to lead to just the right place.

What does my learning mean to me at this time? I don't know. I like it. It has enriched me. I don't feel changed--rather like coming home--like I wasn't sure of the track I was on or falling off the track. The program reassured me that this is track I want to be on and I'm back on it more solidly.

Recently my husband said he thought that something was going on with me and he didn't know what it was, couldn't put his finger on it. I asked him to describe what was different. He said, "Well, it's not that you've changed--though you are different--it's more like you've reinforced what you always were. I get the feeling that over the years you have tried many different things, tasted various roles and opportunities and now you are discarding what doesn't fit and settling into your true self." I thought that was incredibly perceptive. Because, while I have been, in a minor way, changing some of my activities, it has been much more evident to me in an internal sense, a strengthening and reaffirming of values.

I took the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program because I was involved in a lot of conflict mediating in my life and I wanted to be better at it. In some respects the program was an overdose of conflict and in other ways it was a relief from conflict, understanding how you can reduce it to resolution. I have pulled away from some of those conflict-riddled
areas and this research project has helped me to realize that that's okay. It's where I need to be right now to get some balance. The greatest conflicts in my life are within myself and my biggest inhibitor.

At this point I don't see the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program as a turning point in my life but more a piece of ongoing learning. I don't see myself as developing a new career out of it but I do see myself as using it more and more effectively everyday.

I no longer feel burdened by it. It seems to just flow naturally--almost to the point of making me fear that I've forgotten it. I keep checking to see--Did I do Step 1 or Step 2? Did I remember the process? Did I forget something?--because the results just seem to appear and be so positive I'm not quite sure how they happened.

Then I realize it has jelled. It has become a part of me and I'm using it more naturally without the stock phrases and in my own context so that it feels comfortable, not like a responsibility. And I no longer feel guilty that I am not getting on with being the sole cause and effect of world peace! I'm satisfied with making a difference in one person, one situation, one relationship at a time, and finding it immensely rewarding.
CHAPTER 11
SYDNEY'S STORY: JUSTICE FOR ALL

Setting the Context

When thinking about my story my first thought was of me as a little girl. On one occasion I had had a particularly difficult day in the third grade. My mother took me to the Dairy Queen where I met my third-grade teacher. She looked down at me and asked: “How are you?” I remember looking up at her and telling her exactly how I was which wasn’t very good.

When I got back into the car my mother said, “When people ask you how you are, Dear, don’t really tell them. They don’t really want to know. Just say you’re fine!”

It’s odd that I remember it. I felt ashamed and embarrassed. I got the message that people don’t really care how you’re feeling and they don’t really want to know when they ask. I felt different because I did really care and I did want to know about people when I was concerned about them.

That same year the teacher mentioned to Mother that she thought I was too soft for this hard world. I believe Mom told me so I’d “toughen up.” I didn’t know how and I wasn’t sure I wanted to. That stayed with me. I kept asking myself if I was too soft and had what it takes to make it in this world.

This has been my dilemma for three quarters of my life, feeling different because I was kind and gentle and didn’t want to hurt people. My tears have come easily and so has my laughter and I liked me that way and still do. I’ve always tried to be honest and have integrity. When I haven’t been those things then I pay some sort of price within myself. I feel the best when I’m in an honest place or a place of integrity within myself. The people around me I can trust have those qualities as well. It’s a safe place to be. I don’t want to put myself into any scary places anymore with people I don’t understand or don’t trust.

I think before conflict represented loss of love, loss of acceptance, loss of friendship. I think when I saw people fighting, some part of me thought that was in some way like a small death of relationship, of love, of caring--
that you were destroying something. Somehow it was tied up with being too aggressive and too angry. So in avoiding that I haven't always stood up for my rights. The message came through to me that somehow honesty and integrity were weaknesses of character. I knew something wasn't quite right but I thought, "What's my alternative? I don't know if I can develop into this yelling, screaming, foot-stomping type of person in order to get what I want. Maybe what I have to do is understand that I'm not going to get all that I want and that there are people in this world who will take advantage and that I have to avoid them as much as possible."

Now what I understand is: I don't have to avoid them and I don't have to take a back seat. I can actually use skills and get to a place of understanding with those types of people. I now realize that conflict is part of life. I'm more and more accepting of that and less frightened of conflict.

What conflict resolution did was it confirmed those things that were important to me. It's not abnormal to think that you can be a kind, caring, loving, soft individual and still do really well. Conflict resolution takes people's emotions into consideration. I haven't always seen that in the business world. You leave your emotions and feelings outside the door when you come to work. I don't think that's possible; I think people have those emotions all through the day. Conflict resolution says, "Well, we are all having emotions and we are all dealing with those emotions. You can still succeed, you can still do well with business, you can still be a nice person. You don't have to be like a doormat: you can still have some power."

I have always been attracted to power, always wanted to have the ability to make changes. It took me all these years to accept that there are two kinds of power and we make a choice as to which one we believe in and will live by. I used to think that the powerful people were aggressive and cut-throat--you know, men that drove Cadillacs and signed the deals and stepped on little people on their way up. I didn't understand for a long time what it meant that the meek shall inherit the earth. I now believe that the meek will inherit the earth and meek doesn't translate to weak. I once read a quote in Reader's Digest that said: "Don't mistake my kindness for weakness."
This is where my journey has led me: to an understanding that in kindness there is tremendous strength and in love there is great power.

So my learning came through my life and understanding that there's still a lot of power but a good power around having integrity and values and morals. For me, life is like a circle coming back to that which I have always known.

My studies, thoughts, and experiences around conflict resolution started as a career change and have become much more. For me, conflict resolution is a philosophy of living that embraces integrity and respect. Everybody keeps coming out a winner. I'm no better than you and you're no better than me.

I feel like the last year has been one of the most spiritual years of my life. I feel happier and more at peace and more validated. I think the most beautiful thing about mediation is: one person knows they've been heard and it matters what they've said. That's the first step. You realize that it's so important to us as human beings. That's what this work is all about for me. It's a feeling of passion. It's a very intense feeling I have about this work. It's clear now that it's part of my spiritual journey and I look forward to making it my life's work.

The story you have started reading is about Sydney, a single mother of two children. She is an American citizen living in the Greater Vancouver Region of British Columbia. Her background is in marketing and small business. Her objective when starting the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program was to become a mediator.

I have chosen her story to end this section because of its rich metaphors, detail, and insights into learning. I couldn't but be drawn into Sydney's powerful narrative. Her words, like her learning, were filled with integrity and candour.

As with Kate's story there is a connection between Sydney's tale and the social narratives in which it became embedded. As a child, Sydney felt it was important to have respect and integrity, although others did not share her beliefs. Later in life she saw how these values could also be disregarded at the workplace. Rather than take a proactive stance in resolving conflicts, many male managers simply disregarded them. As a woman, Sydney was expected to "tow the line" without questioning company ethics or operating policies. This focus on patriarchal authority raises questions about systemic power imbalances and gender issues introduced in
chapter 5 of my work.

Although there are elements of vindication and redressal in this story, Sydney is less concerned with these than she is with celebrating the new sense of direction in her life. As I sat and reflected on her story--probably in a coffee bar up the street--I realized that it is very much about justice. It helped me to understand the connection between the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training as a department within the Justice Institute. During her training in conflict resolution Sydney finally realized what she had believed since childhood: that it was alright to be honest and caring. She knew instinctively that honesty, integrity, and concern for other people were essential for strong relationships and community-building. Without these, it would be impossible to connect with other people in the workplace or in the family.

Sydney’s story of learning is about finding a way to honour personal knowledge. Her training at the Justice Institute became part of this journey. The win-win philosophy of conflict resolution reflected her own values. Through her learning she found a community of people as well as a way of being that stressed the importance of honesty and respect.

I first met Sydney while doing a university assignment. The purpose of the assignment was to practice my research skills. I received permission to observe a class at the Justice Institute with this goal in mind. Sydney happened to be a participant in the course. Following my observations and after listening to her speak about her life, I asked if it would be alright to interview her for a subsequent assignment. This was how I first discovered her story.

Many months later we saw one another at the first graduation ceremony for certificate students held at the Justice Institute’s new campus in New Westminster. Shortly after that event, I asked her if she would be willing to participate in my research study.

Like the other life stories I have presented, her’s speaks about a personal journey of learning. I have chosen to begin her tale with her memories from childhood since these became points of reference during the research interviews on conflict resolution.
Lessons From Childhood: Learning to Adapt

I had very loving parents and we had a lot of fun. My father has a terrific sense of humour. He was a musician and a dancer so there was always music and there was always laughter and we always felt like we were in it together.

I'd describe my father as a bit of a gypsy. It was really difficult for him to stay in one place for any length of time. I think it was more of a choice than it was anything to do with my parents' business. They would go from town to town. We'd finish the school year and then we'd move and they would set up a dance studio. The way that we found out where we were going to live was: we would get in the car--sometimes in the middle of the night--and we'd arrive to some town. I can remember Dad going to the telephone booth and opening up the phone book of the local town, seeing if there were any kids' tap and ballet schools. If there wasn't, he would turn around and say, "We're home!" That's how we'd find our new home. We'd just drive until we found a place.

We were very transient. We moved just about every year of my life up until high school. We located in Montana where I went to high school and finished high school. It was really nice to stay in one place for that length of time.

Mother was ashamed of the fact that we didn't have things. I guess that was passed down to us. We were very, very poor. We were never homeless. We seemed to have a roof over our heads. I don't know that we always got enough to eat but most of the time we did. There were lots of times when we didn't have furniture in the house. We would maybe have some mattresses. We always had a television but we didn't have the kind of home that I felt proud to bring my friends over. I don't ever remember having friends over to my house except in my high school years.

I always felt this sense of shame but I didn't quite know where it came from and I didn't quite know why I felt it. I didn't even know what it was I was feeling. In retrospect now I can see that it was some feeling of shame that we weren't as good as everybody else. So I grew up maybe feeling a bit "less than" most
people.

On some level, I knew I was kind and I was honest and I was a gentle person. My feelings had been hurt lots and lots of times as children’s feelings are hurt. But I think instead of making me an angry, bitter person which it might have done with some people, I grew up to be a little bit kinder and softer and gentler because I never wanted to hurt people and shame people and make them feel less than. I knew that feeling; it was not a nice feeling. I think a lot of my philosophy grew from who I was as a child. I just didn’t want to hurt anybody and I couldn’t stand seeing people hurt, shamed, and blamed—probably because I know what those things are like. In retrospect, I’m glad I have that understanding and awareness.

The Adult Years: Learning to Be a Chameleon

After high school I moved again and attempted to go to university in Oregon. When I say “attempted” it just didn’t work for me. I didn’t know what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go. I was extremely shy so that didn’t help.

I actually became a ballroom dance teacher. My parents were dancers and it seemed like it was a natural inclination for me because I had always danced. That’s what I did for a number of years was teach dancing.

Having moved every year of my life for so long, I continued that into my adulthood. It was difficult for me to stay in one place very long. So I would uproot myself because that felt like the norm and I enjoyed that. I didn’t have a real sense of community in terms of town. I never stayed long enough to find a body of people that I could share a philosophy, work, and experiences with. You become very adaptable but at the same time I had a shyness that stayed with me because of moving and always trying to get reacquainted. You either were going to fit in or you weren’t. In some ways I think I had to become like a chameleon to fit in. I knew what it was to feel like the outsider, not the powerful one in the group.
Sydney taught ballroom dancing and then decided to pursue her interest in marketing and small business. Over the years she worked in different areas including the fitness industry and the restaurant business. She also developed her own toy product and had it marketed in the United States and throughout the world.

Although very successful in her roles as a manager and business woman, she was alarmed by the aggressive leadership styles of organizations. All too often, Sydney said, business managers would ignore the personal needs of workers in order to focus on financial success. Where there was a hierarchy in an organization those at the top used their power to control those at the bottom, a form of management she describes as patriarchal. As a woman, she felt that her emotional and interpersonal needs were openly disregarded. Rather than address questions of business integrity, Sydney said, managers would typically minimize her concerns and those of others. The workplace was a hotbed of tension and dissatisfaction.

To illustrate her points, Sydney referred to several businesses in which she had experience. One was the fitness industry. Sydney, along with other managers, were responsible for making sales. Many of the male managers would “fly flags”; that is, list their sales ahead of time to impress their boss. After listing the sales they would then have to go and try to realize them.

Sydney considered this practice to be unethical and only declared sales which she had actually made. One outcome of her honesty was that she was scolded for her lack of aggressiveness and threatened with dismissal. The irony was that, at month’s end, she was often the most successful manager because she had kept accurate sales records and had the most sales.

In the narrative that follows Sydney describes her feelings about hierarchical forms of management that rely on traditional ways of doing business. She notes the price paid by employees in terms of stress and poor treatment from their employers. She then shares a story about her experiences in a restaurant.

Her background as a business woman is significant because it served to reinforce her understanding of the discrepancies between strong human relations practices and weak ones, between honest, up-front work practices, and dirty, oppressive ones. Over time, Sydney told me, she came to realize that she would have
to find a career that was more in line with her personal values. Her negative experiences in management and marketing were strong motivators behind her decision to become a mediator and take conflict resolution training. As she says, work plays an important role in adulthood so it is important to feel comfortable in the workplace.

I think a lot of us identify ourselves with the work we do and the affiliations we have at work. What I found was that in working in a predominantly male-oriented management, a significant percentage of men didn’t have the same kinds of values, the same approach to doing business as I did. So there was a struggle to prove myself along the way. If you were to look at me you would think, “She’s soft, she’s not as assertive or aggressive as she should be. She’s not going to be able to close the sale. She doesn’t have good killer instincts so she’ll never make it to the top.” Interestingly, I did make it to the top of most things I did but not always with a great deal of understanding or support from people I worked with. I did it in my own quiet way and I was challenged.

Sometimes I felt like I wasn’t being aggressive and assertive enough and yet somehow I thought, “I know that there’s a way that I can relate to people and I can be honest and I can be kind and I can be thoughtful of how they’re feeling, where they’re coming from, and they can feel that way about me and we can all still come out with what we want. Probably my biggest motivation was that I just got sick of seeing the way people were doing things and in my head, in my heart, I was thinking, “There’s a better way to do this.”

This feeling developed over time as I gained experience working in different areas. After working in the fitness industry, I later managed a restaurant part-time for the owners. I was actually an assistant manager. We had a big staff of 30 people working at various times. They included many young people who were trying to make a living and survive. Some were supported by their parents or going to university and wanting extra money. For the most part, they were hard-working individuals who had the best of intentions, I believe, and wanted to do a good job.
In this particular restaurant the owners were unskilled in terms of communication. Neither one of them had ever worked in a service industry before. One had been an accountant and the other had been a housewife: they were married to each other. Now these people had the power. They had the power to hire and fire and chastise and embarrass and humiliate and they frequently took advantage of that power. I went in as a more experienced manager, having worked with a number of staffs over the years and having developed an awareness and understanding of what motivates people and a deep belief about treating them with respect and regard. No matter what job they're doing for you, everybody is important in a business and everybody has a right to be respected.

There wasn't a lot of that going on from management. I spoke with them about those issues. "How do you fire people?" The owners' way of firing people was that they didn't directly tell them. They just wouldn't book them for any hours.

It took about 2 weeks before people coming in and checking their schedules said, "Hey! What's going on here?" By then they didn't have any money for food or rent. I wouldn't know as an assistant manager who was being let go and who wasn't until they came to me and said, "What's going on?"

I'd say, "Well, I don't know. Let me find out." Typically I would then find out and give them that information.

When I approached the owner-managers about this, I said, "Number one: you've got to respect people enough to let them know they no longer have a job. This is only fair. These are kids who are counting on work for money and food and rent." I didn't like the way these young people were talked to--very disrespectfully in front of each other, in front of customers.

There were all kinds of conflicts happening and, as a result, there was tremendous tension and resentment-building on staff. I was in the middle trying to do some education with the management, trying to teach them, and I was told that that wasn't welcomed.
"Don't rile it up. You're just going to make things worse, Sydney. If they come to you with their problems, tell them you're not interested in talking to them because that's not your job."

"Well, if that isn't my job, what is my job?" Am I just supposed to stay here and make sure the place isn't robbed? What am I supposed to do?"

I finally just had to get out. The staff turnover was incredible. The unhappiness was incredible—the tears, the anger.

That kind of story is more frequent than not in business. In all the businesses and companies I've ever worked for I've never seen effective management and staff relationships. And I've been around a fair while. My experiences in the restaurant were probably the final "I've got to get into something where people want a win-win situation."

It has become really clear to me that in most organizations with a hierarchy there is pervasive conflict. People are angry and competing. There isn't teamwork.

I didn't understand why it had to be that way. I have always felt like: "Why can't we be honest? Why can't we work it out? Why does there have to be this sense of animosity and anger?" And then I thought, "These things don't stay in the business place; they spill over into private lives, family lives, and it becomes a societal issue. You cannot be 8 hours a day in a situation, I don't think, where there's a whole bunch of unresolved conflict and negativity then come out and not be affected outside the workplace. It's going to spill over into your personal life."

**Entering the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program**

When describing herself, Sydney referred to two different sides of her being: the business side and the social work side. In addition to her marketing and business background, she had worked with Social Services and in a hospital. Her dissatisfaction with hierarchical management practices and her desire to work in an area that was more consistent with her values got her thinking about mediation as a possible career. When she decided to enter the Conflict Resolution Certificate
Program she had also recently become a single mother after separating from her husband and needed to find a way of ensuring support for her children.

Although her decision to enter the Justice Institute was motivated by career considerations, it came to have much more value for her. She recognized that the process of learning to resolve conflict from an interest-based perspective was consistent with her own beliefs about interpersonal communication. What was exciting about mediation was that it blended these values with the potential for a new career.

In the next section Sydney describes how she came to the Justice Institute and the impact the certificate program had on her. She was, she said, in awe to see men who were learning conflict resolution become emotional in class. This was a side of them she had not seen at the workplace.

When Sydney first started her training she was working as an employee of a company. She recalls how, in the context of her learning at the Justice Institute, she brought a real-life scenario into a classroom role play as a way to develop skills so she would be able to confront one of her male counterparts at work.

When I found out about mediation and conflict resolution it was like "Oh, thank you!" I mean it normalized my feelings. I saw that we didn't have to be aggressive and angry and competitive and keep each other shut out in order to make it. There was a better way of doing it. That was my biggest motivation for entering the Justice Institute's program.

I was looking to do something different, a career change. I had my small business and that had always run on the side. After a few years, it wasn't enough to support me and my family. I had to go back to work for other people. And having to do that after 13 years of not working for anybody was the final, "Oh, my god! I need to get some more education!" I think I was entering into conflict resolution with the notion of doing another small business. I think I'm very good with people. I'm curious about people. I care about people. I have a business sense. So this might be the perfect combination.

I was thinking in terms of labour and management. Somehow I've been in between those two roles. I never, even as a manger, quite fit with the management mode as it stood. And as a manager, I never quite fit with the staff. They didn't see me as one of them. I was in the middle and I thought,
"Well, why not learn the skills around being in the middle and see if I can somehow bring these two factions working better together?"

I was looking to do something different. I had worn two different hats up to that time. I wanted to do some good for others while making money at the same time. My social worker side said, "Want to help make people's lives better!" My business side said, "Want to run my business more efficiently and make lots of money!" Those two roles don't always go together. There was a side of me that wanted to do something that could bring the two together.

My first course in the conflict resolution program was very exciting. It was about the messages we give each other when we're talking, so it was about communication. This was the first time in years that I had sat down in a whole room full of people--maybe the first time ever--and talked about the importance of communicating with respect and regard and what it meant to us when that didn't happen. We all feel a need to be understood and heard. I didn't know what was involved in conflict resolution but I knew that the first class was touching something important to me and I was really excited about it. I could hardly wait to go onto the next course.

That feeling continued throughout the program. For example, I discovered I had some issues about men and the way they deal with things, not only personally but in business. To hear men in the classroom say that they wanted win-win situations and that they wanted to listen and understand--looking at men and seeing them feel for somebody else, getting tears in their eyes when we were talking around anger issues--that was important for me to be able to understand that there are still lots of caring, kind, respectful men out there.

The anger management class was significant for me because that was the first class where most of us really had to get into sharing what was inside. That's not an easy thing to do. I can just picture some of the men again. Women typically are a lot more open about who they are and what they're feeling and when we get in women's groups we talk about these things. But I think, for me, it was seeing the men's faces and the tears and the real struggle to try to get it out, to share with the group,
the courage that took. We really bonded through that experience and had the sense that we had reached a higher level of understanding about where each and every one of us was coming from.

I started the conflict resolution courses before I finished a particular job. I had been working for a small printing company. One of the male employees had gone into such hysteria with me; his rage became directed at me, partly because I was the only female on a male staff and was not viewed as a physical threat to him and partly because I was the most tolerant of his behaviour. I was always trying to see beyond why he was acting a certain way.

When he went into rage it was really inappropriate. I kept saying, "Do you realize that you're raging at me but it has nothing to do with me?" I would try to walk away and he would come after me. At one point he had me in my office, blocking my exit. I was at a point where I felt I was going to have to defend myself. I became very angry at him. It wasn't traumatic for me but it was disturbing and I still had to work with this man. After that, I was at a point where I wouldn't even speak to him. He no longer existed for me--that was how I was dealing with him.

I brought that interaction from work into the classroom and asked, "Can I deal with this man and still keep my integrity? He's absolutely wronged me. There's no doubt about that."

That was a challenge for me. I role played that situation with another student in class. I found out that I was saying things inadvertently to trigger him. We really got into that role. I took that experience and that knowledge back to the workplace and used them with him and it worked. I couldn't believe it. It worked. At one point when I was talking with him he started getting into a blaming mode. I used immediacy and said, "In order for me to hear you, I need you to say it differently. When you start blaming me and threatening me I feel I have to defend myself and I'm unable to listen."

I think that was my first major experience of having the skills actually work. What was most apparent to me was that even in his rage and his acting out, he still had some issues. There was something I didn't understand about that. When I started seeing things from his point of view and
when he started realizing that I wanted to understand what was happening for him and what it meant to him we were able to communicate better. His rage was over a file that had been misplaced 3 months earlier and found 3 months earlier but he had a lot of rage around other things as well. I started to really see his hopes, his fears, his concerns and how he thought I viewed him.

I think we reached a deeper level of understanding about each other--at least I did of him; I hope that he did of me. It wasn't just Band-Aid therapy. The man and I after that were able to speak to one another at work. We did not have a friendship but at least we had a tolerable relationship. I would never have thought it could happen.

I did another role play with a woman. She chose the role play. I played the part of her mother and she was playing herself as the daughter. It was about privacy issues and building some boundaries and what difficulty the daughter was having doing that with her mother. Yet she really felt that it was at a point where she needed to do something about it because it was hurting her relationship with her husband and family. At the same time she didn't want to alienate her mother.

We did that role play and it was incredibly emotional. She was in tears and really struggling--the pain of whatever was going on in that relationship was right there with her. I felt it too and I was in tears as well. I felt for a while what it would be like to be sitting in front of your daughter and having her tell you those things. Again I think it comes down to walking in somebody's shoes. That's what conflict resolution is all about: trying to put yourself in the place of the other person.

Afterwards this particular woman said, "I hadn't realized how much fear I have around this, how painful this is for me." Having gone through it and experienced it, she said, "I think I'll be able to go home and talk to my mother about this and not be so afraid because I'll know what to expect." Her words reaffirmed to me how much alike we all are. We all have fears.
When I first started conflict resolution I judged people on physical appearance. I've always thought of myself as being a non-judgmental person and I've tried to really get in touch with that side of me which is judgmental. I would go into a class and before the class would start I would sit there and look at the people and would say in my head, "There's somebody I could like. There's somebody I know I'm not going to like. There's somebody I like. There's somebody I'm not . . . ." There might have been two people I thought I would not have anything in common with. Maybe they opened their mouths a couple of times; maybe they said something. I don't know. I formed a judgment around them. I can think of two of them that I looked at initially and said, "I would never have a thing in common with these people." They became two of my closest friends in the program. They shared who they were. I shared who I was and we connected.

Think about how often in life we make judgments about people, visual judgments. We don't have that opportunity to find out who they really are. I walked out of the Justice Institute with a better understanding of how important it is not to prejudge people. What a learning experience that was.

After my first class my ex-husband said to me, "So what was conflict resolution like?"

And I said, "Oh Joe, it was wonderful. It was like being in a whole room of me's, people like me."

And he said, "Oh, what a scary thought!"

I had to laugh. Again, different perceptions of the same situation.

For me, the conflict resolution training was wonderful. I had this feeling of "I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be at exactly the time I'm supposed to be there." It's the same feeling I had when I was becoming a professional ballroom dance teacher and when I had my children. I had that feeling with every class.

I think there is a philosophy around conflict resolution. I think what I realize is that success is not all about money. I've always known that at some level. Money is still important but that will come with passionately loving something that you're doing and believing in. By my age a lot of people have reached what's really important to them in life. A lot of the stuff that isn't important falls away and you get down to who
you are as a person and your values. You can couple that with doing work that you love. My belief is that the success will come. I still plan on rising to the top of this particular profession, mediation, but it's a more noble profession.

Refining the Skills

Sydney continued applying her skills at home and at work while taking her training at the Justice Institute. She said that initially her teenager children were skeptical of her new skills when she started to behave differently at home. The way in which she dealt with this response was to acknowledge that she was learning new skills and that she was interested in staying connected with her children. Over the past year Sydney feels that she has been successful in this regard. She told me a story about her daughter who one day remarked that the really nice thing about being depressed was having a mother who would listen.

Learning how to use conflict resolution skills successfully was challenging at home and in the classroom. Sydney explained to me how her “old self came back under pressure” when she did her mediation assessment at the Justice Institute. During her evaluation, she says, she avoided the conflict between the two role players rather than using her skills to help them resolve the situation. The reason for this, she said, was because she had not yet really learned to accept conflict as part of life. During the assessment her fears had re-emerged.

Sydney redid her mediation assessment and was successful. She graduated from the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program when I did. Since that time she has taken the initiative to pursue different career and work options related to the conflict resolution field. She attended a national mediation conference in Victoria earlier this year. She also completed a practicum with a local community mediation centre. Sydney has developed many new connections this year which she hopes will help her to become established as a mediator.

As I had with other participants, I asked her to reflect on her aspirations for the future and to share with me how they related to her learning in conflict resolution. She spoke about finding a way to link her interest in helping people (the social work side) with her work experience (the business side). Through her learning at the Justice
Institute, she came to realize that it is possible to combine the two.

In the text that follows there is a strong sense of Sydney having arrived where she has always wanted to be. Her learning in conflict resolution represents a form of justice that brings with it healing and happiness.

I want to be a world-class mediator. That's not to say I want to be world famous. I want to do good work. I've come to realize that conflict resolution is not just about using skills taught at the Justice Institute or in some classroom. In order to be a world-class mediator, I have to know me. What are my beliefs, my prejudices, my hopes, fears, and expectations? How do these affect my perceptions of other people and their situations? Talk about an onion: I have to first peel my own before I can hope to do it with others.

Finding out what kind of work is available has been helpful. It has allowed me to understand where I can be that social worker/business woman that I have longed to be. What I'm starting to realize is that there are two types of mediation: very task-oriented business mediation and the type of mediation that is more around healing, whether it be in family mediation, divorce mediation, or mediation with juvenile offenders.

Right now I would like to work with juvenile offenders so that they're not caught up in the system at a very early age and get stereotyped. One of the things that intrigued me about victim-offender reconciliation was its philosophy. When a crime has occurred it leaves a victim and an offender. Restorative justice says that a healing needs to take place. It needs to take place so that victims can move on with their lives and not feel victimized over and over. There is also healing that needs to take place with offenders. What do they need now to go on and become a productive member of society? Let's say that you've got a young offender who has committed a crime for the first time or for the first time has gotten caught, there's a lot of shame in the system. What if this young person continues to be shamed and shamed and shamed and can't see a way out?--a way of being responsible and taking ownership and then being forgiven and allowed back into society without that shame? I would like to help juveniles get off that one-way track. If they can feel
that there is a healing that's been brought about and that goes on in themselves, I think that's a perfect place for my social worker to come out and do her thing. The healing occurs between the victim, the offender, and through the support of the community.

My healing came from being validated. There were times when I felt I was swimming upstream and I wasn't going with the flow. And yet to be who I was was stronger than that. I had to continue to be who I was.

I believe I am on track and always have been on track. That's the greatest thing I've learned--I'm really solid in that belief now. My self-confidence and my vision of who I am have been validated and that has helped me feel stronger. Where that will show itself, I believe, is asking for what I need. I realize now that one of my challenges has been to be assertive and now I realize that I have a right to be assertive. That's different than being aggressive.

I would want people to look at me and say, "She's a strong woman!" and know what that means to me. It doesn't mean I'm a barracuda in the boardroom. It doesn't mean I can close every sale. It means that I live my life according to what I think is important in a spiritual sense, knowing that strength comes from kindness and honesty and integrity. "Justice for all": that's where our strength is in this world and that's where we each need to have pride so our strength as a collective will come out.

How will my learning in conflict resolution change the way I look at work in the future? Well, one thing is that it won't feel as much like work. It's a joy to do something that you love to do, whether it's bringing in money or it's not bringing in money. To do the kind of work that I've been talking about won't feel like work to me. I can't say at this point that I can look back and exclaim, "Yeah, I've done some really worthwhile work that has perhaps altered someone's life." I do know that I would like to be able to give back something. It would be nice to believe that my being in this world contributed to somebody's happiness.
I think the greatest challenge for people is attitude and I think that I've been blessed with a terrific attitude. If I pictured myself as an animal I would be a cat that landed on its feet. If you were to say to me, "What kinds of conflicts? How would you compare them to those of other people?" I would say that I have had a very good life. I have been able to see the positives in just about every situation. I believe that kindness and gentleness and honesty and integrity are what's going to make us survive in this world. I have a very strong sense of that. Maybe I'll let that notion of "she's too soft for this world" from my third-grade teacher go now.
Part 4

Themes and Variations: Reflecting on the Stories
CHAPTER 12
WHAT IS CONFLICT RESOLUTION LEARNING?: THEMING THE STORIES

I have framed this thesis around two questions: (a) What is the experience of conflict resolution learning for adults? and (b) how does this experience fit into their biographies? The life story approach provided a way of entering into and exploring these questions.

What have the narratives revealed about the meaning of conflict resolution learning? This is the topic of this chapter. I will use a process of theming to explore the significance of conflict resolution in the life of each learner and then analyze the significance of the learning across the narratives.

Before theming I would like to share some of the ethical and procedural considerations that influenced my work at this stage. Such considerations are important for the thesis as a whole as well as the processes of analysis and interpretation. Like any form of meaning-making, theming reflects the ethics of the researcher. My focus in this chapter will be on the participants I interviewed. In the next chapter I will revisit my own story in relation to the research.

The Ethics of Interpretation

My choice of theming reflects a particular stance, one that I have tried to emulate consistently. This stance or orientation was identified in chapter 2 as interpretive. I named the processes I would follow in my research as: (a) reflecting on and interpreting learners' personal experiences, (b) honouring participants' knowledge, (c) attending to narrative as craft, (d) respecting complexity, (e) modelling empathy and collaboration, and (f) integrating individual narratives of learning into broader frameworks of social discourse. These designate both my practices as a researcher as well as my personal beliefs and underlying values about what it means to do research.

I do not intend to contradict these practices and beliefs at this stage by assuming the persona of a wise and great sage who ascribes universal meaning to the life stories that have been shared with me. As an interpretive researcher, I recognize there are many meanings that readers will find in the narratives. I do not want to circumvent this process of discovery but leave space for further inquiry and
reflection.

One way in which I might honour the stories is to simply acknowledge their multiple meanings and allow you as readers to find them. However, this would leave my work unfinished. The act of interpretation requires that I re-enter the stories and try to formulate what is tacit.

When we interpret a life story, we do not simply report what our informant told us. Instead, our retelling changes the story in a much more fundamental way than the kind of light editing we take for granted. We do not simply tell a shorter story, one that distils the highlights from a long and repetitive transcript, nor do we simply organize events chronologically or group them into themes. Instead, we convert what we have been told from one kind of account into another. (Ochberg, 1996, p. 10)

Interpretation can serve to illuminate the corners and spaces of the research.

I decided to use the process of theming described by Aoki (1992). The framework he proposes is structured yet inductive. "Theming" is not the act of finding themes but contemplating and naming the essence of an individual's experience. This is the theme. It is followed by one or two questions which serve as the basis for reflection.

I have adopted this same structure. I refer to my reflections as elaborations since they articulate and develop what is implicit in the questions.

The theming of each story was a collaborative undertaking. I decided that it would be important to include the participants at this stage of my work as I had at earlier stages. I wanted to see what individuals would identify as the underlying essence of their learning, having gone through the research process with me. Before theming, I phoned and talked to each learner for approximately 25 minutes. I took notes as well as quotes. All of the participants, I discovered, were able to reflect on and express their understandings clearly and insightfully.

After theming all of the stories, I began looking for common threads across the narratives. I concentrated on the meaning of conflict resolution learning as well as on my experiences and knowledge as the researcher. What had I learned through the process of collecting everyone's stories? And what were some of my overall impressions and understandings? The cross-theming was as much a synthesis and reflective integration of my data as it was systematic analysis. I did this work by myself because I was the only one who had experienced the research in its entirety. Although
collaboration was an important cornerstone of my work, I also believed that it did not preclude me from making meaning of the findings for myself.

One way in which to understand the difference between the theming and cross-theming is by referencing them to Wolcott's (1994) understanding of qualitative research. He explains description, analysis, and interpretation as three distinct, yet overlapping modes of transforming narrative data. Description, he says, is the fulcrum that keeps the other two processes in balance.

While Wolcott's framework may be criticized for its empirical simplicity, I like the way he tries to keep the authority of the researcher in check by distinguishing analysis from interpretation. "Analysis underscores a particular mind-set, a resolve to get some part of our work right. When the analytical work is done well, we should not have to convince a reader of our rightness" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 176). Interpretation, on the other hand, ventures farther from the research data and engages the interpretive capabilities of the researcher just as much as the data itself. Theming is probably best understood as analysis whereas the cross-theming also involved interpretation. This is a generalization. In the concluding chapter I interpret extensively.

Theming the Life Stories

Kate's Story

Theme: Conflict Resolution Helped Me to Be Authentic

Questions. What does it mean to be authentic? What is its significance for Kate?

Elaboration. I spent many hours talking to Kate. I wanted to understand her story on a deeper level. Every time we spoke our conversation went round and round. When the time came to theme we seemed to stop circling and began to focus on the underlying value of her learning in conflict resolution. She described the significance of her story as a "path to authenticity." This, she said, is a lifelong task but the conflict resolution training has quickened this process. Kate described authenticity to me as making her "external expression of self congruent with her internal experience of self."
Her inner work facilitated the building of a bridge between the two, she said.

Kate's development towards authenticity involves different dimensions. On one level, she understands it as a linear progression of experiences through time and space. On another level, it is more reflective of her orientation as an artist; that is, holistic and idiosyncratic. In her art she can envision what it is she would like to bring into being. This gives her something to work toward. The process of moving towards this envisaged outcome, however, brings many surprises. It is process that determines what emerges as product. The shifting dynamics among vision, process, and outcome are authentic to her learning as an artist.

How does this apply, if at all, to the learning she experienced in conflict resolution? Kate knew her learning in this area would be significant for her future career, although she did not know the extent to which it would precipitate inner work. Part of this inner work consisted of revisiting the past in order to move further along the path of authenticity. The Conflict Resolution Certificate Program provided the skills for Kate to get to where she is now with a sense of entitlement. It is only with this entitlement, she said, that her goals can be undertaken and achieved. The Justice Institute's training accelerated her shift towards authenticity through an integrated program that combined practical, external skills with ongoing reflection, self-awareness, and emotional well-being.

John's Story

Theme: I Learned That Empathy Is the Essence of Conflict Resolution

Questions. What is empathy for John? How does he understand it within the context of his learning?

Elaboration. John believes that empathy is essential for achieving positive outcomes in any conflict resolution process. I asked him to visualize his image of empathy. He said that if his learning could be represented by a circle empathy would be in the centre and the steps of the conflict resolution process would be around the circumference. The line denoting the edge of the circle would not be a fixed boundary. People would, he said, be able to move into the centre from different locations around
its circumference.

The problem with models is that they are somewhat contrived. I began to understand that the real significance of empathy, from John's point of view, is that it moves beyond theory to something inside the individual. Although the model is helpful, empathy is not really a set of steps that can be traced on paper. True empathy is a state of being that has been internalized so effectively that it appears to be second-nature.

John said that if someone was truly empathic that individual could arrive at the same destination as someone who learns conflict resolution. He illustrated this by talking about his own area of interest, intercultural communication. To work in this field, John said, one does not need to be an expert in multiculturalism or conflict resolution. The conflict resolution model is linear and may need to be adapted when working with particular cultures.

What is most important, John said, is for individuals to connect with one another using the international language of empathy. He is referring to a genuine interest in trying to understand other people. It is this interest that has the power to transcend technical expertise, resulting in a deeper understanding among the parties in dispute. The value of the Justice Institute's training is that it provides a framework for learners who are not empathic to model the skills of empathy in a structured and supportive learning environment within a short time frame. Someone who is truly empathic understands that the skills of empathy are essential for acting empathically and will use them automatically.

A link between empathy as skills and empathy as a value, John said, is experiential learning. One can lead to the other. When students honour their learning in the classroom they will commit themselves to acquiring new skills and leave themselves open to reflection. Role plays and small group discussions are important because they allow students to feel and access the impact of their behaviour on others.

John is speaking from personal experience. When he entered the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program his primary objective was to become an effective workplace manager. Only after he understood empathy, he said, did the conflict resolution model and skills become personally meaningful. It provided a framework to situate his knowledge. One of the reasons John focused on his small group
experiences in his narrative is because he believes they provide valuable opportunities for learners to connect with one another.

Kevin's Story

Theme: Conflict Resolution Provides a Way to Actualize My Purpose in Life

Question. What is the significance of Kevin's new purpose?

Elaboration. Kevin referred to a period in his life when he held John Wayne values. They carried with them a set of expectations and ways of acting which he eventually challenged. The meaning Kevin attributes to conflict resolution can only be understood as part of a much larger journey which began before he went to Life Spring and the Justice Institute.

The way in which he shared his understanding of this journey was by referring to his purpose in life. He told his story by sharing his goals and objectives. When he talked about events of the past it is in relation to the future. This is how he understands his learning around conflict resolution, as a bridge that has helped him move from one stage in his life to another. He told me that it is important for him to have a clear picture of where he is going. The conflict resolution model served this role and provided a framework for him to practice and apply his skills.

Kevin's description of his journey in stages is consistent with his understanding of his life in periods. Conflict resolution provided a framework for moving ahead. Although he could not anticipate the gut-wrenching challenges, they allowed him many opportunities to reassess where he wanted to go. His determination to overcome these obstacles in turn gave more meaning to his journey. When Kevin and I began theming his story he said, “Things that are worthwhile in life tend to be hard. Conflict resolution learning was both worthwhile and hard.”

There is a tension underlying this statement. Perhaps it is this tension that is at the centre of his learning. On one hand he was moving away from the past. Yet it was only by understanding his life before that he was able to redefine what he wanted for the future. His learning in the classroom also reinforced this tension. In order to learn
how to confront conflict differently, he had to understand how he had confronted it in the past. Learning how to resolve conflict carried a tension of its own.

Today Kevin has a new sense of perspective on his life. He is able to reflect on his past knowing that he closer to where he would like to be. Even though he is now a professional, however, he is still challenged by new learning. The learning associated with conflict resolution is compatible with his mission in life, to help others. What began as a set of formal learning experiences has become part of who he is as a person. Kevin said that he applies interest-based skills to his personal as well as his professional life. His learning has allowed him to integrate his values into his being across different areas.

Sandy’s Story

Theme: I Learned From Conflict Resolution That It’s Important to Check My Assumptions

Question. What has Sandy learned from checking her assumptions?

Elaboration. Sandy focused on the role of perception in her story. She attributed this orientation to her university background in psychology.

What is interesting about her learning at the Justice Institute is that she acquired a much deeper understanding of what perception means and how it enters into the process and language of everyday conversation. She knew from psychology that perception was a key factor in communication but her learning helped her to understand why. Conflict resolution helped her to look at her own assumptions and the role they play in her interpersonal relationships.

When I asked Sandy to talk about assumptions she said that when individuals communicate with one another they are looking at a situation coloured by their own backgrounds. When we communicate with others, she said, it is important to identify their assumptions. Otherwise, we act without thinking and this in turn leads to other difficulties. Many conflicts develop because of a failure to explore what people are really thinking. The interest-based skills taught at the Justice Institute are designed to help identify these taken-for-granted understandings.
Sandy expected her training in conflict resolution to benefit her work in the community but has found that she uses the skills more at home. The reason, for that, she said, is because she has more frequent contact with those around her.

I believe it is important to consider the context of Sandy's learning in trying to understand its significance. The fact that she uses her skills at home suggests that her learning has become "personal," that she applies it frequently, and that she values it enough to integrate it into her intimate relationships. Checking assumptions is important because her communications with her family members are ongoing. She is motivated to apply her learning as a way to connect with those she loves. By checking her assumptions, she has found that she can open, rather than close a conversation. Creating a space for dialogue leads to a deeper level of understanding and, Sandy says, takes a conversation in a whole new direction. By travelling another path she is able to connect with her family in ways she may not have anticipated.

Another benefit to opening the conversation is that it allows her to explore other people's meaning systems. Sandy said that she is able to understand which situations might become conflicts and what her alternatives might be in a given situation. The process of checking assumptions provides her with more information to make informed choices.

One of the outcomes from her learning is that she no longer feels an overwhelming sense of responsibility to apply her skills in a caregiving role. One benefit of this at home might be that she has more time to relax. Sandy said that there appears to be less conflict in her life than before and added that this may be because her understanding of what it means to be in conflict is different. Learning how to check assumptions provided her with a different sense of perspective.

Sydney's Story

Theme: Conflict Resolution Validated What I Believe Is Important

Question. What did Sydney discover in conflict resolution that allowed her to feel validated?

Elaboration. Sydney's story is about coming full circle. The circle begins and
ends with herself. The significance of her learning in conflict resolution is that it has enabled her to make this connection.

Sydney’s experiences as a child emphasized conformity. She was expected to live according to a set of values that were incompatible with her own. Mezirow describes the formative influences on our development in these terms:

Although we are encouraged to become increasingly self-directed in our learning as we grow older, the learning provided by our particular culture and by the idiosyncratic requirements of parents or parent surrogates is the learning that is rewarded. Approved ways of seeing and understanding, shaped by our language, culture, and personal experience, collaborate to set limits to our future learning. (1991, p. 1)

What is significant is that, even in adulthood, Sydney was not encouraged to become self-directed. Her role as a woman in the workplace was, in some ways, similar to her role as a child. In both cases she was expected to behave in ways that were incongruous with how she wanted to act.

It is understandable why those in positions of power would not allow the kind of communication and relationship-building that Sydney wanted. The kinds of values she emphasized in her story, values such as honesty, respect, and integrity overlap with the validity claims that Habermas associates with ideal discourse: (a) comprehensibility, (b) sincerity, (c) legitimacy, and (d) truthfulness (Welton, 1993, pp. 84-86). These are frameworks for clear and open communication. By disregarding these conditions, male co-workers could maintain their positions of power and therefore their authority.

Sydney’s learning in conflict resolution was validating or empowering for several reasons. First, the kinds of values taught in the program were compatible with her own. Given her previous experiences, it was important that her values be recognized publicly.

Further validation came from sharing her experiences and beliefs with others. Becoming part of a community was important, not only for understanding her values but for challenging them. Sydney described how she learned to be less judgmental in the classroom.

A third source of validation came from learning skills which she could use to confront others and assert her needs. She told the story of returning to confront someone at work with a history of anger. By validating what she believed and giving
her the tools to deal with conflicts, her learning has given her a sense of autonomy.

**Dimensions of Authenticity: Cross-Theming the Stories**

I wanted to see whether or not there were themes that cut across the stories. These might be expressed directly by the content of the narratives or they might be conceptual frameworks or process themes that played a unifying role in linking one story to another. When preparing the next section, I analyzed each story for understandings about conflict resolution learning that I believed were significant. I then compared my results from one story to another and looked for overlapping or parallel areas.

What I discovered was that there were several shared meanings but that these could be expressed as variations on one overriding theme. I will call this cross-theme "Authenticity." This was a term Kate used to focus on the essence of her learning. She described it as the process of moving towards a closer match between her external behaviours and internal values. Brookfield (1988, pp. 47-48) also uses the term to refer to individuals' underlying meaning systems.

The results from the cross-theming suggests that there are other meanings embedded in the word authenticity. My purpose in this section is to identify each variation and elaborate on its significance by referring to examples from the life stories and from my research. It is important to note that conflict resolution learning itself draws on all of the variations, although not all learners experience all types of authenticity. Before describing its variations I will summarize some of the other ways in which learners described this key theme.

**Images of Authenticity: An Overview**

Different learners used different metaphors and language when referring to forms of authenticity as the underlying significance of their learning. John and Sandy described authenticity as one way of relating versus another. John, for example, distinguishes those who apply empathy as a technique versus those who have engaged it as a value. Sandy talks about the old, closed-circle-of-wagons approach to human relationships versus the open, collaborative approach represented by the
Justice Institute's training. One of the goals of interpersonal communication, she argues, is to see "what we have in common and what connects us" instead of dwelling on "a societal, built-in need to disagree." All of these references imply that one kind of behaviour is more natural or authentic to who we are as individuals. The other is a way of interacting that is the result of artifice or patterns of socialization.

This same dichotomous language is evident in Kevin's story. One of the themes in his story is that he had to learn a new set of behaviours because his old set was not working. Every time he "stuffed" a conflict he said it took a piece out of his relationship and out of his self-esteem. One of the reasons he values interest-based skills is because they provide a framework for being authentic. He contrasts the "interest level of honesty" with "the facades we can put up." For him, the emphasis in conflict resolution of moving from judgment to curiosity is intended to help him identify what is at the core of an individual's being. It is a process that highlights authenticity.

Sydney uses other language to describe her journey in the margins between inauthenticity and authenticity. Again there is a dichotomy between her own values and those in which she was socialized during childhood and in the workplace. At one point she says that she had to become a chameleon in order to fit in. She described the community of learners at the Justice Institute, however, as "a whole room of me's." The reference to herself refers to her authentic self as opposed to a socialized self that is required to be a chameleon.

These descriptions, along with Kate's, suggest that authenticity is viewed by the learners as a state of being and acting. It is true to who they are as human beings and allows them to connect with other people, resulting in more meaningful relationships. In this way, it contrasts with unauthentic forms of behaviour which keep them from knowing themselves and others. Although conflict resolution is identified with authentic as opposed to unauthentic forms of learning, these are idealized ends of a continuum. What we normally understand as learning is best represented as a process of moving along the continuum rather than being at one end or the other. Similarly, it is possible to become more authentic in some dimensions of learning than in others.
Variation 1: Authenticity as Evolving Self-Awareness

**Question.** What is required of the learner?

**Elaboration.** This variation refers to a way of being as a learner in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. There is an expectation that learners who come into the program with a willingness to be “authentic,” that is, to strive for self-awareness will benefit the most from their training. Evidence of this appears in the extensive description given to inner work in the first core course. The *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* (1974) reinforces the notion of inner work because it requires students to examine their own conflict style(s).

The expectation for students to be authentic, according to this variation, is also based on comments made by Sandy and one of the instructors. They both mentioned that many of the students who come to the Centre for Conflict Resolution Centre are “self-selected.” What this suggests to me is that program candidates already have a certain level of self-awareness and an idea of what they want from their learning prior to coming to the Justice Institute. If this is true, one assumption would be that they are prepared to do further inner work in order to meet their personal and professional objectives.

A contrast with this group is those who demonstrate less self-awareness or those who have different expectations about the program. One of the reasons Kevin may have found his initial learning so gut-wrenching is that he was not yet at a place of self-awareness that was comfortable for him. The learning did not seem to be authentic. In his story he refers to other students he has seen who come to get “fixed” but are not committed to personal change. These students understand their learning as skill mastery rather than inner work.

If authenticity expresses a point of entry that is more characteristic of some learners than others, it is also a point of becoming for all students. One of the characteristics of the conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute it that it encourages learners to be more authentic; that is, to challenge themselves to deeper self-understandings. This expectation is embedded in the interest-based model of moving from judgment to curiosity. As Kevin said, there are two sides to this process: understanding oneself and others. Through the skills taught in conflict resolution learners have an opportunity to explore whether or not their interests are reflective of
who they would like to be and become as individuals.

Kate's reference to the "path of authenticity" illustrates an underlying orientation towards learning that moves her towards increasingly clear understandings of herself. Although this path is long and full of surprises it has taken her to where she wants to be.

I also believe that Sandy's learning has carried her to a place of greater authenticity. Her resistance to conflict resolution, like Kevin's, seems to have been a necessary bridge to cross as part of her journey. When she talks about her learning now it is as if it is an extension of her being. She has found a way to make it part of who she is. I am reminded by the comment from Sandy's husband that she has become who she always knew she was and that her learning gave her the opportunity to reconfirm this. As with Sydney, there is the image of coming full circle.

Self-awareness may lead to personal change or it may reconnect learners with themselves. These are the two paths, one linear and one circular, that can both lead to a deeper, more authentic sense of who one is.

**Variation 2: Authenticity as the Integration of Conflict and Resolution**

**Question.** What does "integration" imply?

**Elaboration.** The words conflict and resolution denote two opposing states. Learning to resolve conflict requires an understanding of both. This may, in turn, facilitate an understanding of conflict and resolution that is integrated; that is, as embedded in our experiences as human beings without necessarily being identified as good or as bad. Another way to express this integration is as "reframing," that is, reformulating one's perspective of conflict and placing it in a larger framework in which life is viewed as more than conflict versus peace. Such reformulation designates another form of authenticity.

Sydney says that she used to think of conflict as "being too aggressive and too angry . . . I knew something wasn't quite right but I thought, 'What's my alternative? I don't know if I can develop into this yelling, screaming, foot-stomping type of person in order to get what I want.'" So she avoided conflicts. Kevin made a similar statement. He said that he used to avoid conflict because it was associated with pain. In both examples conflict was perceived as an oppositional force that threatened individual
The courses at the Justice Institute, however, require learners to confront conflict in order to be able to work towards resolution. This confrontation takes the form of discussion, skill practice, and reflection. As students continued to practise their peacemaking and resolution skills, they also continue to confront conflict. One outcome for some students is to recognize that conflict and resolution are not necessarily polarized forces but two states of being, among many others.

There are different references in the narratives which reflect this type of learning. Like Sydney, Sandy tended to think of conflicts as "being after you've gotten into it and you're fighting and you're in trouble." What her training did was to help her understand that conflict is one of many possible outcomes in a given situation. She also learned the types of behavioural responses that may accelerate or prevent a conflict.

Both Sandy and Kevin resisted conflict at early stages of their learning--Sandy, because she associated her new skills with extra responsibility and Kevin, because he identified conflict with pain. However, they are now both comfortable living with conflict, rather than against it. Sandy says there are probably just as many conflicts in her life but they don't appear to be conflicts. Her learning, like Kevin's, has shown her how to place conflict in perspective.

John referred to the ways in which conflicts in the classroom were detrimental to his own learning. However, he also realizes that the classroom is a microcosm of society and that individuals who hold certain beliefs and behave in particular ways carry these into formal learning environments. Although conflict resolution provides alternatives for challenging one's behaviour, there is no guarantee that learners will internalize other ways of being. An understanding of authenticity is an understanding of the diverse ways in which learners respond to instruction as individuals outside the classroom respond differently to the same set of circumstances.

Similarly, if conflict resolution learning is understood as a process of apprenticeship for the real world, students must have the opportunity to deal with real as well as simulated conflict. Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989, p. 34) understand authenticity as those forms of learning which most closely resemble the actual practices of a given culture. Such practices in the framework of this study include conflict resolution, mediation, and negotiation. What makes these practices different
from other practices such as technical vocations, however, is that they involve processes and interventions which carry potential for harm. Kevin and Kate said that learning how to confront conflict could be painful. Allowing space for conflict in the classroom must be balanced with the need for safety, individual needs, and the skill levels of students in the program. The ways in which conflicts are handled authentically is a joint responsibility of learners and instructors.

Variation 3: Authenticity as Connection Between Self and Others

**Question.** How does the learning process facilitate connection as well as resolution?

**Elaboration.** As well as developing an integrated understanding of conflict, authenticity can mean developing an integrated understanding of self. Being authentic, according to this variation, means seeing oneself in others. There is a sense that who learners are as individuals is reflected through their relationships because they are part of the social world. How they interact with others is influenced by how they look at themselves. When they have learned to be authentic there is no need to put up walls or to view people as different.

Individuals become authentic in this way by using empathy and collaboration. It is difficult to separate one from the other. In order to collaborative it is important to be empathic and vice versa. The interest-based process of conflict resolution training at the Justice Institute emphasizes both. By checking their judgments students are encouraged to be open to knowing other people.

Sydney's narrative provides many examples of this kind of authenticity. She learned how to become friends with other classmates that she assumed would not be people she liked. She said that the conflict resolution helped her to understand that everyone is equal.

Sydney as well as Kate refer to building bridges. Kate identified these as touchstones of her value system. The bridge is a metaphor for connecting. In order to build bridges we need to have the right skills and the willingness to join two separate entities. During her interviews with me Sydney mentioned a presentation by Danaan Parry (see chapter 5) at her graduation ceremony. Danaan referred to building bridges
with the rocks that had been torn down from the Berlin Wall.

When students don’t treat others respectfully, they are aware of the wall they have built. Sandy describes how, early in her learning, she lost the opportunity to build a sense of relationship or community with others because of the way in which she responded to them. Today, however, there is a greater sense of interconnection with others in her stories of conflict resolution.

**Variation 4: Authenticity as Enactment or Embodied Knowledge**

**Question.** How do students express their knowledge of conflict resolution while learning?

**Elaboration.** Authenticity in this section refers to learning that involves the whole person. Learning is not just skill mastery or theory; it is the process of engaging one’s entire being through different modes of response. There is no separation between knowing and doing because the two are dialectically related.

Although learners refer extensively to role plays, they also provided many other examples of how they learned. All of the students said they reflected on the meaning of conflict resolution at different times, sometimes methodically and sometimes spontaneously. At least two students used the analogy of a light-bulb experience to describe their insights during moments of reflection. Sydney and John identified spiritual dimensions of their learning. Kate emphasizes the emotional dimension; Kevin, the pragmatic. All of these examples show the different modes of learning that were engaged.

There are many theoretical frameworks for understanding learning as an active, dynamic process that involves different responses. D. A. Kolb’s (1984) model of experiential learning not only includes concrete experiences but opportunities for reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. He portrays these as a cycle which the learner can enter at any point. Individuals do not integrate all modes at once; the process of integration occurs over time in different settings.
Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 33) emphasize the interconnection between thinking, doing, and being in their theory of LPP. Their view of socially situated learning focuses on the whole person.

Mezirow (1990) argues that in order for learning to be transformative it must involve a praxis between reflection and action; that is, a dialectic between the two.

Learners come into workshops, courses, or other secure settings at different junctures within their learning process. This process may be precipitated by or fostered in an educational environment, but it is incomplete without the learner taking action and subsequently reflectively assessing the action, possibly in a secure educational setting, before taking further action. The transformative learning process does not end in the classroom. Praxis is a requisite condition of transformative learning. It is not inherently a question of personal development versus social development or aborting social action by emphasizing individual development, although this too frequently happens. There is a major difference between learning to negotiate meanings and purposes, realizing values for oneself, and validating one’s personal beliefs through reflective dialogue and the task of learning to successfully overcome oppressing power in one’s external world through social action. Both are components in transformative learning . . . (Mezirow, 1990, pp. 356-357)

A final framework for understanding the interrelationships between knowing and doing is provided in recent works which refer to “enactment” or “embodiment.” This approach, when applied to learning, supports further the notion of mind-body interaction.

We hold with Merleau-Ponty that Western scientific culture requires that we see our bodies both as physical structures and as lived, experiential structures—in short, as both “outer” and “inner,” biological and phenomenological. These two sides of embodiment are obviously not opposed. Instead, we continuously circulate back and forth between them. (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. xv)

The concept of enactment is one reflected in the stories of conflict resolution learners. All of the participants said they could not have learned what they did from a book. They needed opportunities to see the skills modelled, practice them, problem-solve in a variety of everyday contexts, reflect on the meaning of their learning, and try to make meaning of what had happened. Several learners also said that this research project
had given them the opportunity to continue their learning.

**Variation 5: Authenticity as Ownership**

**Question.** What does ownership mean?

**Elaboration.** When I refer to ownership I am again suggesting points along a continuum in which some learners may have a greater degree of ownership than others. In the sense that I am using the word here, “ownership” refers to internalization of conflict resolution skills, knowledge, and values as well as to the ability to use these with self-confidence and agency. When someone is said to have agency, it suggests that they are autonomous and in control of their own lives. A related, though slightly different term is self-efficacy. Agency is an important concept in adult education because it facilitates self-directed learning. Those learners who own their learning will also enact it. Ownership, to me, suggests that an individual has engaged in a process of critical self-reflection and is able to find personal significance in what has been learned. The learning becomes authentic. Ownership also means that individuals are beginning to integrate the other forms of authenticity into their being. It is difficult, for example, to be enactive without owning the skills and values of conflict resolution.

There were different signs that learners had taken ownership of their learning in some areas or were beginning to take ownership. In her story, for example, Kate says that although it feels clumsy to use the conflict resolution skills at first, they will eventually become part of oneself through ongoing practice. She also uses the term “undeservingness” and contrasts it with a state of entitlement. This sense of entitlement, I believe, is a reflection of ownership; one has the right and ability, not only to apply the skills but to make them part of one’s being.

Kate and Sydney both talk about conflict resolution as a process of empowerment. Kate said that the skills and values of win-win provide learners with alternatives. These alternatives are enabling; they allow individuals to be agents, rather than victims of their lives. Part of Kate’s learning on the path of authenticity was to be able to envision a future. She began to realize this before going to the Justice Institute and it became part of her inner work.
Sydney speaks about ownership as validation as well as a spiritual awareness. She says that she has learned that there are two types of power and that kindness and integrity reflect a good kind of power rather than an aggressive, “cut-throat” kind. For her, the ability to own her learning has been a process of healing as well as reaffirmation.

There is also a sense of ownership in Kevin’s story when he says that he is past the gut-wrenching, survival stage in his learning. Now, he says, “the challenge is more of an intellectual challenge”. For him, the process of owning conflict resolution involved being able to confront conflict, practise the skills extensively, and then relate them to his life’s purpose and goals for the future.

When learners do not yet have ownership in a given area, they are aware of this. John, for example, spoke of his desire to make empathy part and parcel of his being. Self-awareness is one form of authenticity which, I believe, is essential for ownership, a more integrated form of authenticity.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I themed the life story of each learner I interviewed. I followed Aoki’s (1992) framework for analyzing and interpreting the central theme of each narrative. I then looked at the stories as a whole to determine shared understandings of conflict resolution learning. I discovered that the common and overlapping meanings could be expressed as variations of one theme, Authenticity. I identified and described these variations. In the next chapter I will reflect further on conflict resolution in the context of my own life and research.
Chapter References


CHAPTER 13
REFLECTIONS ON REFLECTIONS: SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Stories as a Framework for Personal Experience

I chose a life story approach for my research because I wanted to understand conflict resolution learning, not as a formal process but as part of each learner's biography. How would adults from different backgrounds frame their experiences? And how would others come to understand these tales of lived experience?

Although I was able to find themes that ran across the stories, each one was distinct from the others. I began with Kate's story because it illustrated different levels of understanding and experience with conflict. She was born during a world war. She had lived in different countries, each with their own kinds of social conflict. She had done formal research on conflict. And she was able to articulate the dynamics of interpersonal conflict. The focus I gave to her story was inner work because she identified connections between self-understanding and use of the conflict resolution skills. Her path to authenticity was about developing her skills so they would be compatible with her underlying beliefs and values. Kate's learning provided a framework for working towards this outcome.

I then focused on conflict as a social phenomenon. John's background was in Multiculturalism. His tale was about intergroup conflict. From him, I learned that conflict resolution is part of a much larger process of community-building in which empathy plays a central role. His story supported the idea of the classroom as a microcosm of society. Each student, like each member of society, he said, has different expectations, beliefs, attitudes, and levels of awareness. As educators and students, it is important to respect this diversity and reconsider ways in which we can honour and respect those who share our world. Formal learning can serve as a powerful example for informal learning.

The connection between culture and individual behaviour was developed in Kevin's story. His learning around conflict resolution reflected a desire to help others and, as he said, to make a difference in their lives. Kevin described himself as a pragmatist and his understanding of learning was influenced by this quality. He focused on his skills and said that they had helped him to actualize his beliefs. His
learning began outside the classroom, continued at Life Spring and the Justice Institute, and developed in his roles as a mediator, coach, and trainer.

I chose to place Sandy and Sydney’s stories together because they show what it is like to use conflict resolution on an everyday level at home and in the community. Their understandings of learning are linked to their roles as women, spouses, and mothers. I was touched by the deeply personal nature of their learning and the ways in which it had entered into their lives.

The three theories of learning I described in chapter 6 can all be applied to understand and make sense of these individual experiences. Constructivism provides a framework for thinking about the participants’ own meaning-making as well as the reflective, problem-solving processes embedded in experiential learning. One of the most important goals in conflict resolution is to help learners understand one another. The way in which they are encouraged to do this is by entering into other people’s world through the use of the win-win model and interest-based skills. Conflict resolution is an interpretive process that requires learners to understand their own constructs and those of others.

Socially situated theories help us to understand the significance of learners’ backgrounds and the communities of which they are part. These influence the meaning they attribute to their learning. John’s understanding of conflict, for example, was shaped by his experiences in Multiculturalism. Sydney’s understanding was coloured by her background as a business person. These two examples show that social contexts give meaning to the practices and understandings of learners.

From transformative learning theory, we see the potential for educators to enter into participants’ stories and influence their outcome. Programs such as the Justice Institute’s can be a catalyst for encouraging learners to become critical thinkers. The emphasis given to inner work may engage deeper levels of learning which may in turn impact on individual meaning perspectives.

If there is visible evidence of the theories at work, it is also true that they have been reframed by the learners. What makes the stories so captivating is the unique and dynamic frameworks they give to patterns of lived experience. Participants’ personal knowledge crosses the boundaries of theory and discipline. Every learner’s tale is a complex web of meaning which must be interpreted carefully.
Challenges of Narrative Research

Collecting and representing individual stories of meaning presented many challenges. One was knowing how to enter into the text. I faced this challenge when writing my own life story. Which tale would I choose to represent the meaning I attached to my learning? Would it be the story of my evangelical upbringing and the conflict I encountered during adolescence when I began to question the values of my childhood? Would it be my conflicts at university to strengthen my identity and face the world as an autonomous self? Or would it be the conflicts I had encountered in my roles as a public school teacher? After writing several drafts, I decided not to use any of these frames but a more integrated version that bridged my tales of personal experience to my stories as a professional.

Questions of frame and context also challenged the writing of other life stories. Each learner had many tales to share. Sometimes the tales were consistent. Sometimes they raised questions or presented contradictions. The ways in which researchers enter into narratives must provide insights into the area being explored while leaving spaces for reflection and complexity. Stories which minimize or oversimplify personal experiences lose their richness.

As the researcher, I was also aware of the ways in which other stories entered into the primary narratives. I included several secondary tales at the beginning of my thesis to illustrate these connections. The life stories of participants, I showed, were part of a much larger story in which many individuals, histories, theories, and experiences had played a role. The individual stories of learners in my project were linked to the stories of communities and cultures.

As I entered further into my research, I had to confront questions about ethics as well as procedure. In most cases there were no black and white answers. I had to act in a way that was consistent with my own goals and values. When I continued to ask for stories during my first interview Sandy said she couldn't think of any. This taught me that the invitation for participants to share their experiences must be gentle and gradual rather than forced and repetitive. When I completed the draft of Kate's story I discovered that much of what I had written, based on my interview transcripts, was not about learning. This helped me to understand the need to balance open-ended conversations with conversations that focus on the phenomenon the researcher is
exploring.

Although narrative research was new to me, I feel that I honoured my commitments to participants. Every individual I interviewed had the opportunity to check and revise what I wrote. Often this involved several visits back and forth or several phone conversations.

It was important to me to respect each individual's understanding of their story while presenting my own interpretation as well. This required careful negotiation. For this, I was fortunate to have worked with individuals trained in the art of conflict resolution. Our shared experiences in this field were, I believe, invaluable in allowing me to enter into other people's lives. They shared their stories openly and graciously. This taught me that, although collaborative processes require much time, they are essential for this kind of work. The research became an opportunity for all of us to practise our skills in a different context. By agreeing to participate in my study, participants were also saying that they had something important to say about their learning. After I had finished the interviews and focus groups, several of them thanked me for this opportunity.

How the Research Has Entered Into My Story

My interactions with all of the participants I interviewed have given me a new perspective of conflict resolution. One of the things that struck me most was the commitment of learners to use and apply the skills in their lives. The Conflict Resolution Certificate Program has given them alternatives for understanding themselves, for understanding others, and for understanding the importance of staying connected. As I did my research I was reminded that we are all part of the same world and that we can, as Kevin said, make a difference.

I think this is probably one of the reasons I began my project. My learning at the Justice Institute had touched me on a deeply personal level and, in a sense, I wanted to give something back. One way to do this was by exploring and sharing other people's stories. Part of my growth as a learner has been to understand my role as a member of the communities in which I participate. This includes the community of conflict resolution practitioners. I would like to become a professional mediator.
As a learner, I continue to reflect critically on the significance of conflict resolution for myself and for others. I see evidence of conflicts daily on the television and in my encounters with other people. I see images of bloody, ethnic wars portrayed graphically by the media. I hear the screams of people on the street arguing. I see the stress on individuals’ faces as they decide how to handle a difficult situation.

Programs such as those as the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training are important because they provide frameworks and tools for understanding and responding to disputes. In order to strengthen conflict resolution programs, however, educators must continue to look critically at the needs of those coming for training and the broader social and political power contexts that intersect with individual lives. Sharing stories is one way to understand the purpose, process, and outcomes of learning from the frames of reference of participants.

Is It Finished Yet?

I submitted my thesis proposal to my committee in April 1995. It is now September 1996. In between these two dates I have shared my research with friends, colleagues, family, and partner. During the past few months one of the questions they keep asking is: “Have you finished yet?” or “Is it finished?”, meaning the thesis. For those unaccustomed to the process of thesis-writing this question probably seems perfectly legitimate.

I also wonder when the stories will be finished but from my perspective as a researcher. How do I enter into people’s lives for a period of a year and suddenly depart? How do I leave their stories behind and leave room for my own? Where do our stories begin and end?

The metaphor I used to describe the ways in which one story enters into another was circles within circles. On one level the story of my research will always be a part of me. On another, it will be transformed by other tales yet to be encountered. Narrative research, like other forms of research, offers a snapshot of experience in time. Having taken several pictures, I will now leave them for you to study.
REFERENCES


Linden, Mr. Justice Allen M. (1986). Comments on how alternative dispute resolution would apply to Canada’s legal system. In The 1986 Isaac Pitblado Lectures on Alternative Dispute Resolution--Emerging Mechanisms and Professional Responsibilities in Dispute Resolution, November 1986 (pp. 11-12). Winnipeg, Canada: University of Manitoba, Faculty of Law.


Appendix A

Justice Institute Authorization Forms
Appendix B

Interview Guide: Pilot Interviews
PILOT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These were sample questions asked during the pilot interviews. I explained the research process to participants and reinforced the importance of maintaining their confidentiality before asking the questions.

1. What motivated you to take courses at the Justice Institute in conflict resolution?

2. Is there anything about who you are which might make your story special or different from that of other students who have taken the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program?

3. What did you think when you were first introduced to the conflict resolution model?

4. How did the conflict resolution model compare to the way you managed conflict before enrolling in courses?

5. If someone wanted to learn about the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, what types of questions should they ask?

6. What do you think is the most important thing you learned?

7. Tell me about a memorable incident while you were learning conflict resolution skills.

8. What did you do with the training?

9. What was it like trying out the skills at home and with friends?

10. How has the training affected you on a personal level?

11. What have you learned about yourself and others as a result of your training at the Justice Institute?

12. What have you done with the training since you graduated/finished taking courses?

13. How do you plan on using your training in the future?

14. What do you think about conflict today?
15. What would you like other people to know about the conflict resolution training program?

16. What areas do you still wonder about or feel like there are gaps in your learning?

17. Sometimes when the tape recorder is turned off people say, "I wish I would have mentioned that!" Is there anything else you would like to say before I turn off the recorder?
Appendix C

Letters of Contact and Telephone Contact Form
LETTER OF CONTACT FROM RESEARCHER

This letter was mailed to students via the Justice Institute with another letter from the Program Director, Marg Huber, supporting my study.

October 16, 1995

Dear Conflict Resolution Graduate,

Your name was given to me as someone who might be interested in participating in a research project I am conducting as part of my Master’s program in Adult Education at the University of British Columbia. The purpose of the program is to explore the kinds of learning that take place in conflict resolution training. I will ask you to reflect on your training and to share your personal stories of learning.

Two individual interviews will be conducted followed by two group discussions involving all participants in the project. Each interview and group session is expected to last about one to one and a half hours. Meeting times and places for the interviews will be arranged over the phone. During the final stages of the project, participants will be encouraged to put their stories of learning into written form and to share these with other adults in the final group session.

Although the name of the Justice Institute may be used in the study, your own name and other identifying factors will be kept confidential. You will have an opportunity to check or clarify comments which you have made before the final stories are printed. You are free to withdraw your participation in this study at any time without prejudice to you.

If you would like to participate in this project, please complete the attached information form and return it to the Justice Institute within one week using the enclosed envelope. Interviews will be conducted in late October and November. You will be asked to sign a formal consent form granting permission for your participation in the project before the first interview.
Should you have further questions, please feel free to call me at 662-8242, Dr. Pratt, my thesis supervisor, at 822-4552, or Marg Huber, the Program Director in Conflict Resolution Training at 528-5613. Marg is also serving on my thesis committee to help overlook my work.

Your support of my work is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Brent Hocking
M.A. Student, Department of Educational Studies, U.B.C.

_____ Yes, I am willing to participate in this research project involving conflict resolution graduates from the Justice Institute of B.C.

_____ I am not able to participate in the study.

NAME: ____________________________

TELEPHONE NUMBER(S): ____________________________

GENDER: ____________________________

PROFESSION: ____________________________

GRADUATION DATE FROM CERTIFICATE PROGRAM: ____________________________

DO YOU HAVE ANY DOCUMENTS (E.G. DIARY) OR VIDEOS (E.G. ROLE PLAYS) WHICH MIGHT HELP YOU TO RECALL IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCES? ____________________________

Please detach and return to the Justice Institute within a week using the envelope provided. Thank you for your response.
TELEPHONE CONTACT FORM

Hello. My name is Brent Hocking. I am conducting the research project on conflict resolution graduates as part of my thesis work at UBC. The purpose of the study is to find out more about the learning that takes place in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program from the points of view of the students.

I am phoning because you indicated a willingness to participate in this project. Thank you for responding. I am excited about listening to your story.

I wonder if you would have 10-15 minutes to answer a few questions about yourself and your experiences as a conflict resolution student? The results of this conversation will help determine if you are still interested in participating. Your name will be kept confidential and the contents of this phone conversation will not be used for any purpose except to determine if you are still interested in participating. You may also choose not to answer questions. If you would like to verify the authenticity of this study, I would be happy to provide the names and telephone numbers of the Program Director at the Justice Institute and my thesis supervisor at UBC (Marg Huber, 528-5613; Daniel D. Pratt, 822-4552).

Do you have questions why I am phoning? Do you have time to answer a few questions?

If yes, proceed with questions on next page.
Questions

1. Tell me a bit about yourself, the kind of work you do, and the reasons you decided to take conflict resolution training.
2. What has the training meant to you personally?
3. Are you able to attend all of the interview and focus group sessions?
4. Are there any special considerations such as timetabling, travel, or daycare that would affect your ability to participate in this study?
5. Are there preferred times and places you have for the interviews?
6. Do you know of someone whose experiences in the program are totally unlike your own experiences? Do you think they would be willing to participate in this study?
7. Would you still like to participate in this research project? If yes, continue.
8. Where and when would you like to meet for the first interview?
Appendix D

Interview Guide: Individual Interviews
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Learner's Background

1. Tell me about who you are and your background.

2. Is there anything about who you are which might make your story special or different from that of other students who have taken the Certificate Program in Conflict Resolution?

3. What role has conflict played in your own life?

4. Tell me about the places and times in your life where you have encountered conflict. What stories come to mind as you think of these places?

5. What are the different contexts or roles that come to mind when you think of yourself as a learner?

Entry into the Program

1. What were the circumstances that brought you to take conflict resolution courses?

2. What motivated you to continue with the full certificate program?

3. What did you think when you first started taking courses?

4. How did the learning model compare to the way you managed conflict previously?
Learning: General

1. What would you like other people to know about your learning in conflict resolution training?

2. How do you interpret the words conflict and resolution?

3. How does learning conflict resolution skills compare to other forms of learning?

4. What were your fears in learning how to manage conflict?

5. What do you value most about all the kinds of learning you have experienced in the classroom, at home, and in the community?

6. What does the term relationship mean to you?

7. What does it mean for you to make connections with others?

Learning Process

1. Tell me about a memorable incident or story while you were learning conflict resolution skills.

2. Describe your memories of life in the classroom. What do you remember about the instructors and other students?

3. How important were certain types of instruction such as role plays?

4. For some people, certain aspects of the program may be emotional. What role did emotions play in your own learning?
5. Are there other kinds of learning you experienced at the Justice Institute, apart from training in the classroom?

6. Did you participate in study groups outside of the Justice Institute? If so, what role did these play in your learning?

7. What role did coaches play in your learning at the Justice Institute or in your own study groups?

8. What role did the two final assessments play in your learning?

**Application**

1. How did your training fit in with the rest of your day-to-day activities?

2. What are some times when you used the skills very successfully?

3. What was it like trying out the skills with people close to you such as family and friends?

4. Which types of situations or contexts were the most challenging for you to apply your skills?

5. What did people around you think about your training in conflict resolution skills?

**Outcomes**

1. What is the most important thing you learned?

2. What would you want other people to know about who you are as a person which might help them to understand the role the training has played in your life?
3. In what types of situations do you feel you learned the most?

4. What is the most important thing you have learned about yourself as a result of the training?

**Future Goals and Expectations**

1. How do you plan on using your training in the future?

2. What areas do you still wonder about or feel like there may be gaps in your learning?

**Concluding Reflections**

1. What would you like to be the main focus or central part of your story?

2. Sometimes when the tape recorder is turned off, people say, “I wish I would have mentioned that!” Is there anything else you would like to say before I turn off the recorder?
Appendix E

Directions to Participants and Consent Form
VERBAL INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO PARTICIPANTS
AT FIRST INTERVIEW

1. The purpose of the interviews is to listen to your stories of learning from the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program. I will ask what you remember about your training and the kinds of learning that have taken place since you graduated. My role is not to evaluate the program.

2. The research process will include two individual interviews and two group sessions as well as some reflective writing.

3. I will use the interview transcripts for the thesis and other possible publications.

4. Interviews will be tape recorded. I may also leave the recorder on during breaks and debriefings as important information often surfaces during these informal times.

5. Information will be kept confidential by removing identifying factors and erasing the tapes at the end of the study.

6. You will have an opportunity to read and edit my written version of your story.

7. You may withdraw at any time from this study without prejudice to you.

8. I would really like to hear your life story and to share mine. Please feel free to include whatever thoughts or information you think are important to understanding your personal experiences. I will be encouraging you to remember and to express your ideas in story form by referring to characters, events, and places that have a role in your learning.

9. Sometimes I will ask open-ended questions and you may think, "What does he mean?" I would like you to interpret the questions as you like. There are no particular or right answers that I am expecting. The questions are intended as a guideline only.

10. Feel comfortable to talk freely. If there are stories that come to mind don't worry too much if you have answered the question as well as you might.

11. Don't assume that I know the information already.

12. Some questions may touch on personal issues. Feel free to respond at a level that is comfortable for you.
13. You will have time in between the two individual interviews to reflect on the stories you share today and to develop your knowledge. Do not feel pressured to say everything in one session.

14. You may find it useful to keep notes, journal entries, or pictures over the duration of the research project to help you remember and reflect on significant information.

15. I will ask you for specific details about your life story to provide a framework for your learning. These may include such things as your age, where you were raised, your profession, and the number of people in your family. Again, please share information that you are comfortable sharing and that you feel is significant.

16. There may be times when you wish to talk about another person or institution. It is important to respect other people's confidentiality when doing this. Try to find a neutral way of referring to someone that will not disclose their identity (e.g. a government official).

17. Do you have any questions before we proceed?
Appendix F

Focus Group Materials
FOCUS GROUP 1: REVIEW OF RESEARCH

This handout was given to participants at the first focus group as a way to review my research purpose, objectives, and assumptions before talking about the focus group sessions.

Focus Group 1
Saturday, December 30, 1995 (11:00 a.m.)

Research Questions

1. What is the meaning of conflict resolution learning for you?
2. How is this learning grounded in your life story and day-to-day experiences?

Objectives

1. To develop a better understanding of conflict resolution learning
2. To honour the personal knowledge and interpretation of participants as a way to understand learning
3. To begin linking conflict resolution theory and practice

Assumptions about Learning

1. Learning is experienced differently by different individuals as well as in similar ways.
2. Personal histories or autobiographies as well as social beliefs and values affect influence the learning experience.
3. There are many types of learning including formal classroom learning as well as the learning that occurs from application of skills and knowledge.
4. Learning requires reconstruction of knowledge and reflection.
5. Some kinds of learning are more powerful than others in terms of personal growth and significance.
6. Learning is ongoing and dynamic.
7. Discussion of learning processes is itself a catalyst for learning.
8. Learning has particular meaning in adulthood.
9. Learning cannot be separated from other elements in education such as teaching, program planning, and curriculum.
10. Stories offer a framework for linking the different elements in our learning.
GUIDELINES FOR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION

These are general guidelines for individual participation in both focus groups. These guidelines were discussed at the beginning of the first session.

Focus Group 1
Saturday, December 30, 1995 (11:00 a.m.)

Guidelines for Participation

1. The format and content of the group sessions are negotiable.

2. Everyone in this group, including the primary researcher, is considered a learner in the project.

3. Please speak loudly, clearly, and slowly near a microphone.

4. Wait a few seconds at the beginning of a new tape before speaking, please.

5. Please try to limit background noises such as body or chair movements.

6. Please wait until someone has finished speaking before speaking yourself. This will help to keep each conversation clear so that speakers can be distinguished on the tape.

7. It is important to share our time so that everyone has an opportunity to participate.

8. Try to give an example or short story whenever possible to clarify a general point.

9. Feel free to respectfully disagree or to offer a counter-story. This will provide a richer overview of the topic under discussion.

10. It is assumed that all information discussed in these groups is confidential. The ability of participants to self-disclose is connected to the level of trust established in the group. As with information from the individual interviews, your actual name from the group sessions will not be used in the final stories that are written.
11. The written transcripts from the tape recordings as well as your own written stories and graphics will be given to the researcher as sources of information to use in the writing of your stories.

12. A handout with excerpts from the individual interviews will be distributed to help you prepare your presentation next week. Please return this handout when you attend the second focus group. Thank you.
AGENDA FOR FIRST FOCUS GROUP

Focus Group 1
Saturday, December 30, 1995 (11:00 a.m.)

I. INTRODUCTION (15 minutes)
   A. Welcome/Volunteers to monitor recorders
   B. Review Research Objectives and Process - handout
   C. Guidelines for Focus Groups - handout
   D. Proposed Format for Focus Groups, Including Options
   E. Questions and Confirmation of Format/Next Meeting Time

II. DISCUSSION: REFLECTION ON INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS (15 minutes)
    Recorders turned on now
    A. What was it like for you to reflect on your learning?
    B. What did the learning confirm about your learning and its significance for you?
    C. What did you find challenging?
    D. What did you learn that was new or surprising?

III. TRANSCRIPT STATEMENTS: PREPARATION OF PERSONAL LEARNING REFLECTION (45 - 60 minutes)
    A. Brief Discussion
    B. Prioritize 7 items: What has this learning experience meant to me?
    C. Write short paragraph integrating the 7 items from B
    D. Is anything missing from my paragraph or does it present a full picture of my overall learning?
    E. Read out paragraphs to other students
    F. Take paragraphs home to help prepare next week’s presentation

IV. COFFEE AND MUFFIN BREAK (15 minutes)

V. PLANNING NEXT WEEK’S MEETING (10 minutes)
   A. Confirm date and time
   B. Graphic Organizers -handout
   C. Small-group work today: briefly present life story and get feedback from group (As a reader, I would be interested in knowing...)
   D. Next meeting: presentation to whole group: 20 minutes per student

VI. SMALL-GROUP WORK (40 minutes)

VII. Closure: Whole Group (5 minutes)
    A. Feedback on today
TRANSCRIPT STATEMENTS

These were statements taken directly from the individual interview transcripts. No names were identified with any of the statements. I asked participants to select seven quotes which represented what they believed to be the real meaning of their learning in conflict resolution. Participants wrote a short summary using these statements.

On Conflict

"There's something about the use of power, power as a dominating force . . . "

"I don't want to do away with conflict 'cause it's highly creative."

"Somehow it was tied up with being too aggressive and too angry and all of that. So in avoiding that, I haven't always stood up for my rights."

"I think that when I saw people fighting . . . or when I was fighting some part of me thought that that was in some way like some little small death of relationship, of love, of caring . . . And now I realize that conflict is part of life . . . I am more and more accepting of that and I'm less frightened of it."

"Conflict to me . . . means having a difference with another person and along with that comes some real anxiety that . . . "In order for me to deal with this conflict . . . things are going to get worse rather than better."

"By avoiding conflict or by stuffing things that were said or done that hurt we tend to destroy our relationship; we tend to destroy our own self-esteem."

"If people are determined to fight they're going to fight because that's what they want but there is a realm where you can take that situation and if you work with it and you work with it sufficiently skilfully . . . you may be able to transform it."

"In my mind, the internal conflict sets the stage for the external conflict."

". . . disagreements that take place between individuals and between individuals and institutions, between groups, differences of opinion, differences of ideas, differences of ethics which translate into many things . . . "

"When you're going through life and you're growing up you'll see conflict in many different ways."

Transcript Statements (10 pages)
"If our definition of conflict is essentially at that point where there is harm being caused, then I think it doesn't help anyone to allow that harm to continue . . . If the definition of conflict is simply a conflict of ideas . . . then perhaps it might even be productive to have that competitive spirit."

"It's just stating the obvious to say that it can be extremely destructive."

"You can spend a hundred years or a thousand years building up good human community relations and . . . they can be destroyed in a matter of minutes or hours or days."

"Conflict is culturally based."

"While we're trying in our schools, for example, to build understanding . . . "catch them while they're young" kind of thing . . . conflict is gonna take place."

"I think one of the things I really learned from the program is, it seems to me, that conflict is more a perception than a reality in a lot of cases . . . We are actually, in some cases, even on the same side of the issue, even agree. But there's almost a societal, built-in need to disagree."

"Conflict had never been something I was afraid of in the past. If anything, I think I saw conflict, always have seen conflict, as an opportunity to change something or to improve on something. I just wanted to do it better."

"Winning is okay with men. It's not just okay, it's important. The most important thing is to win whereas I think often for women it's not so much as important as making sure the other person is okay too."

"I've never been in a position to declare war, you know, on a world-wide scale and still I can't help but feel that a lot of what gets us to that place is old ways of dealing with differences of opinion."

On Motivation to Enter the Program/Change One's Behaviour

"I thought, "I don't want to end up there."

"One is the category of people that want to earn a living in this field and the other is the category of people that just want to effect some kind of a positive change in their own personal lives."

Transcript Statements (10 pages)
"I think that I always had a sense... about these communications... but I was not aware of things I was doing that were not in keeping with that."

"It's kind of a self-selecting thing so people go into it already wanting... I'm not sure that you could take somebody who doesn't value that and thinks that it's completely wrong and a waste of time, put them through the program and find them totally changed."

"I went through a number of years of introspection... to try to find a new purpose in life. It wasn't enough that I just be here and enjoy life. I needed to have a purpose."

"I wanted to do something for me, for my own personal growth... and it was kind of like spending time on myself."

"Conflict that involves communities is what motivated me to enter... this whole discipline."

"I wanted to develop my own skills as a manager how to deal with conflict."

"My biggest motivation was that I just got sick of seeing the way people were doing things and in my head, in my heart, I'm thinking, 'There's a better, different way to do this.'"

"I had no idea when I entered the program that it would have such a personal impact."

"A greater sense of fulfilment in my work."

**On the Program in General**

"What this is all about is trying to put yourself in the place of the other person, trying to understand what it all looks like for them."

"Before we even start... there are various dynamics already taking place around communication, deeply rooted in our culture... And the people bring to the table assumptions."

"What's in the larger good out of here rather than in my own personal achievement?"

"I think there has to be an acceptance of it, that it makes sense and it is what you want."

"The theme that I see running through the conflict resolution program is... the whole idea of interests."
"It’s very skill based and they’re not skills which are really commonly learned. They’re not skills that are taught in schools. They’re not skills that are taught at home . . . . My feeling is if we got skills training . . . in school we’d have a lot less conflict when we become adults. I mean I really see them as life skills."

“I think the skills help me to actualize my beliefs . . . . The skills help me . . . to be empathic.”

“With these courses I started doing that introspection and taking a look at my beliefs and values. Why do I have them? What works for me? And what doesn’t work for me?”

“I think part of the curriculum is a value set.”

“We not only have to manage the process--being the model--and also demonstrate some skills--being the communication skills--but we also have to know where we’re going with them.”

“It emphasized that this learning that was going on was a very personal kind of learning . . . it wasn’t an academic kind . . . It was a demanding kind of you’re not just going to take this in and be knowledgeable, you’re going to change the way you are, you’re going to change the way you deal in the world, and you’re going to do it right now, you know, right in this setting with these people.”

“It wasn’t just a matter of going to the course and learning some technical information. It was a matter of internalizing a process and creating a real change in myself.”

“It was putting a lot more form and shape over the things that I might have felt informally and added on . . . In addition to that, a lot of good information and ideas. And just simply a way of relating to one another as human beings.”

“You see the instructor model an alternative and it becomes very powerful.”

“I think the program itself is hugely valuable in that aspect of moving individual people from that place of looking for the conflict instead of looking for the . . . ways in which we connect.”

“What it is that stood out for me in terms of the pedagogy was probably, in fact, the lack of real structure. Sometimes I wasn’t even sure where we were headed . . . It was quite loose in . . . some of the classes.”

“One of the things I like about the Justice program is that it is dealing with beingness and transforming beingness. It’s dealing with emotion.”
"Anyone that can de-escalate an aggressive situation, I think, is keeping the peace. And I think virtually every course we have at the JI or at least in the certificate program does help people do that. So I think we're already targeted on peacekeeping and social reform."

"The conflict resolution material, to the degree that it is life skills, it's self-management, it's directed at behaviour, it has a certain focus on the preservation of relationships, getting people's needs met as opposed to their solutions effected."

**On the Mediation and Negotiation Assessments**

"I got stuck on negotiation and I failed the negotiation assessment. And it was very, very interesting for me going through that."

"They reaffirmed for me what I'd thought I was missing."

"I failed my negotiation assessment . . . that was really hard and it challenged me to look at what I did wrong and I went back a week later without any practice in between and I scored a Strong."

"I passed the negotiation and didn't pass the mediation one the first time through . . . what was interesting to me about that was that my old self came back under pressure . . . I had not yet fully integrated into my being the belief that conflict is a good thing."

"So there's a lot of people out there . . . who for some reason or the other have gone through this whole process and it's not working for them."

"There should [be] some way of assessing people . . . at each step of the process before they go on to the next one."

"I also believe that the evaluation process is important for the learning process and I think that's why it's there. And I don't think that's comfortable for a lot of people, myself included."
On Experiential Learning

“It’s so much different than reading a story or a theory in a book.”

“Even when you were role playing and somebody else was doing the mediating role, let’s say, and you were watching . . . you were learning.”

“The role plays I found very scary and yet the more valuable part.”

“It was a huge risk for me to . . . bare my real feelings . . . I think there’s that natural situation built into the course that, you know, that what you’re doing is very public . . . everyone sees what your skill level is . . . And so you’re open to an evaluation by your peers.”

“I think we do learn from one another a great deal and the learning tends to be very subtle.”

“Sometimes when I was put into a group actually no learning would take place at all and it’d be a complete and total waste of time . . . in some cases the group . . . essentially excluded any participation . . . And in other places [learning] took place quite well.”

“What you would see develop in role-play was that . . . something would trigger, a feeling, a memory, an emotion.”

On Applying the Conflict Resolution Model

“Just because you walk out of the classroom doesn’t mean that you can let go of this stuff and leave it in the classroom . . . your mind is constantly working on it.”

“Is there a practical application? And can I then develop that often enough that those kinds of skills would become part and parcel of my being?”

“The reality was that it was a lot easier in the outside world [than in role plays].”

“I was so happy that I had had these skills because it would have been a very intimidating situation for me otherwise.”

“One of the ways for me to really solidify my learning is to try to teach it.”

“If you don’t model the basic ethical principles or the other principles, the operating principles of this process, then I think it becomes a little superficial.”
"When I've had that opportunity to do that introspection, if you will, or thinking it through and convincing myself that, "Yes, it does make sense and it will work for me," that's when I can embrace it . . . and then I will have learned it."

"I'm finding that that's the biggest challenge for me is the role of a parent and when my children are in conflict or if I'm in conflict with them because there's a lot of emotions at stake there . . . just now I'm starting to see a delay in my trigger response."

"I slip away into the usual way of doing things and then I have to come back and sort of raise this as an awareness . . . I'd say that it'd be easier for me to slip into the old way of doing business when I'm around familiar people."

"I tend to redo [the Thomas-Kilmann] once a year for myself and I see over a period of time how I'm changing."

"What I need is to have a demo or a lecture or some information presented. Then I need time to go away and integrate it . . . If I can rewrite it . . . that's the way I internalize things or integrate things. Once I've had a chance to integrate it then I need an opportunity to go out and practise it. And for me . . . that's what was missing in the J1 program."

"I was actively co-mediating through the last half of the course . . . right after I finished the course I was asked to start coaching."

"I can create what I perceive to be a more favourable change by being curious and understanding and I can't if I [am] judgmental and authoritative."

"The things that are standing out for me right now more are the failures. I guess because knowing you can do something better somehow really highlights your failure when . . . you don't."

"Every once in a while I just have to really let loose. It's not something that I would have said before. And it seemed really funny to me that in the middle of doing this wonderful program I would come up with this new, great, terrible response."

"I sort of put it that you will do what you are most practised at."

"It doesn't mean that . . . there's something wrong with the concepts, they don't work in certain situations. Rather it's a matter of persisting until you get it right."

"It's like this little learning is a dangerous thing. So especially when you're learning something new and you really value it . . . to make sure that that doesn't sort of go to your head and make you feel like you've got the answers for everybody out there but just to recognize that it's a tool."
"integrate maybe what you learned with your own personal style and your own way of doing things and ... see how that fit ..." 

"Sometimes it may have happened a few days after the program was over ... I was reflecting back on what we had learned there and suddenly ... "Okay, this makes sense now."

"And I said, "Here's what's happening for me and here's what I think I'm seeing and I wanna check that out with you" ... And quite honestly both ... looked at me like I was absolutely insane."

"I have this sense right now of the need for vigilance ... being a watchdog on myself because as much as I believe in it and want it to be part of my life, it's still hard to be really good at it, you know, to really make that switch all the way."

**On the Personal Impact of the Program**

"I think the most important thing I learned was that I am able in the present to work toward creating - creating my own future, like you do have the emotional tone of your relationship in your hand at every moment."

"It's very difficult to be a victim when you're learning those kinds of skills."

"My belief ... now would be that ... you first get a deeper understanding of what the other person is trying to say."

"I have stopped telling people what to do ... I was very free with my advice."

"It becomes something which is very positive and brings positive enjoyment and pleasure and all those things-it doesn't become something which is constantly threatening."

"I finished the course in March and in that time frame it seems to me that thee has been no conflict in my life and when I really think about it that's not true. There have been lots of little situations but they have never felt like conflict to me."

"I'm past the point of the gut-wrenching learning where you have to learn so much in such a short period of time--you've gone through it--you know the pressure in getting there. Once you get there the learning that comes after that is a lot more fun."

"I'm feeling happier ... and more at peace and more focused ... I like myself better."
"You suddenly see any potential conflict situation as an opportunity for creating new friendships instead of the fear of having new enemies and that in itself is a great stress reliever."

"I can choose to be happy or I can choose to be . . . miserable by events around me and I'm going to make a choice to be happy and to approach things as an opportunity . . . rather than as a problem."

"I'm not really sure that it was a whole new learning thing. I think that it was more of a reinforcement and what I got from it were tools, tools to implement what maybe I already believed in, had read, knew about. It was more of the "how to do it," you know."

"I don't know if you've experienced this experience of saying, of having this feeling of 'I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be at exactly the time I'm supposed to be there?""

"What conflict resolution did for me in a way was that it confirmed those things that were important to me."

"There's still a lot of power but a good power . . . having integrity and having values and morals and living by those . . ."

"I took that experience and that knowledge . . . back to the workplace and I used it . . . and it worked."

**On Future Goals**

"I feel like I've incorporated something really quite wonderful into . . . my life and I don't know yet where that's gonna take me or what I'm gonna do with it or if I need to do something with it other than simply add to . . . what my life is already about."

"I want it to become . . . more a part of a natural way of doing things."

" . . . trying to figure out how that's going to fit into my life personally and creatively and how to make a living around that . . ."

"I want to feel that I've touched people's lives in a meaningful way and that has to be on an emotional level as opposed to an intellectual level."

"One of the things I think one is gonna have to do in the field of mediation, conflict resolution, is sell yourself and really find a market for this."
“It's really great to say we believe in peace and harmony and love and understanding and forgiveness . . . and then to be able to do work that would demonstrate that [is] . . . really fulfilling for me.”

“Right now the area that I wanna move into is . . . helping organizations create a respectful workplace.”

“And if I'm going to . . . be dealing with people from different cultures what is my understanding of that culture?”
HOMEWORK DIRECTIONS GIVEN OUT AT FIRST FOCUS GROUP

These are the written directions to help participants do their written life story in preparation for an oral presentation at the second focus group.

Individual Presentations

**What will the Presentation Involve?**

1. You will speak to the whole group for 5 - 10 minutes. There will be another 10 minutes for questions and discussion of your story.

2. Your presentation is a summary of your life story. Think of it as the most important elements that you have talked about during this research project. There are two areas you should talk about in your presentation:
   a. significant facts about your life
   b. a clear explanation about what the conflict resolution learning means for you at this point in time - both in your life and in this research process

3. It is important for you to organize your thoughts clearly ahead of time. You may wish to write out your presentation or have detailed notes.

4. Your presentation should not only be descriptive; it should attempt to explain what the certificate training has meant to you and why, if at all, it has been important in your life.

5. The presentations will be tape recorded and your written materials given to Brent (If you would like materials back please let me know).
Preparation

In order to prepare for this presentation you will draw on the following:

1. Begin my jotting down what is important to you in terms of your life story and the conflict resolution learning.

2. Select which information is the most important for you.

3. Prepare your two graphics (web and lifeline or chart).

4. Now you are ready to put the information into sentences. This will probably take a couple of hours. Use the following material to help you:
   - the notes you just made and your two graphics
   - the materials from the first focus group (paragraph and small-group feedback)
   - any other materials that may help refresh your memory (e.g. notes, tapes from the courses; personal diary entries).

*If you wish, you may develop your thoughts further after the second and last focus group. You may want to write a more detailed story of your learning or you may wish to develop other pictures or graphics. If you would like to do this, please make sure that your materials are submitted to me by the end of January. Thank you.
GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:
MODELS TO HELP STUDENTS WITH LIFE STORY ASSIGNMENT

These were sample graphic organizers shown to students at the first focus group. They were asked to do #1 and either of #2 or #3 in preparation for writing their own life story.

Sample Graphics

1. Web Showing Settings - required

![Diagram of a web showing settings]

2. Lifeline - you may wish to do this or 3

One kind of lifeline (shows your life history):

- 1990 Had my first child
- 1994 Began CR Program
- 1995 Graduated

Graphic Organizers (2 pages)
Another kind of lifeline (shows your development as a learner in the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 93</td>
<td>Entering the Labyrinth</td>
<td>Nervous/didn't understand CR model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 93</td>
<td>Conflicting Conflict</td>
<td>Took my second course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Personal Growth Chart - **do this OR #2**
   - any diagram or model that shows your growth in the conflict resolution program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Name of Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 93</td>
<td>Entering the Labyrinth</td>
<td>Nervous/didn't understand CR model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 93</td>
<td>Conflicting Conflict</td>
<td>Took my second course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graphic Organizers (2 pages)
GRAPHIC ORGANIZER 3: SAMPLE FOR MY OWN LIFE

This was a sample of a diagram showing my own growth in conflict resolution. I distributed it to learners when discussing how to do the graphic organizers. The model starts from the bottom and goes vertically upward.

Focus Group #2: Stages of Learning
January 3, 1996
B. Hocking

RE-EVALUATING LIMITS OF MODEL
STRONGER ASSERTIVENESS
CONTINUING TO REFINE
ROUGH APPLICATION
EXCITEMENT: I WANT TO TRY THIS
SELF-EXAMINATION (FEAR, GUILT)
SELF-AWARENESS
COMMITMENT, READINESS TO START PROGRAM
FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE IN MEDIATION
INTEREST
AWARENESS OF PROGRAM
AGENDA FOR SECOND FOCUS GROUP

This is the agenda for the second focus group. As noted in chapter 3 it was modified in response to a participant’s questions about self-disclosure.

Focus Group 2
Wednesday, January 3, 1996 (7:00 p.m.)

Agenda

I. Follow-up questions/discussion from first focus group

II. Other considerations for study:
   A. Use of Justice Institute name
   B. Reading your stories
      1. Accuracy of information
      2. Inclusiveness of detail
      3. Representativeness of learning, of life
   C. What to do with tapes
   D. Any other questions, concerns?

III. Individual Presentations

IV. Closing Discussion

V. Refreshments
FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS FOR SECOND FOCUS GROUP

These were follow-up questions I asked participants at the second focus group. We spent about 30 minutes discussing them following the discussion on self-disclosure.

Focus Group 2
Wednesday, January 3, 1996 (7:00 p.m.)

Questions

1. Many of you seemed to describe your learning in terms of a journey. How does this journey in conflict resolution fit into your larger odyssey in life?

2. How do you think the learning of students who take the program for career purposes compares to the learning of those who are seeking personal growth?

3. Do you think people need to experience great conflict before learning conflict resolution?

4. How has the conflict in your lives influenced your learning?

5. Any other thoughts?
GROUP DISCUSSION:
REFLECTIONS ON EACH LEARNER’S LIFE STORY

These notes were taken at the second focus group. After each learner presented the life story, the group would discuss the significance of learning for that individual. I copied the following notes on chart paper and then retyped them.

Focus Group #2

Group Discussion of Stories

What does each person’s life story suggest about that individual’s learning?

Sydney

-arrive where we started (Sydney has come full circle)
-reaffirmation of her personal knowledge in connection with her life experiences
-clarity to her understanding
-meeting people who shared similar beliefs

Sandy

-still searching for where learning “fits” in overall life
-feels a responsibility to do something with her learning
-excited about learning
-has developed an awareness of her personal boundaries and caregiving role(s)
-would like to spend time on herself, without feeling obliged to help others
Kevin
- ongoing application of learning and practice
- open to working in different contexts
- one learning experience builds on the other

Brent
- focus on sameness and differences
- difference in perfection
- need to be validated
- sees learning as value-based

John
- belief that he can make a difference
- life experiences carry an emotional impact
- guidelines and skills to back up his intentions
- taking initiative to resolve conflict now with skills

Kate
- emphasis on the experiential base of learning
- "inhumanity of war" was a strong influence in her learning about conflict and conflict resolution
- working towards being authentic - this learning process moves us toward being ourselves
Appendix G

Follow-Up Interviews
INTERVIEW GUIDE: MARJE BURDINE, FIRST COORDINATOR OF THE CENTRE FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING

Interview with Marje Burdine
Thursday, March 21, 1996
1:00 p.m.

1. Before talking about conflict resolution specifically can you give me a brief overview of the Justice Institute - when it was built and the philosophy that underlies its particular organization?

2. When were conflict resolution courses first offered at the Justice Institute?

3. How was the Justice Institute chosen as the training facility?

4. What was your vision in developing a conflict resolution program?

5. What influences or needs were there at the time that encouraged you to continue building the program?

6. When did the certificate program begin?

7. What were some of the challenges involved in setting up the certificate program?

8. How did people from outside British Columbia hear about the certificate program?

9. Do you remember how the enrolment developed over the years?

10. Who provided financial support and resources for the development of the conflict resolution certificate program?

11. In what year did the first group of certificate graduates complete their program?

12. Why do you think the certificate program has been so successful?
INTERVIEW GUIDE: CORE TRainers

This is a sample of the questions I asked core trainers.

Questions for Michael Fogel
Monday, June 3, 10:30 - 11:10 a.m.

Historical Questions

1. How did you become involved in working at the Justice Institute?

2. How was the role of trainers different from their role today?

3. What kind of community existed among those working in the program?

General Questions

1. Which values or aspects of the conflict resolution training have been most significant for you personally?

2. What connections do you make, if any, between the work at the Justice Institute and the peace movement?

3. What does the term experiential learning mean to you?

4. What does apprenticeship look like as far as the training in the program is concerned?
INTERVIEW GUIDE: ERIC GILMAN

These are sample questions which I asked to Eric Gilman about the work of the Mennonites and MCC.

1. What is your role at VORP?

2. What is the philosophy of VORP?

3. What can you tell me about the history and organization of VORP in Canada?

4. How is VORP organized in Langley?

5. How did the Mennonites come to be peacemakers?

6. How is your program the same or different from the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program at the Justice Institute?

7. What are some areas in which the work of the Mennonites overlaps with that of the Justice Institute in the conflict resolution field?
LETTER TO ERIC GILMAN INVITING FEEDBACK ON MY WRITING

June 12, 1996

Dear Eric,

I have enclosed a draft copy of the chapter on the historical development of conflict resolution in Canada, part of which includes a section on the contributions of the Mennonites starting on page 14. Please feel free to edit this section (e.g. clarify points, add detail, add citations if I did not credit you with information you provided). You may also wish to offer feedback on the other sections of the chapter. Thank you.

I am also forwarding you two consent forms. Would you please keep one and return one to me signed and dated using the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

I would appreciate it if you could return any changes to me within one week of your receiving this package. You may want to fax me any changes and send the consent form by mail. If you do not think any changes are needed you may wish to leave a phone message with me stating this.

I appreciate your help with this project. The information you provided allowed me to contextualize ideas for the chapter. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me.

Thank you, Eric.

Sincerely,

Brent Hocking
Appendix H

Peer Review: Directions for Graduate Students
DIRECTIONS GIVEN TO PEER REVIEWERS

These are the directions given to two fellow graduate students from my thesis support group. They read the individual interview transcripts and offered feedback to me before I reconstructed the life stories.

January 7, 1995

Dear Peer Reviewers,

Thank you both for taking the time to read my transcripts and share your feedback with me. I will try to make this as painless as possible because I know that everyone is busy at this time.

Enclosed in your binder are 4 interviews - two for each participant. There is a colour divider separating the two participants.

Directions for Reading and Providing Feedback

1. Please read each interview 2-3 times. Feel free to write notes on these papers, to colour code, or to cut and paste - whatever works for you.

2. Repeat for the second interview (same person).

3. Questions:
   a. What do you think is the meaning/significance of conflict resolution training in this person's life? In other words, what stands out about this person's learning experiences in conflict resolution?
   b. How do you think the above are connected? Any preliminary thoughts?

   Feel free to jot down notes or to make a visual or model.

4. Repeat steps 1-3 for the second participant.

Note: It would be appreciated if you could begin with the first two interviews in your binder. How does 10-14 days sound as a time frame for each participant?

If you have time, maybe you could switch with one another in 3-4 weeks and do the other 2 participants.

PLEASE DON'T SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON THIS.
ANY HELP YOU CAN OFFER WILL BE APPRECIATED.

Brent
Appendix I

Directions to Participants for Reading and Editing Life Stories
GUIDELINES TO PARTICIPANTS FOR READING AND EDITING THEIR LIFE STORIES

This handout was given to participants and discussed in person when I delivered the life story to them. It was accompanied by a list of points specific to the participant.

Attached is a copy of your life story. Thank you for your patience in waiting for it to be finished.

I would encourage you to read the story a couple of times before making any changes. I have listed information below which I hope will help you with the editing. I will return to collect your story and to discuss any changes. Another copy of your story will then be made and shown to you for final approval.

I appreciate your help with this project. Thank you again.

Considerations When I Wrote the Life Story

1. Each person had many stories to share. I tried to work with one important thread that I saw throughout your experiences. Using this theme I have addressed four areas: (a) research context, (b) purpose of your learning, (c) process of your learning, and (d) learning products/outcomes.

2. I cut and pasted your words from many different sources, including the interviews, focus groups, and life writing. When I needed to insert words of my own in your text, these were put in brackets.

3. I have given priority to your voice in the story. Everything you have said or written is indented. My words go to the edges of the pages.

4. Although several of you had several similar themes in your stories, I tried to write a different story for each person.
Recommendations to Assist you in Reading and Editing the Story

1. The purpose of the story is to reveal the meaning conflict resolution learning has for you in your life. You may wish to put the words 'learning' and 'Conflict Resolution Certificate Program' into your story in different sections to make this emphasis clear.

2. Will the reader have a sense of what kind of person you are (= character)? Do you think more information is needed?

3. Is the wording in brackets alright? If so, I will delete the brackets.

4. Check the organization and flow of sentences and sections. Would you like to move anything?

5. Has anything important about your learning been omitted? (See #1 above)

6. Are you satisfied that your confidentiality has been protected? If not, what changes would you suggest?

7. Please make any changes you think are important (content, grammar, spelling, and pseudonym).
Appendix J

Justice Institute Documents

¹ The two documents in this appendix were recopied with written permission from the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, Justice Institute of British Columbia (see Appendix A for letter of authorization)
MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT OF THE CENTRE FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING

OUR MISSION

We are dedicated to the provision of quality instructional services in interest-based dispute resolution to assist individuals, organizations and communities to resolve differences and build harmonious relationships.

OUR VISION

As a learning community we make an ongoing commitment to the challenge of putting into practice constructive dispute resolution in our relationships with colleagues, students and the larger community.

We value the attitudinal and behavioural shifts toward awareness, respect and acceptance of self and others; and we promote interest-based methods of resolving differences.

We recognize that people approach conflict from different cultural perspectives and individual experiences. We value diversity and strive to reflect it and be responsive to it in our programs.

We value leadership in the dispute resolution field and continually strive for excellence by:

- demonstrating personal integrity and ethical conduct in all dealings;
- challenging ourselves and being open to challenge on what we teach and how we teach it;
- remaining innovative, open and investigative;
- listening and thoughtfully responding to community needs;
- being collaborative and consultative within the dispute resolution community;
- encouraging and assisting communities to advance and implement collaborative dispute resolution.

We value experiential, practical, theoretical and philosophical components of the learning process. We acknowledge diverse learning styles and place emphasis on the needs of the learner. We are committed to ongoing support and skill development for all members of the learning community.

In all aspects of our programs, we value methods of assessment and evaluation that are measurable, fair, consistent and based on objective criteria. We establish programs that are consistent with existing professional standards.

Within our decision making process we value participation, collaboration or consultation as appropriate; and clarity in structure, roles, expectations and responsibilities.
COLLABORATIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION MODEL: GOALS OF EACH STAGE

Goals of Each Stage

STAGE 1: SETTING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

The goal of this stage is to establish a feeling of mutual commitment to discussing and resolving a conflict together, in as comfortable an atmosphere as possible. This stage is about trying to establish a collaborative atmosphere. It involves both the physical and the emotional environment. It involves how you begin the discussion, your tone of voice, your facial expression, the setting you have chosen. It recognizes that the way something begins can to a great degree determine how it unfolds. The work done in this stage does not end here; the attempt to create a collaborative environment needs to be maintained throughout.

STAGE 2: CLARIFYING THE ISSUES

The goal of this stage is to establish the scope of the discussion, by getting an overall sense of what each person would like to talk about (the issues, or areas of discussion). This stage builds on the work done in Stage 1, and recognizes that what we need to discuss may not be clear, may not be known to one another, may not be understood. The elements of this stage suggest that your approach and behaviours will convey a desire to listen and understand as well as a desire to be heard and understood. This stage also presumes that our discussions will make more sense and be more focused if we first understand the general scope of the problem before we explore it. Regardless of who initiates the discussion, make sure you both get an opportunity to say what you want to talk about. Depersonalize the conflict—don’t make yourself or the other person the problem.

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STAGE 3: EXPLORING INTERESTS

The goal of this stage is to give and receive information from each other about what is important to each and why, in relation to the 'issues'. Interests are viewed as our motivators, and include our goals, beliefs and hopes, as well as our concerns and fears. Once we have a sense of what the conflict is about, this third stage helps us to understand the conflict in more depth. This stage recognizes that much of what we and others say is not fully understood, needs more information, or is based on assumptions. In collaborative conflict resolution, this stage is about finding out more of what is important to the other person, what motivates them, and letting them know the same about ourselves. It involves questioning and listening and asserting. It involves trying to maintain an attitude of curiosity rather than judgment, as we try to understand a different point of view.

In this process of mutual discovery, we begin to see that in some ways, we may actually agree. We may find ourselves thinking differently as a result of hearing what the other person says. We can clear up assumptions and misunderstandings. We move toward thinking of ways that each of us might be more satisfied than in the current conflict situation. The purpose of exploring interests is to give us a foundation for resolving the conflict.

STAGE 4: RESOLUTION

The goal of this stage is to find mutually satisfying ways to resolve our conflict, based on our interests or motivators. This stage is about coming up with and then choosing options which might work to satisfy both of us. The options are built upon the work of Stage 3, where we discovered the unmet needs of each party, and also where we had common ground. The approach is based on the idea that solutions which meet both our needs to the greatest extent will be the best resolution of the conflict between us.