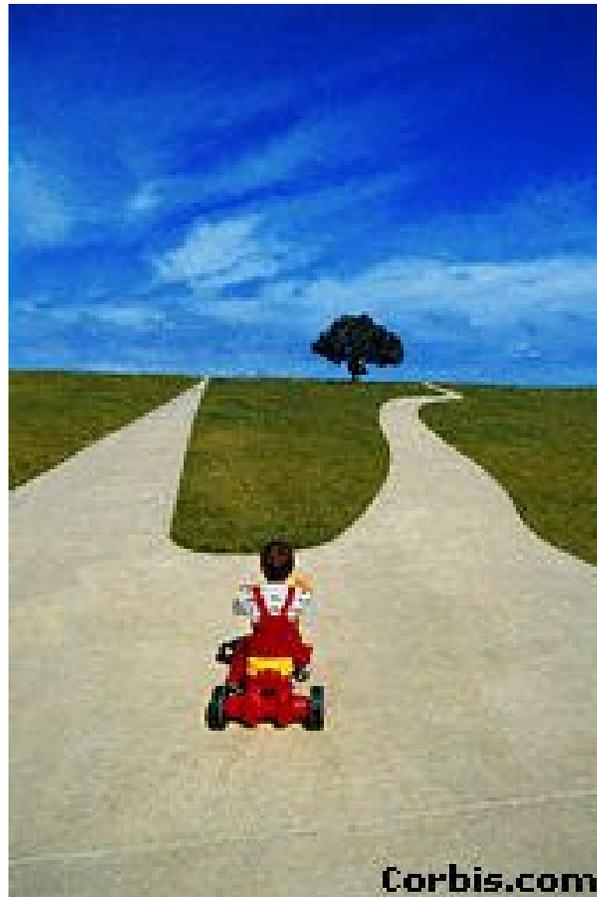


Identity Education In Conflict Resolution



Mathew De Cristo
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HCOM Capstone~Spring 2002

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DEDICATION

This Capstone project is dedicated most lovingly to my parents. Your undying devotion to my well being, continuing belief in my limitless capabilities, and enduring generosity of both wisdom and spirit remains the corner stone of my character, and my educational development. Your support and sacrifice are responsible for this capstone project and all my previous and subsequent successes. It is to you that I present my capstone on cultural identity and its relation to conflict. Above all, I learned from you how to recognize the difference in others, and how to be myself. I could go on forever but thank you's are never enough-I love you. To my sister Dani, thanks for teaching me that it is important to pay attention, by going through all that adolescent life crap before me, and showing me what not to do. Because of you I really did have it easier.

Many thanks to Lisa, Josh, Graham, Deb Busman, Debian, and the other good people that I was fortunate enough to meet and share ideas with, in and out of the classroom. I really appreciate the educational advice, friendship and general sanity that you were able to provide me with. In addition, if I ever needed anything from administration, I was thankful for Natasha K. Oehlman and Jen Reeves, the respective backbones of the HCOM department. You always did such great work for me and the other students and we love it!

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INTRODUCTION

The Columbine High School tragedy in Littleton, Colorado in April of 1999, where two students killed 12 other students and one teacher, once again demonstrated the urgent need for conflict resolution education. CR education is needed because it provides strategies to reduce altercations by diffusing charged emotions and promoting peace. Students and schools share responsibility for violence. Schools need to teach students how to cultivate peace and students need to learn to choose it in difficult situations.

In my research I found that even though culture and conflict are directly related, students are not being given sufficient training on how to distinguish the connection. Some school based CR/PM/ADR programs lack effective diversity training that emphasizes how resolution is affected by each student's uniqueness.

In the United States Conflict Resolution was born as a social concern of the 1960's and was later adopted by religious groups and peace activists. Throughout the late 1980's and 1990's schools began to look towards conflict resolution as a means of providing alternative discipline plans, as well as a way of creating an interactive means for the students to get involved in diffusing the conflict situations they face every day.

“The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives.”¹ Conflict Resolution Education is a process that encourages students to prepare themselves for a future of misunderstandings, disagreements and altercations.

¹ Robert M. Hutchins www.brainyquote.com/quotes Mar 20, 2002

Conflict Resolution (CR) prepares people to settle their differences in a way that fosters understanding, encourages problem solving and helps develop skills for cooperation.

CR teaches people how to approach the conflicts they face in a constructive manner. CR can change the inevitable conflicts in life from the usual win-lose, where the generally stronger or more aggressive comes out on top, to win-win resolutions where both sides are able to communicate their interests, rather than their positions. Both sides are then able to take the opportunity to reach a desired outcome.

Conflict Resolution Education is a structured process that uses a set of problem solving principles as well as skills for cooperation. These skills and principles help disputants to identify their issues and emotions and foster communication between them. The principles of CR are: In a social environment conflict is natural, normal and even inevitable. Differences can be acknowledged and appreciated. When viewed as a solution building opportunity, conflict can lead to positive change. When parties (disputants) build on each other's strengths to build solutions, self worth and an opportunity to fill each other's needs are created.

CR is a process that allows disputants to recognize and identify, each other's emotions and underlying concerns relating to the conflict, as well as differing styles of communication. CR helps disputants acknowledge those differences as well as understand how they might affect the resolution process. CR helps people to recognize cultural identities and differences that are significant to their dispute. Often, underlying interests, like cultural needs and expectations get overlooked in traditional methods of resolution such as arbitration or litigation. Diversity awareness training is an integral part

of any conflict resolution program and without it, conflict resolution can never be fully successful.

Conflicts can be as simple as a disagreement over school resources (whose turn it is to us the ball?). This kind of conflict can easily lead to more aggressive and personal conflicts like verbal abuse such as name-calling, rumor starting and threats. When conflicts go unnoticed at the earliest phases they can easily become violent situations.

Students that have not been introduced to any sort of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) training like Conflict Resolution or Peer Mediation (PM) are vulnerable to their own emotions, patterns of thought and those of their fellow students. In youth, unchecked emotions will eventually lead to violence. The same holds true for most adults unless they have had some sort of ADR training in their past. The successful management of adult conflict can be directly linked to how adults learn to get along as children.

In the U.S. there are many programs linked to CR. Programs like NIDR (National Institute for Dispute Resolution), and NAME (National Association for Mediation in Education). The merging of these two programs led to CREnet (Conflict Resolution Education Network). There are 7500-10,000 ADR, PM and CR programs in the U.S. and more throughout the world.

The goals of CR are: 1)To recognize the balance of power and the conflicting needs or underlying interests of disputants. 2)To create safe communities in non-violent and multi-cultural societies, 3) To understand conflict within countless situations (being adaptable), 4)To effectively communicate concerns and understand/handle anger, 5) To improve skills of problem solving improve recognition, empowerment, communication,

understanding and empathy. 6) To work towards a mutual understanding and minimize/enhance/avoid the legal/judicial system, and 7) To focus concerns on alternatives to violence such as Peer Management so future conflicts are able to be prevented.

CR differs from prevalent practices of resolution because it focuses on alternatives to violence and collaborative problem solving. By modeling, teaching and incorporating problem solving skills students are able to learn to effectively communicate. The Skills for cooperation are negotiation, (being able to work it out on their own) mediation (involving a third party and being able to work with a peer to reach a solution) and collaborative decision-making (being able to identify and understand other perspectives in order to work together and come up with a mutually beneficial solution.)

These skills are an integral part of any conflict resolution program and when implemented successfully can create a strong foundation for students to build and keep relationships in the future. Students that have these skills are more able to relate with people different from their own cultures and to get through the cultural and emotional misunderstandings that are commonplace in student conflicts. Teaching skills for cooperation can improve inter group relations by providing the skills needed to respect others as individuals and group members.

Even though these skills are central to improving relations, their impact is not as effective without a certain level of diversity training. Teaching students how to recognize and to be aware of how differing cultures can affect an argument as well as the argument's outcome is even more important than teaching them the skills of negotiation

and collaborative decision making. Without the skills to identify and acknowledge cultural differences and their affects on the outcome of an argument, the skills for cooperation can be rendered useless. If students cannot negotiate they will turn to alternative methods of resolution, which can include extreme violence. The tragedy at Columbine High School is a prime example of how mismanaged relationships, in a school with no means of prevention or reconciliation, will lead directly to violence.

CULTURAL SOURCES OF CONFLICT

Among the ADR programs in the U.S. many emphasize recognition and acknowledgement of cultural differences within a conflict situation. However, most lack the training to help students understand how those differences directly relate to the conflicts they face.

The resolution of student conflicts is affected by many factors. The most pressing and over looked factor is the social context that influences student behaviors and values. Learned social patterns influence a student's attitudes towards race, sex and how they will respond to conflict situations. These social patterns are not only learned in the home. Schools can teach values that perpetuate social norms or acceptance of violence as an appropriate means to resolve conflict.

Conflict resolution programs in schools need to provide students with a learning environment that recognizes cultural differences and how those differences can affect the resolution of conflicts. 1) Acknowledging identity and culture does not only mean recognizing differences of race or socioeconomic status, though those are contributing factors. 2) It also means understanding the different ways that people of different cultures might approach a conflict, and it teaches students to identify their own reasons for the

decisions they make. Culture is a pattern of choices that is internally approved in response to a number of everyday problems. In essence it is the way we were brought up to deal with our problems.

Some of the cultural differences that affect resolution and communication are the styles in which people communicate, and the way they apply rules. Recognizing these different cultural approaches to conflict is essential for student's understanding of conflict and the resolution process.

People can communicate in an expressive or restrained way. People who are expressive may easily show their emotions and may be comfortable with touching and eye contact, while people who are more restrained tend to hide their emotions and are less comfortable with touching and eye contact. A misunderstanding of communication can be the leading obstacle in resolving a conflict.

The ways people apply the "rules of engagement" also heavily affect the outcome of a problem. A Particularist believes that rules should be applied according to the situation, while a Universalist believes that rules should be applied consistently regardless of the situation. This difference can affect how willing people are to use Conflict resolution and to reach and stick to a final agreement.

With out the recognition of even these few cultural differences and their affects on the CR process, it is difficult for students to understand the nature of conflict. Programs that do not provide students the training and ability to understand the nature of conflict are more likely to miss the opportunities to find solutions and are less likely to be successful in preventing conflicts and the violence that follows.

Every social interaction is full of possible conflicts. With so much variety of opinion and need, conflict becomes almost unavoidable. Students have all the more opportunities for discord. Every student in the world is unique, and every student has problems that are equally unique. Part of the nature of conflict is that cultural identity affects how we approach conflict resolution.

In order to find out how to better teach students to understand the relation of conflict and culture, my research will attempt to answer: 1. Why should CR education prioritize cultural diversity training? 2. Are any CR programs doing so? If yes are they successful? How do we know? If not, are there are proposals that hold potential? Also I will find answers to the problem if any and give specific recommendations to improve the status quo

In order to answer these questions I will analyze the effectiveness of different programs by asking; does each program acknowledge diversity and show the relation of culture and conflict and how that relation affects the conflict? I will evaluate two different programs including one program that is employed by three different middle schools in the South East, and one program developed by Street Law called “We can work it out.”

First, I will discuss my findings of the relevant themes of the programs including what’s missing from the program and then I will evaluate what the program does, as well as its effectiveness. Second, I will assess the three programs strengths and limitations. I will show why the limitations are problematic and what options exist to develop a more effective program. Third, I will make recommendations on how to use the relative strengths of the programs as well as how to make adjustments to their limitations. Then I

will discuss how my standpoint affected my decision-making process, as well as what I would do as a conflict resolution educator.

FINDINGS and EVALUATIONS

Teaching conflict resolution skills is the most important task facing our schools today. Students have complicated lives that make it almost impossible to maintain secure and lasting friendships. Students need strong interpersonal skills to create meaningful relationships that become lifelong influences. With our technology advancing faster than our capacity to keep up relations, (we have learned how to create weapons of mass destruction and seem ready to use them at the slightest hint of provocation) it is necessary for us to advance equally in our relationship technologies. In order to survive in the future, students need to be the kind of people who have learned the skills to collaborate with others to handle their problems in a productive manner. Conflict resolution programs can facilitate learning when academic controversy comes up in a classroom.

“Conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur. An activity that is incompatible with another is one that interferes or inhibits the effectiveness of the second activity. The scale of conflict can range from disagreement to war. Conflict can be between two or more people, groups, or can begin with one person.” (Deutsch, 1973) ²

According to (Johnson & Johnson, 1995a): Conflicts in schools can be classified into four categories. The first category of conflict is controversy. This kind of conflict happens when two people disagree over an idea, theory, or some information and the two

² [http://www.clcrc.com /pages/conflict.html](http://www.clcrc.com/pages/conflict.html) Mar 13 2002

parties want to reach an agreement. 'The world is round,' 'no it's obviously flat.' Outside influences can lead to this kind of personal conflict.

The second category is conceptual conflict. This kind of conflict exists when a person has ideas that clash within his or her mind. This can happen during a controversy while ideas and arguments that contrast one's own opinion are presented. "I was sure the earth is flat before, but now there is so much information to the contrary that I'm not sure."

The third category is Conflict Of Interests. This kind of situation happens when one student's attempt to reach a desired goal gets in the way of another student's attempts to reach desired personal goals. Examples of student conflict include control over resources ("I need to use the computer, you have been on it for hours"), partiality towards certain activities over others. ("We need to work on our group project, not go to that party"), and an array of relationship issues that can turn into insults, name-calling, threats and physical aggression ("You're a jerk, or I'm gonna get you").

The fourth category is Developmental Conflict. "Developmental conflict exists when incompatible activities between adult and child based on the opposing forces of stability and change within the child cycles in and out of peak intensity as the child develops cognitively and socially" ("I don't want you playing with Timmy, he's a bad influence on you" "But he's my friend")."³

The alternative dispute resolution movement has spread into a good many fields in the last few decades. Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs are being used in disputes like labor-management, victim-offender, environmental, even in family and community disputes. Communication techniques involve the expressive skill of speaking

³ <http://www.mediate.com/articles/navy.cfm> December 13, 2001.

and the receptive skill of listening. Learning to listen, as well as to speak allows students to identify, recognize and acknowledge each other's emotions and underlying issues that are significant to their dispute. Student conflicts and conflict solutions are rooted in these diverse psychological issues and styles of communication.

Conflict Resolution Education offers students a chance to be familiar with diversity, and learn to work with it as a part of the resolution process. The structure of the CR process allows students to understand conflict and to learn to overcome it by providing them with a set of problem solving principles as well as skills for cooperation.

GOALS and PRINCIPLES

The principles of CR are guidelines that generate an understanding of the nature of conflict and are applied to all dispute situations. When students master the problem solving principles they are able to resolve problems without letting their emotions take over the argument. This enables them to work through the process instead of letting it turn into violent situations.

There are several different steps or principles available in each problem-solving process. When students are able to implement some or all of these principles into their conflicts, violence can be easily avoided. "The problem solving principles are tools that students can use to build meaningful relationships and reach collaborative decisions." ⁴

The first problem solving principle is; in a social environment conflict is normal natural and even inevitable. In a conflict situation the tendency is to react without delay, because we know that if we don't we might lose the opportunity to respond. CR teaches

⁴ Richard Bodine&Donna Crawford, The handbook of Conflict Resolution Education(san Francisco: Jossey-Bass inc. 1998)

that in order to successfully resolve conflicts students need to think before reacting. This means realizing that the same reaction is not acceptable for every conflict and to reach a solution each student needs to consider all the options and weigh all the possibilities. In other words, it is important to think about how to react before actually reacting.

The second problem solving principle is; differences can be acknowledged and appreciated. CR teaches that the most important part of communication is not speaking, but listening. The process of active listening lets the speaker know that their position has been heard. If students do not hear what other students are saying, they are not able to understand or resolve conflicts. Active listening means listening to what is said using communication skills and body language.

The third problem solving principle is; when viewed as a solution building opportunity conflict can lead to positive change. Unfortunately, most conflicts are seen as problems that need immediate emotional resolution. When emotions spill out during a conflict it is easier to attack each other rather than the issues. CR teaches students to attack the problem, what lies behind the emotions and what the causes of the problem are.

The fourth problem solving principle is; when students learn to use each other's strengths to build solutions, self worth and an opportunity to fill each other's needs are created. CR teaches students to look for options for mutual gain. Options that make sure the disputants are better off in the future. This means showing students that a personal gain at the expense of someone else only delays conflict and thwarts resolution.

The principles of CR help students to assure a fair process by learning how to use objective criteria as the foundation for their decision-making process. It is necessary that

the process chosen to follow during resolutions be just for all parties involved. “Even the perception of inequality can cause a grievance that could destroy the resolution process.”⁵

The CR principles teach students to be accountable for their conflicts. Every conflict has many sides and each side has to accept responsibility for resolving the conflict. When students attempt to place blame it can create bitterness and irritation that can intensify any existing conflict.

Students need to learn to use direct communication in order to send clear messages about feelings and interests. CR programs implement ways that students can express their own wants, needs and concerns by not using “you” messages, but by learning to use “I” messages. Using “you” messages can criticize or blame the listener (this is your fault) while using “I” messages is a non- threatening and clear way for students to inform each other of their wants and needs. (I am hearing what you are saying)

CR programs encourage students to focus on the interest of the other party and not on their position. Positions can be easy to understand because we usually verbalize what we want in an argument. If students are going to be able to resolve conflicts they need to discover why the other party has the needs and wants that it has. This is important because student learn to acknowledge fundamental differences, and how to work together. CR provides not only a list of conflict solving principles, but also skills for cooperation. The skills for cooperation are negotiation, mediation and collaborative decision-making.

Mediation is a method of CR in which a neutral third party acts as a moderator for the process in order to improve communication. Peer mediation provides schools with an

⁵ <http://www.ed.go/offices/OESE/SDFS/actguid/conflict.html> April 7, 2002

alternative to traditional disciplinary practices. Peer mediators ask the disputing students to tell their stories and ask questions for clarification. The mediators help the students identify ways to solve the conflict. Students involved in this process as mediators or disputants can learn new ways of handling conflict. Unlike arbitration, the third parties in mediation help the conflicting parties to devise a solution themselves. Solutions are based on recognizing needs, the interests that cannot be negotiated.

Negotiation is the discussion process of give and take between disputants. Negotiation can only happen when all sides have agreed to attempt to reach a mutually beneficial solution. When disputants are able to negotiate they can really start working together. The final skill in the process of cooperation is the collaborative problem solving. This is when disputants, that have decided what the mutual goals they seek to reach are, can begin to develop a strategy for actually reaching and retaining those goals.

All CR programs have set goals in order to be most effective. The goals of CR programs vary only slightly and are useful in all stages of the resolution. Effective conflict resolution education programs can “Enable children to respond nonviolently to conflict by using the conflict resolution problem-solving processes of negotiation, mediation, and consensus decision-making. An effective program can also enable educators' ability to manage students' behavior without coercion, by emphasizing personal responsibility and self-discipline. A good program can also mobilize community involvement in violence prevention through education programs and services, such as expanding the role of youth as effective citizens beyond the school into the community.”⁶

One goal that all CR programs share is to separate people from the problem. “Before working on the substantive problem, ‘the people problem’ should be

⁶ <http://www.csmp.org/whole/whole.htm> January 15, 2002

disentangled from it and dealt with separately.”⁷ People problems fall into the categories of perception emotion and communication. Perception is the differing points of view of the disputants. Emotion is the feeling that the disputants enter the argument with. Communication is the differing way that each party relays their needs and listens the other party’s needs. These people problems when separated from the substantive concern are less likely to get in the way of resolution. They can even facilitate resolution.

The goals of the CR program developed by Barbara Porro called ‘talk it out’ are (1) To define conflict: discuss what conflict is, ask students to describe conflicts they have been involved in. (2) To recognize different responses and consequences of response to conflict: Introduce three choices of response to conflict. Ignore it, fight it out, or talk it out. (3) To help students identify cooling off strategies: help children recognize feelings that surround the conflict and introduce positive ways to handle anger. (4) To express feelings/needs: Talk and listen to each other, demonstrate ‘you’ and ‘I’ messages and the affects of each. (5) To learn how to listen: Introduce listening techniques, and the purpose of listening which leads to discussion. (6) To define needs: during discussion demonstrate how to summarize the problem and identify the needs of both sides. (7) To practice and develop win-win: Demonstrate effective communication, this step is part of the collaborative decision making process.

The problem with the goals of the ‘talk it out’ program is that it does not attempt to recognize why there are different responses to conflict and where those differences come from. Goal 2 says to recognize different responses but it does not mention how to recognize why those different responses exist.

⁷ Richard Bodine&Donna Crawford, The handbook of Conflict Resolution Education (san Francisco: Jossey-Bass inc. 1998)

The goals of other conflict resolution education programs are the following: (1) To promote a more receptive and responsive view of conflict resolution as a positive force that can accompany personal and organizational growth. (2) To recognize the unique competence of young people to participate in the resolution of their own disputes and to see students as resources not just participants (3) To increase the appreciation of the ability of conflict resolution training to enhance academic and lifetime skills considered basic to all learning such as listening, critical and creative thinking, and problem-solving. (4) To encourage higher levels of citizenship activities by sharpening students' knowledge of non-adversarial conflict resolution, decision making and dialogue. (5) To value diversity and take a multicultural approach to conflict resolution and, to help young people, school personnel and community members deepen their understanding of themselves and others through improved communication, thereby improving school climate and preparing students to live in a multicultural world. (6) To offer an appropriate and effective school based conflict resolution method in conjunction with the school-wide discipline policy, including suspension, detention and expulsion, thereby helping to reduce violence, vandalism, chronic school absences and a general lack of belonging by students. These goals can be much more effective for a CR program because they include valuing and understanding diverse viewpoints and needs. However the last goal seems to be the most difficult one to attain. School wide CR programs should usually not include suspensions and detention as a form of discipline. This is not as effective as teaching students how to steer clear of problem situations. Also, it is difficult for most schools to implement school-wide policies and programs because CR

necessitates full cooperation of the student's, teachers and administration. Teachers are usually overloaded with work as it is, and find it difficult to work in extra material.

Even though CR programs include diversity awareness, the problem with most CR programs is the lack of diversity understanding. "By creating a safe environment mindful of all human beings, the process and practice of conflict resolution education fills an ongoing need for acceptance and awareness of cultural differences and individual strengths. Relationships of inequality and power, prejudice and discrimination, and cultural and social difference are challenged by new ways of communicating and understanding."⁸ Without understanding the relation of culture and conflict, cultural norms concerning racism, sexism and violence can easily be perpetuated.

The relation of culture to conflict is as perplexing as the nature of conflict itself. Culture is a pattern of living that is socially approved and internally sanctioned. Given the rich diversity of values that go into culture, it is not surprising that people in conflict have difficulty communicating with each other. Culture teaches people how to respond to conflict, how to communicate, and how to apply rules.

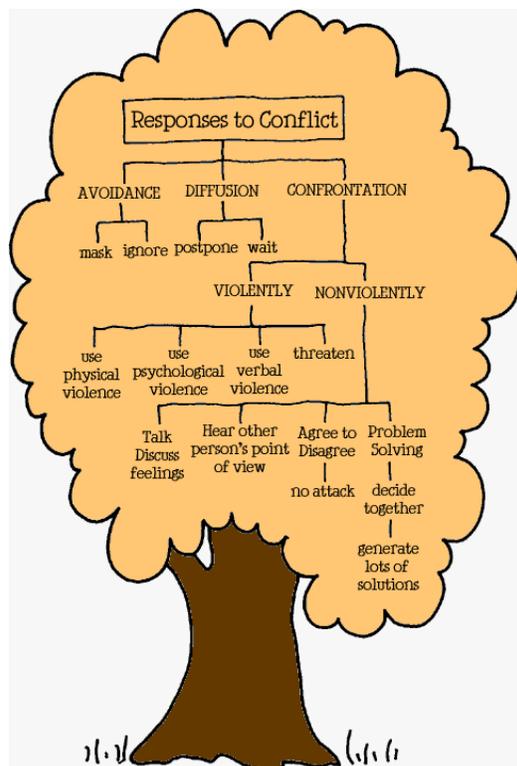
There are cultural differences that affect communication that coincide with a person's set of norms, standard practices and values. Some people communicate in an expressive manner. This is a more direct method of communication and expressive people are more likely to show emotions freely even anger. Expressive cultures also touch often and keep intense eye contact. People who use an indirect method of communication are more restrained. They have a less candid emotional demeanor and are not as comfortable with long eye contact or touching. The difference in these methods of

⁸ Lincoln, Melinda. Conflict resolution education: a solution for peace Communication and the law. May 1997.

communication can cause distrust and an un-comfortable and un-successful resolution process.

Other cultural differences that affect communication is a person's view of themselves in relation to others. For example an individualist makes decisions based on what is seen as best self interests, while a collectivist chooses based on what is best for the family, or community. Also, the way people apply rules affects the resolution process. In mediation, a Universalist would apply rules uniformly regardless of the situation. A Particularist on the other hand would apply the rules of mediation according to the needs of the situation. Time orientation also affects resolution. This is the importance that people place on the immediate need to get the problem resolved. In case of multiple problems, time orientation affects in what order of importance the problems will be placed.

These cultural differences added together with what you have learned so far in your lifetime makes up your cultural identity. What you know combined with who you are helps you forge your reaction road map or how you are predetermined to react in a



conflict situation. Your direction (or reaction) is determined according to your identity and can only be changed by learning or unlearning.

A response to conflict is analogous to a map or a tree diagram. The base of the tree is the conflict situation. (This tree is upside down) There are three branches, or roads you can take in response: Avoidance (masking or

ignoring the problem and just hoping it will go away), diffusion (postponing or waiting for the problem to fizzle out), or confrontation. Confrontation leads to two branches of reaction, violence and nonviolence. Violence can branch into the use of physical, psychological or verbal violence. The nonviolent branch leads to more options such as talking and discussing feelings, listen to each other's point of view, agree to disagree (no attack), and problem solving (deciding together to generating multiple solutions).⁹

It is beneficial for schools to promote Peer Mediation programs in an effort to prevent violence. If disputants choose to respond to conflict with confrontation (as is the general trend) then they are going to continue to follow their map of reactions and they are likely to respond with violence. The two students who killed 13 people at Columbine High School followed their own reaction maps. They avoided and diffused the situation until it came time for confrontation. When they reached the fork in the road that leads to either violence or non-violence, they were not able to choose non-violent solution to their problems.

The successful management of adult conflict can be directly linked to how adults learn to get along as children. "By learning to address fear, discrimination, manipulation, control, and intimidation with effective coping strategies and communication skills, individuals armed with defense and proactive tools can lessen acts of violence and the effects of harmful fallout."¹⁰

Learned social patterns influence a student's attitudes towards race, sex and how they will respond to conflict situations. "There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the

⁹ <http://www.esrnational.org/> March 2002

¹⁰ Lincoln, Melinda. Conflict resolution education: a solution for peace *Communication and the law*.

integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes 'the practice of freedom,' the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."¹¹ Trained students can help their classmates identify the problems behind the conflicts and to find solutions. Peer mediation is not about finding who is right or wrong. Instead, students are encouraged to move beyond the immediate conflict and learn how to get along with each other, an important skill in today's world.

CR education and Peer Mediation provide strategies to reduce altercations by diffusing emotions and promoting peace. Students are not fully to blame for violence, if a school does not cultivate peace then it can be responsible for perpetuating structural violence. If a school will not or cannot mediate in a bully situation it is bad for victim, the bully, the school, the family and the community. As shocking as the incident at Columbine was, it was no the first or last of its kind.

A Time Line of Recent School Shootings

Feb. 2, 1996 Moses Lake, Wash.	2 students and 1 teacher killed, 1 other wounded when 14-year-old Barry Loukaitis opened fire on his algebra class.
Feb. 19, 1997 Bethel, Alaska	Principal and 1 student killed, 2 others wounded by Evan Ramsey, 16.
Oct. 1, 1997 Pearl, Miss.	2 students killed and 7 wounded by Luke Woodham, 16, who was also accused of killing his mother. He and his friends were said to be outcasts who worshiped Satan.
Dec. 1, 1997	3 students killed, 5 wounded by Michael Carneal, 14, as they

¹¹ Forcey and Harris, Peacebuilding for adolescence (Peter Lang New York 1999) p215

West Paducah, Ky.	participated in a prayer circle at Heath High School.
Dec. 15, 1997 Stamps, Ark.	2 students wounded. Colt Todd, 14, was hiding in the woods when he shot the students as they stood in the parking lot.
March 24, 1998 Jonesboro, Ark.	4 students and 1 teacher killed, 10 others wounded outside as Westside Middle School emptied during a false fire alarm. Mitchell Johnson, 13, and Andrew Golden, 11, shot at their classmates and teachers from the woods.
April 24, 1998 Edinboro, Pa.	1 teacher, John Gillette, killed, 2 students wounded at a dance at James W. Parker Middle School. Andrew Wurst, 14, was charged.
May 19, 1998 Fayetteville, Tenn.	1 student killed in the parking lot at Lincoln County High School 3 days before he was to graduate. The victim was dating the ex-girlfriend of his killer, 18-year-old honor student Jacob Davis.
May 21, 1998 Springfield, Ore.	2 students killed, 22 others wounded in the cafeteria at Thurston High School by 15-year-old Kip Kinkel. Kinkel had been arrested and released a day earlier for bringing a gun to school. His parents were later found dead at home.
June 15, 1998 Richmond, Va.	1 teacher and 1 guidance counselor wounded by a 14-year-old boy in the school hallway.
April 20, 1999 Littleton, Colo.	14 students (including killers) and 1 teacher killed, 23 others wounded at Columbine High School in the nation's deadliest school shooting. Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, had plotted for a year to kill at least 500 and blow up their school. At the end of their hour-long rampage, they turned their guns on themselves.
April 28, 1999 Taber, Alberta, Canada	1 student killed, 1 wounded at W. R. Myers High School in first fatal high school shooting in Canada in 20 years. The suspect, a 14-year-old boy, had dropped out of school after he was severely ostracized by his classmates.
May 20, 1999 Conyers, Ga.	6 students injured at Heritage High School by Thomas Solomon, 15, who was reportedly depressed after breaking up with his girlfriend.
Nov. 19, 1999 Deming, N.M.	Victor Cordova Jr., 12, shoots and kills Araceli Tena, 13, in the lobby of Deming Middle School.
Dec. 6, 1999 Fort Gibson, Okla.	4 students wounded as Seth Trickey, 13, opened fire with a 9mm semiautomatic handgun at Fort Gibson Middle School.
February 29, 2000 Mount Morris Township, Mich.	6-year-old Kayla Rolland shot dead at Buell Elementary School near Flint, Mich. The assailant is identified as a 6-year-old boy with a .32-caliber handgun.
May 26, 2000 Lake Worth, Fla.	1 teacher, Barry Grunow, shot and killed at Lake Worth Middle School by Nate Brazill, 13, with .25-caliber semiautomatic pistol on the last day of classes.

March 5, 2001 Santee, Calif.	Charles Andrew Williams, 15, kills 2 and wounds 13, after firing from a bathroom at Santana High School.
March 7, 2001 Williamsport, Pa.	Elizabeth Catherine Bush, 14, wounded student Kimberly Marchese in the cafeteria of Bishop Neumann High School; she was depressed and frequently teased.

¹²

Roughly 20 incidents in just under 5 years and it is likely that most of them could have been prevented with some sort of peer mediation or other CR method. It is important to realize how a student's social behavior and values are influenced by their social context. Schools contribute to acceptance and promotion of violence/social norms-like racism and sexism as well as patterns of response to conflict situations. This has an impact on conflicts and violence in schools. Teachers often find themselves dealing with students who are less prepared for learning. Too much class time is being spent on disciplining students instead of teaching them. While students have changed, so must the classroom. Again, we need to progress in our relationship technology as fast as our classrooms advance in size and diversity.

EVALUATION of PROBLEM

Successful Peer Mediation programs are what are missing from most of today's classrooms. Without support from trained mediators, or training in conflict resolution, it is difficult for students to understand the nature of the conflicts they face. Of the CR and PM programs that do exist, some or most lack the peer mediation training that allows students to recognize how their cultural identity (including that of being a student) can affect the outcome of a conflict.

CR education programs such as Peer Mediation differ from traditional practices in their approach to managing student conflict. Prevalent practices use arbitration methods

¹² <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0777958.html>, February 6, 2002.

(adults and teachers that settle the dispute for the students). PM education programs provide students with a structure to resolve their conflicts using cooperative, collaborative problem solving methods. This gives the students possession of the problem and a chance to participate in designing a solution. PM can help students increase their self-esteem, and foster independence.

Every school has its own characteristics or culture and some factors that contribute to an ineffective PM program are problems with scheduling, lack of available space, and competing curricular needs. The strengths of successful PM programs are critical components such as consistency, quality peer mediators, committed leadership, disputant follow up and ongoing methods of publicizing the program.

The first evaluation I did was of a program implemented in a Kentucky school called “we can work it out” mediation model developed by Street Law. The program utilized a showcase event where students demonstrate their mediation abilities and strategies. The event also used video conferencing technology. The students explored various means of conflict management and were encouraged to discuss their own ‘triggers’ for anger and violence. This was an extremely effective method for discussion because it teaches students to realize how who they are and what makes them angry are connected.

Another extremely good strategy used by the Street Law program was the broadcasting of the ‘We can work it out’ event via Kentucky Educational Television. Ten universities and community colleges were organized as viewing sites for the interactive videoconference. Teachers had received copies of the curriculum prior to the videoconference. This gave students the opportunity to answer an interactive

questionnaire. Questions included; What were some of the ways students at your school resolve conflicts? Can any conflict be mediated, or just some? Did mediation make any difference at your school?

A limitation of the program was that it did not ask the students: how does your cultural identity shape the way you approach a given conflict? The program did refer to the fact that not all conflicts can be mediated such as drug abuse, sexual assault and troubles at home, but it failed to recognize the fact that not all conflicts can be mediated as a part of the nature of conflict. A problem with this program is that it does not provide students with a means of relating their own problems with who they are and their outlook on the world. Options for the program could be to include some more questions with respect to identity and conflict and to attempt to add more schools into the video conferencing format.

The next evaluation I did was of a program implemented in three middle schools in the South East United States. This program was had two major components: 1) A school wide conflict resolution curriculum and 2) A Peer Mediation program that consisted of a core group of trained peer mediators. Four to six teachers at each school were trained in CR principles and methods and were then responsible for training around thirty students chosen to participate. Students were chosen across three grade levels and trained over a two day period in skills relating to listening, communication, understanding conflict, confidentiality and the mediation process. This program advocated training all students as Peer Mediators on a rotating basis in order to ready the students for on the spot mediation. Also when students generalize what they learn it can have positive effects on the family and community.

A major problem with this program is that because of competing demands on teacher time and over-crowded class schedules, the school requested that the material be condensed into five lessons. Time and resources determine a program's success. Follow up is a big part of the program curriculum and space needs to be provided. Also the training of both teachers and peer mediators mentions little on how a student's cultural identity shapes a conflict situation. When these are lacking the effectiveness of the program is weakened.

CR and PM Programs should not only rotate the student mediators, but also the teacher mediators in order to create a school-wide curriculum, something that every CR program needs to be successful. Also, rotating the space of physical education classes or the homeroom period as a semi-weekly time to go over CR principles and methods is another option for classes.

As a Human Communications student, I have come to learn that communication between people of differing cultures takes more than a willingness to get along. In order to communicate with others I have learned to listen and to attempt to understand the other person's point of view and the cultural identity that constructs it. As a white male, I know that the ways I have learned to communicate and approach conflict are different from many of my fellow students. As a 25 year old, I have learned that every interaction in life is unique and no two opinions, decisions, or arguments are the same. Each interaction is a possible conflict. Knowing the skills to resolve conflict or prevent it is an advantageous tool. The world we live in scares me sometimes and I hope for every generation including my own that they will grow up and see the need to play nice.

I suggest on each program having sufficient training in the relation of conflict and cultural identity because with this training, CR and PM programs could function much more efficiently as a means of violence prevention. Adult conflict is directly related to how we learn to get along as children. Students who learn how to resolve their conflicts peacefully will grow up and become adults that know how to resolve conflicts in a constructive manner. Consider this slippery slope: From professionals, to presidents, to professors, if adults learn elements of conflict resolution as children it could mean the end of road rage, physical abuse, and even war.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Providing better training to students on how to recognize the relation between their cultural identity and the way they approach conflict is one way of improving the CR and PM's effectiveness in preventing violence. I have made several other recommendations on how Conflict Resolution Education could function more effectively and improve the status quo. The recommendations I give can work in addition to the concepts of the programs I evaluated.

In addition to teaching students how to work towards reaching an agreed upon common ground, I also suggest that CR programs adopt a method developed by Fisher Ury and Patton (1991) called BATNA (Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement) or EATNA (Estimate Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement). This would help students to realize that even under the best circumstances and with both sides working together

towards an agreement, it is still not always possible to reach a solution, and it may be necessary to have alternatives ready.

Another suggestion I made was in regards to the Street Law program. The video conferencing is an excellent idea and I think all CR programs could use it. More schools could be initiated and the program could even be expanded abroad. (Overseas, Mexico, etc.) This would give students an excellent chance to see how people different from themselves react to similar conflicts. Another suggestion I had for the Street Law program is to expand the questionnaire to ask questions that relate to identity and conflict.

Other recommendations for peer mediation and conflict resolution programs are to rotate the student mediators, as well as the teacher mediators in order to create a school-wide curriculum, something that every CR program needs to be successful. Also, rotating the physical space available for CR and PM programs, or rotating the homeroom period, as a semi-weekly time to go over CR principles and methods is another option for programs. Other strategies that schools could incorporate to better participation and awareness of the programs are giving daily announcements as a reminder, passing out flyers, wearing t-shirts and involving the school's community (parents, local district) in recognition of the contribution made by peer mediators.

“Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one.”¹³ Cr reaches every aspect of human development and interpersonal relationships. Conflict resolution education offers a theoretical understanding of the nature of conflict by providing students with a framework for decision-making. That framework models teaches and

¹³ Malcolm S. Forbes www.brainyquote.com/quotes, February 6, 2002.

incorporates techniques of problem solving including negotiation, mediation and collaborative problem solving. CR also includes practical experience, by utilizing lifelong mediation skills and alternatives to violence.

Though these skills are central to improving relations, their impact is not as effective without a certain level of diversity training. If students are not provided with sufficient acknowledgement or recognition of diversity, they will follow the patterns of thought and action that they already possess. (Their cultural tree or road map). Learned social patterns influence a student's attitudes towards race, sex and how they will respond to conflict situations. Schools are responsible for perpetuating structural violence if they do not take responsibility for preventing it. The two students at Columbine High are hardly free from the responsibility of their actions but their advancement towards using violence as a solution to unhappy experiences could have been tracked and stopped by their schools and their fellow students. CR provides effective communication needed to diffuse violence. Communication that was sorely lacking between the students at Columbine H.S. as well as most other schools across the nation.

So why should CR education prioritize cultural diversity training? Every conflict and resolution has a unique character influenced by the cultural perspectives. Teaching the relation of conflict and identity is an essential component in any Conflict Resolution program. The CR and PM programs that I evaluated were somewhat effective in getting the nature of conflict across to their students but never had the true issue at the front of the line of solutions.

If I were running a CR or PM program, I would have the relation of identity and what we fight for as the foundation of the program. The goal of peace education is to

create communities that foster caring for others and for the responsibilities and rights of all participants. The responsibility of educators is to provide students with opportunities to develop skills to explore peaceful options to violence. After all, “The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives.”

APPENDIX

PROSPECTUS

Name: Mathew De Cristo

Date: spring 2002

Concentration: American Multicultural Studies

Capstone Project Advisor: Debian Marty

Capstone Audience: Schools with CR PM programs, parents, students all levels
Teachers, future teachers

SECTION 1

Working Title of Capstone Project: Identity Education and Conflict Resolution

Capstone Topic: Conflict Resolution Education

Scope

My plan of research is to examine what the relationship is between Culture or personal identity and conflict. I will attempt to show the effects of cultural identity on the outcomes or the resolutions of conflicts. My thesis is every conflict and resolution has a unique character influenced by the cultural perspectives of participants.

To prove this I will ask questions like What are effective ways to teach conflict resolution (what works or doesn't) Why should CR education prioritize cultural diversity training? Are any CR programs doing so? If yes are they successful? How do we know? If not, are there are proposals that hold potential?

Also I will find options for the problems if any and give specific recommendations to improve the status quo. I will also attempt to find out what are some

possible solutions to all stages of the conflict. This includes post mediation processes like conflict management, and peer mediation.

Who-

I will be focusing on two programs of conflict resolution education available for students. One used by and the other developed by street law called “We can Work it out”

What- Conflict resolution and Peer Mediation within a multicultural setting there are problems that arise that are not necessarily related to individual identity and culture. However, I will show how identity and culture can affect the willingness, and ability of the disputants to cooperate. Also, how the outcome or resolution is affected by the varying needs wants of the disputants. Once I have distinguished the effects I will attempt to find possible lasting resolutions and guidelines for intercultural dispute negotiations/mediations.

Where-

Three middle schools on the East coast and one school in Kentucky as the setting for a videoconference of over 10 school sites around the country.

When-

I will be focusing on present Conflict Resolution programs. I will also be attempting to find suitable guidelines for future interactions

Importance

Disputants generally assume that they have nothing in common with their opponents. However, people or groups almost always share some common ground; similar values, interests, needs, fears, living in the same place, or even the desire to live in peace w/out fear of the other. My project will attempt to find a way to open the channels of intercultural communication during a dispute, as well as introduce measures that continue on after a dispute is resolved. These measures could pre-empt other possible disputes.

Major questions

Research Questions:

1. Why should CR education prioritize cultural diversity training
2. Are any CR programs doing so?
3. If yes are they successful? How do we know?
4. If not, are there are proposals that hold potential?

SECTION 2

Major learning Outcomes and Criteria:

-MLO2-research Research skills ~ **ability to acquire, evaluate, interpret, synthesize, apply, document, and present knowledge gained through diverse and appropriate methods of inquiry in the context of an analysis of an issue, question, or problem**

-MLO3- Relational communication skills ~ **ability to interact ethically and effectively in interpersonal and group communication and decision making processes**

-MLO5- Critical cultural analysis ~ **ability to investigate and explain relationships among cultural ideologies and socio-historical experiences, interests, identities, and actions of specific cultural groups**

SECTION 3

TEN research questions

- 1) How are student's social behavior and values influenced by their social context?
- 2) What is the relation of conflict and culture?
- 3) What are the effects of culture on conflict resolution programs?
- 4) What are the most effective ways to teach CR education?
- 5) What do schools contribute to acceptance and promotion of violence/social norms- (racism-sexism) and response to unreasonable authority-bully or PM?
- 6) What do schools contribute to a student's understanding of human rights?
- 7) What is the nature of conflict?
- 8) How does race/culture affect reactions to a conflict and willingness to cooperate w/other race/culture?
- 9) Are there pre-negotiation/conflict, post negotiation/conflict guidelines?
- 10) Are solutions always possible/acceptable (BATNA?)

SECTION 4

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<http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/#Consortium>

SECTION 5

My research plan is set to include the CSUMB library and use library of congress headings Conflict Management, Peer Mediation, School Violence, and Violence Prevention.

SECTION 6

Form of Capstone Project: Display- A study w/ recommendations (community/campus)I will be doing a display of my research with a film and/or interactive survey. I will be using a lap-top and/or possibly a TV.

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