

PeaceBuilders: A Multicultural Conflict Resolution Curriculum for Newcomer Children
in Victoria, BC

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Executive Summary

The recent influx of newcomers to Victoria, British Columbia has translated into more newcomer children within public schools. This has meant a new set of challenges for administrators and teachers including varying levels of English and cultural differences. The South Island Dispute Resolution Centre (SIDRC) was approached by a number of elementary schools in School District 61 to develop a communication and conflict resolution skills building program for newcomer children aged 8-9 in grades 3-4. The SIDRC agreed and created the PeaceBuilders program. I was fortunate enough to partner with the SIDRC for an eight month co-op placement as well as for my final Masters project, in which I developed and wrote the PeaceBuilders curriculum. The PeaceBuilders curriculum is a manual of thematic activities relating to communication and conflict resolution skills. The curriculum would be an experiential based model that uses activities rather than lectures to teach the skills. The final curriculum, the PeaceBuilders manual, is found in Appendix A.

The report begins with the practice of ‘situating myself’ in references to the research material. This was an important step as I am a Canadian, coming from European ancestry, and therefore an outsider to the newcomer group. An extensive review of literature identified a significant gap wherein conflict resolution literature failed to focus on newcomer children specifically. The literature returned a significant number of resources concerning conflict resolution, multiculturalism and children within the dominant culture, which served only limited purposes for the PeaceBuilders program. The literature failed, was to place newcomer children at the centre of a discussion concerning conflict resolution curriculum in elementary schools. The literature also

seemed to only speak about multiculturalism from the perspective of the dominant culture. By doing this an assumption emerged wherein multiculturalism was spoken about in terms of the dominant culture making space for minorities rather than any type of collaborative integration of cultural groups.

The report then transitions into a discussion of the methodology of the project. Here, I outline the importance of the chosen research paradigm, the interpretive paradigm, in reference to newcomers and speak to the purpose of attempting to understand the experiences and contexts of newcomer children. I also detail the research of Michelle LeBaron's work surrounding conflict and culture and how it was used to develop an effective lens through which to develop a conflict resolution and communication skills building curriculum for newcomer youth. I also detail the research process of keyword searches to identify research to review.

An in depth review of curriculum content was conducted over a number of disciplines including school health, psychology, school counselling, early childhood education, curriculum inquiry, intercultural relations and dispute resolution. Reviewing this information produced a thematic examination of the data. Major themes that emerged relating to the PeaceBuilders program content included how children learn, process design, skills to learn, culture, and games and conflict resolution interventions. This data was analyzed with the purposes of fleshing out umbrella themes relating to skills that matched the mission, vision, mandate, principles and goals of PeaceBuilders.

14 dominant and recurring themes emerged:

- Active listening
- Assertiveness
- Conflict is normal/ conflict styles
- Conflict resolution

Diversity/ inclusion
Get to know the group/ name games
Human rights
Managing emotions
Power
Respect
Role of culture
Stereotyping
Teambuilding
Trust

The next step was to assign activities to each theme that taught the practical skills necessary in situations of conflict. Activities had to meet four criteria elements in order to be used in the manual: first, how well an activity fit with the vision, mission, principles, mandate and goals of the PeaceBuilders program (Appendix C), two, if it applied to the targeted age group of grades 3-4, three, if it could work with varying levels of English proficiency and finally, I based the effectiveness and suitability of activities on my past experience working with multicultural youth.

Finally, I detail two significant gaps I discovered within the research. First, there is a lack of newcomer-focused conflict resolution and communications skills building programs for children and second, existing research teaches children the concept of multiculturalism from the dominant culture's perspective rather than presenting cultures as equals. I then outline how the PeaceBuilders curriculum I developed is unique because it firmly places newcomer children and multicultural competencies as the core focus of the program.

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Project Objectives and Client

The objective of this Masters project was to develop and write a multicultural conflict resolution curriculum for the South Island Dispute Resolution Centre's (SIDRC) PeaceBuilders program, a weekly school-based program for newcomer children aged 8-9 in grades 3-4. PeaceBuilders comprises of 10 one-hour sessions for newcomer children who arrived in Canada within the last five years or who were born in Canada and don't speak English as their first language at home. The children come together, outside their respective classrooms, to meet with the SIDRC facilitators. PeaceBuilders seeks to enhance newcomer children's school experience by teaching them communication and conflict resolution skills so they can adapt to Canadian culture while maintaining their own cultural identity. The PeaceBuilders curriculum was the deliverable for my project and this report details the process used to create the curriculum. Through research, I determined the components of a successful multicultural conflict resolution curriculum and used those practices to write the PeaceBuilders curriculum.

Situate Yourself

My supervisor posed a question on the first day of my research methods class: who has the right to study what (Smith, 1999)? There are groups who exist on the margins of society who have been oppressed, judged and ostracized (Kovach, 2005). Who has the right to conduct research about these groups? Do you have to be part of a group in order to research it? What impact does an outsider have when conducting and presenting research about a specific group? It is important to take into account the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched. I am not a newcomer so how can I research and discuss the newcomer experience?

Within this section I will discuss myself in relation to the material, a practice I call ‘situate yourself.’ By this I mean reflect and examine the impact I have on the research and the experiences that have formed and informed these reflections. This is not a common practice for most of the academy and something I believe is missing when research is presented. As a 27-year-old middle class Canadian woman of European origins and a member of the dominant culture, there are differences between newcomers and myself that must be discussed.

Some would ask why an exercise like this is important. I completed a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Honours looking specifically at the interplay between Religious Studies and Human Rights. Within Religious Studies, it was common practice to describe oneself in reference to the research, as it was likely the researcher was an outsider to the group being examined. By this I mean, reflect on ones worldviews, assumptions about the material, gender, age, socio economic standing, period of time, geographic location, education, sexuality, etc. in relation to the research. Doing this gives the reader a point of reference when considering the presented research. By situating yourself within the research, we are honest about how we approached the research and the impact that has on what is being presented. It gives context to research that would otherwise exist in a vacuum.

This type of practice is often seen as presenting biases, prejudices or even lacking impartiality about what is being studied. I see it more as a reflective practice. By reflecting on how we relate to our research we begin to unpack what impact we have on the research. In this sense, this reflective practice is innately honest as it encourages us to be open about the relationship we have with the research and by what personal

experiences that relationship was formed and informed. It's important to unearth important assumptions, which should be reflected upon in relation to what is being studied.

I'd like to begin by examining what I think are the important worldviews I have and how they relate to newcomers. I call myself a structural feminist and this greatly impacts how I see newcomer issues. Let me briefly unpack the phrase presented above. I believe there are structural, and by this I mean systemic, barriers built into our institutions that discriminate against many groups, including newcomers. Feminist is a term I identify with strongly. As a feminist I believe in equality and also place a high importance at looking at the intersectionality of people which means examining people from a holistic perspective including their relationships, social standing and culture and how all these interact with each other. For example, it is vital to consider a newcomer's age, sexual orientation, income, gender and other identities rather than simply calling them a newcomer.

Next, I'd like to talk about two key experiences that have formed my notions of newcomers to Canada. First, is the immigrant story within my own family. My maternal grandfather came to Canada from the Ukraine in the 1920s when his family, who were Mennonites, fled persecution from the Soviet Union. Adapting to Canadian culture was very difficult given they were a religious minority in Canada. This personal connection with immigration has led to me feeling a deep sense of empathy with newcomers. Secondly, I was lucky enough to work with a non-profit called Children's International Summer Villages (CISV) in my youth as a participant and camp counsellor. CISV brought together children from different countries and taught them the importance of

multiculturalism and peace education. This created a lens through which I see issues pertaining to multiculturalism and greatly informed my thinking when writing the PeaceBuilders curriculum. I used my past experiences and knowledge from CISV as a jumping off point with the PeaceBuilders program. These two core experiences have been the primary factors in shaping my understanding and knowledge of newcomer issues.

These worldviews and experiences contributed to a lens through which I see newcomers as a member of the dominant culture. By speaking about this lens I hope I have created a context in which the following report will be presented.

Literature Review

This section will examine two areas of literature surrounding the PeaceBuilders curriculum. The first will examine the concepts of dispute resolution, conflict and culture and how the three concepts relate to one another. I will use the theoretical approach of Michelle LeBaron to outline these concepts. Next I will examine how the PeaceBuilders curriculum is rooted in the concept of conflict transformation and will detail the elements of the concept. Finally, I will go over the process by which the literature was researched and examined.

Dispute Resolution, Conflict and Culture

Dispute resolution is a vast field of study with many ways of understanding and approaching conflict. It is important to place the PeaceBuilders program within a specific dispute resolution concept and approach to better understand some of the assumptions made about conflict throughout the PeaceBuilders curriculum. I will begin by examining the work of Michelle LeBaron. LeBaron's approach focuses on the importance of

looking at conflict and culture as one rather than two separate components.

LeBaron intertwines the concepts of culture and conflict and asserts, “conflicts are always cultural, since we are all cultural beings” (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006, p. 13).

Culture has been described as the water we swim in and we are often unaware of how it informs our assumptions including those about conflict. In other words, we are unaware of the omnipresence of culture and how it acts as the lens through which we see conflict. Our own cultural group informs this ever-present cultural lens and sometimes we forget that everyone does not share our lens, and that our lens is not the ‘right’ lens. This concept is particularly important when discussing conflict resolution and newcomer children as it means there will be a multitude of cultural lenses within a PeaceBuilders class and each participant will perceive conflict through a different cultural lens.

Literature and PeaceBuilders

The broader concept in which I situate the PeaceBuilders program is in conflict transformation. Conflict transformation, often referred to as the transformative approach, has two key foundations, “a capacity to envision conflict positively, as a natural phenomenon that creates potential for constructive growth, and a willingness to respond in ways that maximize this potential for positive change” (Lederach, 2006, p. 26). Here we see Lederach describe how the transformative style interprets conflict: as something normal with the capacity for growth, as well as how it approaches conflict, with the aim of reaching positive change.

Another distinct characteristic central to conflict transformation is relationships. Lederach states, “in conflict transformation relationships are central. Like the heart in the body, conflicts flow from and return to relationships” (Lederach, 2006, p. 27). It may

seem obvious to place relationships at the center of conflict but conflict transformation speaks about more than the visible relationship between two people. It also emphasizes the “human web” as the context in which relationships take place (Lederach, 2006, p. 27). Here we see the importance of interconnectedness when it comes to understanding relationships in conflict. What are the other less visible connections present in a conflict? This is where culture fits into the transformative style. People are connected by relationships informed by culture and this plays a significant role within conflict. Relationship building is key within a PeaceBuilders group as it builds friendship, empathy and understanding.

Literature Review Process

Now let us turn to a discussion about the literature reviewed while developing the PeaceBuilders curriculum. An exhaustive search of EBSCO, Web of Science, JSTOR and other databases was performed using specific keyword searches. Search words included multicultural, intercultural, newcomer, immigrant, conflict resolution, curriculum, children and primary school. These words were chosen because of their direct relation to the PeaceBuilders program. Combinations of all of these words were searched within the databases mentioned above. Results were limited and a distinct number of articles appeared to repeat despite the different keywords used. The recurring articles talked about multiculturalism abroad, but upon closer reading, only spoke about children from one ethnic group. They appeared to be labeled multicultural because they took place overseas. Literature with newcomer children at the center of the research was nonexistent.

It became evident a change in research tactics was required. Words pertaining to

newcomers were removed from the keyword searches and the results of literature found changed dramatically. Including the words ‘multicultural’, ‘intercultural’, ‘newcomer’ or ‘immigrant’ within any combination of the above keywords returned very minimal results relevant to my project. By removing the above words, the literature became plentiful.

The majority of the literature focused on how to teach children, in general, about conflict and multiculturalism (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1996; Huber, 2003; Graham & Pulvino, 2000). The literature I reviewed gave good insight into how to do this. The specifics of this particular literature are examined in more depth in the data section of this report. However, I couldn't find information about teaching newcomer children specifically about conflict and multiculturalism. This is a definite gap within the overall literature pertaining to children and conflict resolution. The sense I got from the majority of the literature, was that it centred on educating children within the dominant culture about multiculturalism. I couldn't find information that taught children from outside the dominant culture about multiculturalism and conflict resolution.

It was in reviewing this portion of the literature that I discovered a limited number of references to multiculturalism and conflict resolution (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1995; Huber, 2005; Crawford, 2005). I observed that, multiculturalism was talked about in terms of children within the dominant culture learning about minorities. This is an ineffective and incomplete way of presenting multiculturalism to children. Talking about multiculturalism as though there is one dominant culture and outside minorities isn't true multiculturalism. I define multiculturalism as community cultural diversity that allows people to promote diversity and express their own cultural identity. It assumes and perpetuates a power imbalance between the two groups. Multiculturalism appeared to be

predominantly presented from the dominant culture's perspective.

These sources also provided a number of games and activities pertaining to multiculturalism and conflict resolution within classrooms (Crawford, 2005; Huber, 2005). The specific themes and approaches adopted by the games and activities within the literature are reviewed in detail in the data section. These games and activities focused on learning about other cultures and trying to find commonalities with minority cultures. Literature reviewed lacked information about debriefing games or activities with children. Games and activities lacked a debrief model in which children would discuss the learning embedded within the game. Posing questions to the children about what they had just learned and how they can apply it in their lives is a key step that was overlooked within the literature. Debriefing is where children reflect on the learning and make connections to their own life.

In summary, the literature reviewed revealed a prominent lack of sources pertaining to conflict resolution and communication centering on newcomer youth. There simply doesn't exist a dedicated area of literature that speaks exclusively about newcomer youth and conflict resolution. The literature that focused on children in more general terms is presented in the data section. The challenge then became how to write a newcomer-focused curriculum given the literature available. As we will see, this required examining information from different fields and attempting to create a cohesive and effective curriculum. This is problematic if the person conducting the research doesn't have an understanding of theory pertaining to conflict and culture. Without these understandings of culture and conflict resolution, there is the potential of risk when piecing together the research. I was well suited to take on this task because of my

background studying culture and conflict.

Methodology

I asked a question at the beginning of an earlier section: How can I speak to the newcomer experience? To answer this I came to rely heavily on my chosen research paradigm, the interpretive paradigm. This paradigm is based on the assumption that “humans are interpretation through and through” (Benner, 2008). Humans are situated in “a particular culture, time and place” and live “in a world of common meanings, habits, practices, meanings and skills that are socially prior to the individual and are socially disclosed or encountered” (Benner, 2008). I'm interested in the personal experiences and understandings of people and how those experiences are culturally informed and feel the interpretive research paradigm approach best serves this purpose.

As stated earlier in situating myself, I see newcomers from the intersectionality perspective and think it is necessary to examine as many groups a person belongs to as possible rather than simply as a newcomer. The interpretive research paradigm accounts for this by viewing people in the context of their experiences. One of the primary tenets of the interpretive paradigm is “in order to be understood, human action and social practices cannot be divorced from the meanings people attach to them” (Bevir, 2010). In other words, the meaning we assign or associate with our experiences informs the action itself.

Because the nature of the research surrounding newcomers is so firmly rooted in cultural diversity, I chose to ground my research in Michelle LeBaron's theory surrounding conflict and culture. This theory asserts that conflict and culture are intertwined. Often, culture is spoken about as being a mere component of conflict but

LeBaron explains, "...culture is more than a topic related to conflict and conflict resolution – it is an integral part of all interaction..." (2006, p. 16). This is not to say that culture causes or creates conflict, although it can, but that conflicts are invariably cultural. This understanding of conflict and culture is integral to the development and understanding of my project. Because my research looks specifically at newcomers, they experience culture and conflict from their own cultural perspective as well as the general Canadian cultural perspective.

The general research approach for the curriculum was a combination of a literature review examining the current state of literature about newcomer children and conflict resolution and a data set pertaining to what the content of the curriculum should include. My strategy was to begin with a literature review of newcomer children and conflict resolution and communication skills. This research developed my understanding of the successful components of a program like PeaceBuilders. PeaceBuilders underwent a pilot phase prior to my undertaking the project. It used materials not specifically designed for newcomers. I examined secondary data in the form of materials and content used during the pilot phase of the program. These included worksheets and other materials pertaining to the pilot. I also successfully applied for ethics approval, found in Appendix B, to conduct a series of interviews with PeaceBuilders facilitators and an interpreter who had previously worked on the pilot phase. Due to time constraints (I had only three months to research and put together the curriculum), I was unable to conduct the interviews.

I'd now like to briefly discuss the process by which I put the manual itself together. An outline of the manual is provided in the data analysis section of this report

and details the two major sections of the manual: the training materials and the activities.

I began with putting together the activities, as they were the bulk of the manual. The specifics of that process are also found in the data analysis section. Next, I focused on compiling the training materials for facilitators. These materials provide a discussion of culture, how to ensure a successful learning environment and the importance of mid-way check-ins and evaluations.

The next section will go into detail about the data uncovered within the literature reviewed. I will go over the themes that emerged in the literature and discuss them in relation to the PeaceBuilders program.

Data Set

This section examines conflict resolution and communication skills curriculum for elementary school children. Areas where data was researched include: school health, psychology, school counselling, early childhood education, curriculum inquiry, intercultural relations and dispute resolution. Throughout the research three primary areas emerged surrounding approaches for teaching children in schools: curriculum based, counsellor based and peer mediation based. Graham and Pulvino describe the curriculum-based approach as “targeting all students in a class, grade level, or school, and usually consist of a series of lesson plans providing a theoretical background and social skills training” (2000, p. 172). This approach is consistent with the typical classroom approach to teaching. Counsellor based approaches target the role of guidance counsellors in schools and how they interact with children. This approach usually consists of a counsellor working with a small group of children (Graham & Pulvino, 2000). Finally, peer mediation based “programs train a subset or all of a school's student

body to serve as mediators when conflicts arise” (Graham & Pulvino, 2000, p. 172). This approach is more of an intervention method for when conflict happens among students. Because of how the latter two approaches work, they didn’t pertain directly to the curriculum I was designing. For this reason I did not pursue those particular strains within the research and instead focused on the curriculum-based approach.

The objective of the data set is twofold: first, to gain an understanding of how conflict resolution and communication skills are being presented to children in the curriculum-based approach and second, to identify the specific games and activities being used and how are they being delivered. Because PeaceBuilders is an experiential activity based program, my primary focus was how games and activities teach children conflict resolution and communication skills.

While deciding how to divide and organize this review of data I considered several options: chronologically, by author, by argument or thematically. There was no clear progression in content from a chronological perspective, nor did there emerge any great differences in the arguments presented by the authors. It is for this reason I decided to organize the data thematically. To identify the themes within the data I devised a coding system. I reviewed my notes taken from the data and extracted the key concepts. I then went through this list of key concepts and assigned each concept a theme. Five dominant and recurring themes emerged: how children learn, program design, skills to learn, culture, and games and conflict resolution interventions. I will present and examine each of these themes below.

The first major theme examined how primary school children learn best. Understanding how children learn helped me design an effective curriculum that children

are more likely to retain and use. First, establishing a safe and healthy learning environment is paramount for children. Children learn when they feel safe. Crawford details the importance of routine, “primary children feel more secure” when their schedule is familiar and known to them (2005, p. 323). Crawford also identifies the need to set guidelines in a group setting, “for primary children, these rules should be few, fair, and appropriately flexible for given contexts” (Crawford, 2005, p. 323). Guidelines contribute to creating routine in the classroom as they establish expected rules about personal behaviour. Children learn well when behaviour is modelled to them by the teacher (Crawford, 2005). When children have behaviour modelled to them it makes a deep impression. It is for this reason Crawford emphasizes teachers creating space for communication within the classroom between children and teachers (Crawford, 2005).

The next key concept that emerged within the data was program design. Information within the data didn't provide a tidy step-by-step process, instead it offered guidelines or elements to consider when developing a conflict resolution and communications skills building program. To begin with, any process should be participant-oriented (Dureya, 1994). This means the needs of the participants, in my case the children, should be the primary focus when designing any program. This means accounting for the developmental levels and cultures of the participants (D'Andrea & Daniels 1995; D'Andrea & Daniels 1996; Crawford, 2000). To do this D'Andrea and Daniels suggest developing a wide range of cultural competencies, the ability to communicate and interact with people from different cultures, to better serve the participants (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1995). This involves developing an understanding of cultural differences, particularly when it comes to communication styles. LeBaron and

Pillay outline these differences as being called high context and low content communication cultural starting points (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006). Within high context cultures “nonverbal communication is emphasized” and messages are “implicit” and implied (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006, p. 35). On the other end of the spectrum, low context cultures emphasize verbal communication and use “explicit messages” (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006, p. 35). Understanding the different cultural starting points when it comes to communication is vital when designing a conflict resolution and communication skills building program.

This leads to a discussion about the importance of participant assessment skills when designing a program. Assessment skills should be culturally sensitive and account for as many different cultural starting points in the group as possible (Duryea, 1994). Duryea suggests enlisting the help of community 'gate keepers' to understand the cultural preferences of particular groups when considering the design of a program (Duryea, 1994). Having this input will lend to the credibility of the process as well as account for the different cultures of the participants. Cultural competency will allow for people to feel comfortable in the process and encourage them to share how they're feeling. Effective curriculum in particular is characterized as allowing for “diverse narratives of experience in a classroom” (Huber, 2003, p. 347). These narratives are expressed when the program respects all cultures present.

Next is the actual content of the program, the communication and conflict resolution skills children will learn through the curriculum. This is the area of the data where the most consistencies and similarities emerged. There is a general consensus around children being taught broad concepts such as conflict is a normal “occurrence

inherent in human interaction which presents an opportunity to creatively deal with the situation in a way that respects the other person as well as one's own interests” (Graham & Pulvino, 2000, p. 175). Primary school children have a need to learn general communication skills (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1996). The specifics of those communication skills include, “empathetic listening, and nonthreatening statement of one's own concerns” (Graham & Pulvino, 2000, p. 172). Others include cooperation skills, decision-making skills and problem solving skills (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1996). Conflict resolution skills found in the data include anger management, assertiveness skills (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1996), brainstorming skills and the harms associated with labelling (Graham & Pulvino, 2000).

The next step is tying in the key concept of culture. The data provided an array of definitions of culture. LeBaron and Pillay write, “culture is the shared, often unspoken, understandings in a group” that isn't static (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006, p. 14). Penderson defines culture as “complex and dynamic, it is not chaotic” and a “synthesis of personal and social system variables combines to create an individual's multicultural identity” (1993, p. 345). LeBaron and Pillay's definition presents a more collectivist way of thinking about culture. They characterize culture in terms of a group. Penderson's definition talks about the personal and group aspects of culture and how the two fuse together. This fusion creates the ultimate end product of “an individual's multicultural identity” implying Penderson approaches the concept of culture from a more individualistic perspective (Penderson, 1993, p. 345). These two approaches don't necessarily present an inconsistency in the data when it comes to defining culture, rather it could speak to the different cultural starting points of the authors themselves. Both

concepts agree that culture is dynamic rather than static and changes over time.

Because of our cultural differences, “understandings of conflict vary widely” (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006, p. 14). Given that, we come upon another predominant understanding within the data: North American conflict resolution techniques have inherent cultural biases built into them and there is a danger in using them in multicultural settings. About this key concept Brinson states “over-reliance on traditional problem-solving techniques and strategies when working in cross-cultural situations could increase vulnerability to emotional and behavioural problems” (Brinson, 2004, p. 296-97). Duryea states, “dominant culture methods of conflict resolution incorporate values and attitudes not shared by members of many other groups” (Duryea, 1994, p. vii).

The final dominant theme found within the data are the games, activities and conflict resolution and communications skills designed for children. Crawford provided two conflict resolution intervention tools: ABCD and traffic light. The former provides an acronym about solving conflict that is easy for children to remember, “A: Ask about the problem B: Brainstorm solutions C: Choose the best idea D: Do it!” (Crawford, 2005, p. 323). The later, traffic light, is “a simple red light–yellow light–green light visual can be enough to help primary children remember to (red) stop and state the problem, (yellow) slow down and think about possible solutions, and then (green) go try the solution” (Crawford, 2005, p. 323). These two interventions are peer to peer focused and can help children learn how to resolve conflict on their own. Huber approaches interventions from a group perspective with an activity called peace candle circles (Huber, 2003). The whole class gathers each time a student brings a conflict forward and all students involved tell the story of the conflict from their perspective. A candle is lit in

the middle of the circle to represent the conflict. Once all the stories are shared and the students have talked about a solution, the candle is extinguished (Huber, 2003). This intervention is based on narrative theories about conflict resolution and takes on a more collectivist approach as opposed to those of Crawford, which have an individualist style.

The scope of this section is too limited to discuss all the games presented within the data. A few examples are offered here to demonstrate what the games and activities look like. One game taught children about the negative effects of labelling and stereotyping, “students were divided into two groups based on an arbitrary characteristic (i.e., by height). The groups were then designated 'good' or 'bad,' a different set of rules being applied to each group” (Graham & Pulvino, 2000, p. 182). Children then discuss what it feels like to be on either team and having different rules assigned to them based on their appearance. The Multicultural Bingo Game gives children a chance to learn about the different cultures of their classmates as well as share about their own cultural background, “the students were provided with a 'Multicultural Bingo Sheet,' which included boxes that contained various culturally specific statements (i.e., 'Enjoys eating sushi,' 'Has tried adobo,' 'Is Samoan or part-Samoan'). They were instructed to move around the room and find individuals who could 'sign off' in one of the boxes on the sheet” (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1995, p. 153). Morning check-ins between teachers and students are “teacher-led 'morning meetings' that make it possible to get each day off to a positive start, to share scheduling information, and to provide students an avenue to both celebrate good news and air concerns” (Crawford, 2005, p. 323). This type of group activity provides a safe space for children to express themselves and learn to communicate with others.

The majority of games and activities I read were comprehensive as well as presented similar suggestions for context surrounding conflict resolution and communication skills. The question then became, by what criteria would I assess and ultimately decide to incorporate an activity into the curriculum? I will discuss this task in the following section by breaking down the specific elements within the process by which I chose to include activities and the thought process behind it.

Data Analysis/ Findings

This section will analyze the data set above, examine the common and recurrent themes that emerged within the data and discuss the overall process by which I chose the content to be included in the curriculum. This section will discuss how the themes within the data set were translated into the games and activities chosen for the curriculum. How does one take the theories within the data and blend them effectively with the goals of the PeaceBuilders program? To do this I had to create a set of criteria by which activities could be measured to ensure they fit within the curriculum. I detail the elements of that criterion below.

Themes:

Once the research was completed I then had to distil the common themes found within the research and use that to write the curriculum's content. During the research I had compiled detailed notes of the data examined. I began a coding method of picking out common and recurring themes within the data. This process entailed reviewing the notes and looking for common words, concepts and activities. Emerging themes began to form around the content relating to communication and conflict resolution skills that children in the targeted age group could be learning. Similar concepts were broadly

grouped together to form the themes to be included in the curriculum. Each theme was an umbrella term that activities would fall under. Fourteen themes were identified within the data:

Active listening

Assertiveness

Conflict is normal/ conflict styles

Conflict resolution

Diversity/ inclusion

Get to know the group/ name games

Human rights

Managing emotions

Power

Respect

Role of culture

Stereotyping

Teambuilding

Trust

Once my client approved these themes, the next step was to begin assigning each theme activities found within the data. I specifically looked through all the activities found within the data and began to assign them to the 14 themes. Activities would relate to their larger theme and attempt to break down the many components and skills found within the umbrella theme. For example, the theme of Active Listening had to have activities that related to the three main components of active listening: empathizing,

paraphrasing and open-ended questions. The goal was to have a minimum of four activities per theme, to give facilitators choice and account for different learning styles, meaning an estimated total of fifty-six activities. The next step was to sift through the data and assign activities to their respective themes.

This was not a clear-cut process. Activities were found in a range of sources. The majority were found within the data, but as I have detailed above the data pertaining to multiculturalism was tailored to children within the dominant culture learning about minorities. For this reason, roughly 14 games or 25% of activities were either developed or tweaked by me or developed in partnership with other PeaceBuilders facilitators. Two activities, or 4%, were carried over from the original curriculum because past PeaceBuilders facilitators expressed those particular activities were very effective. Activities went through the process detailed below to ensure consistency and effectiveness within the curriculum.

Criterion for Activity Selection:

A mix of internal and external factors formed the process of assessing the data set. This was a criteria process that blended very practical elements with gut and intuition from my experiences. The four criteria I used were how well an activity fit within the vision, mission, mandate, principles and goals of the PeaceBuilders program, if it was appropriate for the target age group of grades 3-4, if the activity accounted for varying levels of English and finally I used my past experience working with multicultural children as a guide.

The first set of criterion was how well a potential activity fit within the vision, mission, mandate, principles and goals of the PeaceBuilders program (these are found in

Appendix C). My client provided a very concrete list of the intentions and purposes that motivated the PeaceBuilders program. In essence, PeaceBuilders is a program meant to teach newcomer children communication and conflict resolution skills so they can self-advocate within Canadian school culture, build healthy relationships and adjust to Canadian culture in general while still maintain their own cultural identity. Potential activities had to directly relate to the purposes of the program in order to be included within the curriculum. While selecting activities from the data I had the vision, mission, mandate, principles and goals in list form in front of me and very carefully cross-checked each activity with the list. I had to ensure each activity directly related to this list. I looked for common language, concepts and themes between the list and each activity. It was important to be able to directly relate the list to each activity to maintain consistency among the activities and program goals and values.

The next set of criterion for activities was the age group targeted by the program. PeaceBuilders primarily targets children in grades 3-4, meaning children ages 8-9 years old. This age group was chosen for specific developmental reasons. At this age children can grasp simple theoretical concepts as well as apply them to their own situations (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1995). Concepts, theories and skills presented within activities had to match the developmental level of children aged 8-9. It was for this reason within the literature review I used the keywords 'children' and 'primary school.'

Next was if an activity accounted for varying levels of English. This was vital to consider given the target group for the PeaceBuilders program is newcomers. Newcomer children, as a group, may have different levels of English. In order for an activity to be effective for varying levels of English it had to incorporate visual aids, use simple

language and make room for translation from interpreters. This criterion was particularly challenging and meant many activities had to be modified to be accessible to as many children as possible.

The final criterion applied to activities was based on my personal experience working with multicultural youth. My work with multicultural youth took place within a non-profit called Children's International Summer Villages (CISV), which teaches peace education to children in summer camp settings (CISV, 2007). CISV provides their activities online and this proved to be an abundant resource within the data from which activities could be pulled and required little to no modification. CISV is generous with their activities and encourages the use of their activities among youth programs. My past experience with multicultural youth served to determine the effectiveness and suitability of each activity. There were several activities within the data that I knew wouldn't be effective because of playroom space, resources needed or number of children participating because of my past experience.

Outline of PeaceBuilders Manual:

I would now like to discuss the basic outline of the manual to give a general sense of what order and sequence the manual follows. The actual manual can be found in Appendix A and can be referenced for more detail. The manual begins with the list of the vision, mission, mandate, principles and goals of the PeaceBuilders program. The next section is entitled 'Trainer Reference Materials' and gives an overview of culture for the facilitators of the PeaceBuilders program. This section discusses LeBaron's definition of culture and provides an activity for facilitators to discover the different cultural groups they belong to. This section also provides a short tool for facilitators to assess the needs

of their PeaceBuilders group. As the needs of each group of children is different, this tool ensures the activities and themes selected are learner-focused.

The next section, entitled “Classroom Environment,” covers the basics of how the facilitators can make the environment in which the PeaceBuilders classes takes place inviting, safe and effective for learning. It discusses the importance of writing group guidelines early on as the group is forming as well as incorporating structure and routine into each PeaceBuilders class. It also details the importance of using ‘group check-ins’ during each class. This is a tool used by facilitators to gauge the how much the group enjoys the day’s activities to ensure the classes remain learner-focused and responsive. The next section details the importance of group debriefing after each activity. The debriefing cycle is explained as well as how the cycle is represented in each activity debrief with the categories: feel, think and act. Debriefing questions first have the children say how they felt about the activity, then asks questions to get them thinking about the specific theme being taught and finally how the children can act on the theme and put it into practice. A number of debriefing tools are listed for facilitators to use.

The next section is entitled ‘Evaluation’ and outlines the process of a mid-way and final evaluation of each PeaceBuilders group. A midway evaluation is another tool facilitators can use to ensure that classes remain learner-focused as well as get a sense of the children’s progression in learning the content being presented. A final evaluation is completed at the end of the 10 weeks and allows the children to share their overall experience of the program with the facilitator. This information can then be used to improve delivery method and activities used during the next PeaceBuilders group.

The final section, which comprises the majority of the manual, is the fourteen

themes and the activities assigned to each theme. Each theme section begins with a page outlining what specific skills the participants will be able to demonstrate upon completing the activities within the section. Each individual activity sheet is formatted in the same way so activities are easy to follow. The theme each activity relates to is found at the top right hand corner. Each sheet displays the objective of each activity, how much time the activity takes and any supplies needed to complete the activity. It then gives a step-by-step breakdown of how facilitators should run the activity. It then provides debrief questions for each of the three: feel, think and act. Each activity sheet also provides tips for facilitators about the activity and any other themes the activity may relate to. There is a lot of crossover among which themes the activities can be used for.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report has been to detail the process I followed to produce the PeaceBuilders curriculum for my client, the South Island Dispute Resolution Centre. I set out to research and write a conflict resolution and communication skills building curriculum for newcomer children in grades 3-4. To date, the curriculum has been used for five PeaceBuilders groups in four schools within School District 61. The curriculum I wrote is unique in that it is newcomer focused. The central themes of multiculturalism and cultural competency were used as the foundation for developing and writing the curriculum.

The goal of the research was to discover appropriate content for the experiential and activities based PeaceBuilders program. In essence, I researched the content for the curriculum, how it should be structured and what learning environment it should be delivered within. I went about this research by conducting systematic keyword searches

in academic databases. Next, I synthesized the findings within the articles examined and pinpointed 14 themes the curriculum content should include. I then developed criteria for which activities would be included in the curriculum and designated activities among the 14 themes.

I discovered a sizeable gap within the research I examined: a lack of conflict resolution and communication skills building activities specifically for newcomer children. I further discovered the activities for children presented in the research that spoke about multiculturalism, spoke about and emphasized multiculturalism from the dominant culture's perspective rather than presenting all cultures equally. Both discoveries demonstrate the limitations within the current research. It is limited due to a lack of focus about newcomer children and also how it presents and teaches children about multiculturalism.

The above discoveries demonstrate the need for future research in the field of conflict resolution and communication skills building for newcomer children. More research needs to be done about newcomer children in Canada in general, particularly how they interact and exist within the Canadian school system. Another key area for future research is in what environment do newcomer children learn the most effectively? More newcomer children focused research is needed to better understand them as a group. The more information and research we have programs like PeaceBuilders can become more effective and successful.

I started to take steps down the path of newcomer-focused research about conflict resolution and communication skills building for children by developing and writing the PeaceBuilders curriculum. My hope is that other researchers in the field will take more

steps towards learning more about this group. As I discovered while researching, there is a lot more to learn.

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Appendices

Appendix A: PeaceBuilders Manual

The PeaceBuilders manual can be accessed by contacting the South Island Dispute Resolution Centre via the contact information below:

South Island Dispute Resolution Centre
102-2220 Sooke Road
Victoria BC V9B 0G9
Phone: 250.383.4412
Fas: 250.383.9536
Email: casedev@disputeresolution.bc.ca
Website: www.disputeresolution.bc.ca

The activity below is a sample from the manual.

Diversity/ Inclusion

From Saturn to Jupiter

Objective: Participants become aware of what it's like to belong and not belong to groups.

Time: 10 – 20 minutes

Supplies: 2 large pieces of paper, tape, marker

Keep in mind...

- Encourage/ acknowledge participants about guidelines
- When calling out directions, include several groups where there are only one or two participants in a group

Description

Step 1: Pieces of paper should be placed at opposite sides of the play area, one labeled Saturn and the labeled Jupiter.

Step 2: Instruct participants you will be calling out groups and they will have to decide which group they belong to and then run to the planet to join their group.

Step 3: Give instructions to the group in the following way: "Those who [have brown hair] go to Saturn, those who [do not have brown hair], go to Jupiter.

Step 4: Continue calling out different instructions. Consult the table below for suggestions.

Variation - Add some movement constraints when participants move from one group to the other such as jumping like a frog, walk backwards, jump on one leg, etc.

Debrief

Feel: How did you like the game? Were you ever alone on your planet? How did that feel? How did it feel to be part of a big group?

Think: Were there times when you didn't know which group to go to? Why or why not? In what ways are we all alike in our group? In what ways are we all different? Do you like having friends who are different from you?

Act: What can we do to know each participant in our group better? What can we do to make sure everyone feels welcome in our group?

Adapted from:
Equitas

Appendix C: Mission, Mandate, Principles, Vision and Goals of PeaceBuilders

Mission

The South Island Dispute Resolution Centre serves newcomer children in a multicultural context to help them build healthy relationships through delivering experiential learning so they can become successful, competent and engaged individuals within the greater community.

Mandate

Be aware and responsive leaders, role-models and partners to develop the capacities of newcomer children and families through education informed by research and effective practices.

Principles

Build cultural competencies and conflict engagement skills through the principles of co-operation, respect, fairness, inclusion, respect for diversity, responsibility and acceptance.

Vision

Newcomer children will have collaborative communication skills that will enable them to contribute to creating a just and equitable society.

Goals

Participants will:

Develop intercultural competence

Build an inclusive community through friendship

Develop positive attitudes towards others

Develop intercultural communication skills

Enhance participants' self-image, confidence, and identity

Develop strategies to cope with the challenges of life in new surroundings and culture