

**Conflict Resolution and Canada World Youth:
Examining the Link Between International Exchange, Cross-Cultural
Communication, and Conflict Resolution**

by

**Lise Bérubé
B.A.H, Queens University, 2003**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the link between international exchange programs, cross-cultural communication, and conflict resolution. Through a case study of the Canada World Youth Core Program, my research sought to answer the question: How do the participants of the Canada World Youth Core Program perceive their adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and conflict resolution skills to have been developed or improved as a result of their participation in the program? I asked eleven former Canadian participants of the program to share their stories of conflict and challenges throughout the exchange, which resulted in rich and detailed qualitative data.

My findings suggest that increased opportunities to engage in cross-cultural communication through international exchange programs, such as Canada World Youth, can increase an individual's adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and conflict resolution skills. I therefore conclude that such programs are an important component to the Canadian educational system, and should be supported, promoted, and made widely available to Canadian youth.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 - Research Question and Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the connection between three areas that I believe to be closely inter-linked, but which have yet to be explicitly seen as so. These areas are conflict resolution, inter-cultural communication, and international exchange programs. I believe that giving individuals the opportunity to be immersed in a new culture, and therefore have a chance to develop inter-cultural communication skills, will lead to an increase in their ability to resolve conflict because they will be better equipped to consider alternate worldviews¹ and multiple realities. I believe that international education/development programs² have the potential to provide these opportunities to individuals to develop these much needed conflict resolution skills. I have chosen to examine this connection through the example of one specific program, the Canada World Youth (CWY) Core Program. My research questions is: *How do the participants of the Canada World Youth Core Program perceive their adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and conflict resolution skills to have been developed or improved as a result of their participation in the program?*

¹ The term 'worldview' denotes a concept that attempts to articulate the consequences of human activities that are individual as well as collective, psychological as well as social. Worldviewing activities take place in dialogue with the context within which people live. (Docherty 2001, 50-51)

² In this paper, I use the term International education/development programs to describe organized programs that offer the opportunity for individuals to live abroad for the purposes of either education or work (volunteer or paid).

1.2 – Importance and Contributions of the Research

This research will provide evidence in regards to whether the promise given by the Canada World Youth Core Program to provide its participants with adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and conflict resolution skills is reflected in the perspectives of the participants.³ My research will add an important component to the knowledge of how such a program has the ability to not only provide these important developments, but also allow for personal development in regards to conflict resolution that can lead to more collaborative approaches in international and cross-cultural relations. In the field of conflict resolution, much has been written about the importance of conflict resolution in international development, as well as conflict resolution across cultures. However, there is a gap in research that joins, or triangulates, the link between international education/development programs, cross-cultural interaction, and conflict resolution. These are the aspects I will link together in my research.

1.3 - What is CWY?

Canada World Youth is a non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) that was created in 1971 by Jacques Hebert, and has, for over 35 years, been providing opportunities for Canadian youth under the age of thirty to experience new ways of life. This program offers youth in Canada and around the world the opportunity to participate

³ The CWY website indicates that its participants will acquire skills, attitude and knowledge such as: adaptability, leadership, cross-cultural communication, teamwork, language learning, organization, critical thinking, problem solving, conflict resolution, and intimate knowledge about two unique places in the world. Available at <http://www.cwy-jcm.org/en/programs/core/programs/bda/after>

in international alternative education programs. Through their participation, these youth gain volunteer work experience in Canada and overseas, learn about community and international development, and have the chance to develop numerous skills through personal development. The CWY Core Program gives youth between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four the chance to spend three months in a Canadian community, as well as three months in a community overseas. These participants engage in volunteer work in a variety of sectors including community development, education, social services, the environment, agriculture and small businesses.⁴ They are given the opportunity to become part of a new community through volunteering as well as through living with host families from their respective host communities.

1.4 - Why CWY?

My interest in CWY began several years ago when numerous friends and acquaintances shared their stories of how their participation in this program had been nothing short of a life changing experience. In 2005, I applied for a position as a project supervisor with CWY and was selected to participate in a group interview. This allowed me to gain more insight into the organization and begin to understand some of the challenges and opportunities provided by such a program. After working for over a year with international students studying English in Canada, I realized that many of the conflicts that arise for this population stem from being misunderstood, or in turn, misunderstanding a culture and being unable to adapt to new ways of life. I entered the

⁴ Core Program volunteer sectors, available at <http://www.cwy-jcm.org/en/programs/core>

Masters of Arts in Dispute Resolution Program at the University of Victoria in 2006 with the intention of focusing my studies around the area of cross-cultural communication and conflict resolution. I believe the CWY program to be a great example, and one of the rare programs that offers youth a chance to experience new ways of life while they are still developing their notions of reality, therefore providing them with an increased adaptability and flexibility which could contribute to their conflict resolution skills for the rest of their lives.

1.5 – Relevance

Because of the nature of many international development programs, or international volunteer programs, there is often a notion associated with these programs of ‘helping’ developing countries. While these programs do offer the opportunity to many individuals to live in a new culture and experience a new way of life, they are not primarily based on the idea of exchange, or on having two cultures learn from one another. This is one area in which the CWY program is so unique, in that it is focused on the notion of exchange and exposure to new cultures. Canadian participants are provided with the privileged opportunity to learn about different cultures through first hand experience. This program is not primarily about international development or aid work, but rather about giving youth an opportunity to broaden their minds, gain a better understanding of their own cultures, and learn new ways of interpreting the world in which they live. It is my belief that the individuals exposed to these types of situations will be better equipped to deal with ongoing conflict in both their personal lives, as well

as within an international or cross-cultural context, since they will be more willing to acknowledge different view points and appreciate and respect different approaches to navigating the world. This is an invaluable asset in an increasingly globalized⁵ and cross-cultural world.

⁵ The World Bank describes globalization as: “the growing integration of economies and societies around the world” which have as positive effects rapid growth and poverty reduction, but has also generated significant international opposition over concerns that it has increased inequality and environmental degradation. (The World Bank Group 2001, available at <http://www1.worldbank.org/economicpolicy/globalization/>)

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 – Background of Literature on Conflict and Culture

Cross-cultural conflict is by no means a new phenomenon. Conflicts are common across and between all cultures and are a regular occurrence in human life. Throughout history, internationally as well as nationally, many conflicts have resulted in hostility or wars, yet individuals and societies have shown innumerable examples of how we can tolerate others and live in harmony with foreign cultures. However, as our world is becoming increasingly globalized, we are expected to cope with an increasing amount of diversity and contrasting ideas in our everyday lives. In 1993, Samuel Huntington wrote:

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future. (Huntington 1993, 22)

This hypothesis, written 15 years ago, has proven to be true in many aspects of the conflicts we are currently experiencing globally. Huntington suggests that the contemporary world must be seen as one which has no one universal civilization, but rather many different civilizations, or cultures, all of which must learn to coexist with the others (Ibid, 49).

In her article ‘Understanding Worldview Conflicts’, Jayne Docherty lays out some of the challenges inherent in addressing inter-cultural conflict. She highlights the importance in realizing that people of other cultures may often construct their worlds differently, and therefore see a conflict through a very different and individual angle. She

supports Huntington's claims that contact with other cultures is becoming an increasingly routine human experience (Docherty 2001, 52), and that the challenge does not lie in assimilating cultures or trying to come to an agreement of which 'worldview' is the right one, but rather in learning how to accept and live with these multiple worldviews. "The problem presented by world viewing differences is not one of reconciling competing more or less accurate world versions with the "real" world. The challenge of our time is learning how to manage, negotiate, or navigate through multiple worlds." (Ibid, 52) According to Docherty, the most important step in addressing this type of conflict is managing, and being aware of, the differences and similarities between worldviews. "Many parties experiencing difficulties with worldview management never engage in formal conflict resolution processes." (Ibid, 65)

Culture plays a more important role in conflict than simply posing challenges to managing it; it can often be the root or cause of conflict.

Conflict emerges when people have difficulties dealing with differences – differences related to race, ethnicity, language, class, gender, age, religion, and more. These differences influence the lenses through which people view each other, often leading to mismatched perceptions and expectations, resulting in conflict. (LeBaron 2003, xi)

LeBaron explains conflict as an occurrence that "is never just "out there" but is always relational and social" (Ibid, xi). Attempting to understand our own and others' cultural views is essential to meeting the challenges presented by conflict. It is not enough to simply acknowledge a difference in another's culture. In order to fully appreciate and be able to accept other ways of life, we must first be able to recognize our own cultural viewpoints and ways of knowing. Being aware of the ways in which our cultural realms have been formed will allow us to better understand how another's worldview has also

been shaped. “There are other ways to understand our differences, ways that acknowledge the multifaceted richness these differences lend to our lives. And there are ways to work through the differences to deepen relationships and prevent destructive conflict, ways both generative and hopeful.” (Ibid, 7) In order to better understand one’s own culture, it is often helpful to be exposed to new ways of life, and therefore be able to compare alternative realities to one’s own. “To understand an alternative cultural perspective, we compare it to our own. Deepening our awareness of our own cultural starting points, currencies, and boundaries, we understand and assimilate richer understandings of others.” (Ibid, 13) This can give us the opportunity to reflect on our own cultural makeup, and to be aware of the choices and decisions we make that are directly tied to our culture, but which we often come to make without realizing what has shaped us to do so. (Ibid, 19) It may never be possible to completely grasp one’s entire conception of culture, or pinpoint it at any given time, however taking the time to reflect on our cultural influences will help us become more self aware and better able to understand the influences that are also shaping others.

Milton Bennett introduced the term “ethnorelativism” to describe a stage of recognition and acceptance of cultural difference (Bennett 1993, 2).⁶ This includes respect for behavioral and value differences, the expression of empathy and pluralism, as well as the ability to integrate into a culture. Bennett argues that this stage comes only after having moved through the stages of denial, defense, and minimization, where one

⁶ In this paper, Milton Bennett claims that intercultural sensitivity is not natural, that education and training in intercultural communication is an approach to changing our “natural” behaviour. He asks learners, through his paper, to transcend traditional ethnocentrism and to explore new relationships across cultural boundaries. (Bennett 1993, 1)

will isolate and separate, feel denigration and superiority towards a culture, and minimize the differences between cultures, respectively. This developmental model presents a view of cultural integration where, "...it is the construction of reality as increasingly capable of accommodating cultural difference that constitutes development." (Ibid, 4) In line with LeBaron's emphasis on the importance of one's reflection and understanding of one's own culture, Bennett explains the ability to understand oneself as belonging to plural cultures, therefore being better able to communicate and understand experiences cross-culturally (Ibid, 4).

To become aware of one's own worldview is to realize that one is construing in a particular cultural way. It is to find one's own "meaning-making" meaningful, an activity that exists on a metalevel, above the basic differentiation of cultural categories. At this level, intercultural sensitivity increases as people experience themselves as members of more than one culture. (Ibid, 5)

The importance of understanding one's cultural biases as well as being able to conceptualize other cultural viewpoints is essential in dealing with international as well as interpersonal conflicts. The need for effective communication and understanding when working through conflict is paramount in reaching common goals and objectives. As Diamond argues, the transformation of a conflict lies in the changing of the assumptions, beliefs, and perceptions of those involved, as well as the development of creative solutions and common understandings (Diamond 1996, 3). This requires both sides to make room for a new way of viewing the conflict in question.

Letting go, even a little bit, opens new space for us to see the other side and the conflict in a different light. Now we can begin to hear how their experience makes sense to them, to understand how the differences in culture, perspective, and circumstance might have fed misunderstanding and ill will...we can now reframe the picture, seeing new possibilities and joining our energies toward the creative discovery of new approaches, possible options for satisfying mutual interests and needs. (Ibid, 17)

This, however, is incredibly challenging if one has not been exposed to different cultures and different ways of seeing the world, and is rigid in their way of thinking and unable to open their minds to new worldviews.

John-Paul Lederach, one of the leaders in cross-cultural conflict resolution and conflict transformation, presents conflict as an opportunity: “Rather than seeing conflict as a threat, we can understand it as providing opportunities to grow and to increase understanding of ourselves, of others, of our social structures. Conflicts in relationships at all levels are the way life helps us to stop, assess, and take notice.” (Lederach 2003, 18) While conflict can be positive in many cases, it must be approached with an open mind conducive to constructive interaction and productive dialogue. “The potential for constructive change lies in our ability to recognize, understand, and redress what has happened. Positive change requires a willingness to create new ways of interacting, to build relationships and structures that look toward the future.” (Ibid, 36) This must be done with an open mind and with a willingness to accept the complexity of issues that may be presented. As Lederach explains,

When we embrace dilemmas and paradoxes, there is the possibility that in conflict we are not dealing with outright incompatibilities. Rather, we are faced with recognizing and responding to different but interdependent aspects of a complex situation. We are not able to handle complexity well if we understand our choices in rigid either/or and contradictory terms. (Ibid, 52)

Similarly to Lederach, Kottler describes conflict as fundamental and necessary to our development of ideas, relationships, and knowledge. “It takes conflict to challenge our assumptions and stimulate a change in our beliefs. Arguing with others and defending our cherished principles are what drive us to develop them further, or abandon

them in favor of others that have a closer approximation to reality.” (Kottler 1994, 161)

Engaging in conflict helps us realize what is truly important to us, and can be useful to the development of individuals as well as that of society (Ibid, 149). Any conflict can therefore be seen as an opportunity for advancement and development. This can be clearly seen when cultural immersion leads to conflicts that then result in new worldviews and new notions of reality. As Kottler points out, “ideas that conflict with the status quo make us feel uneasy; they undermine our notions of reality.” (Ibid, 160)

The result will therefore be either a change in one’s notion of reality, or a re-affirmation of one’s reality after reflection and evaluation. Either way, conflict can make us re-evaluate who we are, and how we have come to be the people we are with the values we hold, which will in turn help us become increasingly self-aware, and also more flexible and adaptable to new ways of being.

Bernard Mayer, one of the leading thinkers in the field of conflict resolution states: “Our challenge is to change our focus from conflict resolution to constructive conflict engagement and, accordingly, change our view of ourselves from neutral conflict resolvers to conflict engagement specialists.” (Mayer 2005, 3)

Conflict must be approached as an opportunity for learning and development. Conflict resolution practitioners, as Mayer calls them, are a fairly new concept, and have only minimal involvement in major conflicts.

We can talk about looking at underlying interests, separating the people from the problem, convening dialogues, engaging in citizen-to-citizen diplomacy, and addressing the emotional dimension of the conflict...what we have to offer in major conflicts is quite limited, even if the power that be were to listen to us. (Ibid, 11)

Consequentially, we cannot leave the task of conflict resolution in the hands of professionals. Because conflict is a social, cultural, and a regular occurrence, individuals must be properly equipped to deal effectively with conflicts themselves. As Lederach also argues, the key to conflict management and transformation does not lie in a one-shot resolution, but rather in the creation of a space for ongoing exchange and dialogue (Lederach 2003, 57). He takes the optimistic outlook that we are at a stage where, as a society, we can deal productively with conflict:

I see that our human community, local and global, is on the edge of historic change where patterns of violence and coercion will be replaced with respect, creative problem-solving, individual and social capacities for dialogue, and nonviolent systems for assuring human security and social change. (Ibid, 71)

In order for this to be possible, the opportunities for dialogue to take place must be present, and there must be an effort to communicate across cultures. As LeBaron explains, “since culture is expressed through communication, culture and communication are indivisibly part of conflict. Although not all cultural differences yield conflict, effective communication across cultures is essential to its resolution.” (LeBaron 2003, 41) In order to engage the largest amount of people and to develop the skills that will allow them to deal effectively with conflict, there must be opportunities for communication and exposure to varying cultures and viewpoints. CWY is one way of offering these opportunities for personal development that can lead to improved conflict resolution skills.

2.2 – A Word on ‘White Privilege’

In her article entitled “White Privilege and Male Privilege”, Peggy McIntosh argues the importance of recognizing one’s position in the world.

I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was “meant” to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, cookbooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks. (McIntosh 1992, 71)

I believe that what McIntosh refers to as ‘white privilege’ can also be applied to the privilege of being born to a relatively comfortable life in a developed country. She makes strong and valid points regarding our position in the world, and our learned ways of conceptualizing our place in the world as normal and ideal.

My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will...Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow “them” to be more like “us”. (Ibid, 72-73)

McIntosh explains how this outlook becomes problematic when working with other cultures and people from developing countries. She argues that we must challenge our notions of seeing ourselves as ‘privileged’, while still acknowledging our position in a hierarchical world to take on the responsibilities that come with being born in a certain societal position. By identifying ourselves as privileged, we automatically assume a position of dominance.

We usually think of privilege as being a favored state, whether earned, or conferred by birth or luck...the word “privilege” carries the connotation of being something everyone must want...such privilege simply confers dominance, gives permission to control, because of one’s race or sex. (Ibid, 77)

I believe McIntosh's argument is important to the underpinnings of the CWY program, in that it offers its participants the opportunity to challenge their notions of their placement in the world, and their ideas surrounding privilege.

2.3 – Background of Literature on Canada World Youth

The development of the Canada World Youth (CWY) Programs are rooted in a dream that was developed through founder Jacques Hébert's experiences of traveling to international destinations, his love of different cultures, and his desire to promote a more peaceful world.⁷ Jacques Hébert's commitment to youth, both in Canada and throughout the world, inspired him to found Canada World Youth in 1971, followed by Katimavik, a similar volunteer program that sends young Canadians to different regions within the country, in 1977.

In his book *Hello, World! On Canada, the World and Youth*, Hébert describes the developments of CWY, and the motivations and theoretical underpinnings that led him to create this organization. Hébert believed that Canada could become the conscience of rich countries, "the catalyst of the North-South Dialogue" (Hébert 1996, 30). However, in order for Canada to play this role, Canadian citizens would need to become more directly involved. "Whatever our government's good intentions, nothing would happen

⁷ In 2001, Jacques Hébert wrote a message to mark the organization's 30th anniversary. He declared that "for 30 years, Canada World Youth has clearly demonstrated that people of different cultures, language, religions and backgrounds can live and work together, and learn to understand, respect and like one another." Available at <http://www.cwy-jcm.org/en/aboutus/founder>

before Canadians were sensitized to international-development problems.” (Ibid, 30) In order for Canadians to become sensitized to these issues, they would need the hands-on learning and exposure to opportunities that would present a chance to gain knowledge that is only possible through interaction and immersing oneself into a new experience. “Context is crucial...recognizing how similar we are to one another, and yet how important our differences are – things that make each of us special – is a kind of understanding best gained through experience.” (Ibid, 9)

The CWY program was developed as an original way to integrate volunteer work and international development work with cultural immersion and community building to provide an educational experience. Jacques Hébert was not blind to the fact that making people of such contrasting cultures live together could at times be very difficult, however he had faith in the fact that as human beings, we are similar enough to work through our differences and learn from these in order to better ourselves in the process. “How could we expect groups of young people to live in harmony for seven or eight months, when their culture, background, values and language were so different? In theory, therefore, an impossible program. In practice, it works!” (Ibid, 36) Since its beginnings, CWY has been funded mostly through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and through thousands of individual donors from across Canada. Throughout the 2006-2007 exchange term, there were 537 youth who participated in the Core program, and a total of over 1500 young people participated in CWY programs within Canada and 27 other countries around the world.⁸

⁸ Canada World Youth Annual Report, 2006-2007. Available at http://www.cwy-jcm.org/download/rapport_annuel_2006Elowres.pdf

To this day, there have been four Master's theses written by Canadian students on CWY and the many benefits of this program, in addition to evaluations, recommendations, and impact assessments. The theses have focused mostly on the international development opportunities of the program, and have examined the program as a means of alternative education and as a means to gain skills through cultural experiences. These theses form a large part of the basis of my thesis research, however the goal of my research is to go beyond looking at the CWY experience as a cultural exchange, and expand on this previous research to see how these intercultural interactions can help the individuals involved to improve their ability to consider different perspectives and accept different realities, thereby becoming better equipped to resolve conflicts in their own lives as a result of their improved adaptability. While there have been several chances for participants to describe and reflect on their experiences of the CWY programs, there has been no direct link made between engaging in a CWY program and conflict resolution through improved cross-cultural communication skills.

In 1980, a student at the University of Alberta conducted a quantitative study as his master's dissertation entitled, *Youth and development: a follow-up study of former Canadian participants of the Canada World Youth program* (Young 1980). This follow-up study provided a general overview of the skills acquired by past CWY participants. Young administered a survey questionnaire to the 986 participants who had completed the CWY program between the years of 1975 and 1979. He received an 83 percent response rate from his study, and concluded that:

CWY has been successful in achieving its development education goals: former participants believed that CWY had increased considerably their personal autonomy, leadership skills, intercultural appreciation and skills, Canadian

cultural appreciation and skills, and development understanding and involvement. (Young 1980, I)

Young also attempted to assess the long-term impact of the CWY program on the Canadian participants, specifically related to the development education goals. This included looking at the activities in which former CWY participants were involved, as well as evaluating how the participants perceived themselves to have changed as a result of the CWY experience and changes in their attitude toward development. Young was curious to know what the former participants were doing in the years following the program, whether they had become more politically involved, or were otherwise still benefiting from their CWY experience. He found that participants overwhelmingly believed their CWY experience had increased their intercultural skills (Ibid, 95), however his quantitative results indicated that the participants felt they only occasionally or rarely had the opportunities to use these skills. “Thus, while most participants increased their intercultural skills during CWY, substantially fewer are able to make optimal use of their new abilities after the program. Overall, it appears that the intercultural experience and talents of former participants are under-used.” (Ibid, 96)

The second thesis was written by Sistino Paolo Colatosti entitled, *Canada World Youth's International Development Programs: Providing youth the skills for the 21st century* (Colatosti 1998). In his thesis, Colatosti presents CWY as a useful framework to be used for integrating Canadian youth into today's workplace. He argues that programs such as CWY should be used more widely as a “human resource development model so that interns can acquire the experiential learning and skills to bridge the gap between school and the workplace”. (Colatosti 1998, 1) He also emphasizes the relevance of

exposure to cross-cultural working conditions as an asset to youth entering the Canadian workforce. These include skills such as leadership, interpersonal communication, adaptability, and creative thinking. Colatosti argues that CWY is providing these basic skills that employers have agreed are “fundamental for entry-level employment.” (Ibid, 3)

While Colatosti is mainly arguing that programs such as CWY should be supported and encouraged on the basis that they are beneficial to the Canadian labour force, he acknowledges that this is only one of the beneficial layers of the programs, and that “the interpersonal communication that takes place among participants not only helps youth learn to appreciate other cultures, customs, and religions, it ultimately transforms their values and attitudes so that they learn to respect and empathize with others in the global world.” (Ibid, 38)

In the third thesis, Karsten Mundel examines an exchange program between Canada World Youth (CWY), *Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Morelos*, and Augustana University College. Mundel approaches the CWY program through a Freirian perspective, as an opportunity for youth to learn through alternative forms of education. Participants are empowered through conscientization⁹ and a realization of what is going on in their world, and what they can do to effect positive change (Mundel 2002, 10). Mundel uses Freire’s concept of conscientization as a form of learning that enables active participation in a classroom as well as in a community, regional, or global context. “Through conscientization, students move from fatalistic acceptance of an unjust status

⁹ Conscientization refers to the process in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and their capacity to transform that reality. (Freire 1970, 27)

quo to seeing their and their communities' agency in envisioning and realizing other realities." (Ibid, 11) Mundel argues that the study of international exchange programs is a field that is generally under-theorized, and that even though CWY has now been in operation for over 30 years, there has been little formal research into its programs (Ibid, 34). Mundel lays out an important argument for the necessity of such research in the following statement:

I think that the more quantitative studies are not able to reflect the richness of the learning experiences and through their design are able to gloss-over or ignore important program considerations. While my reservations about quantitative methods is not new, I think that it is important to point out because many of these quantitative and some of the more rigid qualitative studies are the ones used to justify many of the programs to funders or others making policy decisions. Decisions affecting international exchange programs are often based on this incomplete information. I see the need for more research into international exchange programs that convey both the richness and the complexities of these experiences. (Ibid, 35)

The fourth and last thesis written on CWY, which is closely related to my research topic is entitled, *Exploring Cross-Cultural Experiential Education* (Field 2002). In her Masters of Education thesis, Caroline Field explores, through the personal narratives of participants, the impact of the CWY program on cross-cultural experiential education. Field focuses on the impact of culture shock and reverse culture shock as a result of the program as an educational experience.

In studying the impact of cross-cultural experiential education on participants it became evident that the participants changed, becoming more aware of themselves and more culturally sensitive. In considering the factors that contributed to this change, it became apparent that the variables determining the degree of reality, risk, responsibility and guidance involved in the experience played a key role in setting the scene for such change to take place. Together these variables combine to create a meaningful learning experience for the participants in which the potential impact is significant. (Field 2002, iii)

Field presents culture shock and reverse culture shock as the components of the CWY participants' experiences that generally represent the motivation for growth, while a

reflection on these is the component that allows for learning to take place (Ibid, 108). It is in these stages, where individuals feel most uncomfortable and most vulnerable, that they are forced to question their racial, gender, ethnic, religious, and cultural biases. “In forming relationships, the students must question their own backgrounds and identities. It is only in questioning their perspectives that they will be able to begin to understand cultures other than their own to make room to accept them.” (Ibid, 27)

These four theses all contribute to the background of research that has contributed to the literature claiming the benefits of programs such as CWY, and the advantages of investing in cross-cultural immersion programs. My research expands on these past studies to illustrate the link between these advantages and conflict resolution.

2.4 – Background of Literature on CWY in the context of International Education/Development Programs

The CWY program is quite different from other forms of educational exchanges, where youth study in a foreign country but do not necessarily live within local communities or become immersed in the lifestyle and culture. It is also a shift from other international development programs where the goal is more about economic development, and less about learning about another culture and broadening one’s perceptions and worldviews. The CWY program was developed through a Freirian ideology of education with a theoretical background rooted in international development and cultural exchange.¹⁰

¹⁰ Although CWY was created while Freire was still developing his working ideology of education, and was not necessarily consciously building on this ideology, I use this term due to the similarity in theoretical underpinning.

In July of 1960, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations adopted a resolution directed to UNESCO¹¹ which included the affirmation that “contacts between peoples and knowledge of each other’s ways of life and thinking are a prerequisite for peace and improvement of international cooperation ... exchanges in the fields of education, science and culture are an essential factor for economic development.” (Klineberg 1966, 8) This came at a time when it was becoming increasingly accepted that international relations had become an important means of creating the necessary conditions for peace (Ibid, 8). This was also around the time that international exchanges in education were becoming increasingly popular with the goals of achieving both economic and academic advancement, as well as cultural and political knowledge. It was quite clear by this stage in history, that it was no longer possible to ignore the realities of an increasingly globalized world where cultures and nations would be coming into increasing contact. Since then, “international education has grown in response to the changing cultural and political realities of the world and in accordance with the varying stages of cross-national contact, exchange, and mobility.” (Deutsch 1970, 18) There are now a plethora of university exchange programs that allow students to conduct a period of study in a foreign country in order to expand their academic opportunities and learn different ways of life.

While there are many perspectives from which international education programs are commonly viewed, they developed mainly through a viewpoint that highlighted the

¹¹ UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

importance of gaining knowledge of the world outside one's physical location. A widely accepted approach to international education at the time of its gaining popularity was:

... the philosophy-of-education view stressing cultural enrichment, cross-national perspectives (or what has been called "world outlook"), and a combination of cultural relativism and cultural transcendentalism...educators became increasingly concerned about reducing the cultural stereotyping and ethnocentrism which, it was argued, led to international hostility and aggression.(Ibid, 9)

It is now quite common for people to study in foreign countries, and while there is much to be gained by such an opportunity, there is no guarantee that one will overcome their cultural stereotyping or develop a sense of cultural transcendentalism by studying in a foreign country. As Klineberg points out, it is an oversimplification to expect that a period of study in a foreign country will uniformly result in more favorable attitudes toward that country (Klineberg 1966, 8). "If contacts between peoples are truly, as in the ECOSOC resolution, "a prerequisite for peace", there is a very real responsibility placed upon those who encourage and facilitate such contacts to do so in a manner most likely to produce the desired results." (Ibid, 8) This is part of the reasoning behind CWY and it is also why CWY has structured its programs in such a way that the participants are not only living and learning in a new community, they are being immersed in a new culture and a way of life in their everyday actions. In the hopes of building relationships and expanding worldviews, "the best results will be obtained when there are opportunities for involvement in an on-going enterprise, when the visitor can become a full-fledged participant, when he can be treated as a regular member, though a temporary one, of a group doing a job." (Ibid, 23)

While international education is often seen broadly as any type of organized effort to affect values and capabilities that are international in terms of perspectives or in terms of mobility (Deutsch 1970, 1), international development is more commonly referred to as a form of assistance to a developing country. In 1988, CIDA stated that “the purpose of Canada’s development assistance program is simple – to help the poorest countries and people in the world to help themselves.” (CIDA 1988, 7) However, by this stage in time the field of international development had also acknowledged the importance of building partnerships and fostering links between Canadians and the people living in developing countries. The goals of international development were no longer simply to ‘help the poor’ or to ‘develop the third world’, but were also closely related to promoting global peace and security, building long-term global economic prosperity, and strengthening the international trading system (Ibid, 7).

Many Canadians also recognize that interdependence is a fact of daily life. Rapid growth of the world’s population, the technological revolution, environmental concerns and economic dependency have brought all the world’s people much closer together. For most Canadians, development assistance is an investment in our shared future. (Ibid, 5)

By this time, we have reached a point where it is simplistic to think of development cooperation as donor-recipient relationships, and it is obvious that the focus should rather be on partnerships between equals in the pursuits of social justice, the conduct of trade, as well as in the realm of knowledge (Dupuy 1979, 16). “Above all, now that virtually everyone sees unmistakably that we live in an interdependent world, we need to achieve a better comprehension of just how that interdependence works.” (Ibid, 17) This understanding can only be gained through the building of relationships and the sharing of information through interactions.

CIDA sees its role in international development as equally important and useful to Canada as it is to developing countries. It acknowledges that social and economic progress are preconditions for long term global peace and security, and that “Canada’s cooperative efforts with other nations, bilaterally, multilaterally and through private links, are essential elements in the constructive internationalism to which the Government is committed...they allow us to strengthen the fabric of international cooperation and social coherence.” (CIDA 1987, 6) This highlights the importance of collaboration, which is not possible without a foundation built on shared goals and common understandings. While the main purposes of development have been said to be: “to develop human potential, to promote social change and improve living standards, and to stimulate economic growth and productivity on a sustainable basis” (Ibid, 18), it is also an opportunity to promote a “spirit of constructive internationalism by reducing barriers which inhibit the emergence of a more global society based on truly shared values.” (Ibid, 10)

The goals of international education and international development are considerably different, yet in many ways overlapping. The CWY programs offer a rare opportunity where these goals are joined together and bring out additional goals as the main objectives, such as mutual respect and understanding between cultures through exchange. This program does not only offer an opportunity to observe another culture, but encourages its participants to gain a new perspective on the notion of culture. “The increased contact with, and knowledge of, foreign cultures should in principle provide a basis for intercultural communication so that expectations on both sides of the

communication line are that the ‘other party’ is different, and should be different from oneself.” (Eide 1970, 135)

Hébert’s ideology behind the development of CWY is closely related to a Freirian ideology that is grounded in gaining knowledge through experience. Freire believed that ‘education’ or ‘learning’ was not something that should be limited to a classroom, or should be gained through any form of direct teaching or passing on of information. By limiting one’s learning to a traditional education system, we truly limit the opportunities for growth and development of new ideas, therefore limiting human potential. “The roots of the problem are far beyond the classroom in society and in the world...the context for transformation is not only the classroom but extends outside of it.” (Freire & Shor 1987, 33) Gaining knowledge, to Freire, was something that had to be accomplished by an individual through interaction and reflection. “Education can be de-conditioning because man, essentially a conditioned being, is also essentially a being capable of knowing what conditions him, capable of reflecting on his action and behavior, and of perceiving his perceptions.” (Freire 1970, vi) In order for people to become educated and gain knowledge, they must engage in dialogue and experiences that are different and new, and therefore be able to shape new ideas and challenge their assumptions and conditioned learnings. Freire explained how individuals are capable of shaping their sense of reality through interactions:

...Such dialogue...leads not only to their acquisition of literacy skills, but more importantly to their awareness of their right and capacity as human beings to transform reality. Becoming literate, then, means far more than learning to decode the written representation of a sound system. It is truly an act of knowing, through which a person is able to look critically at the culture which has shaped him, and to move toward reflection and positive action upon his world. (Ibid, 5)

In order for an individual to gain a new sense of knowledge about his own culture, he must be able to look at it critically, and therefore must either be removed from this culture, or introduced to a new culture in order to challenge his former assumptions. CWY presents this learning opportunity to its participants by giving them a chance to experience a new way of life, a new culture, and by engaging in dialogue and interaction with people of different backgrounds, cultures, and notions of reality. “If students do engage each other in critical dialogue, I see that as an act of empowerment because they chose to become human beings investigating their reality together.” (Freire & Shor 1987, 34)

Freire was also determined to challenge the traditional educational systems through which static ideologies are often reproduced and reinforced. “Ideology is doctrine or theory which is administratively preserved and transmitted...there is therefore a permanent need of dialogue for dismantling bureaucratic constructions and for preventing the entrenchment of vested interests.” (Freire 1970, vii) Freire encouraged and demanded a need for alternative forms of education outside of this system in order to challenge senses of reality and knowledge, and provide the chance for individuals to re-shape their own realities. This form of education could be found through building new relationships and being exposed to new ways of thinking. “*Consciousness of and action upon reality are, therefore, inseparable constituents of the transforming act by which men become beings of relation.*” (Ibid, 28) To Freire, it was imperative to understand that our realities are shaped by our relations to others, and are therefore constantly changing as we build relationships and gain new knowledge as a result of these. This knowledge,

however, cannot be gained without the opportunities to challenge our engrained preconceptions and assumptions that we have learned through our past teachings.

This need for learning experiences beyond the walls of formal education systems is a large part of the motivation behind CWY.

...Systematic or formal education, in spite of its importance, cannot really be the lever for the transformation of society. We must understand in a dialectical way the relationship between systematic education and social change, the political transformation of society. The problems of school are deeply rooted in the global conditions of society... (Freire & Shor 1987, 129)

As Freire argued, we need to challenge our ways of living and build new relationships in order to see any change in our social realities. And what better way to challenge our assumptions than to be immersed in a new way of life? Everyone who has been exposed to different worldviews and living situations will leave with a somewhat changed sense of reality. This may even make them see their lives through a different light. "It is not unusual for tourists to find that a wider acquaintance with foreign countries gives them a deeper understanding of their own." (Marshall 1970, 14) If this is true for those visiting a new country for a short period of time, it must also be true, and to a greater extent, for those being fully immersed in a new culture. Every individual will have a different experience, as they will build relationships and interpret and reflect on these in different ways. Therefore, experiences may vary widely, but they will all result in new knowledge and new creations of reality.

In order to assess more realistically what effects the cross-cultural experience is likely to have on attitudes toward the host country, we need to think about the question more analytically: to take into account the fact that there is no such thing as '*the* foreign student', but a large number of individuals who differ among themselves in many ways; that the experiences they have in the host country may vary widely; that country presents many different aspects about which a visitor may gain impressions or make evaluations. (Klineberg 1970, 53)

The CWY program brings together aspects of international education and international development through a Freirian ideology that is based on building relationships, challenging realities, and creating opportunities for learning beyond the walls of a formal education system. Hébert's dream of creating an opportunity for youth to learn that there was a way to live other than their own, through the "dialogue of cultures" (Hébert & Strong 1980, 66), was realized and has been in action now for over 35 years. Hébert hoped to offer a program that would be limitless in its potential for learning and benefits.

It would be a program of education in development and at the same time a modest but concrete contribution to that development – both Canada's and that of the Third World. By living and working together, sharing ideas and values, these young people would become aware of the incredible gap in material well-being that separates the Third World from the industrialized countries. (Ibid, 66)

The participants would come home changed and would be able to act as pioneers of new knowledge (Ibid, 36). The knowledge and experiences of individuals is not limited to their own benefit, but can also benefit those around them, and will continue to develop as they build new relationships. "During the foreign sojourn they can be expected to be a source of information for their hosts, and on their return to serve similarly as transmitters of their new knowledge to their fellow nationals." (Klineberg 1970, 47) The CWY program has been successful by providing opportunities to gain knowledge and skills, to build individual as well as global relationships, and to challenge the cultural assumptions that are often reinforced through ignorance and distance. This ability to integrate oneself into a new way of being is invaluable in today's society. "This characteristic demonstrates man's flexibility or powers of adjustment or, perhaps, willingness to accommodate – to make, or be, at peace." (Fain 2002, 133)

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 – Research Design

3.1.a. – Research Question and Recruiting Participants

My research question is: *How do the participants of the Canada World Youth Core Program perceive their adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and conflict resolution skills to have been developed or improved as a result of their participation in the program?* My method of data collection for this research consisted of conducting eleven semi-structured telephone interviews with CWY Core Program participants who had completed the program within the past year. In order to recruit these participants, I first contacted the research department at the head office of CWY in Montreal to gain approval and support for my research (*Appendix I*). Upon gaining this approval, I sent a participation information request form to the CWY research department and asked them to send this to their list of past participants who had completed the program in 2007 (*Appendix II*). A total of 232 CWY participants were sent this letter of information, and asked to contact me directly if they were interested in participating in the approximately 30-45 minute long telephone interview. In order to limit my data, I used a method of time-frame sampling¹². I therefore agreed to interview all participants who contacted me by December 31st, 2007, and were willing to be a part of the research. Between the time the letter of information was sent out on December 19th, 2007, and December 31st, 2007, I

¹² Time Frame Sampling is a derivative of ‘purposive sampling’, in which the researcher must make the design more concrete by developing a sampling frame capable of answering the research question, identifying specific sites and/or subjects, and securing their participation in the study. (Devers & Frankel 2000, 264)

received eighteen email responses from interested participants. I responded to all these emails by thanking the participants for expressing interest, and asking them to send me their contact information and availability for interview times. Of the eighteen, four participants did not respond to the second request for contact information, and two replied with their contact phone numbers, but did not respond to further requests for potential interview times or availability to participate in the interviews.

3.1.b. – Semi-Structured Interviews

I therefore booked twelve interviews with participants, one of whom was not home at the scheduled time, and did not respond to my attempts to reschedule. As a result, I conducted a total of eleven telephone interviews between January 18th, 2008 and February 4th, 2008. The participants being interviewed originated from cities and towns across Canada. None of the participants I interviewed were part of the same exchange placement (in the Canadian community, nor the community in the exchange country). For purposes of confidentiality and anonymity, I cannot divulge their locations (either in Canada or in the partner country while on exchange). I did not collect many details on the ethnicity, socio-economic background, or specific demographics of the participants, however, there were 5 female participants, and 6 male participants in my study, all who ranged between the ages of 18 and 25. The interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes, to one hour and 15 minutes.

All participants were asked the following four loosely structured questions, and were invited to share any additional information they thought was valuable or important to them. All telephone interviews were tape-recorded using a telephone-recorder transmitter, and notes and personal reflections were recorded during and after each interview. The four questions asked were (also in *Appendix III*):

- 1) What were the main areas where conflict arose throughout the program, and which conflicts did you find were the most challenging to resolve or work through?
- 2) Did you feel that you were adequately prepared to deal with the conflicts that arose throughout the program, or do feel that there is any way the program could have better prepared you or equipped you to deal with these conflicts?
- 3) How do you compare your ability to resolve conflict now, as opposed to before participating in the exchange program? Do you feel you approach conflict differently now in your everyday life?
- 4) Do you feel that your perceptions of reality and the world have changed at all as a result of this program? Do you relate to people differently or have any different outlooks on culture than you did prior to the program?

3.2 – Ethical Considerations, Anonymity and Confidentiality

Before beginning my research, I contacted the CWY head office research department to ensure they were supportive of my research. Once I had gained their approval, I was able to apply for approval from the Human Research Ethics Board at the

University of Victoria. Prior to the beginning of each interview, I explained to the participants that they were free to withdraw from my study at any point without any consequences or explanations. Participants were also told their anonymity would be protected, by having myself as the only person who would be listening to the interviews, and the only one who would have access to their personal information. All data was collected and stored in confidentiality, with all voice recordings and transcriptions secured and locked with passwords. Of the participants interviewed, there were no refusals to participate, and all participants consented to the terms of the research and confirmed that they understood all terms to which they were agreeing.

3.3 – A Descriptive Reporting

“We can never capture this world directly; we can only study representations of it. We study the ways people represent their experiences to themselves and to others.” (Denzin 2001, x) What I have examined and analyzed in my research is the ways in which the participants of the CWY program have interpreted, and are now representing their experiences of this program in regards to conflict resolution. “Experience can be represented in multiple ways, including through rituals, myths, stories, performances, films, songs, memoirs, and autobiographies. Experiences come in multiple forms: problematic, routine, ritual,...turning point.” (Ibid, x) The participants interviewed represented their experiences to me through the interviews in several ways, and explained the points that stood out the most throughout their exchange. My descriptive reporting of a sample of participants of the CWY Core Program has elements of both a case study as well as a program evaluation methodology, however it may not fit directly into either of

these traditional methodologies. I found this the most appropriate way to conduct my research through an interpretive, social constructivist lens, and asked the participants to share their experiences with me through guided, semi-structured interviews.

“Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system.” (Creswell 2007, 73) This is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores either one bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, “through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case-based themes...for example, several programs or a single program may be selected for study.” (Ibid, 73)

Since I am looking at the particular case of a CWY Core Program, elements of the case study methodology allow me to examine and analyze the behaviours and changes that occurred for the participants in regards to their perceptions surrounding conflict management.

As each participant interviewed can be described as its own individual case, my research approach does have some elements of a case study approach. This is in keeping with Creswell’s view that, “In a collective case study (or multiple case study), the one issue or concern is again selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue.” (Ibid, 74)

I have also partnered elements of a case study approach with some concepts found in program evaluation. Program evaluation can be used to “appraise social initiatives and better understand why some interventions appear to work well in some settings and not in

others, or why some interventions clearly do not impact behaviour at all” (Kirby, Greaves and Reid 2006, 161). This concept informed my research questions and served as a guide to the project since one of my goals is to provide recommendations or support for CWY programs while highlighting the benefits as well as the shortcomings of this program to be considered in future CWY developments.

Some useful purposes of my use of aspects of case study methodology can be seen specifically when attempting to answer questions of ‘how’ and ‘why’ in situations where “the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.” (Yin 1994, 1) This description of the utility of a case study fits perfectly with my interpretation of my research question with the CWY Core Program. I will be analyzing a contextual situation that also reflects an aspect of everyday phenomena that is occurring outside of this specific context. While I am looking at how participants of the CWY program develop conflict resolution skills through an organized and contextualized cultural exchange, the results and findings of my research may be interpreted as being relevant in other ‘real-life’ contexts where people are immersed in new cultures or encounter new worldviews in everyday life. With this framework, I can use the case study methodology as a research endeavor that “contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena”, and while I am simply evaluating a single specific case, because of the practicality of the case study for this situation, it will also allow for “an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.” (Ibid, 2-3) My research is therefore looking at several individual

participant experiences in the context of being part of the CWY Core Program. This case based approach, partnered with elements of program evaluation, which has “provided a unique opportunity for social scientists...to apply their research skills to help improve the efficacy of social programs and the human condition” (Kirby, Greaves and Reid 2006, 163), has allowed me to relay the stories of the participants as a source of support for the CWY Core Program.

3.4 – A Qualitative Interpretive/Interactionist Paradigm

Interpretive social science is based on the belief that the way we see the world and develop new knowledge is determined by our conceptions and interpretations of our lived experiences. From an interpretive perspective, there is no absolute truth to be discovered; our notions of truth and reality are fluid and can change as a result of our experiences and interpretations of these lived experiences. We can only know as much as we have been exposed to, and each individual will come to understand their world through the interpretations that have shaped them to this point.

Our capacity to understand is rooted in our own self-definitions, hence in what we are. What we are is a self-interpreting and self-defining animal. We are always in a cultural world, amidst a “web of signification we ourselves have spun.” There is no outside, detached standpoint from which to gather and present brute data. When we try to understand the cultural world, we are dealing with interpretations and interpretations of interpretations.” (Rabinow & Sullivan 1979, 6)

Interpretive social science is also largely based within the concepts of culture. “All knowledge, even that of modern science (which often claims itself to be objectively free from such interpretive constraints), is thus selected from the totality of reality, and *interpreted* in the conceptual language of a particular time and place.” (Clark 2002, 53)

A culture encompasses the meanings, practices, symbols, rituals, and truths that a group of people attribute to their world, and by which they navigate their experiences in this world. While there is no one perfect definition of 'culture', it can be said to encompass practical knowledge, social and moral guidelines, as well as transcendent explanations about the meaning of existence (Ibid, 190). It is a collective interpretation of how to live in the world. The cultures in which people find themselves will shape the way they interpret their own and others' actions, and therefore the knowledge that is created through these interpretations. Since people can be part of many cultures simultaneously, each individual's interpretation of meaning and reality will be unique. "Culture, the shared meanings, practices, and symbols that constitute the human world, does not present itself neutrally or with one voice. It is always multivocal and overdetermined...that is our situation." (Rabinow & Sullivan 1979, 6) Because of this, any research conducted through an interpretive theoretical lens will present itself as one interpretation that has been shaped by certain values, and lived experiences. "This is the art of interpretation. The aim is not to uncover universals or laws but rather to explicate context and world." (Ibid, 13) Because people interpret their situations and create knowledge based on their unique perceptions of their experiences, there is no one reality or truth to be discovered through research, but rather a common understanding to be shared and knowledge to be passed on and re-interpreted.

For this reason, I have approached my research with the belief that the information I will be relaying is not an absolute claim attempting to prove cause and effect, but is rather my own interpretation, informed by my past experiences

and perceptions, of the ways in which the participants of the CWY Core Program have developed conflict resolution skills throughout their participation in the program.

The qualitative researcher is not an objective, politically neutral observer who stands outside and above the study of the social world. Rather, the researcher is historically and locally situated within the very processes being studied. A gendered, historical self is brought to this process. This self, as a set of shifting identities, has its own history with the situated practices that define and shape the public issues and private troubles being studied.” (Denzin 2001, 3)

My qualitative research is therefore shaped by my own perceptions, as will be the reporting of my findings. It is an attempt to generate new knowledge, new perceptions and understandings of reality and truth, and the ability to share common viewpoints between and across cultures.

Interpretive interactionism attempts to make the meanings that circulate in the world of lived experience accessible to the reader. It endeavors to capture and represent the voices, emotions, and actions of those studied. The focus of interpretive research is on those life experiences that radically alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their experiences. (Ibid, 1)

My research will mean different things to every person who reads it, as everyone will have had different experiences that will guide the way they interpret the information and translate it into knowledge and their notions of truth. Regardless of this, I will be contributing to the development of new knowledge, although this knowledge may be slightly different for everyone. “There is no verification procedure we can fall back on. We can only continue to offer interpretations. Therefore, insight and judgment are an essential part of any inquiry.” (Rabinow & Sullivan 1979, 7)

3.5 – Social Constructivist Theory

There are many methodologies and theories that have been developed from an interpretive perspective. While different in certain aspects, these theories are all based on the notion that meaning is created through interactions between people, and is therefore inseparable from social relations.

The most basic element in this image of human beings is the notion that society and the individual are inseparable units; that while it may be possible to separate the units analytically, the fundamental assumption is that a complete comprehension of either one demands the comprehension of the other. (Ward 2003, 36)

The basis for the case study methodology used in this thesis is grounded in social constructivist theory, which presents humans as social beings who make up their individual realities through interaction and communication (Patton 2002, 98). Through this theoretical lens, we can understand intercultural interaction as being the first step towards developing a shared meaning and a common reality between individuals who may previously have had conflicting worldviews. As Mary Clark has argued, “every society, every culture has its own theory of human nature, which it takes as *the* truth.” (Clark 2002, 2) The challenge of finding a common ground on which to function in a global society then lies in maximizing the opportunities to enhance communication between societies and cultures in order to engage in an ongoing process of producing new knowledge and understandings of our identity in relation to others. Throughout my research, an interpretive/interactionist paradigm is used as the foundation base for the social constructivist theory that informs the case study methodology.

Social constructivist theory is grounded in an interactive paradigm, which sees knowledge as something that is obtained by “participating subjectively in a world of meanings created by individuals...what exists is what people perceive to exist.” (Kirby, Greaves, and Reid 2006, 14) Interactionists are likely to define themselves in a subject-to-subject relation to their data, in contrast to positivists, who pursue an object-to-object model (Silverman 1985, 101). Therefore, every human situation is viewed as novel, emergent, and filled with multiple and often conflicting meanings and interpretations.

For the purposes of my research, I will be focusing on a social constructivist theory to examine how people in a certain setting construct their notions of reality and frame their perceptions, beliefs, and worldviews. This theory also questions the “consequences of their constructions for their behaviours and for those with whom they interact.” (Patton 2002, 132) The very goal of my research is to look at how people can create new shared realities through a program such as CWY in order to come to common understandings. I believe that being able to relate to others and their way of perceiving the world will provide individuals with the ability to communicate and understand each other better, and therefore be better equipped to engage productively in conflict with this other. I also believe that being exposed to a variety of contrasting cultures, ways of life, and notions of truth will greatly improve one’s ability to conceive of different worldviews, and while not necessarily fully grasping or agreeing with these, will create a space for tolerance and understanding that will increase one’s conflict management skills, and will encourage productive social interactions.

3.6 – Qualitative Interpretation

As I mentioned when describing interpretive social science, when we conduct case studies through a constructivist framework, it is inevitable that, “ultimately, the interpretations of the researcher are likely to be emphasized more than the interpretations of those people studied.” (Stake 1995, 12) As attentive as I may try to be to the participants’ expressions of their experiences, it will be my personal interpretations, motivated and guided by a constructivist ideology, that will be expressed in my thesis research. Ideally, the qualitative case researcher will try to “preserve the *multiple realities*, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening.” (Ibid, 12) While examining my data and interpreting my findings, I have tried to continuously remind myself to be as reflective as possible with regards to the experiences and stories of the participants, while evaluating and questioning my own ideological biases and presumptions. Although I am aware that my research is informed by my already existing biases, interpretations, and ideologies, I have attempted to represent the voices of the participants as clearly as possible and have offered my analyses as an interpretation of these.

Through using a social constructivist theory, I hope to be able to not only represent the voices of the participants involved in my research, but also present a challenge to them, and other readers, to re-examine and re-evaluate their notions of truth and how they have come to shape their realities.

In a call to action, researchers engage in concrete steps that will change situations in the future. They may teach persons how to bring new value and meaning to identities, cultural commodities, and texts that are marginalized and stigmatized

by the larger culture. They demonstrate how particular definitions and meanings negatively affect the lives of specific persons. They indicate how particular texts directly and indirectly misrepresent persons and reproduce prejudice and stereotypes. (Denzin 2001, 6)

Because of my background knowledge and experience in conflict resolution, I will bring a new voice to the analysis of a program such as CWY and present my research as a new opportunity for knowledge. “It is this differential structural location, combined with the different background knowledge and training which we as researchers bring to the analysis, which allows us to make a contribution to a new conception of the phenomenon.” (Goodson & Mangan 1991, 14-15)

I have chosen to use an interpretive methodology because it reflects my worldview that individuals have the ability to create their own realities. This methodology has informed the way in which I have participated in the research and the ways in which I have interpreted the collected data. “Interpretive procedures are central to the reproduction of social structures...Social structures are real, constraining and enabling forces...Social structures are the condition of social action and are reproduced and changed by it.” (Silverman 1985, 77-78) I believe that the chosen methodology will enable me to reinforce the importance of programs like CWY and encourage the development of other programs like this one in the future. This supports the notion that worldviews and realities are constructs that are developed through experiences and communications. . “Social construction, or *constructivist* philosophy, is built on the thesis of *ontological relativity*, which holds that all tenable statements about existence depend on a worldview, and no worldview is uniquely determined by empirical or sense data around the world.” (Patton 2002, 97) I hope to demonstrate that through cross-

cultural interaction and dialogue, individuals can create a worldview that will allow them to engage in effective conflict management in their personal lives and in a global society.

3.7 – Validity and Limitations

Because of ethical considerations, I could not have access to a list of past CWY participants to contact myself. Therefore, the participants who were contacted with the participant information letters were selected from a list of past participants who had agreed to be part of a mailing list for CWY. The participants then contacted me on their own free will, with the intention of sharing their experiences with me. Because of this, it is quite likely that the participants who contacted me, and consequently participated in my research were among a group of individuals who felt they had gained a lot from their CWY experience and therefore wanted to share their stories. Because of this, I cannot claim this study to be representational of all CWY participants, but rather a portrayal of the experiences of the sample that were willing to share their experiences as part of my research. This may be seen as a limitation to my study, as it reflects only the experiences of this select group. However, I also believe it to be one of the strengths of my study, as the rich data that resulted from these interviews are a result of incredible experiences from participants who truly wanted to share their stories and felt they had much to give in the way of new knowledge resulting from the program.

3.8 – Transferability and Veracity

Through my research and my interpretation, I hope to show the potential of the CWY Core Program as an opportunity to develop conflict management skills and improve the ability of individuals to consider multiple worldviews. However, I also must take into consideration that it may not be possible to generalize from this specific case to other programs or separate phenomenon.

The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (Stake 1995, 8)

This statement outlines that it is important to remember that the goal of conducting a case study is to understand that specific case itself, rather than to generalize it to other cases. However, it may still be possible to propose theoretical claims, and transfer the knowledge gained through this case study to other situations. This is possible because,

...case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes... in this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a “sample,” and the investigator’s goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization). (Yin 1994, 10)

This idea of ‘analytic generalization’ allows for a previously developed theory, in this case, social constructivism, to be used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of a case study. (Ibid, 31) “If two or more cases are shown to support the same theory, replication may be claimed...analytic generalization can be used whether your case study involves one or several cases.” (Ibid, 31) Using this theory of analytic generalization, it is therefore safe to say that the findings and results of the examination and interpretation of these specific cases of the CWY Core Program could be used to

show some transferable trends or ways in which social constructions are created. If it is found through the interviews that the participants of the CWY program have similar interpretations of their experiences in regards to the development of conflict resolution skills, it would be valid to argue that the program has the potential to develop these skills in individuals, and therefore that similar experiences, namely being exposed to new cultures, could also contribute to the development of similar skills.

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS AND RESULTS

4.1 – Introduction of findings and categories

In this chapter I will present and describe the findings of my research that were derived from eleven qualitative interviews of recent past participants of the Canada World Youth Core Program. My research sought to answer the question: *How do Canada World Youth Core Program participants perceive their adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and conflict resolution skills to have developed or improved as a result of participating in the program?* To gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences, I asked four broad open-ended questions to each participant in order to hear as much about the participants' stories of conflict throughout the program as possible (*Appendix III*). These four questions, surrounding the topics of conflict throughout the exchange, project supervisor support and pre-orientation training, ability to deal with conflict after having participated in the program, and general opinions regarding personal change as a result of the program yielded the following rich and abundant data.

After conducting the eleven telephone interviews and transcribing them all to writing, I began my first round of open coding of the transcriptions. I coded each interview to identify specific ideas brought out by the participants. The eleven interviews yielded approximately three hundred codes, many of which were repeated throughout various interviews. My next step was to group these codes into more general categories

that would encompass the concepts brought out by the participants. I was able to narrow these down to thirty-two categories, which I then grouped into five even more general and broad groupings.

The categories have been grouped into the following five themes: Main Challenges and Causes of Conflict; Cultural Challenges/Cultural Implications; Interpersonal/Inter-group Relationships; Personal Growth and Development; and Areas of Support/Important Contributions to the Program.

Figure 4.1.1
CATEGORIES AND THEMES GENERATED FROM INTERVIEW DATA

| Main Challenges and Causes of Conflict | Cultural Challenges/Cultural Implications | Inter-personal/Inter-group Relationships | Personal Growth and Development | Areas of Support/Important Contributions to the Program |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> External factors aggravating conflict/Complexity of issues <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of Abandonment/Isolation/Powerlessness <input type="checkbox"/> Frustration <input type="checkbox"/> Misunderstanding/Miscommunication <input type="checkbox"/> Expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Motivation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Culture Shock <input type="checkbox"/> Role of Values/Biases <input type="checkbox"/> Comfort levels <input type="checkbox"/> Overcoming Stereotypes <input type="checkbox"/> Clashing Opinions/Viewpoints <input type="checkbox"/> Language/Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Religion <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Norms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Counterpart relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Host family relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Group Unity, Morale/Group Dynamics <input type="checkbox"/> Group Separation/Division | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Mind-Opening/Broadening of Scope <input type="checkbox"/> Learning from Experience <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability/Flexibility <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Reflection/Development <input type="checkbox"/> Change/Shift in Perception <input type="checkbox"/> Education/Learning Ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Project Supervisor Role <input type="checkbox"/> Reflection Circles/Weekly Checks <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-training/Preparation <input type="checkbox"/> International Development/Exchange <input type="checkbox"/> Community Suggestions for CWY |

This chapter will describe the categories and groupings indicated in table 4.1.1 as experienced by the CWY participants interviewed.

4.2 – Main Challenges and Causes of Conflict

The main challenges and causes of conflict throughout the CWY Core Program experience were described by participants in the following areas: external factors and complexity of issues aggravating conflict; feelings of abandonment, isolation, and powerlessness; frustration; misunderstandings and miscommunication; unmet or contradicting expectations; and motivation to participate in the program.

In terms of external factors contributing to conflicts and the complexity of issues contributing to conflicts, participants identified challenges being presented through pre-existing dynamics and external actors involved in the exchange phase. One participant indicated the elevated complexity of conflict that was present when people from outside the program became integrated in program activities: "...she was good friends with them so when we would have functions, a lot of them would end up showing up or trying to influence the group dynamic" (P1)¹³. Other external factors included geographical location of host family placements, and participants leaving the group mid-project due to personal reasons. Factors such as pre-existing dynamics between partner countries and underlying stereotypes about a culture were also identified as adding a degree of complexity to issues and conflicts that arose throughout the program.

The second re-occurring factor identified as a main challenge by participants was the feeling of being abandoned, isolated, or powerless throughout various phases of the

¹³ Participants are indicated by their coded numbers (P1 refers to Participant 1, P2 refers to Participant 2, and so on)

program. This was felt by participants in many different areas, some of which included a lack of support from their counterparts, a lack of support from the project supervisors, or a general feeling of isolation and powerlessness linked to a demise of community integration. Several participants identified the lack of support from their counterpart as adding to these frustrations: "...it was really hard as a Canadian being in (partner country), and not having support from a female counterpart..." (P11); "...she felt like her partner didn't back her up enough in trying to deal with this problem..." (P10); "and then a lot of what happened was that now that the (counterparts) were home, they just kind of left, and a lot of the Canadians, like myself included, we were just kind of abandoned" (P6). In addition to feeling abandoned by their counterparts, some participants expressed feelings of isolation due to a lack of support from the partner organizations and from project supervisors: "...as well as not having the proper support from both organizations, like, CWY was pretty good about getting back to them, but I know for a fact that the (partner) organization was terrible at following through with anything, or getting back" (P6);

It stemmed starting from um, from my opinion, from the Project supervisors, um, the P.S. from the partner country, I think got comfortable into her own life and the swing of things and kind of having an upper hand on the knowledge of the culture and instead of really easing us through it, she had left the Canadian P.S. to guide the group, but basically we all kind of felt lost. (P1)

These feelings of powerlessness came hand in hand with a lack of representation and participants feeling that their voices were not being heard or properly understood.

Other conflicts were brought on by feelings of frustration, and participants identified one of the main challenges of the program as the inability to deal with these frustrations in an appropriate manner.

We had to work together, you know do our volunteer jobs together and um, and since we couldn't talk, you know, she got very frustrated with that, and I realized that it was hard for her to understand, um, that you know, that it wasn't something that we could control at that time, so of course naturally she just got really frustrated, and then I got frustrated, you know with myself and the whole situation so, um, so in the first week, yeah we had some arguments. (P3)

Such frustrations stemmed not only from complications in communicating in different languages, but also from cultural differences, personality differences, and having to deal with any given situation.

Misunderstandings and miscommunications were identified by nearly every participant as being a great source of conflict and frustration throughout the program.

Most of our conflict centered around just miscommunications...like we were both frustrated with each other for both our own reasons he thought I was naïve and ignorant, and I thought he was being naïve and ignorant and all sorts of things, and stuff that eventually we realized was just, that's not talking to each other, but just assuming what the other was saying. (P6)

Another participant similarly noted: "we weren't understanding each other and like, when we spoke to each other, things were coming out and what was being said was hurting the other person's feelings, and it wasn't what we meant, like they were just, we were misinterpreting it." (P4) These miscommunications often led to defensiveness that in turn aggravated pre-existing conflicts or created new ones. Many participants noted upon reflection that these conflicts were often resolved when they were able to take the time to effectively communicate and ensure that they were being understood, or in turn were able to understand what the other was really trying to communicate.

Challenges arose for participants whose expectations of the program were different than what they actually experienced. Many of the participants expressed that they had preconceived notions of what they would experience in the program, and had

expectations that others involved in the program would be participating in the exchange for the same, or at least similar reasons as them. “We wanted to explore, and it was very much kind of an adventure and we wanted to travel, and we wanted to meet new cultures and we wanted to explore the other cultures and we, we sort of assumed that the (counterparts) were on the same boat, that they had done the program for the same reasons.” (P2); “I guess I kind of thought that going into it, that my counterpart would be very much like me, and want to like, you know, learn about the same things.” (P8) The participants who expressed these expectations also said that while they were disappointed at the lack of reciprocity from their counterparts, this realization helped them change their expectations for future interactions throughout the exchange, and helped them take a more flexible approach to unknown situations. “I really came into it like whatever happens, it happens, you know, like, I almost, usually I would have these expectations of no, it should be this good, it should be amazing.” (P2)

In addition to a divergence in expectations, there was also a realization by participants throughout the exchange that individual motivations for participating in the program were quite varied, which led to some disappointment for some of the Canadian participants, but in certain cases also helped clarify some of the actions of their counterparts. “I think they sort of felt sort of forced to be there where otherwise I don’t really think that they wouldn’t have wanted to, so, um, so that, I think is where a lot of that conflict came from.” (P3) While some participants noticed the difference in motivations, they didn’t all necessarily understand why these differences may have been present. “They were definitely just there because it was a way to travel and kind of see

the West, but we were there to volunteer, and to just like, well, everyone was different, even on the Canadian side, but I was there to be involved, and stay busy, and enjoy my time, and kind of immerse myself in the experience” (P7). One participant noted the difference in privilege leading to different motivations for participating in the exchange.

We’re in a position to say, ok, well, I have everything here, let’s go see what the rest of the world looks like, let’s go travel, let’s go experience other things, umm, because we don’t, we don’t think we have any issues here in our own home, whereas the (partner country), they looked at this as an opportunity to make links in Canada, to make contact, to come back to Canada, um, to make some money in Canada, to bring some money back to (partner country). (P2)

These contrasts in motivations for participation proved to be a source of frustration for many participants.

She didn’t really want to participate in the program, and she was saying like, she didn’t even want to be in the program, and she was just in it because her father had forced her to and um, then that was really hard for me because there are so many Canadians who really really want to be in the program, and it was just really hard for me to be in it with someone who didn’t want to be there. (P4)

Despite these frustrations, one participant also pointed out that once she and her counterpart were able to clearly communicate their respective expectations and motivations for participating in the exchange, many of these problems and frustrations were solved. “Her objectives were really different than mine, and we’d never really talked about like, well, why are you here, until we had these contracts in front of us, and so I think like that’s probably one thing that could have stemmed a lot of problems.” (P8)

In summary, the main sources of conflict and most difficult challenges that presented themselves throughout the exchange as highlighted by the participants included: external factors and complexity of issues aggravating conflict; feelings of abandonment, isolation, and powerlessness throughout the exchange; frustrations on several levels; misunderstandings and miscommunication; unmet or contradicting

expectations; and differing motivations for participation in the program. Several other factors were illustrated as aggravating and affecting these in different ways throughout the program, such as geographical location, with many participants saying they found conflicts to be increased when in the partner country.

4.3 – Cultural Challenges/Cultural Implications

The second theme that seemed to be prominent throughout the participant interviews related to the aspect of culture and the challenges faced by being immersed in a new culture as well as having to integrate another into one's own culture. Participants identified the following key areas as challenges in working, living, and building relationships between cultures: culture shock, varying comfort levels, values and biases, clashing opinions and viewpoints, cultural norms, the challenge of working with different ideas of religion and gender, as well as overcoming stereotypes and learning to communicate through language barriers.

Participants identified overcoming culture shock, and becoming comfortable in a new culture, as an unavoidable obstacle that they each had to go through in their own way in order to be in a space where they could better deal with conflicts. Participants provided these examples of how culture shock and comfort levels affected conflict through the exchange:

I think, the (counterparts) went through really bad culture shock when they came to Canada, and they kind of were just, and they didn't want to speak English, and they, they were just really really culture shocked, and so they kind of separated and they just wanted to stay together. (P4)

I did notice that the Canadians, when we were all in a group, um, you know, our level of participation was pretty much the same, because we were comfortable

being together, um, but, like I said once we got to (partner country), the (counterpart) participants became, um, when we got to those group activities, for some reason, things became a lot more confrontational, and, opinions started coming out, and points of view, and things were much more sensitive between the Canadians and the (counterparts), the two groups were, we were bumping heads kind of every time we got together. (P3)

So yeah, the cultural thing also switched once we changed countries, and now that we're in sort of their hometown, and their language and their comfort zone, and familiarity in terms of food and stuff, um, they sort of relaxed in a way, so they weren't as kind of withdrawn in many ways, they started getting out on their own. (P6)

While participants demonstrated how overcoming culture shock and being increasingly comfortable in a new culture helped them better engage in everyday situations and share experiences with counterparts, they also explained how an increasing comfort level could lead to conflict when people felt freer to express often confrontational opinions. The level of culture shock experienced ranged from participant to participant, and it is important to note that culture shock was experienced by several participants while still in their home country. Being immersed in a new family life and experiencing new norms and rituals presented challenges not only abroad, but also while still relatively close to home.

The coming together of differing values, biases, opinions, and viewpoints, often stemming from cultural norms, posed ongoing challenges for every participant interviewed as part of my research. These values and ways of seeing things were often the underlying issues that led to conflict between counterparts. As one participant pointed out:

It's impossible not to talk with bias when you're trying to translate and make sense of ideas, and so, we got this huge skewed perspective of what the other side was thinking or what was going on with them, so yeah, so the language was a huge barrier, and then the personalities, and then um, of course the cultural element of that and just what comes with just having people who are from

different backgrounds and just believing that their background is the right way of being. (P6)

Another participant acknowledged how important it is to take notice of one's own values and the ways in which these values affect one's actions and the way one approaches all situations: "there are so many of your own values that you don't even realize you have within you, um, and you tend to bring that everywhere you go, even though sometimes you think you don't have those values." (P2) Of these values, one that was brought up in a few interviews was that of religious beliefs. Religion seemed to pose some uniquely challenging situations within groups when a participant would refuse to engage in certain activities due to religious beliefs. This posed some challenges to the group, as people struggled with being inclusive and at the same time respectful of deep-rooted values.

One last challenge identified by many participants was that of gender-specific engagement in conflict. Of all the participants who mentioned the role of gender in conflicts throughout the duration of the program, each one acknowledged that the girls in the program had more conflict than the boys, and that the boys were often better able to simply accept things as they were. This seemed to be similar across cultures, with both the Canadian girls and the counterpart girls. As a few participants noted: "actually a lot of the male participants tended not to have any conflicts with their counterparts, and that was not just in my group, but in the other group too" (P2); "actually a lot of the conflicts seemed to be almost universal, the girls usually, at least some of the girls had conflicts with their counterparts" (P2).

Having to overcome stereotypical assumptions about other cultures was a challenge that most participants noted as both important to understanding their counterparts, and essential to building respectful relationships. As one participant illustrates, the CWY program offered him the opportunity to examine the stereotypes he had developed over the years, and provided a chance to overcome those by learning to better understand the realities of the culture within which he was immersed.

...that really just had a lot to do with just arriving in (partner country), and realizing that the community we're in and the people we're seeing weren't at all the stereotypical vision that we get from world vision... as much as maybe I would try to deny it, I still had these stereotypes about just the entire continent of Africa, and whether I liked it or not or whether I tried to escape them or not, and even, I told people before I did the program, I said, I really want to do this because I know I have stereotypes and I want to break those stereotypes, I want to really see what's happening there, and it TOTALLY did, one hundred percent!
(P2)

The last overarching challenge when intermixing cultures, which almost every participant identified as one of the most noticeable, involved the difficulty in learning to communicate across language barriers. Participants noted the difficulty in dealing with any type of conflict when the most common and typical forms of communication could not be used. Not being able to speak the same language as counterparts led to challenges presented by misunderstanding, misinterpretations, and general feelings of frustration and impatience when not being understood. Conflicts also arose when linguistic slang, or sayings that carried different meaning for different cultures were used and mistaken as being offensive by the recipient. Most participants indicated that while the language barrier was one of the biggest initial challenges, this improved throughout the program as the participants learned to speak the partner language, and also learned to communicate more effectively in alternative ways.

Well I would say in general, that the first, the biggest conflict probably came um, with the language barrier... inevitably that's where a lot of the conflict came from initially, so the language barrier did create some um, tense moments, and um, particularly at the beginning, um, the first few weeks of the program because there was so little communication that we could have verbally anyway. (P3)

...most of our conflict centered around of just miscommunications...it started off as a language barrier. (P6)

4.4 – Inter-personal/Inter-group Relationships

A large part of the CWY program is based on the counterpart relationships, since participants are placed with a counterpart with whom they live, work, and share their exchange experience. Part of the challenges and developments that come as a result of the CWY experience are due to learning how to live and work within a group. One participant reflected, “I think worldwide it’s, I think it’s extremely important in how to deal with conflict, so I think if you could figure it out between inter-groups and inter-group relationships then you can apply that in the bigger picture, so it’s super important.” (P1) The challenge of learning to work on inter-personal relationships within a group forced participants to adapt and become more flexible. The benefits of building these relationships were also seen through inter-personal support and in the friendships that were built as a result of sharing a common experience. “I think one of the things that really, really helped in the program, was the friendships that you had, and um, what, like whenever you were having a problem like if you went to your other people in the group, they really helped you through it.” (P4)

As previously stated, counterpart relationships are a fundamental aspect of the CWY Core program. Many participants indicated their counterpart relationships as a

main source of conflict throughout the exchange, which contributed to ongoing challenges, but also provided a great opportunity for learning and personal development. Participants found they had to develop creative ways in which to make the most of their counterpart relationships:

...so we just tried to enjoy other aspects of our relationship which were, which were fine, it was better to just try to have fun and not focus on things that we didn't agree on, or that we didn't see eye to eye on, so I think simplifying things was a good idea, and that, that helped, so, it worked out pretty well. (P3)

While certain participants seemed to have been matched with a counterpart with whom they built lasting friendships, others found they had to make the most of a relationship that would be challenging and would not have developed under any other circumstances.

In addition to living with a counterpart, CWY participants must deal with the challenges and unique experience of living with a host family, some of which often have very different cultural practices and ways of living than the participants are used to. Certain participants indicated the host family placement as one of the highlights of their experience, while others identified this as one of the major challenges and areas of tension. For one participant in particular, the support of the host family and other participants of the program proved to be incredibly helpful in a situation where there were ongoing challenges with her counterpart.

I wanted to get as much out of my experience as possible, so the good thing was that I had an awesome host family, lots of kids, and um, so they were all kind of, they were the ones who showed me around out village, and kind of took me by my hand and kind of helped me have an awesome experience there and also the other participants, one of the guys in the program was a really good friend and he kind of helped me experience a lot of the culture as well. (P11)

Another participant illustrated the complications that arose when dealing with counterpart conflicts within the dynamics of a host family:

...so, um, first you know, little while, it was all great, but then we had a little bit of a personality clash, uh, it wasn't so much that we had a conflict, as um, it was more, I tend to be more withdrawn and he was more outgoing, and it ended up being a conflict even with our host family, because he would disappear for times, and I'm supposed to know where he is, and it was hard for me to get through to him. (P5)

Adjusting to new living conditions and learning the culture of a new family proved challenging for many of the participants. A few participants commented on the experience of integrating into a new family life while navigating many other new experiences:

The second rotation when we were in (host country), most of the conflict was, was just uh, trying to get through to some of my family members, my host family members, not even so much communication, because we knew enough of, enough French that we could communicate but it was just, you know they'd say they'd do something and they wouldn't do something, and a lot of that is just the culture difference...(P5)

I mean I guess like a big adjustment though too is living with a host family, you know, and, one of our host dads was kind of an interesting guy, and we would sometimes get mad about just like weird things, and so it wasn't necessarily us or whatever, but like you know, he'd get mad at his sons and would yell at him in front of us, and we were just sitting there like not quite sure what to do you know. (P8)

In addition to building relationships with one's counterpart and host family, the participants were presented with the ongoing challenge of working as a group throughout the six months, having to build group unity, group morale, and struggling through the fluctuations in group dynamics involved in decision making processes and everyday activities.

So we had, there's pretty much consensus decisions on most things, and our supervisors were pretty much into letting us figure out a decision making process, and so in the beginning, we had to decide who got what, or work placements and with what (partner) counterpart working with what Canadian counterpart took us probably 2 full days of discussion to get that done. And our supervisors like, they helped us out, and we were getting very frustrated and there's tensions and like factions and everything but by the end of the program we had really settled things down so I think they realized that there was a process that we had to go through. (P9)

From the very beginning of the program, participants are encouraged to make decisions as a group, and are given the responsibility of ensuring that everyone is satisfied with the outcomes. Participants indicated that this set the scene for the rest of the program, and motivated them to come up with innovative solutions to engage in group activities that were accessible to everyone: "...so, that's why things like when we had dinners at people's homes, these were things that everyone could participate in because it didn't matter if you had money or you didn't have money, um and so we'd definitely get the whole group in on it." (P2) Several participants noted that the times when the group morale was highest throughout the program were at times when the group was working towards a common goal, and sharing in the experience of achieving something together.

For example, one participant describes the group morale during a building project:

...first day we completed almost 2 kms of road, and were figuring an even better way, ummm, a more efficient way to build that road, so the group dynamic was pretty strong, we were pretty motivated through the beginning of the day, and that was the unity between the whole group, we were pretty excited about it. (P1)

While many participants noted the importance of group building activities, others also acknowledged the value in the process of coming to group decisions, and engaging in the challenges as a member of the group:

...there's lots of conflict, and you don't even have to be involved with the conflict yourself, you know, as I said I tend to be very laid back so while, I'm not saying I didn't have any, I had a lot less than others, and just because you're all in the same house, you're forced to watch other people's conflicts, and you're, you're involved to some extent, simply because you're all there... (P5)

...like everything from my counterpart, to my group, to my workplaces, everything seemed like it was not the way it was supposed to be, like it was totally wrong and not good, and not great at all, but because everything went wrong, it was such an unbelievably amazing program, and so, because in all of those situations there was conflict, um, whether on the group scale, it was huge conflict in between trying to resolve issues around making sure people felt heard,

and respected, and understood, and felt involved, and um, and felt uh, kind of felt like they were part of something... (P6)

...I think I realize that being part of the actual team is more important than being a leader than I previously thought it was.... I did realize at least that for something to actually get done, it takes more than one person... (P10)

Most of the struggles surrounding group unity for the participants stemmed from strong personality clashes and a cultural division between individuals. Most participants noted that at some point throughout the program, there was a division between the Canadian group and the group from the partner country. A few of the participants even acknowledged the division in their use of language, often referring to the groups as “us and them” (P6). There was also some mention of a change in group dynamics after the switch from the first stage of the program to the second stage in the partner country, which was at times reflected in a certain group’s lack of motivation to participate in the program as a member of the group:

When we went to (partner country), that’s when things really started to scatter, and we never really formed or bonded as a group, or even as a smaller group, it was always in sort of different scattered fractions of our group, but what eventually started to happen was that people just um, realized that there was, like there wasn’t any incentive to participating. (P6)

Every one of the eleven participants interviewed commented to some degree on the role of group dynamics and group work as a part of their experience in the CWY program. Whether they found it incredibly challenging, rewarding, or just an obvious part of the experience, they all acknowledged that this was an important aspect of the program that provided for some first hand learning experiences and opportunities for self development.

4.5 – Personal Growth and Development

The last two interview questions of my research asked participants to reflect on how their experiences had changed them individually, and whether they had learned any skills that had helped them in their everyday lives. The participants identified several areas in which they felt they had changed and developed as individuals, including: becoming more open-minded, gaining empathy, learning to adapt to new situations and being more flexible, gaining a new perspective on the world, and learning from experiences, which in turn led them to ongoing educational development. Many of the participants noted a change in their ability to deal with conflicts after returning from the exchange, and commented on how they have been able to use their new skills in various areas of their lives. Participants generally noticed that they were better able to take a step back from a situation and look at it from an objective point of view. They felt empowered by the experience of having worked through demanding situations, and having overcome challenges they had never previously been exposed to: “...it really altered my perception in the way that I just see everything as an opportunity and feel that I have the ability to find good things on any path that I might choose, um, and it gave me a lot of experiential skills to deal with any situation that I find pops up...” (P9). Being immersed in a new culture also allowed participants to reflect on their own values, and re-evaluate the way they address conflicts in their personal lives.

I mean it's not just that I listen better now, that makes me better able to understand where they're coming from, it's that I better understand my own culture, and thus understand sort of the biases, prejudices, and philosophical associations that go behind each of our discussions. (P10)

...if you can't listen to other people, then um, you're not going to get anywhere, so I think that I'm, especially with my family I've noticed that, just I'm way more patient with people, when there's issues that arise and I think um, too,

communicating cross-culturally for me has been a huge, huge change, I'm way more perceptive that people do come from different backgrounds, do have different make-ups, you know... (P11)

Many participants were able to appreciate the challenges as learning opportunities. One participant in particular noted how going through the difficult phases of the program helped her personal development:

...there were so many times that I was like, wow, if it was easy to just hop on a plane, I would definitely get out of here, because it was really hard, especially with my counterpart, things with her really made my life hell some days, but I think that um, but I really value the whole experience, and I think that without it, I wouldn't be going nearly as far as I see myself going in the next few years, so it's an exciting thing.(P11)

One area that participants felt they had changed as a result of the program was in their ability to be more open-minded, and have a broader scope of understanding and appreciation for differences between individuals. Several participants commented on how they found the CWY experience to be a mind-opening experience for everyone, regardless of whether they believed themselves to have been open-minded prior to the experience. As one participant commented: "when I thought I was open-minded before and thinking I was open-minded and accepting it was like, oh, so this is what it's like to have an open mind" (P6). Certain participants also noted they felt better able to empathize with people whom they had previously believed to be very different from themselves.

I just sort of feel like now, if there's a conflict that I'm confronted with, it's much easier, um, when it's simplified, and, cause I realized during the program, that if we kept things simple, and tried to understand where the other person is coming from, and really just focused on what it was that was most important that we had to overcome, um, there weren't as many conflicts, I just sort of let go of things that I could afford to let go of, you know, compromised on things that I was ok with and just stick to what was, um, what I felt was most important to talk about, so that's helped in many other situations too, and the willingness to try to understand someone else's point of view is also something that, um, improved very much because, you know, in most cases when people are confronted with conflicts, a lot of the time um, you know it's hard to um, it's hard to really, well

to put yourself in the other person's shoes and to think of someone's situation other than your own. (P3)

Seeing it, or trying to see it as best I could from the perspective of the people that have grown up within it and that live and function within that culture has provided a very different perspective, and I would say the perspective is just um, is just much more open mindedness about um, about the other types of cultures that do exist, and um, and the differences that, between you know, those other cultures and the one that I'm used to, the one that I've grown up in, um, so I would say that yeah, that really the more broad perspective or the willingness to um, to examine those other cultures is much more, is much more advanced now, or I'm much more open to that than maybe than I was before (P3)

Participants communicated that becoming increasingly open-minded came hand in hand with the ability to adapt to new situations and be flexible in their ways of thinking and acting. Most participants reflected on their experiences as having increased their ability to deal with any situation in a calm way while making space for new and alternative ways of approaching situations. One participant related this skill to her ability to engage in conflict in their everyday life: "I think this is the greatest skill I could have when it comes to conflict, just being able to take things coolly and not stressing out about the consequences or what's going to happen, or expectations, um, something comes up, you just deal with it then and there." (P2) Being placed in a new situation where one is forced to evaluate their pre-conceived notions, and reflect on their ways of being and their own culture encourages them to open up and adapt to new ways of life, as the following participant explained:

...you put me in a situation where you have to be comfortable with a completely different way of living and you have to accept that, and accept the fact that other people, even on a pretty basic level, they don't think the same way as you, their mindset is different, their goals are different, I don't know, I think it just opened me up in terms of like, just accepting other cultures, and uh, different kinds of people, which I think is huge. (P7)

Another participant explained the need to be flexible in approaching relationships, and being innovative in finding new ways to adapt to situations. This participant

acknowledged the importance of realizing that needs can be met and that the most can be made of situations that may not seem ideal or easily manageable at first glance:

...ok, so we're different people, we have different beliefs, we're never going to have the same beliefs, I'm never going to convince you of mine, you're never going to convince me of yours, um, we're definitely never going to dance through daisy fields holding hands and singing lullabies, so how do we actually communicate clearly, and how do we enjoy spending time with each other without one of us going all the way one way, or the other going all the way one way, um, and how do we find a sort of compromise and common ground. (P6)

In addition to becoming increasingly adaptable, flexible, and open-minded, participants were unanimous in their reflections that their participation in the CWY program had changed their perceptions of the world in various ways. Many participants mentioned that they had noticed a change in their values after their return from the exchange program, and reported that they put more emphasis on different parts of their lives than they had previous to leaving. For example, a few participants noted: "like now, I really start putting more values on, or I've changed, prioritized my values" (P2); "I mean, my whole perception on life and the meaning of life and everything has changed since the program, like I just, um, I see so much more potential in the average human being, and I see that I value certain things way more than I ever did" (P11). Participants seemed able to understand cultures through a new viewpoint, and saw the complexity of issues that contribute to the ways in which individuals come to understand their position in the world. As one participant noted:

There's a lot of different factors that have to be considered like, like history, socialization, um, the family, politics, so many things like that have to be looked at because that's the climate that our participants and ourselves have been raised in and we all bring that to the table so if you look at that you can have a better understanding, and that's kind of what changed my world, just, looking at a lot of different variables. (P1)

The changes that most participants noticed within themselves are changes that continue to affect them in their everyday lives. Several participants pointed out that this change was

an ongoing process that was initiated through their CWY experiences: “It did change me in that way, I’m just thinking, I’m different now even from the first months that I returned from the program...now I think I look back on it and I think that was kind of the catalyst for change.” (P9) This ongoing change and ongoing personal development is also highlighted through one participant’s description of having taken on a new worldview, and a new way of interpreting the world:

...you always know that people from different places will have different perceptions on things, but I’m way more, I guess understanding of that, or, um, I see that a lot easier now, and don’t just think from a Canadian point of view necessarily anymore, I think more a worldly point of view...(P11)

These personal changes and continuing developments experienced by participants of the CWY program were described as being in large part due to being able to learn through personal, first hand experience, which continues to affect their life long decisions and ongoing education post-CWY program. When asked whether they felt there was anything that could have been done to better help prepare them for the challenges they would be faced with throughout the program, participants generally agreed that no amount of preparation could have prepared them for the specific situations that presented themselves. In fact, they stated that the most valuable lessons were learned through being exposed to a situation without any specific preparation and having to figure out ways to make the most of any given situation. One participant commented: “... being put in another culture and just let go, it’s like sink or swim, it’s kind of fun, and it’s a wicked way of learning, learning like through direct interaction.” (P7) Another participant explained the necessity of being immersed in a situation in order to completely understand it and appreciate the lessons learned:

I mean we all had an idea of what would happen, and what would um, what it would be like to live with a person for 6 months, and um, like even the culture

shock and stuff and how that would raise problems, but I don't think that any of us really really understood what that would be like, and I don't think, in a way you can't really prepare for that, but um, but they do try to prepare you for it, but I don't think you can really really truly understand until you're in it. (P4)

Not only did the participants learn from these first hand experiences, many of them said that their learnings from the CWY program encouraged them to pursue ongoing education in the field of international development after their return, and led them in new directions which they had not considered before the program. Three participants commented on how the CWY program directly affected their areas of study and life paths:

I can say directly because of CWY, I changed my major to global politics, and not at all for the job at the end or what I could have at the end of the degree, but more of I want to learn how the world works, how society interacts, and learn about so many of the things you know that we take for granted, and especially, especially because of this program learning about ideas of development. (P2)

The area that I was originally going to go into in school changed after the program, and it kind of more, was more related to some of the, in a broad sense to the program itself in certain areas that related more to international relations or development and getting into that area rather than what I was going to do before, so it did change, it did alter sort of longer term choices that I was going to be making. (P3)

I'm doing a Peace Studies and International Development in university right now, so I think it really just gave me um, a heads up to those kinds of fields, you know wanting to learn more about a lot of things. (P9)

The personal developments and learnings that the CWY participants experienced throughout the program are therefore ongoing and continue to affect them in their everyday lives. There was not one single participant who said that they did not believe their participation had affected them in a positive way. While not every participant felt that the program had completely changed their life, they all agreed that they gained valuable skills and developed as individuals throughout and as a result of their participation in CWY.

4.6 – Areas of Support/Important Contributions of the Program

Throughout the interviews, participants referred to certain aspects of the CWY program that they found to be very helpful throughout the exchange, and also offered a few suggestions on how the program could be made even better. Of the most helpful areas, participants generally said they greatly appreciated the support of their project supervisors throughout the exchange, and often looked to their project supervisors for personal and emotional support. A few participants described some ways in which their project supervisors provided helpful support without being overbearing or attempting to solve others' problems themselves:

They tried to work it out, like they tried to give us different ways to work on it, and, um, in the end, like with the supervisors help, it really did help us like get along, um, they, they gave us like different ways that we could work on, like, getting along together. (P4)

I felt that they were like exactly what I needed at least, they were just enough to give enough advice to send you on your own path, and not coming into it too much to think that uh, I don't know, that your counterpart would think you're talking to other people behind his back, so it seemed pretty good, I was happy for that, and proud of them for that. (P9)

A few participants reported that their project supervisors did not always meet their expectations, and they sometimes felt that the project supervisors were not fulfilling their role to an appropriate degree. In these circumstances, there were many small problems that arose, some leading to bigger conflicts, that the participants believed could have been resolved by having the project supervisor step in and intervene through their position of authority. One participant explained the role of the supervisor as setting an example for what behaviours should be acceptable, and the importance of the project supervisors doing everything in their power to maintain their own relationships and dynamic within the group in order to set an example for the rest of the participants: "...we were trying to

bring to light that as project supervisors they're an example and there's clearly a divide between the project supervisors and the communication between them and that's not a very good example for us." (P1)

Another helpful aspect that several participants commented on was the reflection circles, or weekly check-ins where participants would come together to 'check-in' and touch base with one another to ensure effective communication within the group. One participant illustrates the importance and usefulness of these circles in the following statement:

We spent every morning in a circle just explaining how we feel or what's happened in the past couple days, and if we didn't have this reflection circle, and it was really annoying because it would take a while, but, when we didn't do it, it usually happened on those trips that we were away...and it's like people didn't get to address how they were feeling, or where they were coming from so no one had any idea of how to empathize with anyone because no one knew where they were coming from so, we'd always come back to these circles, and then, usually, like, we'd just, by the end of it I think we just knew that as annoying as they were they were definitely fundamental in being able to communicate and avoid arguments. (P1)

Certain participants mentioned they found the pre-orientation camps and preparation period to be helpful in building a group dynamic and preparing for the experience. However, as previously mentioned, they also mostly found that no amount of training that could have effectively prepared them for the experience.

I think that they definitely prepared us as much as we could be and then anything that came after that was going to be individual, we would have to, we have to you know, figure out what solution was best for us, and our counterpart, so, but yeah, I do think that, that um, they definitely gave us enough time in advance to um, to just keep in mind, to put that idea into our head that you know, that we could and likely will run into things that could create conflict and you know, because it's a situation none of us has ever seen before so, um, so they did make us realize that um, you know, you'll still run into conflict, but you'll have to, the point is of course to try to figure it out um, on your own with your counterpart and with the group, and try to find your own, your own solution. (P3)

The group building exercises during the pre-orientation camps helped participants form relationships, and helped them have an idea of some of the conflicts that could arise throughout the program. Simply mentioning to participants that they would be encountering new ways of life, and that people would be approaching a similar situation through very different perspectives, seemed to be helpful in itself as a simple mind-opener to set the mood for the exchange. As one participant noted:

We were always trying to look at it through an open, like an open perspective, like, why, why, were they trying to do this, like we really tried to understand the other point of view, so uh, we did have that, so some of that I could say could be thanks to some of the preparation that CWY gave us before the program. (P2)

Apart from the help of project supervisors and the other factors that made the exchange experience more enjoyable and navigable for the participants, there was some emphasis throughout the interviews on the very nature of the CWY program being centered around the idea of exchange, rather than development, which the participants believed allowed them to come out of the program with such rich experiences and new knowledge. This was highlighted by participants expressing their appreciation for being welcomed into communities in both Canada and the partner country, and being able to learn from others as well as teach their group members and learn together as a group.

This is why CWY is one of the best programs I've seen out there because it helps you to see this exchange, it helps you to realize that not only can I show you things, but you can show me things too, and I can learn a lot from your culture as well as you can learn from my culture, and more of this exchange is what has to happen, and less of we're coming in, we're giving you what *we* think you should have, and then we're getting out, and these kind of programs sometimes miss what's actually happening in the communities and what's happening on the ground, and that one experience just kind of really was the highlight of what my mode of thinking just changed completely. (P2)

This perspective of being able to learn from a new culture as much as giving back to it is an important aspect of international development and international exchange. It was

clear through the stories of the participants interviewed that they genuinely saw the CWY program as an opportunity to gain new knowledge and learn about a new culture, rather than to impose their beliefs on others. Throughout the interviews, it became clear to me that the focus for most participants was on what they had personally gained, and the experiences they had shared with others, rather than on what they had contributed. As one participant pointed out, being immersed in a new culture and community made her re-evaluate what is really important in her life: “I mean I’ve traveled lots before but never to a developing country, and I think that being in (partner country) really just kind of instilled that in me, that like, community and these things are really really important.” (P11)

The participants of the CWY program all felt they had gained an incredible amount of knowledge through their exchange experiences, and were generally very pleased with the program and the organization of the program. There were, however, a few participants who had some suggestions for CWY, or some areas where they felt the program could be improved. Most of these suggestions had to do with preparation and their wish for a higher degree of preparation prior to beginning the program, as well as in regards to the training of project supervisors. One participant in particular described the importance of ensuring that supervisors were well prepared to deal with situations that could arise, since the participants may not be aware of the best way to proceed:

I think that it’s something that should be brought up in pre-orientation and give forewarning that these things do happen and ways to deal with it, but I really think that the training should be given to the Project Supervisor, so that they can pass it on during the program, like, do a follow up and consistently follow it up because they’re the ones who ultimately have to deal with those problems at the

end of the day, and in our specific cases it was their breakdown that trickled its way down into the group. (P1)

Specific recommendations for improvement during pre-orientation camps included wanting the preparation to include more strategies for dealing with inter-personal conflicts:

It's the same with a lot of things you can learn theories but you have to have experience in them, it definitely does help to learn conflict management, resolution, negotiation, mediation, before you go into it and I think we could have had more of that, like in the orientation, in personal interviews, the interviewer asked me how would you deal with conflict with another group member, and I gave him an answer, but I'm not really that kind of guy, so I didn't have the greatest answer and then it wasn't much more than that that prepared us. (P9)

One other participant felt that since the language barrier presented such great challenges in the initial phase of the exchange, it would have been helpful and very useful to have some language training prior to the beginning of the program.

I still feel like they should have done, the one thing we weren't prepared for and they should have done was the language as well, um, there was no language training of any kind before we went down there, well, I'm sorry, that's a lie, there was maybe like 2 hours of language training before we went down there, but uh, that was my big problem with the orientation camp. (P10)

In summary, the five themes that were most highlighted throughout the participant interviews were: the main challenges and causes of conflict for participants throughout the program, the cultural challenges and implications, inter-personal and inter-group relationships, personal growth and development and important areas of support and contributions to the program. This chapter has presented the findings of my research as illustrated by the CWY Core Program participants who were willing to participate in the interviews. The following chapter will be a discussion of my analysis of these experiences, and will present my interpretation of the meaning of these findings.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 – Summary of Findings

After having conducted, transcribed, reviewed, coded, and analyzed the interviews, I believe that I can confidently say that the participants interviewed felt that their participation in the CWY Core Program did in fact help to develop and improve their adaptability, cross-cultural communication skills, and conflict resolution skills. While the participants all had very different experiences, and interpreted their experiences differently, they all identified a personal change in these areas. In this chapter, I will discuss the ways in which the participants were able to improve their adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and therefore conflict resolution skills through their CWY experiences. What I have most importantly come to understand through this research, is that the development of conflict resolution skills through such an experience is not directly related to whether or not the participants were able to resolve the conflicts throughout the program, or whether they were able to get along well with their counterparts, but comes rather from the process of being part of such an experience, and being exposed to these situations, whether resolved or not, which provided rich opportunities for learning and personal development.

5.2 – Gaining Adaptability

When speaking of adaptability, I am referring to many aspects and challenges presented by participants, including overcoming culture shock, overcoming stereotypes,

learning to accept unmet expectations, and becoming comfortable in a new and different culture. This is not to say that one must be completely integrated into a culture in order to adapt, but that one must be able to function as part of the community in which one is living and find a way to feel comfortable in that given situation. Some of the participants interviewed were able to integrate into the community and feel at home in their partner country, while for others, there was an ongoing struggle throughout the program to find their place within the community. However, even those who found it difficult to find a comfort level within the community were able to find it in themselves to adapt. These may actually be the individuals who went through the most intense self-development, because they overcame a bigger challenge than those to which the transition came easily. It is important to note that there are several factors that played into one being able to adapt throughout the different phases of the exchange, such as living situations, comfort levels, feelings of safety or concern for one's safety, and numerous other external influences that influenced the degree to which one could adapt to situations. The degree to which the participants were able to adapt to their new situations and function within them also depended on such factors.

5.2.a. Diverging Expectations/Motivations

One area in which many of the participants indicated they had to adapt throughout the exchange program was related to their expectations of their counterparts' reasons for participating in the exchange. As was mentioned by a few of the interviewees, their counterparts' motivations for participating in the program were often different from their

own. These participants thought this may have resulted in a different degree of involvement in the program, as well as a different expectation of outcomes. While some of the participants described this divergence in motivations as something that they were able to accept and work with, others felt that this was problematic to the program, and were not able to completely adapt to this situation. One participant illustrated the difficulty in coming to terms with diverging expectations in the following reflection:

...we lived in the same city that our counterparts were from, so um, my counterpart was always with her family, and she didn't really want to participate in the program, and she was saying like, she didn't even want to be in the program, and she was just in it because her father had forced her to and um, and then that was really hard for me because um, there are so many Canadians who really really want to be in the program, and it was just really hard for me to be in it with someone who didn't want to be there, and then, and then she didn't want to live in the same house as, she didn't want to live with the host family, she wanted to live, she was really religious, and she lived in a church, and so she didn't want to live in our house, she wanted to live with her family, and it was just, it was really really difficult living with somebody that was like, not into the program at all. (P4)

This proved to be a major challenge for participants who were put in a situation where they felt their counterpart was not involved for the right reasons. Upon reflection, some of the participants interviewed were able to see the motivations for participation of their counterparts as more complex, and were therefore able to accept that their counterparts had different reasons for participating in the exchange. Their ability to understand the multiple factors that led to the counterparts' decisions to participate and the degree to which they engaged throughout the program shows that they were able to gain a certain amount of empathy towards their counterpart, and therefore adapt to the situation with which they were presented.

...now I'm talking more about things we learned later on, because it was only when we got to (partner country) that we realized how much value like a single Canadian dollar has...and so we started kind of, a lot of things we started putting into perspective, and so we're like ok, well obviously...like I would, I would

definitely want to save that money...I would want to hold on to this money and like bring it back and use it...(P2)

Instead of resenting their counterparts for being a part of the program for the wrong reasons, or feeling that they could not come to share common goals with their counterparts, many of the Canadian participants indicated that they came to realize and understand the realities of their counterparts, and were able to empathize with their situation and adapt to their position within the exchange.

5.2.b. Finding One's Place in the Community

Another challenge that the participants identified was that of integrating into a new community and becoming a part of that community, even if only for a short period of time. Because Canadian, or Western culture, is quite individualistic, it is often a challenge for us to think of ourselves as a part of a community. Many of us are used to cultures in which we are able to associate with people who are similar to ourselves, and have common interests and common values. We choose our friends according to what we like to see reflected in ourselves, and therefore often avoid challenges of having to overcome contradicting viewpoints. The CWY participants are put into a situation where they are living with a family in a small community, which may be a new experience for many of them. They must also learn to live with a variety of people that may not be similar to them in most ways, and must make the most of these situations. I believe there are valuable lessons to be learned from having to build relationships and finding strengths in personalities that are very different from our own. This makes us reflect on our ways of being, and forces us to re-evaluate who we are. The challenge of being part of a

community also makes us look at ourselves from a different perspective than the individualistic ideology we are used to. It can put a different spin on the way we conceive the world and our place in this world, as well as challenge our deepest beliefs. “Changing our deepest beliefs, those “pilings driven into the swamp” that underlie our world view require us to shake up the kaleidoscope of our collective mind and rearrange the facts – the pieces of colored glass out of which we construct reality – into a new, more adaptive pattern.” (Clark 2002, 13) Being able to do this, however, requires an open mind and a willingness to let go of one’s pre-set notions, and not everyone will engage if given the opportunity. I believe that all of the participants interviewed throughout my research were able to open themselves up to new possibilities and new ways of being, and it is for this reason that they were able to share such valuable lessons and stories with me.

5.3 – Cross-Cultural Communication

In terms of cross-cultural communication, participants learned that while one of the first challenges in this area is overcoming language barriers, there are many other aspects involved in communicating effectively across cultures. The participants expressed the ways in which communication means both being able to express themselves and make themselves understood, as well as looking beyond their initial and automatic responses to a certain action, and attempting to understand what is truly being communicated by the other. This was made clear through several examples described by participants.

One participant re-iterated a pre-orientation camp activity that was set up to introduce them to some of the misinterpretations and miscommunications that would likely arise throughout their exchange. The Project Supervisors had the group of Canadian participants enact a role play in which they acted out a cultural ritual without the use of language. After the exercise, the participants were asked to explain what they had observed through the exercise. The following description illustrates the participants' reactions to the exercise:

So when we finished we all sat around in a circle and they were like, ok, tell us what you saw. And so we started saying things like, you know the women were inferior in this culture because they didn't sit in the chair, they were on the ground, and the men would eat first...but the main thing that the men seemed superior in this culture, and everyone, almost everyone had agreed about this, it just seemed obvious right, and then they break it down for us, and what it is is that this tribe considers women sacred and they also consider the earth very sacred, and because women give birth, just like the earth is able to give birth, uh, they said that the women have the only privilege to sit that close to the ground, so when the man pushes her head down, it's because that's the only way that he can connect to the earth, and the males eating first, that's because it's the only way to make sure that the food is ok for the women to eat, so they *really* broke down like our first conceptions like ideas of what this culture was like, and for me, that really made me really kind of realize that I have to really look at things... (P2)

This example shows one participant's realization that things are not always what they seem, and highlights the importance of keeping an open mind when interpreting actions in a new culture, or in any situation for that matter. While not all the participants claimed that they had an experience similar to this one that really broke down their misconceptions and made them realize they had completely misinterpreted a cultural action, they did all acknowledge that the challenges to communicating went beyond understanding a language.

Since many of the participants explained how a large number of the conflicts that arose throughout the program were a direct result of miscommunications or misunderstandings, it is quite clear that learning to communicate effectively across cultures can play a huge role in alleviating many conflicts. For this reason, it is crucial that people be given the opportunities to develop these communication skills, and be aware of the nuances that can come with messages through a variety of communication methods.

5.4 – Conflict Resolution through CWY

While gaining conflict resolution skills is not necessarily the main focus of the CWY program, I believe it is an important aspect that can be developed through the program, and that was reflected by all the participants interviewed. As participants noted, they felt they had learned much about themselves throughout the program, and had also learned about the differences between individuals and ways of approaching situations. As a result, they are now better able to conceptualize of alternative ways of approaching a conflict. They will therefore be better able to understand various points of view when in a conflict situation, which will in turn increase their ability to work through problems with respect and while building lasting relationships. As John-Paul Lederach explains in his book *The Moral Imagination*, the first step towards transforming conflicts into positive and learning experiences is to accept the notion of multiple realities, and realize that we can, at the same time, both hold on to our beliefs, and accept those of the other.

The moral imagination refuses to frame life's challenges, problems, and issues as dualistic polarities. Its fundamental approach holds multiple and even competing and contradictory needs and perspectives together at the same time. It is built on

a capacity to imagine that it is possible to hold multiple realities and worldviews simultaneously as parts of a greater whole without losing one's identity and viewpoint and without needing to impose or force one's view on the other. It pursues complexity as a friend rather an enemy. (Lederach, 2005, p.62)

Participants of the program made it clear that this was a valuable lesson they had learned as a result of the CWY experience. They acknowledged that they would never be able to convince another of their values and viewpoints, and that they in turn would not be persuaded to change their own, however this did not mean they could not agree on certain matters and come to appreciate each others' differences and build on their commonalities. This is a skill, or rather a way of seeing the world, that can be applied not only to conflict between those from different cultures or backgrounds, but also in close personal relationships with family members, loved ones, and those we surround ourselves with everyday.

5.5 – Personal Reflections on Findings

A conflict can be a very positive experience if approached with an open mind and with a productive outlook. While it may be incredibly challenging at times, if we are able to effectively listen to other values and points of view, and honestly reflect on our own, I believe we can address any conflict peacefully and productively and find a way to manage the conflict in such a way that will leave all parties involved satisfied with the outcome. As Abu-Nimer explains, “you should have the energy and capacity to listen to people's pain, people's misperceptions, and even listen to people's ignorance...you need to constantly reflect on your own biases” (Abu-Nimer, 2003, p.6) This is not always easy

to do, and needs to be done consciously in order to understand where one's own beliefs and pre-conceptions are coming from.

Because identity is constantly changing, cultures are also constantly changing, and because of this constant change and fluidity, it is possible to identify with any given person at any given time. I believe it is important to keep challenging oneself throughout one's lifetime in order to keep re-realizing this inter-connectedness, for it is very easy to fall back into what is comfortable and familiar, and separate ourselves from this reality.

When we extend ourselves into a new vocation, violence breaks out: we burst into tears, are a prey to doubt, are aggressively confident and talk of nothing but our plans – violence and disregard take many forms. We are going through a deep energy change, a spiritual change, and we are producing symptoms. (Richards, 1998, p.240)

The times when I have been most removed from my comfort zone and felt the most 'lost' and found myself questioning why I am doing what I am doing are also the times where I have come to feel most self aware of who I am, and noticed the importance of being connected with all individuals, even those who once seemed so alien. This was also reflected in the stories of the CWY participants interviewed. These stages of discomfort are the ones that allow us to grow, to examine our identities, and to constantly redefine ourselves. I believe this to be an important step in learning how to effectively resolve conflicts. As one learns to better know themselves, reflect on who they are and why they have become the person they are, the better they will be able to understand others, and therefore the better they will be able to work through conflicts with others.

5.6 – Learning through First-Hand Experience

It would appear, from the data collected in this study, that one of the most important points that came from the participants interviewed was that of being able to learn through direct, hands-on experiences. Several participants mentioned that there is no way they could have learned the things they did in a classroom, or through a book, or through any other experience for that matter. This highlights the importance of being exposed to new situations in order to gain new knowledge and continue to grow as an individual. If we continually stay in our comfort zones and surround ourselves with the same people, we will continue to gain a certain degree of knowledge, and we can definitely learn through textbooks, media, and everyday interactions, however we will not be challenged to push the boundaries which can help us gain valuable skills. Being exposed to and immersed in new situations and new ways of life gives us this opportunity to reflect on our own place in the world, and the way in which we live our lives. In order to fully appreciate and be able to accept other ways of life, we must first be able to recognize our own cultural viewpoints and ways of knowing. Being aware of the ways in which our cultural realms have been formed will allow us to better understand how another's worldview has also been shaped. For many people, this may not seem like a necessary skill to have, but with the increase in globalization, and the nature of our increasingly international community, we cannot ignore that we must learn to work with people around the world. As one participant pointed out, there is only so much that can be taught before actually being placed in a real-life situation:

It was one of those things where, sure we've been told we understand that, but so much of their behaviour, um, was, we understood it so much more once we went there, and experienced it for ourselves for a few weeks, so, at the same time you

know, I'm not sure how much they can actually do or explain to us what those differences will be beforehand. (P5)

This highlights the importance of being immersed in situations where one can gain hands-on learning. This applies not only to situations that will help us productively engage in, and manage conflicts, but also to all types of education. As was described by Freire, gaining knowledge is something that must be accomplished through interaction with others and through personal reflection.¹⁴ In order for people to become educated, they must have these opportunities to engage in dialogue and live new experiences that will challenge their assumptions and conditioned way of learning.

5.7 – Areas for further research/Unanswered Questions

One particularity of conflicts experienced by CWY participants is related to the notion of gender and conflict. Several participants interviewed mentioned that the girls in the program experienced much more conflict with their counterparts and within the group than did the boys, and that they also had more trouble working through, or letting go of the conflicts that arose. While this was mentioned in several of the interviews, it was not made clear why this distinction was present, or what some of the factors were that might have made it more challenging for the girls to overcome these obstacles. I believe this would be an interesting area for further research, and would have liked to look into this on a deeper level, however the scope of my thesis did not permit this.

¹⁴ “Becoming literate...is truly an act of knowing, through which a person is able to look critically at the culture which has shaped him, and to move toward reflection and positive action upon his world.” (Freire 1970, 5)

Another area that I found I did not have much time to address was the pre-orientation training that the participants received during the pre-orientation camps. While some participants described this time as being very important to the building of group dynamics, and helping them prepare to know what to expect, others seemed to think that while it was a fun time where they were able to build relationships and make new friends, they did not really feel they gained the appropriate information and knowledge that could have helped them navigate through the duration of the exchange program. A further area for research could be looking at the development of the pre-orientation camps, and seeing whether they are as effective as they could potentially be for CWY participants.

5.8 – Conclusion

By conducting a case study of the CWY Core Program through semi-structured telephone interviews with a selection of past-participants, I set out to answer my research question: *How do the participants of the Canada World Youth Core Program perceive their adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and conflict resolution skills to have been developed or improved as a result of their participation in the program?* Through the thoughtful and rich descriptions of the experiences illustrated by the eleven participants interviewed, I have been able to provide evidence of a link between international education/development programs, cross-cultural communication, and conflict resolution. The triangulation of these three areas depicts the invaluable benefits that can result from opportunities such as the CWY program, as well as the importance of

providing these opportunities to youth in Canada. By overcoming challenges, building relationships, and reflecting on their experiences, the participants interviewed in my research were able to develop important skills such as adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and in turn, conflict resolution.

5.8.a. Reflecting on ‘White Privilege’

Earlier in my thesis, I touched on the concept of ‘white privilege’ as described by Peggy McIntosh. After having reflected on the stories and experiences told through the eyes of the CWY participants, I have come to believe that McIntosh’s arguments are not only justified, but incredibly important to acknowledge in this day and age. As McIntosh expresses, “I think that we need a more finely differentiated taxonomy of privilege, for some of these varieties are only what one would want for everyone in a just society, and others give license to be ignorant, oblivious, arrogant, and destructive.” (McIntosh 1992, 76) I believe it is important to examine our notions of what it means to be privileged, or be born in a position of privilege, as well as to challenge these assumptions and in turn take action to reposition ourselves appropriately in our world. I believe that with the ‘privilege’ (or however we come to conceptualize this) of living with material luxury and the comforts of having opportunities that come with living in a developed country, also comes the responsibility of taking action and making the effort to better understand other parts of the world, and therefore broaden our awareness and understanding of other cultures and ways of life. As McIntosh explains, “we might at least start by distinguishing between positive advantages that we can work to spread, to the point

where they are not advantages at all but simply part of the normal civic and social fabric, and negative types of advantage that unless rejected will always reinforce our present hierarchies.” (Ibid, 78) I believe that the CWY programs are an effective way to offer Canadian youth the opportunity to both come to realize, and act on this responsibility of acknowledging their position in the world, and challenging the social constructions and hierarchies that are a result of this position.

5.8.b. Recommendations

Earlier in this paper, I indicated that my research was being conducted with the hope of providing recommendations or support for CWY programs. Through hearing and feeling the passion expressed by the CWY participants interviewed, I find it impossible to see CWY as anything but a positive and promising program that offers important learning opportunities for Canadian youth. I hope this paper serves as a source of support for CWY programs. As Lederach argued, “In the first decade of the new century and millennium, we face a turning point, a unique moment with the potential to affect and redefine the ways we organize and shape our global family.” (Lederach 2005, 21) I present this paper as an evidence base to show the necessity for programs that offer individuals a chance to develop new and positive ways to shape what Lederach has called ‘our global family’.

I believe that our society can greatly profit from international exchange and cultural exchange programs, and that greater energy should be put towards ensuring that

these programs receive adequate funding and support, while continuing to emphasize the importance of having capable and knowledgeable Project Supervisors. As many of the study participants noted, the role of the Project Supervisor greatly enhanced their experience and assisted in their development throughout the exchange. The process of conducting this research has convinced me that in order to have peaceful societies in our present day, we must continuously engage in exchange with foreign cultures while remaining open and flexible to the dynamics of all interactions.

As globalization and transnational migration continue, dramatic change is becoming the norm. To remain relevant and appropriate, conflict resolution processes will need to be dynamic and cannot continue relying on set notions of the cultural perspectives of a given group or groups. Given the immense capacities for destruction that we have developed and the frightening increase in the inter-societal polarization, there is every reason to strive for a more culturally sophisticated practice in order to maximize the promise of our field. That is one of the greatest tasks facing those of us dedicated to contributing to a better future through productive engagements with conflict. Our success, I believe, will be directly related to the amount of “mindfulness” we can muster and the degree of flexibility, multiplicity, and inclusiveness that we can incorporate. (Davidheiser 2005, 5)

We cannot depend on others to solve the complex conflicts that will continue to be presented to us throughout the coming decades. With ongoing cultural clashes and never ending divergences of opinions, it is imperative that we are able to engage productively in conflict, and keep an open mind. As described by the eleven participants interviewed throughout this research, the CWY Core Program offers an opportunity to develop and increase one’s adaptability, cross-cultural communication skills, as well as conflict resolution skills. For this reason, I believe international exchange programs, such as CWY, can be used as a tool and a valuable resource to help the growing generations develop the skills that are imperative in an increasingly globalized world.

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APPENDIX A

**Masters in Dispute Resolution
University of Victoria
Victoria, B.C.
Canada**

Letter of Information for Implied Consent

Conflict Resolution through Canada World Youth Core Programs

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Conflict Resolution in Canada World Youth Core Programs* that is being conducted by Lise Berube.

Lise Berube is a graduate student in Dispute Resolution in the Department of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email at lberube@uvic.ca, or by telephone at 250-857-2333.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Dispute Resolution. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Patricia Mackenzie. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8735.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to examine how the participants of the Canada World Youth Core Program personally perceive their adaptability, cross-cultural communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills to have developed or improved as a result of their participation in the program. This research will therefore provide a better understanding of how international development programs offered to youth can provide an opportunity for gaining productive conflict resolution skills through cross-cultural interaction.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it will add a component to the knowledge of how a program, such as the CWY Core Program has the ability to allow for personal development in regards to conflict resolution that can lead to more collaborative approaches in international and cross-cultural relations. In the field of conflict resolution, much has been written about the importance of conflict resolution in international development, as well as conflict resolution across cultures. However, there is a gap in research that joins, or triangulates, the link between international development/international education, cross-cultural interaction, and conflict resolution. These are the aspects I will link together in my research.

The benefits to individuals of developing conflict management and resolution skills are innumerable. Through my research, I will demonstrate that in our present multi-cultural world, it is essential and invaluable to be exposed to experiences, such as the CWY Core Program, that will allow us to develop these skills. This research will contribute to the evidence that CWY offers opportunities to develop skills such as adaptability, cross-cultural communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution, which are essential skills to continually develop in order to live peacefully in a multi-cultural world.

Participants Selection

The purpose of this letter is to ask for your collaboration with this project. I am asking you to send an email (see attachment) to all the Canadian participants who have completed the Core

Program within the past 12 months. This email will inform the participants about my research, and will invite them to contact me directly if they are willing to participate by engaging in 10-15 minute interviews with me over the telephone. These telephone interviews will take place beginning in January of 2008, and I will have compiled all the research from the participants by the spring of 2008. I will have a final copy of my completed thesis to give back to Canada World Youth and all the individuals who participated in the research by the summer of 2008.

What is involved

If you agree to participate in this research, your participation will include sending out an email to the participants who have completed the CWY Core Program within the past 12 months, or by post, whichever is most convenient to your organization. Once these participants contact me, I will provide them with any additional information about my thesis, and will gladly answer any questions they have before volunteering their participation in my research.

Inconvenience

There is no way that your participation in this study should cause any inconvenience to you. If any potential or known inconvenience is incurred through your participation, please bring it to my attention and I will do my best to compensate for or alleviate any inconvenience.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include an addition to the evidence and validity of the CWY Core Program, as well as an opportunity to further document the experiences of past participants.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. Your participation in this project is only required to be as involved as you wish it to be. The minimum amount of information I am requesting is to have the initial email sent out to participants who have completed the Core program within the past 12 months. The participation of these individuals will also be completely voluntary, and they will be free to withdraw their participation at any point throughout the project.

Anonymity

Due to the nature of the study, it will not be possible to keep the name of Canada World Youth anonymous, nor would it be in the best interest of the program or the project to do so. As this project entails a case study of the Canada World Youth Core Program, a loss of anonymity is required.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected. None of the names or information of participants provided to me for the purpose of this study will be passed on to a third party, or used for any other purposes. All information passed on to me through the participants will be kept completely confidential. I will be the only person who will be seeing the raw data, and I will be transcribing the recorded telephone interviews myself. I will not use any of the actual names of participants in my thesis to protect their anonymity, and I will not refer to any specific locations that may give away the identity of the participants. The personal information of all participants will be kept in a secure and locked location until approximately 5

years after I have defended my thesis. The information of individuals who withdraw from the research at any point will be destroyed and they will not be contacted again.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: The final results in the form of my thesis will be presented to the Canada World Youth Research Division, and will also be sent to all the participants who have participated in the interviews. The final thesis may also be published and presented in various areas.

Disposal of Data

Data collected from the participants of the Canada World Youth Core Program throughout this study will be disposed of 5 years after the completion of my thesis in order to ensure their information is not used for any other purposes, and to ensure their anonymity is protected.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include myself, Lise Berube, at lberube@uvic.ca, or by phone at 250-857-2333, Dr. Patricia Mackenzie, at patmack@uvic.ca, or by phone at 250-721-8036, or Dr. Lorna Williams, at lornawil@uvic.ca, or by phone at 250-721-7826.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

By sending out an email attachment to Canada World Youth Core Program participants, **YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

APPENDIX B

**Lise Berube
Masters Candidate
Dispute Resolution
University of Victoria
Victoria B.C**

Letter of Information for Participants

Conflict Resolution through Canada World Youth Core Programs

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Conflict Resolution in Canada World Youth Core Programs* that is being conducted by Lise Berube.

Lise Berube is a graduate student in Dispute Resolution in the Department of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email at lberube@uvic.ca, or by telephone at 250-857-2333.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Dispute Resolution. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Patricia Mackenzie. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8036.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to examine how the participants of the Canada World Youth Core Program personally perceive their adaptability, cross-cultural communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills to have developed or improved as a result of their participation in the program. This research will therefore provide a better understanding of how international development programs offered to youth can provide an opportunity for gaining productive conflict resolution skills through cross-cultural interaction.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it will add a component to the knowledge of how a program, such as the CWY Core Program has the ability to allow for personal development in regards to conflict resolution that can lead to more collaborative approaches in international and cross-cultural relations. In the field of conflict resolution, much has been written about the importance of conflict resolution in international development, as well as conflict resolution across cultures. However, there is a gap in research that joins, or triangulates, the link between international development/international education, cross-cultural interaction, and conflict resolution. These are the aspects I will link together in my research.

The benefits to individuals of developing conflict management and resolution skills are innumerable. Through my research, I will demonstrate that in our present multi-cultural world, it is essential and invaluable to be exposed to experiences, such as the CWY Core Program, that will allow us to develop these skills. This research will contribute to the evidence that CWY offers opportunities to develop skills such as adaptability, cross-cultural communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution, which are essential skills to continually develop in order to live peacefully in a multi-cultural world.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have completed a Canada World Youth Core Program within the past 12 months. I am asking you to contact me directly if you are

interested in being part of my research by participating in short telephone interviews. These telephone interviews will take place beginning in January of 2008, and I will have compiled all the research from the participants by the spring of 2008. I will have a final copy of my completed thesis to give back to Canada World Youth and all the individuals who participated in the research by the summer of 2008.

What is involved

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a 20-30 minute telephone interview with myself. I will set up a time that is convenient for you, and I will call and record the telephone interview in order to later transcribe the interview to typed print.

Inconvenience

Your participation in this study should not cause any inconvenience to you. If any potential or known inconvenience is incurred through your participation, please bring it to my attention and I will do my best to compensate for or alleviate any inconvenience.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. If you feel uncomfortable at any point throughout the study, or begin to feel an unanticipated risk, you may withdraw at anytime. If any of the interview questions bring up emotional issues that you wish not to relive, you may stop at anytime, or move on to the next question. You will not be encouraged to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, or to recount any situations that you do not feel comfortable discussing.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include an addition to the evidence and validity of the CWY Core Program, as well as an opportunity to further document the experiences of past participants.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used according to your wishes. If you wish to have the data collected up to that point used in my research, I will try to incorporate it as best as possible, however, if you prefer your data to be destroyed, I will respect your wishes and will dispose of the data which will not be used as part of the research.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, your real name as well as any defining characteristics will not be used in the final draft of my research. I will be the only person who will be listening to the recorded data, and I will not divulge your identity to anyone else before, during, or after the research has been concluded.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected. None of the names or information of participants provided to me for the purpose of this study will be passed on to a third party, or used for any other purposes. All information passed on to me through the participants will be kept completely confidential. I will be the only person who will be seeing the raw data, and I will be transcribing the recorded telephone interviews myself. I will not use any of the actual names of participants in my thesis to protect their anonymity, and I will not refer to any specific locations that may give away the identity of the participants. The personal

information of all participants will be kept in a secure and locked location until 5 years after I have defended my thesis. The information of individuals who withdraw from the research at any point will be destroyed and they will not be contacted again.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: The final results in the form of my thesis will be presented to the Canada World Youth Research Division, and will also be sent to all the participants who have participated in the interviews. The final thesis may also be published and presented in various areas.

Disposal of Data

Data collected from the participants of the Canada World Youth Core Program throughout this study will be disposed of 5 years after the completion of my thesis in order to ensure their information is not used for any other purposes, and to ensure their anonymity is protected.

Contacts

Please contact me directly if you are able and willing to be a participant in my thesis research. You can contact me by telephone at 250-857-2333, or via email at lberube@uvic.ca.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Prior to the beginning of any recorded telephone interview, you will be required to give your verbal consent to be a part of this research, and indicate that you have understood the terms to which you are agreeing.

APPENDIX C

Telephone Interview Questions

- 1) What were the main areas where conflict arose throughout the program, and which conflicts did you find were the most challenging to resolve or work through?

- 2) Did you feel that you were adequately prepared to deal with the conflicts that arose throughout the program, or do feel that there is any way the program could have better prepared you or equipped you to deal with these conflicts?

- 3) How do you compare your ability to resolve conflict now, as opposed to before participating in the exchange program? Do you feel you approach conflict differently now in your everyday life?

- 4) Do you feel that your perceptions of reality and the world have changed at all as a result of this program? Do you relate to people differently or have any different outlooks on culture than you did prior to the program?