Educating for Peace and Social Justice: Integrating Conflict Resolution into the History and English Curricula

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Abstract

This study responds to the lack of awareness surrounding the idea of peace as a process and how opportunities are being lost to create a skill set in students that will enable them to recognize, understand and resolve conflicts nonviolently not only in the classroom, but also in society at large. The study, which was completed through the interviewing of three classroom teachers, also focuses on current conflict resolution efforts in schools and the preconception that using conflict resolution methods in the classroom requires hours of preparation and lost time for curriculum-relevant lessons. This qualitative study highlights the experience of teachers who have worked to incorporate conflict resolution into the curriculum of their Intermediate/Senior level English and History classes, creating a perspective-widening empathic response between students and their peers, as well as students and members of the wider society. In this way, the experience of these teachers demonstrates that conflict resolution—when incorporated into the curriculum as a way to deconstruct and respond to content material—promotes a greater understanding of the roots of conflict and equips students for greater success in school and in the world beyond.
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Research Study

David Hicks, the Director of the Centre for Peace Studies in Lancaster, England, writes that “a growing number of teachers are [...] concerned about the unpeaceful nature of many schools and classrooms [...] With both primary and secondary teachers reporting growing numbers of aggressive or disruptive children, a drastic reassessment may be necessary not only of what we teach but also of how we teach.” (Hicks, 1988, p. 5) Indeed, what we teach and how we teach it can have an enormous impact on not only student behaviour inside the classroom, but also in the wider community. Aggressive and disruptive behaviour in students could be seen as a symptom of serious shortcomings in North American culture—a glorification of violence, a lack of tangible nonviolent conflict resolution skills in mainstream education and an emphasis on individualism which hinders the development of community and empathy between community members and the wider society. In light of these signs of social illness, several questions remain: “what should schools be teaching in order to counter this trend towards aggression and disconnection?” and “how should it be taught?”

Background of the Researcher

My interest in this topic is multifaceted. Since having my own children I have been reading about meaningful ways to engage with children in conflict situations. I have learned much from the works of Alfie Kohn (2006) and Jeanne Gibbs' TRIBES program (1995), which I
completed in May 2010. I also did a session in Nonviolent Communication training, based on the works of Marshall Rosenberg (1999) in the fall of 2010 and again in the fall of 2011. Rosenberg's and Kohn's works, as well as the TRIBES program spurred my interest in promoting peace through the development of a caring community and using nonviolent communication methods to resolve conflict. I am also a dedicated peace activist and believer in nonviolence for religious reasons; however, I believe that the idea of nonviolent conflict resolution is an invaluable tool for students regardless of their religious beliefs, and “by bringing [students] together, schools give kids a chance to develop their thinking, to practice handling their emotions, to deal with conflicts, and to learn the values of our society—if the schools are organized correctly.” (Lantieri and Patti, 1996, p. 6)

**Purpose of the Study**

Hicks writes that, “Children [...] seem to have fairly well-defined ideas about war and peace by the age of 6 or 7. While they have quite clear images of war it appears that they often have very hazy ideas about the nature of peace.” (Hicks, 1988, p. 9) If students are not taught in concrete ways what peace looks and feels like, and how it can be nurtured in school and the wider community, a fantastic opportunity for real-life training will be lost. Many educators and educational researchers who are interested in teaching peace and social justice recognize two ways in which teachers could incorporate peace into their classroom in order to give students the opportunity to both see world conflicts from a different perspective and develop real skills for conflict resolution and community building. These two aspects of peace education are incorporating peace and social justice into the curriculum, and teaching peace through community building and nonviolent conflict resolution in the classroom. This could be
accomplished using a model of conflict resolution to approach the curriculum and also as a means to achieve peace between students and teachers in the classroom setting. Many cooperative learning programs, such as Jeanne Gibbs’ TRIBES program, incorporate conflict resolution strategies and provide activities with which teachers can introduce students to the conflict resolution process. This process, especially once internalized, can be used—along with practical and theoretical conflict resolution texts—to explore conflict in history and literature from a new perspective, enabling students to use their experience in a peaceful classroom through application to real-life and hypothetical situations. I would like to further explore this idea of a conflict resolution approach to curriculum as a means to bring peace to the forefront of students’ minds and to give them the tools to achieve peace in their own situations in and out of school.

While there has been much written on conflict resolution in the classroom and other classroom management techniques, so far in my research I have found few concrete examples of teachers using conflict resolution as an approach to the curriculum. This seemingly underdeveloped idea is important to me as an integral part of my teaching philosophy—that it is my job not only to help children achieve the emotional and social maturity that peaceful cooperation with one’s peers requires in the classroom, but also to give them opportunities to experiment with these concepts in the context of real world events and situations. I believe that just as one trains for track and field or the football team, one should train for difficult emotional and social situations that inevitably arise in life so that one might be better prepared to respond to these situations and come away with one’s values and integrity intact. In *The schoolhome*, J.R. Martin quotes a teacher who complains, “I was trained to teach, not to deal with kids like this” (Martin, 1992), but “kids like this” is the reality of the classroom and the real world—every
human being on this planet has special considerations of some kind, a perspective developed through the joys and sorrows of his or her life—and I believe that it is a teacher's job to help students navigate the world through the lens of these joys and sorrows and to help students understand that everyone around them is doing the same. Ultimately,

our society needs a new way of thinking about what it means to be an educated person. We can no longer turn away from the emotional fabric of children's lives or assume that learning can take place isolated from their feelings. We need a vision of education that recognizes that the ability to manage our emotions, resolve conflicts, and interrupt biases are fundamental skills—skills that can and must be taught. (Lantieri and Patti, 1996, p. 3)

I believe a conflict resolution approach to curriculum is one way in which students may attain the skills necessary to navigate their inner and outer lives in a peaceful and harmonious manner. The main question for this study, therefore, is how can teachers practically incorporate conflict resolution into the curriculum? As a pre-service teacher completing certification to teach the Ontario English and History curricula, this study will focus on incorporating conflict resolution into these two programs specifically.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

What is Peace Education and Why Does it Matter?

The overarching goal of this study—to demonstrate ways in which teachers can incorporate conflict resolution into their English or History curriculum in order to provide opportunities for students to practice the skills needed for peaceful conflict resolution and thus contribute to a more peaceful society—is synonymous with the goals of Peace Education. In his book *Peace Education*, Ian Harris describes an informal experiment done by an art professor at a large Midwestern American university. The students were asked to draw a picture depicting the idea of peace.

[The] students were bewildered by [the professor's] request. Many thought for a while, but had a hard time imagining peaceful images. After a while a few students drew pictures of rainbows, doves, or other natural scenes. These students had a hard time responding to this simple request because the concepts associated with peace are not prevalent in our contemporary culture. (Harris, 2003, p. 3)

Harris points out that not only are depictions of peace not prevalent in our modern society, but images depicting “violence, destruction and death often dominate.” Whether or not schools are taking a zero tolerance approach to bullying and other violent acts, the fact remains that students are living in a society that glorifies violence through television, movies, music, video games and countless other sources. It is not enough for schools to simply ban these undesirable images and behaviours from the small area inside their walls; if educators really want to make a difference in students' future lives, educators and school policy makers must put a system in place to help students deal with these images in constructive ways and present them with tangible alternatives to violence.
Peace Education is about filling the part of the students' brains that is—as in that Midwestern American art class—filled with peaceful images of rainbows, doves and pastoral scenes, instead with concrete skills that students will use to problem-solve in a world rife with inequality, injustice and conflict.

[Peace Education as a philosophy] teaches nonviolence, love, compassion and reverence for all life. Peace Education confronts indirectly the forms of violence that dominate society by teaching about its causes and providing knowledge of alternatives. Peace education also seeks to transform the present human condition by, as noted educator Betty Reardon states, “changing social structures and patterns of thought that have created it.” (Harris, 2003, p. 9)

Peace Education is a philosophy, but it is also a toolkit which equips students to think critically about ideas of peace and violence, and also gives them new vocabulary and skills to deal with conflict in their own lives. It is this skill-set of conflict resolution strategies and the ways in which such strategies can illuminate curriculum material that my research will focus on in hopes of helping educators bring Peace Education into Intermediate and Secondary-level History and English programs.

**Psychological Development and its Implications in Peace Education**

Enthusiastic educators may wish to start incorporating peace and social justice topics and strategies into their practice immediately; but in order to avoid a disappointing response from students, it is important to have a basic understanding of children's moral and emotional development. In Piaget's model of moral development, children move from heteronomy—the stage in which children's behaviour is influenced by an outside authority—to self-determination or autonomy. The heteronomous stage sees the internalization of rules children learn from authorities in their lives, such as parents and teachers, and extends into egocentric (or
independent) play and even into the early stages of group play. In Piaget's study on moral judgement and game playing, children in the heteronomous stage imitated the rules they had learned without understanding their deeper implications. (Duska, 1975, p. 11) It is through group, or cooperative play, however, that autonomy begins to develop.

In peer-group interaction, children first begin to make sense of the role and rules of authority. The development of mutual respect among peers helps a child to begin to develop his own internal rules, or reasons for his actions. “Prior to this, the only respect the child knew was unilateral, that is, the respect he had for adult authority.” (Duska, 1975, p. 13) Thus, cooperative play and the development of mutual respect starts a child on the road to autonomy and the development of concepts like equity and justice.

Piaget believes that “the sense of justice, though naturally capable of being reinforced by the precepts and example of the adult, is largely independent of these influences, and requires nothing more for its development than the mutual respect and solidarity which holds among children themselves.” He contrasts the rule of justice to adult rules which have been imposed on the child and says: “The rule of justice is a sort of immanent condition of social relationships or a law governing their equilibrium, and as the solidarity among children grows we shall find this notion of justice gradually emerging in almost complete autonomy.” (Duska 1975, p. 27)

Piaget's theory of moral development, then, emphasizes that it is in cooperation with peers that one develops the key skills and ideas that are quintessential to human society. Through cooperation, children internalize, deconstruct and ultimately become authorities in the communities they build with their peers. Thus, learning successful ways to cooperate with peers has the potential to speed moral development in children.

Kohlberg's additions to the theory of the stages of moral development indicate that classroom teachers need to observe more than just what stage at which their students are functioning. Educators must be aware that the moral development of some children—especially
those from abusive or authoritarian homes—may become arrested at a Pre-Conventional stage. “Although cognitive ability and consequently some chronological age growth is a necessary condition for stage development, it is not a sufficient condition, and consequently [even] some adults might still think at the Pre-Conventional level. (Duska, 1975, p. 52) Those experiencing abuse or neglect in their home environment may be immune to the cooperation and mutual respect required to release them from Pre-Conventional (or Heteronomous) reasoning. These students, whose concept of authority is warped or devoid of human compassion, could benefit from frequent exposure to an empathic authority-figure.

The development of affective empathy is a key emotional milestone for its ability to affect moral reasoning, as one’s ability to feel or understand the emotions of others helps one build connections within one’s community. Infants are born with automatic empathic response (mirror neurons) which develop into affective empathy as the child gains emotional experience with which to understand the emotions of others. In 1982, Feshbach discovered key differences between boys and girls and their development of empathy. Girls scored higher and thus seemed to be more empathic than boys, especially when responding to happiness and pride emotions. (Goldstein, 1985, p. 36) Interestingly, boys who scored high in these same euphoric emotions were consistently described as antisocial or aggressive, whereas the girls had no such negative peer response. (Goldstein, 1985, p. 37) Boys who scored higher for dysphoric empathy were better received by their peers. Feshbach explains this surprising finding as follows:

Experiencing another person in distress may be quite upsetting for the child who is observing and may motivate the child to take action to attempt to alleviate the other person’s felt distress. This motivational sequence may serve to control the child’s own empathically produced distress feelings that, if not controlled would seek release through impulsive behaviour, sometimes including aggression. On the other hand, empathic experience of euphoric emotion would not have these motivating consequences and therefore would not be expected to lead to the
child needing to exercise self-control against impulsively releasing his motions. (Goldstein, 1985, p. 37)

Thus, the function of empathy seems to be to move the child from an insular, egocentric existence, to one of closeness with other human beings. Reaching out in altruistic behaviour towards another serves to temper the negative emotional response of dysphoric affective empathy, while ultimately motivating pro-social action.

The stages of moral and emotional development in children have important implications in the realm of Peace Education and conflict resolution. First of all, the Peace Educator must be aware that until early adolescence, children are still struggling with authority and their internalization of rules created through acceptance and rejection of that authority and interaction with their peer group. Many concepts in Peace Education, such as that of nonviolence, are not understandable in a meaningful way to children who have not achieved at least a Stage 4 or 5 in moral reasoning—something that might not happen by the time a student is graduating from high school. Peace Educators must also keep in mind that children from abusive or authoritarian families may have arrested moral development at a Pre-Conventional or Conventional Stage and may have difficulties understanding altruistic moral reasoning. Students from these unfortunate situations may also be unable (at least for a time) to use empathy as a tool to understand others. Also, while boys and girls ultimately have similar levels of empathic response, Peace Educators must keep in mind that the empathic response develops differently in the sexes. Scaffolding for the stages of moral development and modelling of empathy, as is present in many conflict resolution programs can help students achieve to their full potential in these areas.

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1While Feshbach's study on boys and empathy is surprising, it should be pointed out that when boys and girls took part in a training program to increase empathy, by the end of the training session, there was no difference in empathic response between the sexes. (Goldstein 1985, p. 50)
A Pedagogy for Social Justice

The overarching purpose of this study is to provide teachers with concrete ways in which they can implement a program that promotes social justice through a Peace Education model. What, then, is social justice? There are many—sometimes conflicting—ideas about what social justice means in schools and in the world, and how one should act in order to promote justice in society. While acknowledging that there are many interpretations of social justice, the definition for the purpose of this study will be based on the work of Paulo Freire, specifically *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In Freire's model, the Oppressed struggle against the Oppressor to regain the humanity that has been denied them through their subjugated state. A key point in this struggle is the idea that “because it is a distortion of being more fully human, sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so. In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not [...] become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both.” (Freire, 1993, p. 44) In order for the Oppressed to resist becoming Oppressors—a transition which, unfortunately, is easily made due to the fact that authoritarianism is the only model of freedom that the Oppressed have witnessed—the Oppressed must learn other means through which they can claim their full humanity. Freire here recognizes that there is a conflict between the Oppressed and the Oppressors and equilibrium—or justice—will be achieved when this conflict is resolved, when the Oppressed are finally able to become fully human through the act of struggle and liberation. Freire also acknowledges that in order for the liberation of the Oppressed to come to fruition, the Oppressed must respond to the absolute lovelessness of the Oppressor with an act of love. (Freire, 1993, p. 45) Freire describes this act—which he describes as love because it is the act of seeking full humanity and is diametrically opposed to the false generosity offered by the Oppressed—as
almost always comprised of violence. The act, then, that leads to liberation is one of ultimate conflict between the Oppressed and their Oppressors. It is through the resolution of this conflict that a transformation occurs:

Liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one. The man or woman who emerges is a new person, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanization of all people. Or to put it another way, the solution of this contradiction is born in the labor which brings into the world this new being: no longer oppressor nor longer oppressed, but human in the process of achieving freedom. (Freire, 1993, p. 49)

The result of the resolution of the conflict between the Oppressed and the Oppressor, therefore, is social justice. Social justice is what occurs when all people are able to realize their true humanity and do not impede others in realizing their full potential as human beings. In practical terms, then, social justice is the equitable resolution of social problems like poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, the inequitable enforcement of gender norms, environmental degradation and the conflicts that result from such problems. The resolution of these conflicts, and the peaceful and equitable world that would result, are the ultimate goal of a teaching practice that incorporates conflict resolution into the curriculum.

Social Justice Curriculum as a Means to Understand Conflict and Strive for Peace

When traditional, authoritarian, teaching methods are used in the History classroom, students have difficulty understanding the relevance of distant political treaties and battle descriptions to their lives. Teachers can increase student interest in History by overlapping History curriculum materials with “knowledge for social justice citizenship.” (Bickmore, 2008, p. 158) Focus on social justice in History helps students understand the world that they live in through a historical lens by bringing to the fore socio-economic (as well as other) inequalities
that they experience in their day-to-day lives. Kathy Bickmore, a prominent researcher in conflict resolution and peace education, writes that:

Social education scholars prioritize various overlapping kinds of knowledge for social justice citizenship. All include elements of conflict management:

• skills and values for toleration and dialogue across social/ideological diversities and conflicts;
• familiarity with political issue deliberation processes, interpersonally and in/through political systems;
• experience with diverse cultural communities' and social movements' leadership for change;
• critical inquiry and reasoning;
• analysis of conflict, interests, and power;
• capacity and willingness to look below the surface of discourse for the differential power it conceals. (Bickmore, 2008, p. 158)

By focusing on History through the lens of social justice and conflict resolution, not only can students begin to see the genesis of some of the world issues that are affecting their lives today, but they can also come away from these lessons about distant (and not so distant) histories with a practised skillset that they can use in everyday life.

Emphasis on social justice and conflict resolution in the History classroom challenges some of the preconceived notions with which students may enter a History class; namely, that the fabric of human history is held together by physical conflict and that change occurs primarily through violence or the threat of violence. Social justice education in the History classroom may even call into question preconceived notions about heroism. Indeed, social justice educator Peggy McIntosh “calls for less emphasis in social studies on individual heroism and more emphasis on the processes of making and mending the fabric of culture—for example, providing basic human necessities and sustaining the ecosystems that form the basis for human life.” (Bickmore, 2008, p. 159) When the History curriculum includes a thorough treatment of not only the movements
for social equality, but also peace and anti-war movements throughout human history, there is much to be learned about not only the hidden agenda behind violent conflict, but also the ways in which people have united to stand against that agenda and solved problems in creative and constructive ways. Framing history's peace movements in a way which teaches students skills they can use in every day life is empowering for students and gives History relevance that it does not have when learning History is nothing but the mind-numbing task of memorizing dates. In this way, History students also become students of social justice and peace.

The struggle for peace, if it is to be successful, must [like the study of war] also provoke courage, must be understood as a heroic task, and must recruit thousands if not millions of converts willing to renounce violent means to settle disputes. Educators have an important role to play in this struggle because they help to influence the important values and beliefs of their students. (Harris, 2003, p. 3)

History educators, of course, cannot tell their students what to believe and must always be careful to present information in an unbiased manner, but simply helping students to understand the deeper issues behind historic conflict, and the complexities of those issues, helps to open a path between History and the world we live in today. Many of the socio-economic issues that influenced the decisions of political and military leaders in the past, are directly or indirectly affecting the lives of students today. Helping students to become more aware of these issues may indeed recruit them into the ranks of those “willing to renounce violent means to settle disputes” and bring us one step closer to a more peaceful world.

Linda Christensen has written a great deal on how to incorporate social justice issues into the English classroom. She writes about using reading and writing to help students “get at the social roots of that alienation and despair—to help students use words as a passage into interrogating society.” She indicates that, “We need to move beyond sharing and describing our pain to examining why we're in pain and figuring out how to stop it.” (Christensen, 2000, p. vii)
Christensen notes that to become educated in this way—to become conscious of injustice and the ways in which it can be combated—is simultaneously healthy for the individual, and healthy—though not desired—for the society. She writes:

> The paradox of education is precisely this—that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated. The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions... But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change. (Christensen, 2000, p. viii)

Christensen believes that truly teaching literacy is not only about decoding the letters and words on a page, but using those letters and words to decode society. She believes that “We must teach students how to “read” not only novels and science texts, but cartoons, politicians, schools, workplaces [...]. We need to get students to “read where and how public money is spent. We need to get students to “read” the inequitable distribution of funds for schools. This is “rising up” reading—reading that challenges, that organizes for a better world.” (Christensen, 2000, p. vii)

This is the kind of reading that brings attention to the root of conflict in the world and seeks to address it.

Teaching the ability to decode society is not the only function of the social justice oriented English classroom; Christensen believes that a key component to being able to discuss sensitive topics with students in a meaningful way is building community in the classroom. “To become a community, students must learn to live in someone else's skin, understand the parallels of hurt, struggle, and joy across class and culture lines, and work for change. For that to happen, students need more than an upbeat, supportive teacher; they need a curriculum that encourages
them to empathize with others.” (Christensen, 2000, p. 2) In the safety of this community, students make discoveries about fellow students and people from cultures different than their own. For example, Christensen writes about a student who claims that through reading about the thoughts and feelings of others—and realizing that they are not so different from his own—he “started respecting [his] peers” and let go of prejudices he had harboured against certain groups. (Christensen, 2000, p. 6) Another student learned things about his own culture that he did not know, leading to a greater understanding of himself. Christensen writes:

A curriculum of empathy puts students inside the lives of others. By writing interior monologues, acting out improvisations, taking part in role plays, by creating fiction stories about historical events, students learn to develop understanding about people whose culture, race, gender or sexual orientation differs from theirs. This is imperfect and potentially dangerous, of course, because sometimes students call forth stereotypes that need to be unpacked. (Christensen 2000, p. 6)

Though unpacking stereotypes can be dangerous, the English classroom provides a good venue for this kind of thinking; students can reflect on the validity of stereotypical thinking from the comfortable distance that is allowed when thinking about fictional characters. While conversations can become tense, with guidance from the teacher and the closeness of the established classroom community, students can make sense of some otherwise uncomfortable social issues. Prompting students to think about issues of social inequality helps students to recognize the root of these issues in their own lives and gives them the critical thinking skills to deal with them in constructive ways. Christensen stresses that engaging students to talk about the violence they see in the world around them does not glorify this violence, but allows students to deconstruct it and make sense of it in a way that can help them deal with conflict situations in the future. (Christensen, 2000, p. 5) As such, a social justice-focused curriculum in English and
Language Arts classes sets students up for responding to the roots of conflict constructively, which leads naturally into a conflict resolution integrated curriculum.

**Conflict Resolution in the Classroom: Teaching Students to be Peacemakers Program Overview**

There are many conflict resolution programs currently available; and there is probably not a school board in North America that has not implemented conflict resolution to some degree. It was, therefore, difficult to pick a single program to focus on for the purposes of this study. The Toronto District School Board endorses several programs to reduce violence in schools: Tribes and Lion's Quest Conflict Management are just two such programs. I have been Tribes trained and have experience using Tribes methods in the classroom and maintain that as far as conflict resolution goes, Tribes is a “soft” program that, while it does teach some aspects of conflict resolution, does not go in depth on topics such as motivation and negotiation and introduce students to vocabulary that they could then apply to curriculum material. Unfortunately, I have no experience with Lion's Quest Conflict Management at this time. I have chosen to focus on the *Teaching Students to be Peacemakers* (TSP) program (Johnson & Johnson, 1991) because I have found studies on its efficacy, not only from the perspective of the desire to reduce overall school violence, but also as a tool in implementing conflict resolution into the curriculum, which is the main focus on my study.

The TSP program's core objectives are:

1. To build a classroom and school climate that is conducive to resolving conflicts constructively.
2. To ensure that both students and teachers have positive attitudes towards conflict and see conflict as a context for learning.

3. To build awareness that the strategies used to resolve a conflict depend on the importance of the goal and of the relationship.

4. To ensure that all students, no matter their background culture or beliefs, are oriented as to the procedures to resolve conflicts in the school.

5. To allow sufficient opportunity for students and teachers to practice the negotiation and mediation procedures so that they become “automatic habit patterns that occur reflexively with a person is involved in a conflict.”

6. To create a school-wide discipline program that empowers students to regulate their own and their classmates' actions. (Johnson & Johnson, 2004, p. 69)

According to the program's co-creators, TSP ensures that students “overlearn” the negotiation and mediation procedures in order to effectively implement the program strategies in their classrooms, schools and family situations. “Students need to practice the procedures over and over until they become automatic habit patterns. If students have to stop and think what they should do, it may be too late to manage the conflicts constructively. (Johnson & Johnson, 2004, p. 73) “Overlearning” of negotiation and mediation techniques occurs through following the lessons as laid out in the book, which uses short readings, cooperative activities and reflective questioning to guide students into the knowledge and frame of mind to effectively resolve conflict. Johnson & Johnson (2004) urge that teachers dedicate half an hour a day for five weeks to introducing and practising these conflict resolution skills—a time commitment that some teachers may find restrictive without implementing some of the ideas from TSP into their curriculum.
Teachers who are reluctant to commit to such a program may be interested in the statistics surrounding TSP as a means to improve students' academic achievement.

The TSP training was integrated into both English literature and history academic units to determine its impact on academic achievement. The basic design for these studies was to randomly assign students to classes where the TSP training was integrated into the academic unit studied or to classes where the academic unit was studied without any conflict training. Students who received the Peacemaker training as part of the academic unit tended to score significantly higher on achievement (effect size = 0.88) and retention (effect size = 0.70) tests than did students who studied the academic unit only. Students not only learned the factual information contained in the academic unit better, they were better able to interpret the information in insightful ways. (Johnson & Johnson, 2004, p. 76)

Training in conflict resolution programs, such as that TSP offers, gives students a developmental advantage. Children who are not trained in conflict resolution tend to manage their conflicts in destructive ways, or rely on authority figures, such as teachers and parents, for arbitration. (Johnson & Johnson, 1995) On the other hand, “Individuals skilled in resolving conflicts tend to make and keep more friends, be more employable, be more successful in their careers, have a more fulfilling family life, and generally experience less stress and more happiness.”(Johnson & Johnson, 2004, pp. 77-8) Conflict resolution programs, such as TSP, make not only safer schools, but contribute towards a safer society.

**Conflict Resolution in the History and English Curriculum**

For many teachers already struggling with a tightly-packed course agenda, curriculum integration is the only feasible option for teaching conflict resolution programs to their students. Fortunately, studies show that the incorporation of conflict resolution skills into curriculum materials is well worth the effort. “When the peacemaker training was integrated into an English literature class, academic achievement increased even though time was taken away from studying
the novel to learn the negotiation procedure. Because much of literature, history, and science deals with conflicts, the possibilities of integrating conflict resolution training and subject matter learning seem quite possible and promising.” (Johnson & Johnson, 1995, p. 434) Conflict resolution training equips students with skills that support the kind of environments that are so prevalent in schools; that is, collaborative environments that depend on peer cooperation for success and progress. “In fact, many of the social skills that enable successful teamwork (e.g., presenting positions, listening attentively, communicating understanding, generating integrative solutions, and reaching mutual agreement on the best course of action) are the same skills that underlie constructive conflict resolution. Empirical evidence indicates that without training, many students may never learn such skills (D.W. Johnson & R.T. Johnson, 1996). Conflict resolution training, therefore, enables students not only to successfully navigate and negotiate through conflict with peers, but also to more deeply understand conflict in course material.

Integration of conflict resolution methodology into the already existing curriculum does not require teachers to purchase new materials or instructional resources, nor does it require busy teachers to develop new courses or units. Laurie Stevahn (2004) writes,

Curriculum-integrated conflict training starts with teachers examining the content of their existing curricula and identifying where conflicts occur. Conflicts especially abound in English literature, language arts, social studies, and the humanities. Open any novel or storybook, for example, and you will find conflict almost immediately. Conflict "hooks" us, piques our curiosity, and makes us wonder how each dilemma will be resolved. Similarly, conflicts in the social sciences including history, civics, government, economics, and so on—also capture attention, arouse concern, and stir emotion. Conflicts over resource allocation, land use, energy consumption, health care, affirmative action, and educational effectiveness, to name only a few, provide endless opportunities for deliberation. The central question for students becomes: What creative solutions can be crafted by applying constructive conflict resolution procedures to each problem? (p. 51)
Conflict resolution training enables students to look at human conflict in history or literature and recognize key elements of conflict which leads to deeper understanding of the situation. For example, through conflict resolution training, students can successfully recognize the nature of a person or character's response to conflict: how did the person respond? What were the response options? What was the best response in order to maintain a successful long term relationship? If interpersonally destructive options were chosen, what was the person or character's main motivation? (Stevahn, 2004, p. 52) Through consistent posing of questions such as these, teachers can further enforce a conflict resolution mindset. Indeed, “Once teachers introduce the steps, students can repeatedly use them to role-play constructive resolutions to the numerous conflict scenarios in their curriculum. Each role-play helps students internalize the negotiation procedure as well as develop fluency in applying it across diverse conflict situations.” (Stevahn, 2004, p. 54)

Conflict resolution processes can help students reach deeper understanding of the complex conflict situations present in the History classroom, not only through giving students a vocabulary to talk about conflict, but also through the process itself. For example, in a History class that deals with conflict between First Nations communities and settlers or the Canadian Government, introducing students to the traditional conflict resolution process of the indigenous peoples could not only give insight about ways to resolve conflict, but also about the cultures involved. North American indigenous communities have used conflict resolution strategies for thousands of years to resolve conflicts between individuals, families and tribes. (Pranis, 2005) This ancient process is the Restorative Justice Circle, which “promotes including all those impacted by a crime in a process of understanding the harm of crime and devising strategies for repairing the harm.” (Pranis, 2005, p. 9) In the Restorative Justice Circle,
Participants sit in a circle of chairs with no tables. Sometimes objects that have meaning to the group are placed in the centre as a focal point to remind participants of shared values and common ground. The physical format of the Circle symbolizes shared leadership, equality, connection, and inclusion. It also promotes focus, accountability, and participation from all. (Pranis, 2005, p. 11)

Restorative Justice Circles use elements of ceremony in order to help participants centre their thoughts on the issue at hand, and to distinguish the Circle from a meeting. Often, a “talking piece” is used; this is an object that is passed around the circle in order to facilitate speaking in turns and attentive listening. The process is lead by a “keeper”, who “assists the group in creating and maintaining a collective space in which each participant feels safe to speak honestly and openly without disrespecting anyone else.” (Pranis, 2005, p. 12) In a Restorative Justice Circle, decisions are made by consensus, meaning that while some participants may not be enthusiastic about the ultimate decision of the group, all group members need to agree upon the plan and support its implementation. (Pranis, 2005, p. 13) Using this process to help students talk about conflicts between First Nations communities and European settlers could be a revolutionary way to infuse the learning process with not only increased understanding about the difficulties of these conflict situations, but also increased empathy for those involved. With enough research and dedication to the process, it is almost a given that students could come up with solutions that are more creative and ultimately more satisfactory to all parties than those decided upon unilaterally by our government hundreds of years ago. Reflection upon why the historical decisions were made in comparison to those reached in the classroom Circle process could lead to deeper understanding of the foundation and structure of our current society.

The English curriculum, just like the History curriculum, presents students with ample opportunity to deconstruct and interpret conflict using skills that can be easily transferred to real-
world conflict outside the walls of the classroom. Though specific resources outlining the process by which teachers can implement this strategy into their teaching practice are limited, as the importance of this approach and its implications are realized by increasing numbers of educators, resources such as complete unit plans are becoming available. One example is a resource entitled *Conflict Resolution Through Literature: Romeo & Juliet, Curriculum Unit* by Barbara A. Marderosian—a 40 page booklet which outlines a method for approaching Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* through a conflict resolution lens. The strategy that this resource uses is mediation, in which students are divided into groups representing the characters in conflict—characters either on the side of the Montagues or the Capulets. Following a mediation format, the resource outlines how students can begin to deconstruct the conflict in the play. With one student (or the teacher) acting as mediator, the following approach can be used at various points in the play, particularly when tension is high and the resolution to the problem is not obvious:

**Opening Remarks:** the mediator explains his or her role in the process and the goal of the mediation. The role of the mediator is not to resolve the conflict, but to facilitate communication between two opposing groups.

**Step 1:** The mediator selects one person at random to explain his or her concerns while other listen. The mediator ensures that no one interrupts the person speaking, takes notes and writes down any questions for later. Once the disputant is finished speaking, the mediator sums up the stated position and asks questions if needed. The mediator does not judge or give advice, but merely collects and clarifies information.

**Step 2:** A disputant from the second group now has a turn to state his or her position without interruption. The mediator will perform the same function as in Step 1.
**Joint Session:** The mediator guides the two disputants in exploring ways in which the problem can be resolved. Only one issue at a time should be discussed in order to maintain structure and clarity, so the mediator should refer to his or her notes to keep the session organized. The mediator prompts the disputants to think about the consequences of the conflict between them.

**Agreement:** The mediator sums up the terms of the agreement between the two disputants and then commits the terms to writing. After the agreement is complete, both parties will sign the document. (Marderosian, 2006, p. 4)

The structure of the mediation session offered by Marderosian as a way to deconstruct conflict in *Romeo and Juliet* can be used for other literary works as well. The booklet also offers other useful approaches to conflict resolution, giving students opportunities to learn key strategies in conflict resolution—such as identifying nonverbal communication, identifying feelings, active listening and asking open-ended questions—while also learning about the play. This resource also provides opportunities for students to connect the play and the conflict resolution skills they are learning to their experiences in their own lives. For example, the booklet offers suggestions for student writing exercises on the topic of their experience with or understanding of gangs and violence (a prevalent theme in *Romeo and Juliet*) and gives students an opportunity to interpret these experiences using the conflict resolution strategies which which they had previously interpreted the play. The resource prompts students to make connections between literature and their lives using a conflict resolution lens, which facilitates greater transfer between these skills and student lives. Making connections in this way between student experience and that of the characters in *Romeo and Juliet*—or any other literary work—clearly demonstrates foundational themes that transcend fiction and point to truths about the human experience.
Summary

As this literature review demonstrates, there has been much research done on the idea of Peace Education—teaching students that peace is not an abstract concept but an action with correlating strategies and skills that need to be practised and maintained—and its overarching goal of social justice. Studies in psychology suggest that teachers wishing to implement a curriculum focusing on peace education, social justice and conflict resolution must consider the psychological development of their students and provide appropriate materials. While discussions about social conflicts—such as race, class and gender—and programs that outline specific strategies to combat conflict in school and business settings are becoming more prevalent, very few educators have developed curriculum material that combines the idea of conflict resolution as a strategy to work toward peace and social justice. The resources that have been developed point toward two main approaches for incorporating conflict resolution into an English or History curriculum; firstly, in order for conflict resolution to be successful, a safe and caring community must be established. Such classroom communities ensure that students have the opportunity to develop their empathic response, no matter their stage of psychological development. Secondly, students must practice conflict resolution strategies—such as those present in most conflict resolution programs—applied to the texts they are studying in class. This two-pronged approach ensures that students first develop and then frequently exercise their conflict resolution skills so that they may be fit mediators for the conflicts they will encounter in future personal, work and world situations.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Procedure

This research study on educating for peace and social justice by integrating conflict resolution into the History and English curricula was undertaken by reviewing relevant literature and through conducting interviews with teachers who are currently practising—or have practised in the past—a teaching model that includes peace and social justice issues and explores conflict through establishing a conflict resolution integrated program. I sought teachers from different backgrounds, and at different stages of their careers who were willing to be interviewed about their teaching practices and relevant personal information. The interviews were conducted in agreement with the participant as to time, location and medium; for example, two interviews were conducted in person, while one was conducted over the telephone. The interview questions (see Appendix B) were open-ended so as to allow participants to not only respond directly to the question but elaborate on the issues in ways that reflected their own experience and teaching practice. Each interview was tape recorded and a full transcription of each interview was completed. I then re-read each transcription and looked for both commonalities and differences in the ways the participants answered the questions. These transcriptions were then colour-coded by theme in order to facilitate a more thorough analysis of interview contents. For example, each interviewee described how they used different dramatic exercises in order to encourage students to take the perspective of either literary characters or figures from history and from this perspective develop further questions that lead deeper into curriculum material. As I read through the digitized transcripts, I pulled out like ideas pertaining to dramatic strategies for conflict resolution from each interviewee and colour-coded them, assigning a different colour for each
speaker. I copied and pasted the relevant text into a new word processing document, labelled for the theme it addressed. At the end of this process I had created five additional files containing transcript excerpts pertaining to the background and training of the participants, their ideas about conflict resolution and social justice, the use of drama in the classroom, the use of technology for conflict resolution and the importance of developing a safe community in which to practice conflict resolution skills. I re-read each separate file and organized the quotes in a way that best demonstrated how the issues in each theme effect classroom practice.

One participant requested a copy of the interview transcript, which was sent to the participant via email.

Participants

Participants were chosen for this study based on the following criteria:

- Willingness to participate
- Experience teaching either English, History or both
- Experience teaching at Intermediate and/or Senior levels
- Experience incorporating conflict resolution into the English or History curricula for the purpose of Peace and Social Justice Education

The following participants participated in this study through the completion an interview between 40-60 minutes in length:

1. Zach, a History teacher of 11 years who has taught students at the Intermediate level in Toronto. Zach is currently completing a graduate degree in Social Justice Education.
2. Michael, a retired teacher who taught English and Drama from the Intermediate level through to College. Although Michael is Canadian and completed a Canadian teacher education program, he taught primarily in the United States.

3. Julia has been teaching for 32 years and is currently teaching Senior-level History at a private High School in the United States.

**Ethical Review Procedures**

In accordance with the Ethical Review Procedures of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, a consent form was given to each participant prior to beginning with the interview. Each interviewee was required to read and sign the consent form (see Appendix B). Prior to each interview, the consent form was reviewed with the participants and the topic was discussed ahead of time in order to ensure clarity on the topic and purpose of this research project. The interviews were conducted at a location and time chosen by the participants, and in a manner that was mutually agreed upon. All interviews were recorded using a recording device before being transcribed in their entirety. Any questions that the participants had at any point either before, during, or upon the completion of the interviews were encouraged and responded to. Participants were assured of their anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and by changing the names or titles of personal projects the participants are involved in. Before the interview, it was stressed to the participants they their participation in this research project was entirely voluntary and they were welcome to opt-out of either individual questions, or the entire project, at any time without consequence. The interviewees were offered access to the completed transcripts and were welcomed to ask the researcher to omit any data they felt did not
accurately capture them as educators. The participants were also told they would be informed of the project’s completion and could request a copy of the project if they wished.

Limitations

Due to the small sample size of three participants, the opinions and experiences expressed by teachers in this study may not accurately represent the diverse opinions and experience of teacher practice on this topic. The generalizability of results is limited. For example, two out of three participants had more experience teaching in the United States; experiences described by these teachers may not reflect what is possible in a Canadian—or even more specifically, in an Ontarian—context. Despite the limited number of participants, however, I feel that the research is still valuable as I was able to gain insights as to practice that I could apply to own classroom.

Another limitation of this study was imposed by the requirement of anonymity. Due to the fact that incorporating conflict resolution into the curriculum is still a somewhat novel practice, the teachers who are transforming their classrooms with Peace and Social Justice Education in mind have garnered a fair amount of attention in the media. There is considerable material available which highlights teacher practice in this area, especially on the Internet, which could not be included in this study for fear of revealing the identities of the study's participants.
Chapter 4: FINDINGS

The information gathered for this study demonstrates not only that there are multiple ways that one can incorporate conflict resolution into an English or History curriculum, but that there are multiple reasons for doing so. While participants in this study did demonstrate significant similarities, there were also differences that indicate that while teachers interested in peace and social justice issues may be interested in similar educational outcomes, they come to these ideas in different ways. For example, the participants featured all had different levels of conflict resolution training from different sources—such as through educational outlets offering such training or through religious institutions—but arrived at similar conclusions about how conflict resolution should be integrated into the curriculum. In order to best illustrate the process of developing a conflict resolution integrated classroom practice—and address the research question on the practical means of incorporating conflict resolution into the English or History curricula—I have focused on themes that demonstrate this process, such as the background and training of the research participants, their ideas about conflict resolution and social justice, the importance of building classroom community, use of drama, and incorporating technology into an integrated conflict resolution curriculum.

Background and Training

The question of how to incorporate conflict resolution into an English or History curriculum largely depends on one's reasons for doing so. As such, a significant number of the questions posed to the research participants aimed to elucidate the participant's background in
terms of their interest in conflict resolution and any experience or training they may have had with conflict resolution programs.

The three study participants came from diverse backgrounds in terms of their experience with conflict resolution and their reasons for implementing an integrated conflict resolution program in their own teaching experience. None of the participants had had a teacher in their own lives as students who had implemented an integrated conflict resolution program, nor had they encountered a direct conflict resolution skills program in their classes. Two of the participants, Michael and Julia, pursued training in conflict resolution and integrated it into their teacher practice because of their spiritual beliefs—Michael identifying as a Quaker and Julia as a Buddhist—which compelled them to address the idea of peaceful conflict resolution and its connection to curriculum as a means of emphasizing the importance of such skills and knowledge to a holistic view of humanity. For Michael, he was also influenced by his family history and their connection to a particularly prominent figure in the history of nonviolence. Michael told a story about how his family, some of whom worked in the cotton mills of Manchester, England, personally encountered Gandhi as he came to England to make a plea for the cotton farmers of India, who were not permitted to process their own crops as the cotton was instead shipped to England. Michael explained,

When Gandhi arrived in England he didn’t go to Whitehall and speak to the Prime Minister. He bypassed the government and he went to the workers, and explained and said, “Is this fair? That you are living on the backs of people who are starving in my country?” And of course people said, “No, it’s not.” Gandhi got the workers on side, supporting the freedom of India against their own government. He said to them, “If you agree with our thinking, then you’ll be forced on the dole, or you’ll have to emigrate.” And my family emigrated to Canada because of that speech. So they came here—that’s why I’m a Canadian. They came from England and settled here. So I heard about Gandhi every night. Every night. (Michael, January 31 2012)
Having his remarkable story in his family history, it is easy to understand that—having ideas about nonviolence and conflict resolution ingrained in him since childhood—Michael would see the integration of such ideas into his teaching practices as imperative. For Michael, Gandhi’s efforts to free India and his writings which would later become so crucial to other liberation movements, became a cornerstone of his worldview, which then influenced his classroom teaching.

The other participant, Zach, did not identify himself as belonging to any particular faith group, instead citing his cultural upbringing as influential to his interest in conflict and different ways of resolving conflicts. For example, Zach stated that he grew up in a family that did not shy away from conflict—often fully engaging in discussions of controversial topics—which contrasted with his experience in schools. Zach states,

Because of my work in other areas I really began to think about the power relationships inherent in conflict resolution and what that means—what resolving a conflict really is. I began to question why we want to manage conflict, and what that looks like. A lot of time it's smoothing over even diverse perspectives in a lot of ways. All for the feel-good thing of everybody getting along in harmony, we love each other kind of thing. So I began to question a lot of that stuff; hence my movement towards conflict as something that is provocative, something that is generative, that can produce learning, that can produce meaning. I'm not for suppressing conflict in any way possible; a lot of anti-bullying programs keep conflicts low no matter what. As soon as there's any inkling of tension, there's a quick movement towards suppressing. That's with the intention of making sure people are safe, right? And understood. But I'd say there's a danger to that as well. (Zach, November 8 2011)

In Zach's view, the danger of this approach to conflict resolution—the approach that seeks to muzzle differing viewpoints in order to minimize conflict—does little to achieve the goals of such anti-bullying programs, which is to prevent verbal and physical violence. Refusal to acknowledge differences, instead of promoting a lasting
peace between students, instead creates sustained unacknowledged tension, which such programs do not prepare students to manage. Zach's perspective, then, is that an incorporated conflict resolution program gives students ample opportunity to explore not only diverse perspectives from history and literature, but also provides the students with practice in conflict resolution by having them “try on” various perspectives as their own and work with other students to come up with viable solutions to conflict situations. Zach's family and cultural background has led to this belief that provoking conflict in a safe setting (such as that of a family or group with a similarly close bond) is “productive” and “generative” in that it allows students to develop their communication and conflict resolution skills in anticipation of future conflict situations in their future relationships.

While Zach's experience with family conflict compelled him to integrate conflict resolution into his teaching practice, Michael and Julia cite key world events for their interest in the topic. Michael—a retired teacher—became involved in the American Civil Rights Movement after 80 churches who had been registering black citizens to vote were blown up or set on fire by members of the Ku Klux Klan in an effort to suppress the vote and the movement toward true emancipation in the South. This experience was profoundly influential not only on Michael's teaching practice, but on his dedication to nonviolence as a strategy for conflict resolution in everyday situations. Michael spoke at length about his experiences in Mississippi, but one story in particular illustrates the effectiveness of nonviolent conflict resolution tactics and their applicability to the classroom. Michael tells a story about making a connection with a store clerk who he had met while buying groceries for his group of civil rights workers.
When Michael first came into the store, the clerk was watching a television report about Martin Luther King arriving in Selma. The clerk immediately recognized Michael as an outsider and made assumptions about his political affiliations, trying to bait him into an argument about the conflict between the north and south. Michael says,

I turned on the listening ears you develop in conflict resolution and just listened to him. I went back the next day—now it was just a soap opera he was watching—and he was asking me, “So what do you think?” He was still trying to bait me. And I explained, “Well, as you probably know, I’m from up north. In fact, I’m even more northern than New York. I come from Canada, and I’ve never been to Mississippi before, so I’m really interested in your point of view.” (Michael, January 31 2012)

Michael went on to describe how a casual, almost-friendly relationship developed over time as he went there every day for lunch and gave the clerk a chance to talk without Michael imposing his views on the clerk or trying to “convert” him to a more “Northern” way of thinking. All the while, the tension in the small town in Mississippi was growing; Michael described how members of the Klan were slipping threatening notes under the door where he was staying, his phone line was tapped and the sheriff of the town was tail-gating him and other members of the group. At this point, Michael decided that the project was too dangerous, that the students in his group—who were not trained in conflict resolution—needed to be removed from such a volatile environment. Michael cancelled his section of the project and fled north. It was only later that he learned what had transpired with the store clerk. Michael told about how The man in the store who had tried to bait me, with whom I then had daily contact and conversation, and who I knew was in the Klan, for some reason he started questioning what the Klan were doing. He decided to pull out of the Klan—and they pistol whipped him. They beat the hell out of him. When his friends tried to take him to the local hospital, the hospital got calls that if they accepted him, they
would blow the hospital up. So he suddenly saw what he was involved with in the Klan. This man volunteered, because he’s now tasted the medicine he’s been part of giving to other people, he volunteered to take our next group to live in his store, and the apartment upstairs. (Michael, January 31 2012)

For Michael, this story was a testament to the efficacy of nonviolent conflict resolution—the process through which Michael had gradually earned the trust of someone who was initially antagonistic toward him and had been influential in the clerk’s acceptance of a perspective different from the one to which he had been indoctrinated all his life. The implications for teaching are profound—connecting not only to conflict resolution and restorative justice strategies such as allowing all parties to speak no matter their position, but also to the need to develop emotional connections between people in order to facilitate a flow of ideas. While most student views are not going to be as controversial as those expressed by a member of the Ku Klux Klan, the strategy that creates empathic and emotional connections between students—and teachers and students—creates an environment in which students feel less bound to ideas that are faulty or less useful to them and, at the same time, more open to new ideas that perhaps they had never encountered before.

While Michael’s experiences with the American Civil Rights Movement directly influenced his teaching practice, Julia—a teacher of 30 years—found that recent events in the United States altered her History class in ways that forced her to respond. After the events of 9/11, Julia noticed that students were very engaged in world affairs as they tried to understand what happened to the World Trade Center and why it happened. Julia says,

As a classroom teacher, I felt compelled to try to deliver information quicker and to see that the students were finding their own information over the internet far beyond what teachers could deliver about the situation. It was like a teaching moment for me—to fast track the educational process, and to figure out what would work best for them, for their world. Then I thought of trying to understand
the Other, and to walk in the Other’s shoes to at least know where they’re coming from. To shift education to more conflict resolution and understanding of the Other. [...] We could bring parties to the table prior to actual events spiralling out of control. There would be another way besides blowing each other up, and killing one another, that would take us to another level. It’s a big vision. (Julia, December 4 2011)

Julia goes on to say that while she recognized this need in her program to provide students with guidance in terms of where to find reliable information about world conflict, she did not immediately know where to start. Realizing that a program that promotes awareness of “the Other” could not be successful without participants being trained in conflict resolution strategies, Julia began to develop a training manual specifically for her History class, which she would later expand into a full-blown World Issues Conferencing project. In this way, the events of 9/11 influenced Julia's program to a profound degree, as she recognized the changing needs of youth in American society and subsequently altering her teaching practice.

All three research participants, after recognizing the need to incorporate conflict resolution into their teaching practice, pursued training of some kind. For Zach, training was completed informally through personal research and exposure to the research and practices of other researchers in the field of conflict resolution. Michael, on the other hand, had previous training due to his involvement with the Quaker community as well as his experience with the Civil Rights Movement and the nonviolence training that occurred as part of that program. Julia's training—with the United States Institute of Peace—took place after she had already begun to implement an integrated conflict resolution program in her History class, as she recognized that further professional development would enhance her practice. All three teachers pulled appropriate strategies from their training programs and incorporated these strategies into their English and History classrooms, creating a program that promoted an awareness of diverse
perspectives and gave students the tools to understand the reasons behind these perspectives in a way that promoted understanding and empathy.

**Conflict Resolution and Social Justice**

When Paulo Freire wrote *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he described not only the complexities of interaction between an oppressor and the oppressed, but also a process by which people belonging to marginalized groups could regain their full humanity (or achieve the justice required in order to flourish as human beings) by overthrowing their oppressor. Freire describes this process through which the oppressed can “initiate love” through a rebellious act of conflict. (Freire, 2000, p. 56) Freire states that this “rebellious act” is almost always an act of physical violence; while violence need not always be an act of bloodletting, Freire's assertion emphasizes that conflict is always necessary in order for the restoration of justice to occur. When there is no justice, there can never be peace.

All three participants expressed similar ideas about the connection between social justice and conflict resolution; that conflict arises because of injustice and conflict resolution should be the process of restoring equilibrium between people. Michael expressed the process of restoring justice in very practical terms, citing the example of witnessing two people screaming at each other on the street. What does one do in that situation? Does one forgo one's position as an outsider and get involved? Michael said,

> We don’t really focus on [conflict resolution], we assume that wherever there is conflict it will get resolved, and in fact it most often does. People will yell at each other, and either one person will give up or they’ll keep yelling and there will be declared a winner or the loser—which is not a good dynamic. But we do know how to teach conflict resolution and kids are being the facilitators; and if there are
conflicts they know how to say, “Come and get at the issue.” (Michael, January 31 2012)

In this way, Michael is referring to the idea that despite the fact that conflict between people happens all the time, it is rare that conflict leads to equitable solutions that benefit relationships. Instead of striving for justice, people in conflict often strive to win or—if they perceive their position or strategy as weaker than that of their opponent—abandon their plaint, which does nothing to create balance and instead postpones resolution until the problem grows or deepens and can no longer be ignored. While many people view conflict as negative and seek to avoid it at all costs, conflict is really an opportunity for dialogue—an opportunity for people to come together and discuss injustice and what is required to restore fairness and balance. Conflict resolution then is a conduit for social justice—the means by which we can more easily ensure that balance is maintained in society in all facets of human life.

Julia too agrees that “there is no peace without justice” and describes how this idea manifests in her History classroom, in which students form groups and pick a world conflict to study and resolve through a technologically-enhanced deliberation process. Julia's program follows many of the traditional strategies found in conflict resolution programs, but uses technology such as wikis, message boards and social media to allow tech-savvy students to access each stage of the process with ease. Julia describes the process as follows:

When the students work through the conflict that they want to try to work on, there's such great buy in. It empowers students to deliver. So with the peace agreement, everyone has to be thinking about bringing groups back together—and part of reconciliation would be the justice process. The students don't just do the rounds in the negotiation; if you don't have built into the process who will do what, how we will do it, and then what would be some interesting mechanisms to make sure that the parties are part of the process in the final closure. The process is difficult—if you don't have a process there is the danger that you could spiral into another cycle of violence and escalation of the conflict. So the part which
sometimes is missing is the idea that the push towards social justice is a critical mass, when trying to resolve conflict. (Julia, December 4 2011)

Julia's use of the term “critical mass” when referring to the process of reconciliation is apt. She is here referencing the idea that if a significant amount of people adopt a conflict resolution approach to a problem, rather than seeking to “win” regardless of the outcome for the “losers”, or simply abandoning their complaints, others will quickly adopt conflict resolution strategies as well. This is significant both of teacher practice and for conflict resolution in the wider world; for example, as students in Julia's class take on the roles of diplomats in various world conflicts, cooperation between the representatives for both sides in a conflict will create an atmosphere that is conducive for further cooperation. As students work through the process of conflict resolution in Julia's History class, they become more and more familiar and comfortable with these strategies and are more likely to adopt them in their own personal conflict situations, which could create a critical mass toward social justice in the wider world.

While Zach adheres to a similar idea concerning the connection between social justice and conflict resolution, his emphasis is on conflict as a positive force that can lead to a more just society. He expressed discomfort with the idea that some uphold—that conflict should be suppressed in order to maintain peace—and acknowledges that the only way to ensure sustainable relationships is to embrace not only conflict, but effective strategies to deal with them. Zach states,

There are approaches to social justice which actually try to suppress conflict in every way, and they call that social justice. There are other ways to look at social justice where conflict is necessary to have social justice, because otherwise nothing ever changes. You can't achieve a goal in social justice without putting into conflict what already exists. Historically, all social movements involve some sort of conflict against the powers that be—the dominant—by folks who are in the margins, and sometimes by people who are dominant use their power in ways that
provoke change. There's a very close relationship in my opinion between conflict and social justice. (Zach, November 8 2011)

Zach goes on to say that conflict can be purposefully instigated in order to bring about social change. He refers to an idea explained in Lynn Davies' *Education and Conflict: Complexity and Chaos* in which Davies describes a process of “interrupting” a dominant discourse, for example, making students think about what they perceive to be the norm and questioning all facets of normative discourse. (Davies, 2004, p. 55) Davies states that humour is one way to interrupt the dominant discourse; a teacher, for example, could use humour to interrupt a student who is exhibiting status quo thinking on a subject, initially causing a conflict with that student, but diffusing the situation through humour, which would evolve into discussion about the dominant discourse. Zach describes the process of interruption as “putting people in situations that are somewhat uncomfortable and talking about things that they don't necessarily talk about if given a choice through a provocative interrupting question—which for a lot of people is the basis of teaching.” (Zach, November 8 2011) Interruption, then, can be used as a means through which to provoke conflict in situations where students experience the discomfort of the questioning of the status quo, though still feel safe enough to participate in the interruption, to work through the process of a resolution toward justice for all.

**Conflict Resolution and Community**

The process of resolving conflict hinges upon people being able to talk to each other, to—even momentarily—but their own needs aside and listen to the needs of others. The reciprocal exchange that is necessarily to resolve conflict is an inherent part of community development, whether in a classroom or any other social outlet or organization. The building of trust between
students and between students and teachers, then, is imperative to the success of any conflict resolution program; and when the conflict resolution program is integrated into the curriculum, community must be established in order for students to not only successfully practice conflict resolution strategies, but also to achieve success with curriculum material.

For Michael, developing a classroom community became a part of his conflict resolution program. Using Rachel DuBois' *Reducing social tension and conflict through the group conversation method* as a framework, Michael found that developing community improved not only interactions between students, but also reduced issues that teachers deal with perennially, such as absenteeism, lateness and disengagement. Michael says,

> [At the beginning of a semester] students only have superficial connections. So if you get them using “group conversation”, they just thrive on it. As soon as I started doing it, I had perfect attendance, and everybody arrived on time. Because I only did it for 20 minutes in a three hour class, they didn’t want to miss it. This method directly addresses the question, “how do you create conditions that avoid conflict?” So the student who might want to be talking a lot in class, in a group conversation starting off a 3 hour lecture, if he wanted to speak out people were eager to listen to him. And then he can let go of this “pay attention to me, me, me.” (Michael, January 31 2012)

While Michael's use of the Group Conversation method was practised at the post-secondary level, after he had moved on from this Intermediate and Senior level teaching, the strategy he describes would be equally useful in a middle school or secondary school classroom. The Group Conversation method allows students to not only develop relationships that sustain their learning, but also creates an atmosphere in which students feel that their needs are being addressed, that they are heard by the group as a whole—which is, of course, a large component of any conflict resolution program. The Group Conversation method became an integral part of Michael's program, which directly fed his efforts to introduce ideas about conflict in literature. While the
conversation itself is not entirely integrated into the curriculum material, the use of conversation at the beginning of every class (much like the Community Circle endorsed by the TRIBES program), set the tone in which conflict could be addressed.

Zach also emphasizes the importance of community to his practice as a teacher incorporating conflict resolution. “One of the first things that I will do is think about who students are—from when I taught grade 3 all the way to doing my work with high school teachers right now. Whether you call it conflict resolution, social justice education or peace education that’s a first step for me, no matter what.” (Zach, November 8 2011) Elaborating on the idea of developing relationship as part of an integrated conflict resolution program, Zach states,

Conflict resolution is how you deal with every interaction you have with the student, or with your colleagues. And so a lot of it is not necessarily overt teaching, but just the way things are handled, and what you chose to focus on in terms of content. In English, classic narrative has conflict in it, and it gets resolved in the end as a matter of traditional narrative. But you'll see writers create situations where there is no resolutions—and that freaks people out. It's not new anymore, but I mean when that first started happening, quite commonly, people would freak out. What does that say about people? What does that say about us? I don't know. (Zach, November 8 2011)

The interactions that we have with students and colleagues, therefore, become part of a conflict resolution curriculum, just as the actual curriculum content—such as narrative structure in an English class—becomes part of an integrated approach to conflict resolution. Zach points out that an integrated conflict resolution program is not only about community interactions, but also student interactions with texts. Stressing that human beings seem to have an innate desire to resolve conflicts—as is evidenced by the discomfort experienced when encountering texts that lack such resolutions—could become a part of a community building exercise in which the teacher connects student lives to text and emphasizes an awareness of the importance of balance
and justice in real and fictional human lives. To achieve this level of symbiosis between student lives, text and curriculum, however, the development and maintenance of classroom community must be a high priority.

**Drama as a Conflict Resolution Tool**

One common theme I found with each of my participants is that they each used drama, in various forms, as a way to incorporate conflict resolution into their respective programs, using strategies such as role playing and in-role writing to help students shift their perspective to that of the Other so that they may begin to understand the complex facets of conflict situations. Both Michael and Zach used drama explicitly—for Zach drama was his chosen strategy to promote student engagement no matter the subject, be it English, History or Geography; while Michael combined drama with other strategies such as Group Conversation in order to engage students with curriculum material and each other. Even Julia, who did not explicitly call her strategy “drama”, used drama techniques in the way she had her students take on the role of diplomats, research world issues and act out a peace conference in which each side in the conflict was argued by a well-researched team of students. For the purpose of this subtopic, however, I will focus on the strategies described by Michael and Zach and return to discuss Julia's integrated conflict resolution program in the next section.

Michael's experience with conflict resolution is diverse, due to his commitment to the topic through his faith and the training opportunities and experiences this has afforded him. Throughout his experiences as a teacher and a facilitator, however, Michael relied heavily on drama techniques to help students to first formulate questions about texts and then discover the
often complex answers. Michael describes this technique when he had students study *A Dolls House* by Henrik Ibsen:

> I asked my students to look at the conflict in the family, with Torvald and Nora. The play ends with Nora slamming the door and walking out on her husband. That was unheard of in that society. I asked the students to write a plot series of how the sequel would happen—Nora is out on the street; the only model she has is Torvald bullying her. Now she’s burdened with, “Okay, as I go through life, what’s going to stop me from bullying others?” (Michael, January 31 2012)

Through this strategy, Michael had students think deeply about several aspects of the problem presented in the play: what was the dynamic between Torvald and Nora? Why did Torvald treat Nora the way he did? What was Nora’s response? How will this treatment affect her in the future? How do social and cultural factors affect our decisions? Each of these questions lead students to think not only about the answers present in Ibsen’s play, but also about those answers present in their own social context. Using in-role writing—having students extend the play using Nora's perspective—students compare Nora's experience to that in current-day society and ask questions about what has changed and why. This process not only illuminates the play for students, but opens up areas of dialogue about current day social and cultural issues—issues that are currently causing conflict in our own society.

Indeed, Michael describes his teaching practice as very deliberately deconstructing status quo ideas about society. He did this by first introducing students to a model of society as described by the Greeks and expounded upon in Greek theatre.

> I started out every class in literature by explaining the basic model in our society, for life and literature. It comes from the Greeks—the word *thesis*. The model coming from the Greeks is to put down a thesis, and then you smack it with an anti-thesis. In theory you’re supposed to get that and then you get the synthesis, the synthetic, the combination of the two. I pointed out our governments are based on that conflict—parliament. Our court system is based on it. Defence and
prosecution. And in many ways Teacher-Student relationships are about that. (Michael, January 31 2012)

In this way, theatre and drama become a way for students to understand how society functions. Even at the most basic level of interactions between individuals, the Greek model elucidates a way of thinking about these interactions that is not generally common; every argument, or thesis, has a counterargument, or antithesis, which can be consolidated through a deliberation process into a synthesis—an amalgamation of ideas which by its very nature implies agreement between those in conflict.

Michael goes on to describe another technique he used while discussing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in order to help students understand the complex relationships between characters. Michael would have students list the conflicts in the play by character; for example, students would write down “Hamlet” and then list each conflict that this character has with other characters in the play—Hamlet with his mother, Hamlet with Laertes, Hamlet with Claudius, Hamlet with himself. Michael then had students plot each conflict on a graph, using the graph lines to describe the nature of the conflict between characters. What is the nature of the relationship between Hamlet and each character in the play? Using this technique, students could easily see Hamlet's interactions at each plot point. Once one character is complete, students would move onto the next—Gertrude, for example. “You start watching an enormous graph fall into place; where are the high points between people? Where are things getting solved?” (Michael, January 31 2012) The graphing exercise then helps students to project ideas about each character into the future. For example, one of the most intense points of conflict with Hamlet is with Ophelia. Using the graphing technique, students can see at a glance what kind of relationship Hamlet had with Ophelia and how her suicide affects him; what had his relationship
with Ophelia provided him and now that this is gone, how will this affect Hamlet's future actions? The intersecting lines of the conflict graph allows students to see the motivations of characters throughout the play and how easily characters—and by extension people in their own society—are influenced in their actions by extenuating circumstances and the accompanying emotional response, whether positive or negative.

Zach also used drama extensively as a part of his integrated conflict resolution program in History, employing several different strategies that allowed students to understand the complexities of human relationships in different contexts, which resulted in more profound resolutions of historical problems. Zach always started talking to students about conflict resolution by having them examine themselves. “I always started off conflict resolution classes with looks at who we are, and how that plays out in terms of our relationships with those around us—thinking about power and privilege with respect to those relationships, thinking about our own issues and desires and how they conflict sometimes, and how we deal with that.” (Zach, November 8 2011) Such conversations led easily into students thinking about their own conflict style—whether they take on the role of the aggressor or defender, whether they pursue or avoid conflict at the expense of themselves or others and how these intrapersonal details are related to one's identity. Zach's introduction to conflict resolution, therefore, begins as an exploration of self, which allows students to begin to explore more easily the actions and motivations of others.

Once students have a firmer grasp on their own “role”—how and why they respond in the ways that they do—they are then prepared to take on the roles of others in dramatic exercises. Zach used, for example, a strategy called Dramatic Deliberation, which students would first choose a role in a specific problem and then research that role through newspapers, informal telephone interviews, email exchanges and reading published testimonials by the stakeholders in
their specific issue. Writing in the role that they have chosen, students then create a position statement which presented in preparation for engaging with other students in-role. The deliberation process takes on a very formal structure—the entire time during which students remain in their chosen role, both when they are speaking and when they are taking notes and writing down questions they wish to ask the speaker. First, one student who represents one side of the conflict presents a position statement while others take notes. The students are then permitted to ask three questions of the speaker, to which the speaker responds in role. This exercise is followed by a student taking an opposing role presenting a position statement and the process is repeated. Once every student has presented a position statement, the second phase of deliberation may begin. In the second phase, each presenter comments on the position of a peer's response to his or her own position, the purpose being to come to an agreement about the particular conflict. This process is repeated until all students have had a chance to comment and respond and a common understanding is achieved. This strategy allows students to not only practice conflict resolution technique, such as structured speaking and listening format, but also promotes empathy through the adoption of positions and perspectives that students may not claim for themselves.

A less formal version of Dramatic Deliberation in which students took on roles and performed according to the decisions they made based on research and interactions with other students and their research helped students in Zach's Grade 7 History class understand the complexities of historical situations. This dramatic exercise was less rigidly structured than the Dramatic Deliberation exercise; students once again assumed role in a conflict, this time from a historical perspective. In this exercise, Zach once again had students research the positions of
people involved in a conflict situation and had them act out how a deliberation process might occur in that time period. Zach describes the exercise as follows:

History is rampant with conflict. I approached history by focusing on those conflicts. For example, I don't tell the story of what happened with the rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada, but I do give context and we do work around figuring out what things were like at that time, creating a detailed enough context to put people in a role, depending on their situation—and it was very much a situation of haves and have-nots in upper Canada at that time, including people not usually mentioned in history books—namely First Nations people, and black Canadians. (Zach, November 8 2011)

This exercise allows students to take on the perspectives of those who are not usually included in history textbooks, or are relegated to the sidelines. This approach focuses on students becoming personally involved in social history—the history of a people and how they interacted within a certain context. Students become personally invested in the story of marginalized people first by researching their concerns and arguing for those concerns against other students who have researched and are speaking for an opposing position. Zach, elaborating on the role of the teacher during this complex process, says “[As the teacher,] I have two roles, as one of the people who are in the haves, and one of the people who are in the have-nots, and I provoke a situation where they have to solve their problem.” (Zach, November 8 2011) The role of the teacher, then, is not to suppress conflict between the two groups, but to instigate it. As the students have researched their position, they are aware of the intricacies of the conflict, but are often hesitant to come head-to-head with other students with an opposing position. Having the students maintaining their in-role voices, fleshing out their problem, their needs and subsequently their demands is a wonderful way to begin the conflict resolution process, but also required is an emotional catalyst—which the teacher provides. Zach describes how this exercise is designed to produce precisely this emotional effect:
I provoke the situation where I get the [marginalized group] angry enough to do something, and they decide what they're going to do. It's totally unpredictable. I have no idea what's going to happen. I start off with the people in the Family Compact [privileged group] in one room, and they're figuring out what to do with the land. They decide who gets the land and where it goes. Then I go and tell the other ones what they're doing; and they're having a discussion as to what they need, how to communicate this to the government and they don't know how to, and I [switch roles to lead the marginalized group, asking] so what can we do, how can we do this? Then the village folks are figuring out what they're going to do depending on what the Family Compact decides, and the tension builds, builds, build, builds. Until finally, in some cases, it ends somewhat peaceful, but over the years in most cases it's been a ruckus—what I'll call a productive ruckus, in terms of the emotions that it generates, in terms of the injustices around what is happening. It is quite powerful. A lot of people talk about how those feelings just keep lingering even after the drama is over. (Zach, November 8 2011)

The lingering emotions point not only to student engagement, but also to the presence of the elements required for resolution. When students are emotionally invested in both topics in history or literature, and the process by which those topics were illuminated for them, they are more likely to make connections between those topics, those processes, and their own lives. The emotional connection between students and the ideas make up a specific curriculum topic—such as the conflict between the Family Compact in Upper Canada and the marginalized First Nations and black Canadian groups—allows students to connect to those ideas more readily as they now have personal experience with those topics and the associated feelings.

Through his integrated conflict resolution practice, Zach draws attention to several important aspects of the uses of drama in the classroom and how it contributes to student learning. First and foremost is that dramatic exercises are almost always a surefire way to ensure student engagement; in an environment where enough work has been done to convince students that they are in a safe space where they will not be unduly or harshly criticized by their teacher or their peers, even reluctant participants often find drama activities an engaging and satisfying means to learn curriculum material. Secondly, dramatic exercises allow students to take control
of their own learning. Zach explains, “even if I didn't tell them exactly what happened they ended up knowing what happened; and at the same time they also learned that life is not just about facts. It's about those emotions, how they play into people's expression of who they are, and the barriers that they face.” (Zach, November 8 2011) Zach is careful to make a distinction, however, between his own practice and that of some other dramatic practitioners. He emphasizes that while many teachers who use drama in the classroom assert that these exercises promote empathy, Zach argues that this should not be the goal of the exercise:

A lot of the discussion around [drama and empathy] is this notion of “do you really think that somebody in that situation would have acted that way?” A lot of the time the answer is “I don't know.” There's that notion of empathy—and a lot of the time drama practitioners say [dramatic exercises are] the best for promoting empathy—but I wasn't trying to promote empathy. I was trying to demonstrate that you can try to feel like that person, but the decisions you make are ultimately a reflection of who you are. And you could try, and this is valuable in that you're trying, but you'll never really know. (Zach, November 8 2011)

By problematizing the idea of dramatic exercises and the notion of empathy, Zach adds a layer of complexity to both the strategy itself and also to the very idea of human interaction—that no matter how we try we can never really know how another person feels, how another person is influenced by their particular personal circumstances. Zach emphasizes, however, that trying—and practising through in-role dramatic exercises—is crucial. Through practising conflict resolution students not only become more personally aware of the complexities present in both history and literature, but become more skilled in interpersonal relations in their own lives. Zach elaborates on the benefits of using drama as a way to incorporate conflict resolution into the curriculum:

What do students gain from the incorporation of conflict resolution into the curriculum? Practice and the ability to think about how they deal with conflict and addressing conflict in appropriate ways—not shelving it, but addressing it in appropriate ways.[They also gain] acknowledgement of and the ability to share
their diverse perspectives—including dissenting perspectives. Students learn how to appropriately and purposefully engage in conflict. That’s social action.” (Zach, November 8 2011)

**Incorporating Technology into an Integrated Conflict Resolution Curriculum**

While Julia's curriculum-integrated conflict resolution program also involves a dramatic component in that it too has students choose and research a position for an in-role diplomatic conference on historical and current world issues, the element that sets Julia's program apart from others is the use of technology to create a highly professional and streamlined deliberation process which students in her Senior History class find not only engaging and relevant, but life-changing.

As mentioned previously, Julia felt compelled to incorporate conflict resolution into her History class in response to the interest she saw in her students in world events. After 9/11, her students turned to the Internet to inform them about what was happening and why. Julia immediately noticed that there was a wealth of information out there and not all of it was reliable; in fact, much of the information that students encountered on the Internet was confusing and deliberately misleading about the nature of the attacks on the United States and the people that perpetrated those attacks. Julia's response was to modify her History class' final project to incorporate web-based sources and tools with which to organize the information that they collected. Using tools such as wikis, text chat and message boards, students could more easily keep track of the information that they found and conference with each other about the reliability of sources. These initial steps into the realm of technology led to collaboration with programmers to create a system which could lead students through the deliberation process from the beginning
stages of collecting information—such as news articles and videos—through formulating a position on their topic and finally to the deliberation itself. Julia describes the process as follows:

We’ve chosen a variety of topics, such as HIV AIDS and government corruption. So the students access the notebook containing the conflict resolution materials; and then they access the open simulation platform, which has all the phases of the negotiation. The students pick a conflict, get the positions that they want to represent, and all this is online through the open simulation platform. They then move forward toward creating a position paper from their perspective that they have at the table, the role they play in the simulation. (Julia, December 4 2011)

The final product for this project, then, is an essay or position paper; while the product itself is not unique, the process through which students arrive at their essay and its arguments often results in a product that reflects engagement and an understanding of the complexities of world issues that would not be possible through simple by-the-book research. Indeed, one aspect of Julia’s use of technology in her conflict resolution program helps students to not only build knowledge on world issues, but create emotional connections that make those issues real and relevant to them.

Julia has spent several years now perfecting not only the conflict resolution strategies used in her program but also the technology that sets her conferencing project apart from other uses of technology in the classroom. While the students immediately appreciated the ability to use the tools that were so familiar to them as a means to learn in the classroom—and also appreciated the guidance that they received on how best to sift through and organize the massive amount of information available on the Internet—the project only fully realized its full potential within the last two sessions, when Julia was able to link her History class and their conferencing project to another school through the Internet. Julia describes the process as follows:

My freshman class wanted to focus on Uganda for the peace building process—how to take a nation state from civil war—the LRA and all the
horrors there—to facilitate the reconstruction of a society. And then simultaneously, we got hooked up with the Uganda teams and are on the third round of conferencing with [a small town in Uganda], on the subject of defilement—which is just a terrible problem, that my group—high schoolers here in California—didn't think of. Through this process we learned about this subject and how it is just a horrible thing for girls growing up in Uganda, and other African societies, as far as their life and their potential. (Julia, December 4 2011)

Through the process of conferencing with students in Uganda, Julia's class was able to explore issues that were previously not on their radar, and explore them with the help of students who were personally affected by these issues, which created an emotional connection to the topic and greater engagement with the topic itself as well as with the societies affected.

This was not the only benefit of using Internet technology for this project, however; Julia describes how the Ugandan students were involved in the entire process with the students from California—from the collection of information to the negotiation process—and over time relationships developed between students from both schools. Julia describes how the Ugandan students posed questions to the students in California—learning from the American students just as the Americans learned from them—asking whether they ever wrote poetry, which was a popular pass time for the students in the small Ugandan town. The students began to exchange poetry, to work together on creative writing, and Julia saw an opportunity to expand the platform on which the students had been collaborating to facilitate a collaboration of a different kind.

“That is one of our focuses; every time we run through the project, we build it out more, using agile development which allows for our platform to be expanded to include new functions every time we do the project. As we go through it, we can take it to another level.” (Julia, December 4 2011)
Julia's use of technology has all the benefits of integrated conflict resolution—students are made aware of differing perspectives, the complexities of conflict situations and human interactions, as well as the skills that students can take away from the project and apply to their own lives. This project, however, also literally connects students to their subject, to conflicts happening on the other side of the world, allowing students to build on emotional connections made to topics through the experience of in-role negotiation and create emotional connections to real people.

**Summary**

While research participants each reported different reasons for their interest in peace and social justice education and their focus on conflict resolution, the methods that they report in their descriptions of teacher practice are remarkably similar. Each interviewee spoke of an undeniable link between conflict resolution and the goal of social justice; that conflict resolution provides the tools for students to come to agreements or compromises that ultimately facilitate greater understanding and—when applied locally or globally—a more just and peaceful society. The ways in which the research participants incorporated conflict resolution into their classroom varied only slightly; all participants expressed a belief that conflict resolution is most successful when practised in a safe and caring classroom community, and integrated community building into their practice. Participants also focused on dramatic exercises in order to help students respond empathically to the conflict situations presented to them either in a historical or literary context. While use of technology to facilitate a conflict resolution integrated curriculum was not universal, Julia's example of effective use of social media remains relevant to incorporating conflict resolution strategies into the classrooms of our increasingly technologically-savvy
student populations. This study, therefore, presents not only practical strategies for incorporating conflict resolution into the English and History curricula, but possible future directions for inquiry and the theoretical frameworks to support current and future practice.
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

The previous chapter outlined the theoretical foundations of incorporating conflict resolution into the curriculum as well as the practical strategies with which to add conflict resolution to one's teaching practice. This chapter will discuss the implications of incorporating conflict resolution into the English or History classroom through analysis of data gathered from the study's three interviewees concerning the benefits of a conflict resolution integrated program, and the reception of such programs as experienced by the research participants. This chapter will also make recommendations for further study which may aid in the implementation of a conflict resolution program into an English or History classroom for the purpose of Peace and Social Justice Education.

Benefits of Incorporated Conflict Resolution

Incorporating conflict resolution into the English or History curriculum has many benefits—from increasing student engagement to making stronger connections between curriculum material and social issues or world events. These factors contribute to greater student success; students exposed to a conflict resolution-enhanced curriculum perform better academically because they are more invested in the material and see the relevance to what they are learning. (Johnson & Johnson, 2004, p. 76)

All three participants I interviewed gave one reason as the chief benefit to incorporating such a program into their curriculum: a curriculum that incorporates conflict resolution strategies in order to enhance curriculum material allows students to practice said strategies and develop strong conflict resolution skills which they can take with them out into the world. The strategies practised in a conflict resolution program are very practical and students immediately see the
connection between practising these skills in a theoretical way—such as when discussing literature or an event in history—and how they can apply to personal situations. Michael, for example, gave an example of an instance during which he used the same strategies as he was using in his English classroom with a group of battered women at a women's shelter. Role playing a particularly difficult conflict situation gave one woman not only a stronger skill set, but allowed her to work through the emotional issues associated with conflict. In this particular exercise, Michael used role-playing and provocation—playing the part of a person this woman had been in conflict with, repeating the same phrases that had previously been so hurtful—to recreate the conflict situation so that the woman could imagine and re-imagine her response in a safe environment:

We just repeated it and repeated it. She would get to the other side of the room and be raging, and I would encourage her to let the rage out—scream whatever she wanted, say whatever she wanted. And finally—it took about 12 times—and then she started the role-play again, listening to the obscene stuff, and she stopped and said, “Oh... oh... let me start over again.” The penny had dropped and you could see it had dropped. She started again, but before he could start his role, she took him on by saying, “Hi, good morning. Want to see some pictures of my little girl?” (Michael, January 31 2012)

While this particular scenario would be appropriate in only a very rare and special classroom in which all participants are not only bonded, but mature enough to handle serious subject matter without making a joke of it, the techniques used to practice the scenario are the same techniques used by all three of my interviewees and demonstrate their usefulness in the real world. In this instance, Michael established roles for students to play and took on a role himself in order to provoke a conflict that the students could practice, allowing them to build the skills that they needed to experience conflict in such a way that they maintained control over the situation.
“That’s the creativity inside of non-violence. It’s spontaneous. It's grounded. It’s not playing tricks. She had to do that over and over and over, and get it out of her. And at that point, when we did it that last time, she could get through it, and find the answer.” (Michael, January 31 2012)

Zach too stresses that engagement with exercises that are ultimately building real-life skills is the most important element in incorporating conflict resolution into the curriculum—showing students what peaceful resolution looks like and giving them the tools to deal with conflict appropriately. Zach makes another important point, however, that incorporating conflict resolution into one's teacher practice can also change one as an educator. Not only will incorporated conflict resolution make teachers more aware of complex student identities—who students are and why they react to conflict the way they do—but it also gives teachers the tools and skills needed to ensure a safe environment for learning. Zach describes his vision of restorative pedagogy as such:

How you deal with conflict is in itself instruction. You're the one with the power in that situation, as the teacher. Using those strategies rather than teaching about them, using them in the context of your every day practice is a way to instruct. The response on that level has been pretty good; it doesn't always work—it's messy—but it provides some structures that are possibilities for how to engage and how to figure out a lot unfortunate feelings. For me, one of the biggest issues with conflict resolution is adding that restorative piece. Any attempt at addressing conflict needs to have some restorative angle where people need to be given an opportunity to make good, to regain trust. No matter what it looks like, that opportunity, in my opinion, needs to be given. (Zach, personal communication, November 8 2011)

Using curriculum materials as a way to instruct about conflict resolution strategy, therefore, benefits not only students, but teachers as well. A teacher who uses these skills every day will be more adept at dealing with real-life conflict when it inevitably does arise. Zach's focus on the
idea of restorative justice is also important; in order for conflict to be truly resolved, all parties must be given an opportunity to right any wrongs that they themselves have committed. Making sure that restorative justice is part of the resolution process ensures that all parties feel respected equally and relationship is maintained, which is especially important in a classroom environment. Exercises based on the idea of conflict resolution familiarize not only students but teachers with this process.

**Reception and Complications**

For my three research participants, the reception by administrators, parents and students of their use of conflict resolution in the classroom has largely been greeted with enthusiasm. In rare cases, however, there were reservations expressed by stakeholders which influenced the program itself. For example, Julia experienced difficulty while trying to secure funding to expand the technological aspects of her program. Working in an American school, there is much greater emphasis on securing private funding for education programs and Julia experienced difficulty while trying to convince members of a very conservative school board that her program was worthwhile. “Some people have problems when you use the terms “conflict resolution” and “peace studies”. They immediately think of the 1960's or 70's and hippies, peace symbols and smoking pot. They have no concept of how the field has evolved into a very sophisticated international studies program for diplomats. They have to be educated.” (Julia, December 4 2011) A teacher using a conflict resolution approach to curriculum, therefore, may find it necessary to defend the program against unfounded preconceptions. Julia found it helpful to take a “business model” approach when explaining the program to those who seemed particularly hesitant. “When you frame the project in terms of the Harvard Business Model, and blow out the
cobwebs on the idea of the 60's and radical this or that, then people get a more nuts and bolts view of this process that's going on. The kids understand it immediately; it's the adults that—for whatever reason—have a political or social block on “peace”, or “peace activism”. ” (Julia, December 4 2011)

Zach too experienced some setbacks when members of his school's administration objected to his integrated conflict resolution program—specifically the technique of provocation. While Zach embraces conflict as a teachable moment, as a way to get at deep-seated issues, sometimes members of the administration, parents or community members find this idea uncomfortable and prefer teachers to suppress conflict despite the lost opportunity for fruitful discussion and development of skills. Zach also spoke about how, faced with these obstacles, many teachers will abandon an integrated conflict resolution program in favour of more conventional social justice and equity work, which deemphasizes the conflict itself, such as fundraising and other charity work. There are also sometimes challenges from those who believe that when a teacher does conflict resolution work in his or her classroom, it is difficult or impossible to also meet curriculum expectations. Zach responds to this criticism as follows:

The challenges will come from this insistence by people that you need to focus on the curriculum and it takes a while to gain the capacity, the tools as a teacher to address those criticisms. You have to address that insistence by people that you are meeting all curriculum expectations—nobody in here is not going to know how to read; nobody in here is not going to know how to do their numbers. But they will also know how to critique. They will know how to figure out conflicts, in a way that doesn't try to suppress them, but does still value other perspectives and the conflict itself. (Zach, November 8 2011)

Zach stresses one of the key points of this study—that this is about conflict resolution integrated into the curriculum; the curriculum, then, is the foundation onto which the conflict resolution skills are applied and these skills are used to get at aspects of the curriculum and make them
relevant to students. The conflict resolution piece, using this approach, is not something that is
tacked on—an extra that will be taking the place of genuine curriculum material—but is a means
to illuminate the curriculum and show students that what they are learning in school is relevant to
life outside of the school's walls. Teachers who incorporate conflict resolution into their practice
must also develop the arguments to defend their practice against any accusations that this
approach represents a curriculum that is modified or incomplete in any way.

**Implications and Recommendations**

Through this study, I aim to demonstrate not only how educators can incorporate conflict
resolution into their English or History classrooms, but also why this is an important endeavour
that should be a part of every classroom. Through extensive interviews with three classroom
teachers who have used conflict resolution as a way to unpack curriculum material, I have
discovered that the most common way to incorporate conflict resolution into the curriculum is
through use of dramatic exercises; all three interviewees used various forms of drama in their
classrooms, from in-role writing to formal in-role deliberations to putting together a
technologically-enhanced diplomatic conference in which students played the parts of world
leaders or organizations. While the use of technology was often used to enhance a dramatic
experience—helping students to organize their research materials and create a more authentic
conference, technology was also used to facilitate human connection, which is integral to an
integrated conflict resolution program. At the heart of any conflict resolution exercise is the
desire to unpack the human experience—the elements that make us who we are and help us or
hinder us in communicating effectively with each other—and facilitate stronger connections
between people. In Julia's classroom, technology helped students to connect their chosen conflict
situations to the people experiencing those conflicts in the real world, adding another layer of authenticity and relevance to their studies. Incorporating conflict resolution into the curriculum—whether using technology or dramatic exercises—is chiefly about creating an authentic experience. Through creating conflict—even dramatic conflict—students experience not only the problem and its resolution, but also the emotion that accompanies the process. This is why, as Zach suggests, approaches to conflict resolution that seek to suppress conflict are so dangerous; not only does this approach fail to teach students the skills that they will need in their personal lives in and out of schools, but it also promotes a worldview that is profoundly unhealthy and unrealistic. Conflict is part of the human experience just as much as other elements that may be perceived as less problematic and students—who come to school to be educated so that they may function successfully in the world—need to practice not only the practical elements of how one resolves conflict with another human being, but the emotional aspects as well. How can one deal with difficult feelings appropriately? How can the successful management of difficult and uncomfortable feelings help us to achieve more satisfaction in life? These questions find answers in the idea of conflict resolution and restorative justice, which ancient societies—such as those of the aboriginal people of North America and around the world—have known and practised for hundreds of generations and are just starting to surface in Western thought. These ideas need to be prevalent in not only our classrooms but also in our teacher education programs in order to more equitably promote the diverse culture that Canada so celebrates.

I, like my three interviewees, have deeply personal reasons for my interest in this topic—reasons which ensure a commitment to a style of teaching that I believe not only promotes equality between people of different genders, races, sexualities and religions, but also actively works toward the furthest extension of that equality into the political arena where such beliefs
begin to manifest as changes to public policy. In my time as a student and in this teacher education program, I have seen school boards responding to inequality through changes in policy (such as the Toronto District School Board's Prevention of Gender-Based Violence program which was put in place after an extensive study on bullying, homophobia and sexism). These programs are successful when they get to the root of problems; simply naming the problem is not enough. We need to name the problems and then talk about them in ways that constructively isolate the problems and enable discussion about satisfactory resolutions; such conversations are not possible when people lack the basic skills to dialogue constructively. Basic communication skills—listening, perspective taking, isolating needs and arriving at consensus—are a part of any conflict resolution program; allowing students to practice these skills at every opportunity by linking them directly to the curriculum will ensure that students are honing these crucial skills throughout their school years, in preparation for their lives as adults who are fully capable and prepared to field conflicts in their work and personal lives.

Based on the results of this small study, I can make the following recommendations to teachers who wish to incorporate conflict resolution into their curriculum:

1. Familiarize yourself with a conflict resolution program. Inquire as to whether there is a program that is recommended by your school. Make sure that the program has a detailed step-by-step structure for dealing with conflicts. Programs that seek to minimize or suppress conflict will not be helpful.

2. Determine the best way to promote a safe environment in your classroom. You may choose to follow a specific program like TRIBES, or Group Conversation, or use the ideas of educators like Linda Christensen whose lessons incorporate student lives into curriculum material. A safe environment is critical for successful conflict resolution.
3. Familiarize yourself with dramatic strategies such as in-role writing, Dramatic Deliberation, Hot Seat—any exercise in which students can take on the perspective of another and play out a scenario.

4. Examine your curriculum and isolate the conflict. In an English classroom isolate literary conflict and how this conflict affects character behaviour. In a History classroom, much of the curriculum is based on conflict and how that conflict has altered the trajectory of the human race; isolate these conflicts and the key players. Use these conflicts as the starting point to explore the curriculum.

5. Technology can be very useful in not only efficiency and organization but also in promoting human connectedness. If your school is equipped, take advantage of the ability of the Internet to connect your class with other classes around the world. This will not only allow students to experience the curriculum first hand, but also create the emotional response that is crucial to successful conflict resolution, as well as student engagement.

**Further Study**

Some questions that have been raised by the completion of this study, which could be used as a starting point for further research, are:

1. Can conflict resolution be incorporated into subjects other than English and History? What would this integrated conflict resolution curriculum look like?

2. Are there other methods—apart from dramatic exercises and the use of technology—through which teachers can incorporate conflict resolution to the curriculum?
3. Research suggests that boy and girls develop empathic response at different ages. Does psychological development affect a student's ability to participate fully in a classroom where a teacher incorporates conflict resolution into the curriculum?

4. Many students have experienced events in their lives which have left them emotionally damaged or underdeveloped. How do these students fare in a classroom where the teacher incorporates conflict resolution into the curriculum? Do such students experience academic success more or less than socio- or neuro-typical students?

5. Is there a difference between how students of different races, religions, sexualities or economic backgrounds fare in a classroom where the teacher incorporates conflict resolution into the curriculum? Is there a benefit or drawback to this program for such students?

Summary

While questions remain concerning the ways in which teachers can incorporate conflict resolution into their practice and the efficacy of these methods for students of different backgrounds, abilities and stages of development, this study demonstrates that there are concrete strategies with which teachers can address the foundations of injustice in their classrooms and help students to develop tangible ideas about peace and how to promote peace in their personal lives and in the larger society. Through participating in a program that incorporates conflict resolution into the curriculum, students develop skills that help them to deconstruct not only literary and historical conflict situations, but also practice skills that are deeply relevant to student lives outside of a school context. Drama activities that help students to develop their empathic response to those who are of a different race, religion, class or gender—or simply of a
differing opinion—equip students with the tools to deal with the difficult issues they will face in their later lives and become productive members of a more harmonious society. In the technologically-enhanced conflict resolution program, students learn ways to interface with people that are rarely taught despite the fact that human lives are increasingly lived online; students simultaneously share their cultures and ideas through creative writing, video conferencing and problem solving while learning curriculum material. This approach to social media, as well as the dramatic exercises in perspective taking and empathy building help to break down the boundaries between the self and “The Other”.

But even if students are trained to automatically consider the perspectives of others and have a well-developed empathic response, isn't conflict inevitable? Aren't human beings inherently violent?

Psychologist David Adams has done extensive work, testing out whether humans are innately aggressive. After years of research, Adams has concluded that there is little concrete evidence that humans are intrinsically violent by virtue of our genes. Rather, we are taught war-like behaviour [...] The Seville Statement on Violence [...] categorically rejects the notion that warfare is inevitable, and states that “misuse of scientific theories and data to justify violence and war is not new, but has been made since the advent of modern science.” The statement goes on to note that “the fact that warfare has changed so radically over time indicates that it is a product of culture. Its biological connection is primarily through language.” (Harris, 2003, p. 118)

If indoctrination to war-like behaviour is primarily through language, then perhaps we may be saved from this war-like behaviour through language as well. While it is true that conflict is inevitable, conflict need not descend into violence and war on personal or global scales. Instead, through learning the language of conflict resolution, students can embrace conflict as a way to learn about others and themselves and to use conflict as a way to move forward as a society toward peace and social justice.
References


Christensen, L. (2000). *Reading, writing, and rising up: Teaching about social justice and the power of the written word*. Milwaukee, Wis.: Rethinking Schools.


Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: ___________________

Dear ___________________,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying Incorporating Conflict Resolution into the English and History Curricula for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Patrick Finnessey. My research supervisor is Dr. Elizabeth Campbell. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 40 minute interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher name: Selena Middleton

Phone number, email: ______________________________
Instructor’s Name: Dr. Patrick Finnessey email address: ____________________
Phone number: ____________________

Research Supervisor’s Name: Dr. Elizabeth Campbell
Phone #: __________________

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Selena Middleton and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ________________________________

Name (printed): ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

In interviewing teachers who have experience with conflict resolution curriculum integration, I asked the following questions:

Section 1: Background Information

1. What grade are you currently teaching?
2. How many years have you been teaching? What grades and subjects?
3. In your own educational background, did you have a teacher who addressed peace and social justice issues in the classroom and modelled peaceful and equitable behaviour?
4. Have you read research on peace and social justice or theories of nonviolence?
5. Have you received any training in mediation and conflict resolution?

Section 2: Teacher Practices

1. Can you tell me about the experiences you've had in your own classroom incorporating peace and social justice and conflict resolution into the curriculum?
2. Can you give me an example of a lesson or unit you've taught that incorporated peace and social justice and conflict resolution strategies that you found to be successful? What do you think made it a success?
3. Can you tell me about 1 or 2 resources that you have used to incorporate peace, social justice and conflict resolution into your classroom instruction? How do you update your knowledge about peace, social justice and conflict resolution initiatives and strategies?
4. How do you introduce the idea of conflict resolution to students? What steps do you take to familiarize your students with this idea?

Section 3: Beliefs/Values

1. What prompted you to begin to incorporate peace and social justice issues into your classroom?

2. What do you believe students can gain from the incorporation of peace, social justice and conflict resolution into curriculum material?

3. What do you believe students can gain from the incorporation of conflict resolution into the curriculum and the classroom community?

4. How do your students respond to your lessons on peace and social justice issues?

5. How do your students respond to your lessons and modelling of conflict resolution?

6. What is your vision for an effective peace and social justice program? As a teacher interested in social justice issues, what lasting impression do you hope to leave your students with?

Section 4: Influencing Factors

1. Have you faced any obstacles or challenges when incorporating conflict resolution into the curriculum?

2. What kind of feedback have you had from students, parents, colleagues or other community members regarding your practice of incorporating conflict resolution into the curriculum?
Section 5: Next Steps

1. What do you feel you would still like to learn about incorporating conflict resolution into the curriculum?

2. What goals do you have for your program of conflict resolution in the future? How will you work to achieve these goals?